

Leon County Board of County Commissioners

Cover Sheet for Add-On Agenda #29

March 10, 2015

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Vincent S. Long, County Administrator

Title: Consideration of Options Regarding the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement Project

County Administrator Review and Approval:	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
Department/ Division Review:	Alan Rosenzweig, Deputy County Administrator
Lead Staff/ Project Team:	Tony Park, P.E., Director, Public Works

Fiscal Impact:

The current bid design is funded by FDOT at \$985,000. Any alternative approaches will have a future fiscal impact to provide on-going repairs and maintenance for the existing Natural Bridge Road Bridge, as well as, the possible cost for a future replacement.

Staff Recommendation:

Board direction.

Report and Discussion

Background:

The Natural Bridge Road Bridge (BN 554001) is a Leon County bridge over a branch of St. Marks River in Leon County and is not on the State Highway System (off system). The bridge is seventy-seven years old.

The Bridge has been identified by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for replacement using Federal funding because of a low 2008 Sufficiency Rating. In 2009, H.W. Lochner was selected by FDOT to start the bridge replacement design, which was completed in December 2011. In 2012, the County performed structural reinforcement to maintain the bridge's integrity.

At the February 26, 2013 meeting, the Board approved a Consent Item regarding the Off System Project Agreement with FDOT for the construction of the replacement bridge (Attachment #1). Construction was slated to begin March 9, 2015, which would have required the closure of the bridge for five months.

At the February 10, 2015 meeting, citizens raised concerns about the proposed 21-mile detour route and, among other things, limited access to emergency services. The Board voted at the meeting to send a letter to FDOT requesting consideration of the issues (Attachment #2). Additionally, FDOT has received a resolution from Jefferson County and a letter from Wakulla County addressing the aforementioned issues (Attachment #3).

Analysis:

On March 6, 2015, Leon County received a correspondence from FDOT addressing the concerns raised by the citizens and reflected in the County's February 11, 2015 letter (Attachment #4). In summary, the FDOT letter states:

- FDOT has suspended all activity on the project.
- FDOT has identified three alternatives for Leon County to consider: 1) Construct a temporary bridge; 2) Re-do the plans and use the existing bridge while constructing a new bridge in a different alignment; and, 3) Provide the current plans to Leon County to proceed as the County sees fit. No cost estimates have been finalized for either concept, however, as noted in FDOT's attached letter this temporary bridge, "would significantly increase the cost of the project."

Preliminary estimates indicate that the alternatives presented by FDOT would cost in excess of an additional \$2 million. This additional funding is not currently contemplated as part of the project and would be in addition to the current cost of \$985,000.

Leon County continues to acknowledge and recognize the hardships the proposed detour will place on a limited number of Wakulla and Jefferson County residents. Leon County also recognizes the necessity of maintaining and providing for a safe road network throughout the region. In response to FDOT's letter and actions, the Board may wish to consider one of the following options:

1. Request FDOT proceed with the current plan as designed.
2. Do not proceed at this time with the bridge replacement. This would entail having FDOT continue to perform the necessary inspections and advise the County as to the condition of the bridge. County staff will work with FDOT to ensure that the bridge remains safe for usage. The County will request FDOT provide a current analysis of the bridge conditions.
3. Leon County could request Wakulla and Jefferson Counties provide funding for a temporary bridge to eliminate the proposed detour. As reflected in the attachments, both Wakulla and Jefferson Counties have expressed significant concerns regarding the detour.

Natural Bridge is a Leon County maintained bridge. As such, Leon County responds to FDOT's inspection report that includes recommendations as to repairs and weight limit restrictions. However, at some future date the safety of the bridge may again require a decision of replacement.

Options:

1. Request the Florida Department of Transportation continue with the Natural Bridge Road Bridge project as currently designed.
2. Do not proceed with the current project as designed, request Florida Department of Transportation provide a current updated analysis of the bridge condition, and continue to have the Florida Department of Transportation perform future inspections of Natural Bridge Road Bridge and advise Leon County as to any repairs or weight restrictions that are recommended.
3. Determine if Wakulla and Jefferson Counties would provide funds towards a temporary bridge and direct staff to formally send a correspondence seeking this information.
4. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Board direction.

