



Collier Soil and Water Conservation District

Gazetteer

January 2012

Road Projects

For road projects funded and implemented by Collier County, residents have three important functions to consider:

First, in writing, cultivate relationships with County Commissioners and tell them about significant natural areas which should be protected from new roads and expansion projects.

Communicate with them directly when potentially harmful projects are first proposed.

Second, monitor annual revisions to the County's Capitol Improvement Program and participate in public workshops.

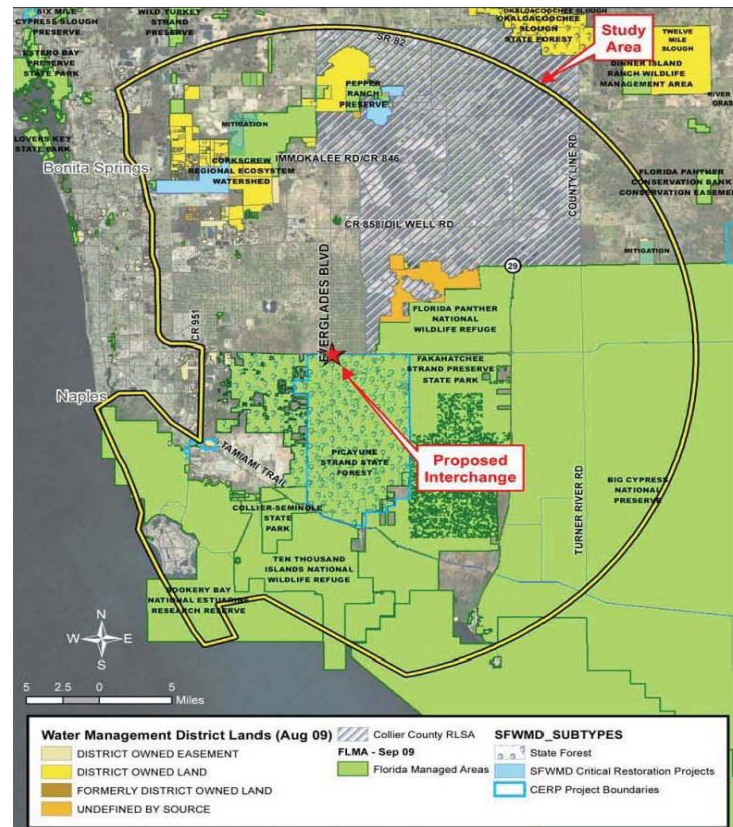
Finally, participate in preparation of the County's Comprehensive Plan, which occurs every 5-7 years.

The Comprehensive Plan covers a 20-year period and guides how the County will grow, how land will be used and how resources will be protected.

It includes a Transportation Element, which contains the County's vision for its transportation system.

Residents should consider serving as Advisory Board Committee members.

Ecological Monitoring



black bear, Florida Sandhill Crane, Wood Stork, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Gopher Tortoise, Eastern Indigo Snake and Mangrove Fox Squirrel.

Information on the FDOT cumulative effects evaluation study, including the map above, can be viewed on the FDOT Project web site: <http://tinyurl.com/75kj7vf>.

Some study team tasks to be undertaken include verification of the I-75 and Everglades Boulevard interchange area; characterization of the study area; analyses of past, present and future actions, and preparation of a Cumulative Effects Evaluation report. Meeting notes for the Technical Memorandum 2 Presentation held October 19, 2011, a Technical Memorandum 2 Presentation and LUCIS Model Presentation are all on the project web site.

Why would you want to review any or all of these documents? Because this issue is important!

Part of science is understanding uncertainty. When scientists say they know something, it means they have tested their ideas with a degree of accuracy over a range of scales. Scientists also address the limitations of their theories and try to extend the range of applicability. When the method is applied properly, the right results emerge over time.

What we heard and read about for the proposed I-75 and Everglades Boulevard interchange for several months last year was not so much a clash between politics and science, but a fundamental disregard for rational and scientific thinking.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a cumulative effects evaluation study that looks through time and how these changes would permanently affect resources in that area. FDOT will look at how past, present and reasonably foreseeable future changes will affect eight protected species: Florida panther, Florida

For state- and federally-funded road projects, many opportunities exist for citizen participation.

Residents should participate in the annual transportation project prioritization process with the Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

MPO is an excellent source of information about transportation needs and planned projects in the region.

MPO is where comprehensive transportation planning is done for our urbanized area.

MPO develops plans and transportation programs but unless you demand it, that doesn't usually encourage or promote prudent ecological safeguards necessary to protect our ecology.

If you demand, Collier MPO can foster prudent economic growth and development within the county, and minimize transportation-related ecological destruction, as a normal practice.

Collier MPO Board meetings are broadcast live on the Collier County television station and then re-broadcast at other times published times and multiple opportunities to view their meetings and issues presented.

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Public policy is more complicated than clean and controlled experiments, but considering the large and serious issues we face—in the economy, in the environment, in our health and well-being—it's our responsibility to push reason as far as we can. Far from being isolating, a rational, scientific way of thinking could be unifying. Evaluating alternative strategies; reading data, either in newspapers or from authoritative Internet web sites about the relative effectiveness of various policies and understanding uncertainties—all features of the scientific method—can help us find the right way forward.

"Where There Is No Vision, The People Perish."

Transportation systems negatively impact wildlife by increasing direct and indirect mortality, by destroying, degrading and fragmenting habitat, by serving as barriers to movement and by spreading exotic species and pollutants. Roads impact far more than the land upon which they are built. They often start a domino effect of habitat loss by spurring development on the property which surrounds them. A new highway or expansion of an existing road can change a rural area to suburban or urban in a matter of years, and the change is permanent. But proper planning can mitigate some of these effects.

Today it is still possible for nearly anybody with a few minutes to spare to tell a government agency what they want and gather folks at a meeting to prove "it's in the public interest...."

Using science, FDOT restructured their planning, programming and their environmental review process to achieve more Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) the process to improve the quality of decisions and environmental investment, including:

- Early identification of avoidance/minimization options,
- Socioeconomic effects balanced with the natural environment,
- Disputed projects/issues identified early-on and addressed before programming,
- Attention focused on key technical issues - not on proving the negative,
- Ready access to quality data for agencies and affected communities, and
- Summary reports to provide feedback and facilitate continuous improvement.

The ETDM Process creates linkages between land use, transportation, and environmental resource planning initiatives through early, interactive agency involvement. These linkages reduce the time and effort, and, in turn, the cost, to make transportation decisions.

Efficiency is gained by FDOT's Project Manager who can better develop a scope of services in which alternatives have already been screened for environmental concerns and resolution. Any remaining technical studies to be conducted are more focused and do not need to prove the negative/absence of environmental effects.

There is more to our lives than just being consumers of goods and services. We do more than just go to work and buy things. We have friends and hobbies, neighborhoods and communities. We can use the FDOT scientific cumulative effects evaluation to improve our lives and our biodiversity. Doing so, will have a more lasting impact on the economy of Collier County, the one that will be here long after the special interests have pulled their money out of the community and left for other pursuits.

Let's not get in a hurry on this issue.