



WELCOME TO SR 87 Connector PD&E Study INCORPORATED 1844

NEWSLETTER 3

OCTOBER 2012

SPECIAL POINTS OF IN- TEREST:

- Alternative Meeting was held in the Summer of 2011
- Two possible Alignments
- Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for Fall 2013

Website is available:
www.sr87connector.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

S.R. 87 PD&E 1
Where Have We Been?

Wildlife Coordination 2

Bicycle/Pedestrian Update! 3

What Happens Next? 3

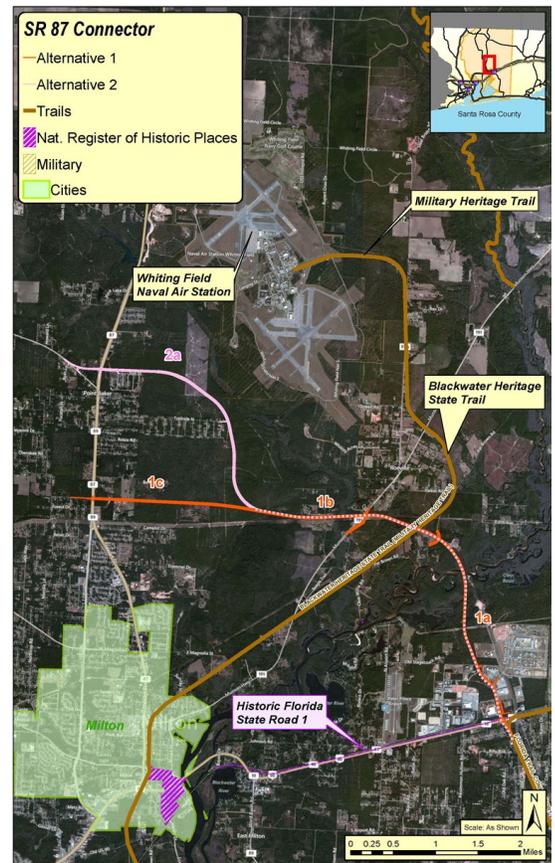
Contact 3



State Road (S.R.) 87 Connector—Where Have We Been?

Since our Public Alternatives Meeting in the summer of 2011, the S.R. 87 Connector Project Team has been preparing reports and developing engineering drawings. The study looked at several corridors; however, due to environmental constraints, all but two corridors were eliminated. The remaining alternatives, Corridor 1 and Corridor 2, have been developed into actual alignments and further refined based on field conditions. Alignment 1 ties into S.R. 87N just north of Manning Road at Oakland Drive. Alignment 2 travels a bit further north and ties into S.R. 87N at Harvest Point Drive. This alignment will also require the realignment of S.R. 89 where it merges from the north with S.R. 87N. The following is a sample of the analyses and reports that have been prepared, or are in the process of being prepared, to evaluate these two alignments:

- Concept Plans for both Alignments 1 & 2
- Roadway sections developed
- Preliminary Engineering Report
- Endangered Species Biological Assessment Report
- Wetlands Evaluation Report
- Location Hydraulics Report (analyzes area-wide drainage)
- Bridge Hydraulics Report (analyzes the drainage and stream flow at proposed bridges)
- Bridge Development Report (Options for design of the bridges)
- Drainage/Stormwater Pond Siting Report and Master Plan
- Access Management Plan
- Cultural Resource Assessment (Community Facilities, Historic Sites, and Archeological Sites)
- Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan (Businesses or residences that may be displaced)



Wildlife Coordination



The S.R. 87 Connector Team has been coordinating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop environmentally sound design solutions for two Threatened and Endangered Species in the study area. The two species are the Reticulated Flatwoods Salamander (RFS) (*Ambystoma bishop*) and the Gulf Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*). To address the potential impacts to these two species, a Biological Assessment (BA) was prepared. This BA addresses the proposed action in compliance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended. This requires that, through consultation with the USFWS, federal actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened, endangered, or proposed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. The BA evaluates the potential effects of the proposed S.R. 87 Connector on species and critical habitat that are federally listed under the ESA. Specific project design elements are identified that avoid or minimize adverse effects of the proposed project on listed species and critical habitat.