Attachments:

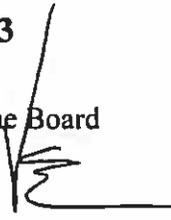
1. February 26, 2013 Agenda Item
2. February 10, 2015 Letter to FDOT
3. Wakulla and Jefferson Counties Correspondences to FDOT
4. March 6, 2015 Letter from FDOT

Leon County Board of County Commissioners

Cover Sheet for Agenda #7

February 26, 2013

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Vincent S. Long, County Administrator 

Title: Approval of Off System Project Agreement with Florida Department of Transportation for the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement

County Administrator Review and Approval:	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
Department/ Division Review:	Tony Park, P.E., Director of Public Works and Community Development Katherine Burke, P.E., Director of Engineering Services
Lead Staff/ Project Team:	Charles Wu, P.E., Chief of Engineering Design Chris Muehlemann, P.E., Senior Design Engineer Daniel Rigo, Esq., Assistant County Attorney

Fiscal Impact:

This item has no fiscal impact to the County. The replacement of the bridge will be constructed by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) using Federal funds.

Staff Recommendation:

- Option # 1: Approve the proposed Off System Project Agreement with Florida Department of Transportation for the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement, and authorize the County Administrator to execute the Agreement (Attachment #1).
- Option #2: Ratify and accept the Warranty Deed from St. Joe as Exhibit B to the Agreement

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for the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement

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Report and Discussion

Background:

The Natural Bridge Road Bridge (BN 554001) is a Leon County bridge over a branch of St. Marks River in Leon County, Florida and is not on the State Highway System (off system) (Attachment #2). This Bridge has been identified by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for replacement using Federal funding because of low Sufficiency Rating. In 2009, H. W. Lochner was selected by FDOT to start the bridge replacement design. The design of this project was completed in December 2011 and the construction is programed for Fiscal Year 2014.

Analysis:

The existing bridge typical section consists of one 14.5' travel lane with guardrails. A stop sign was installed on both ends of the bridge to advise drivers to approach the bridge with caution. After a bridge inspection in 2008, FDOT recommended a weight limit of 10 tons be posted at the bridge, and it was posted, accordingly, by Leon County. The advisory speed limit on the bridge is 15 miles per hour.

Because of the low sufficiency rating, which is an indicator of the overall condition of the bridge structurally and functionally, repairs of the bridge before the entire bridge replacement were approved by the Board through the FY 2006/07 budget approval process. The bridge repairs, including reinforcement of the beam seats, installation of the tension rod for lateral support, and grouting the damaged deck were completed in July 2010.

The new bridge will have two 10-foot travel lanes and two-foot shoulders with traffic railing along both sides of the bridge (Attachment #3). Understanding the importance of merging the new bridge into the natural environment, staff coordinated with FDOT to encourage the bridge designer to adopt the Context Sensitive Solutions approach, meaning it has design elements included to blend into its natural environment. This approach includes aesthetic deck form liner to mimic a wooden deck while the railing system will receive surface treatment with the color blended into the ambient environment (Attachment #4).

The proposed Agreement provides acknowledgement and acceptance of the following key elements:

- FDOT and the County agree that FDOT utilizes federal funds to undertake and to complete all aspects of the bridge replacement work; including, but not limited to, the design, construction, construction inspection, utilities, permits, and other associated tasks.
- Authorizes FDOT to temporarily use the existing Natural Bridge Road right-of-way for bridge construction; all safety and maintenance responsibility of right-of-way during construction is at FDOT's expense and the responsibility of FDOT and its contractor.
- Outlines the County's involvement and procedure prior to final acceptance of the new bridge by Leon County.

