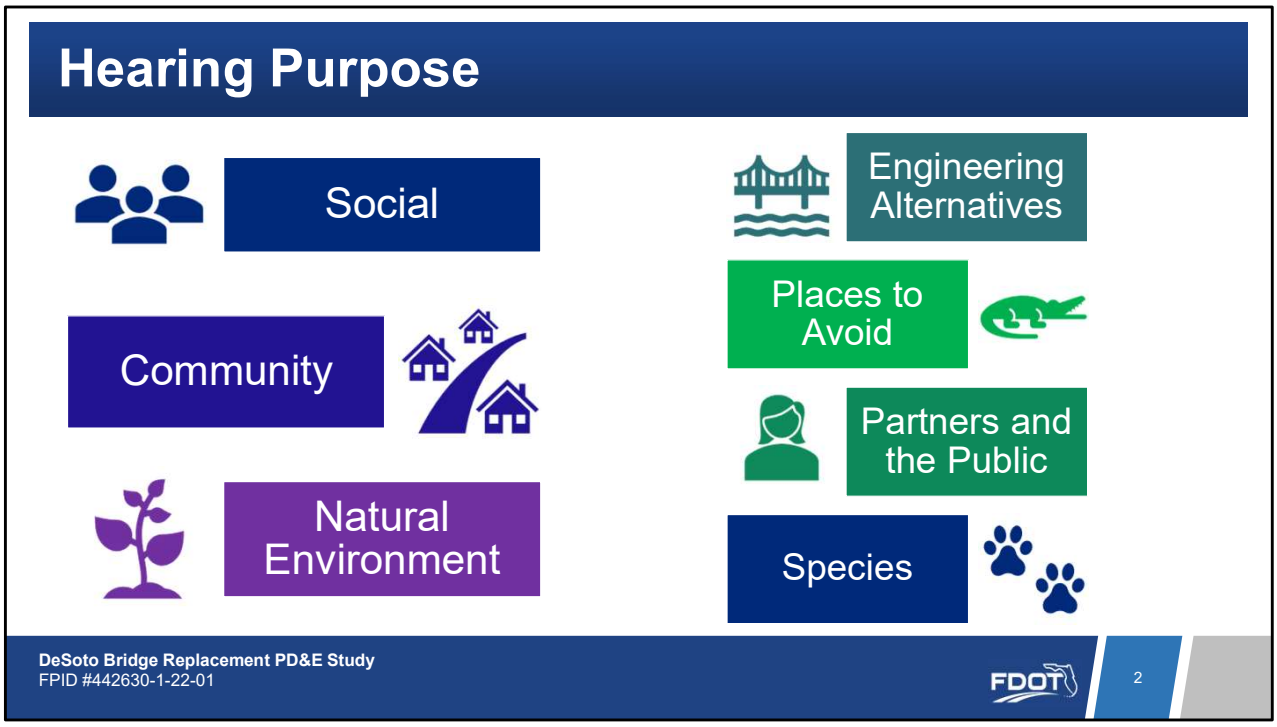
Welcome to The Florida Department of Transportation's public hearing for the DeSoto Bridge Replacement Project Development and Environment, or P D and E, study. We appreciate your attendance and participation.



This public hearing is being conducted to give the public the opportunity to review and provide comments on the proposed preferred alternative and associated effects on the social, economic, cultural, natural, and physical environment. The purpose of this P D and E study is to evaluate engineering and environmental data and document information that will aid F D O T District One and the F D O T Office of Environmental Management (or O E M) in determining the type, preliminary design, and location of the proposed improvements.

Project Overview

Study limits:

- DeSoto Bridge
- State Road (SR) 64 (Manatee Avenue East) to Haben Boulevard
- Approximately 1.3 miles
- Manatee County, FL

The study begins on US 41 from State Road 64 (Manatee Avenue East) and extends approximately 1.3 miles to Haben Boulevard in Manatee County. The bridge provides an important north-south connection over the Manatee River between the Cities of Bradenton and Palmetto.

The department proposes to replace the bridge with an in-kind replacement. The proposed new bridge includes two travel lanes in each direction, inside and outside shoulders and multimodal improvements such as a 12-foot barrier separated shared-use path on both sides of the bridge to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians and improve safety.

Project Need

- Address the continued structural degradation
- Maintain a critical link for regional travel to connect communities and the movement of goods
- Address substandard design elements
- Maintain evacuation route
- Accommodate multimodal activity
- Provide inside and outside shoulders to allow vehicles to pull out of travel lanes if necessary

The need for the proposed improvements for the DeSoto Bridge is to address the continued structural degradation and substandard design elements and to maintain a critical link between the cities of Bradenton and Palmetto and regional travel.

The DeSoto Bridge is an emergency evacuation route and is part of the Strategic Intermodal Systems or SIS network.

Maintaining access to this bridge is critical for safety, connecting communities, emergency response, and the movement of goods.

It is important to the transportation network and regional connectivity.

Existing Conditions

Bridge

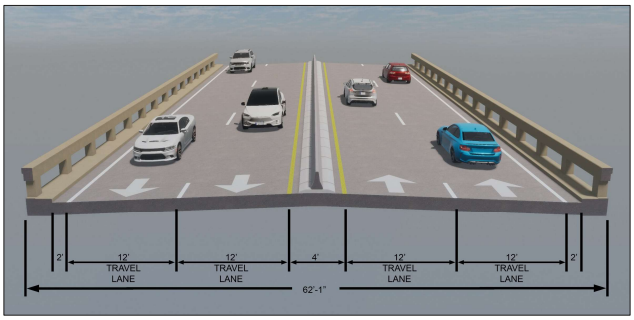
- Four 12-foot travel lanes
- Built in 1957

Deteriorating Bridge Elements

- Cost prohibitive rehabilitation

Substandard design

- Insufficient pedestrian/bicycle accommodations
- No shoulders to pull out of the travel lanes if necessary



Within the project limits, the DeSoto Bridge is a four-lane bridge, with two 12-foot lanes in each direction, with a concrete barrier separating traffic. The bridge was originally constructed in 1957, has a posted speed of 50 miles per hour, and provides 40 feet of vertical clearance over the Manatee River. This bridge is experiencing corrosion issues; therefore, rehabilitation is no longer cost-effective. The bridge also has substandard design elements including insufficient pedestrian/bicycle accommodations and no inside or outside shoulders which would allow vehicles to pull out of the travel lanes if necessary.

