



Project Advisory Group Meeting No. 5

Date: Tuesday, May 9, 2017

Time: 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Location: Miami Dade College
InterAmerican Campus
627 SW 27th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33135

Attendees: See Attendee Comments and Concerns, Action Items and Sign-in Sheets at the end of this document

MEETING RESULTS

ATTENDEE COMMENTS AND CONCERNS:

- Would like a clear definition of where we are in the alternatives process:
 - Are these the only five alternatives that will be evaluated further?
 - Are we comparing them now or are we building them out?
 - Is there still an opportunity to develop a new or additional alternative(s)?
 - Can there be a different alternative on SW 8th Street than there is on SW 7th Street? The needs are different.
- Would like a better understanding of the purpose of the PAG and what the role of the members should be.
- There have been concerns about the way the PAG meetings have been “set up.” Members of the group like the U-shape arrangement so everyone can be heard equally.
- Requested meeting materials, such as a more detailed agenda and copies of the presentation, etc., prior to the meetings so they could review them in advance. They have also requested a list of the PAG members.
- Would like to know who has been attending the meetings and whether or not they are actually PAG members.
- Would like to know about “lessons learned” on other projects (what has worked and what hasn’t) and what the FDOT will do differently to make sure this project is successful. Would also like to see pictures or examples of what has been done in other areas of the country.
- Would like to know more about the impacts each of the alternatives would have on local businesses.
- There are concerns about the tourist buses blocking traffic on SW 8th Street.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Finalize the traffic numbers to present an accurate estimate of potential impacts for each of the alternatives.

- Distribute the agenda and presentation to the PAG members before the meeting, to give them an opportunity for review. Also, post the meeting materials on the project website prior to the PAG meetings.
- Prepare renderings to show the traffic impacts to compare the alternatives. Traffic impacts at certain intersections will also be prepared.
- Review the potential for a two-lane, one-way alternative. Take out one travel lane and put in a bicycle lane.
- Have table tents available for all PAG members.

MEETING SUMMARY

State Representative David Richardson opened the meeting with brief introductions.

Rep. Richardson:

Thanks for coming. Let's do a brief introduction. My name is David Richardson. I am the state representative for District 113 that includes all of Miami Beach, Downtown Miami, North Bay Village and where we are sitting right now. If you walk across the street, it is someone else's district. But this portion is in District 113. I appreciate everyone being here. With that, I will ask the senator to introduce himself.



Sen. Jose Javier Rodriguez:

Hi everybody. I am Senator Jose Javier Rodriguez of District 37. I don't live too far away from here, in Shenandoah. I knew a lot of you before I got into office. Thank you to Representative Richardson, to the secretary and his staff who have been very available to us, and to all of you who have been on the Project Advisory Group (PAG) or are otherwise involved. None of you get paid for this; you just care about your neighbors and your neighborhoods, so thank you for what you are doing.

FDOT District Six Secretary James Wolfe:

Hi. I'm Jim Wolfe, District Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and I want to thank you for being here. I know you are on your own time and that you care about your communities. Thank you for being here.

Rep. Richardson:

The goal of this meeting is to let everyone have a free and flowing dialogue. One of the things most important to me is that we have ample opportunity for the community to participate in the dialogue for this project. As many of you know, I was heavily involved with the Alton Road project in Miami Beach. I would say that this secretary was not there, and I'm not going to blame it on any secretary, but I would just say that the public did not become as involved as perhaps they should have until the bulldozers were on the street.

I want very much to avoid that situation from happening here. I can promise you that whatever the final product will be, not everyone is going to be 100 percent happy with it. But what we want is to have an opportunity for everyone to have their say and go from there. With that, I'm going to turn it over to you, Mr. Secretary, and let you conduct the meeting.

Sec. Wolfe: Very good. I will immediately turn it over to our project manager so that she can conduct the meeting.

Bao-Ying Wang, P.E., Project Manager:

Thank you very much to Representative Richardson for agreeing to this meeting. We are going to present to you a project status and then we will open it up for questions.

Vilma Croft, P.E., Consultant Project Manager:

We have now received the 2015 crash data and are looking at the predominant types of crashes and the factors that may have contributed to those crashes, so we can evaluate solutions to improve safety along the corridor. We have completed the traffic analysis for the existing conditions, and we will be starting the analysis for build alternatives which we will discuss later on in the presentation. We can now define the alternatives to be evaluated and we will discuss those shortly.

We understand the community's desires for wider sidewalks, parking, bike lanes, and transit-only lanes, as well as safety improvements. There are constraints in this corridor, including the state's Historic Highway Designation, which limits the types of improvements that can be done and which may require a change in the historic designation. Right of way is very limited, and all of the build alternatives being evaluated along both 7th Street and 8th street stay within the existing right of way. Minor right of way acquisition is being considered at the I-95 interchange.

The alternatives being evaluated include a no-build, transportation systems management and operations (TSM&O), and five build alternatives. The no-build alternative maintains the existing lane configuration on both 7th and 8th Street. It means no expenditure of funds, so there will be no impacts to maintenance of traffic or the environment. However, there will be no safety improvements or improvements to the multimodal level of service. This alternative remains a viable option throughout the life of the project.

The transportation systems management and operations also maintains the existing three lanes on both 7th and 8th streets, and it includes minor safety improvements or traffic operations improvements. Some of the improvements that can be expected with the TSM&O alternative include new signalization elements such as controllers, cabinets and cameras. We will also be evaluating adaptive signal controls and transit information systems.

The build alternatives include Alternative 1, which is a two-way / two-lane alternative. It converts both SW 7th and SW 8th streets to two-way traffic. You have one lane in each

direction with a dual-turn lane in the center of the roadway. This alternative maintains the existing pavement width, existing sidewalks and parking. It also includes improvements at I-95. This alternative may require changes in the historic designation.

Build Alternative 2 is a two-lane / two-way, plus transit configuration. This alternative also converts both SW 7th and SW 8th streets to two-way traffic, again one lane in each direction. However, the third lane is converted to a transit-only lane. It also maintains the existing pavement width, sidewalks and parking. It includes improvements at I-95 and may also require a change in the historical designation.

