



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway
Administration

Memorandum

Subject: Record of Decision
FHWA-FL-EIS-95-03-F
Tampa Interstate Study (TIS)

Date: January 31, 1997


From: Director, Office of Planning
and Program Development
Atlanta, Georgia

Reply to
Attn. of: HPP-04

To: Mr. J. R. Skinner
Division Administrator (HDA-FL)
Tallahassee, Florida

This documents the Record of Decision (ROD) as required by 40 CFR 1505.2) for the subject project. This record incorporates the Federal and State project files and the draft unsigned memorandum (attached) of January 9, 1997, from Mr. J. R. Skinner, Division Administrator, which served as preliminary ROD. Based upon the Environmental Impact Statement and public input, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) have chosen the alternative called the "Selected Alternative." FHWA has determined that because of the urbanized nature of the project area, the Selected Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative. The preliminary ROD contains a description of the alternatives considered, the 4 (f) evaluation measures to minimize harm, and all necessary monitoring requirements.

The FHWA and the FDOT received one comment by the due date for comments (January 21, 1997). The United States Environmental Protection Agency recommended that the communities/housing developments that will be affected by noise impacts and mitigation be involved in the design and placement of noise barriers to the maximum extent feasible. The FHWA and the FDOT have been coordinating barrier design and locations with the affected noise sensitive areas as part of the TIS project to date and will continue to do so as the various components of the project are implemented in the future. Therefore, the FEIS and the attached ROD remain valid.


John Humeston

1/31/97
Date

Attachment

Date: January 31, 1997

Subject: Florida - FAP No. IR-9999(43)
Final Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA-FL-EIS-95-03-F
Tampa Interstate Study (TIS)
Hillsborough County, Florida

From: Mr. J.R. Skinner
Division Administrator
Tallahassee, Florida

To: Mr. Leon N. Larson (HPP-04)
Regional Federal Highway Administrator
Atlanta, Georgia

The following is a Record of Decision (ROD) for that portion of the Tampa Interstate Study (TIS) project as identified in the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) 2015 Long Range Transportation Plan (2015 LRTP), adopted December 5, 1995.

Decision

The TIS project consists of approximately 24.1 km (15 miles) of multi-lane improvements to I-275 from the Howard Frankland Bridge/Kennedy Boulevard ramps and just north of Cypress Street on Memorial Highway (S.R.60) north to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and I-4 from I-275 (including the interchange) to east of 50th Street (U.S.41); a multi-lane controlled access facility (Crosstown Connector) on new alignment from I-4 south to the existing Tampa South Crosstown Expressway; and improvements to approximately 7.08 km (4.4 miles) of the Tampa South Crosstown Expressway from the Kennedy Boulevard overpass east to Maydell Drive, in Hillsborough County.

The TIS Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) area or footprint was originally established during the Master Plan phase (Phase I) of the study, conducted from 1987 to 1989. The TIS Master Plan Concept was approved by FHWA in November 1989, and adopted by the Hillsborough County MPO as part of their 2010 Long Range Transportation Plan (2010 LRTP), then current. Following completion of the Master Plan phase, and based on the 2010 LRTP, additional detailed studies and analyses were conducted as part of the EIS phase (Phase II) of the project in order to refine alternatives, address agency and citizen concerns, and further reduce impacts. A preferred alternative was identified, the Draft EIS was published in December 1995, and a Public Hearing was held January 16, 1996. No particular areas of controversy were identified as a result of the hearing.

When the new 2015 LRTP was adopted by the MPO in December 1995, some portions of the TIS EIS project (specifically Design Segment 2A, stages of Design Segment 1A, and a small portion

of Design Segment 2B), were omitted from the plan because of competing transportation priorities and funding constraints.

According to the 1990 amendment to the Clean Air Act, if a proposed improvement is within a designated "non-attainment" or "maintenance" area, the project must be in conformance with the local Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Based on the current 2015 LRTP, there are only certain components of the TIS Preferred Alternative which may currently be advanced. They include ramp improvements in the Westshore area; the outside lanes of the four-roadway system in the Ybor City area; and the Crosstown Connector with auxiliary lanes on the Crosstown Expressway transitioning back to the existing alignment. The safety and operational improvement project for the downtown I-275/I-4 interchange is not a component of the TIS Preferred Alternative but is part of the Selected Alternative.

