

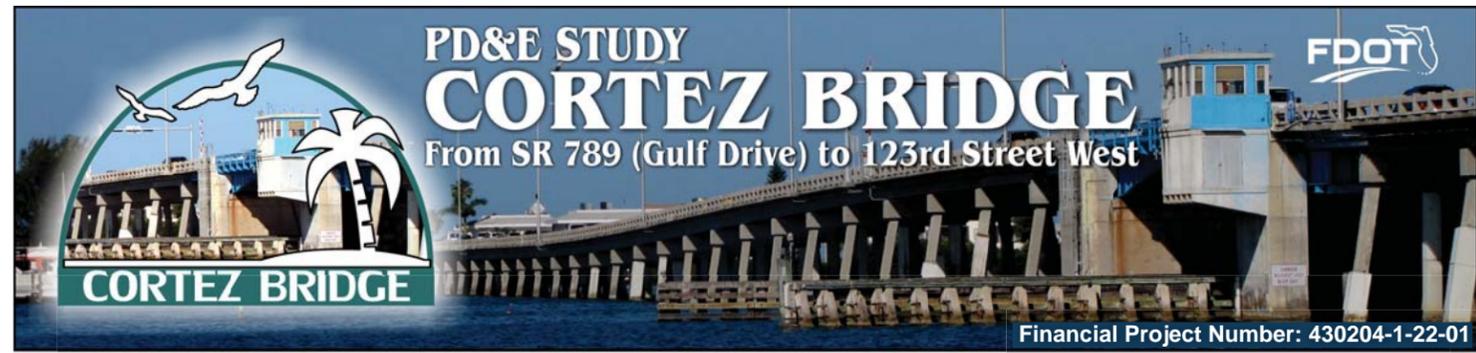


Florida Department of Transportation
 District Environmental Management Office
 P.O. Box 1249
 Bartow, FL 33831
 Attn: Marlon Bizerra
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Financial Project Number: 430204-1-22-01

Newsletter 5 - August 2017

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, will conduct a public hearing about the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study of Cortez Bridge on State Road (SR) 684 in Manatee County. The study limits are SR 684 (Cortez Road) from SR 789 (Gulf Drive) to 123rd Street West, a distance of about one mile.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is a very important part of this PD&E study. Several methods are used to provide and receive information from public officials, agencies and interested citizens. They include newsletters, presentations to neighborhoods, small groups or organizations. A project website is available for you to share your comments with FDOT and the project team. Please visit www.CortezBridge.com

STUDY SCHEDULE

	2013				2014				2015				2016				2017			
	WIN	SPR	SUM	FAL																
Notice to Proceed	★																			
Public Involvement			📖				📖								📖				📖	
Data Collection			📅																	
Design Concepts																				
Engineering and Environmental Analysis							📅								📅					
Draft Project Documents																			📅	
Select Recommended Alternative																				
Final Project Document/Agency Review																				
Location and Design Concept Acceptance (LDCA)																				★

LEGEND: 📖 = NEWSLETTER 📅 = PUBLIC MEETING 📍 = PUBLIC HEARING

CONTACT US

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

Marlon Bizerra, P.E.

Project Manager | Florida Department of Transportation
 801 North Broadway Avenue | P.O. Box 1249 Bartow, FL 33831
 863.519.2250 | marlon.bizerra@dot.state.fl.us
 Comment forms available at www.cortezbridge.com

The public hearing is **Thursday, August 31, 2017** at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 6101 Cortez Road West in Bradenton. An open-house begins at 5 p.m. when people can view the proposed conceptual designs, ask questions and provide comments to FDOT representatives about future repair or replacement of the existing two-lane bridge.

The formal hearing begins at 6 p.m. The hearing moderator will offer introductory remarks followed by a video describing the proposed bridge project. A short intermission will follow where people can register to make oral comments, which will be received following the intermission. Written comments also will be accepted at the hearing and if received by September 12, 2017. Comment forms will be available at the public hearing and at www.CortezBridge.com so you can make your preferences known.

Replacement alternatives still under consideration include a 35-foot vertical clearance drawbridge and a 65-foot vertical clearance fixed bridge within the existing corridor. A video presentation will explain the alternatives.

Draft project reports and conceptual plans are available for public review from August 10, 2017, through September 12, 2017, during regular operating hours at the following locations: Island Branch Library, 5701 Marina Drive, Holmes Beach, FL, and at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church Office 6101 Cortez Road West in Bradenton. Comment forms will also be available at these locations.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

FDOT solicits public participation without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. People who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or who require translation services (free of charge) should contact project manager Marlon Bizerra at 863-519-2250 or e-mail at marlon.bizerra@dot.state.fl.us. We need about one week advance notice to make arrangements.

