Part 03
CORRIDOR VISION AND FEASIBILITY

"Here is land, tranquil in its quiet beauty, serving not as the source of water, but as the last receiver of it. To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country."

– President Harry S. Truman, 1947

Introduction

Through extensive public involvement, a vision has been developed for a world-class path across the Everglades connecting Collier County to Miami-Dade County. The pathway's vision, established by Steering Committee members and public input, is as follows:

> ***'The River of Grass Greenway is a non-motorized transportation and recreation corridor across the Everglades, connecting Naples and Miami, that promotes enhanced opportunities for education and stewardship of the environmental and cultural assets of this unique area.'***

The planning team hosted a series of workshops, public meetings and online engagement to guide the formation of the path's vision and development of conceptual alternatives. Building upon the research and analysis completed in Part II of the Feasibility Study and Master Plan, the planning team refined and analyzed the feasibility of each publicly developed concept based on a criteria established during the workshops with public and Steering Committee members' input. Alternative routes that furthered the vision of the ROGG were then analyzed for potential impact and benefit to the existing transportation network.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide documentation, refinement and analysis of publicly developed concepts for the ROGG. To accomplish this, the chapter is divided into six sections, including the following:

1. Public Involvement – This section documents and summarizes an extensive public involvement process that consisted of three week-long public corridor workshops, a series of three public meetings, three public open houses and two websites; one a public engagement, townhall style website hosted by the consultant team and a second, information depository style website hosted by MDPROS.

2. Pathway Components – This section documents publicly developed concepts for the ROGG and supporting amenities such as crossings, trailheads, and hubs. A series of cross-sections, plans and diagrams form a menu of pathway components that work in unison to form the ROGG.

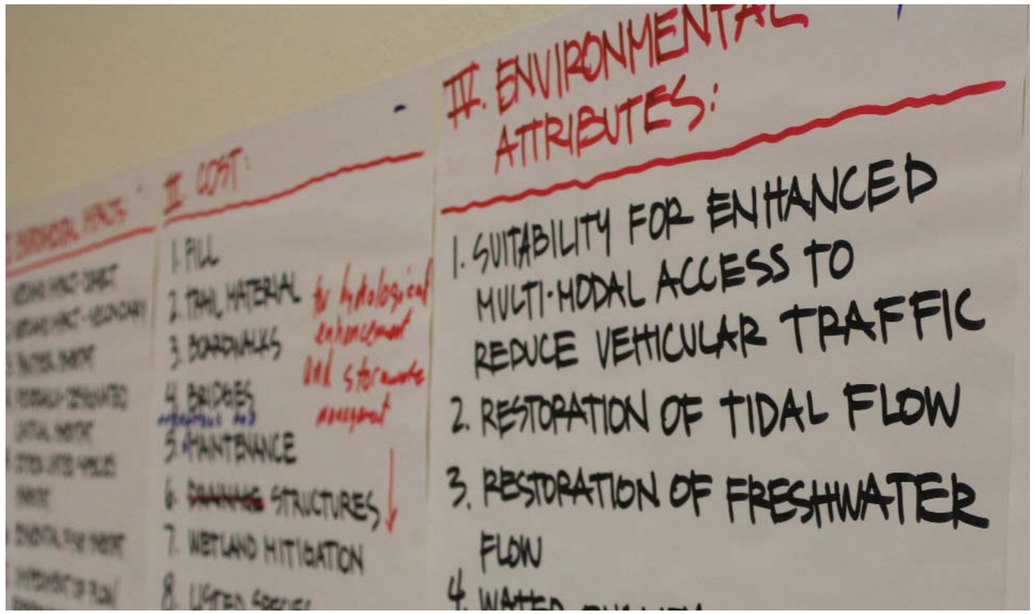
3. Feasibility Evaluation – This section provides a comprehensive evaluation of pathway concepts and alternate routes through an analysis of opportunities, constraints and fatal flaws. Through the application of public meetings and a Steering Committee review, feasibility criteria were developed and alternative and preferred routes documented.

4. Alternative Transportation Analysis – This section documents the alternative transportation options and scenarios that are potentially provided by the ROGG or may work in conjunction with the pathway to ensure higher positive environmental, social and economic benefits.

