The purpose of this newsletter is to inform the property owners, business owners, and interested citizens of the federal approval of the following project:

The S.R. 679 (Pinellas Bayway Structure E) at Intracoastal Waterway Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study from south of Madonna Boulevard to south of S.R. 682 in Pinellas County, Florida - WPI Segment No 410755 1. The existing two-lane low-level bascule bridge will be replaced with a two-lane fixed bridge providing 65 feet of vertical navigational clearance over the existing Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIW). Once funding is secured, the project is expected to proceed to the Design phase.

Pursuant to Florida Statutes 339.155(6), this letter also serves as notice to property owners that a whole or portion of their property is within 300 feet of the center line of the Preferred Alternative. However, this does not mean that all properties will be directly affected.

Public Hearing
The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in cooperation with the United States Coast Guard (USCG), held a public hearing on March 28, 2007 for the PD&E study. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit input from the public regarding the location, design, social, economic, and environmental effects of the recommended improvements to the Tierra Verde Bridge. The recommended improvements included replacement of the existing bascule bridge with a two-lane, high-level, fixed-span bridge, which would require the relocation of the GIW and realignment of Madonna Boulevard.

Changes to the Preferred Alternative
Subsequent to the public hearing, coordination with the FDOT, United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), USCG, and Pinellas County continued. Through this coordination process, it was determined that additional cost and impacts, potential liabilities, and delay of project implementation would result from continuing to pursue the relocation of the navigational channel. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative was changed to Alternative 5, the high-level fixed-bridge over the existing channel with realignment of 1st Street East (The Village driveway). Alternative 5 was previously evaluated and presented at the public workshop in April 2006. The proposed horizontal alignment and typical section did not change. However, Alternative 5 was refined slightly:

• Instead of realigning Madonna Boulevard to line up with 1st Street East (The Village driveway), 1st Street East will be realigned to form a four-leg signalized intersection with a single median opening at the existing Madonna Boulevard. This was previously evaluated as Madonna Boulevard intersection Option A. This will eliminate three business relocations and save approximately $10 million in estimated right-of-way costs.
• The design speed on the proposed bridge was reduced from 50 mph to 45 mph.
• The grade from the top of the proposed bridge toward the north was reduced from 6% to 5%. The grade from Tierra Verde northward up to the crest of the bridge remains 6% in order to clear the existing channel.
• The median width of S.R. 679 through the Madonna Boulevard intersection was reduced to better accommodate pedestrians utilizing the crosswalks.
Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative proposes a two-lane, high-level, fixed bridge over the existing channel. The Preferred Alternative provides 65 feet of vertical navigational clearance and 100 feet of horizontal clearance between fenders.

The new bridge would include a 12-foot travel lane and a 10-foot shoulder in each direction with a 5-foot sidewalk on the west side and an 11-foot sidewalk on the east side to accommodate a planned multi-use path. The replacement bridge would be constructed to the east of the existing bridge.

In addition, the Preferred Alternative requires roadway improvements along the approaches to the new bridge to tie-back to the existing roadway. The southern approach varies due to the transitioning of the road from the existing four-lane divided roadway to the two-lane undivided bridge. The northern approach roadway includes two 12-foot travel lanes with 12-foot shoulders (5 feet paved to accommodate bicyclists). The roadway also includes a 5-foot sidewalk on the east side and a 12-foot multi-use path on the west, separated from the roadway by a guardrail and a buffer strip.

The Preferred Alternative realigns 1st Street East (The Village driveway) to align with the existing Madonna Boulevard intersection.

Permits Issued

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) issued an individual Environmental Resource Permit on March 31, 2009. On May 12, 2009, the USCG issued the required bridge permit.

Project Cost and Next Steps:

The current design cost estimate is $2,732,000. The current construction cost estimate for the bridge, roadway approach improvements and stormwater management is $59,054,000. Upon identifying a funding plan, the project is expected to proceed to the Design phase.

Work Program Information

Although the PD&E study has been completed, the design phase is not currently funded in FDOT’s Five-Year Adopted Work Program (Fiscal Years 2010-2014). FDOT is in the process of developing a design-build scope in hopes of securing funding through efforts by the Pinellas Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (MPO) Bayway Bridge Task Force. Right-of-way is programmed in the amount of $70,813 for fiscal year 2010. Construction is not currently funded.

Please visit FDOT’s Work Program web page for the most current work program funding information: http://www2.dot.state.fl.us/fmsupportapps/workprogram/WorkProgram.aspx

LEGEND

- PROPOSED PROJECT
- PROPOSED BUS LANE
- PROPOSED DRIVELINE
- PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
- PROPOSED EASEMENT
- PROPOSED PEND.

Roadway at Grade (North Side)

Recommended Bridge

Madonna Boulevard/1st Street East Intersection