

## 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?

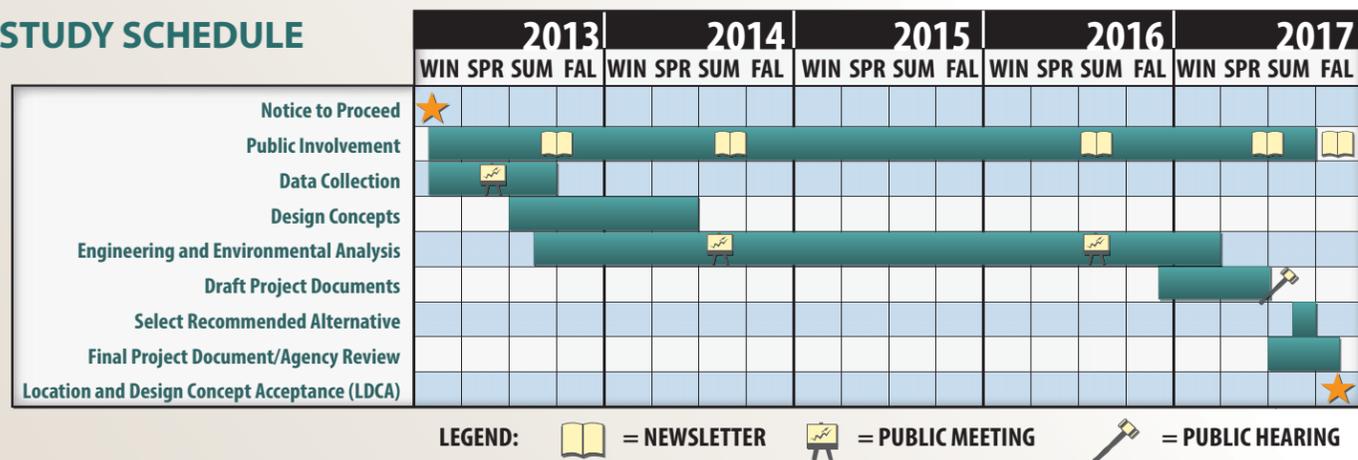
Following the public hearing and review of your comments, FDOT, with input from Manatee County, will select a recommended alternative and submit it for approval to the FDOT Office of Environmental Management.

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 June 2022.

## 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](http://www.CortezBridge.com)

## STUDY SCHEDULE



## 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.**

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 Comment forms available at [www.CortezBridge.com](http://www.CortezBridge.com)

**PD&E STUDY**  
**CORTEZ BRIDGE**  
 From SR 789 (Gulf Drive) to 123rd Street West

Financial Project Number: 430204-1-22-01

**Public Hearing Handout**      [www.CortezBridge.com](http://www.CortezBridge.com)      **August 31, 2017**

## WELCOME

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, welcomes you to the public hearing 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 the Cortez Bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

The public hearing begins as an open house at 5 p.m., with a formal presentation at 6 p.m., followed by a public oral comment period. You can complete a comment sheet today or take it home, complete it, and mail it to FDOT by September 12, 2017. You can also go to the study website [www.CortezBridge.com](http://www.CortezBridge.com) to state your preference by submitting a comment sheet. Your comments will assist the Department in determining the recommended alternative that will be submitted to FDOT's Office of Environmental Management for approval.

The proposed improvements consist of either the future repair or replacement of the Cortez Bridge on SR 684 in Manatee County. Replacement alternatives include a 35-foot vertical clearance drawbridge and a 65-foot fixed bridge within the existing corridor. A video presentation will explain the alternatives.

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.



## 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 the 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](http://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. Results from the August 2016 public meeting are summarized on the following page.

## ALTERNATIVES STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION

FDOT will present the two **Build** alternatives and the **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 the 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 meet 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 the 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 vessel 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.

### 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.)



### FDOT Right of Way Acquisition Process

One of the unavoidable consequences on a project such as this is the necessary relocation of families or businesses. **On this project, we do not anticipate the relocation of any families or businesses.**

All right-of-way acquisition will be conducted in accordance with Florida Statute 339.09 and the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, commonly known as the Uniform Act.

If you are required to make any type of move as a result of a Department of Transportation project, you can expect to be treated in a fair and helpful manner and in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act.

If a move is required, you will be contacted by an appraiser who will inspect your property. We encourage you to be present during the inspection and provide information about the value of your property.

You may also be eligible for relocation advisory services and payment benefits. If you are being moved and you are unsatisfied with the Department's determination of your eligibility for payment or the amount of that payment, you may appeal that determination. You will be promptly furnished necessary forms and notified of the procedures to be followed in making that appeal.

**A special word of caution - if you move before you receive notification of the relocation benefits that you might be entitled to, your benefits may be jeopardized.**

The right of way specialists who are supervising this program are here tonight and will be happy to answer your questions.

## 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, vessel impact and storm surge
- 10-ft sidewalks accommodate pedestrians, fishermen, bicyclists
- Additional 10 feet 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 feet
- Greatest visual impacts relative to existing bridge height
- Access changes
- Seagrass impacts
- Utility impacts
- Proximity of bridge to condominium

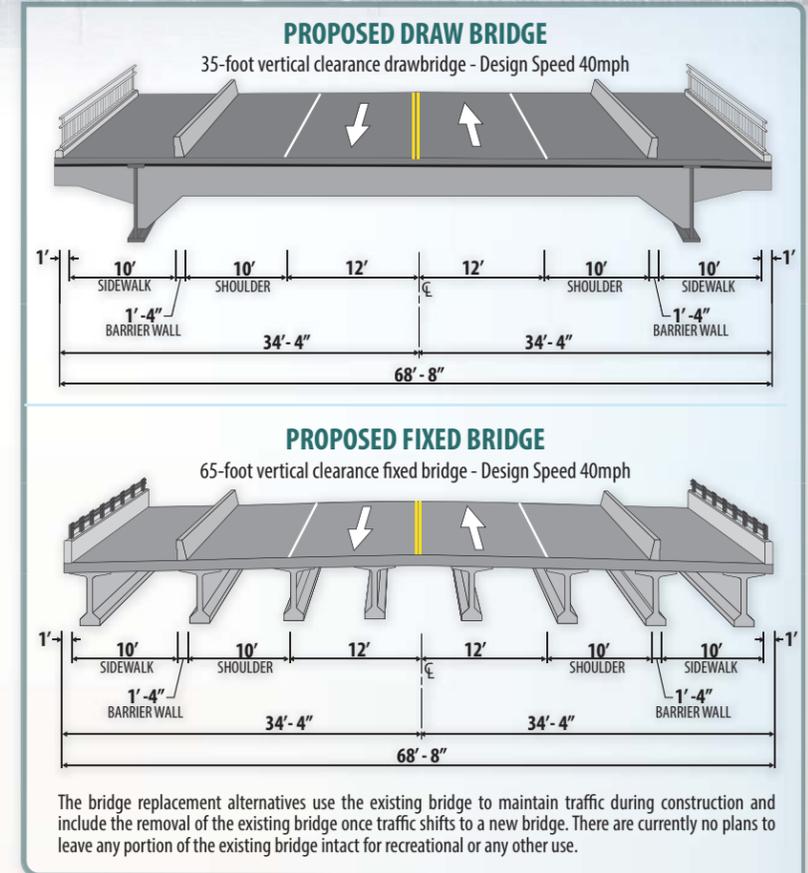
## Mid-Level Draw Bridge Alternative

### 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 feet 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
- 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 feet between fenders
- Does not prevent need to restrict heavy vehicles
- No aesthetic improvements