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SOUTHPORT CONNECTOR EXPRESSWAY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT STUDY FAQ

EARLY 2025

? FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study?

A: A Project Development & Environment Study (PD&E) is the formal process used to ensure that consideration is given to environmental and social impacts, engineering design, public input, and project costs in the development of major transportation projects. The PD&E Study determines if there is an engineering and environmentally feasible alternative to meet the transportation need determined in the planning phase. Components of the PD&E Study include data collection, development and analysis of alternatives, development of project documents and final approval.

Public involvement is an integral part of the PD&E Study process. PD&E Studies engage elected and appointed officials; federal, state and local agencies; environmental agencies and advocates; and community members in developing and evaluating alternatives to meet community needs, while seeking to minimize public and environmental impacts. To learn more about the CFX project development process, click here.

2. Why is the Southport Connector Expressway being proposed?

A: Osceola County for years has been one of the fastest growing counties in Florida and Polk County is not far behind. Straddling both counties is the Poinciana community – home to more than 70,000 people – and growing. The Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) is working in coordination and in partnership with leaders in both counties on solutions to current traffic congestion, as well as to accommodate the thousands more people expected to call this part of the region home in the coming years.

Traffic increased by 25 percent along Cypress Parkway from 2019 to 2024. Osceola County alone is reviewing plans from developers to build 11,000 more homes east of Lake Toho in the coming years.

3. What is the Southport Connector Expressway? Where would it go?

A: CFX's goal is to Move Poinciana with enhancements to local infrastructure alongside the proposed 15-mile Southport Connector Expressway. The Southport Connector Expressway – in conjunction with the Poinciana Parkway – is part of a broader, regional solution that would support the area's continuing growth while allowing motorists much-improved access to major roads such as Florida's Turnpike and Interstate 4. The Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study area extends from the Poinciana Parkway to the east within the Cypress Parkway median to Pleasant Hill Road. From there the expressway would continue east south of Lake Toho on a new alignment to Florida's Turnpike and Canoe Creek Road.

Local travel enhancements would include widening Cypress Parkway to six lanes, widening side streets at Cypress Parkway and making other intersection upgrades in eight locations and building multi-use trails on both sides of the roadway.

4. How does the Southport Connector Expressway fit with other roadway improvements planned in the area?

A: The 15-mile Southport Connector Expressway – in conjunction with the Poinciana Parkway – is part of a broader, regional solution that would support the area's continuing growth while allowing motorists much-improved access to major roads such as Florida's Turnpike and Interstate 4. The Southport Connector Expressway would be part of a regional network of future planned expressways including the Poinciana Parkway Extension, State Road 515 (Northeast Connector) and State Road 534. Together, all these new corridors would form a 50-mile beltway through Osceola County.

5. What are the alternatives being considered? How is CFX going to prevent the expressway from blocking views or dividing the community?

A: CFX is evaluating alternatives to elevate the Southport Connector Expressway using walls, bridges – to maintain more open views – and a hybrid option that would combine the two. Visit www.movepoinciana.com/maps-renderings/ to view the Alternatives' Typical Sections.

CFX added consideration of the bridge alternative in response to resident concerns about maintaining community connectivity and cohesion.

6. What is the schedule for the Southport Connector Expressway PD&E Study?

A: CFX anticipates holding an Alternatives Public Workshop in March, followed by a Public Hearing to review a Preferred Alternative this fall. The CFX Governing Board is scheduled in December 2025 to review the Preferred Alternative and decide whether the project moves forward - or not - to design and construction.

7. How will CFX address concerns about potential impacts to the community and the environment from the Southport Connector Expressway?

A: State, regional and local agencies acknowledge that making major, needed transportation improvements can present challenges and have impacts on the community.

CFX during the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study - started in 2020 - is identifying, evaluating and documenting potential social, natural, physical and cultural impacts. The PD&E Study also is developing strategies to minimize and/or mitigate those impacts. That includes considering and developing strategies for addressing potential residential, business or wetland impacts, as well as temporary impacts from construction. With regards to potential business impacts, for example, CFX works with owners to find new locations for businesses when needed.

