



Florida Department of Transportation

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FDOT Announces the Results of the Cortez Bridge Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study

Fort Myers, FL - The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) announced today, the results of the Cortez Bridge Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study at the Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting. The study, which began in 2013, determines social, economic, natural and physical environmental impacts associated with a proposed transportation improvement project and enables the Department to choose the best build or no-build alternative based on these and other criteria.

The study has determined that the preferred alternative is the 65-foot clearance fixed span bridge. The fixed span bridge has many benefits over the existing low-level drawbridge or a replacement drawbridge including:

- Three major repair projects have already been implemented in 1996, 2010, and 2015. Future repair projects would likely increase in scope, traffic disruptions and cost, and yet decrease in effectiveness due to continued deterioration of the bridge. The new bridge will be constructed using modern materials capable of lasting beyond the 75-year design life requirement for new FDOT bridges.
- A fixed bridge is resoundingly the best financial investment for taxpayers. The initial construction cost, including design and construction saves approximately \$23.9 million compared to a new mid-level drawbridge. Over the 75-year life of the bridge, the fixed bridge also saves approximately \$11.2 million in operating and maintenance costs compared to the drawbridge. The \$35.1 million in savings can be used for additional improvements to the transportation system.
- Vehicles and boats will have improved traffic flow with a fixed bridge, which will eliminate congestion and delays exasperated by the bridge openings.
- The new bridge will be designed and constructed to modern standards that will improve the safety of the bridge and will include enhanced pedestrian and bicycle features, including two 10-foot sidewalks separated from the roadway by a traffic barrier, which will enhance safety and overall recreational opportunities.



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- Bridge replacement provides the opportunity for improved aesthetics. An aesthetics committee, comprised of community representatives and officials, will be convened similar to the process currently ongoing for the Anna Maria Island Bridge Replacement Project on State Road 64.
- Environmental effects are minimal and less than a drawbridge.
- The fixed bridge creates an open space along the waterfront, under the Cortez Village approach, that could support a variety of public uses including park-like amenities such as landscaping, benches, bicycle or kayak rentals, play area, dog park, or event space that could feature sports or other activities. It also provides an opportunity to connect the north and south sides of the Cortez Village Community with a roadway, sidewalks, and walkable public space under the new bridge where pedestrians will no longer have to compete with Cortez Road traffic.

Design is scheduled to begin later this year and the right of way phase is funded in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. Construction is not currently funded.

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