Alternative 2A is very similar. Again, there is one lane in each direction. However, the third lane would be a bike lane. The existing travel lanes....Yes? *(Speaker pauses to acknowledge an attendee who wishes to speak.)*

Question: Are we going to be doing this today? Because this is not what we thought we would do.

Comment: What we are doing right now is looking at the alternatives that have already been put on the table. They would not necessarily be the best alternatives at the end of the day, but she's just going over what's on the table right now.



Comment: Can I ask a process question? I think what would be helpful, at least for me to know, is where we are on the five alternatives that are on the table. Part of the advisory committee role is to assist the consultant or the department to try to figure out what other alternatives there might be. So, we are not yet comparing the alternatives, we are sort of building them out. There are others, but these are the ones that are there so far, is that accurate? Because there's one stage to present what the alternatives are and another to start comparing them. So, where are we? Are we on the first stage with these are five alternatives, but there may be others that the PAG can help develop? Or, are these are the only five and we have to evaluate them? Can you clarify where we are in the process?

Vilma Croft: To answer your questions, yes, we've identified five build alternatives. However, if there are other alternatives that the group would like to evaluate, then we could add additional alternatives for evaluation.

Comment: The fact that there are five alternatives on the table now – it's not closed, is it? There could be others?

Ms. Wang: There could be others, but that would be more like a locally recommended or locally preferred alternative. In order to include that as part of the study, we would like to have a city resolution or some sort of local support.

Question: Do you mean, that if we were to come up with another alternative, it would need to include the involvement of the local government?

Ms. Wang: Exactly.

Comment: Forgive me, but I thought this meeting was to discuss the situation we have been going through. We feel that all this time we have been spoken to. This has not been the set-up that we have had up to now. We've had the chairs across so we were sitting like school children, and, honestly, a lot of us -- you can see the heads nodding yes -- have felt that we were being spoken to as third graders, and we feel that is very disrespectful. We feel that we have not been given an opportunity to speak. We have been very dissatisfied with the treatment of this team to the point where a letter was written requesting that you look into replacing the team. This is an extreme position that we have not taken lightly.

It takes a lot to take a group of involved citizens like this to that level of frustration. I understood that this meeting was to clear the water, to speak out, to repair that situation and to move forward. Now this is a very nice set-up. A lot of pictures have been taken while we are sitting here and that's very fine and dandy. No pictures were taken up to this point, and now it's going to reflect very nicely, but I would like to see how we are going to move forward with the current situation. We are not children. We need to be addressed like the citizens that we are.

Sec. Wolfe: I get your point, and I hope that from this point forward we are going to be interactive and get you involved. I think that today we can show you what we have on the table, and then we can open up an interactive phase where we can have a discussion and perhaps revise where we are.

Rep. Richardson:

Yes, I think that is exactly what I would like to do. Just let her briefly go through these alternatives, and then let's open it up. I want everybody to have their say. We will talk then. Nothing is off the table. If you want to talk about the team or talk about the alternatives, or if you want to talk about your representative or your senator, we can talk about anything. And, by the way, I forgot to thank you, Dr. Bashford, for hosting us. Thank you. So, let's just quickly go through the last couple of alternatives and then we will get to the next part.

Vilma Croft: This is the two-lane / two-way, plus a bike lane alternative. It is one lane in each direction, and the third lane is converted into a bicycle lane. This alternative gives us the option to widen the sidewalk. This alternative also makes improvements to the I-95 interchange and it may also require a change in the historic designation.

Alternative 3 is a two-lane / one-way alternative that maintains the existing one-way configuration on both 7th and 8th streets. However, it takes one of the travel lanes and converts it to a bike lane. You have four additional feet and the opportunity to widen the sidewalk, so it narrows the pavement width on both 7th and 8th streets by 4 feet. It also includes improvements on I-95 and it may also require a change in the historic designation.

Alternative 4 maintains the three-lane / one-way configuration for both 7th and 8th streets. It maintains the existing pavement width, existing sidewalks and parking. However, the

difference between this alternative and no build is that this one includes improvements on I-95. The improvements to I-95 are very similar, and they depend on the alternatives that are selected for the arterial. Both Alternatives 1 and 2 have a similar configuration for I-95.

Rep. Richardson:

Let's stop there, because now we are getting into details about I-95. Let me just ask in this stage of the review phase, what is the scheduled time frame? Where would we normally finish this phase if we stay on the current schedule?

Vilma Croft:

On this schedule, we are looking to finalize the alternative analysis in the summer and hold the Alternatives Public Workshop in September. Shortly after that, we will select a preferred alternative, hold a public hearing at the beginning of the year (2018), to finish the study in May.

Rep. Richardson:

What will be at the end of August? You said you wanted to do something in September?

Vilma Croft:

September will be the Alternatives Public Workshop.

Rep Richardson:

Let's stop there. Let's talk now about the letter. Who wants to speak about the letter? Yes, how are you doing? (*Acknowledging an attendee*)

Comment:

I'm doing great. My name is Michael Roman. Let me just say that this room has never been set up like this. The sign-in sheets, the name cards -- none of this has ever been done. A request from many advisory group members is that we would like a more thorough agenda or supplemental agenda information such as an actual agenda packet. Now, some of these things may sound very small to some people, but to some people they really do matter. Can we have a list of the advisory group members, for example? The current ones who are attending these meetings and maybe an attendance sheet of how often they are attending? I mean, just because their name is on the list they cannot play the same role as the advisory group members that have been here meeting after meeting.

