

Chapter 5

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 SCOPING MEETING

The Fort Hamer Bridge Scoping Meeting for this *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA) study was held on Tuesday, August 17, 2010 at the Carlos E. Haile Middle School, 9501 E. State Road (SR) 64, in Bradenton, Florida. An informal open house was held from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and the presentation and public comment period was held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The purpose of the scoping meeting was to provide an opportunity for the public to participate in the alternatives scoping process for the Fort Hamer Bridge project. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) project manager presided at the meeting. Representatives of Manatee County, the USCG, and its consultant were present at the meeting to discuss the project with the public. See Appendix A-3 for sign-in sheets and speaker cards from this meeting.

A letter announcing the scoping meeting was mailed on July 19, 2010 to public officials, agencies, and property owners within 0.5 mile of the project. A quarter-page display advertisement announcing the meeting was published in the Bradenton Herald on Friday, August 6, 2010. In addition, a Notice of Intent (NOI) for the meeting was published in the Federal Register on Friday, July 9, 2010.

In correspondence dated July 20, 2010, the USCG, as lead federal agency for this study, invited the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to be cooperating agencies in this study. Only the USACE accepted this invitation.

A total of 264 people signed the attendance sheets at the meeting. Aerial photos showing the alternatives under evaluation were on display along with other project information. The presentation portion of the meeting began with introductory remarks by the USCG project manager, followed by a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation included a summary of the need for the project, a brief background of the project, and the alternatives under evaluation.

Following the presentation, the next portion of the meeting was devoted to receiving public comments. Specific comments and questions raised by concerned individuals were answered by email or letter following the meeting. Twenty-four (24) people spoke for the public record at the meeting.

A total of 219 comments have been received. Seventy (70) written comments were received at the scoping meeting, 24 people gave oral comments during the public comment portion of the meeting, and two people gave their comments directly to the court reporter. Forty (40)

comments were submitted via the website in the days prior to the meeting. Fifty (50) comments were submitted via the project website and email prior to the end of the comment period on August 27, 2010. Another 36 comments have been submitted to-date since the comment period ended. **Table 5-1** summarizes comments received to date.

5.2 OTHER PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS

On May 27, 2010 a Manatee County Public Works Department Public Information Meeting was held in Parrish, Florida that discussed several Manatee County projects including the proposed Fort Hamer Bridge. Approximately 100 people were in attendance. Many questions and comments related to the Fort Hamer project focused on:

- Project schedule
- Potential noise impacts
- Potential safety issues (e.g., sidewalks)
- Increased traffic volumes

On July 20, 2010 representatives of the consulting team met with the Waterlefe Homeowners Association Bridge Committee at the Waterlefe Clubhouse. Approximately 40 people were in attendance. A brief PowerPoint presentation was given providing an overview of the project and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Afterwards there was a question and answer session that addressed the following issues:

- Project schedule
- Potential noise impacts
- Potential safety issues (e.g., sidewalks)
- Increased traffic volumes
- Impact to property values
- Bridge aesthetics/lighting
- Potential personal liability issues related to errant golf balls striking cars on the bridge
- Future impacts to access via Waterlefe's northern, secondary entrance

**TABLE 5-1
COMMENTS RECEIVED**

Comment	Received Prior to Scoping Meeting (Prior to 8-17-10)	Received at Scoping Meeting (8-17-10)	Received During Comment Period (8-18-10 to 8-27-10)	Received After Comment Period (After 8-27-10)	Total
Use and/or improve existing routes and/or bridges.	10	24	12	5	51
Existing routes are already too congested.	10	21	4	3	38
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause increased traffic.	7	11	5	2	25
The Fort Hamer Bridge would save time/gas/costs.	6	16	5	6	33
The Fort Hamer Bridge would not save time/gas/costs.	1	6	3	2	12
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause negative noise and/or light impacts.	3	16	9	4	32
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause negative environmental impacts.	15	29	16	6	66
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause negative impacts to wildlife.	1	16	6	1	24
The Fort Hamer Bridge would be wasteful spending of County money in this economic downturn.	15	27	17	9	68
The Fort Hamer Bridge would create negative overall safety and/or bus stop safety impacts for pedestrians, bicyclists, and children.	17	19	2	5	43
Questioning the design of the Fort Hamer Bridge, access to and from the Fort Hamer Bridge, and/or other road widenings instead of building the Fort Hamer Bridge.	6	19	6	1	32
The negative impacts caused by the accidents on I-75 and US 301 would be repeated without the Fort Hamer Bridge.	9	12	13	1	35
The Fort Hamer Bridge is needed to create a new north/south route and to serve as an emergency evacuation route.	12	39	17	5	73
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause negative impacts to boaters.	2	8	2	1	13
The Fort Hamer Bridge is being built for political reasons and/or governmental rules have changed since the first analysis.	7	6	2	2	17
The Fort Hamer Bridge is a "Bridge to Nowhere."	3	6	0	1	10
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause an increase in property values.	2	4	0	3	9
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause a decrease in property values.	3	9	2	1	15
Commenter is a Waterlefe resident: The Fort Hamer Bridge would negatively impact Waterlefe.	11	16	5	1	33