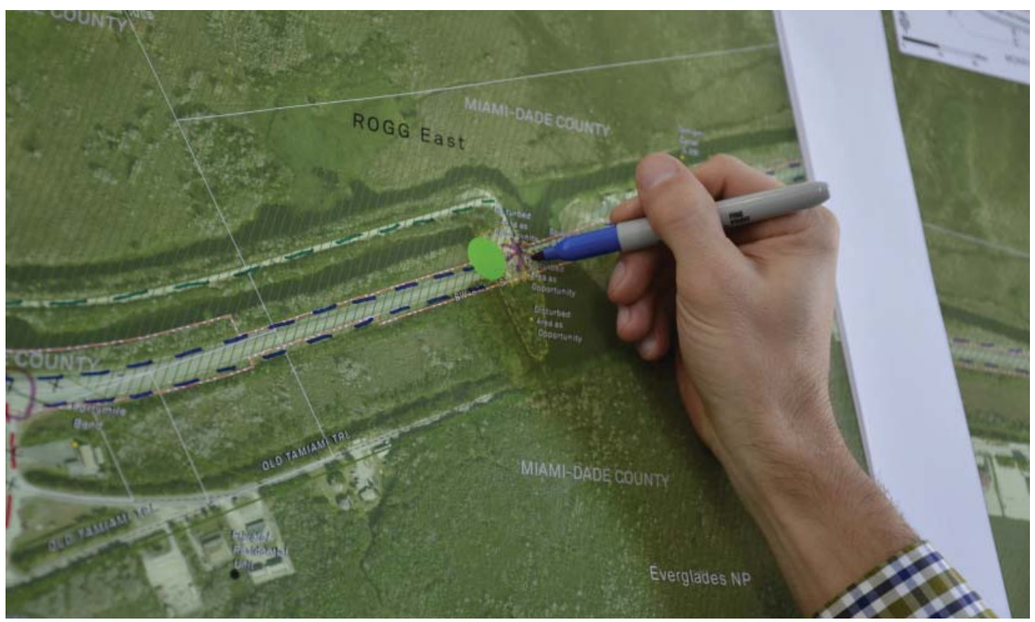
5. Benefits of Pathway – This section analyzes benefits that come from a managed approach that the ROGG would provide and strengthens the case for the ROGG as a key component of an integrated visitor experience to the Everglades region. Benefits are based on previous governmental or academic research and assumptions based on best available data.

6. Summary – The final section provides a summary of the refinement and analysis process for concepts developed through broad public involvement, as well as, key findings of alternative transportation scenarios and potential pathway benefits.

Draft - January 2015



Public input during ROGG West Public Workshop



Public input on route alternatives during ROGG East Public Workshop

3.1 Public Involvement

The public involvement element of the Feasibility Study and Master Plan assures an effective and efficient process that fairly and equitably maximizes citizen input and support for the planning and development of the ROGG. The NPS, through Director's order #75A, employs a heightened level of public involvement throughout the Service's planning work and was incorporated in this planning process. These initiative utilizes the following activities when engaging the public during the planning process:

- Systematically planning a variety of opportunities for the public to learn about and express their opinions on possible actions and policies, and to know that their diverse views are considered in shaping decisions and become part of the record of the decision-making process;
- Informing and educating the public about the scientific and scholarly information used in making decisions or carrying out management activities;
- Consulting the public to gather valuable and sometimes unexpected sources of information that may substantially contribute to or inform management thinking and options;
- Learning from the public their concerns, values, and preferences as part of an advertised or targeted agenda so that we are better informed;
- Including the public's input when making informed decisions;
- Responding to suggestions and comments from the public in a timely, truthful, and straightforward manner;

Three types of public involvement were utilized and are summarized in this section:

- **Corridor Workshops** - Extensive, week-long public workshops with kick-off presentations, multi-day planning sessions and concluding open houses were conducted in or near each planning segment of the ROGG Study Area.

- **Websites** – Two project websites were developed in order to effectively engage the public and distribute information.

- **Public Agencies** – This element included individual meetings with multiple public agencies that represent the public on a vast array of public safety, environmental, land and transportation management and stewardship issues.

3.1.1. Corridor Workshops

Public involvement was initiated with a series of advertised public workshops held in various portions of the corridor to provide extended opportunities for public comment and input to the feasibility study and plan. Workshops were held in Naples, Everglades City, and Miami-Dade County. Regional associations, clubs, and organizations with special interests in the ROGG Study Area were specifically invited to participate in the workshops. Individuals that attended were offered to be interviewed to document ideas and concerns. Participants were invited to provide input on potential routing alternatives, trailhead and gateway opportunities, and ways to connect to existing destinations along the corridor.

