

Florida Department of Transportation

District One Rail Traffic Evaluation Study Study Newsletter

Upcoming Events

> Public Workshop

Wednesday
December 10, 2008
5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

at
The Lakeland Center
Lake Hollingsworth Room
701 West Lime Street
Lakeland, FL 33815
Park in the red parking lot

For directions:
Phone: (863) 834-8144

Web site:
www.thelakelandcenter.com/

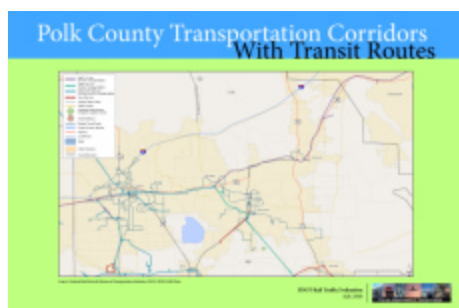
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

Attend anytime between
5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to
view study materials and
speak with the study team.

There will be an opportunity for
public comment following the
presentation at 6:30 p.m.

Project Overview

The purpose of the District One Rail Traffic Evaluation Study is to identify potential projects, improvements or strategies to address community concerns related to rail services in Polk County. The study focuses on identification of opportunities in three key areas: 1) potential impact mitigation strategies, 2) options for relocation of freight services, and 3) passenger alternatives.



The first analysis area will evaluate impact mitigation strategies. The study will identify the potential impacts related to increased freight rail operations within Polk County, focusing on safety; increased travel delay; and increased emergency service response time at highway rail grade crossings. Potential mitigation for any identified impacts will be investigated.

Under the second analysis, area freight service options will be evaluated. The full range of potential routings in the study area for freight services will be explored.

The third analysis area will involve the exploration of the increasing mobility options for commuters and residents in Polk County. Rail and bus solutions will be investigated. The evaluation will determine if a need exists for increased passenger rail or bus service.

A significant public outreach effort will be conducted throughout the study process. This public engagement effort will involve an on-going exchange of information between the project team and the public to appropriately identify solutions that are likely to carry public support.

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Public Outreach—How to Get Involved

An extensive public outreach effort is being conducted throughout the District One Rail Traffic Evaluation Study process. The initial workshop meeting, held on July 10th, was intended to present the project team's plan for the study and provide an overview of the initial concepts and assumptions that will guide the effort. This was an introductory session to set the framework of the study and start the community thinking about opportunities and constraints.

The project team will hold more workshops that will involve more feedback from the community. It is likely that they will take different formats as warranted by project progress. Some events will be informational with informal questions and answers in an open house-style setting. Other sessions will involve a formal presentation and formal question and answer period. The format will depend on whether the meeting is intended to gather information from the public or present the work accomplished since the last information-gathering session.



Frequently Asked Questions

Workshops include exhibits for community review and input.



A complete list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Answers will be available at workshops and on the project Web site*.

Public comments and questions were requested during the July 10, 2008 Workshop. Many of the comments and questions shared similar themes that the project team considers to be the important issues of concern for the community. We have included some of these key questions below, along with answers.

How is this study different from other studies and data collection efforts completed in the past?

Each study that was performed examined transit and transportation options from a different perspective and in many instances included Polk County or parts of Polk County in a regional scheme, but none focused on the linkages within Polk County and how they interact with systems extending out from the county. This study will address these linkages and system interactions.

What transit options are being considered and will they include new alignments and new technologies?

Transit modes (bus, commuter rail, intercity rail, etc) will be evaluated based on an assessment of ridership demand, capacity for future expansion, and costs. The need for expanded transit services in Polk County will first be quantified, and then alignment and technology options that match that need will be identified.

Is it possible to operate passenger trains on freight tracks?

Yes, it is possible to operate passenger rail service on tracks that are used by freight trains; in fact, it is being done successfully today in Polk County by Amtrak and CSX which share the same right of way. However, there are regulations and standards that must be carefully followed and freight and passenger service must be coordinated through established service and operations agreements.

What options are being examined to route freight traffic away from populated areas and protect our natural and recreational resources ?

The evaluation will include a comparison of costs and benefits of each corridor on the long list, as well as an assessment of potential impacts, which include quality of life issues affecting populated areas. The use of corridors currently used as trails would have an impact on the amount of public parks and recreation areas in Polk County, on the financial investment made in these corridors, and on the various users of the system. In the objective evaluation of the relative costs, benefits, and impacts of the corridors under study, FDOT will take into consideration critical environmental, social, and logistical factors as well as feedback from the community regarding their concerns and preferences.

What is being done to reduce rail noise ?

Quiet zones can be implemented to reduce noise impacts along railroad corridors. These are municipally-sponsored initiatives, but they have been successful in reducing railroad noise impacts in other parts of the county. As the study progresses, the need for and process for identifying quiet zones will be discussed with the affected community as part of the public outreach process.

How are response times for emergency vehicles that have to use the grade crossings being addressed in the analysis?

A detailed analysis of grade crossings on the "S" Line from North Kathleen to West Lake Wales is currently underway. This analysis includes surveys and direct consultation with both emergency service providers and school districts. Dialogue with emergency service providers will remain open and ongoing throughout the life of the study so that the needs and concerns of emergency service responders are accurately represented in the options recommended for future study.

***Visit the project Web site at: <http://www.fdotrailtrafficevaluation.com/>**



Workshops and open houses enable one-on-one questions and answers with the project team.