

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Following this second alternatives public meeting, FDOT will review comments received and, together with engineering and environmental analyses, refine the viable build alternatives. We will complete a thorough analysis of potential environmental effects and document findings in several reports. We will also continue coordination with local government entities.

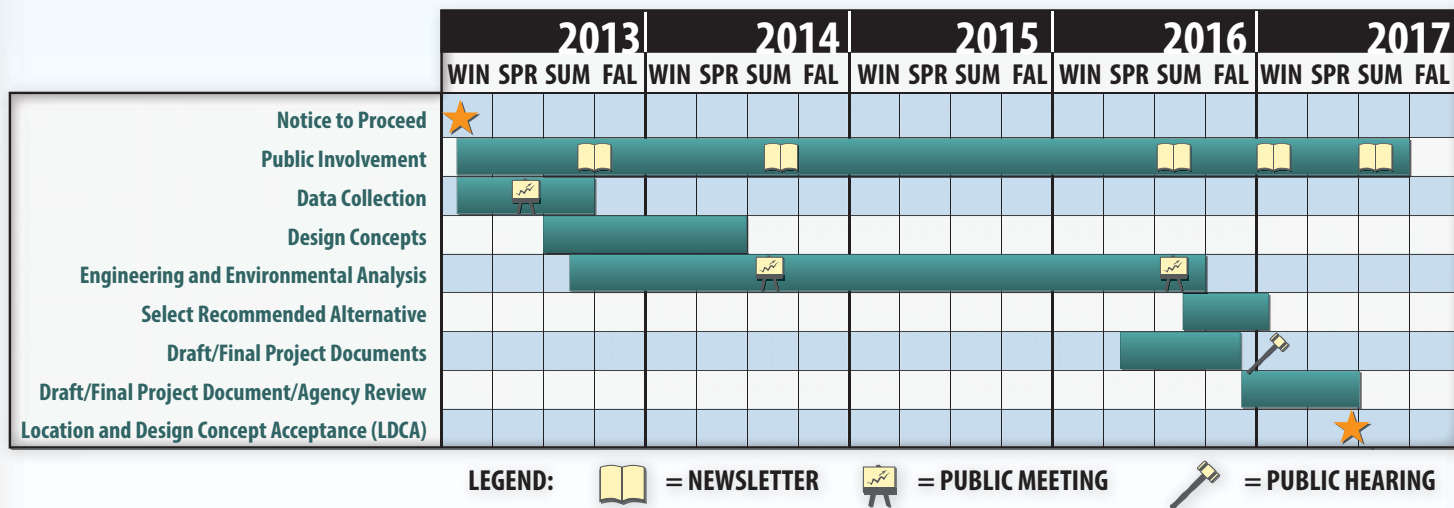
FDOT will present the recommended build alternative(s) and the no-build/repair alternative at a formal public hearing, where we will solicit people's comments. The hearing is tentatively scheduled for early 2017. Following the hearing, FDOT District One will submit the recommended alternative for FDOT Office of Environmental Management review. If specific coordination with the Federal Highway Administration is required, it will be facilitated by the Office of Environmental Management.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is a very important part of this PD&E study. FDOT uses several ways to provide information to and receive information from public officials, agencies and interested people. They include newsletters and presentations to neighborhoods, small groups and organizations. A project website www.cortezbridge.com is available for you to share comments with FDOT and the study team. Please review the study schedule below for future public involvement events.

WORK PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Following completion of the PD&E study, whether the no-build/repair or the build alternative is selected, the design phase (preparation of construction plans) is funded in fiscal year 2018 of FDOT's Five-Year Work Program. Right-of-way acquisition is funded in fiscal year 2019. Construction is not currently funded in the program, which runs through mid-2021.