Some of these administrative things have not been taken care of. Also, I think that one of the main things is that when we are looking at these build alternatives, you have a group of invested business owners and residents, and there are a bunch of different dynamics at this table. We all know that we are not going to want the same thing. But through the process, a lot of the same questions keep coming up. Recently, there's been a lot going on in the Flagler corridor, so a lot of the members have expressed that we want to make sure we are minimizing some of the same things here that are happening with Flagler. And, although Flagler is a completely different project, it's beneficial to us to understand what lessons have been learned. What is FDOT going to do differently? Many times when we bring



up issues with the Flagler project, we are told that this is completely different and it is pushed away. We know it's different, but it's only blocks away from 7th and 8th Street so they really impact each other. Having that knowledge, having the consultant team for the Flagler project come here, or inviting this advisory group to their meetings, could help us cross-reference and see what we can do differently here and what we can do better.

As we were going through a lot of these build alternatives, some of the questions have been to help us decide what build alternative we want. What impact would they have on businesses? Although you may not know 100 percent, we want to know what the impact would be -- what has worked and what has not worked. We want to have this information so we can come up with the best build alternatives. A lot of these pieces have been missing. I'll leave the floor to somebody else. I just wanted to lay that foundation as far as an overview of the frustrations of the members.

Comment: During the last meeting, when Vilma said, "I could be at home right now," to me that was the last straw. I've been coming here, and I have to say I really appreciate what you did in Miami Beach and have wanted to say that. To me, it's about respect. I own a business on 8th Street and I live two blocks away. Whatever you do on 7th and 8th is going to affect me the same way that Flagler affects me when I see seniors falling on the rocks in Flagler because the sidewalks are not there; not even the one that, according to your regulations, should be there.

It is hard for us to understand when the team that we have is supposed to be the ones guiding us. When we say we want something, you are supposed to give us information, but you just say "no" you have to wait until we have more information. This is not Tampa, this is not Orlando, this is 8th Street and this is Miami. And if the people here are not going to tell you what we want to have, then who is going to tell you? The people from Tallahassee that don't know our neighborhood? To me that is really serious.

Sen. Rodriguez: I just want to say, thank you for sticking with it. The fact that you are here means that you are interested in constructively figuring this out. I have a question, and it's just through an observation by listening to you. I think part of your frustration is not knowing what your role is as an advisory group. Also, part of your frustration is that if you conceive of your role as just trying to give an opinion as to an alternative, and you say, "This is how it would impact a business," or "A parking lane is better than a bike lane," then you are not getting the information you need. I am not a technician, I'm not an engineer, and I suspect that there are two core things that, from the outset, were not clear. One is about what your role is and the other is what you are supposed to do. If you're filling in the blanks and you're saying, well I'm supposed to look at an alternative just to give an opinion as to which one is better, the sense is that you're not getting the information you need and that can be frustrating. Is that accurate? Is that part of the frustration? You're being tasked and you're giving time and you're being asked to weigh-in, but you don't know exactly what you are supposed to do?

Comment: My name is Miguel Soliman, and I am not here in a political capacity, but I am running for commissioner of this district. I am terrified as a resident. I am terrified of losing Calle Ocho, of losing all the businesses. What's happened with Flagler, I think, has been extremely irresponsible. Flagler has been demolished from day one, from the river to 27th Avenue in one

shot. You drive by sections of eight or 10 blocks, and for weeks nothing happens. They start on a street, they close it, and for days you don't see anything happening. You've got two lanes on Flagler, and they close one lane or a partial area, and you say, they're going to do some work, and nothing happens for weeks. It's reduced to one lane and nothing happens. You do that to us on 8th Street, and you will destroy our city. You have already destroyed Flagler, and this may be a different project, but you will destroy our city. No one comes from FDOT to give us any kind of report. I don't see any meetings going on; your contractor does whatever he wants. I've done streets like Flagler in six months.

Rep. Richardson:

Let me do this because I think your comment is very fair. I've driven the district as well. I think what the senator and I can commit to you is we are going to get an answer, and we will have a meeting to discuss that issue. The senator and I have been in Tallahassee. We are back now. Let's try to find out what has happened on Flagler. I share your concerns. I've driven it and I've seen weeks where nothing has happened. So I promise you that I will follow up with the secretary. I commit that to you. Is that okay? But what I don't want to do is distract from this project. I want to make sure we are going to talk about how we are going to get everybody's voice heard either today or down the road on a fifth or sixth alternative, or to have your input about the alternatives we already have.

Comment:

I need to follow up on something. The impact on businesses has to be taken as a factor in the evaluation of this project. You have to look at what is happening to the businesses on Flagler; they're going under. They're bankrupt. They're closing shop, and the way that things are now in the general economic climate is that we have a lot of competition out there. You cannot compete with others if you can't get people to a business. That's a major problem with businesses that could be affected by any project on 8th Street.

I've spoken before in prior meetings. There are two streets, 7th Street and 8th Street. 8th is primarily a business street; 7th is not. There has to be another alternative where you fix 7th Street and not 8th Street, or do something less on 8th Street while doing more on 7th Street. For example, on 7th Street there is no parking, and there has to be some sort of buffer between the people that are on the sidewalk and those big cars that could make them fall. We need something to buffer those pedestrians on 7th Street. 8th Street has parking and sidewalks, so what goes on 7th Street does not necessarily have to go on 8th and vice versa. I would like to see an alternative that includes that option.

The impact to businesses is really something that I want to see, because you have a lot of new businesses opening up on 8th Street. For example, there's a business on 12th Street that's opening up. But when you have a project like this where you don't know what the ramifications are, you're going to have those businesses closing.

Sec. Wolfe:

If I can interject here. I certainly hear the concerns about construction impacts on Flagler and the projection that another disaster awaits us if we get the same kind of project on 7th and 8th Streets and, certainly, we need to delve into that and make sure that is not repeated. In fact, it may be that your conclusion is that we should not do a project on 7th and 8th Streets. I hope we can come up with a solution. But this is an issue that is beyond us at this point. We are trying to determine the alternatives that we should analyze and move forward with. At this

point, we don't even know if there is going to be a project; no-build is a viable alternative. We are not really at a point where we can say this is how we are going to build it because we don't know what we are going to build.

