



## **PRFSC Dec 10,2019 Poinciana Roads Transportation Meeting**

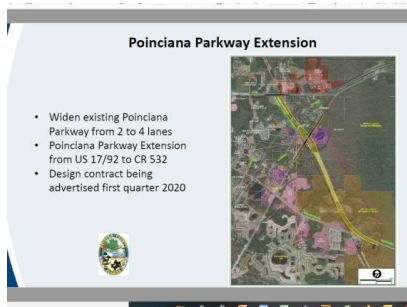
On Tuesday December 10,2019 PRFSC hosted Osceola County Executive Director of Transportation and Transit Tawny Olore to present and discuss the latest developments and plans for improving the Poinciana roads situation. She was accompanied at the meeting by Osceola County Commissioner Brandon Arrington.

The need for the meeting was set by an Orlando TV Channel 6 newscast that aired at 4:30 that evening prior to the meeting. The clip of the newscast may be viewed at [https://youtu.be/1p\\_ACGggeB4](https://youtu.be/1p_ACGggeB4) . The day after the meeting there was a Spectrum TV News 13 newscast that described the meeting which may be viewed at [https://youtu.be/1p\\_ACGggeB4](https://youtu.be/1p_ACGggeB4) . What has happened is that since the construction of the Poinciana Parkway any traffic that was moved off from Poinciana Blvd and Pleasant Hill has been more than replaced by the increased traffic resulting from new houses being built in the Poinciana. From the comments of the Poinciana residents interviewed in the newscasts the situation has in fact gotten worse.

As the news clip describes, Osceola County had placed a sales tax referendum up for vote on May of 2019 that would have provided increased tax dollars to improve the Osceola County roads and other transit. The voters voted down that proposal. Instead, what Osceola County recently did was to refinance the existing Osceola Parkway toll road to generate an additional \$300M in money that could be used to construct new roads in Osceola County. The presentation given at the meeting described all the projects countywide that the money will be used for. All of the slides presented at the meeting are published on the [www.PRFSC.org](http://www.PRFSC.org) web site. These meeting minutes will only discuss the projects of most interest to Poinciana residents.

As described by the Florida Highway Patrol state trooper in the TV 6 interview the ways to get into and out of Poinciana are limited. That is because Poinciana was built on what are islands located in the middle of the Reedy Creek Swamp, a Federal protected wetland that is key to the preservation of the Florida environment. ( for reference please check out <http://prfsc.org/florida-wildlife-corridor/> ). Most people who live in the Poinciana area need to commute each day either to the north to the Disney I4 West area or towards Kissimmee and the Florida Turnpike corridor. These meeting minutes will describe the Poinciana projects most impacting each of those commutes.

## Poinciana Parkway Extension

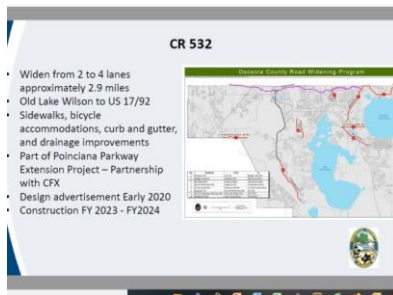


**Poinciana Parkway Extension**

- Widen existing Poinciana Parkway from 2 to 4 lanes
- Poinciana Parkway Extension from US 17/92 to CR 532
- Design contract being advertised first quarter 2020

The slide features a map of the Poinciana Parkway area with a yellow line indicating the extension route from US 17/92 to CR 532. A small circular logo is visible in the bottom left corner.

## Osceola CR 532 Expansion



**CR 532**

- Widen from 2 to 4 lanes approximately 2.5 miles
- Old Lake Wilson to US 17/92
- Sidewalks, bicycle accommodations, curb and gutter, and drainage improvements
- Part of Poinciana Parkway Extension Project – Partnership with CFX
- Design advertisement Early 2020
- Construction FY 2023 - FY2024

The slide includes a map titled "Osceola County Area Planning Program" showing the expansion route of CR 532. A small circular logo is visible in the bottom right corner.