Format

Each Corridor Workshop started with an evening kick-off presentation to summarize findings from the research and analysis portion of work by the planning team. This was followed by two consecutive days of public planning sessions that progressed through a series of topics, first with broad subjects such as goals, routes and trailheads and then concluded with topics such as trail materials, wayfinding and feasibility criteria input. Public input was followed by one day of closed door time for refinement of concepts and ideas. Each workshop concluded with a half-day public open house in which all work products were displayed for public review and further input. Public notice of each advertised workshop included newspaper, website, press release, emails and in some cases television and public radio.

Location/Dates

Corridor Workshops were held at public facilities in or near each of the ROGG segments. This allowed the planning team to readily access the study area for further research and analysis as needed and established a local interest in each segment. The following locations and dates were utlized for each of the three adversited Corridor Workshops:

- **ROGG West** - Edison State College Collier Campus - Bldg. J. (Conference Center); Dates: January 29th through February 2nd, 2013.

- **ROGG Central** – Everglades City Hall; Dates: February 26th through March 2nd, 2013

- **ROGG East** – Florida International University (FIU) – School of Architecture and the Arts; Dates: March 12th-16th, 2013.

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ROGG West Workshop

Edison State College, Naples, FL

Public Comments:

- About accessibility from populated areas—don't want to have to drive to facility. It should be accessible from urban areas via bicycle/on foot.
- Some of the pictures of the ROW show it is tight, are you going to try to fit it within the ROW. (Response) Yes, it is tight in some areas and near bridges, but in other cases it is more than 200 feet. We are trying to look at what is achievable within the maintained area.
- Each park has their own environmental education program, but would like children to get out and experience the area in a different way.
- We have lots of different trail systems, and different groups are doing different things within these spaces. We need to provide a comfortable connection.
- We had discussed equestrian before, but the users were not interested.
- Consider private owners along trail as trailheads.
- Picayune trail is being improved north of Port of the Islands.
- Potentials for shuttle tram, transit stops with bigger turn around area.
- Concern that the trail will further impact the north to south flow of water, in-turn climate
- Communicate/involve ORV users
- For Fakahatchee Strand, consider taking the course through the upland communities as this could reduce wetland impacts, but it might also increase impacts to upland hammocks used by panthers.
- Consider paddling on the Tamiami Trail.
- Accommodate fishermen on bridges used for the trail.

Note: Comments above are representative. Complete meeting notes are located in the report Appendix

Public open house during ROGG West Corridor Workshop at Edison State College, February 2, 2013.

ROGG Central Workshop

Everglades City Hall, Everglades City, FL

Public Comments:

- Impressed with detail of work and amount that went into it.
- I am a property owner within the Preserve and I think the project is very nice. I think it boils down to how you engineer and impact environment. Everglades is a beautiful place, and it doesn't do any good if you can't experience it.
- Should consider filling in canals on U.S. 41.
- Part of grant is to reduce traffic. A private vendor might come in and shuttle. I think it may have the opposite effect.
- You will have private cars bringing bikes and create more traffic.
- They closed down stores and gas stations on 41, and don't want ORV and buggies, but they support another trail? If you decide to get permitting for bikes, please do it for canoes.
- The whole water flow restoration starts at Kissimmee. It should start with sugar cane farms. Most of the issue is up there and not down here.
- Indigenous people value what is on earth, not money or modern life. They keep building. First it was I-75. Its okay to look at it, but don't disturb it. Our concern is that over time we are going to continue building.
- When this was first presented to me, it seemed like a little pathway. Now it seems like so much more. You say you would like to protect cultural resources and nature. This looks like you would be doing the opposite of that. Big Cypress is already in much distress. You will be bringing in more people, more impacts. What you are talking about tonight is a violation of nature.

Note: Comments above are representative. Complete meeting notes are located in the report Appendix

Public kick-off presentation during ROGG Central Corridor Workshop at Everglades City Hall, February 26, 2013.

ROGG East Workshop

Florida International University, Miami-Dade County

Public Comments:

- Parking along the roadway is another problem with the safety of the drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.
- The ROGG should connect to the Biscayne-Everglades Greenway and into Miami. Run a trail south from the ROGG on the levee.
- Consider the bank fishermen when proposing the floating trail option.
- Narrowing the lanes seems dangerous and raises the risk to riders.
- Transit may reduce carbon footprint slightly, but increased tourism might have a net increase in carbon footprint.
- Design the trail as a separate pathway is preferred.
- Object to the project because of the environmental impact to the wetlands, vegetation and wildlife and the sheer cost of the roadway seem to make it out of the question. Plus accessibility questioned during some seasons.
- No commercial services or activities.
- The ROGG idea is an exciting idea, and one that connects greenways throughout the region.
- Good job with the methodical process, don't get rushed.
- Accommodate various levels of experienced cyclist.
- The parks along the highway are currently only accessible by automobile, requires parking, etc. There needs to be facilities to accommodate transit, the trail, and shuttle stops to access the area.
- Bike lanes should be on U.S. 41, but they are not for all users along the trail. It needs to be an off-road path
- Please do not block or inhibit access that we have had for generations.
- Remember traditional cultures (hunting, fishing, frogging, hiking, camping and enjoy).