8. Will the PD&E Study findings be available to the public?

A: As part of the PD&E Study, CFX is evaluating the potential social, cultural, natural and physical impacts and benefits of the Southport Connector Expressway. Following are some of the environmental and engineering documents with the study findings that will be produced and made available prior to the public hearing in the fall:

Environmental

Community Impact Assessment
Contamination Screening Evaluation Report
Cultural Resource Assessment Survey
Natural Resource Evaluation
Water Quality Impact Evaluation Checklist
Noise Study Report
Air Quality Technical Memorandum
Project Environmental Impact Report
Comments & Coordination Report

Engineering

Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum
Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report
Project Traffic Analysis Report
Pond Siting Report
Geotechnical Report
Location Hydraulics Report
Typical Section Package
Utility Assessment Package
Conceptual Design Roadway Plan Set
Preliminary Engineering Report

9. How will the Southport Connector Expressway help relieve local traffic congestion?

A: The Southport Connector Expressway would include improvements to make local travel easier - even benefitting those who do not use the proposed tolled road. As part of this project CFX would widen Cypress Parkway, which would remain non-tolled, to six lanes. Eight side streets at Cypress Parkway would be widened and the intersections otherwise upgraded.

This would increase the traffic capacity on Cypress Parkway by more than 50 percent, making local travel easier. Commuters and others making longer distance trips are expected to use the elevated expressway, thereby taking traffic off the local road. A multi-use trail on both sides of Cypress Parkway would be proposed as part of these improvements.

Currently Cypress Parkway traffic operates at an unacceptable Level of Service F - with long delays and queues. Under the No-Build or do-nothing condition – without the proposed expressway and additional capacity planned on Cypress Parkway – the delays and queues in the future are expected to be much worse and very long throughout the day.

Increasing capacity by more than 50 percent on Cypress Parkway would alleviate congestion and restore operations to an acceptable Level of Service D or better (short or moderate delays) through the year 2050.

10. Will CFX build walls to protect communities from noise from the new expressway and widened Cypress Parkway?

A: CFX will conduct a noise evaluation and produce a Noise Study Report as part of the PD&E Study. The Noise Study will follow federal criteria to determine potential noise impacts to the community and possible ways to address it. The study will look at potential noise impacts and abatement along both the local road and the elevated expressway.

If the project moves forward, potential noise impacts also would be re-assessed during the design phase.

11. How will CFX address community concerns about potential air quality impacts from the Southport Connector Expressway?

A: As part of the PD&E Study, CFX is evaluating the potential social, cultural, natural and physical impacts and benefits of the Southport Connector Expressway. Environmental and Engineering evaluations and documents produced as part of the study include an Air Quality Technical Memorandum.

CFX is considering a more detailed air quality review in response to community concerns. It should be noted that Florida measures air quality impacts in terms of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and the state is in attainment (i.e., within) federal CO₂ guidelines.

According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Air Resource Management: Thanks to a statewide effort, emissions in Florida continue to decrease and are now the lowest they have been on record. The state of Florida has one of the best outdoor air quality monitoring networks in the country, enabling the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to provide accurate and timely data to the state's residents and visitors. Learn more at floridadep.gov/air.

Also, the proposed improvements would result in less stop-and-go traffic and less vehicle idling, providing a reduction in CO₂ emissions on the local road.

12. How would the Southport Connector Expressway benefit to the community?

A: Transportation improvements, once completed, in general have positive social and economic benefits by providing more travel choices, increased roadway capacity, enhanced mobility, and improved access to adjacent land uses and community facilities.

The proposed expressway and local road improvements would result in more reliable travel times – being able to reliably get to work, school or medical and other appointments on time. Free-flowing traffic would improve emergency response times, as well as reduce the risk of vehicle collisions that commonly occur in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

The Southport Connector Expressway would provide greater social and economic benefits than doing nothing at all to improve the flow of traffic in the region.