## Champions Gate/I4 Interchange



**I-4/CR 532 Interchange**

- Design of modified Interchange as a diverging diamond configuration
- Partnership with FDOT
- Design complete in FY2020
- Construction in FY2021
- State funds

The slide features a map of the I-4/CR 532 interchange area with a yellow line indicating the diverging diamond configuration. A small circular logo is visible in the bottom left corner.

The completion of the Poinciana Parkway has provided another way for drivers to leave Poinciana heading north to Disney and Orlando. Although it is a toll road, traffic counts on the Poinciana parkway have far exceeded the original projections. The parkway was originally built by the Osceola Expressway Authority but recently was transferred over to the Central Florida Expressway Authority. CFX was able to use its better bonding rating to allow it to refinance the bonds for the parkway to allow significant expansion to take place.

As a result CFX has approved significant expansion for the Poinciana Parkway. Contracts will be bid in 1Q 2020 for expansion of the existing Poinciana Parkway from 2 lanes to 4 lanes. In addition Poinciana Parkway will be extended to Osceola CR 532 at Champions gate flying over 17/92 and the railroad tracks with an exit onto 17/92. In partnership with Osceola County CR532 will be expanded from 2 lanes to 4 lanes between Lake Wilson Road and 17/92. Osceola County will expand Lake Wilson road from 2 lanes to 4 lanes heading north from CR532 intersection. Polk County will expand Lake Wilson road south from CR532 to Ronald Reagan. Osceola County will partner with FDOT to improve the Champions Gate intersection to I4 and FDOT will add additional lanes to I4 between the Champions Gate interchange and the 429 interchange. Construction on these projects is expected to begin in 2021 and be completed by 2024. Unfortunately these road projects are very expensive and take a very long time to build. The good news is that as of today they are committed and

funded so they will become a reality. CFX is also working with the Federal Government and FDOT to plan the longer term connection between the extended Poinciana Parkway directly to the 429 interchange at I4. That will be the ultimate solution to connect Poinciana to I4 and Disney.

## **Poinciana Eastbound Traffic Improvements**

While the Poinciana Parkway has been extremely popular for Poinciana residents who can afford to pay the tolls and need to head to the north from Poinciana, the bulk of the Poinciana rush hour traffic still needs to go to the northeast towards the Kissimmee area. When the Poinciana Parkway was first being built it was projected the 10% of the Pleasant Hill traffic would be diverted to use the Poinciana Parkway. At that time Pleasant Hill traffic counts were 55,000 cars per day. Poinciana Parkway has far exceeded the original 5500 car per day estimate but because of new construction current traffic counts for Pleasant Hill exceed the 55,000 car per day at the time of Poinciana parkway construction. It was stated at the meeting that for year 2019 unincorporated Osceola County which includes Poinciana grew at a rate of 5% during the year. At that growth rate the population of Poinciana will double in the next 20 years.

The question was asked at the meeting about when Osceola County expected to be able to provide adequate roads to meet the needs of Poinciana's expanding population? If the growth rate of 5% per year continues the only correct answer would be never. New roads take many years to plan and to build even if the taxpayer money is available to pay for them. The time is now for Poinciana in partnership with the two counties, state of Florida and the Federal Government to start planning the roads to meet Poinciana's future needs.

## **Poinciana Blvd**

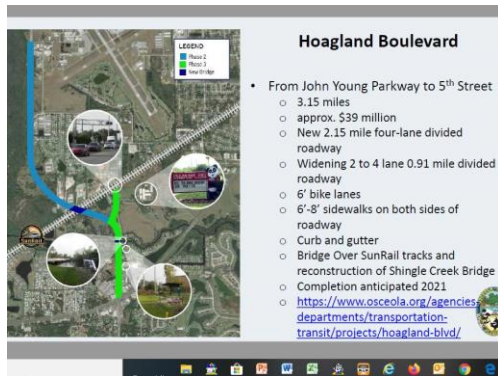
**Poinciana Blvd**

- Widen from 2 to 4 lanes approximately 5.8 miles
- Pleasant Hill Road to Crescent Lakes Way
- Sidewalks, bicycle accommodations, curb and gutter, and drainage improvements
- Design advertisement in January 2020
- Construction FY2024

For the short term the best that Osceola County can do is to fix and upgrade the roads that we currently have. The good news is that with the refinancing of the Osceola Parkway Osceola County has some of the money needed to do this. These are the projects described at the meeting and that will be described below.