I promise you, we hear about Flagler. We are going to have that meeting the representative talked about; deal with the Flagler construction issues and learn something from that. And, when we get to the appropriate point that we know what our project is on 7th and 8th Streets, we need to devise a reasonable plan to get there. Flagler is a complete rebuild. I don't know that this will be a complete rebuild. Do we know that? What's the condition of the utilities?

Vilma Croft: Right now we do not anticipate a complete reconstruction.

Sec. Wolfe: If we do a milling and resurfacing, and new pavement and pavement markings, a lot of work happens at night, and it's not Flagler all over again. It depends on which alternative we pick. If we pick options that move the curb and gutter, that's more complicated. One of the aspects that we can delve into in the evaluation of alternatives is how it will be built. We can evaluate the impacts. We can do that analysis. But right now, in this project, we are at a point where we need feedback from you. Are we proposing to study the correct alternative?

Comment: There is one alternative which I do not see, which is leave to 8th Street the same and fix 7th Street. That's an alternative that has been proposed in the past.

Comment: I do want to answer one question with something that was mentioned a while back. One of our biggest obstacles is knowing our specific role with this group. I believe we all think of ourselves as advisors to help move this process along. But when we have recommended other build alternatives to look into – such as, maybe we should not look at 8th Street and 7th Street the same -- a lot of the answers are, "This is not part of what was studied and we cannot explore that." I'll give an example. When we were looking at one of the build alternatives we asked if we could have two lanes one way on 8th Street and two lanes one way on 7th Street. Then we went back and forth until it became a build alternative. But in the very beginning we were told "That's not one of the build alternatives" and that's it.



You are having two lanes going east and two lanes going west. Why can't we have two lanes going the same way on one street and the other the same? If you are looking at the flow of traffic, it's still flowing the traffic in the same amount. So why can't we look at that as a build alternative?

Sec. Wolfe: Aren't Alternatives 1 and 2 two-way traffic?

Comment: The three-lane / one-way alternative was one of them, and the other the two-lane / one-way. But, we wanted to explore the two-lane / one-way if that makes sense.

Sec. Wolfe: I'm sorry. Isn't that Alternative 2?

Comment: It is now. But it's the first time we've seen this.

Sec. Wolfe: Then the team must have listened.

Comment: Yes, I think we are glad that it's being heard now, but it hasn't been that way up until this point.

Sec. Wolfe: You probably think that because I'm FDOT with the others, and I am, but I don't work on this project on a daily basis. So, I've come to form my own opinion. The two-lane / one-way in each direction gives you extra room to do something with it, and it gives you some choice, and it's viable. It moves about two-thirds of the traffic of the current configuration, which is three lanes. That's an option so you can look at what you could do with the freed-up space.

The alternatives that are two-way traffic on each of the streets, the typical section does not tell you what happens at the intersections, and we all know how intersections work. They have left-turn lanes. If you don't have left-turn lanes and you have two-way traffic, the left turning vehicle stops everybody else. So you probably can't have left turns where there isn't a signal and, at the signals, you would either have to develop left-turn lanes in each direction or you would have to develop something called split phasing.

You're accustomed to the three-lane traffic going each way at the same time. If you have left turns mixed in, you can't do that; it would just stop the whole intersection. You would have eastbound traffic going left and through, and westbound going left and through, and it's very inefficient. What's going to happen is that all of the traffic numbers will be run and they're going to show these deficiencies in Alternatives 1 and 2, so I'm not saying don't analyze those, but I'm trying to give you a sneak peek at what's going to come out of the evaluation when they lay it out and show how intersections work or in fact don't work. So, I'm a little concerned about investing time on two alternatives that are going to fail.

Comment: A few years ago, 8th Street was two-way. Obviously, it did not work. It was changed back to one single way. So, can you give us some reasons why it did not work, because we don't want to waste our time? If that's on record, then provide us with that information and we will see that and we will discard those options. Everything has been, "No, we cannot get that information."

Comment: I think we all came to the table to try to help, and what you said right now is the type of feedback a lot of people in the room would really benefit from. You have a lot of people that are professionals and they have experience and they know that there is a wealth of opportunity and options here that we could be discussing. Whereas, the project managers of the group, which probably have some insights, are trying to shut us down, or at least that's the perception. We've been kind of steered not to come up with many ideas. But at the same time, laymen like myself, or just residents and merchants, would love to get the insight as to why a whole plethora of options may not be viable; just to guide us to really have the right ideas to invest in. So I think that the way you just treated this group in just exploring one little option is the type of feedback that would be greatly appreciated and would actually help the process here.

Comment: I would like to say thank you for setting this up this way. It's the first time that we've ever had this set-up and it's very helpful because we can have an honest conversation. Up until now, we haven't even had the slides in advance. It is my understanding we are an advisory group and we are supposed to advise. We come here with the intent to advise, but we are being set up not to be able to advise because we don't have information. Even if some of us are in the profession – I tried to follow the explanation that Secretary Wolfe had -- but I did not get it completely and I'm a professional. So you can imagine how the rest of the group feels.

In my experience, in dealing with projects such as this, we always show examples. There was a quote in the *Miami Today* and where they were talking about Copenhagen. We would love to see the pictures and have you show us why it would not work on Calle Ocho, if it applies. I recently came back from New York and they have some incredible new sections that deal with the pedestrians, the bicycles and the cars, and they have parking and down the same street. We could also look at options like that. But, during the last meeting we had, we are looking at "Streetmix" which is an application that shows how a street works in a section. We were being fed a solution for the whole of Calle Ocho without considering that Calle Ocho changes.

I believe we are here to offer advice. But, it would be very beneficial to the whole group, especially those that are residents that have never dealt with a project like this before, to see examples that are not just "This is what it could look like." But, also show us why it would not work because it does not have a turn lane. Two-way doesn't work because of A, B, C and D, and then start discarding some of these, but with more information. Information also about the economic impact with some of the alternatives being proposed because people are worried.