13. How does CFX plan to address concerns about potential impacts to businesses from the new expressway? What could be some of the possible positive impacts to businesses from the project?

A: We understand that proposed major transportation improvements can cause uncertainty among community members – including business owners. The PD&E Study evaluates social, natural, economic, cultural impacts and also looks at ways to minimize or mitigate those impacts. For example, ramps proposed earlier in the study near Pleasant Hill Road were removed due to the anticipated, significant direct right-of-way impacts to adjacent businesses as well as for operational reasons.

CFX works with businesses whose property would be directly impacted by the project, to help them find new locations or otherwise mitigate impacts. CFX staff has met with the Bravo Supermarket owners, for example, in this regard.

In our meetings with chamber members, we have heard some concerns about potential project impacts. We also have heard many concerns about traffic congestion impacts on: businesses' ability to serve and reach customers; for customers to be on time for appointments; to be able to get and make deliveries on time; for employees to get to work on time; and, challenges recruiting employees in such a congested area. We recognize there has to be a balance in how we try to address the many conflicting interests in the community.

14. Would the Southport Connector Expressway provide any economic benefits to the community? If so, what would those be?

A: With more reliable travel times, employers would see reduced lost productivity from late employees or delayed deliveries. Businesses would have less difficulty recruiting staff if folks know they'll have an easier commute.

If the project moves forward to construction, businesses could benefit from providing goods and services to the contractors. Project employees typically patronize local businesses, funneling money back into the local economy.

Also, from an economic development standpoint, improved roadway infrastructure and access to major travel corridors (such as I-4 and the Turnpike) are among the requirements for major companies looking to relocate to an area.

15. How could my business benefit from this project, if it is approved?

A: If the project moves forward to construction, firms hired by CFX to build the improvements will need workers, goods, materials and services. CFX provides many fair and competitive opportunities for doing business with the agency as part of improving and expanding our expressway system. Opportunities are available for prime contractors, subcontractors, vendors, engineering consultants and subconsultants – just to name a few. The agency needs an array of goods and services for these projects – from surveying to sod, landscaping and fencing. To find out how your company might be able to participate in the CFX Procurement process for goods and services, visit www.cfxway.com/doing-business/procurement.

16. How many people are expected to use the Southport Connector Expressway? How is the traffic forecast calculated?

A: The 2050 design year projected daily traffic on Southport Connector Expressway is 62,000 (draft) vehicles per day between the proposed ramps west of Cypress Dr and Old Pleasant Hill Rd. The traffic analysis is being updated as the PD&E study progresses and concepts are refined. Detailed traffic data and analysis will be documented in the Project Traffic Analysis Report (PTAR) which would be available leading up to the public hearing.

Traffic forecasting is based on the Florida Department of Transportation's Central Florida Regional Planning Model (CFRPM). The model takes into consideration many factors in forecasting traffic, including planned developments data.

17. Where will people have to pay a toll on the expressway and how much will it cost?

A: A toll plan with amounts is under development. A Traffic and Revenue Report including this information will be among the documents made available prior to the public hearing slated for this fall.

18. Will local residents have to pay a toll?

A: Cypress Parkway will remain non-tolled if the project moves forward. The proposed expressway would be a tolled facility, providing quicker, more convenient travel for commutes and other longer trips.

19. How much time could the Southport Connector Expressway save in travel time on longer trips? How were the travel time savings calculated?

A: For example, the 28-mile trip from Cypress Parkway and Marigold Avenue to the Orlando International Airport currently could take 40-90 minutes. If the Southport Connector Expressway and related Cypress Parkway improvements are made, that 37-mile trip could take 35-50 minutes. That's a reduction in travel time of up to 46% - or up to 40 minutes.

The calculation was based on Google typical travel time estimates in 2024 for the existing roadways. For the Southport Connector Expressway segment, the travel time was calculated using distance and anticipated posted speed.