This Final EIS identifies and evaluates the overall impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative, hereafter referred to as the Long-Term Preferred Alternative, and also separately addresses the impacts specific to those portions of the project contained in the current 2015 LRTP, hereafter referred to as the Selected Alternative. The intent of the FHWA and the FDOT is to ultimately construct the Long-Term Preferred Alternative, but this will have to be completed in phases, as they are included in future updates of the MPO's LRTP. The intent of the Selected Alternative is to meet the purpose and need of the Long-Term Preferred Alternative but to a lesser degree.

This ROD discusses the alternatives considered for the entire TIS EIS but only addresses the impacts of the Selected Alternative. It is anticipated that future RODs will cover the remaining portions of the TIS ultimate footprint, as described in the FEIS. It remains the goal of the FHWA and the FDOT to construct the ultimate TIS footprint once the outstanding portions meeting FHWA's logical termini criteria are included in future LRTPs and funding becomes available.

Alternatives Considered

A comparative analysis technique called "Tier Analysis" was used during Phase I to identify viable alternatives for the TIS. This screening process, or tiering, provided for a thorough evaluation and comparison of a large array of competing design components.

Tier 1 Analysis - The first tier examined two-, four-, and six-roadway system alternatives; double decking; high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) access and alignments; interchange types and locations; and multiple shifts in the roadway centerline. Impacts to land use, the environment, and the community as well as accessibility, permitability, constructability, and cost were all evaluated during Tier 1. Through the analysis process, the two-roadway system and double-decking were eliminated from future consideration because of anticipated traffic volumes, complications with interchange movements, and cost-effectiveness. In an effort to avoid or minimize Section 4(f) involvement at hundreds of historic properties and several public parks located in the vicinity of the existing interstate corridor, a number of alternatives and alignment shifts were developed and evaluated. Several concepts of the six-roadway and four-roadway systems, with HOV provisions in the median, were carried throughout for further analysis. In addition, several interchange and HOV alignment concepts were carried through for further evaluation.

Tier 2 Analysis - The second tier analysis continued to define the positive design components, collect public input throughout public meetings and speakers bureaus, and refine the design alternatives. In an effort to build consensus, particular attention was given to comments from the local community, City of Tampa, and interested agencies with respect to land use impacts, access, interchanges, ramps, and frontage roads. The Tier 2 alternative concepts were presented to the public for review and comment at the first Alternatives Public Meeting. The comments received as a result of that meeting are summarized in the Public Meeting No. 2 Comments Summary Working Paper (September 1988).

Tier 3 Analysis - After a review and evaluation of the comments received during the comment period, the remaining alternatives were refined using more stringent standards and detailed information. The Tier 3 alternatives were presented at the second Alternatives Public Workshop. The comments received as a result of that meeting are summarized in the Public Meeting No. 2 Comments Summary Working Paper (January 1989). Comments received as a result of the second public workshop were more specific about local and commercial access issues, the aesthetics of the roadway, and potential mitigation measures to reduce noise levels. In an effort to respond to the public's concerns about right-of-way acquisition and related issues, impacts to property adjacent to the proposed improvements were further evaluated. It was determined that right-of-way impacts could be further reduced by reducing both the number of roadway lanes proposed and the right-of-way required. Through this evaluation, alternatives were developed which would provide an acceptable level of service (LOS) commensurate with the associated social, economic, and environmental impacts. After review of these comments, the selected concepts were carried forward to the Draft Master Plan.

The TIS Draft Master Plan concept was presented to the public for review and comment at the third Alternatives Public Workshop. The TIS Master Plan Concept was approved by FHWA in November 1989 and adopted by the Hillsborough County MPO as part of the previous 2010 LRTP. The TIS Master Plan Report (August 1989) is published separately.

A no-action alternative was evaluated for the year 2010 to identify the traffic operations impact of not implementing the preferred alternative in the study area. It was determined that the no-action alternative does not provide an adequate transportation facility for future traffic demand. However, the no-action alternative was carried through the public hearing for this project.

Following completion of the Phase I Master Plan, additional detailed studies were conducted as part of the Phase II EIS to refine alternatives and further reduce impacts. The refinement and continuing development of alternatives through this systematic process assisted in providing the necessary documentation as to the logical process and selection of viable alternatives. This process also provided the necessary documentation for alternatives eliminated in the evaluation process, or modifications to form "new" alternatives. Finally, through an extensive public involvement program, this process enhanced the community's ability to better understand and follow a rather complex technical process in a step-by-step manner until the selection of a reasonable and viable alternative was reached.