FDOT and Leon County acknowledge and agree that any and all real property needed to complete this project has been acquired by the FDOT as of the date of this Agreement. Upon completion of the bridge construction, the right-of-way properties acquired by FDOT for the bridge construction will be transferred from FDOT to the County, and the County shall, thereafter, be responsible for maintaining said right-of-way

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All real property needed to complete this project has been acquired by FDOT. One of the properties acquired by FDOT for the project, prior to the execution of the proposed Agreement, was inadvertently acquired in the County's name as grantee, as reflected in the warranty deed from St. Joe Timberland Company of Delaware, LLC to Leon County recorded at O.R. Book 4402, Page 133, Official Records of Leon County, Florida, a copy of which is attached to the draft Agreement as Exhibit B. The County Attorney's Office reviewed the title work completed by FDOT and concluded such acquisition to be satisfactory. As a result, staff recommends Board's ratification and acceptance of the Warranty Deed from St. Joe as Exhibit B to the Agreement.

The total cost for replacement of this bridge is estimated at \$2.1 million, including design, construction, and all associated costs, which is to be paid by FDOT using Federal aid funds. Leon County is currently responsible for maintenance of the existing bridge. Under this agreement, FDOT is authorized to temporarily use the County's existing Natural Bridge Road right-of-way for construction of the project, and all safety and maintenance responsibility of said right-of-way during construction shall, at the FDOT's expense, be the responsibility of the FDOT and its contractor. After final acceptance, the County will assume the maintenance responsibility of the new bridge. FDOT's replacement of the bridge assists Leon County in enhancing the transportation safety and allows the County to maintain a new structure, which will reduce the maintenance costs and will remove the County's responsibility for the ultimate replacement of the deficient bridge.

During construction of the new bridge, the Natural Bridge Road, on both ends of the bridge, will be closed for seven months and the detour route is approximately 21 miles. The anticipated road closure can reduce environmental impacts, construction time, and construction cost. The bridge construction contractor is required to make a formal road closure request from Leon County two weeks prior to the actual closure. The public will be notified by variable message signs that display the dates and times of the road closure for a period of two weeks prior to the closure. Because the Natural Bridge Road Bridge is near the Natural Bridge Battlefield Historic State Park, staff has been working with FDOT to minimize the construction and road closure impacts to the park, in addition to continuing coordination with the Park Ranger. Special notes have been added to the construction plans requiring no construction operations during special events, including Battle of Natural Bridge Re-enactment in March.

According to the current FDOT's Transportation Improvement Five-Year Program schedule, the funding for bridge construction will be available in Fiscal Year 2014. The Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement construction is anticipated to be bid by FDOT in May 2014 while the construction time is estimated to be seven months. Approval of this funding requires agreement by the County to maintain the project once completed.

Due to the massive volume of the Agreement Package, only the Agreement and Exhibit B are included as Attachment #1. The complete Agreement, including all exhibits, may be reviewed at the Leon County Courthouse, 301 South Monroe Street, 5th Floor, County Administration or at Leon County Public Works, 2280 Miccosukee Road, 2nd Floor, Engineering Services Division. It may also be viewed at [Leoncountyfl.gov/Departments/PublicWorks/Engineering Services](http://Leoncountyfl.gov/Departments/PublicWorks/Engineering%20Services) under Important Documents.

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Options:

1. Approve the proposed Off-System Project Agreement with Florida Department of Transportation for the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement, and authorize the County Administrator to execute the Agreement
2. Ratify and accept the Warranty Deed from St. Joe as Exhibit B to the Agreement.
3. Do not approve the proposed Off-System Project Agreement with Florida Department of Transportation for the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement.
4. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Options #1 and #2.

Attachments:

1. Proposed Agreement
2. Project Location Map
3. Proposed Bridge Typical Section
4. Bridge Typical Section Rendering

VSL/TP/KB/CW/bp



Leon County

Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 606-5302 www.leoncountyfl.gov

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At-Large

NICK MADDOX
At-Large

VINCENT S. LONG
County Administrator

HERBERT W.A. THIELE
County Attorney

February 11, 2015

Tommy Barfield, District 3 Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Highway 90 East
Chipley, Florida 32424

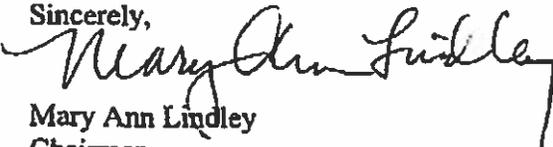
Dear Secretary Barfield:

On behalf of the Leon County Board of County Commissioners, I am writing to express the concerns raised by citizens at the February 10, 2015 County Commission meeting regarding the Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement Project. It is my understanding that FDOT intends to begin the replacement project on March 9, 2015 which will require the closure of the bridge for seven months.