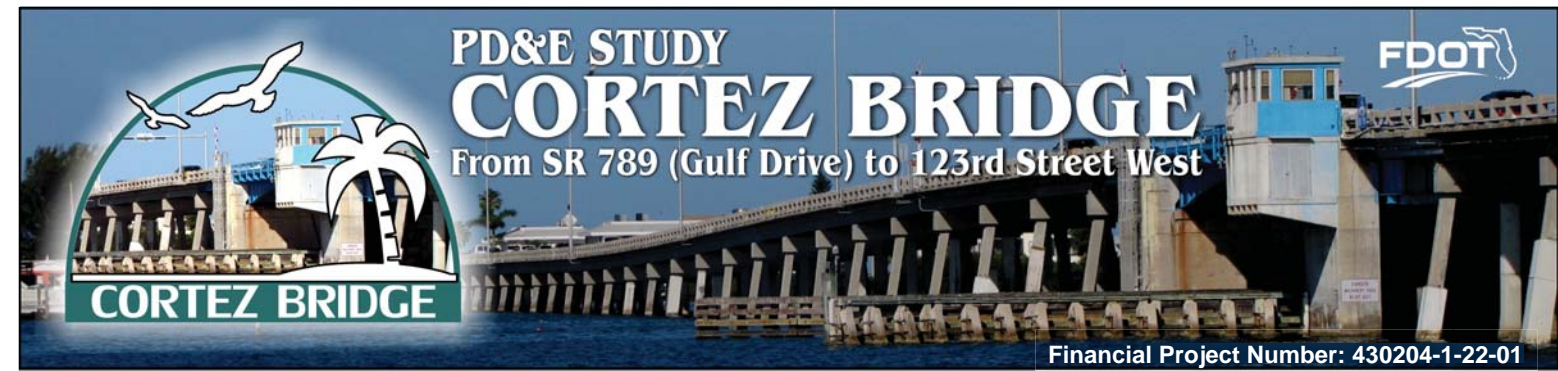
STAY INFORMED

We urge you to participate in this study and invite your comments and questions. If you would like to add a name and address to the PD&E study mailing list, please contact:



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Meeting Handout - August 9, 2016



WELCOME

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, welcomes you to a second alternatives public meeting that is part of the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study of State Road (SR) 684 (Cortez Road) from SR 789 (Gulf Drive) to 123rd Street West in Manatee County. The one-mile long study includes Cortez Bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

This meeting is an open house format where you can view a video presentation that explains the various alternatives, review the project displays, and ask questions and provide comments to FDOT representatives in a one-on-one setting. You can complete a comment sheet today or take it home, complete it, and mail it to FDOT by August 19, 2016. You can also go to the study website www.cortezbridge.com to submit comments. Your comments will assist the Department in determining recommended alternatives to present at a future public hearing.

BRIDGE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS ONGOING

In January 2013, FDOT began the PD&E study of Cortez Bridge on Cortez Road, a designated hurricane evacuation route. The engineering and environment study determines whether the bridge continues to be repaired or is replaced. If replacement is selected, the type of structure is identified. We are looking at low-level drawbridge, mid-level drawbridge and high-level fixed bridge designs. The purpose of the project is to address the deteriorating structural condition and substandard features of the bridge, not to add traffic capacity. Therefore, no additional lanes are proposed, and no improvements outside the existing corridor were considered.



NO-BUILD/REPAIR ALTERNATIVE

The no build/repair alternative includes continued repairs and routine maintenance of Cortez Bridge that are intended to keep it safe and operable until 2035. At that time, the bridge would need to be replaced. The no build/repair alternative would not prevent the need to potentially restrict heavy vehicles, meaning that heavy trucks could be restricted.

In order to address beam deficiencies, repairs would include replacement of the beams and the deck on the six spans in the worst condition. Other beams and deck will remain, as will all the existing piles and pile caps. The no-build/repair alternative would require closure of the bridge for nine weeks and a detour via Anna Maria Bridge or Ringling Bridge to maintain vehicle traffic during construction. Except for short interruptions, boat traffic will continue to use the channel while repairs are made.

