Beckett Bridge PD&E Study - Alternatives Workshop
Responses to Comments

Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities

The existing sidewalks are only 2 feet 2 inches wide and do not meet standards established by the American Disabilities Act. There are no bicycle lanes or shoulders on the existing bridge. Current design standards for similar bridges include shoulders and wider sidewalks.

Sidewalks, 5.5 feet wide, are proposed on both sides of the Movable Bridge Alternative. Shoulders, which can be used by experienced bicyclists, also 5.5 feet wide, are also proposed on both sides of a new movable bridge.

In addition to accommodating cyclists, the proposed shoulders improve safety for pedestrians and allow cars on the bridge to pull over out of the travel lanes to allow emergency vehicles to pass. Shoulders also provide a safer area for disabled vehicles to pull over.

A future recreational trail, the Howard Park Trail, is proposed to cross the Beckett Bridge. Accordingly, improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be considered when bridge improvements are made.

For the Movable Bridge Alternative, six-foot wide sidewalks and four-foot wide shoulders are also proposed on Riverside Drive, approaching the bridge, between Chesapeake Drive and Forest Avenue. Because of the limited right-of-way, a six-foot wide sidewalk is proposed only on the north side of the roadway between the bridge and Chesapeake Drive. No sidewalks are proposed on the south side of the roadway, adjacent to the Bayshore Mobile Home Park. No impacts to residential property adjacent to the roadway will occur from construction of the sidewalks or shoulders for the movable bridge alternative.

A new bridge is designed to last about 75 years. Although there are currently no sidewalks on the roadway beyond the project limits, they could be added within the next 75 years, depending on future development and funding. It is much more expensive to add sidewalks to the bridge after it is constructed.

Providing wider sidewalks or shoulders on the existing bridge would require widening of the bridge. The Rehabilitation Alternative, as proposed, does not include widening of the existing bridge.

Extensive additional engineering analysis is required to determine if a sidewalk could be added to the existing bridge as part of the Rehabilitation improvements.

On average, more than 7,000 vehicles a day travel over the Beckett Bridge in both directions. Closing one lane to vehicular traffic would not be practical if the bridge remains.

Vertical Clearance

A permit from the US Coast Guard (USCG) will be required if a new bridge is constructed. The USCG has the authority to determine the minimum height required for a new fixed bridge. There are no official guidelines for clearances at this location.

A number of waterfront property owners along Whitcomb Bayou have expressed concern about their loss deep water access if a new fixed bridge is constructed. In addition, some of these property owners already have boats which require the bridge to open. The Bayshore Mobile Home Park also provides docks for sailboats and other recreational boats for seasonal residents. Accordingly, it is not anticipated that the USCG would permit a fixed bridge with a vertical clearance of 6 – 8 feet.

Historical Context and Significance

The bridge has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

If SHPO determines that the Preferred Alternative results in an "adverse impact" to the bridge, efforts to offset this impact (mitigation) will be required. Examples of actions that could offset the impact could include the following:

- Photographic documentation of the bridge which will be archived.
- Preservation of a portion of the bridge to be displayed in a public area with educational information to preserve the history of the bridge.

The project team recognizes the historic character of the community and will consider possible impacts to the historic character when selecting a Preferred Alternative.

A Cultural Resource Committee has been established to address the historical significance of the bridge and to provide input during the development of alternatives and selection of a Preferred Alternative. This committee includes representatives of the SHPO, FDOT, Tarpon Springs Historical Society, and City and County staff.

If the Rehabilitation Alternative is selected as the Preferred Alternative, additional coordination with the SHPO would be required during development of the final design plans for the needed repairs.

Costs

Cost Estimates for the proposed alternatives are provided below.

Rehabilitation	$9.5 M
New Movable Bridge (7.8 feet Vertical Clearance)	$15.8 M
New Fixed Bridge (28 feet Vertical Clearance)	$11.1 M + Cost to Purchase Right-of-Way

Costs include Design, Construction and Construction Engineering Inspection. The cost estimates for a new Fixed Bridge does not include the cost to purchase adjacent property for additional right-of-way. No right-of-way is required for the New Movable Bridge.

Flooding and Roadway Repair

Addressing the need for roadway maintenance on Riverside Drive outside the project limits (Chesapeake Drive to Forest Avenue) is not included in this PD&E Study. The study's focus is evaluation of potential improvements to the existing bridge. Roadway work associated with the Preferred Alternative selected for the bridge improvements will be limited to Riverside Drive within the project limits. Although Pinellas County owns and operates the Beckett Bridge, the City of Tarpon Springs is responsible for maintenance on Riverside Drive/N. Spring Boulevard. A copy of the Summary of Comments will be provided to the City of Tarpon Springs.

Currently no stormwater management system exists within the project corridor. If a replacement bridge is selected as the Preferred Alternative, a curb and gutter drainage system is proposed. The proposed system will convey collected stormwater runoff from the roadway to Whitcomb Bayou in the vicinity of the bridge. This system may reduce flooding in some areas. During final design, evaluation of methods to address flooding issues near the bridge will be continued in more detail.

The low elevation of the area contributes to local flooding. Raising the elevation sufficiently to completely eliminate flooding issues near the bridge would require acquisition of property adjacent to the roadway.

Community/Property Impacts

Construction of a new movable bridge, as proposed, will not require acquisition of any additional adjacent property. In contrast, construction of either option for the proposed new fixed bridge will require acquisition of about two acres of adjacent property. Depending on the alternative, three to five residences would require relocation and impacts could occur to some residents of the Bayshore Mobile Home Park.

Although visual impacts are subjective, it is recognized that the fixed bridge would impact the view from the adjacent properties.

Traffic and Evacuation

Recent traffic studies indicate that on average, approximately 7,700 cars travel over the Beckett Bridge on a daily basis. Pinellas County recognizes that this section of Riverside Drive is an important route to Tarpon Avenue, which is considered a designated emergency evacuation route.

Traffic calming measures, including installation of additional speed "humps" on Riverside Drive were not evaluated as part of the Beckett Bridge PD&E Study. Decisions concerning the need for additional speed "humps" within the project area would be made by the City of Tarpon Springs.

Detour

Detouring traffic during construction of the Rehabilitation or the Replacement alternatives would require construction of a temporary bridge next to the existing bridge, or constructing the bridges cannot be avoided without impacting substantial additional adjacent property owners. Efforts will be made during design to minimize the detour as much as possible. However, the anticipated length of the detour is six months for the Rehabilitation alternative, one year for construction of a movable bridge, and two years for construction of a fixed bridge.

In addition to detouring traffic around Whitcomb Bayou via Whitcomb Boulevard, two other detour routes are available. Traffic can also be diverted from Alternate US 19 to Florida Avenue using Meres Boulevard. If adequate advanced notice and signing are provided, it also may be possible to divert traffic south of the project corridor via Klosterman Road, Carlton Road and Curlew Road to reach Florida Avenue.