WHEN WE LAST MET

FDOT held an alternatives public meeting on August 9, 2016 to display alternatives developed to address the deteriorating structural condition and substandard features of Cortez Bridge. A total of 179 people attended the two-hour open-house meeting at Saint Bernard Catholic Church activity center in Holmes Beach. Information from the second alternatives public meeting is posted online at www.CortezBridge.com.

FDOT representatives discussed the project with people who watched a video and viewed aerial photographs explaining the alternatives and their respective impacts and costs. FDOT received comment sheets at the public meeting and in the comment period that followed the meeting.

ALTERNATIVES STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION

FDOT will present the two **Build** alternatives and a **No-Build/Repair** alternative for comment at the public hearing.

The **Build** alternatives provide a long-term, bridge replacement solution designed to last up to 75 years. The existing vertical clearance of the Cortez Bridge is 17½ feet at the Intracoastal Waterway. The U.S. Coast Guard establishes a 90-foot horizontal guide clearance between fenders. However, FDOT is considering a 100-foot wide channel, which is a 10-foot increase over the existing condition, to match the existing clearance at the Ringling Bridge and at the Anna Maria Bridge, which is currently being designed.

Following extensive analysis and coordination with state and federal agencies, public officials, and the public, FDOT has developed the following bridge replacement alternatives for Cortez Bridge, which would be built approximately 20 feet north of the existing bridge:

- A mid-level drawbridge with a 35-foot vertical clearance when the bridge is closed. The 35-foot alternative's proposed 4.5% grade would be more easily accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists than a 45-foot vertical clearance considered previously, which required a 5.5% grade on the east side.
- A fixed bridge with a minimum 65-foot vertical navigational clearance, which 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. The proposed fixed bridge has 5% grades, which meets the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) criteria for sidewalks without flat landings.

In 2015, FDOT completed an 11-month, \$4.4 million project to repair structural, mechanical and electrical components of the existing bridge to extend its life until 2025. The **No-Build/Repair** alternative is a short-term (10-year) solution that will temporarily address the deteriorating structural condition of Cortez Bridge. This alternative can tentatively begin in 2025 and extend the life of the bridge to 2035.

The **No-Build/Repair** alternative maintains the existing substandard roadway width with no shoulders and a curb that has been identified as a safety hazard. Repairs would not prevent the need to potentially restrict heavy vehicles in the future. It provides no relief to vulnerability of ship impact and storm surge damages. This alternative does not reduce the number of bridge openings or address traffic delays.

The **No-Build/Repair** alternative will require closure of the bridge for nine weeks and a detour via Anna Maria Bridge or Ringling Bridge to maintain traffic during construction. Although this alternative is not a long-term solution for the project, it will remain under consideration throughout the remainder of the study process.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The study evaluated potential environmental effects associated with the proposed build alternatives. Detailed analyses of wetlands, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, water quality, hazardous materials, recreational sites, noise, air quality, historic structures, and archaeological sites are an important part of this study. Based on our analyses, we do not anticipate significant effects associated with the proposed build alternatives.

An evaluation matrix provides a detailed comparison of the no build/repair alternative and the recommended build alternatives. The matrix will be on display at the public hearing and is on the website. The matrix shows potential impacts to the social and natural environments and cultural resources. It also identifies preliminary costs.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Following the public hearing and review of your comments, FDOT, with input from Manatee County, will select a recommended alternative and submit it for approval to the FDOT Office of Environmental Management.

Following approval, the project is eligible to advance to the design, right-of-way acquisition and construction phases as they are funded. The design phase (preparation of plans) for the No-Build/Repair or Build alternative is funded in fiscal year 2017 of FDOT's Five Year Work Program. If a build alternative is selected, right of way acquisition is funded in fiscal years 2020, 2021 and 2022. Construction is not funded in the current work program, which runs through mid-2022.

Results of August 9, 2016 Alternatives Public Meeting

The comments indicated support for each alternative as follows:

- **No-Build/Repair** – 29%
- **Replacement** – 68%
 - » **Low-level** 21-foot vertical clearance drawbridge – 5%
 - » **Mid-level** 35-foot vertical clearance drawbridge – 19%
 - » **High-level** 65-foot vertical clearance fixed bridge – 44%
- **Other** (new bridge to Longboat Key) – 4%

(Note: Percentages for the No-Build/Repair, Replacement and Other categories total more than 100% due to comments submitted with multiple preferences.)