The no-build/repair alternative would keep the same functionally obsolete, substandard bridge width since the existing movable span cannot be widened. The existing bridge width is not sufficient to provide any shoulders, and the curbs do not meet current safety standards. Despite repairs, the existing bridge would continue to deteriorate. Furthermore, the bridge would remain susceptible to damage from ship impact and storm surge due to its substandard foundations and low profile, respectively. While the no-build/repair alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the project, it must be studied throughout the duration of the project to provide comparison with other alternatives as required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

REHABILITATION ALTERNATIVE

The rehabilitation alternative included performing major repairs to the fixed and movable portions of the bridge that are intended to keep it safe and operable until 2050. It would also maintain the existing substandard bridge width with no shoulders. It provides no relief to vulnerability of ship impact and storm surge damages; does not provide any improvement in levels of service, travel time, or delays; and would not result in fewer bridge openings.

Pedestrian and bicycle amenities, such as bike lanes and wide sidewalks are not possible with the rehabilitation alternative. For these reasons, and considering other advantages and disadvantages including construction, operation, and maintenance costs, **FDOT has dropped the rehabilitation alternative from further consideration.**

BUILD ALTERNATIVES

In June 2015, Manatee County government requested that FDOT look at providing a dedicated transit lane across a future improved Cortez Bridge. The Manatee Chamber of Commerce supported the county's request. In the next several months, FDOT developed two additional build alternatives. One alternative included a center bus lane that separated the bridge through lanes. The second alternative included a bus lane in each direction on the outside of the through lanes. Following an extensive analysis, FDOT determined the benefit of the predicted small reduction of personal vehicles crossing the bridge each day did not justify the cost of the bus lanes. **Therefore, these bus lane alternatives were eliminated.**

The analysis of various two-lane bridge replacement alternatives also continues. FDOT is studying low-level drawbridge, mid-level drawbridge, and high-level fixed bridge designs. The replacement alternatives provide a long-term solution with a 75-year design life.

The study analyzed new bridge alignments within the existing corridor. They were a center alignment, a north alignment, and a south alignment. The center alignment was dropped from further consideration because it requires a long detour or a \$14.9 million temporary bridge. The project length is not significantly different for the north and south alignments; therefore, construction costs are not significantly different. The north alignment, which is about 20 feet away from the existing bridge, was selected because it will not impact the Bradenton Beach Marina or the Tide Tables Restaurant parking area and will result in fewer impacts to seagrasses compared to the south alignment.

The vertical clearance of the existing Cortez Bridge at the Intracoastal Waterway is 17½ feet. The U.S. Coast Guard establishes guide clearances at this location. They are a minimum 21-foot vertical navigational clearance for a new drawbridge and a minimum 65-foot vertical navigational clearance for a new fixed bridge. The horizontal navigational clearance for all bridge replacements is 90 feet perpendicular between channel fenders. However, we are considering a 100-foot channel to match the horizontal clearances at Ringling Bridge and the proposed Anna Maria Bridge. The wider channel will be safer and allow vessels to pass through the channel quicker.

FDOT has developed the following bridge replacement alternatives:

- A low-level drawbridge, similar to the existing bridge, with a 21-foot vertical clearance when the bridge is closed.
- A mid-level drawbridge with a 35-foot vertical clearance when the bridge is closed. Previously, FDOT presented a 45-foot vertical clearance drawbridge alternative. However, in order to meet Americans with Disabilities Act design criteria, this alternative, with its 5½% grade, requires several flat landings connected by steeper ramps along the sidewalk, which are not desirable for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The 35-foot alternative's proposed 4½% grade does not require flat landings, so it would be more easily accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists. Bridge openings would be reduced by about one-third, yet the bridge height and grades would be lower than the previously proposed 45-foot drawbridge alternative. **Therefore, FDOT has dropped the 45-foot mid-level alternative from further consideration and is continuing to evaluate the 35-foot alternative.**