Due to the TIS project being located in a highly urbanized area, impacts to the biological and physical environment would be minimal and consequently, they had a minor role in the development of an "Environmentally Preferred Alternative." However, potential impacts to the human environment were major factors in the alternatives development, evaluation and selection process. Additionally, the alignment and composition of the Preferred and Selected Alternatives were influenced by adjacent properties which are protected by Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act of 1966. The proposed rights of way and alignment for the Preferred and Selected Alternatives were shifted to avoid or minimize encroachments into these adjacent properties.

Description of the Selected Alternative

The I-275/I-4 downtown interchange safety and operational improvements are currently the top priority of the 2015 LRTP. Over the course of the TIS project, the issue of safety within the I-275/I-4 downtown interchange has become a great concern to the Tampa Bay community. The proposed I-275/I-4 downtown interchange operational/safety improvements are intended to improve conflicting merge/diverge areas that currently contribute to congestion in the downtown interchange area; to improve sight distance in order to reduce accidents; and to provide a pull-off area for disabled vehicles by providing shoulders where economically and physically possible. The concepts developed involve lengthening ramps, providing lane additions, transferring critical weaving movements to other facilities, and providing full shoulders (where possible). The operational improvements are not intended to be a reconstruction of the interstate to improve capacity but rather a safety improvement that has been identified as needed prior to the reconstruction process. The operational improvements would not be salvageable once the ultimate TIS improvements (Long-Term Preferred Alternative) are constructed. The operational improvements limit right-of-way acquisition, thereby avoiding or minimizing impacts to adjacent historic structures associated with the Ybor City National Historic Landmark District and the Tampa Heights National Register Historic District, as well as other important community resources such as Perry Harvey Park.

The second highest priority for implementation in the 2015 LRTP is I-4 and the Crosstown Connector. This portion extends along I-4 from the I-275/I-4 operational improvements at 13th Street, east to 50th Street and includes the proposed I-4/Crosstown Connector in the vicinity of 31st Street, a new expressway extension south to the Crosstown Expressway, and operational improvements and ramp connections to the existing Crosstown Expressway, from the Kennedy Boulevard overpass east to Maydell Drive. The eastern terminus of the I-4 improvement is the currently under-construction segment of I-4 from 50th Street east to the Polk County Line. The Crosstown Connector will be utilized as a bypass connection between I-4 and the downtown CBD area during construction of the Long-Term Preferred Alternative, as well as during other periods of traffic interruption on the downtown interstate.

Next on the 2015 LRTP priority list is the Memorial Highway (S.R.60) connection. This portion includes operational improvements and ramp connections from Memorial Highway to I-275, connecting to the Veterans Expressway. The Veterans Expressway connects to I-275 via Memorial Highway.

Impacts associated with the Selected Alternative include potential impacts to the Ybor City National Historic Landmark District, Perry Harvey Park, and relocations of residences, businesses, and community features.

Ybor City National Historic Landmark District - Construction of the Selected Alternative will impact 36 contributing structures in the Landmark District (only one contributing structure due to the I-275/I-4 operational improvements) and one individually eligible structure, the Arguelles Lopez & Brothers cigar factory. There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the Landmark District. The Selected Alternative includes all possible planning to minimize harm resulting from such use. The proposed improvements minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the number of relocations and the number of historic structures within the proposed right-of-way while preserving important community features and their unique identity. The FHWA has determined that this use will not substantially impair the integrity or significance of the Ybor City National Historic Landmark District. Elements of the TIS Urban Design Guidelines (under separate cover-December 1994) and the Memorandum of Agreement (TIS FEIS Appendix E) serve as mitigation for impacts to the Ybor City neighborhood.

Perry Harvey Park - Construction of the Selected Alternative will result in an extremely minor impact (less than 0.1 acre) to a small undeveloped and disconnected portion of Perry Harvey Park. There is no feasible or prudent alternative to the use of land from the Park. The Selected Alternative includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Park resulting from such use. The proposed improvements minimize harm to the greatest extent possible.

