



**Hillsborough County
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Hillsborough County

Lithia Pinecrest Road (CR 640)

Project Development & Environment Study

Project Newsletter Number 1
CIP# 69125

From SR 60 to County Route 39
Hillsborough County, Florida
January 2007

This newsletter is the first in a series prepared by Hillsborough County to help keep the public informed about the **Lithia Pinecrest Road (CR 640) Project Development and Environment Study.**

To provide comments, ask questions, and make suggestions about the study, please contact:

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Hillsborough County, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation, has initiated a Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study to consider the proposed widening of a portion of Lithia Pinecrest Road (CR 640). Located in the Brandon, Bloomingdale and Lithia communities, the limits of the study are from State Route 60 to County Route 39, a distance of approximately 10.7 miles.

Lithia Pinecrest Road currently has two travel lanes (one in each direction), and is classified as an arterial roadway. The road serves as a primary transportation corridor in this area of Hillsborough County. Portions of the roadway currently operate below the County's adopted minimum acceptable level-of-service (LOS) standard (LOS D).

Therefore, the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has identified the need to improve Lithia Pinecrest Road. These proposed improvements are intended to accommodate both existing and future traffic volumes, enhance motorist safety, and reduce emergency response times.

The MPO has documented future roadway needs in their 2025 Highway Needs Assessment. This document identifies Lithia Pinecrest as a future four-lane roadway between SR 60 and Bloomingdale Avenue, and as a future enhanced two-lane roadway from Bloomingdale Avenue to Fishhawk Boulevard. Lithia Pinecrest Road between Fishhawk Boulevard and CR 39 is not currently included in the MPO's 2025 Highway Needs Assessment. The assessment may be updated as a result of the study.

This PD&E Study is being conducted to identify and evaluate various alternative design concepts for the needed improvements and to compare the effects they would have on the environment. Once this comparison is complete, the best possible design for the improvements will be identified for further analysis and refinement. Subsequent newsletters will describe project alternatives under consideration and present the recommended improvement.

A proactive public involvement approach that focuses on soliciting community input is integral part of the PD&E process and includes small group meetings, attendance at local community events, an Alternatives Public Workshop and a Public Hearing. The Public Hearing will be held to provide an opportunity for official public statements about proposed improvements. In addition, on going project updates are posted and public comments are accepted at the project website: <http://www.lpcstudy.com>.

We Want Your Input!

A successful PD&E study depends on the public's participation in the study process. We encourage your input throughout the study. Please visit www.LPCSTUDY.com.

To be placed on the project mailing list, please contact:

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KEY PUBLIC & AGENCY INVOLVEMENT EVENTS LITHIA PINECREST PD&E STUDY

Project Kickoff Newsletter.....January 2007

As described on the front page, this newsletter serves to introduce the project and the study to members of the public and to solicit their questions, comments, and suggestions.

Alternatives Public Workshop.....Summer 2007

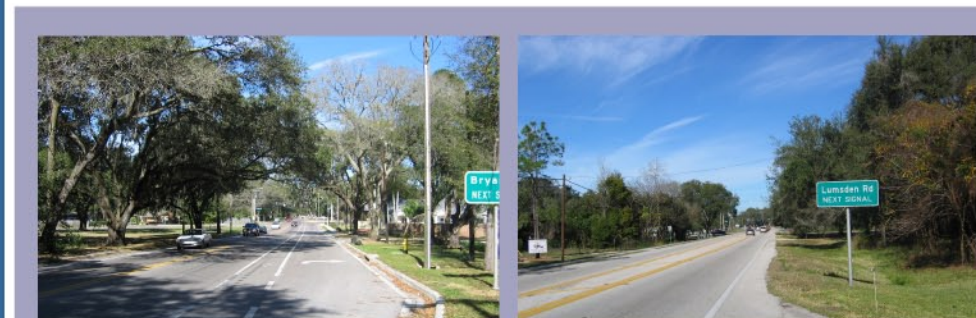
Will present the various design concepts for the Lithia Pinecrest Road improvements that have been developed and allow the public an opportunity to comment on the project.

Public Hearing.....Spring 2008

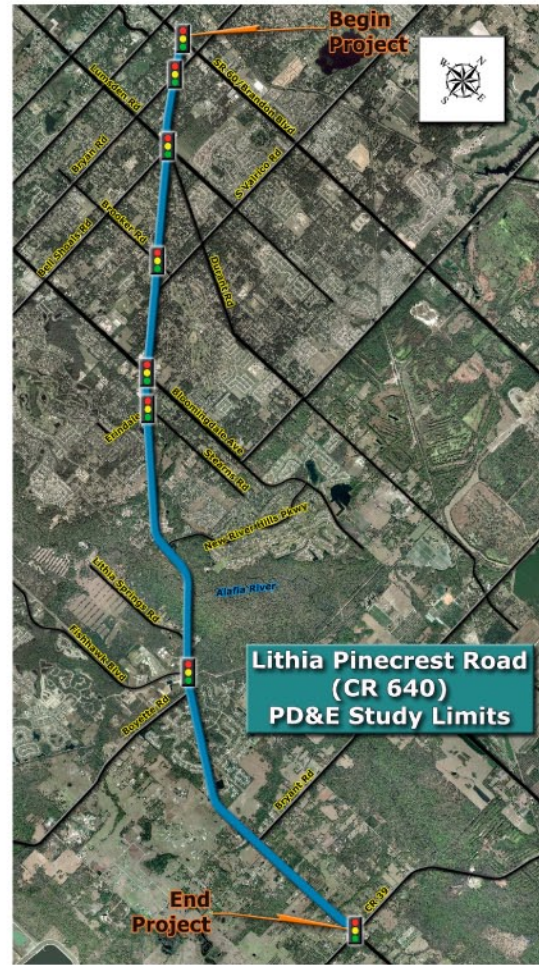
The study's hearing is a formal meeting at which comments are taken for the public record on the findings of the study, including its proposed alignment and design concept.