20. How could the Southport Connector Expressway help those who don't want to pay a toll?

A: The proposed Southport Connector Expressway would provide travel options for anyone who chooses to use it. Those who do not choose to use it will also benefit – from reduced congestion on Cypress Parkway from local road improvements increasing capacity by more than 50 percent.

Diverting traffic to the proposed Southport Connector Expressway could also help alleviate congestion on other local roadways, thereby benefiting residents who may not use the expressway.

21. How would you measure the difference in traffic flow along Cypress Parkway with or without the Southport Connector Expressway and related local road improvements?

A: Currently Cypress Parkway traffic operates at an unacceptable Level of Service F - with long delays and queues. In general, the section of Cypress Parkway east of Marigold Avenue is congested throughout the day and the backups extend beyond the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Poinciana Boulevard/Southport Road.

Under the No-Build or do-nothing condition, without the proposed Southport Connector Expressway and additional capacity on Cypress Parkway, the delays and queues in the future are expected to be much worse than today and very long throughout the day.

Increasing capacity by more than 50 percent on Cypress Parkway – widening to six lanes plus auxiliary lanes and turn lanes – would alleviate congestion and restore operations to an acceptable Level of Service D or better (short or moderate delays) through the year 2050.

22. What is the basis of the traffic Levels of Service and how can I find out more about them?

A: The Levels of Service (LOS) for intersections as displayed on the traffic board at the Community Open House are based on travel delays. The delay thresholds are based on the national Highway Capacity Manual. You may also learn more about Levels of Service from the FDOT Multimodal Quality and Level of Service Handbook.

23. Will a Community Impact Assessment be conducted by an independent party as part of the PD&E Study?

A: CFX is striving to have the Draft Community Impact Assessment (CIA) done for the March Alternatives Public Workshop.

The Community Impact Assessment is not being prepared by an independent company. There is Federal Highway Administration and Florida Department of Transportation guidance to prepare a CIA or Sociocultural Effects Evaluation (the corresponding document FDOT prepares). That guidance would be followed whether the assessment is done internally by CFX or by any external, independent company.

Once CFX begins the CIA process, we will include meetings with the study Community Engagement Group to walk them through the process and to gather member input for the assessment. This will be an additional measure taken as a matter of transparency for the overall CIA process.

24. Previous studies showed the existing right-of-way for Cypress Parkway was not sufficient to accommodate 12 travel lanes. How did CFX fit the proposed six lanes for Cypress Parkway, six lanes for the elevated expressway and other improvements largely into the existing corridor?

A: In 2018, the Concept, Feasibility and Mobility (CF&M) Study completed by CFX concluded that a 4-lane expressway with a 4-lane Cypress Parkway would be enough to accommodate future traffic (to the year 2040). During the PD&E study that started in 2020, alternatives for both the expressway portion and Cypress Parkway portion of the project were considered and evaluated using updated traffic forecasts based on continued growth in the region projected to the year 2050. The result of this evaluation is the six lanes for both Cypress Parkway and the elevated expressway configuration shown at the November 2024 Community Open House.

Working together with Polk and Osceola counties, CFX was able to refine the design concepts to fit primarily within the existing right-of-way width along Cypress Parkway, which is 300 feet. Adjustments to the design criteria such as design speed along the Cypress Parkway portion of the project allowed for slight reductions in travel lane widths, as well the width of the multi-use path along both sides of the road. These adjustments are reflected in the proposed typical sections presented at the Community Open House and fit primarily within the existing right of way. Minor amounts of additional right of way are required to accommodate turn lane improvements at intersections. Note, this right of way impact does not require any residential relocations or displacements.

25. Why does the Southport Connector have to go along Cypress Parkway?

A: Many studies have been conducted over the last two decades to evaluate solutions for traffic congestion in Poinciana. Previous studies have universally documented that Cypress Parkway – given its wider than usual right of way allowing for more than just a four-lane road – was the most reasonable and feasible location for this portion of the Southport Connector Expressway.

