



## **PRFSC Meeting Minutes April 11,2019**

On Thursday April 11,2019 PRFSC hosted Osceola County Commissioner Fred Hawkins as guest speaker. Commissioner Hawkins not only serves on the Osceola County Commission but as the representative of Osceola County on the Central Florida Expressway Board of Directors. The topic of the meeting was what the Central Florida Expressway Authority could offer to help solve Poinciana Transportation problems. This was a follow-on meeting to earlier PRFSC meetings when officials from Polk County and Osceola County had presented what they were doing to address Poinciana transportation problems. The minutes from those meetings are posted on the [www.prfsc.org](http://www.prfsc.org) website.

### **What is CFX and What do they do?**

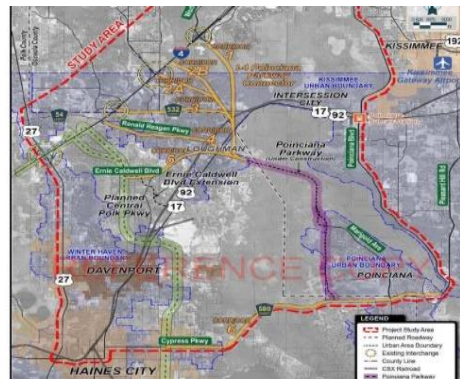
Commissioner Hawkins described how CFX was created by the State of Florida to consolidate the building and maintaining of toll roads in Central Florida. CFX has taken over the functions previously performed by the Osceola Expressway Authority who build the Poinciana Parkway. As part of the consolidation CFX has assumed responsibility for construction of the southern beltway defined by OCX as part of their 40 year plan. (see diagram below)



Commissioner Hawkins described that CFX had \$2.8 Billion (\$2,800,000,000) in road construction money available for new toll road projects to serve Central Florida. He stated that new toll roads for Osceola County were identified as targets for a substantial amount of that money for new construction. He described the five parts of the OCX 40 year plan being the already constructed Poinciana Parkway, the I4 Connector to connect the north end of the Poinciana Parkway to I4, the Southport Connector, the eastern leg connecting the Florida Turnpike I4 connector to the Osceola Expressway and the extension of Osceola Expressway to the rest of the proposed beltway. The three projects that had the highest priority for CFX to build for Osceola County were the I4 Connector, the Osceola Expressway Extension and the Southport Connector. He expected the I4 Connector and Osceola Expressway projects to be approved by CFX board in their July or August meeting. He expected the Southport Connector project to be approved shortly after. The two projects that will most impact the Poinciana traffic problems will be the I4 Connector and the Southport Connector.

## I4 Connector

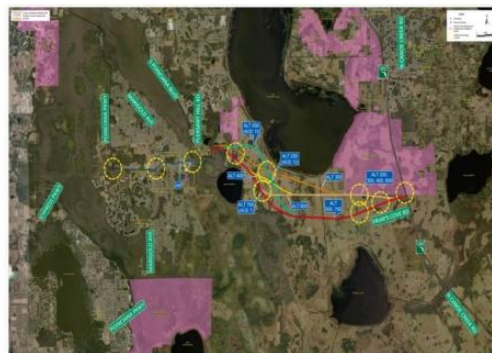
### I4 Connector Map



The I4 Connector project long term is meant to connect the north end of the Poinciana Parkway to I4 at the 429 interchange. The connection at the interchange will require approval and funding from the federal government because I4 is a federal road part of the Interstate Highway system. That will take several years to happen. As an interim step CFX is proposing a project to directly connect the north end of Poinciana Parkway to Osceola County Road 532 near Champions gate. The project would include expanding the Poinciana Parkway from 2 lanes to 4 and constructing a flyover 17/92 to provide the direct connection to CR532. He stated that this project study was near completion and expected to be approved by the CFX board in July or August. He stated that construction would begin soon after and should be expected to be completed within 3 to 5 years.

## Southport Connector

### Southport Connector Map

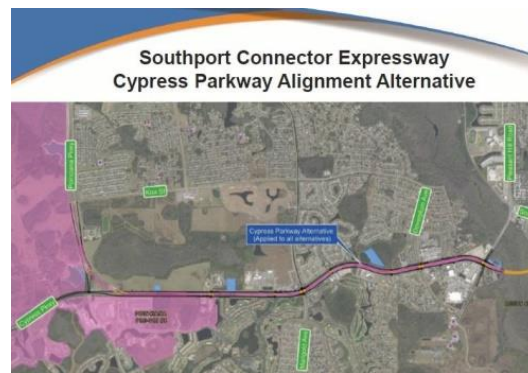


The Southport Connector project is part of the original 40 year CFX plan inherited from the Osceola Expressway Authority. It is meant to connect between the southern end of the Poinciana Parkway to the Florida Turnpike providing a limited access toll road connection through Poinciana between the Florida Turnpike near the present Canoe Creek rest area beneath Lake Toho to ultimately the 429 interchange at I4 west of Disney. The project is of equal importance to the Poinciana Parkway in terms of providing an additional way in/out of Poinciana and relieving traffic from the existing Pleasant Hill Rd and Poinciana Blvd Osceola County roads. The study was completed and originally presented to the CFX Board in March 2018. The project was rejected because the original \$1.2 Billion cost estimated to build the project was more than

double the revenue projected from the traffic and revenue story. The cost to revenue ratio did not meet CFX guidelines for approval. More than half of that cost was projected to come from right of way land acquisition for the lands south of Lake Toho. Commissioner Hawkins stated that since then the landowner has offered to donate the land right of way to CFX at no charge thus substantially changing the ratio of costs vs projected revenues to make it more acceptable to the CFX Board. He stated that the Southport Connector project lagged behind the I4 connector project in the approval process but that he still expected the CFX board to approve the project later in 2019 with construction of the Southport Connector to begin soon after and to be completed with 5 years. This is very good news for Poinciana.

