

Panther Recovery Plan Implementation Team
Transportation Work Group
Meeting Summary

December 2, 2014

FDOT District 1 Office, Bartow, FL

Attendees:

Amber Crooks, Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Elizabeth Fleming, Defenders of Wildlife

Terry Gilbert, FWC

Darrell Land, FWC

Laurie MacDonald, Defenders of Wildlife – PRIT Liaison

Xavier Pagan, FDOT

Nancy Payton, Florida Wildlife Federation – Work Group Chair

Gwen Pipkin, FDOT

Brent Setchell, FDOT

Donald Scott, Lee MPO

Daniel Smith, UCF

John Wrublik, USFWS

No members of the public attended.

- Introduction of new work group member, Xavier Pagan. Approval of agenda and approval of minutes from October 23, 2014 meeting.
- An update on the most recent PRIT Steering Committee meeting was provided.
- Briefing on Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) was provided. Major phases are planning, programming, and project development and environment (PD&E). Partner agencies participate throughout this process, especially in the programming phase. The best opportunity to incorporate a desired wildlife crossing into a project is during the PD&E phase.
- General discussion about SR82 and the proposed Eastern Collier Habitat Conservation Plan.

- General discussion about wildlife fencing on private versus public lands.
- General discussion about SR29 widening and bypass.
- FDOT Wildlife Crossing Guidelines
 - These guidelines may not necessarily apply to 'ecopassages'/shelves, but would be applicable to capacity project or standalone retrofit projects.
 - Work group will review Guidelines verbiage for input to FDOT for their consideration.
- Dan Smith provided an update on Roadside Animal Detection System (RADS) on US41. His research project is anticipated to run through 04/15.
 - Project proposes to 1) to evaluate driver response, 2) perform driver simulations, and 3) perform questionnaires. So far, driver simulations did show that people slowed down with RADS and that picture signs are more effective than words.
 - The study will also include recommendations on changes to existing RADS on US41.
- Dan Smith provided a presentation about crossing structures options and examples.
 - Examples in southwest Florida:
 - I-75- 110 ft. wide x 10 ft. tall
 - SR29 South- 24 ft. wide x 8 ft. tall x 40 length
 - SR29 North - 50 ft wide x 8 ft tall
 - Immokalee Rd. at Camp Keais- 10 ft wide x 5 ft tall
 - Immokalee Rd. at Twin Eagles (general wildlife crossing)- 10 ft wide x 5 ft tall
 - CR846 Citygate - 7 ft tall
 - Other designs include ecopassage or canal shelves – 3' to 10' wide. Wildlife may be able to utilize things such as floodplain bridges (with earthen shelves) and abandoned railroad bridges with some landscaping and fencing.
 - Bridge Replacement Program can be an opportunity to redesign with crossings or other improvements.
 - Factors for site design include context/vegetation, substrate, environmental variability (e.g. water levels), berming and vegetative screening (e.g. ability to block headlights, traffic noise), fencing, topography (e.g. slope of approach), lighting to reduce tunnel effects), and degree of human presence, wetland impacts, ease of construction, profile of roadway, cost, and presence of conservation lands on either side.
- Group discussed land cover maps for least cost surface exercise.
 - There was a consensus for the group to start reviewing existing information (such as roadkills, telemetry, and prior least cost pathways modeling) to identify hot spots and areas of conflict south of the Caloosahatchee River (e.g. Lee County,

Collier County, Hendry County). Simultaneously, the work group will build and utilize the new LCP exercise for gaps and areas north of the river.

- There was a discussion whether the group should provide input on specific proposed development or mining projects. The group consensus was that we will not provide input at this level, but rather, the group intends to provide recommendations on areas of conflict and hot spots which the agencies can utilize in their decision-making on proposed projects.
- Future tasks for the work group includes creating a compendium of types of structures.
- Next meeting, set for 01/29, 10am-3pm at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center in Punta Gorda, FL, will focus on Agenda to include discussion of Hendry County roadways.