Note: Comments above are representative. Complete meeting notes are located in the report Appendix

Public planning session during ROGG East Corridor Workshop at Florida International University, March 13, 2013.

Corridor Workshops Summary

There are three primary subjects in which public comments aligned. Though these subjects are not comprehensive, participants did note support for ROGG, concerns about potential impacts and desires for expanded uses and benefits.

Support for ROGG:

- Current property owner, 'it doesn't do any good if you can't experience it [Everglades],'
- Everglades should be accessible not only by vehicle but by bike and on-foot,
- Impressive amount of work and detail,
- Methodical process for planning is a good.

Development Concerns:

- Concerns regarding potential environmental impacts if pathway does not utilize design techniques to reduce or create a net positive for the surrounding sensitive environment,
- Too much impact from commercial development if ROGG is successful in attracting users,
- Bike lanes should be on U.S. 41 with a separate shared-use trail (ROGG) adjacent,
- Blocking or inhibiting access along U.S. 41,
- Parking along U.S. 41 is a safety issue,
- Narrowing traffic lanes seems dangerous giving current speed limits and traffic control techniques utilized in corridor,
- Private vendors and visitors will increase traffic on U.S. 41,
- Too much building over time,
- Concerned that the path will impact the north/south flow of water throughout region.

Expand Uses and Extent:

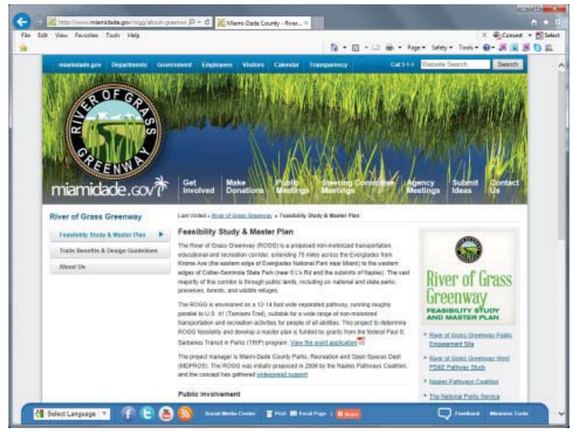
- Connect the ROGG to the Biscayne-Everglades Greenway into Miami,
- Consider bank and bridge fishing needs,
- Link to the restoration efforts,
- Work with each park to establish a significant education component, especially for children,
- Connect to other trails throughout region,
- Consider private land owners for potential trailheads,
- Plan for shuttles/ transit connectivity,
- Include ORV users in planning and design,
- Consider paddling needs along Tamiami Trail.

3.1.2 Websites

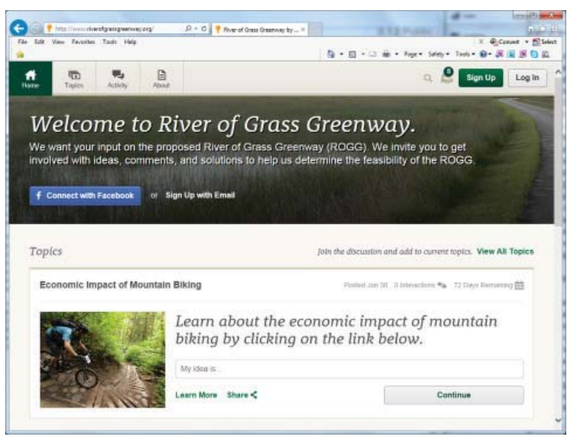
A public online engagement site (www.RiverofGrassGreenway.org) was hosted throughout the ROGG planning process. The website was developed to provide opportunities for the public to review documents, see project milestones, identify participation opportunities and schedules, 'How to Participate' descriptions, provide comments on topics and contact information for project team members for questions. The website had two phases; information collection and feedback. An interactive map and comment element was included during the information collection phase, as well as a two-minute introduction video to allow citizens an opportunity to post comments and contribute to the information based on geographical area. During the feedback phase, the website was revamped to focus on public review of the conceptual vision and implementation materials to provide comment. All comments and discussion topics have been archived (Appendix E) and analyzed.

