

July 2023 Poinciana Pac Meeting Summary

On Tuesday July 25, 2023 Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) and Osceola County presented their current plans for traffic improvements for the Poinciana area. These plans are summarized in the attached pictures.

The Osceola News Gazette provides a good article that describes what went on at the meeting. The article may be read at <https://www.aroundosceola.com>. Unlike the comment from one member of the audience quoted in the article, there was quite a bit of information about the current plans for the project presented at the meeting.

The controversy between CFX and the Poinciana group who opposes the project has gone on for more than two years while the study proceeds. As the article states the group opposing the project has even filed a Title VI Civil Rights complaint opposing the project. CFX says they were contacted in February 2023 about the complaint and responded at that time. Since then they said they have nothing back regarding the complaint yet after 240 days it still has not been closed.

CFX stated at the meeting that they are still evaluating alternatives for building the expressway using Cypress Parkway. **All those alternatives include placing the elevated expressway within the median of the Cypress Parkway corridor from Poinciana Parkway to Pleasant Hill Road.**

The study is currently evaluating a mechanically stabilized earth, or MSE wall concept, within the median of Cypress Parkway as an alternative. MSE walls enclose the fill used to elevate the roadway in this concept. The MSE wall height will vary based on factors such as the maximum height needed at cross street overpasses. While the overpass locations are likely to be where the MSE wall would be tallest, the maximum height would not be held for the length of the corridor. **Nothing was said about any 30 foot wall separating Poinciana.**

The study is also evaluating an elevated bridge structure alternative within the median of Cypress Parkway. The bridge structure would be open underneath to provide views below the expressway and to help maintain the feeling of connectivity within the community.

A hybrid alternative- encompassing both MSE wall and elevated bridge structures- is also being evaluated. This alternative includes MSE wall from Poinciana Parkway to Marigold Avenue and a bridge structure from Marigold Avenue to Pleasant Hill Road.

Following the presentation there were several questions asked by the audience. A summary of some of the questions and answers is provided below;

Q: Would it be possible for the toll road from Poinciana Parkway to Pleasant Hill be constructed entirely at ground level with overpasses being constructed for the local roads intersecting with Cypress Parkway?

A. There would not be enough length at each of the local roads to construct overpasses. For example an overpass for Solivita Blvd crossing Cypress Parkway at Solivita Marketplace would require the overpass to extend well past the property lines of the Marketplace to the north and inside Solivita to the south.

Turning lanes to enter and exit from the local roads to Cypress Parkway would be difficult if not impossible.

Q: How high will the elevated expressway be? What will it look like?

A: That has yet to be finalized. The expressway will need to be elevated to a minimum of 16 Ft at the intersections but will be lowered to close to ground level where the entrance and egress ramps will be located at locations such as Laurel and between Cypress Branch and Country Club.

Q: How many local lanes will be provided. We have 4 lanes today. Won't building the expressway lanes prevent future growth for local traffic?

A: The current plan provides for 4 local lanes in addition to the 4 new toll express lanes. It is estimated that 40% or more of the traffic volume on Cypress Parkway is made up of thru traffic as opposed to local traffic. Traffic studies show that by moving a percentage of the thru traffic to the expressway lanes future traffic congestion on the 4 local lanes will be significantly reduced. The current plan provides for future growth to add additional local lanes taking the number of local lanes from 4 to 6. Rather than hurting local traffic on Cypress Parkway this proposal will actually allow expansion of the number of local traffic lanes by 50%

Q: What will be the impact on local businesses? Rumor has it that the new expressway will kill the future of local businesses in Poinciana.

A: Future projections show that local businesses will be helped not harmed by the building of the expressway. Because the local traffic congestion will be eased by building the expressway access to shopping in the local businesses will be made easier. In addition, the better Cypress Parkway access to points east and west will bring additional customers to Poinciana local businesses.

Q: What will happen to Bravo and the small businesses in the Bravo plaza?

A: Records show that years ago Osceola County allowed the businesses in the Bravo plaza to build on the Cypress Parkway Right of Way. Unfortunately in order to build the expressway some of the land in the Bravo Plaza will need to be taken to build the expressway. Florida law provides procedures for public right of way to be taken in order to build road to serve the public good. CFX will abide by all those legal procedures to provide the businesses as much compensation and relocation help as the law will allow.

Q: Why has not CFX considered the Alternatives suggested by the SCAR group?

A: CFX stated that they have examined the alternatives suggested by the SCAR group. Their determination concluded that **“Those alternatives would have direct and significant adverse effects on the human and natural environment.”**

Q: Why won't CFX meet with those opposing the project?

A: CFX stated that they had been advised by their lawyers not to hold any meetings with those who filed the Federal Civil Rights complaint until the complaint is resolved. CFX stated that as soon as the complaint is closed, they will be eager to resume such public meetings.