Sec. Wolfe: I'll tell you that it does not matter to me if we need to spend more time to get more interaction at this important phase of the project. We would just need to revise the schedule and add more meetings. I do think that it could be more constructive. I think one of the issues is that you're being shown typical sections -- this is what this slide of the road typically looks like. You're not seeing what we call a planned shape where you're looking down at it, you see a road, you see an intersection and, in fact, when you go along the project and you see a typical section the result is not the same in every block. Some places you have 55 feet of right of way width to work with, and some other places you have 80 feet. What do you do with those extra 25 feet? Some blocks look a lot different. How would that typical section get treated at the intersections? Until you start seeing some planned shapes, I know you don't get the picture.

Comment: They just need to be examples of what they would look like. At this stage, we are just looking at pretty drawings to try to convince us. I don't necessarily want your consultant to spend days engineering the intersections. Just show us good photos of what this street could look like. This is one of the most historic streets that we have in Miami, so I don't think anyone here wants a no-build. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't want a no-build. I want a better Calle Ocho that serves us all. But for that, we need your consultant to bring us what the options would look like.

Comment: I do appreciate, Secretary, your willingness to spend more time if it's necessary so that we can give our input. One thing we have stated many times is that this is a unique corridor. We can break the mold a little bit. We can spend more time; we can do things differently with this

project. I've heard from people that know a little bit of your background and they have said you want to make Miami better; you want to break the mold; you want to make streets that are elevated for the city. I think one of the greater arguments that we have is that we don't have to follow the process as usual, we can step outside of that box.

When they were doing the (Level of Service) grading system, one of the things that popped out to everybody is that for SW 7th Street, pedestrians were rated as a C and cars were rated as an F. Anybody that has walked along 7th Street knows there are no pedestrian crosswalks. Crossing is extremely dangerous so how are cars on that corridor more at danger than pedestrians? That's one thing we could not understand. How can FDOT, doing this study, give pedestrians a C and cars an F? That added a weird taste in our mouths. We thought there is something wrong with this process, and there was no evidence-based answer to explain why.

Rep. Richardson:

Let me speak to that because I think it's a really valid point and it's worth highlighting again. I have been doing this for about five years with the FDOT, so I have been involved in a number of projects. FDOT has a process. It's a little bit, forgive me, like a cookbook, and for most projects it works. I get very few complaints about most projects in the districts because there are not a lot of business, and there's not a great amount of interest, so that cookbook approach works. But it's clear that this is unique and that approach is going to have to be tweaked. The same thing happened in Miami Beach, except that this did not happen until the bulldozers were on the street. That was my frustration. I was dealing with it when we were mobilized. There was no group like this. That is why the Senator and I wanted to have a group where we have public input, because I don't want to repeat that experience.



This is a unique project because of the business mix, the community and the historic nature of it. We have to treat it differently than we would with the cookbook approach, which, quite frankly, in my experience has worked 95 percent of the time. I think the most important thing that I have heard is your willingness to alter the schedule if we need to because that is important to me. We want to get this right. Not everyone is going to be happy when we are finished, but I want everybody to have the input. We are committed to doing that. Go ahead Senator.

Sen. Rodriguez:

Yes, I appreciate that as well. One of the things I want to ask is what the PAG can expect from the FDOT going forward. You may need to engage -- or maybe you already have someone on the staff -- to facilitate or engage the people in the process so the people can say what they need. Someone who could help walk us through these options if we happen to hit a road block. Could you maybe give some thought as to what the expectations are going forward and, specifically, find a facilitator?

Comment: I have served on a number of committees for a number of decades and this is the first time ever, in my experience, I have come to a meeting with a one-page agenda and nothing in advance. I think that since November I have been requesting a list of who is on the PAG and I was told it was a violation of FDOT policy because it was a privacy issue and I could not have it. The Senator’s staff was at least kind enough to give us a list of people that he had appointed, and so we finally, this week, did get a list, but we don’t know who has come to each meeting.

The bottom line is that it takes me longer to get here than we have a meeting. I have been watching and listening and, like Juan, have been to about 50 countries in the world and I’ve seen the approaches that we have not been presented. But the thing that bothers me the most is that I’m getting the perception that what we are being asked to do is to figure out a more efficient driveway so that we can get people in and out of Brickell. I think that what has been presented is the fact that they want to create a servitude on Calle Ocho and 7th Street so we are basically subservient to the increased density on Brickell, and that what we are presented is a way to get traffic to move faster.

Sec. Wolfe: I really don’t understand that comment. There are no alternatives that move more traffic than the no-build, so we are not out there to move more traffic. That’s not what this project is about.

Comment: That has not been said and that’s the perception, is it not? The National Historic Preservation just designated Little Havana as a national treasure. It is the number two tourist destination in Miami-Dade County. The thing we are concerned about is that there are examples from all over the world on how you deal with tourist destinations. But when we talk about that; when I say that Brickell has a responsibility in all of this, because if they would just time-shift when they start and end work it would be good. It is really not appropriate to indenture the impact on Calle Ocho and 7th Street for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. That’s not what we should be doing to Calle Ocho.

It should come with an agreement that they have got to do something about the continued density that’s going to create more traffic. The same way you keep widening I-95 and the local government just keeps increasing the density so you have a no-win situation.

Something different has to be done for 8th Street. Every block is different. We come here and we are committed to figuring out what it takes. Calle Ocho is this national treasure, but before 1959 it was nothing like it is, and it has become a revenue generator, a tourist attraction. It is not like any other project. So how do we recognize this? In every other city in the world where there is a tourist attraction they find a way to park the buses. They don’t park them on the street. So, there are other things that have to be brought into this mix.

Comment: You mentioned Brickell, but the only representative from the Brickell area is the Downtown Development Authority. I’ve mentioned in every single meeting that there should be additional representatives from the Brickell area. There are multiple associations there and all these people have an opinion about 7th Street and 8th Street as well, and how it is different in Brickell than on the other side of I-95. To not even have them at the table, especially after suggesting at every meeting that they be invited... I mean you’re going to wait for the moment when the bulldozers hit the ground and then you’ll have the “Brickellites” up in arms as well.

Vilma Croft: We have invited them from the beginning, but they have not attended the meetings. They are on the list.