During the course of the planning process over 3,000 participants visited the website a total of 27,000 times to contribute over 650 comments and ideas. The most active zips codes for participation were the ROGG West Study Area zip code 34114; the Kendall area zip codes 33176 and 33183; and the Marco Island zip code 34145.

An additional public project website was hosted by MDPROS during the ROGG planning process (http://www.miamidade.gov/rogg/). The website was developed to provide opportunities for the public to review documents and meeting notes, see project milestones, identify participation opportunities and schedules, and contact information for project team members for questions. The website was hosted within the existing www.miamidade.gov website which includes information on the County's adopted trail design guidelines and benefits.



Screen image of the public website hosted by Miami-Dade County through the www.miamidade.gov portal.



Screen image of the public engagement website www.RiverofGrassGreenway.org) with informational topics.

3.1.2 Public Agency Meetings

The Florida State Clearinghouse recommended after the Joint Projects agency meeting with the ROGG West PD&E Pathway Study team for the ROGG Project Team to continue having one-on-one agency coordination and interagency and stakeholder briefings to ensure that all affected stakeholders reach a mutual understanding regarding the proposed ROGG. As a result, the ROGG planning team meet with several public agencies, most represented on the Steering Committee, in an effort to drill down to the opportunities and constraints unique to each agency's mission or operations within the ROGG Study Area. Additional meetings were conducted with the following agencies on the following dates:

- ROGG West Agencies Meeting (Collier Seminole State Park, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Picayune Strand State Forest, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park) - November 21, 2013;
- Florida Department of Transportation (District 6) - December 11, 2013;
- National Park Service (Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve) - January 14, 2014;
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - March 26, 2014;
- South Florida Water Management District - May 9, 2014.

Key Takeaways

Through a series of additional meetings and conference calls with public agencies that hold direct ownership or management of lands within the ROGG Study Area, the following key comments were provided:

- SFWMD supports the use of their system's levees for public uses that are consistent with approved guidelines, however, development of paved, hard-surface paths on top of levees are generally not allowed due to a heightened level of maintenance required to keep the path/trail surface smooth of damage from maintenance equipment;
- SFWMD supports the use of the toe-of-levee as a hard-surface path/trail, however, permitting for levee use is split between ACOE and SFWMD depending on location;
- NPS identified that the ROGG should be consistent with proposed elements of CEPP and enabling legislation for ENP and BICY;
- Potential impacts to tidal creeks would be primary concern for NOAA and prefers to see bridges or boardwalks rather than extended culverts;
- Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) would likely be considered for entire Study Area length;
- FDOT is concerned with any reduction of shoulders, changes in speed limits, and providing enough parking;
- Culverts or boardwalks would need to be sized for post-restoration water levels and flow;
- Path should be designed to have minimum impact on fire management;
- Restoration efforts in the Picayune Strand area will be an impact on the water levels which may impact the planning of the ROGG;
- The pathway could enhance the viewshed of wildlife within the corridor which may have a positive impact on the number of roadkills;
- Wetland impacts, if required, should be concentrated in lower quality wetlands.

Note: Comments above are representative. Complete notes from each additional agency meeting are located in the report Appendix.

Public Involvement Summary

Public involvement during the ROGG Feasibility Study and Master Plan effort included extensive outreach methods and events. Three primary groups where engaged during the planning process:

Public Participants

The planning team conducted three week-long corridor workshops in three geographically unique areas in or near each segment of the ROGG Study Area. Each workshop was well attended and included a public kick-off presentation, multi-day public planning sessions and a final public open house with all work products on display for review and input. Broad levels of input were provided by participants.

Websites

Two websites were hosted throughout the planning process, one a townhall-style public engagement website and the other, an informational depository of project products, notes and contacts. With over 3,000 visitors viewing the engagement website over 27,000 times and contributing over 650 comments and ideas, the website was a success in gathering broad input from throughout south Florida and the country.

Public Agencies

Through a series of additional meetings and conference calls with public agencies with direct ownership and/or management responsibilities of lands within the ROGG Study Area, the planning team was able to learn and document opportunities and constraints of publicly generated concepts unique to each agency's mission and operations. Information gathered from these meetings had impacts on the feasibility of concepts, routing alternatives and guidance in the identification of alternative transportation options.