Project History

Public Meetings

Kick-off Meetings
May 23 and 25, 2023

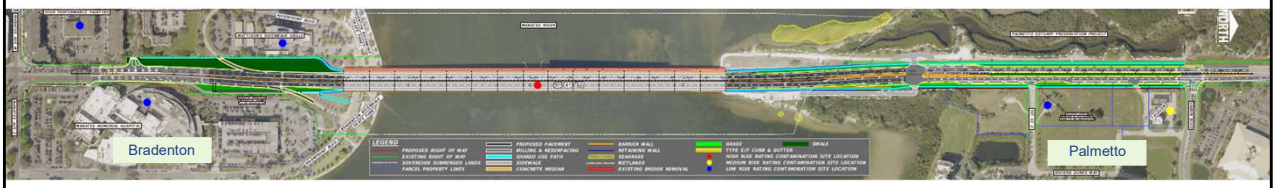
Alternatives Meetings
October 17 and 19, 2023

Public Hearing
April 30, 2024

Throughout this P D and E study process, F D O T has looked at different concepts to replace the bridge with an in-kind replacement. After environmental and engineering analyses and public and agency comments, alternatives were eliminated.

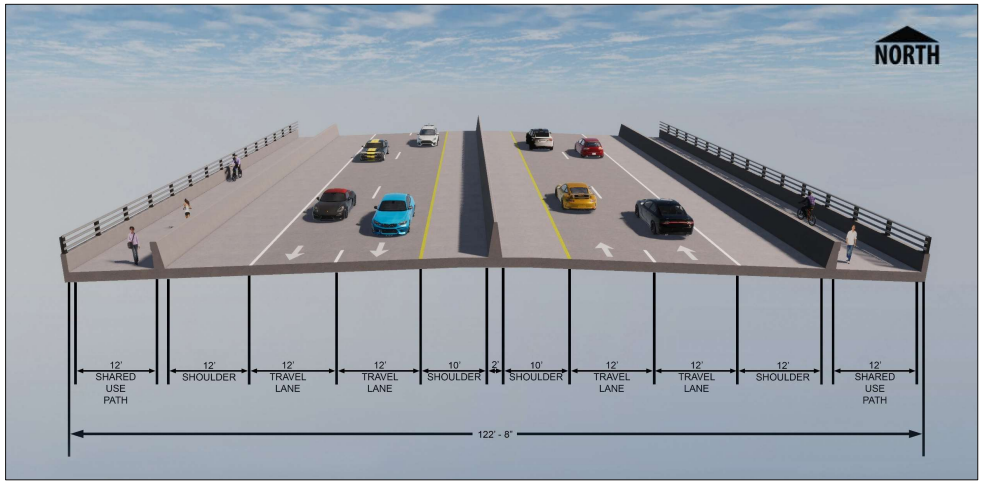
The last public meetings were Alternatives Public Meetings held in-person on October 17th, 2023 and virtually on October 19th, 2023. At the meetings, we asked for your input on proposed improvements. Based on your comments and additional environmental and engineering analyses, a preferred alternative was selected for the DeSoto Bridge.

Preferred Alternative



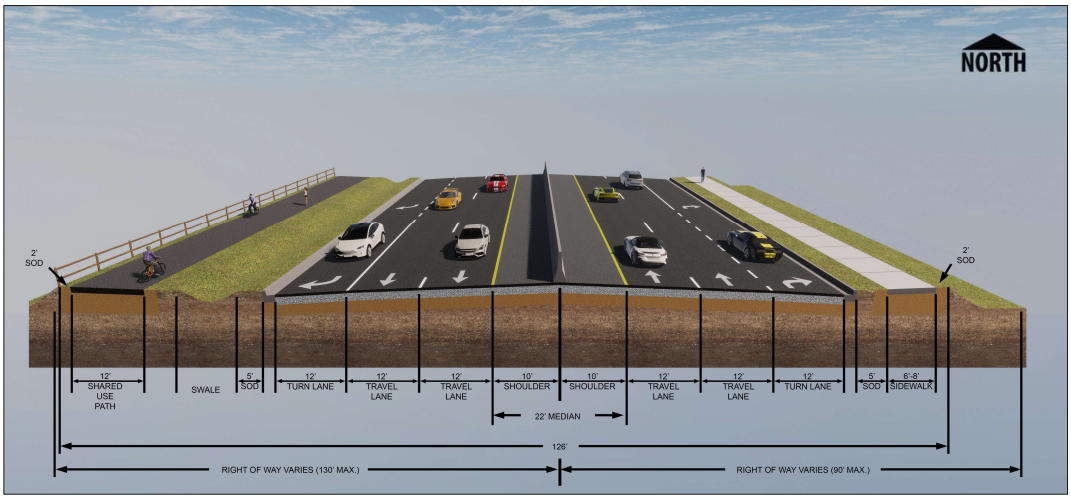
The preferred alternative for the DeSoto Bridge results in constructing the bridge on the east side of the existing bridge. Approximately 0.8 acres of total right of way is needed along the roadway on the south and north sides of the river. The new bridge will connect to the roadway at similar points as it does today.