The concerns shared by the citizens included the proposed 21-mile detour route and the financial burden they would incur as a result of increased fuel and maintenance costs to their vehicles. Additionally, the citizens stressed their concerns of limited access to emergency, mail, and solid waste services that they would experience due to the closure of the bridge. We know that the rural nature of the area severely limits the options for a detour route; however, we are very interested in working with FDOT to ensure that these public safety concerns are adequately addressed during the replacement of the bridge.

We appreciate your continued partnership with this project and understand the constraints that you face regularly with balancing the infrastructure needs of the community and mitigating the impact to nearby residents. FDOT has been deliberative and responsive throughout this process. Your agency's unyielding commitment and support has been tremendous. Therefore, it is our hope that the proposed detour route could be re-examined in a manner to remedy the concerns of the citizens. I look forward to our continued partnership on this and future projects.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Lindley
Chairman

**Resolution Requesting a Temporary Access Bridge
Be Provided For Through Traffic During The
Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement Project
Affecting Three Counties in North Florida**

WHEREAS, numerous residents from Leon, Wakulla and Jefferson Counties will be put in extreme hardship situations during construction for the better part of a year; and

WHEREAS, an affected resident has stated that FDOT expressed only two families would be displaced or placed within hardship due to this construction project which is completely false and has been misleading during the decision making phase of this project; and

WHEREAS, many of the families affected by this proposed road closing in multiple counties will be placed in peril related to health care and emergency response by requiring more than twenty eight miles of alternate routing and up to forty five (45) minutes of response time; and

WHEREAS, the nearest medical assistance is in Leon County which will not be accessible without more than tripling the commute time and distance which will cause additional financial hardship upon families not capable of the increased cost of transportation; and

WHEREAS, children attending Woodville Elementary will have additional hardships, an autistic child and a child with severe learning disabilities along with their siblings have been granted permission for alternate school attendance will require almost one hundred miles per day additional commute from the detour; neither of these families having the ability to absorb additional costs for commute; and

WHEREAS, the families affected by this proposed road closing in multiple counties will be closed off from other daily needs such as banks, grocery stores, gas stations, feed and hardware stores, medical facilities, recreation, businesses and day care; and

WHEREAS, commuting from both sides of the proposed bridge closing will impede employees travel to work in Wakulla and Leon Counties from Jefferson and Madison Counties; as well as employees travel to Jefferson County from Leon and Wakulla Counties; and

WHEREAS, this proposed road closing will place Jefferson County with increased liability to provide mutual aid to communities outside their jurisdiction much further than acceptable distances from public safety services from Fire, EMS; Police and others; and

WHEREAS, it is the duty of our Local, State and Federal partners to provide wise stewardship of our resources to protect our citizens, a stewardship that is not being shown in this incidence; and

WHEREAS, it is evident all the facts have not been reviewed in making this decision to displace so many citizens from several communities and counties; without proper access to reasonable locations; and

WHEREAS, the installation of a temporary access bridge is well within the FDOT's ability both structurally and financially; and

WHEREAS, environmental impacts from a temporary bridge have been proven to be acceptable within similar areas in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, with all the hardships placed on community citizens', job requirements and attendance, educational attendance, health and quality of life expectations; and general human compassion for our fellow persons' daily lives;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that on the 17th day of February, 2015, the Jefferson County Commission supports a review of decisions made to completely close Natural Bridge Road thereby cutting off citizens from multiple counties; and the Jefferson County Commission request steps be taken to ensure a temporary access be constructed for this bridge project;

PASSED, APPROVED, AND EFFECTIVE on this 17th day of February, 2015.