Rep. Richardson:

I have to say, before I ever got elected I went to public meetings on the Alton Road Project, and few people would show up. And then when the bulldozers showed up, that is when people got excited and that's what we want to avoid. Let's take a few more comments and then figure out where we are going to go from here.

Comment: I'm very confused here, is this project going all the way to Brickell?

(Some say yes, others say no)

Question: So how is the traffic going to get better if we bottleneck 8th Street all the way to Brickell? I don't understand.

Comment: I agree with the secretary's point. The no-build is the fastest way to move traffic, so none of the other alternatives that are on the table right now would move traffic any faster. That's not the goal of the project.

Comment: Isn't Option 4 similar to what we have now?

Sec. Wolfe: Option 4 is similar to what we have now, but it improves the interchange at I-95.

Comment: If I may make a quick statement, it's not about moving traffic. It's about moving people. Once you start looking at a dedicated lane for transit, then you'll have more people moving down Calle Ocho.

Comment: I know for you, it is building the road. But if you lived next to 7th Street, you would not want more cars going back and forth. Unfortunately, we are waiting for those new signals that you were going to put up. You could actually go and press a button on the traffic light pole for a senior or anyone else to walk across. The ones that were put up two years ago were removed. It's inconvenient for traffic flow. Remember, you're actually talking about the people who live in this area, not just those who travel from east to west. Sometimes you forget that those who will be impacted the most are the people that actually live here. There's constantly traffic in front of my house.

Sec. Wolfe: We are not doing a project to move more traffic. That is not the intention of any of the alternatives.

Comment: I understand. But I want you to understand when we speak about things, it's because we actually cross 7th Street with our strollers, our bikes, our kids, and, sometimes, it takes a long time for anything to happen. When you actually did listen to us and put the little buttons for us to press, then you removed them. They are not there on 11th Street or 10th Street either. Most of the signals are gone. So when we don't have sidewalks and crosswalks, it is hard for most of us. When you mention any type of FDOT project, the only thing we think is that you want to shove everything down our throats. When we come here, we feel that you are not

listening to us. I worry because I have a 10-year-old and 16-year-old who works 2 blocks away from the house and says he's not taking the car. He crosses 7th Street and 8th Street, and guess what? There are no signals for him to cross. Unfortunately, that's the main road that people use from east to west and they don't drive at 30 miles an hour.

I'm not saying you want to move traffic, but if you look right here, you have students who need to cross between buildings. You can't cross without taking a risk you're going to be hit.

Comment: I'll try to be quick. My name is Dave Collins, I work with business improvement districts all over South Florida. I think no-build is not an option. Jorge is right about the fragile business district. People outside of retail always assume if a business is really good then it will survive. We have a very real opportunity to take a very fragile retail district that people love and end it with this project unless, Secretary Wolfe, you have solutions for that process. We need to protect these businesses while we are improving the street. The mediator idea is great; that's been talked about before. Nobody has reached out before and said yes. You could use a mediator because you are a really good committee, and we seem to have an extra chair. He might be standing by the door. That's Fausto. Fausto can do it (laugh). Collin Worth from the city has suggested that we look at the pedestrian priority district. I haven't heard anyone mention that and it's an extraordinary idea that's being used downtown by the City of Miami.

The lack of information, when it's requested from the consultants, is bothersome. All over America they are implementing amazing ideas and at least four of us at this table know what they are and they are categorically rejected by the consultant because that's not allowed by FDOT. But it's allowed in Seattle and San Francisco and L.A. I mean Los Angeles is doing it and we are not allowed to do it? Two more points: I've been at most meetings, and at one of the meetings a resident asked why the lights from 8th Street shine into the house. Then I drove through the street two or three times. You've got interstate highway lighting on Calle Ocho. It's 36 feet high. You've got maybe a dozen human scale street lights. I asked the consultants here if that was their responsibility and they said it was certainly within their area of concern. That could change the history of this place forever if you just put in what the rest of the world is doing in terms of street lights.

Finally, I wanted to let you in on a secret because I was amazed at the meeting. We had 20 to 26 people that went to an Advisory Group meeting at the NET office because we wanted to get together away from the consultants to figure out how we could go forward. The end result of that meeting was we agreed that there were going to be things each of us disagreed with as we brought something like a consensus forward, and that was okay with everybody in the room. So I think it would be a huge mistake not to recognize what a wonderful and constructive and equally informed group of people you have in the committee, not to mention the people that are sitting at the head of the table, not to mention the president of the college right in the middle of this group here.

Comment: Thank you Representative Richardson; thank you Senator. Secretary Wolfe. Thank you for being here and forgive my passion a little while ago. I know this is very preliminary, but there is a section of 8th Street around 14th, 15th or 16th Avenue where we get 2,500 tourists bused in daily. That's a lot of buses; that's a lot of traffic. Does that go into your study? Does that situation get accommodated into your project or design or model?

Sec. Wolfe: Special events are usually not included. The design is for normal daily traffic.

Comment: Then that is a problem.

Sec. Wolfe: What they have is average daily traffic, and if it is a daily event, it's in the daily traffic. But I don't think traffic drives this project. We're talking about reducing the capacity of this road to move traffic, so where is the traffic?

Comment: No, I'm not talking about traffic. I'm talking about how to accommodate these buses. I mean we are talking about lanes for bicycles, lanes for traffic, parking, but we have these huge buses and they're going to be there.

Rep. Richardson:

To that point, buses are a commercial activity, right? Has anyone explored -- since it's a commercial activity -- that maybe the bus owners need to be dealing with private property owners and seeing if there's space available to rent. I mean, it's a commercial activity so it's something we should consider because it's done in other cities.

Comment: The last time we did cultural Fridays, I had to call the police because there was a bus blocking one of the lanes. Talk about traffic impediment. There were people honking and people screaming, so even if you have the buses contact private property owners, the buses are still going to block a lane.

Rep. Richardson:

Well, unless there is enforcement. That's an issue that the City of Miami Beach had to deal with because it became an issue. Let me go to Michael because you were next.