The Selected Alternative addresses the urgent interchange and capacity needs within the limits of the Long-Term Preferred Alternative. These needs include ramp, geometric and operational deficiencies in the Westshore area (Design Segment 1A); merge, diverge, weave, sight distance and shoulder deficiencies in the I-275/I-4 downtown interchange; a four-lane bottleneck on I-4 between the I-275/I-4 interchange and 50th Street and vertical profile deficiencies in the same area.

Throughout its limits, the Selected Alternative will provide greatly improved ramp geometrics in the most critical areas, improve merge, diverge and weaving operations, and add two through lanes to the only segment of I-4 in Hillsborough County that is currently four lanes. The majority of these improvements will be constructed in their ultimate locations and are completely compatible with future plans of the Long-Term Preferred Alternative. The Selected Alternative will not incorporate HOV lanes or Park-n-Ride lots. Those design features have been planned as part of the TIS Long-Term Preferred Alternative.

Through coordination with FDOT District VII, FDOT Central Office, and FHWA, the Selected Alternative has been determined to be consistent with the FDOT's "Interstate Highway System Policy" adopted November 14, 1991.

The FEIS contains an adequate, detailed statement of the following: proposal description and purpose; probable impact of the proposal; alternatives; unavoidable adverse environmental effects; short-term impacts verses long-term benefits; irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources; and measures to minimize harm. The proposal is in conformance with the State

Implementation Plan (SIP) and will not cause or exacerbate existing violations of any of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The Section 4(f) Evaluation contained in the FEIS describes the project's involvement with historic properties and park land protected by 49 USC 303 as well as measures to minimize harm. The provisions of 36 CFR 800 have been fulfilled as applicable.

The Statement has been coordinated with and endorsed by appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, and also made available for public comment at a public hearing. The proposal is well accepted, without significant opposition and is, therefore, not considered controversial.

Measures to Minimize Harm

This project incorporates all practical measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm. Although some significant impacts will occur, every effort will be made to minimize impacts through the institution of feasible measures applicable to each situation. The relocation of individuals and families will be unavoidable. Relocation assistance and payments will be provided. Extensive public input and creative community suggestions regarding design and mitigation measures have led to the protection of, and in some instances the enhancement of, community cohesion. Historic resources currently exist within the areas of proposed right-of-way. Relocation of certain structures, where feasible, will be pursued, in addition to the relocation assistance and payments to be provided to residents of such structures. Perry Harvey Park (a City of Tampa public park) will be directly impacted by project right-of-way acquisition. Coordination with the City of Tampa has resulted in a determination that no adverse effect to the park will occur and no mitigation is needed for this minor use of land (less than 0.1 acre). A conceptual mitigation plan has been developed for the Park as part of the Long-Term Preferred Alternative's implementation.

Construction activities in the vicinity of drainage structures will be in accordance with Best Management Practices for erosion control and water quality considerations. Preliminary evaluations have also indicated that retention and/or detention areas may be viable considerations in water management techniques relating to highway storm water runoff hydraulics, and mitigation for wetland impacts will be incorporated as applicable and feasible. These wetland sites will be affected primarily by filling activities necessary to widen the existing roadway and construct a new roadway.

The following mitigation measures are discussed and committed to in the FEIS:

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities - Pedestrian and bicycle travel along interstates and expressways is prohibited. However, the proposed interstate improvements include provisions for the future development of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on cross streets beneath the interstate. The FDOT is committed to developing new interstate overpasses which ensure that all cross streets have sufficient room to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians during future local road improvement projects.

Construction - Construction activities will result in temporary air, noise, water quality, traffic flow, and visual impacts for those residents, businesses, and travelers within the immediate vicinity of the project. The impacts will be effectively controlled in accordance with FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. In addition to the following accepted standards, the FDOT is committed to implementing the following specific construction impact mitigation measures:

1. The Contractor will use static rollers for compaction of embankments, subgrade, base, asphalt, etc.
2. Pile driving operations will be restricted to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. to avoid interfering with any adjacent noise sensitive land uses or a different foundation design will be considered, i.e., drilled shafts.
3. Preformed pile holes will be required where they are in proximity to vibration sensitive land uses to minimize vibration transfer.
4. Back-up alarm noise from heavy equipment and trucks will be minimized by requiring the Contractor to operate in forward passes or a figure-eight pattern when dumping, spreading, or compacting materials.
5. Restriction of operating hours for lighting the construction areas will be determined and required of the Contractor prior to beginning construction activities requiring lighting.
6. Coordination with the local law enforcement agencies will be undertaken prior to commencing construction activities to ensure that construction-related impacts are minimized or adequately mitigated when work during non-daylight hours is required.

