US-1 Express from Florida City to Dadeland South

Description

The US-1 Express project, from Florida City to the Dadeland South Metrorail Station, proposes to use the excess capacity along the South Dade Busway to build a managed lane facility, enabling regular traffic to travel with the buses for the length of the corridor. The Busway runs north-south, along the west side of US-1 and extends from SW 344 Street to the Dadeland South Metrorail station. However, the US-1 Express project southern limits are proposed at SW 304th Street to allow residential neighborhoods in the Homestead area to access the limited access lanes, and to minimize the need for potential users living in the southern part of the corridor to drive south in order to access the lanes.

Bus only access points are proposed at S.W. 104th Street, S.W. 128th Street, S.W. 168th Street and S.W. 216th Street. Private vehicle and bus access points are proposed at S.W. 152nd Street and S.W. 117th Avenue/S.W. 211 Street at the South Dade Government Center. The managed lanes are proposed to be connected to the Palmetto Expressway via a slip ramp from the managed lanes to the existing northbound ramp to the Palmetto Expressway from US 1. Another slip ramp is proposed from the managed lanes to US 1. Grade separated interchanges would be located at major intersections throughout the corridor. The project will address the preservation of a future premium transit option along the corridor.

Location

The US-1 Express project limits are from SW 304th Street in Florida City to the Dadeland South Metrorail Station in South Miami, a distance of 16.7 miles.

Purpose and Need

The US-1 Express project proposes to use the excess capacity along the South Dade Busway to enhance transit operations for regular and express bus service, enhance safety for travelers along the Busway, and help mitigate the growing traffic demands along the parallel US-1 corridor. According to a recent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) feasibility study, transit travel times for regular and express service could improve by 34% with the US-1 Express project. The study assumed that transit signal priority would be included along the facility. The proposed grade separations would also enhance safety for both buses and vehicles by minimizing potential conflicts at the intersections throughout the corridor. The proposed project would help to mitigate congestion along the parallel US-1 corridor. Currently, US-1 has an annual average daily traffic (AADT) between 15,000 to 30,000 along the southern end of the corridor, and between 70,000 to 110,000 along the northern end of the corridor. According to the MPO study, volumes along US-1 could be reduced as much as 9% with the addition of the US-1 Express project.

Project Status

The MPO completed a feasibility study for the project in September 2008. The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) would like to expedite the inclusion of this project into the 2030 LRTP in order to proceed with the Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) Study phase.

Project Schedule and Cost

The estimated time to develop the project from concept to concrete is 10 years. Construction costs are estimated at approximately $185 million but will depend on the ultimate alternative selected as part of the PD&E study.

Area Characteristics

The study area centers along US-1 from Kendall Drive to Florida City. This area is intermixed with medium to high density residential land uses in the northern portion and low to medium density residential land uses to the south. However, the corridor is highly commercialized. Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park are located south and east of the study area, respectively. Croplands and pasturelands surround the study area as well as various nurseries and tree crops. Recreational land uses are scattered throughout the study area and include various RV parks and campgrounds, golf courses, and local parks. Homestead Air Reserve Base is also located just east of the study area.

The population of the northern portion of the study area is predominantly white with an average income well above state and national averages. In the southern portion of the study area (south of SW 216th Street), the population is comprised mostly of Hispanic and African-American populations with incomes and ages below state and national averages.

Natural Systems

The study area is completely built-out with almost no natural areas outside of isolated pinelands, local parks, and the banks of manmade canals. There are several major canals that traverse the study area: Black Creek Canal/C-1; Bel-Aire Canal/C1-N; Snapper Creek Canal/C-2; Cutler Drain Canal/C-100, C-100A, C100B, and C-100C; Princeton Canal/C-102; and Mowry Canal/C103. The endangered West Indian manatee (Trichechus manatus latirostris) may be found in the canals that traverse the study area. Special construction provisions would be required to minimize impacts to these animals during construction. The southern portion of the study corridor extends into the Wellfield Protection Area of 5 small wellfields: Harrison Park, Newton, Leisure City, Naranja Park and Florida City. Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park are located south and east of the study area, respectively. A variety of listed species and wading birds may be found traversing or foraging in the habitats within the study area.

Floodplains

The study area is intermixed with areas that lie within or outside of the 100-year flood plain. Areas east of US-1 and lands adjacent to the canal network are those that generally lie within the 100-year flood plain (Zones, A, AE and AH).

Community Issues

Commercial Impact: Express lanes would serve the commerce that exists throughout the corridor. Some traffic patterns may be modified by the closure of some roads that have direct access to US-1.

Public Facilities

The study area includes the jurisdiction and services of several municipalities such as Homestead, Florida City, Goulds, Lakes by the Bay, Perrine, Pinecrest, and South Miami. Community services are concentrated in the northern and southern portions of the study area and include 232 places of worship; 134 daycare facilities; 106 government buildings; 98 educational facilities; 16 cultural centers; 14 police facilities; and 3 hospitals. The South Dade Government Building, Palmetto Golf Course, and the Miami-Dade College South Campus are some of the significant community features located within the study area.

Archeological and Historic Sites

The study area includes 346 potentially historic structures most of which are found in the southern portion of the study area. Twenty of these potential structures have been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Of these, 9 have been listed on the NRHP including the Florida Pioneer Museum, Homestead Chamber of Commerce, Neva King Cooper Elementary School, and portions of the Coral Castle. There are two historic cemeteries in the study area: the Silver Green Cemetery and Palms Memorial Park Cemetery which are both located in the southern portion. They are both primarily African American cemeteries and have not been evaluated by SHPO.

Contamination

Since the proposed improvements are within the existing Busway right-of-way, no impacts to contaminated sites are anticipated.

Visual and Aesthetics

The aesthetics of the project would need to take into account the potential visual effects on the residential neighborhoods along the corridor and the themes of the various municipalities. The grade separated intersections may change the viewshed along US-1.