Comment: Something simple Secretary Wolfe. I don't know when this would come in, but perhaps we can do some landscape isles, 5-foot-wide where the parking is, and since we have a problem also moving people, which I know is not your area, perhaps we could transfer the trees to pods in the parking area and that would free up our sidewalks.

Sec. Wolfe: I think that what's evolving here is that you're frustrated about the assignment to pick an alternative and you don't have enough data. But, in fact, the engineer is not going to produce the actual drawing and data until you get past this milestone of you picking an alternative. So I think that's part of the issue going on here. We'd like to give you more information, but we are still at the alternative selection stage. And what you're saying is very true; there are going to be many places where there's more right of way than normal, and we could do something with landscaping. But we are still looking at typical sections. Every single build alternative is going to have a landscape component. We are going to do it right and we're going to talk to our partners. This project is going to be a partnership. We are going to talk to the county, the city; we'll talk to anybody that wants to be involved in upgrading the facility, and, certainly, landscaping has to be part of that.

Sen. Rodriguez:

Again, looking at the clock, I think an important part of this evening was to talk about the letter, talk about the process going forward. Getting a lot of feedback in detail is helpful, but I just want to turn it over to you to see what you heard in this discussion, and, again, to talk about some next steps in terms of where we are.

Sec. Wolfe:

I thought of several things. There was the discussion about administrative issues and information sharing. Let's have a round or u-shaped table. Some of that progress already happened with this meeting. We need to get information out to you. We probably have a project website?

Ms. Wang:

Yes, we do.

Sec. Wolfe:

We need to post information on the website. Everything from these meetings will be readily available to you. I'll talk to the project team about how we are going to do that. Then we need to figure out if we are going to slow this process down now and have another informational meeting, or do we just say let's go with these options and get into the design and then workshop those designs as we move forward.

There are two different ways of doing it. We can slow down or we can move ahead to the next phase where we start producing some drawings. I could go either way with that, but I kind of think that I'm sensing some frustration where we are just giving you a typical slice of the road. We are not showing you specific locations where something could happen. I think in the next meeting, we have to come back with some drawings to say this is an intersection and this is how this alternative would deal with an intersection. Or, this is where we have some extra right of way and this is good for landscaping. Maybe we could walk down the corridor and look at alternatives and get some feedback. So, I think we can move forward with the alternatives analysis but still workshop them and, in fact, change our mind later if we need to. If we have the wrong alternatives and we find that out in three months, we'll fix it.

Rep. Richardson:

I think to the extent that anyone in the group has an alternative that they think is viable and is not on the table, the sooner we hear about it, the better. That way, the secretary can react to it. He can tell us immediately why he does not think it would work, or he can say that it's something we should look at. It seems to me that is something that's on the critical path.

Comment:

Hi I'm Katie. I'm the President of The Roads Home Association. I think where the PAG has come into some tension is that, for example, for me as a resident and with kids I would like to have less traffic, two lanes, a bike lane, and a more pedestrian friendly street. But I understand the concerns of the business owners that want more traffic coming through.

What we are not getting is what's going to happen when he says I want three lanes and I say I want two lanes. What does that mean? What's going to happen with those scenarios? We've asked that question, and we are not getting the data to say, for example, if we take a parking lane away, or if we add a bike lane or a bus lane, what would happen? We need the data so we can come up with a choice.

Sec. Wolfe: Our consultant is going to run calculations and give you specific numbers, but you know that two lanes versus three lanes is going to move two thirds of the traffic, and it's already congested today. This means it's going to be congested worse and some of the traffic will go elsewhere. That's what's going to happen and we are going to find out whether that's acceptable or not. In the alternatives with one lane going one way and the other lane going the other way, when the analysis comes back, maybe it's moving one third of the traffic that is currently moving and you can visualize what the impacts are. It becomes so bad that two thirds of the traffic goes somewhere else.

Question: So you're saying that if we pick a two-lane option, a third of that traffic will go somewhere else?

Sec. Wolfe: Yes, it will have to go somewhere else.

Comment: Well, that's a concern. I'm sorry, but I live next to you in Shenandoah and I'm three blocks from the epicenter of this area. If I lived right here, I would want it to be built out and really cool, but I would recognize that we have kids and all that traffic is going to go through our neighborhood.

Comment: We want to offer our guidance on these build alternatives, but we need to have the information to make educated decisions.

Sec. Wolfe: After you pick the alternatives, the engineers will start to run some numbers and they can give you that feedback. I think by reducing one lane in each direction you would have some space to make other decisions with viable options. But, ultimately, you have to make an informed decision that includes the traffic impacts. These are the things we will get out of the traffic numbers and, is that a tradeoff that we can support?

Comment: One thing that has not been mentioned that I would like to take a look at is, how is that thought going to play a role in mitigating the differences between business and residents? How can we come to a solution and a consensus versus you saying, "Okay you can't decide, so you don't get anything?" In other words, to say business owners want this and resident want that, how is FDOT going to be the middle man that bring us together in order to be successful?

Sec. Wolfe: I can tell you that your frustrations can be worked out to influence the project direction but, ultimately, we will go into a public hearing. That's where we advertise so anyone can come forward -- groups that are not here at the table -- and give their input. Then we will hear from the elected representatives in all levels of government and we will take all of that input together to ultimately make a decision.

Joe Pena, Miami Dade College:

Thank you for coming today and listening to our community. From a college perspective, we appreciate that we can play a role providing the platform for our community as well as for you, to have this exchange of ideas. I would also say from a vested interest perspective that we have many students crossing 7th Street as well, so there is concern along this corridor and we have ideas on how to get creative for our community and for our campus. One of the unique aspects of this one block area is that it's not so much FDOT driven but City of Miami driven,

and we are in conversations with the City of Miami to have them participate as well. At the appropriate time we would like to present our ideas and work with our community. But again, thank you for responding to our letters, for being here and for giving these folks an opportunity.

