



January 22, 2007

**AGENDA ITEM 4D**

**LAKE JACKSON ECOPASSAGE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STUDY**

**REQUESTED BY:** CRTPA staff

**TYPE OF ITEM:** Discussion

**STATEMENT OF ISSUE**

On November 15, 2004 the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) approved the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Feasibility Study and Preferred Alternative. Based on this approval staff met with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the status of the project. The result of these meetings resulted in the requirement to perform a Project Development and Environment Study (PD&E) in order to receive federal funds for the project. CRTPA staff was able to secure the funds for the PD&E Study from the FDOT Central Office Environmental Mitigation Fund. Kimley-Horn and Associates was selected as the consultant with the Notice to Proceed provided in April of 2006. The project schedule called for completion in December 2006. Kimley-Horn will be presenting the PD&E Study to the CRTPA for approval and submittal to FDOT.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Option 1: Approve the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.

**HISTORY AND ANALYSIS**

In 2002, a biology student from Florida State University, appeared before the Board of County Commissioners, requesting action be taken to preserve wildlife along the North Monroe Street corridor, between Clara Kee Boulevard and Old Bainbridge Road. Mr. Aresco stated an increasing number of animal deaths had occurred along this corridor due to years of the historic migratory routes being impeded by the physical location of North Monroe Street (US 27).

Subsequent to this issue being brought to the attention of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the agency has provided \$125,000 to fund a Feasibility Study. Since North Monroe Street is a State road, the Tallahassee-Leon County MPO staff has offered to manage the Feasibility Study Project for FDOT.

The intention of the Feasibility Study Project was not to single out a specific species of animals for which to provide a mitigative action(s), but to study the existing conditions of animal and vegetative habitats, hydrological conditions, and roadway conditions. The types of mitigative action(s) that resulted from the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Feasibility Study ranged from the construction of animal tunnels to a wildlife wall (a wall that prevents animals from crawling over onto the road and attempting a crossing), or a combination of both.

In November of 2004, the CRTPA approved the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Feasibility Study, which included the construction of a wildlife wall and several culverts for the movement of animal between Lake Jackson and Little Lake Jackson. Additionally, staff noted that upon approval, there would be additional follow up with the FDOT to determine if the project requires a Project Development and Environment Study (PD&E).

In December of 2004 and January 2005, CRTPA staff met with FDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to discuss the PD&E issue. Through these conversations it was determined that the best approach to receive funding for this project, beyond the Feasibility Study, was through the federal process since there are more opportunities for funding through the federal government. However, in order for the project to receive federal funds there is a requirement for a PD&E Study. Therefore, staff requested that KHA develop a Scope-of-Services (SOS) to meet the requirements of the PD&E process. KHA wrote the SOS, submitted to CRTPA staff for review, who in turn submitted it for funding to FDOT Central Office via FDOT District 3. On Thursday, February 24, 2005, CRTPA staff was informed that the funds (\$60,000) were available and being programmed for release upon approval by the CRTPA. Based on the need to have the SOS approved for the release of the funds, staff added this item to the March agenda.

The project was advertised with KHA being the only consultant to submit a proposal for the PD&E Study. The contract with KHA called for a kick-off in April 2006 and a nine month project schedule. In August of 2006 the CRTPA was informed that the State Historic Preservation Officer was requiring a full site survey of the project area. Staff in turn requested additional funding from the FDOT Central Office, which was provided in September. Since that time, the full site survey has been conducted with no significant findings made. Additionally, KHA has finalized the PD&E document for the CRTPA to approve.

### **NEXT STEPS**

After approval of the PD&E Study, the document will be submitted to FDOT and FHWA. Additionally, during 2006 the CRTPA staff has worked with FDOT District 3 and the FDOT Central Office to secure design phase funding. Ultimately, the FDOT Central Office funded the design phase in the amount of approximately \$450,000. The design phase of the project will be let for bids in early 2007. CRTPA staff is still pursuing a variety of funding sources to secure funds for construction of the ecopassage.

### **CRTPA SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIONS**

All of the CRTPA subcommittees (Technical Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Multimodal Advisory Committee) supported approval of the PD&E Study.

**OPTIONS**

Option 1: Approve the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.

Option 2: Provide other direction.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Option 1: Approve the Lake Jackson Ecopassage Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Lake Jackson Ecopassage Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.