



Pinellas County conducted a Kick-Off Open House for the San Martin Boulevard over Riviera Bay PD&E Study on July 14, 2015, from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Holy Family Church, Diffley Hall, 200 78th Avenue NE, St. Petersburg, Florida. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the community and to provide an opportunity for them to comment on the project early in the planning process. The kick-off open house was advertised in the Tampa Bay Times and Florida Administrative Register. Meeting notifications, project fact sheets and comment forms were sent to elected officials, agencies, property owners near the proposed improvements, and other interested parties.

One hundred and thirty two (132) persons signed in at the meeting. Attendees were given a project fact sheet and a project comment form at the sign-in table. An informative project video was shown continuously in the hall during the open house. Project aerials as well as environmental and engineering boards were on display at the meeting. Project team members were available to answer questions and take comments. Comment forms could be completed at the meeting and dropped in the comment boxes or completed later and mailed to the project manager. All materials on display were uploaded to the project website, <http://www.pinellascounty.org/sanmartinbridge>, following the meeting.

Comments received from the public as a result of the kick-off open house are summarized below. Sixty-six (66) comments were received between June 22 and August 9, 2015.

Specific details of alternatives, including potential impacts, were not presented at the Kick-Off Open House. However, a general discussion of options to be considered was presented. Touchdowns for replacement alternatives for the San Martin Bridge were shown. Some comments specifically stated a preference for a particular option or options that were not shown. The following tallies were taken from the comments received, however citizens were not specifically asked to indicate a preference.

Vertical Alignment Options for Replacement Bridge

Options	In Favor of	Opposed to
Low-level Fixed Bridge (18 ft)	6	1
Mid-Level Fixed Bridge (45 ft)	7	2
High- Level Fixed Bridge (70 ft)		3

Alternatives to be evaluated for the San Martin Bridge

No Build	Rehabilitation	Replacement
1	2	32

Many individuals commented on specific concerns and issues. A summary of their issues by topic follows:

Safety

- Allow for pedestrian traffic across the bridge
- Current bridge is too narrow
- Visibility is very poor on the approach due to vegetation and rail heights
- The profile grade of the roadway is too low for proper safe passage, many places go under water at extreme high tides. Hurricane Francis (2004) made the bridge impassible stranding approximately 30 homes
- Need speed bumps or stop signs to avoid the road being a speedway
- Extending the trail will increase crime to the area
- Simply widening the road north of the bridge to accommodate the many recreational cyclists and runners would be of paramount importance
- Barriers between autos and trail users are essential
- Speed of autos should be examined in the trail zone
- Necessary emergency watercraft would be able to pass under a new, higher bridge. Necessary emergency watercraft have been blocked by the existing bridge and have, on occasion when they were needed, hovered just outside the bridge when attempting to carry out their responsibilities
- The bridge should be longer and straighter, or more widely curved, to eliminate current sight restrictions

Recreation

- Access to the park and beyond Rio Vista, onto 1st Street via a new bridge and safe trail would open up access to downtown St. Petersburg for bicyclers from Snug Harbor
- Either provide proper parking for fisherman or prohibit fishing
- Consider widening the new bridge to accommodate a bike lane and to provide for a bike lane over the entire length of the project
- Any trail or sidewalk along the bridge needs to extend all the way to the Friendship Trail
- Bicycle trail on one side, pedestrian sidewalk on the other
- If the bridge is not redone, please still pave a sidewalk or section for pedestrians & cyclists
- Need special area for fishing to prevent line problems for fishing people and boaters
- Appears bike trail is more important than boat owners – who cannot get through with tides due to narrow pass through
- Minimize boat traffic closure when working on bridge
- Conduct a boat census of all homeowners behind the bridge

Environmental

- The New San Martin Bridge needs to have wider than a 30 foot water opening, it should be many times that to get close to its original natural flow which was cut off in 1962
- Please look into storm surge/tidal flow. The fill dirt brought in for original construction causes a bottleneck for water flow.
- Roadside drainage from Osceola Court to north of the Derby Lane entrance drive does not function
- Is it possible to include removal of non-native vegetation in the plan
- Avoid impacts to mangroves
- Increase Safety of Manatees swimming thru the bridge channel
- Flow studies will determine environmental impact of keeping canals cleaner vs stagnation, increasing fish access to many more areas, decrease risk of vessel collisions under bridge
- Adequate provisions need to be made to identify and assess any historic properties / cultural resources that may be present within the Area of Potential Effect
- Widening the opening under the bridge would slow the speed of water flowing underneath the existing bridge thereby allowing silt to wash into canals inland from the bridge
- Remove the entire existing causeway (both sides) that connects the existing bridge span with the two shorelines. This would increase the flow of water in and out of the bayou
- Large boats and house boats pump shower, kitchen and human waste into the canal, unless they collect it in some sort of storage tanks. They also have inboard propulsion engines that leak oil, fuel and slime into our waters.
- There is stagnant water to the west of the bridge

Bridge

- The bridge should be completely replaced with a much taller & wider span allowing for a much safer and wider road
- The extended ramps with the 45' and 70' elevation will impact access on East Tallahassee Drive
- Full bridge replacement; closure of existing bridge; no alignment shift
- The bridge should be built further east to have less impact on the homes located to the west
- Any alternative which doesn't block access both from Weedon Drive to San Martin Blvd. and to 83rd Ave, NE in St. Petersburg would be more reasonable than the High and Mid profile alternatives and ought to be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated to determine whether a structure higher than 18 feet is feasible. Even a 20 foot high structure would be a welcome improvement to the navigational, recreational, and emergency watercraft needs of the inland neighborhoods.

- 30 feet vertical clearance is just right
- You must add one additional alternative: NO BRIDGE (remove the existing Bridge)
- Would like to see bridge height at 20, 25 & 30' heights, the two larger ones shown are unrealistic

Traffic

- Delay project until construction on Gandy Blvd. is complete
- If possible leave one lane open on the bridge during construction
- Extend project limits to 4th Street and fix WB (west bound) left turn back-ups
- A traffic study should also be considered at the intersections of 4th St. N & 83rd Ave and at San Martin and Gandy Blvd due to the increase traffic that the project will bring
- No traffic light, a pedestrian crossing signal should work
- During renovations a traffic light at Gandy may be needed for residents to get out of neighborhoods at rush hours

Quality of Life / Aesthetics

- Assist the Riviera Bay Civic Association's community in creating another new display of pride around St. Pete
- Bring reclaimed water to the north side of the bridge
- Have fishing sidewalks
- No need for 4 lanes through this residential area
- Those who live inland from the bridge could dock larger boats at their homes. A number of residents of the inland neighborhoods, although living in homes with docks on canals, keep their boats in marinas because they cannot get their boats under the existing bridge

Other

- The existing roadway from Gandy Blvd to Riviera Bay needs reconstruction
- Accomplish the project more rapidly
- Larger bridge span width and height means larger boats able to pass which would increase property values and tax revenue
- Neither the High or Mid alternatives are feasible, given political and community opposition to the measures which would be required to implement either of these alternatives
- Neither the High or Mid alternative are feasible when the vessel size is considered. Water depths in canals in the affected neighborhoods seldom, if ever, exceed 3 feet at dockside, nor is their dock space which could accommodate boats of those lengths
- Why another study? – waste of time and money – another 18 months