26. How would CFX build the expressway to avoid making an already bad traffic situation worse?

A: We recognize that building major transportation improvements presents challenges to communities. Should the Southport Connector Expressway move forward, CFX would consider different phasing and other options to try to minimize impacts to the community. One possible option could be to build the east end of the expressway coming from

the Turnpike to Pleasant Hill Road, as well as the Cypress Parkway improvements first. This would provide congestion relief for the community while also creating room to build the expressway along the Cypress Parkway median. CFX would provide community members with advanced notification of major impacts and work to minimize impacts to the extent possible, understanding that some construction impacts will be unavoidable.

27. If the project is approved and moves forward, how long before construction would be completed?

A: If approved, CFX would have to program funding for the improvements. The project then would move from the PD&E Study into design, permitting, right of way acquisition and then construction. That's why projects of this magnitude could take as long as 10 years from the completion of the study to be open to traffic.

28. How would CFX address property owner concerns about possible vibration damage during construction?

A: The PD&E study will document the need to monitor and minimize vibration during construction. If the project moves forward, vibration would be addressed further in design and construction. CFX also follows certain practices to minimize vibration, such as not allowing contractors to use vibratory rollers for compacting materials in the roadway.

29. How would you address homelessness or graffiti with the bridge alternative?

A: We have heard community concerns – including from law enforcement – about possible negative activity related to the bridge alternative. CFX engages in world-class maintenance practices to address graffiti and other concerns on our system.

We've also received interest from some residents for consideration of possible passive recreation or art installations under the bridge alternative, something that could be considered with county leaders if the project moves forward. Other ideas have included possibly putting a law enforcement substation under the bridges.

30. Will there be landscaping as part of the project? If so, who would maintain it?

A: CFX is prepared to invest in a robust landscaping plan for the corridor. CFX takes great pride in ensuring the landscaping along its 125-mile system is appealing to our neighbors and complements the surroundings. Landscaping would be a separate project after the major construction is completed; landscaping design would be coordinated with the counties and adjacent communities.

We have been made aware of previous agreements between the counties, the Association of Poinciana Villages and the Solivita community regarding landscaping and maintenance along Cypress Parkway. Any future landscaping and maintenance agreements would be coordinated by CFX with these parties.

31. Why can't the expressway be built along Poinciana Boulevard as proposed by others?

A: The Cypress Parkway corridor provides 300 feet of right of way. The Poinciana Boulevard corridor is 200 feet wide. Significant additional right-of-way would be needed along Poinciana Boulevard to accommodate the expressway and to build features such as sidewalks/multi-use paths, drainage, utilities, lighting, signage, and ramps to allow access from the local roadway to the expressway. These features would have needed to be added to the community-recommended alternative.

Due to the limited access nature of expressways (that is, non-motorized users are not allowed), the expressway must be physically separated or elevated from the local, at-grade roadway where motorized and non-motorized users may access local land uses such as business, schools, churches, community facilities, and residential communities. Locating the expressway at the same level or elevation as the local roadway simply is not feasible.

The SCAR alignment would significantly impact Osceola County's current widening of Poinciana Boulevard. The county on September 27, 2023, began to widen Poinciana Boulevard to four lanes for 5.6 miles from Pleasant Hill Road to

Trafalgar Boulevard. The County has invested nearly \$145 million to relieve congestion, accommodate bike/ped users, and enhance safety along this critical north-south corridor. Construction is on track for completion Summer 2026.

To be able to get the South Florida Water Management District permit to widen Poinciana Boulevard, Osceola County committed to a 60-foot-wide vegetation buffer along the west side of the corridor. Co-locating a six-lane expressway, such as the SCAR alignment, would not be consistent with the environmental stewardship the County has committed to along this corridor.

Also, the SCAR alignment is not consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element. As a result, the SCAR alternative along Poinciana Boulevard would have potential considerable impacts to the environment and adjacent property owners.

32. Why doesn't this project address traffic congestion on other area roads?

A: We understand that there are traffic congestion challenges on many area roads including Pleasant Hill Road. No single project will relieve traffic congestion on all of these roads.

