



CFX can now meet residents about Southport Connector

By [Ken Jackson](#) on Thursday, October 3, 2024

This article may be read at <https://www.aroundosceola.com/news/cfx-can-now-meet-residents-about-southport-connector>

Poinciana residents: 'They are listening' about Cypress Parkway impacts



Poinciana resident Wendy Farrell (left) discusses some of the proposed Southport Connector and Cypress Parkway plans with CFX Program Manager Ralph Bove at Monday's stakeholders meeting. PHOTO/KEN JACKSON



The Central Florida Expressway Authority has released renderings of what intersections along the raised Southport Connector could look like along Cypress Parkway. This one's at Doverplum Avenue. GRAPHIC/CFX

Something must be done about the traffic on Cypress Parkway into and through Poinciana. That headline has been written nonstop for the last two decades.

While a project that could help alleviate that is on the Central Florida Expressway Authority's (CFX) drawing board, it's been met with vocal opposition by those who live and work there.

The two sides sat down, met, presented ideas and shared concerns Monday at the Poinciana Library about the proposed Southport Connector— specifically about a stretch designed to run down the middle of the beleaguered Cypress Parkway.

To catch you up, the Poinciana Parkway has already been built from Cypress Parkway to U.S. Highway 17-92, and is being expanded to four lanes north of Marigold Avenue. State and federal funds will be used to create a connection from the north end of that road to County Road 532 (Osceola-Polk Line Road), and then another connection to Interstate 4 that will link to the interchange at another toll road, State Road 429.

On the other side of Poinciana is a proposed connection to Florida's Turnpike and Canoe Creek Road south of St. Cloud, to the south of Lake Tohopekaliga.

The sticking point for residents has been the connection to the two. CFX, with the blessing of Osceola and Polk County leaders, have proposed a raised expressway—first conceived

in 2009—in the median of Cypress along the bustling business district, with new lanes of it for local traffic on either side. It would require getting some right of way, which may require relocating a business or two, CFX said.

While residents are still concerned about how a raised road would bisect the communities north of the Parkway from the businesses on the south side, and how building all those lanes will impact those businesses, the sides seem to be getting closer together based on Monday's meeting.

Mary Brooks, CFX's Public Involvement Officer from the project, said that all plans right now for the road are just concepts, with Project Development and Environment (PD&E) and other impact studies to be done over the next two to three years will determine how the expressway will be built, and if and how the "local" part of Cypress Parkway will be improved.

"This project still has many hurdles to clear," Brooks said. "This is a large project, and it has not been funded for construction yet."

Renderings of the raised expressway released last year showed the raised expressway, and residents feared it would wall off homes of a largely minority and lower-middle class community from its business district. A local group, SCAR (Southport Connector Alternative Routes) suggested alternated routes for the road, along Koa Street and Poinciana Boulevard — that aren't feasible due to limited right of way or, in the case of Poinciana, are now not available as the county has begun a widening project. They even went as far as filing a federal Title VI, saying building this road would, "Have an unacceptable and unlawful discriminatory impact on the residents of Poinciana," which would "decimate the community."

While CFX officials admitted last year the court filing prevented the authority from meeting with any residents involved in it, in June the Federal Highway Administration's Environmental Justice board denied the specific complaint at the time, and "stakeholder meetings" like Monday can now take place with residents.

And, at that meeting, two big changes were revealed. CFX said there are now options for the expressway that will be elevated over roads like Solivita Boulevard and Laurel, Marigold and Doverplum avenues that include bridge structures rather than a big wall, or at least a hybrid of the two that would eliminate what locals call the "Great Wall of Poinciana" they fear would bi-sect the community.

The non-tolled, street-level Cypress Parkway would also be widened from four to six lanes, with widened intersections to improve the flow of cars through them.

(For more details on the project, go to <https://www.movepoinciana.com>. To participate in a data-gathering survey of local residents or workers, go to <https://www.research.net/r/SouthportExpressway>.)

CFX's challenge would be to do all this within the 300-foot existing right of way on the Parkway without having to acquire much more than businesses or their parking lots currently occupy, CFX program manager for the Southport Connector Ralph Bove said.

It's all in the name of doing ... something, as Cypress Parkway traffic counts have increased 25% on Cypress Parkway since 2019 according to CFX.

"The goal is to relieve traffic in the area for everyone," Bove said. "The impact to the community, the noise, fitting into the right of way, will be considered at every step.

"Minor amounts of right of way will be needed, although we're trying to avoid this. CFX has a track record of assisting anyone in need of relocating, even before the location is impacted."

CFX's vision is to pull highspeed pass-through traffic—which may be coming from County Road 532 or even I-4 or 429 if those links are built first—off of Cypress Parkway to improve local traffic in what the agency said could be five years or more, when the road is finally built.

Relief can't come soon enough for Poinciana and Solivita residents who asked questions Monday. At least one said she does business in Davenport or Haines City in Polk County rather than in Poinciana or Kissimmee to avoid the "traffic nightmare" currently on Cypress Parkway and Pleasant Hill Road.

"It's come a long way," said Wendy Farrell, a Cypress Woods resident who attended Monday's gathering. "This is a huge project that must take into account our quality of life. It passes through important areas like our recreation areas."

"Getting three lanes of Cypress Parkway is huge. While we'd love it if we were just getting that and not the expressway ... let's say this is a win-win for everyone, and it proves that they are listening."

Brooks said more meeting like Monday's, including an "Alternatives Public Meeting", will be held in the spring.