High-Level Fixed Bridge Alternative

Advantages:

- Total cost over 75 years \$72,007,883
- Best operational improvements and no vehicular delay
- Opportunity for connecting Cortez community under bridge
- Improved safety from shoulders, sidewalk, barrier, ship impact and storm surge
- 10-ft sidewalks accommodate pedestrians, fishermen, bicyclists
- Additional 10-ft between fenders
- Long service life (75 years)
- No detours needed during construction
- No restrictions for heavy trucks
- Recreational and community functions under bridge
- Water quality improvements

Disadvantages:

- Boat heights limited to 65 ft.
- Greatest visual impacts relative to existing bridge height
- Access changes
- Mangrove and seagrass impacts
- Utility impacts
- Proximity of bridge to condominium

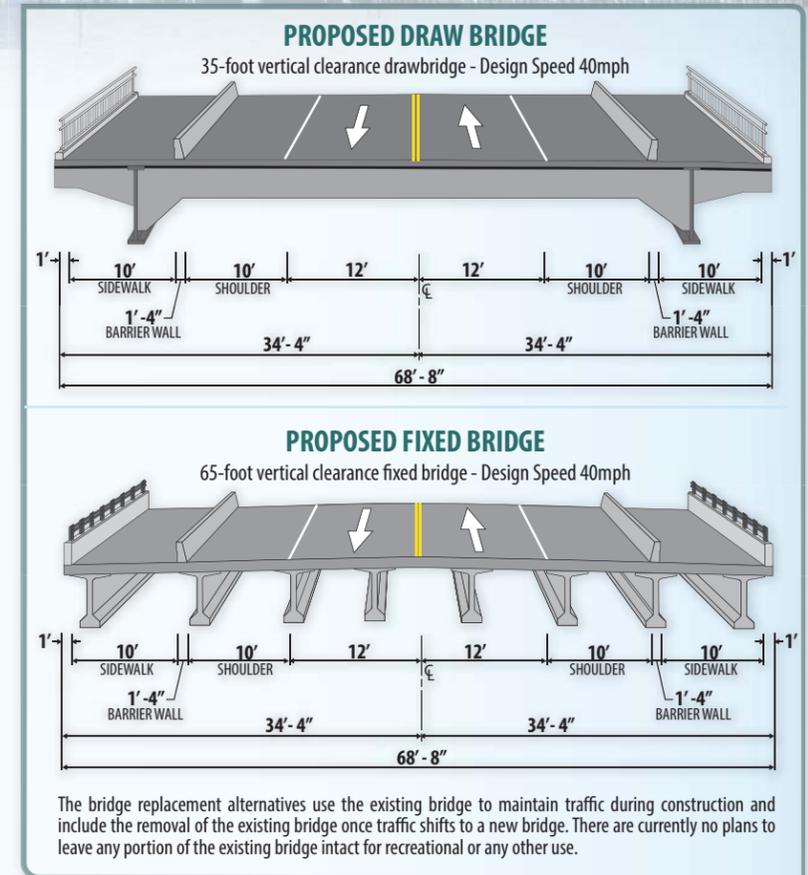
Mid-Level Draw Bridge Alternative

Advantages :

- No height restrictions for boats
- 1/3 fewer openings compared to existing bridge
- No access changes
- Improved safety from shoulders, sidewalk, barrier, ship impact and storm surge
- Additional 10-ft between fenders
- 10-ft sidewalks accommodate pedestrians, fishermen, bicyclists
- Long service life (75 years)
- No detours needed during construction
- No restrictions for heavy trucks
- Water quality improvements

Disadvantages:

- Total cost over 75 years \$104,267,500
- Longer delays for vehicles and boats
- Greater visual impacts relative to existing bridge height
- Mangrove and seagrass impacts
- Utility impacts
- Proximity of bridge to condominiums
- Greater traffic noise impacts compared to fixed bridge



No-Build (Repair) Alternative

Advantages:

- Lowest initial cost
- No impacts to utilities
- No height restrictions for boats
- No mangrove and seagrass impacts

Disadvantages:

- Poor financial investment compared to replacement
- Does not meet project purpose and need
- A short service life (10 years)
- Bridge is functionally obsolete
- Raised curb, no shoulders, substandard railings
- Existing piles susceptible to ship impact
- Concern for mechanical malfunction
- No improvement in water quality
- Highest delay for vehicles and boats
- Vulnerability to storm surge
- No benefit of additional 10-ft between fenders
- Does not prevent need to restrict heavy vehicles
- No aesthetic improvements