Preferred Alternative



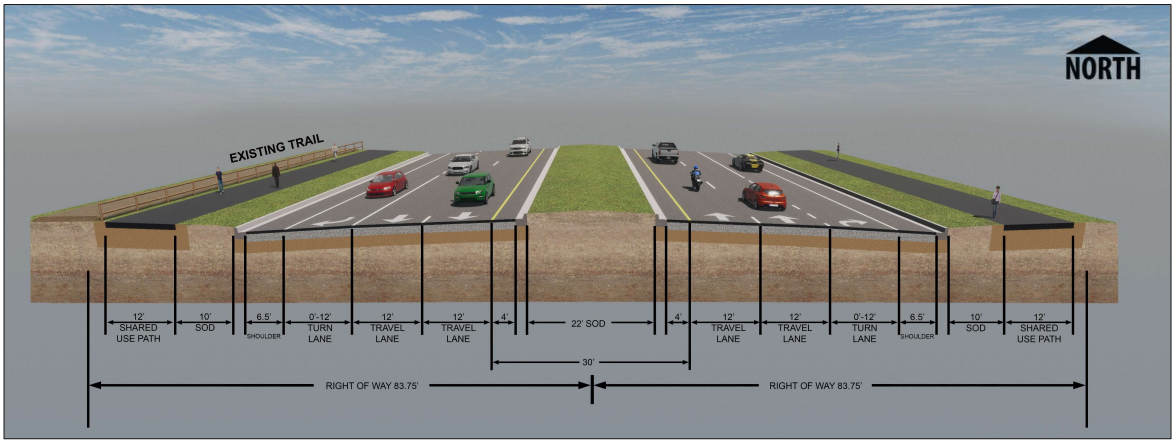
The preferred alternative for the DeSoto Bridge is similar in length and profile to the existing bridge. The preferred bridge includes four 12-foot travel lanes (two in each direction) with a concrete barrier separating traffic. And, as shown, the typical section also includes 10-foot inside shoulders and 12-foot outside shoulders for vehicles to pull out of the travel lanes if necessary, and a 12-foot barrier separated shared-use path on both sides of the bridge to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians providing improved safety.

Preferred Alternative – South of the Bridge



South of the Bridge the typical section includes two 12-foot travel lanes and one 12-foot turn lane in each direction, a shared use path on the west side of the road and a 6-to-8-foot sidewalk on the east side of the roadway. The typical section also includes 10-foot inside shoulders and a swale on the west side of the road for drainage.

Preferred Alternative – North of the Bridge



North of the bridge the typical section includes two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction and a 12-foot shared use path on both sides of the road. In the southbound direction there is one westbound turn lane. The northbound direction includes one eastbound and one westbound turn lane. The typical section also includes a seven-foot concrete traffic separator and a swale on the west side of the road for drainage.

No Build

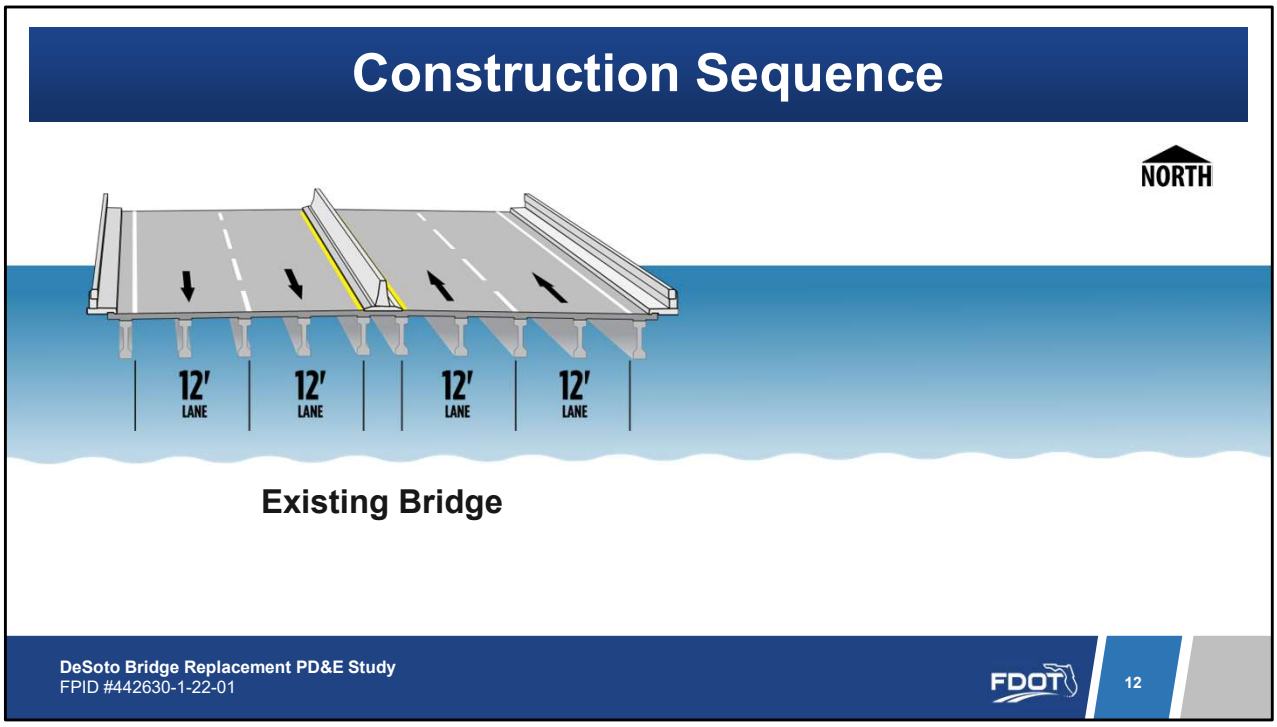
No Build Alternative:

- Assumes that no improvements are made to the DeSoto bridge except routine maintenance.
- Would require increasingly costly and disruptive maintenance and major rehabilitation projects to keep the bridge functional.
- The No Build Alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need and is therefore not recommended as the preferred alternative.

