

ANNA MARIA ISLAND BRIDGE PD&E Study



Newsletter No. 2

www.annamariaislandbridge.com

July 2008

PD&E STUDY CONTINUES

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) began a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study of the Anna Maria Island Bridge in January 2008. It includes State Road (S.R.) 64 from S.R. 789 to Perico Bay Boulevard, a distance of about 2 miles. *Please see the location map on page 2.*

The study will conclude with a determination of whether the bridge will be replaced and, if so, the type of structure that would be built. Alignments north and south of the existing bridge are being considered.

The no-build alternative of continued maintenance/rehabilitation of the existing bridge is also being included as a viable alternative throughout the study.

FDOT is developing various alternatives including low- and mid-level drawbridges, a high-level fixed bridge and a tunnel. Only two-lane alternatives will be studied because S.R. 64, within the study limits, has been classified as a constrained roadway by the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization.

A thorough analysis of the social, cultural, natural and physical environments that surround the bridge is another important component of the study. Findings will be summarized in a document that will be submitted for approval to the U.S. Coast Guard, the lead federal agency for the study. The Federal Highway Administration will be a cooperating agency.

The project would then be eligible to advance to the design, right-of-way acquisition and construction phases as they are scheduled by the department.

KICKOFF PUBLIC MEETING HELD

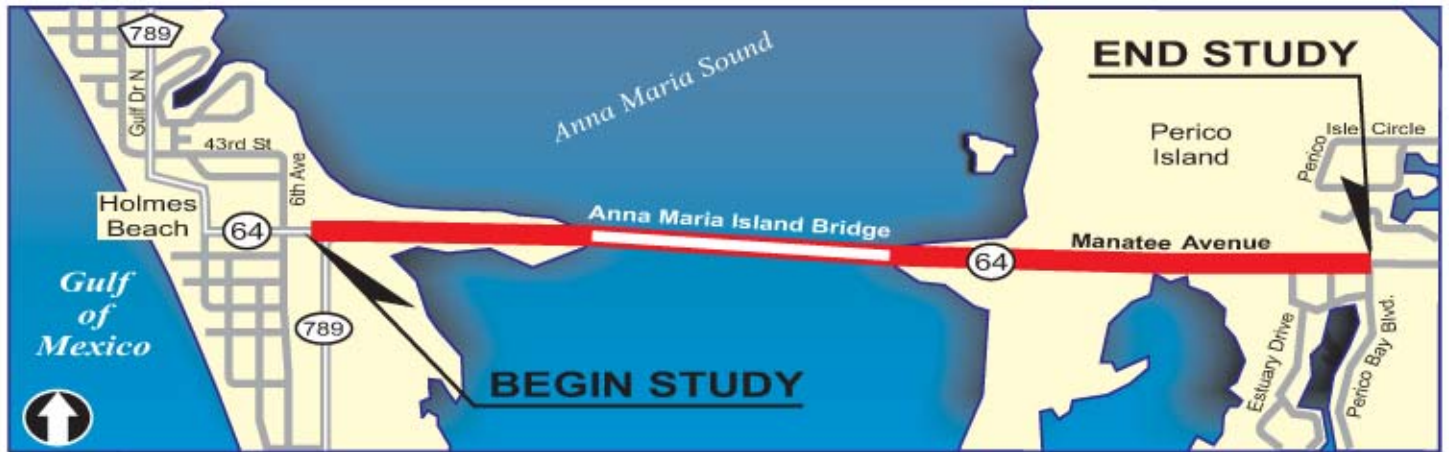


FDOT held a public information workshop on Thursday, April 3, 2008, early in the PD&E study process that will determine the future of the Anna Maria Island Bridge. About 180 citizens and public officials attended the three-hour meeting at St. Bernard Catholic Church activity center in Holmes Beach.

An audiovisual presentation explained the study process. FDOT representatives discussed project issues with attendees who viewed aerial photographs of the existing bridge and its surroundings. The department obtained comments from persons who spoke with several scribes and completed comment sheets and survey forms. Comment sheets and surveys were also submitted through the study web site.

In addition to over 400 completed surveys received prior to the public meeting, FDOT received almost 500 surveys during and following the workshop. *Please see the summary of the surveys and comments received on page 2 of this newsletter.*

A second public workshop is tentatively scheduled to be held late this year. Bridge replacement options and the no-build option will be presented. A formal public hearing will be scheduled in early 2009 to present the viable alternatives including the no build alternative.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RESULTS

The department compiled the results of 879 completed surveys received in April and May. The results indicated:

- 82% favor replacement of the bridge.
- 23% favor further rehabilitation.
- Of those in favor of a bridge replacement, 66% prefer a high-level fixed bridge, 11% would like a mid-level drawbridge, 9% prefer a low-level drawbridge and 3% favor another solution.
- Regarding the existing bridge, the three concerns listed most often on returned surveys include hurricane/emergency evacuation, access to the mainland and roadway traffic.