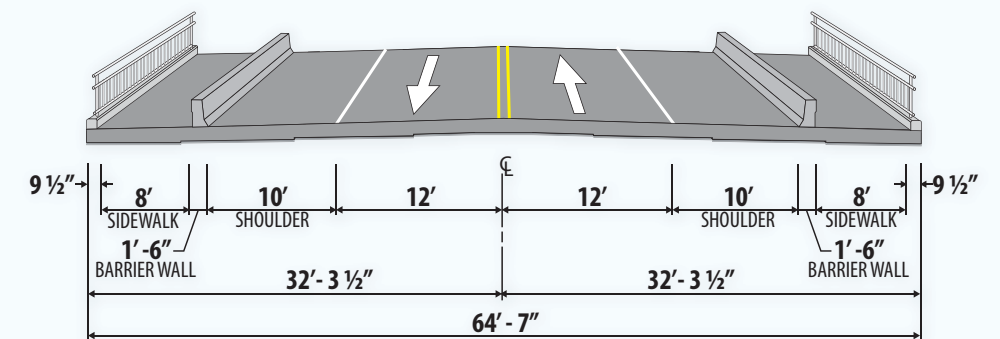
- The last bridge replacement alternative is a fixed bridge with a minimum 65-foot vertical navigational clearance. Its 5% grades do not require flat landings. A 65-foot vertical clearance would allow 98 percent of all vessels that currently use the channel to pass under the bridge, resulting in no delays. In order for the remaining 2% of boats to pass underneath, the bridge height would need to be increased above 65 feet.

All bridge replacement alternatives include removal of the existing bridge once traffic has been shifted to a new bridge. If the replacement option is selected, there are currently no plans to leave any portion of the existing bridge for recreational use.

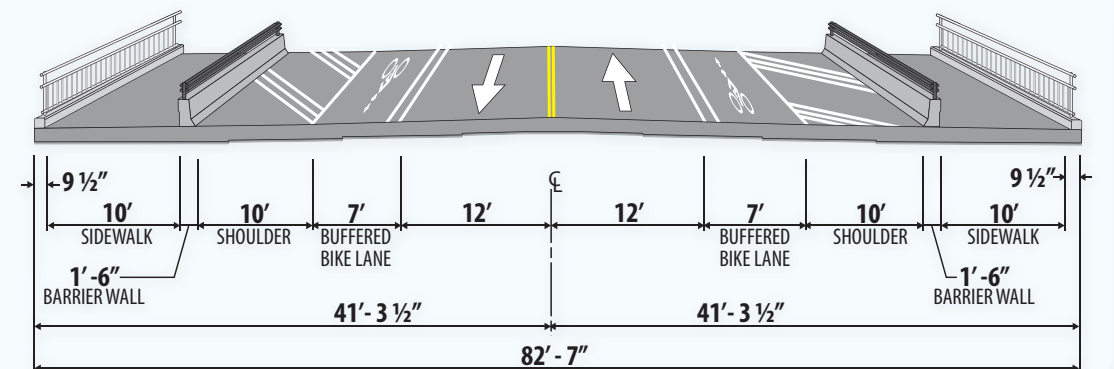
BRIDGE TYPICAL SECTIONS

At the previous public meeting in August 2014, FDOT presented a bridge typical section that included two, 12-foot lanes with 10-foot shoulders and 8-foot sidewalks. FDOT has updated the bridge typical section to include two, 12-foot lanes, 7-foot buffered bicycle lanes, 10-foot shoulders, and 10-foot sidewalks.

ORIGINAL BRIDGE TYPICAL SECTION



UPDATED BRIDGE TYPICAL SECTION



VIABLE REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVES

In order to quantify the costs and potential effects associated with the alternatives, FDOT is analyzing the no-build/repair alternative and build alternatives. Alternatives analysis matrices are displayed with results of the analyses, and aerial photographs with the alternatives are displayed for your review. Representations of the bridge heights are also displayed.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Analyses of the social, cultural, natural and physical environments that surround the bridge are an important component of the study. Environmental effects that are studied include wetlands, seagrasses, flood plains, threatened and endangered species, traffic noise, air and water quality, hazardous materials, recreational sites, historic districts, historic structures and archaeological sites. No significant effects are expected as a result of any of the alternatives. Effects are also listed on the alternatives analysis matrices.