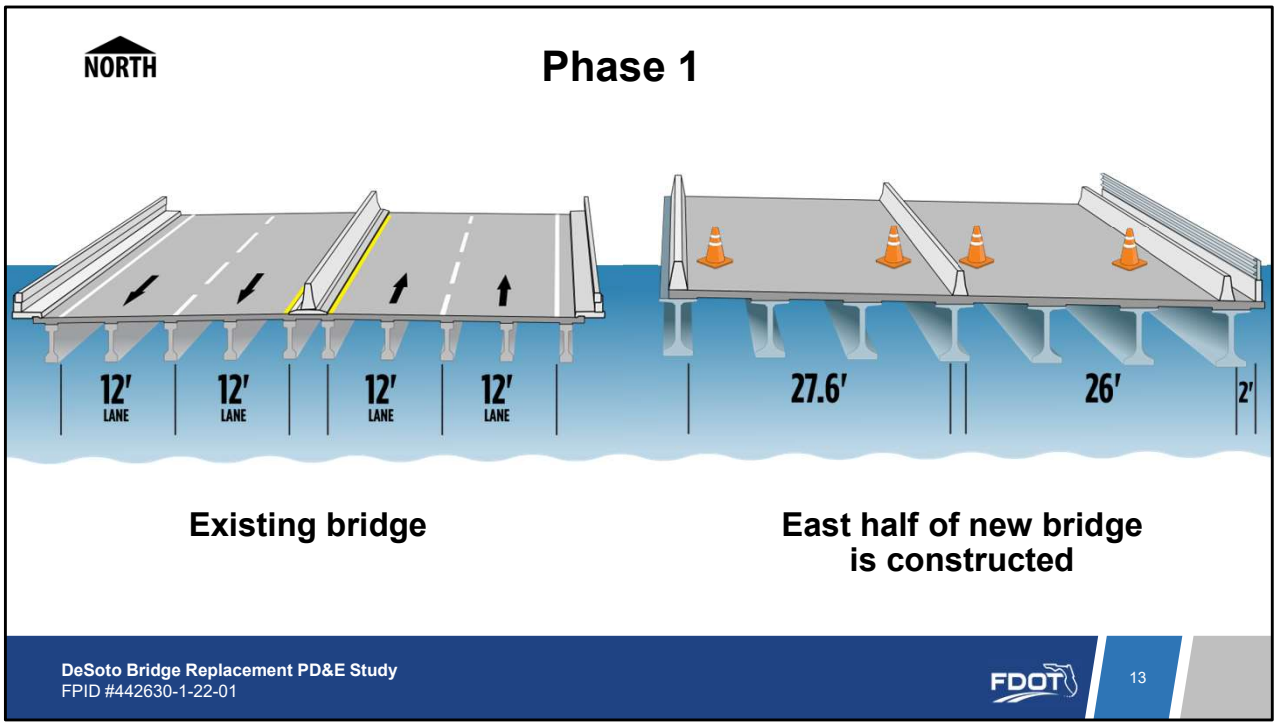
Throughout this study, the "no-build" alternative is considered. The "no-build" alternative assumes that no improvements are made to DeSoto bridge except routine maintenance.

Due to the condition of the bridge, the no-build alternative would require increasingly costly and disruptive maintenance and major rehabilitation projects to keep it functional.

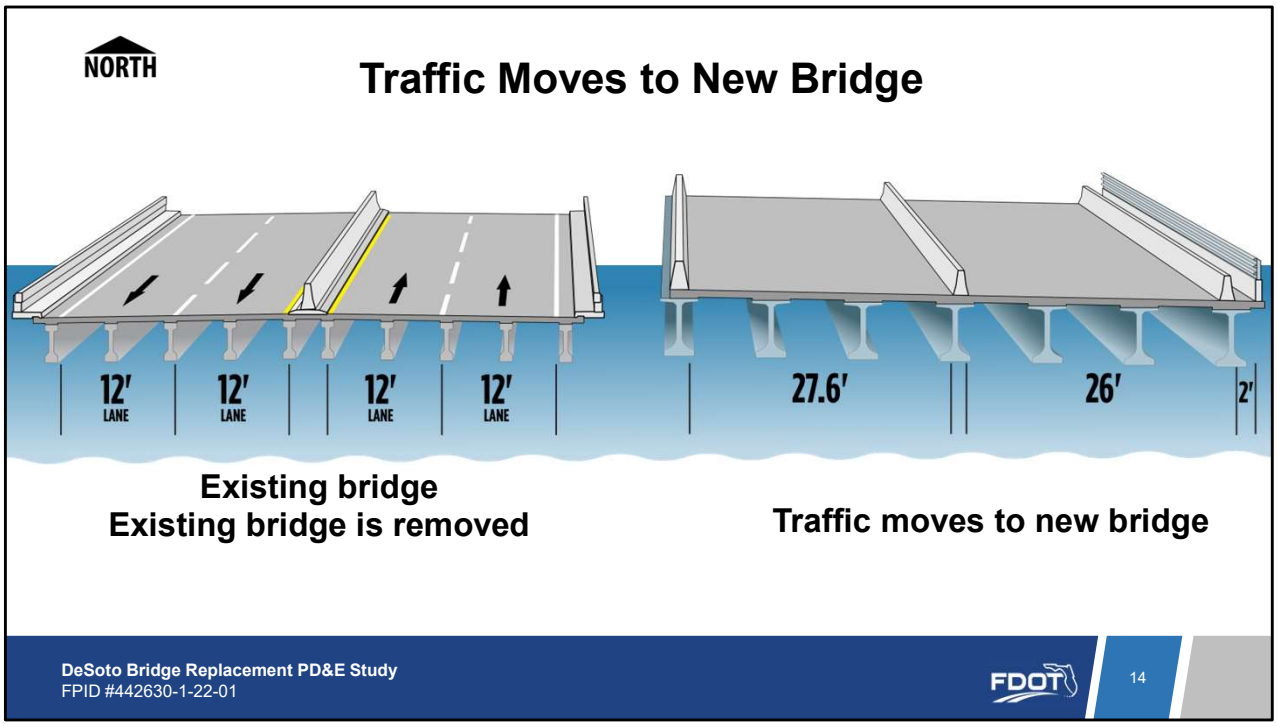
The No-Build Alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need, and is therefore not recommended as the preferred alternative. However, it will remain under consideration throughout the duration of the PD&E study.