The surveys were received from the following locations:

- 41% -- Holmes Beach
- 19% -- Anna Maria
- 19% -- Bradenton
- 6% -- Bradenton Beach
- 5% -- Longboat Key
- 10% -- Elsewhere in Florida and out of state

Complete survey results can be viewed on the project study web site www.annamariaislandbridge.com.

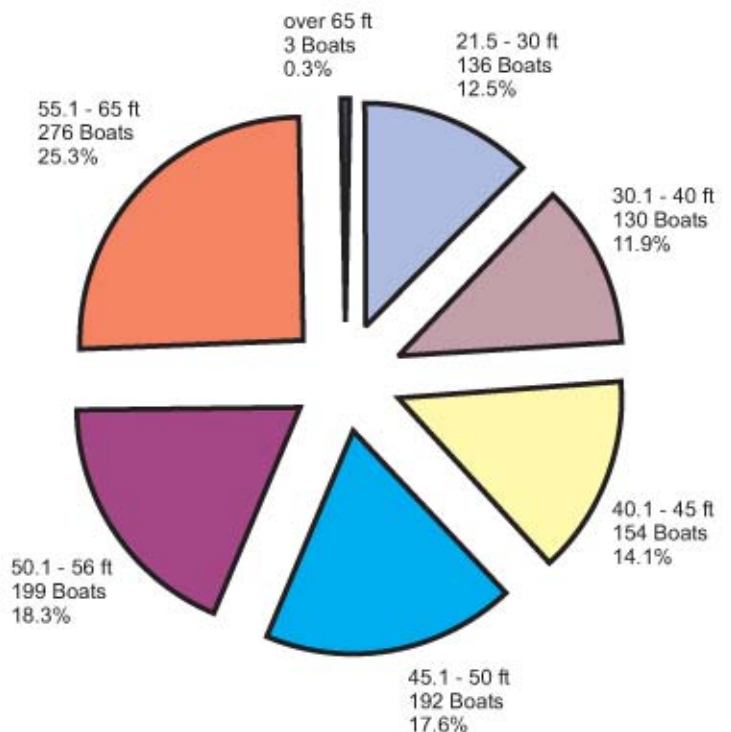
The department also received about 80 written comment sheets, letters and e-mails through the study web site. Common themes shared with department representatives at the public workshop and in written comments focused on possible replacement bridge heights, touch down points and how they would be affected by wind speeds during storm events.

BOAT HEIGHT SURVEY COMPLETED

The department conducted a boat survey from March 13 through June 3, 2008, to quantify the number and type of vessels that pass under the bridge. The U.S. Coast Guard required a survey to determine the height requirements for a future replacement bridge. Bridge tenders contacted boat captains by radio as they passed through the channel to determine their mast heights. Also, the tenders used an electronic device to measure masts that were not reported by the boat captain.

The results of the survey are shown in the graphic depiction below.

Vessel Height/Mast Survey 3/13/08 - 6/03/08



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FDOT has developed a list of questions and answers about the Anna Maria Island Bridge. Many questions were posed at the April 3, 2008, public information workshop and in written comments and e-mails received by the department. Among them were the following:

Q: Why is FDOT studying the Anna Maria Island Bridge again?

A: It has become apparent that, even with the current rehabilitation project that will extend the service life of the bridge by 10 to 15 years, a study should be conducted to identify what should happen to the bridge when the current rehabilitation project's service life has expired. FDOT committed to a study to determine a recommended alternative for the future of the aging bridge. Manatee County commissioners have pledged their support of a bridge replacement, but further rehabilitation will remain as a viable solution throughout the PD&E study. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires a study be completed for projects that will use federal funding or require a U.S. Coast Guard permit. The study is being accomplished in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Federal Highway Administration.

Q: If, as a result of the PD&E study, it is determined that the existing bridge should be replaced with a new one, will it be constructed in the immediate future?

A: Presently, there are no funds programmed for the design of a replacement bridge, any right-of-way acquisition that may be necessary or construction. Typically, it can take from eight to 10 years from the beginning of a study to the start of construction, if funding is available for all phases of the project.

Q: If, as a result of the PD&E study, a replacement bridge is selected, how will storm event winds affect different heights of bridges?

A: A wind study is being done to evaluate the effects of gale-force winds on vehicles traveling across bridges of different heights. However, bridges of any height are never "closed" for vehicles leaving the island.

Q: Is it true that residents of Anna Maria Island may become trapped on the island during a storm event if a replacement bridge higher than the existing bridge is constructed?

A: The department met with representatives of Manatee County to discuss the issue. It was indicated that the height of a replacement bridge is irrelevant to evacuation of the island. Residents should heed evacuation orders well in advance of a storm event. The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council Emergency Operations Plan, updated in 2006, indicated between 19.6 and 24 hours are needed to evacuate all zones in Manatee County including the island. While the U.S. Coast Guard can allow FDOT to lock down a drawbridge to boat traffic, a bridge is not officially closed to vehicular traffic leaving the island. Residents who choose to leave the island via the bridge may do so at their own risk. However, law enforcement agencies may prevent motorists from returning to the island until the storm event has passed and FDOT has had the opportunity to inspect the bridge for structural soundness. Other factors may prevent motorists from accessing the bridge, such as approach roadways that are overtopped with water or downed power lines.