ATTEST:


Benjamin Bishop, Chairman


Kirk Reams, Clerk of Courts



**BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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Heather J. Encinosa
County Attorney
(850) 224-4070

Post Office Box 1263
Crawfordville, FL 32326
(850) 926-0918
(850) 926-0940 FAX

February 4, 2015

Mr. Tommy Barfield,
Secretary, District 3
Department of Transportation
Highway 90 East
Chipley, Florida 32428-0607

RE: FDOT Project No: 413491-1-52-01, Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement

Dear Mr. Barfield:

Citizens living in the area of the above referenced project have voiced concerns to the Board of County Commissioners. It is our understanding that during the construction of the project that no temporary bridge is being provided to the residents in the project area. Residents will have to use an alternative route resulting in traveling as much as 30 miles or more one-way (or an hour or more one-way) to access school, work, and other daily activities.

The lack of a temporary bridge or a shorter alternative route also raises concerns for safety in the event of fire, rescue or emergency medical needs.

On behalf of the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners, I am respectfully requesting that FDOT consider options to provide a reasonable alternative (i.e., temporary bridge or shorter temporary alternative route) for these residents during the construction of the bridge replacement project.

Sincerely,

David Edwards
County Administrator on behalf of
Wakulla County Board of Commissioners

From: "Vickery, Greg" <Greg.Vickery@dot.state.fl.us>
Date: March 6, 2015 at 9:03:34 AM EST
To: "Mary Ann Lindley" <LindleyM@leoncountyfl.gov>
Cc: "Mike Dew" <Mike.Dew@dot.state.fl.us>, "Tommy Barfield" <Tommy.Barfield@dot.state.fl.us>
Subject: **Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement (15-01855)**

Florida Department of Transportation
District Three Administration Building
Office of the District Secretary
Post Office Box 607
Chipley, Florida 32428-0607

March 6, 2015

The Honorable Mary Ann Lindley, Chairwoman
Leon County Board of County Commissioners
301 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Subject: Natural Bridge Road Bridge Replacement

Dear Chairwoman Lindley:

Thank you for your letter of February 11, 2015 regarding the Natural Bridge Road bridge replacement project in southern Leon County.

As you know, Natural Bridge Road and the structure which is to be replaced are not part of the state road system and belong to Leon County. The design and construction of the new bridge is being conducted by FDOT under a partnership agreement with Leon County and is funded with federal dollars.

FDOT takes the concerns about access to critical services that have been raised by impacted citizens, as well as by your fellow elected officials in neighboring counties, very seriously. In order to ensure that these public safety concerns are adequately addressed, we are immediately suspending FDOT activity on the project. Natural Bridge Road will remain open while we discuss the following options with Leon County.

The first option is to change the design of the current project to include a temporary bridge that could be used while the permanent structure is being constructed. This would require additional permitting from the Northwest Florida Water Management District, the Army Corps of Engineers, Leon County Growth and Environmental Management and other regulatory agencies. The delays associated with these permitting actions, as well as the need for additional environmental mitigation and right-of-way acquisition for the footprint of the temporary bridge, would significantly increase the cost of the project. There are restrictions and limitations on the types of funding that can be used for these additional costs, and non-state financial resources would need to be identified before this option could proceed.

Secondly, during the development of the original plans the option of leaving the existing bridge in place and building the new structure on an alignment to the south was discussed. This option would have to resolve the same external factors listed above, and additionally could impact Natural Bridge Battlefield

Historic State Park.

Lastly, another option would be for FDOT to purchase the existing construction contract and transfer the completed design plans over to Leon County Engineering Services. FDOT would continue regular inspections of the bridge to ensure its safety while Leon County determined which course of action to take for replacement of the existing structure.

Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to working with you to resolve our mutual concerns on this important project, and to continuing the strong partnership between Leon County and FDOT.

Sincerely,

/s/ James T. Barfield

James T. Barfield, P.E.
District Secretary

JTB/gv