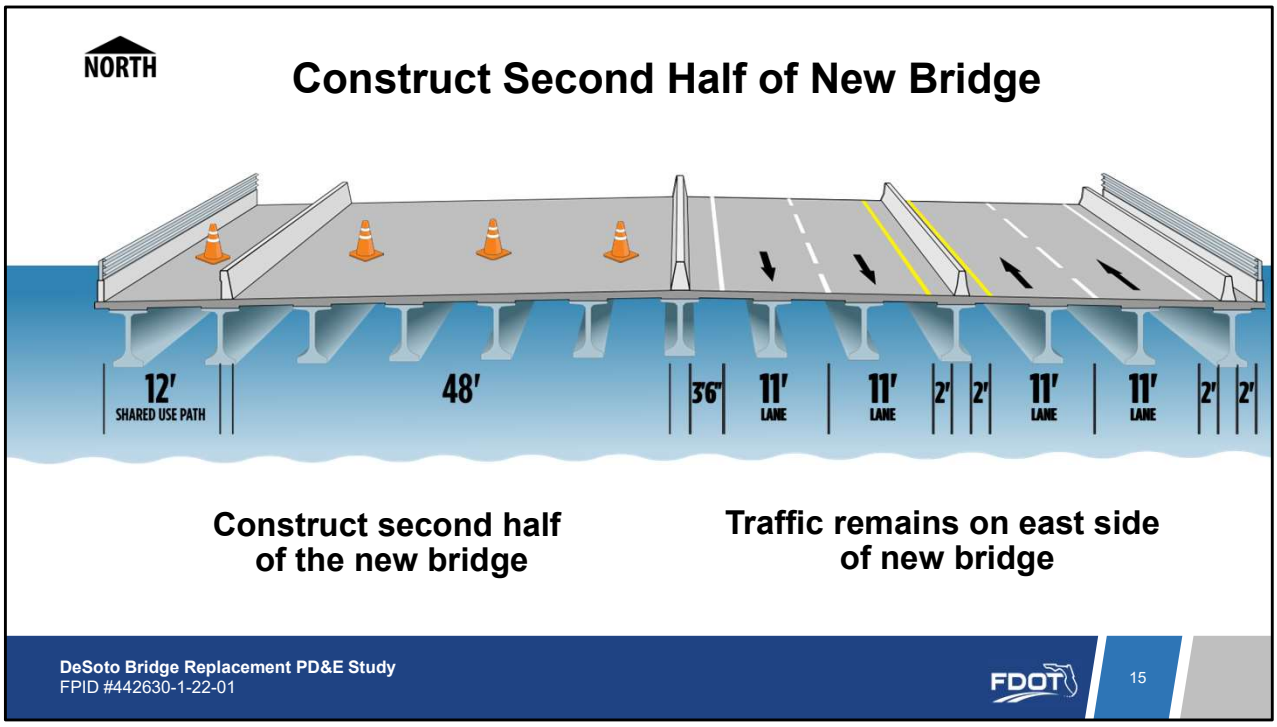
During construction of the new bridge, the existing bridge will remain in operation and all lanes will be open to traffic during the peak traffic hours. The existing bridge has two travel lanes in each direction. The new bridge will be built on the east side of the existing bridge.



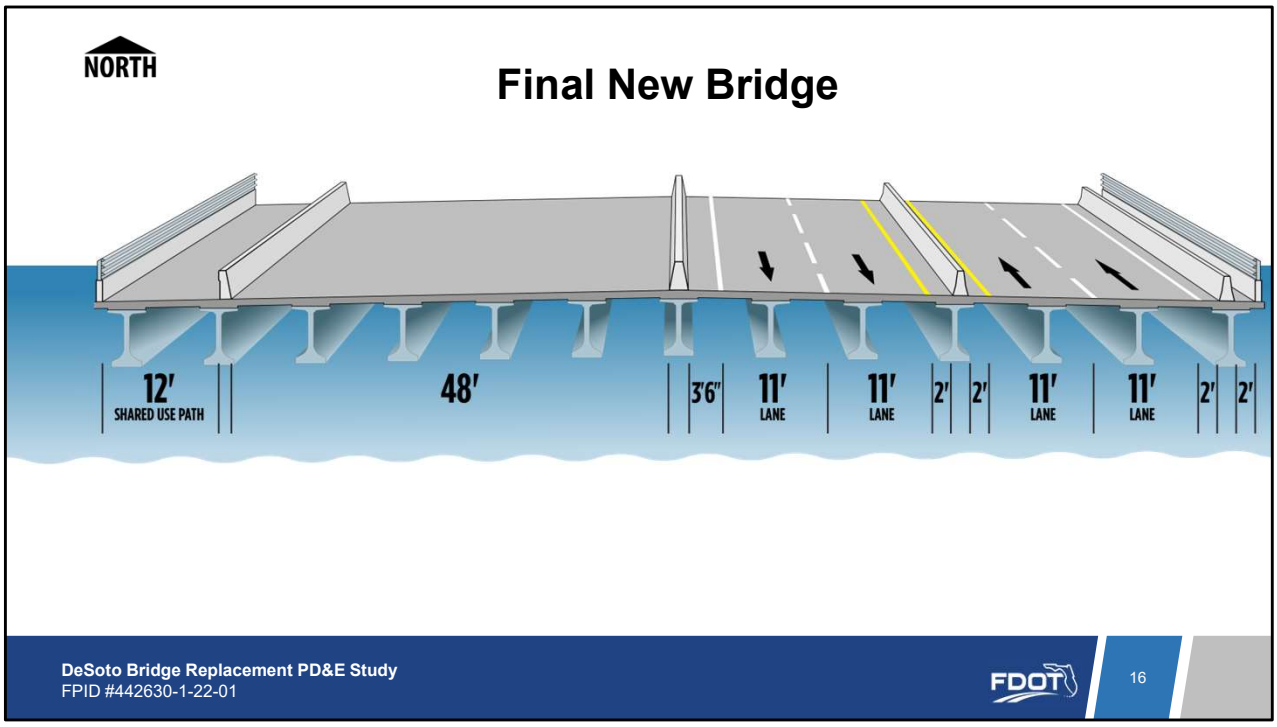
The first phase of construction includes building half of the bridge and one side of the shared-use path to the east of the existing bridge.