### Southport Connector Cypress Parkway portion

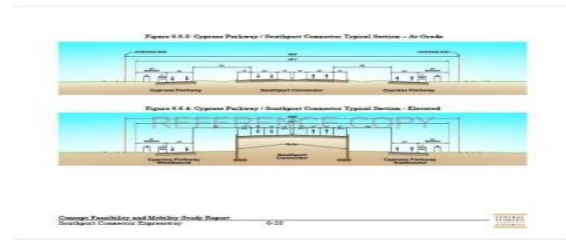
#### Cypress Parkway segment



The most significant part of the Southport Connector project for Poinciana is the Cypress Parkway portion of the project. In looking at the current Poinciana traffic volumes and from the experience of driving through Poinciana, the biggest traffic problems are encountered any time of the day trying to drive Cypress Parkway anywhere between the southern end of Poinciana Parkway and crossing Reedy Creek Bridge. That segment is only 3.4 miles long but it can take forever to get from one end to the other. The traffic volume is much higher than the 4 lane road was ever meant to handle. Between Poinciana Parkway connection to Cypress Parkway and Pleasant Hill there are 7 red light intersections. Because of the heavy traffic and lack of red light synchronization it is not unusual to hit red lights at multiple intersections occasionally ending up in such heaving traffic that it takes multiple light cycles to get through one or more intersections. In spite of multiple attempts by both counties to synchronize the lights the combination of old signal technology and heavy traffic volumes makes synchronization of the traffic signals impossible.

#### Proposed new Cypress Parkway Lanes

Cypress Parkway Elevations



Today Cypress Parkway between Marigold and Pleasant Hill is made up of a 4 lane highway with turning lanes at various multiple interchanges. Since 2012 the traffic volumes using Cypress Parkway have far exceeded what the road was designed to handle. The original proposal for Poinciana Parkway was that it would reduce the Cypress Parkway traffic by diverting 10% of the volume to the toll road. Poinciana Parkway traffic has more than doubled that projection. Yet Cypress Parkway traffic today is more than in 2012 simply because so many new homes have been constructed in Poinciana. The only solution is to expand the traffic capacity for Cypress Parkway.

### Toll Roads vs County Roads

Toll roads are often criticized as offering traffic solutions only for those drivers who can afford to pay the tolls. One argument says that it is fair because the costs for building the new roads should only be paid by those drivers who use them not every taxpayer. The contrary argument is that toll roads are unfair because people with less money cannot afford to pay the tolls. The Southport Connector Cypress Parkway segment offers the best solution for both arguments. The costs to build the proposed Cypress Parkway Southport Connector segment far exceeds anything that can be built by Osceola County alone even if the proposed sales tax passes.

The Cypress Parkway portion of the Southport Connector project would replace the existing 4 lane Cypress Parkway with an 8 lane road. This would double the capacity. Not only would the project double the traffic capacity for Cypress Parkway but it would eliminate the traffic bottlenecks at the 7 intersections between Poinciana Parkway and Pleasant Hill Rd after crossing Reedy Creek. As shown in the picture above each intersection would be replaced with a 4 lane flyover to handle the east/west traffic with the feeder intersection traffic flowing beneath the flyover bridge at each intersection. While the central four lanes would be the expressway toll road traffic there would be 2 lanes each running parallel on the north and south side of the Cypress Parkway expressway lanes handling all the local traffic. There would be no charge for drivers using the local traffic lanes, just like today. Yet most of not a large majority of the through Cypress Parkway traffic would be taken off the local lanes and would use the toll lanes. Through traffic, for the price of a toll would no longer have to face red light intersections at Laurel Ave, Solivita Blvd, Marigold Ave, Cypress Branch, Doverplum. Old Pleasant Hill and Southport/Poinciana Blvd intersections. Drivers wanting to use the local lanes or wishing not to pay the tolls would still access the intersections but with considerably less traffic and state of the art signals at the new intersections. By using the CFX toll revenue to build the Southport Connector the non-toll paying drivers would get to benefit from a new improved

**Poinciana Cypress parkway without having to send taxpayer dollars to get it and to get it built sooner than it could ever be built using only county dollars.**

**PRFSC would like to thank Commissioner Hawkins for coming to Poinciana to share this information with everyone. Regardless of what the voters decide on the Osceola County sales tax question it appears that between the funding available from CFX and Polk County a solution to the Cypress Parkway Poinciana traffic problems is possible if the CFX Board votes to move forward with the Southport Connector project.**