Comments Received for August and September 2015

General Website Comments

Date Received: 9/27/15
Response Summary:

Name: Lauren Edinger
Email: edinger0406@comcast.net

Comments: I live and work in District 1. I believe there is a great need for more DRY wildlife crossings along our major roadways (4+ lanes). The crossings should accommodate large and small wildlife and should remain dry year-round. This will allow animals to safely cross the road and reduce wildlife road hazards for drivers, particularly from dusk to dawn.

I would also like to see more frequent road clean-up and/or a system for trapping litter before it has the chance to blow into roadside ditches and travel downstream. For example, small berms with occasional breaks where grated culverts may be installed to maintain water flow and trap trash.

Date Received: 9/2/15
Response Summary:

Name: Kent L Wimmer
Organization: Defenders of Wildlife
Email: kwimmer@defenders.org
Phone (optional): 8505285261

Comments: RE: Defenders of Wildlife's Comments on the Florida Transportation Plan and Strategic Intermodal System Policy Plan

Dear Ms. Watson,

Please find below the written comments made on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) concerning the Florida Transportation Plan and Strategic Intermodal System Policy Plan. I participated in the August 11 regional workshop in Panama City, and would appreciate if these comments would be considered in addition those I verbally gave during the meeting. Founded in 1947, Defenders is a national non-profit conservation organization focused on wildlife and habitat protection, the protection and recovery of endangered species and the conservation of biodiversity. Defenders has over 80,000 members and supporters in Florida.

We are concerned about the direct, indirect and cumulative effects posed to rare, threatened and endangered species by construction and operation of new and enhanced highways, ports, airports and rail lines throughout Florida. We are especially concerned that new and enhanced highways and railways will impede the movement of wildlife and result in an increased the number of deaths and injuries to motorists and wildlife including the endangered Florida panther and the black bear.

Defenders strongly encourages the Department to be proactive in ensuring any resulting impacts to wildlife are mitigated so to improve human safety and reduce wildlife mortality on roadways. We strongly encourage DOT to employ proactive mitigation measures to protect wildlife including underpasses, overpasses and systems that automatically detect wildlife nearby have been shown to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. Wildlife underpasses and fencing along I-75 have prevented many Florida panther deaths furthering the recovery of our state animal. DOT's FTP and SIS plans should minimize habitat fragmentation by avoiding habitat areas, avoid and minimize impacts in riparian areas, and design lighting to avoid spillover into habitat areas.

We are especially concerned that new and expanded SIS routes will facilitate growth and associated habitat losses in adjacent areas possibly adversely affecting Florida's rare and listed species. Mitigation should include expanding the boundaries of conservation areas adjacent to SIS routes, establishing connections between conservation areas divided by SIS routes, and establishing conservation easements and cooperative agreements with landowners/managers to assure sound water and land management on conservation areas adjacent to SIS routes. We strongly encourage the DOT to take the steps necessary to ensure wildlife issues are considered early in the transportation planning process. Defenders stands ready to assist DOT in identifying sections of roadways with high Florida panther and black bear mortality and identifying solutions to improve the safety of the motoring public as well as our wildlife.

Where highways and railways will be built or expanded, it is essential to consider how bridges and the elevated approaches through floodplains often fragment wildlife habitat by creating a barrier to movement and increase wildlife-vehicle incidents. DOT can protect wildlife as move along these natural corridors by extending bridges to allow for dry ground like the SR 20 Apalachicola River Bridge and by providing additional safe passage points across elevated roadways like passing across Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Under the bridges with abutments close to the water, walls can be used place of riprap, soil and vegetation passages can be created through rip-rap or passage benches can be created away from open water. Fencing should also be used to guide wildlife to structure and prevent intrusions to the right-of-way.

Thank you for consideration of our comments. Please address your response and any questions to me at the address below.

Sincerely,

Kent L. Wimmer, AICP
Northwest Florida Representative
1294 Avondale Way
Tallahassee, FL 32317-8451

Date Received: 8/30/15

Response Summary:

Name: Lori
Email: perkylzd@aol.com

Comments: Funny there are no meetings for District Four in the Jupiter/Tequesta area where much of this effects US. And to boot no one in this area was aware of these meetings. We oppose the addition of passenger trains and additional freight. On top of the list, additional freight to the Lox. River trestle bridge, added congestion, access to our emergency routes are hindered - especially for those living around pockets of water and no alternate routes, medical emergencies and access to patients and health care facilities. Obviously NO one CAREs what the residents in the northern cities of Palm Beach County think. In addition - FEC's plans to 'patch' and 'paint' the bridge rather than replace the decaying mess is unacceptable. It would be in the best interest of the public to deter all of these trains west away from our population. Maybe SOMEONE will hear US.

Date Received: 8/6/15
Response Summary:

Name: Marlie Sanderson
Organization: Gainesville MPO
Email: sanderson@ncfrpc.org
Phone (optional): 352.955.2200

Comments: What is the timeline or schedule for the update of the FTP?