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**TABLE 5-1 (CONTINUED)
COMMENTS RECEIVED**

Comment	Received Prior to Scoping Meeting (Prior to 8-17-10)	Received at Scoping Meeting (8-17-10)	Received During Comment Period (8-18-10 to 8-27-10)	Received After Comment Period (After 8-27-10)	Total
Waterlefe residents were aware of the Fort Hamer Bridge being built when they purchased their homes.	7	3	9	0	19
The Fort Hamer Bridge would cause negative impacts to historic Fort Hamer and/or the Indian Trail.	1	3	1	0	5
The Fort Hamer Bridge is not necessary because the population has decreased and/or development has stopped.	4	7	5	3	19
The Fort Hamer Bridge would create growth and/or jobs.	1	17	7	4	29
The original analysis of the Fort Hamer Bridge is no longer valid.	4	6	2	0	12
Request to be added to the project mailing list.	1	1	0	3	5
Total Commenters FOR the Fort Hamer Bridge Project	17	46	21	16	100
Total Commenters AGAINST the Fort Hamer Bridge Project	23	50	29	14	116
Total Commenters	40	96	50	33	219

Multiple update presentations have been made to the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) since the beginning of this Draft EIS (DEIS). Each Manatee County BOCC meeting is broadcast on local public access cable television and agendas are published via the County's webpage and provided to residents on the BOCC mailing list.

A project website, www.forthamerbridge.com, has been active since May 2010. The Fort Hamer website provides an overview of the Proposed Action, alternatives under consideration, a project schedule, notification of upcoming meetings, and a portal for comment submittal is linked to the USCG (www.Regulations.gov).

5.3 AGENCY COORDINATION

Prior to the development of this DEIS as a USCG document, the Fort Hamer Bridge project was led by the FHWA and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) during the period 1999-2006. During that period, multiple meetings were held in association with the development of the FHWA/FDOT DEIS. The Comments and Coordination chapter of the last version of that DEIS can be found in Appendix K.

In May of 2010, Manatee County restarted efforts to complete the Fort Hamer DEIS with USCG as the Federal Lead Agency. The following section summarizes agency coordination and consultation efforts that have occurred from 2010 to date. Copies of all correspondence can be found in Appendix A-4.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

In response to URS requests, FWC provided mapping identifying:

- Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCAs)
- Prioritized SHCAs
- Species Richness
- Priority Wetlands
- Florida Land Cover – 2003

FWC also noted that similar mapping should be requested from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI).

Department of Homeland Security/United States Coast Guard (DHS/USCG)

On Friday, July 9, 2010, a Notice of Intent to prepare and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in the Federal Register (75 FR 39555), which included notice of the Public and Agency Scoping Meeting (detailed in Section 5.1).

On July 20, 2010, DHS/USCG, submitted a Letter of Invitation to the following federal to participate in the development of the Fort Hamer EIS as a Cooperating Agency:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- US Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

National Marine Fisheries Service

In a letter dated July 27, 2010, the NMFS declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

US Army Corps of Engineers

In a letter dated July 29, 2010, the USACE declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

US Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration

In a letter dated July 29, 2010, the FHWA declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

US Fish and Wildlife Service

In a letter dated August 24, 2010, the FWS declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

State of Florida Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

In a letter dated January 3, 2013 DHS/USCG submitted the Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) for the Fort Hamer DEIS for review and concurrence.

In a letter dated February 6, 2013 the State of Florida SHPO concurs with the findings found within the submitted CRAS and finds the CRAS in compliance with Chapter 1A-46 FAC.

Seminole Tribe of Florida

In a letter dated August 4, 2010, the Seminole Tribe of Florida notes that “[the tribe] appreciates the invitation to this meeting [scoping] but is unable to attend.”

A meeting was held on January 7, 2011 with the Seminole Tribe of Florida to update the Tribe on the status of the project as a USCG led EIS. During that meeting the reduction of the scale of

the project was discussed and the commitment from Manatee County to place a historic marker/plaque at the bridge to commemorate the events related to Fort Hamer and the Second Seminole War.

In a letter dated November 20, 2012, the Tribe acknowledges the initiation of government-to-government consultation as part of the Section 106 process.

In a letter dated January 2, 2013, DHS/USCG submitted the CRAS for the Fort Hamer DEIS for review and concurrence.

In an e-mail dated March 11, 2013, the Seminole Tribe of Florida communicated with DHS/USCG that Tribe still “has a desire” to erect a commemorative marker/plaque in association with the proposed bridge.

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

In a letter dated January 2, 2013, DHS/USCG submitted the CRAS for the Fort Hamer DEIS for review and concurrence.