



Position Paper

Common Misperceptions: WPCC and the Wekiva Parkway Project

We have heard several misperceptions repeatedly surface with regard to the WPCC and the Wekiva Parkway Project. Please be aware that they are all false and misleading. The below details the facts surrounding these misperceptions and the WPCC position in regards to each of the assertions:

1. **“Where have you been, and why are you coming out now?”**: The notion that our community and coalition members have not been involved from the beginning is not borne out by the facts. The WPCC members have been singularly and actively engaging in information meetings and with CH2M Hill for years. The “Recommended Preferred Alternative” (RPA) was officially presented around May 2007 and the WPCC was formed shortly thereafter to present a unified approach. We have been collectively involved and together we are being heard.
 - a. At the special off-site SCEA meeting at Sylvan Lake Park Sports Center in February 2003:
 - i. Several spokespersons from communities which now comprise the WPCC expressed their strong support for the SCEA’s summary position stated by SCEA Chair Commissioner McLain, and strong opposition to a western expressway being extended into Seminole County along the SR46 corridor: “I think it would be important to reaffirm that this Expressway Authority is supportive of a controlled access connector to a Western Beltway but are not interested in seeing a major toll road coming through our community and disrupting the lives of our citizens.”
 - ii. Gary Johnson SCEA Executive Director, commenting on the WBATF Final Report, stated: “Recommendations 3 and 4 are those which set guiding principles for design and construction which could apply to the implementation of Wekiva Parkway as it is described in the report as a new expressway; however, in Seminole County this guiding principle for an expressway as we have said before is inconsistent with existing policy of this Authority and the Board of County Commissioners which has stated that the proposed roadway could only be a four-lane controlled access facility on the existing SR-46 alignment.”

- iii. Commissioner McLain stated: “We allowed quality residential development to come into this part of the County knowing that the road was no longer feasible and that's why it is so disturbing to Seminole County that we not be put in a position of paying for the mistakes of the past now that this road has been revived.”, AND “I just want to assure the people here that we are going to be very cautious; we're going to make sure that we are diligent in reviewing this process; we're going to make sure that we do the proper oversight to make sure that we look out for our interests because all of us have a substantial investment in our community and our quality of life and we have got to keep that in the forefront of our decision-making process.” (audience applause).
 - iv. Commissioner Brender stated: “...I can't foresee anything changing from this Board's position, but I can certainly see as this process goes forward that there will be a lot of things discussed.”
- b. Encouraged by the strong public positions of our Commissioners at the February 2003 SCEA meeting, and building on the SCBCC Resolution of December 2002 rejecting an expressway in Seminole County, there was an understandable misplaced trust and naiveté on the part of the citizens when it came to protecting their interests. As a result, unfortunately, it took us a while to wake up to reality.
 - c. There have been only two public workshops conducted in Seminole County, the last in August 2006.
 - i. The August 2006 Public Workshop was held prior to announcement of selection of the current RPA by CH2M Hill at the May 2007 SCEA meeting. At the workshop, and in individual community meetings subsequent to the workshop, there was significant concern expressed about what has become the CH2M Hill RPA by at least three of the current WPCC membership communities, Tall Trees, Capri Cove, and Sylvan Lake Reserve. From an examination of the minutes of subsequent SCEA meetings, it is clear the reports of CH2M Hill regarding those meetings was at best, perfunctory, and failed to convey the very strongly held objections and concerns of communities about the proposed roadway.
 - ii. The WPCC was formed four months following the announcement of the RPA.
 - d. The very tone and structure of the public meetings was such as to showcase options presented as the only ones available for real consideration, and that only minor revisions to the options presented were even considerable. When asked about other options not on the table, the responses were that they were not feasible from cost, environmental, or engineering perspectives. The cost to the homeowners, business, and churches in the impacted area, in terms of property values, livelihoods, and severely diminished quality of life, obviously enjoyed little weight when compared to these other factors. This discouraged community participation in the process, causing individual citizens to become apathetic and fatalistic, and feeling increasingly powerless to influence the outcome.
 - e. Community meetings employed a “Divide and Conquer” approach, giving the attendees the impressions that “everyone else was OK with this”. In those meetings, our concerns were essentially pandered to being told: “Don't worry about it, we don't have the funding”; “This may never happen”; “This is an open process...”; “We do not

- know when it will start..."; "Tallahassee's broke, Washington's broke, and Seminole County doesn't have enough money to pay its staff"; even, "You and I will both be dead before this road is built".
- f. We consider the PD&E process therefore as fatally flawed as far as a proactive method of garnering *meaningful* community involvement, and *real* influence on outcomes. This flaw is arguably one of the major factors responsible for the unexpected ground swell of disappointed, disaffected and angry citizens in the Seminole County Wekiva River Basin area, and preferring a route selection that has little to no support among those citizens.
 - g. The membership composition of the governmental task forces, committees, and commissions which developed the Wekiva Parkway corridor was/is heavily skewed towards certain special interest groups, and contained/contains no effective representation of Seminole County Wekiva Basin area citizens' interests.
 - h. The "200 meetings" referred to by Commissioner Carey at the 6 May 2008 SCEA meeting was misleading and not in context. We believe there were less than 5 public meetings concerning the WPCC area. We assume the "200 meetings" was a reference to ALL meetings - Orange, Seminole and Lake Counties, WBTF, WBCC, etc., as this is the number mentioned in the PD&E study.
 - i. We believe current SCEA meeting procedures effectively constrain information exchanges to be self-serving - ambiguous and non-confrontational. Real bi-directional flow of information and ideas seems not desired.
2. **"Not in our Backyard" or "We do not want it to happen"** : We believe we have significant and realistic issues, which are accompanied by feasible alternative solutions, and a willingness to work with the SCEA and FDOT. We accept the fact that a beltway will happen and is needed for various reasons. What we do not accept is that the recommended best route should be one that will divide our communities, businesses, churches and schools forever.
- a. Our concerns and alternative route recommendations were presented to each of the SCEA commissioners at separate meetings, and also at the May 6, 2008 SCEA meeting (see DWM and CLS presentations).
 - b. The recommended preferred alternative is like threading a needle through our communities, and cannot meet the requirement of a parkway look within the constraints of available Rights of Way (ROW).
 - c. We want it to maximize utilization of existing ROW
 - d. It must have a parkway-like appearance and design as required by the directing law, but the RPA cannot and will not allow for this.
 - e. We want it to adhere to the publicly stated positions of the Seminole County BCC (Nov/Dec 2002), and the SCEA in February 2003. work with and take input from the existing residences, businesses, schools and churches on a basis equivalent to that of other parties

3. **"This is already a done deal"**: This is not a done deal. This is the time to effect a change to the process, and to positively influence the outcome. We are prepared to see this through as to insure selection of an alignment which will be suitable to the preponderance of those most impacted. The WPCC membership currently include businesses, churches and over 1,000 homes – and it is actively growing.
 - a. We are in active discussions with the SCEA, FDOT, Florida State legislation and our US Representatives to make our positions known, and to negotiate the proper selection of a viable and acceptable alignment in Seminole County for the needed completion of the Orlando ring road.
 - b. We are prepared to see this through so as to insure selection of an alignment suitable to the preponderance of those most impacted.