It is expected that traffic will divert from Pleasant Hill Road to the proposed Southport Connector Expressway, thereby relieving congestion on Pleasant Hill Road. Currently, Poinciana residents north and south of Cypress Parkway use the congested Pleasant Hill Road to travel to/from destinations north of Kissimmee such as the Orlando International Airport, I-Drive District and Orlando, among others. The proposed Southport Connector Expressway will provide a faster route that will be less congested, significantly reducing travel time.

For example, southbound Pleasant Hill motorists will be able to turn left at Southport Road to get on the expressway at Interchange A to go east to the Turnpike. This will reduce traffic and congestion on Pleasant Hill Road at the Cypress Parkway intersection.

33. Why were the previously proposed ramps at Pleasant Hill Road removed?

A: The study looked at westbound expressway ramps that would have been accessible to those heading south on Pleasant Hill Road, as well as eastbound expressway ramps that would have been accessible to those exiting onto Cypress Parkway. Adding those ramps would have resulted in substantial, additional right of way acquisition and business impacts in that area. The ramps also posed some operational challenges.

Developing these major transportation improvements requires balancing both local community and regional needs. To minimize the impacts to the local business community, the expressway ramps just west of Pleasant Hill Road were removed.

With the proposed expanded capacity on Cypress Parkway, future drivers will experience less congestion compared to the current or future congested conditions without the proposed improvement project.

34. How would I find out if my property might be affected or needed for this project?

A: The PD&E Study will evaluate general right-of-way impacts for each project alternative under consideration. Currently as part of the PD&E Study, in most cases, only slivers of right of way will be needed, with no homes being proposed for acquisition. More right of way would be required at Pleasant Hill Road; CFX is coordinating with the potentially affected business owner in that location.

Once a Preferred Alternative is arrived at, specific right of way impacts will be evaluated. Right of way acquisition occurs after the design phase is well underway. To learn more about CFX's policy on right-of-way acquisition visit the CFX website at this link: [click here](#).

35. Why is a thin strip of property proposed to be taken from the Solivita community when there is vacant property across Cypress Parkway at the Poinciana Parkway?

A: Both the bridge and wall alternatives for the proposed Southport Connector Expressway would require taking narrow strips of property from both sides of Cypress Parkway just east of the Poinciana Parkway. Proposed right of way to be taken along the south side of Cypress Parkway would not directly impact any residences.

On the north side of Cypress Parkway, a mixed-use development – residential and commercial – is planned. CFX has been coordinating with the developer of this property with regard to potential impacts and ways to address them. According to the developer, construction could start as soon as this year on this property, currently referred to as “Parcel 23.”

36. How will this project affect the value of my property?

A: Traffic congestion is negatively affecting the quality of life in Poinciana. That could include the ability to sell a home due to the time it takes to travel the area. Typically, during construction, homeowners may be challenged in trying to sell a home. But once the transportation infrastructure improvements are made – and people are able to get to and from their destinations more quickly and easily – then having travel options and better access are seen as a benefit and, overall, property values typically are maintained or increase.

37. How can I find out more about – or provide input – on the Southport Connector Expressway PD&E Study?

A: Public input is an integral part of the PD&E Study process. CFX will continue to provide opportunities for community members to learn about study alternatives and provide feedback.

You can view the latest study presentations, video and exhibits at MovePoinciana.com (and in Spanish at AvanzaPoinciana.com). We want to hear how traffic congestion affects your daily life in Poinciana, so please consider taking our survey by clicking [here](#).

If you have a community group that would like a study update, please contact us at ProjectStudies@CFXway.com or request a presentation by visiting www.movepoinciana.com/presentation.

Be sure to periodically check the study website for the next public meeting or public hearing.

For additional questions or comments, please contact us at ProjectStudies@CFXway.com.

“Para más información en español comuníquese con Tiany Sousa al 407.636.0209 o por correo electrónico a Tiany.Sousa@qcausa.com o visita www.AvanzaPoinciana.com.