PALM HARBOR
ALT. US 19
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in conjunction with Pinellas County and the Pinellas Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), are examining potential improvements on Alt. US 19 near Downtown Palm Harbor. These improvements are intended to maintain traffic flow while improving safety for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists. The project also may offer the opportunity for aesthetic improvements that, if funded, could help serve to direct travelers to businesses in Historic Downtown Palm Harbor.*

The project is seeking to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve pedestrian/cyclist safety.
- Improve motorist safety.
- Create an opportunity to develop a gateway to Downtown Palm Harbor.
- Improve side street access to Alt. US 19.
- Maintain efficient traffic flow on Alt. US 19.

Two potential alternatives are currently being considered: **1) a traffic signal at Nebraska Avenue or 2) a roundabout at Florida Avenue.** Both of these potential alternatives, along with a “no-build” alternative, will be weighed against the above objectives, and the results will be presented to the Palm Harbor Community. Community input will be considered alongside the results of the technical analysis to determine the improvements that best address the project objectives and meet the desires of the community.

*Project includes funding traffic-related improvements only at this time. Funding for additional aesthetic improvements will need to be allocated by Pinellas County.
STUDY AREA OVERVIEW (EXISTING “NO-BUILD” CONDITION)

The study area includes the portion of Alt. US 19 adjacent to Historic Downtown Palm Harbor, with a specific focus on the intersections at Florida Avenue and Nebraska Avenue. Characteristics of Alt. US 19 within the study area include the following:

- Traveled by 21,000 vehicles per day (2014).
- Two 11-foot-wide travel lanes with center turn lane.
- Pinellas Trail runs parallel along west side.
- Bike lanes in both directions.
- Intersection at Alt. US 19 and Florida Avenue controlled by stop signs (on Florida Avenue only).
- Intersection at Alt. US 19 and Nebraska Avenue controlled by a stop sign (on Nebraska avenue only).
- Marked crosswalks across Florida Avenue.
- Unmarked crosswalks across Alt. US 19.

IMPROVEMENT OPTION 1: TRAFFIC SIGNAL AT NEBRASKA AVENUE

Improvement Option 1 is the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Nebraska Avenue and Alt. US 19. The signal will:

- Provide for controlled pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist crossing of Alt. US 19.
- Provide for safer turning movements, particularly with left-turn arrows for Alt. US 19.
- Significantly reduce the number of T-bone and left-turn crashes.
- Provide better access from side streets compared with stop signs at Nebraska Avenue by halting traffic along Alt. US 19.
- Traffic signal design has the potential to create an aesthetic gateway feature.
IMPROVEMENT OPTION 2: ROUNDABOUT AT FLORIDA AVENUE

A roundabout is a circular intersection where traffic flows around a center island. This potential improvement option includes building a roundabout at the intersection of Florida Avenue and Alt. US 19. Characteristics of a roundabout include the following:

- No stopping, resulting in more efficient traffic flow.
- Slower intersection speeds (~20 mph), resulting in increased safety for pedestrians and motorists.
- Up to 89% reduction in serious injury or fatal crashes compared to stop signs and traffic signals.
- Designated crosswalks for improved pedestrian safety when crossing US Alt. 19 and/or Florida Avenue.
- Low maintenance costs.
- Center island provides opportunity for a gateway feature.
- Effective traffic calming technique.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Why is a signal at Florida Avenue not being considered?** The traffic volumes are not high enough along Florida Avenue to meet the Federal Highway Administration’s traffic signal warrant criteria.

2. **What is a traffic signal warrant?** A traffic signal warrant is a series of guidelines used to determine if a traffic signal should be considered at a location. The warranting conditions are based primarily on traffic volumes, pedestrian volumes, and safety criteria.

3. **Which is the safest option for motorists?** A roundabout offers many of the benefits of traffic signals, but it is much safer because of its slower speeds and design geometry. When compared to a traffic signal, a roundabout can result in 48% fewer crashes.

4. **Which is the safest option for pedestrians/cyclists?** A roundabout improves safety for bicyclists and pedestrians in a number of ways:
   - Slows vehicle speeds, which makes conditions safer for everyone.
   - Has fewer potential vehicle/pedestrian conflict points when compared to a typical four-way stop or signalized intersection.
5. **Since traffic doesn’t have to stop, won’t that cause more severe crashes?** Because of the slower speeds and the unique traffic flow of a roundabout, the potential for fatal and severe crashes is significantly reduced.

6. **Would a roundabout slow down first responders?** Roundabouts are designed to accommodate large trucks, including firetrucks. In addition, they are designed with mountable curbs in the center island, which allow first responders to pass through the intersection without extra delay.

7. **Can my boat trailer or motorhome fit in a roundabout?** Yes, roundabouts are designed to accommodate large trucks and trailers.

8. **Would drivers who are unfamiliar with roundabouts drive the wrong direction?** No, roundabouts include clear signage and roadway striping designed to channel traffic in the correct direction.

9. **Would a roundabout create traffic jams?** As with all traffic control devices (including stop signs and traffic signals), a roundabout can introduce additional delay on Alt. US 19, but this delay will be comparable to that caused by a traffic signal during rush hour.

10. **During rush hour, would I be stuck on a side street at a roundabout?** Compared to the current stop sign at Florida Avenue, a roundabout would reduce side street delay by more than 50%.

11. **Which would cost more for construction and maintenance—a traffic signal or a roundabout?** The life-cycle costs of a roundabout will be less than a traffic signal. The cost of building a roundabout at Florida Avenue would be higher than the traffic signal at Nebraska Avenue, but long-term operating and maintenance costs would be lower because expensive electronics and electricity costs are not required.

12. **How would cyclists navigate a roundabout?** Cyclists have two options when navigating a roundabout. Because traffic through a roundabout moves at 20 mph, experienced cyclists will be comfortable using the traffic lane and navigating it as a vehicle. However, other cyclists can use special ramps to move from the bike lanes onto the sidewalk, then navigate the roundabout as a pedestrian.

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**PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION**

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