Location/Design Concept Acceptance.....Summer 2008

Once all comments made in conjunction with the public hearing are analyzed and, if appropriate, incorporated into the study. The final study is completed and forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration for its official acceptance.



Study Location Map



PD&E : One Step In The Process

Federally funded transportation projects are developed according to a five step process. The first step is producing a long range transportation plan, which is developed by the Hillsborough County MPO in coordination with the FDOT. Individual projects are identified and prioritized during this long range planning process.

Individual projects then move forward to the next step, which is the PD&E stage. During this stage, various alternative locations and conceptual designs are developed for the project. The social and environmental effects of each alternative are identified. All projects that will use federal funds are subject to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and it is during the PD&E stage that NEPA compliance is assured, in part through review of the study by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Hillsborough County is completing this PD&E project

to NEPA standards in order to be eligible for potential federal funding.

At the end of the PD&E stage a decision is made to select either a “Build” or “No-Build” Alternative for the proposed project. If a Build Alternative is selected and the project moves forward, it then proceeds to the Design Phase, in which detailed construction plans are prepared. During the subsequent right-of-way Acquisition Phase, these construction plans are used as the basis for any land acquisition required for the project. Once all necessary right-of-way is acquired, the construction phase of the project can begin, marking the final stage in the transportation development process.



Public Involvement Program

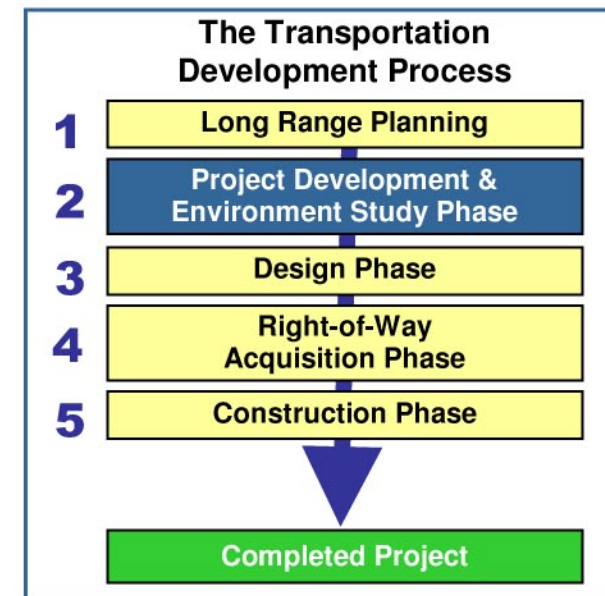
The PD&E Study process includes a Public Involvement Program to inform and involve all interested parties in the development of the planned project. This program is now underway, with the study team gathering input from citizens and agencies within the project area. Public involvement activities will continue through the duration of the project.

Four editions of the project newsletter are planned. The mailing list includes:

- All individuals owning property within at least 300 feet of the right-of-way of the proposed project;
- Neighborhood and civic associations in the study area;
- Local elected and appointed officials;
- Local, regional, and state agencies and interest groups, and;
- Individuals who request to be placed on the mailing list.

Anyone who would like to be placed on the mailing list should contact the HDR Project Manager. The contact information is shown on the front page of this newsletter. A second project newsletter will inform the public of the status of alternatives development and the planned public workshop.

Public information meetings during the study will include presentations given before the MPO and informal “small group” meetings with local civic organizations, public officials, and public agencies. Meetings will provide information on the project status, design concepts, and other study considerations. They will also provide an opportunity for those who have a stake or an interest in the proposed project to comment on the study’s findings. An official public hearing will be held to present conclusions reached about improvement options and project effects. Public statements made at the hearing are recorded in the official public hearing transcript, which must be reviewed by FHWA before approval of the study findings is granted. The third project newsletter will announce the date, time, and location of the public hearing. The fourth newsletter will be used to announce FHWA’s decision on the location and conceptual design of the project. ■



The Lithia Pinecrest project is currently in the PD&E Study phase of this five-step process. The study team is currently gathering information on various social and environmental resources in the project study area. These resources include locations of threatened and endangered species, wetlands, potential contamination sites, as well as locations of residences, public facilities, and commercial buildings near the project corridor. Once alternative design concepts are developed, this information will be used to determine the potential effects of different alternatives on these social and environmental resources. While Hillsborough County does not expect the proposed Lithia Pinecrest improvements to have significant effects on these resources, it is nonetheless important to investigate the project’s potential effects thoroughly. The results of this effect analysis will be summarized in project reports which will be available at the official public hearing scheduled in the Spring of 2008. ■