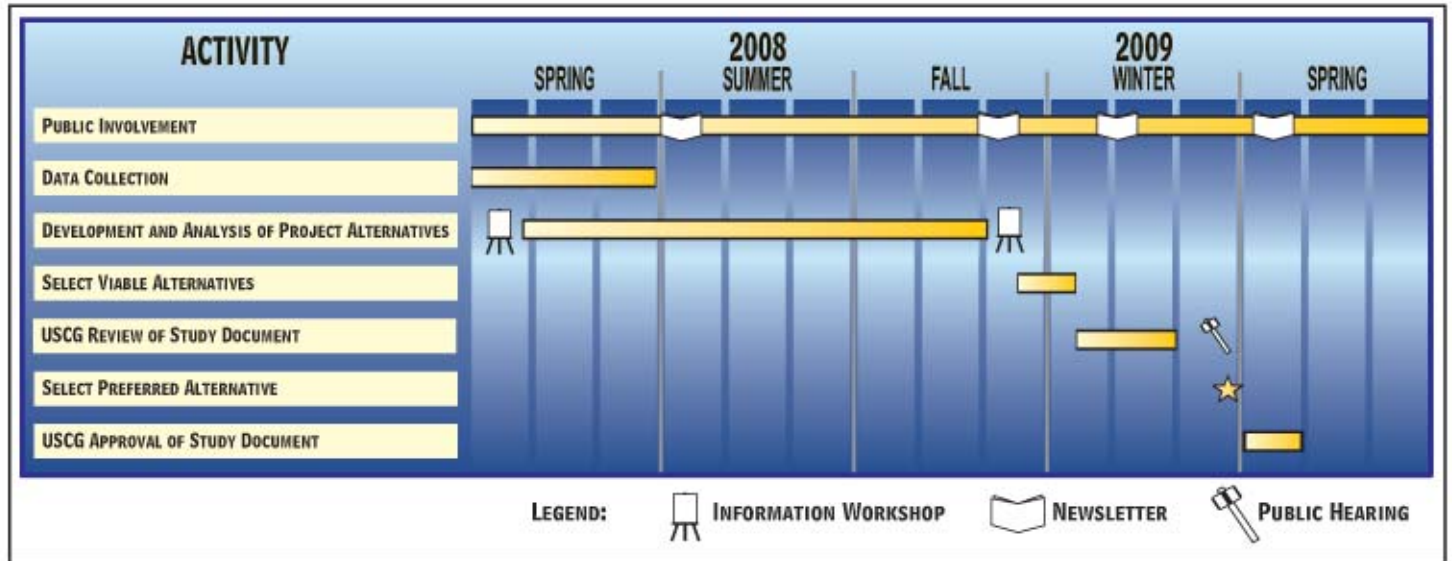
Q: At what wind speed is the Anna Maria Island Bridge "locked down" to marine traffic?

A: Manatee County officials say sustained winds of 40 to 45 mph will result in the bridge being locked down. Emergency response vehicles (ambulances and fire trucks) will be removed from the streets. Emergency response personnel are placed in law enforcement vehicles to respond to emergencies. Also, FDOT removes its personnel from roadways.

WORK PROGRAM SCHEDULE

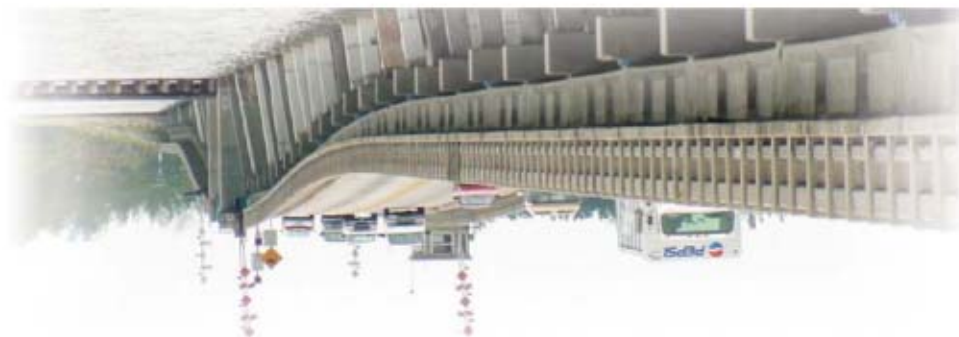
The design, right-of-way, and construction phases for the replacement of the Anna Maria Island Bridge are not scheduled in the FDOT Tentative Five-Year Work Program.

PD&E STUDY SCHEDULE



STAY INFORMED

We urge you to participate in this study and invite your comments and questions. If you received this newsletter in the mail, you are included in the PD&E Study mailing list. If you would like to add a name and/or an address, please contact: Mr. Chris Piazza, P.E., FDOT, District Environmental Management Office, P.O. Box 1249, Bartow, Florida 33831, (863) 519-2293, or, 1-800-292-FDOT, E-mail: chris.piazza@dot.state.fl.us



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