The use of bridges will help minimize impacts to the federally threatened Gulf sturgeon and the federally endangered RFS. The bridges will traverse/span floodplain wetlands, open water, and wetland/ponds that serve as critical habitat for each species. The Blackwater River bridge will commence on the south side of the river to the west of the existing powerline right-of-way. The river will be spanned and a minimum number of pilings



will be installed in the river. Dredging and the use of explosives in, or adjacent to, the river will be eliminated. Sturgeon migration corridors will not be blocked or impeded. Floating turbidity barriers will be used during the construction of the piers and other in-water work. In-water construction will be minimized during migratory periods, generally from March to May and October through November, but a more specific time period based on the sub-population utilizing the Blackwater River can be developed in conjunction with USFWS. Direct discharge from the bridge deck will be minimized to the maximum extent practicable and runoff will be collected and treated in permitted stormwater ponds prior to any discharges. The Blackwater River is an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW),

which requires specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction and stormwater design to prevent degradation to the river. The increased BMP and stormwater requirements will minimize impacts to the Gulf sturgeon. Construction staging areas will be located outside the floodplain. The project is not likely to adversely modify the Gulf sturgeon critical habitat unit.

The RFS critical habitat will be bridged and the proposed bridge crossing is located over the most degraded portion of the critical habitat unit. Minimizing intrusion in the critical habitat unit was accomplished by shifting the alignment to its current location from the previous two alignment paths, which were further north and east through higher quality habitat. The proposal is to bridge the critical habitat area to minimize impacts and to maintain connectivity. Erosion control measures will minimize impacts within the critical habitat unit. Direct discharge from the bridge deck will be eliminated and runoff will be filtered and treated so it does not enter wetlands within the RFS critical habitat unit. The project is not likely to adversely modify the critical habitat unit.



Pictures provided by:
USFWS



Bicycle/Pedestrian Update!

In our last newsletter, we outlined the bicycle/pedestrian network that is being provided as part of the S.R. 87 Connector project. As previously noted, the S.R. 87 Connector will greatly enhance the region's trail network by providing a connection with seven to eight additional miles of multi-use trail parallel to the S.R. 87 connector. In addition, it will link the Blackwater Heritage

Trail (BHST) to the Historic S.R. 1 Trail along U.S. 90. Likewise, future links can be made to area parks and recreation facilities. Over the past few months, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has been working with the Department of Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT), and the FHWA to develop an acceptable Connector crossing of the BHST. The opportuni-

ty to extend proposed wetland bridging was recognized and the bridge was extended to cross over the BHST. As a result, the trail's one-hundred foot right-of-way will be clear spanned by the roadway. In addition, ramp connections (seen below) are being provided from the bridge to the BHST providing the necessary link to establish network connectivity.



What Happens Next?

Over the next few months, the documents that have been produced will be reviewed by multiple agencies. In addition, the Draft Environment Impact Statement (DEIS) will be finalized and submitted for review to

FDOT and FHWA. The Project Team will work closely with all agencies to finalize these documents.

The Team will also be completing formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the Threatened

and Endangered Species that may be impacted by this project. Once the documents are finalized and the formal consultation is completed, a public hearing will be held in the fall of 2013.

Contact Information

Peggy Kelley,
Project Manager

Florida Department of
Transportation
PO Box 607
Chipley, FL 32428
850-415-9517

peggy.kelley@dot.state.fl.us

Ian Satter,
Public Information Director

Florida Department of
Transportation
PO Box 607
Chipley, FL 32428
800-638-0250, ext. 205

ian.satter@dot.state.fl.us

John Flora, RA, AICP,
Project Manager

Metric Engineering, Inc.
407-644-1898

jflora@metriceng.com