The first project and the one most needed for Poinciana is the expansion of Poinciana Blvd from 2 lanes to 4 over the 5.8 miles between Crescent Lakes and Pleasant Hill intersection. The project is currently funded with construction to begin in 2020 and estimated to be completed in 2024. This will help part of the Poinciana northeast traffic flow problem but still the major problem will exist on Pleasant Hill.

## Hoagland Blvd

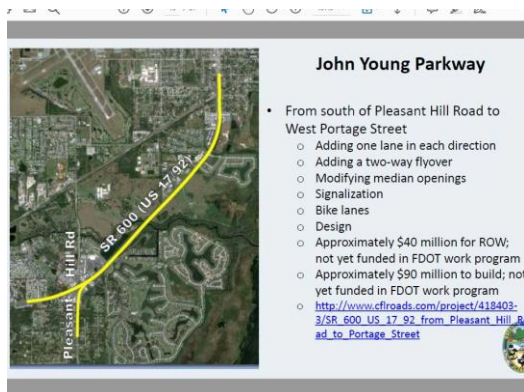


**Hoagland Boulevard**

- From John Young Parkway to 5<sup>th</sup> Street
  - 3.15 miles
  - approx. \$39 million
  - New 2.15 mile four-lane divided roadway
  - Widening 2 to 4 lane 0.91 mile divided roadway
  - 6' bike lanes
  - 6'-8' sidewalks on both sides of roadway
  - Curb and gutter
  - Bridge Over SunRail tracks and reconstruction of Shingle Creek Bridge
  - Completion anticipated 2021
  - <https://www.osceola.org/agencies/departments/transportation-departments/transportation-projects/hoagland-blvd/>

The good news for Pleasant Hill traffic is that the expansion of Hoagland Blvd at the north end of Pleasant Hill is already underway. Hoagland is being replaced for a 3.15 mile segment with a new four lane road that includes an overpass crossing the railroad tracks significantly improving the traffic flow and connection times for traffic heading north for Pleasant Hill to the 192 area. Not only is this project currently being constructed but is projected to be completed in 2021.

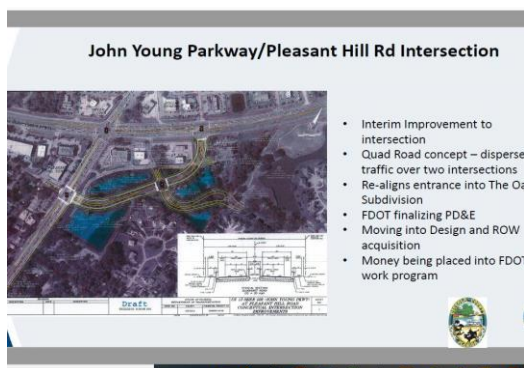
## John Young Parkway



**John Young Parkway**

- From south of Pleasant Hill Road to West Portage Street
  - Adding one lane in each direction
  - Adding a two-way flyover
  - Modifying median openings
  - Signalization
  - Bike lanes
  - Design
  - Approximately \$40 million for ROW; not yet funded in FDOT work program
  - Approximately \$90 million to build; not yet funded in FDOT work program
  - [http://www.cfroads.com/project/418403-3/SR\\_600\\_US\\_17\\_92\\_from\\_Pleasant\\_Hill\\_Road\\_to\\_Portage\\_Street](http://www.cfroads.com/project/418403-3/SR_600_US_17_92_from_Pleasant_Hill_Road_to_Portage_Street)

## John Young Parkway Pleasant Hill Intersection



**John Young Parkway/Pleasant Hill Rd Intersection**

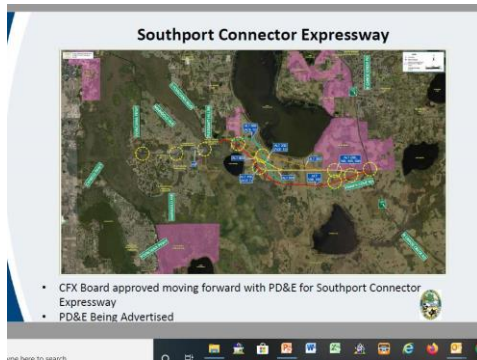
- Interim Improvement to intersection
- Quad Road concept – disperse traffic over two intersections
- Re-aligns entrance into The Oa Subdivision
- FDOT finalizing PD&E
- Moving into Design and ROW acquisition
- Money being placed into FDOT work program