Noise Barriers - The TIS Master Plan Report (August 1989) first discussed the feasibility of noise abatement measures to mitigate noise impacts. Due to the high number of noise sensitive sites identified and evaluated and in response to public comments received throughout the study, the FDOT and FHWA are committed to providing noise barriers as part of the project. The FDOT is committed to providing noise barriers that meet both the acoustic and aesthetic goals of the project as identified in the TIS Master Plan Report, the Urban Design Guidelines, and the Noise Study Report. The economically reasonable noise barrier locations are identified in the FEIS on page 4-75 and on Exhibit 4.8. Specific noise abatement measures will be reevaluated during final design.

Historic Resource - A Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been prepared to address mitigation measures for direct and indirect impacts to historic resources. The TIS Effects Analysis Report (November 1995) evaluates the impacts to historic resources along the project corridor. The Effects Analysis Report addresses effects of the project on the West Tampa National Register Historic District, the Tampa Heights Multiple Property Listing (since approval of the TIS DEIS, this resource has been listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* as the Tampa Heights National Register Historic District), the Ybor City National Historic Landmark District, and individual

properties either listed or eligible for listing on the *National Register of Historic Places*. The MOA includes FDOT commitments for the mitigation of impacts to historic structures within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) including the proposed moving and rehabilitation of certain historic structures, and numerous design amenities defined in the TIS Urban Design Guidelines.

Urban Design Guidelines - The TIS Urban Design Guidelines, approved by FHWA in December 1994, have been developed to minimize indirect adverse visual and auditory impacts to land uses adjacent to the system and to users of the freeway. The goal of the guidelines is to ensure a consistent, aesthetically pleasing design and to mitigate adverse effects of the project on the residents, neighborhoods, and businesses indirectly affected. The TIS Urban Design Guidelines will serve as guidelines and mitigation measures for the Section 106 process by providing design standards for unique areas within the corridor including West Tampa, Ybor City, Seminole Heights, Tampa Heights, downtown Tampa, and Westshore. In addition, the Urban Design Guidelines specify mitigation measures for indirect adverse effects to historic properties and communities in the vicinity of the project. The Urban Design Guidelines provide guidance on specific aesthetic design requirements for bridge structures, retaining walls and embankments, noise walls, lighting, fencing and sign supports, stormwater and surface water management areas, landscaping, public art, utilities, mounds and grading, and recreation facilities.

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) Northern Transit Terminal - Based on the anticipated involvement with HART's existing Northern Transit Terminal, the FDOT is committed to not adversely affecting service operations during implementation of the Selected Alternative. In coordination with HART, the FDOT will implement the best option available to ensure fulfillment of this commitment. Separate Mobility MIS, High Speed Rail and Electric Street Car studies are being conducted by other agencies. The FDOT will work with the agencies to ensure that the Northern Transit Terminal's involvement with the studies and the TIS project is adequately coordinated. The status of this commitment will be addressed in future reevaluations of the FEIS.

In addition, closure of the existing I-4/40th Street interchange will result in more circuitous travel for buses accessing the HART Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility on 21st Street. The FDOT will continue the ongoing coordination with HART to explore options which reduce the excess travel distance.

Monitoring or Enforcement Program

Personnel of the FDOT have developed extensive operating procedures to ensure compliance with the various environmental commitments. The FDOT's Environmental Commitment Compliance Program is outlined in a January 15, 1982-memorandum from Mr. Paul N. Pappas, former Secretary of the FDOT. In addition, appropriate personnel from the FHWA Division Office participate in the development of individual projects to ensure that environmental commitments are incorporated into the project design and construction plans. FHWA Transportation and Supervisory Transportation Engineers also review the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) for all interstate Federal-Aid highway projects to ensure that all environmental commitments have been implemented.

Comments on Final EIS

As of January 21, 1997 (the FEIS comments due date), the FHWA and the FDOT had received one comment. The attached letter from the U.S. E.P.A. recommended that the affected noise sensitive areas be involved in the design and placement of noise barriers to the maximum extent feasible. The FHWA and the FDOT have been coordinating barrier design and locations with the affected noise sensitive areas as part of the TIS project to date and will continue to do so as the various components of the project are implemented in the future.