Once this is complete, traffic will be switched to the new bridge which will accommodate two travel lanes in each direction and a shared use path but will not have shoulders. During construction, the bridge will be closed to pedestrians and bicyclists. After traffic is shifted onto the new bridge, the demolition of the old bridge will occur.



Once the old bridge is removed, the second half of the new bridge will be constructed and joined with the new bridge built in Phase 1 to complete the new structure.



New striping will be placed on the entire bridge structure and traffic will be switched to the new bridge. At this time, the bridge will re-open to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Environmental Effects

- Wetlands
- Protected species
- Water quality
- Contamination sites
- Recreational sites
- Noise
- Air quality
- Historical structures
- Archaeological sites

F D O T evaluated environmental and socioeconomic factors relating to the proposed bridge replacement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and other federal requirements. The evaluation considered the effects of the bridge replacement for the DeSoto Bridge on:

- Wetlands
- Protected species
- Water quality
- Contamination sites
- Recreational sites
- Noise
- Air quality
- Historic structures and
- Archaeological sites.

Based on the analysis, there are no significant effects associated with the preferred build alternative.

Protected Species (Federal)

May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect:

- Gulf sturgeon
- Loggerhead sea turtle
- Green sea turtle
- Eastern indigo snake
- Kemp Ridley's sea turtle
- Red knot
- Piping plover
- Wood stork
- Smalltooth Sawfish
- American Crocodile
- Leatherback sea turtle
- Hawksbill sea turtle
- Eastern black rail
- Aboriginal prickly apple



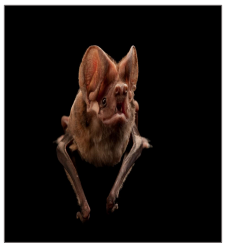


Protected species and habitats are allowed special protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and Florida statutes. F D O T assessed species within the project limits and has determined that the proposed project "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the existence of certain federally listed threatened or endangered species shown on the screen.

Protected Species (Federal)

No Effect On The Existence Of The Following Federally Listed:

- Audubon's crested caracara
- Florida bonamia
- Pygmy fringe tree
- Florida goldenaster
- Perforate reindeer lichen
- Britton's beargrass
- Chaffseed
- Florida bonneted bat
- Florida scrub-jay
- Red-cockaded woodpecker




The proposed project will have "no effect" on the existence of the federally listed threatened or endangered species shown on the screen.

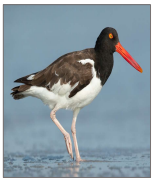
Protected Species (State)

No adverse effect anticipated:

- Gopher tortoise
- Florida sandhill crane
- Little blue heron
- Reddish egret
- Tricolored heron
- American oystercatcher
- Roseate spoonbill
- Black skimmer
- Golden leather fern
- Baned wild-pine
- Sanibel Lovegrass







In addition, it was determined that the project will have “no adverse effect anticipated” on the state listed threatened or endangered species shown on the screen.

Protected Species (State)

No effect anticipated:

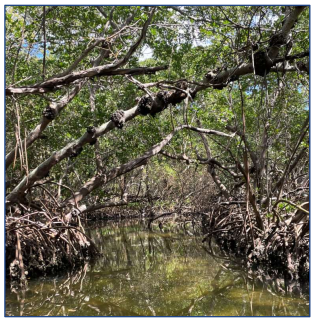
- Florida pine snake
- Florida burrowing owl
- Snowy plover
- Pinewoods bluestem
- Redmargin zephyrlily
- Many-flowered grass-pink
- Iguana hackberry
- Florida tree fern
- Tampa vervain
- Gulf Coast Florida lantana
- Nodding pinweed
- Pine pinweed
- Lowland loosestrife
- Florida spiny-pod
- Comb polypody
- Large-plumed beaksedge
- Toothed maiden fern
- Broad-leaved nodding-caps
- St. Johns black-eyed Susan

It was determined that the project will have “no effect anticipated” on the state listed threatened or endangered species shown on the screen.

Coordination with U S Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regarding the final status of these species is ongoing. If the preferred alternative is approved by the Office of Environmental Management, F D O T District One will continue to work closely with environmental agencies in future phases, such as design and construction, to meet all environmental permitting requirements.

Wetlands and Surface Waters

Impact Type	PD&E Preferred Alternative (acres)
Wetlands	0.31
Surface Waters	Less than 0.10
Mangrove	1.02



FDOT evaluated wetlands within the project limits in accordance with Executive Order 11_9_90 (“eleven nine ninety”), “Protection of Wetlands.” The proposed improvements will affect approximately 0.31 acres of wetlands and less than 0.10 acres of surface waters. A total of 1.02 acres of mangroves swamps (0.31 acres permanent impact and 0.71 acres of secondary impact) will be impacted by the project. The total functional loss for wetlands total 0.27 units.

The Department will mitigate wetland impacts that will result from the construction of this project pursuant to Florida Statute Section 373.4137, to satisfy all mitigation requirements of the Florida Statute Part IV of Chapter 373 and 33 U.S. Code 1344. Impacts to mangrove swamps will be mitigated by the purchase of wetland credits through a mitigation bank within the US Fish and Wildlife Service area and Southwest Florida Water Management District basin of the project.

Construction of bridge pilings will result in less than 0.10 acre of permanent surface water impacts which are considered de minimis, as they result in less than 0.01 functional unit loss. Therefore, impacts to surface waters do not require mitigation. Shade impacts are not considered since this area for surface waters consists of non-vegetated bottom. No other surface waters were identified within the project study area.

Noise

- A traffic noise study was conducted for the preferred alternative.
- Traffic noise impacts were predicted during the design year at residential and recreational land uses.
- A noise barrier has been identified as a potentially feasible and cost-reasonable noise abatement measure for residences located in the Aria at Bradenton Apartments and will be evaluated in greater detail during the project's design phase.

