



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Please refer to the following FAQ list for commonly requested information or responses received at the Public Hearing on March 21, 2024.

1) Q: How much will this project cost? When will construction begin?

A: The total cost of the Preferred Alternative is approximately \$70 million. At this time, the FDOT's Five-Year Work Program includes funding for Construction in FY 2028. However, the anticipated construction timeframe has not been determined at this time.

2) Q: What improvements are being made with regards to bicyclist and pedestrian safety?

A: The Preferred Alternative includes a wider bridge, which would allow a 5.5-foot bike lane for cyclists, as well as a 14-foot shared use path behind a barrier on the bridge. The Preferred Alternative will allow bicyclists to use the dedicated bike lane or the shared use path to cross the bridge.

3) Q: How will maintenance of traffic work while the bridge is under construction?

A: The new bridge will be built in phases. Four lanes of traffic will be maintained on the existing bridges while the southern half of the new bridge is built in the median. Once completed, westbound traffic will be shifted onto the new bridge and the existing westbound bridge will be demolished so the northern half of the new bridge can be constructed. Once completed, the four lanes of traffic will be placed in their final configuration and the existing eastbound bridge will be demolished.

4) Q: Will construction require lane closures?

A: The intent is to maintain four lanes of traffic through the construction zone. There will likely be several planned lane closures throughout the duration of the project to allow the contractor to perform certain activities needed to construct the project. These closures are expected to be of limited duration and whenever possible will occur during off peak hours.

5) Q: Would a future bridge or bridges be higher than the existing bridge? Will it impact our views?

A: The proposed deck elevation at the center of the new bridge for the preferred alternative would be approximately 26-ft, making it around 10-ft higher than the existing bridges. The minimum vertical clearance at the ends of the bridge would be approximately 13-ft which is 7-ft higher than the existing bridge.

The additional height is needed to address storm surge and FDOT corrosion criteria. The higher end spans allow for a pedestrian walkway under the ends of the bridge. This will provide safe passage under the roadway for pedestrians and other users of the shared use paths.

6) Q: Will there be any noise impacts from this project?

A: The effects of traffic noise associated with the preferred alternative have been evaluated in accordance with Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 772, and the FDOT's PD&E



District One

Manual. Several noise-sensitive sites along the project corridor may hear traffic noise levels that approach or exceed Noise Abatement criteria established by the Federal Highway Administration.

Based on traffic modeling analysis, potential noise barriers were evaluated adjacent to impacted portions of the Plymouth Harbor facility and Bird Key Park. However, barriers at these locations would not meet the reasonable cost effectiveness criteria. Therefore, potential noise barriers are not currently recommended for further consideration for this project. **However, this will be re-evaluated as necessary prior to the advancement of future project phases.**

The project will result in some additional noise impact during project construction. These may include heavy machinery and pile driving. However, this work will be done in consideration of local noise ordinances and the FDOT's *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction* and the team will minimize local construction noise and vibration impacts to the greatest extent possible.

7) Q: Will there environmental impacts be to the wildlife in the bay?

A1: The findings of the project's Natural Resources Evaluation have been coordinated with the applicable federal and state resource agencies. The project will result in minor impacts to mangroves, seagrass and waterward areas comprising federally-designated Essential Fish Habitat. However, as part of their review of the project, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service concurred with the FDOT's determination that through the use of species-specific protection measures and the adherence to environmental permit conditions and construction best management practices, the preferred alternative, as proposed, is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to federal or state listed or protected species or federally-designated critical habitat, including manatees and the sea grass.

If the preferred alternative is approved by the Office of Environmental Management, FDOT District One will continue to work closely with environmental agencies in future project phases to meet all environmental requirements.

8) Q: What is happening to the park?

A: The project will utilize approximately 0.62 acres of Bird Key Park, all of which is located within FDOT right of way. The project will only utilize this FDOT-owned portion of the park to relocate a portion of the Bird Key Park Multi-Use Recreational Trail (MURT).

Bird Key Park is a City of Sarasota property on the north side of SR 789 on Bird Key, approximately 1.2 miles due southwest of downtown Sarasota. Bird Key Park is owned by the City of Sarasota. Part of the park is located within FDOT's right of way along SR 789. FDOT and the City have executed a 25-year lease agreement.

The project's proposed utilization of the park is consistent with the lease agreement in place which specifies that the primary purpose of the right of way (e.g., where the park and MURT occur) is as a transportation corridor. Additionally, the project will maintain public access to the park and its various amenities throughout construction.



District One

9) Q: Will there be any aesthetic treatments or landscaping included on the new bridges?

A: Context-sensitive solutions such as aesthetic features and landscaping will be evaluated further during the design phase so that the project is in harmony with local communities and preserves and/or enhances the natural, environmental, scenic, and aesthetic values of the area. An aesthetic committee will be formed by the City of Sarasota to determine the finishes on the proposed Little Ringling Bridge and approaches.

10) Q: The No-Build Alternative seems less expensive, why is the project not moving forward with that option?

A: The “no-build” alternative assumes that no improvements are made to the Little Ringling bridges through the year 2050, except routine maintenance. While the cost upfront seems less expensive, due to the condition of the bridges, the no-build alternative would require increasingly costly and disruptive maintenance and major rehabilitation projects to keep them functional. All projects would require work from barges, and many would require periodic lane closures.

Routine maintenance would include

- Regular periodic maintenance
- Full deck replacements
- Repairs to the substructure and beams
- Replacement of structural pile jackets
- Cathodic (corrosion) protection