Sec. Wolfe: Please correct me if I'm wrong, but we have a range of alternatives. They've been laid out. Let's move forward as a team and analyze those. Get your workshop and the details of those alternatives together. If we are going in the wrong direction and there's an alternative that should be there -- take for instance Alternative 3, two lanes in one direction with a bike lane? Maybe it should be two lanes in one direction with a transit lane; you know -- tweak it a little bit. I just made that up. Or put some green space there instead of a bike lane. There are different ways to do it. Those minor revisions can be incorporated, but it allows us to move forward into the calculation phase where we do this from an engineering standpoint and bring it back to you.

Question: Could you be at other meetings so that you can explain like you did for Katie, for example. Explaining some of the concerns that I've expressed in the past with the businesses, what they are saying that if we reduce one lane you're going to have that overflow within the residential areas. So could you?

Sec. Wolfe: I'll come to your next meetings.

Senator Rodriguez:

Just to close out, thank you, once again, to all of you; to Miami Dade College, Secretary Wolfe, to Representative Richardson, for being engaged in this. I look forward to moving this project forward.

Rep. Richardson:

You have the commitment of both Senator Rodriguez and myself that everyone is going to be involved, everyone will be heard. No one will be 100 percent happy, but everyone will be heard. Thank you all.

END OF MEETING SUMMARY

This meeting summary is not a word-for-word transcript; it is a summary of the comments. If you feel that clarifications are necessary, or if this differs from your understanding, please notify Eileen LaSeur by telephone at 407-883-8257 or by email at eileen.laseur@qcausa.com within five (5) working days upon receipt of this summary.



SR 90/SW 7th Street/SW 8th Street PD&E Study from SR 5/US 1/Brickell Avenue to SR 9/SW 27th Avenue
 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study, Miami-Dade County, Florida
 Financial Project ID No.: 432639-6-22-01, ETDM No.: 14230, FAP No.: 0202 054P



PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING - May 9, 2017 - SIGN-IN SHEET / HOJA DE FIRMAS

Name / Nombre	Affiliation / Conexión or Initial	Address / Dirección	Email / El Correo Electrónico	Phone / Teléfono	How Did You Find Out About This Meeting? Cómo se enteró de esta reunión?
Senator Jose Javier Rodriguez	<i>JJR</i>				
Representative David Richardson	<i>DR</i>				
Secretary Jim Wolfe					
FDOT PM Bao-Ying Wang	<i>BW</i>				
Consultant PM Vilma Croft	<i>VCroft</i>		VCROFT@HNTB.COM		
Carlos A. Alba	HNTB		calba@HNTB.com		
Eileen LaScur	OCA		eileen.lascuro@pcausa.com		
HONG BEUTZ	FDOT		hong.beutz@dot.state.fl.us		
Luis F. Callejas	FDOT		Luis.Callejas@myfloridahouse.gov		
Steve Winkler	neighbor		steve@plushvac.com		
JOSE MONTEZ	McDONNELL				
LAURIE Fucini-Joi	VHP		laurie@urbanhs.com	3059706544	Michael
Joanne Barnford	MDC		on file	305-237-6776	
JAME LOPEZ	RS&H/rdo		Jame.Lopez@rsandh.com	7/388-0234	
Joseph Eisenberg	City of Miami		JEisenberg@miamigov.com	3/416-1409	



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Katie Gant	President of Roads HOA.	120 SW 19 th Rd. Miami 33129	gant.katie@gmail.com		PAG
Raissa Fernandez	Residents + Business Owners	1020 SW 7 St #9 Miami, FL 33130	Rfern007@Fiu.edu	786 2554664	PAG
Frank Schindler		P.O. Box 11339 Fort Lauderdale FL 33329	schindlerfrank@earthlink.net	754-567-3929	PAG
Alex Andrews	Brickell Motors	665 SW 8 th St	alexandrews.com	305-951-7408	
Mate Okoge	INTEB	8202 W Florida St Miami, FL 33127	mokoge@hnrto.com	305-272-1453	
Gillon Worth	City of Miami	444 SW 2 nd Ave SE FL Transportation	CWORTH@Miami.gov	305-416-1022	PAG
Tracy Betancourt	Miami DDA				
Barbara Culhane	FDOT		barbara.culhane@dot.state.fl.us	305-470-5231	
Carlo Fashimank	Parti	1170 NW 8 th St	CFM@fashimank.com		
David Henderson	TPO	111 NW 15 th St Miami 33128	dhenderson@miamidademp.org	305-525-1667	PAG
Miguel Soliman		1436 SW. 6 ST.	MIGUELSOLIMAN@gmail.com	306-9454 (786) 253-1310	
BRENDA BETANCOURT		1436 SW. 6 ST	BRENDA1BETANCOURT@gmail.com	(786) 523-1310	
Isabel Gonzales	QCA				



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Tish Burgher	FDOT	1000 NW 111 Ave Miami FL	tish.burgher@dot.state.fl.us	305.410.5224	
Michael J. Roman	City of Miami	444 SW 2 Ave 5th Flr Miami, FL 33130	mroman@miamigo.com	305.416.1618	
Winston Harris	RS&H	Miami, FL.	winston.harris@rsandh.com	954.236.7369	
JOE PENNA	MDC	Miami Dept of Caly	joe.penna@mdc.edu	305.297-7208	
LUISANA PEREZ	Sen. Rodriguez	200 Coral Way Ste. 505	Perez.Luisana@flsenate.gov	3/854 03 65	
Martin Culver	Sen. Rodriguez	2100 Coral Way Ste. 505	Culver.martin@flsenate.gov	3/854-0365	
JOSE TORRES	LA CASA DE LOS TORRES	1343 SW. 8th St.	lacasadelosTorres@hotmail.com	3/858-5029	
DAVID COLLINS					
JED ROYER	SEWARDSON	OO FILE	OO FILE	OO FILE	
MULLER	RESIDENT	"	"	"	
Tiffany	NOVA		NOVA	NOVA	
Tiffany Betancourt	chamber of commerce	1965 SW 8 st	brendabetancourt@me.com		