A traffic noise study was conducted for the preferred alternative. Traffic noise impacts were predicted during the design year at residential and recreational land uses. A noise barrier has been identified as a potentially feasible and cost reasonable noise abatement measure for residences located in the Aria at Bradenton Apartments and will be evaluated in greater detail during the project's design phase.

Right of Way

Right-of-way

- Approximately 0.8 acres of total right of way is needed along the roadway on the south and north sides of the river.
- No residential or business relocations anticipated.

This project will not cause any relocation of families or businesses. All right-of-way acquisition will be conducted in accordance with Florida Statute 339.09 (“three thirty nine point zero nine”) and the federal “Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970”, commonly known as the Uniform Act. The right-of-way specialists who are supervising this program are here tonight and will be happy to answer your questions.

Evaluation Matrix

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION MATRIX

DeSoto Bridge PD&E Study			
Evaluation Factors	**ALTERNATIVE**	**No Build**	**Preferred Alternative - East**
	Roadway	**No Improvements**	**Right Replacement**
	Bridge	**No Replacement**	**Replace bridge with mid-level fixed**
Ability to meet Purpose and Need			
Address structural degradation and substandard design		☒	☑
Maintain critical link for regional travel		☒	
Accommodate multimodal activity		☒	
Potential Right of Way Impacts			
Parcels (#Business | #Residential | #Other*)		0	7 | 0 | 2*
Area of Impact (ac)		0	0.8
Residential Relocations		0	0
Business Relocations		0	0
Utilities		No	Yes
Environmental Impacts			
Protected Species		None	Low
Contamination Sites (#Medium | #High)		None	2 | 1
Wetland (ac)		0	0.31
Seagrass (ac)		0	0
Surface Water		0	Minimal
Public Parks 4(f)		No	None
Archaeological & Historic Resources (#)		No	1
Noise Sensitive Receptors (#)**		0	32
Estimated Project Costs (2024 $)			
Right of Way		0	$800,000
Reimbursable Utility Relocation		0	$2,000,000
Non-Reimbursable Utility Relocation		0	$6,100,000
Wetland Mitigation		0	$102,920
Final Design & Roadway Construction		0	$146,262,772
Construction Engineering & Inspection		0	$17,551,461
Preliminary Estimate of Total Project Cost		0	$172,816,552

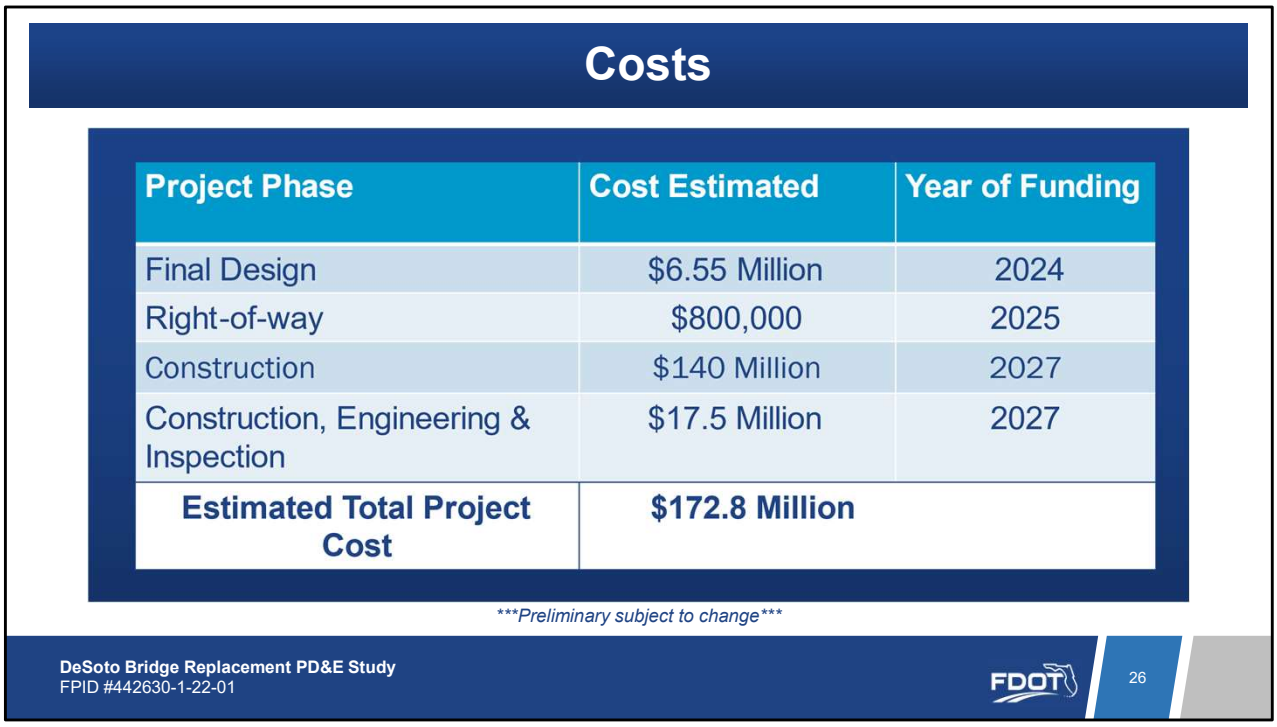
PRELIMINARY, SUBJECT TO CHANGE

* Manatee Memorial Hospital sign & Riviera Dunes sign

** Includes 32 residences within Aria Bradenton Apartments, and 1 recreation use (Palmetto Estuary Preserve)

*** Source: FDOT Long-Range Estimating System. Preliminary Estimate of Total Project Cost does not include maintenance costs; No-Build would result in higher maintenance costs.