While the Hoagland Blvd project will help improve the traffic flow from Pleasant Hill heading north to 192 a major traffic bottleneck for Poinciana Blvd will continue to exist for traffic heading east towards Kissimmee. The long term solution will be for 17/92 to be expanded by adding additional lanes and addition a significant

improvement to the 17/92 intersection by improving the intersection including a flyover. Unfortunately this is a big unfunded project with cost estimated to exceed \$90M. This will not be a short term project.

A short term solution will be possible by adding an additional new road connecting Poinciana Blvd to 17/92 to the south of the existing Pleasant Hill/17/92 intersection. This new road pictured above will add additional traffic capacity and significantly improve the traffic flow at the intersection. It also is much less expensive. The study for the costs and time estimates are just beginning for this project but estimates should become available soon.

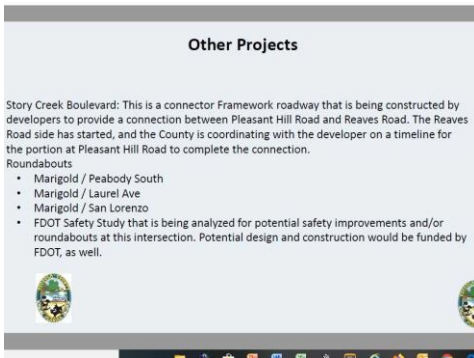
## **Southport Connector**



As described above current growth rates for Poinciana if sustained would have the population of Poinciana doubling over the next 20 years. Most of the new Poinciana arrivals will continue to want to commute to the north and to the east. The new construction projects planned for the north end of the Poinciana parkway will help but the currently planned road improvements for Poinciana Blvd and Pleasant Hill will simply not meet the needs for a doubling of the traffic volumes over the next 20 years. Another road eastbound from Poinciana is very much needed and because of the time it takes to build new roads the planning needs to take place now.

The good news is that a new eastbound road taking traffic out of Poinciana has been talked about for a long time. That project is called the Southport Connector. Like the Poinciana Parkway this project has been talked about for the past quarter century but nothing has been done to start construction. CFX has recently restarted the study for this project and once again put the project into their long term plan. This will not be good enough. Just like the Poinciana Parkway this road will never be built unless the people of Poinciana put enough pressure on our elected politicians to build the road for us. Twenty years when it comes to planning and building new roads is not a terribly long time. If Poinciana is going to survive from a traffic flow standpoint the time to start building this road is now.

## Other Road Projects



In addition to the projects described above there were several other projects discussed. Commissioner Arrington mentioned the Stony Creek Blvd project which is a road connecting Pleasant Hill to Reeves road being paid for and built by a developer. Also mentioned were the Polk County expansion of Marigold to four lanes between Palmetto and Cypress Parkway and the Cypress Parkway expansion to four lanes between Marigold and Poinciana Parkway. Commissioner Arrington described the FDOT safety study to add roundabout traffic circles to Marigold at Peabody, Laurel and San Lorenzo.

The additional project that generated lots of discussion was the possibility of connecting Reeves Road by building a bridge across Reedy Creek to connect to KOA. If constructed this new connector road would offer significant possibilities for relieving traffic from Cypress Parkway. Like the original Poinciana Parkway project and the Southport Connector this project has been discussed for many years but nothing seems to be happening. Osceola County claims this project remains in their long term plan. Past experience with Poinciana road projects raises questions whether the necessary permits to cross Reedy Creek wetlands preserve can be obtain and if Osceola County will ever be able to come up with the money to build the project? Time will tell?

## Summary

In summary, if the current growth rate continues the population of Poinciana will double in the next 20 years. More roads will be needed to prevent traffic gridlock. The good news is that in the near term major expansion of Poinciana roads will be taking place. The bad news is that between now and 2024 there will be lots of road construction taking place. In order to meet the needs of the growing population more roads will be needed beyond 2024. The time to start planning is now.