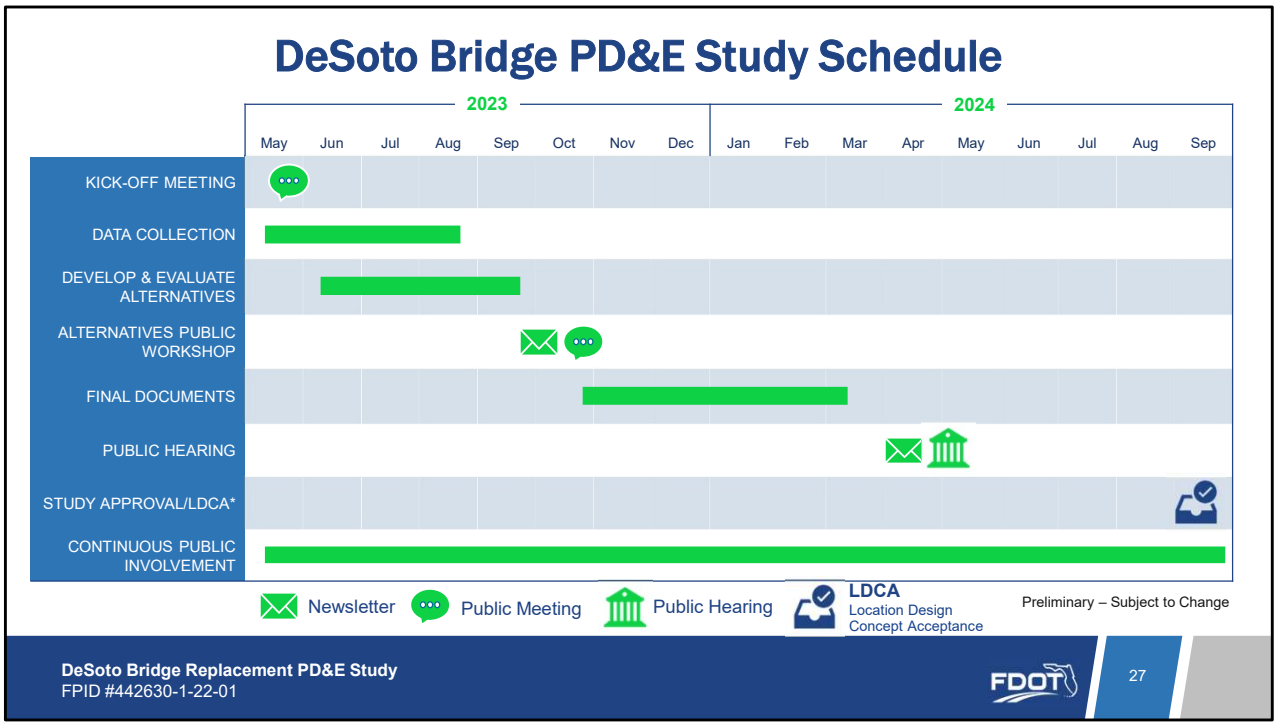
An evaluation matrix showing a detailed comparison of the preferred alternative and the no-build alternative is provided in the project handout and is also on display here this evening. The matrix shows potential effects to the social, cultural, natural, and physical environments, and identifies preliminary costs.



The estimated costs for the DeSoto Bridge in-kind replacement includes:

- $6.55 million for final design and is funded through 2024.
- $800,000 for right-of-way acquisition and is funded in 2025.
- $140 million for construction and is funded in 2027.
- The cost of construction engineering and inspection is estimated at $17.5 million and is funded in 2027.

The Department's preliminary estimated total project cost is $172.8 million.



At this time, the F D O T ’s Adopted Five-Year Work Program includes funding for right-of-way, design and construction. The Department anticipates completion of this P D and E study by **fall 2024**, when location and design concept of the preferred alternative will be submitted to the F D O T Office of Environmental Management for approval. The study schedule is on display this evening.

How to Provide Comments

During the meeting

- Complete and submit a comment form

All comments submitted or postmarked by May 10, 2024, will become part of the official record of this meeting.

Following the meeting

Richard.Combs@dot.state.fl.us

(863) 698-3770

Richard (Dick) Combs
FDOT Project Manager
801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830

https://www.swflroads.com/project/442630-1

We encourage you to review project information tonight and provide us your feedback. All comments should be submitted or postmarked by May 10, 2024 to become a part of the formal hearing record.

Documents for Review Locations

Project Webpage

https://www.swflroads.com/project/442630-1

Manatee County Library
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, FL 34205
Monday – Saturday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Closed Sunday

Palmetto Branch Library
923 6th Street West
Palmetto, FL 34221
Monday – Thursday - 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Friday – Saturday – 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Closed Sunday

Documents are available at viewing locations from April 9, 2024 to May 10, 2024

All hearing materials presented tonight are available to the public on the project webpage and will remain posted for your review. The technical documents are also available for review in person at The Manatee County Library, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205, and at The Palmetto Library, 923 6th Street West, Palmetto, FL 34221.

If you would like to review these materials at the FDOT District One Office, please make an appointment by contacting F D O T 's project manager, Richard (Dick) Combs, using the contact information included in your handout. You may also visit the project website at the project webpage https://www.swflroads.com/project/442630-1 (swflroads.com, project, 44223630-1) for the latest study information, schedule, and upcoming events.

Environmental Review

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

This P D and E study is being conducted and completed according to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and other related federal and state laws, rules, and regulations, which will qualify future phases of this project for federal funding, and this hearing was advertised consistent with those requirements. Please see the statute display board for all other applicable requirements.

TITLE VI

This alternatives public meeting is being conducted in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status.

To express concern(s) relative to the Department's compliance with Title VI, please contact:

Cynthia Sykes
District One Title VI Coordinator
801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830
(863) 519-2287
Cynthia.Sykes@dot.state.fl.us

Stefan Kulakowski
State Title VI Coordinator
605 Suwannee Street, Mail Station 65
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
(850) 414-4742
Stefan.Kulakowski@dot.state.fl.us

This hearing is also conducted in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes. Anyone who feels he or she has been discriminated against with regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status may complete one of the forms located at the sign-in table and mail the completed form to the address listed on the poster board.

Safety Moment

And finally: an FDOT safety moment. “Stop speeding before it stops you” - FDOT thanks you for making safety a continued priority!

Thank you for your interest and participation in the DeSoto Bridge Replacement Project Development and Environment study public hearing and for taking the time to join us this evening.