

# Sugarmill Woods Bike Lane Proposal

## Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

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### History / Background

**1. Is this the first time that Bike Paths in Sugarmill Woods have been suggested?**

No, there have been requests from residents several different times over the last ten years or more for recreational bike paths and / or walking paths within the community and easy access to them. The problem has always been where would the bike paths be located and who was going to pay for them. The suggested answer to the cost issue was an assessment on property owners which was not acceptable to residents.

**2. What is different about this proposal?**

The environment has changed. Our community has grown over the last ten years. Today we have over 4,500 residential properties and more than 10,000 residents here in Sugarmill Woods. Our school age population is approximately 450 students attending K through 12 grades in the Citrus County School System. The Sugarmill Woods Development Community was established in the mid 1970s and 36 years later, we still do not have any sidewalks or bike paths in the community. Given the current size of the community and the increased traffic today, residents are experiencing a greater safety exposure when bike riders, walkers, and drivers have to share the same narrow roads. Many residents have expressed a real concern in this area and have asked for something to be done. The proposal is to incorporate bike lanes adjacent to selected Blvd roads within the Sugarmill Woods community to make it easier and more accessible for residents to ride bikes and walk safely within the community.

**3. What about the cost issue?**

Working with the County and Florida Department of Transportation, the Civic Association discovered a way to cover the entire cost (100%) of this project (engineering, construction, etc.) with “**Transportation Enhancement Funds**” which are a portion (10%) of the Federal Surface Transportation Program Funds. These Transportation Enhancement funds are monies specifically set aside for roadway enhancements like bike paths, walkways, roadway landscaping, etc. Each year, monies are handed down to each Florida DOT District to allocate to those projects most deserving. Grant requests are submitted by County and Incorporated City governments within the district to try and qualify for these funds. Each Florida DOT District has final approval on all Grant requests.

**4. Does the County support this proposal?**

Citrus County local government has been working to implement more pedestrian and bicycle friendly facilities to promote alternate means of transportation throughout the county. These amenities have been shown to result in a reduction in vehicle traffic and provide significant health benefits due to exercise and reduction in air pollution.

National and international evidence to date has demonstrated that the most important way to promote bicycle transportation is to provide bicycle facilities – safe and clear places where people can ride, including bicycle lanes. There was a major study sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration which demonstrated that bicycle usage is directly proportional to the percentage of streets with bike lanes. Two further studies since then have confirmed these findings, noting that bicycle commuting increased in direct proportion to the miles of bike lanes (bike lanes were the strongest variable in predicting bicycle commuting). So, while some people state that there is little bicycle usage on their street, the studies strongly suggest that usage will increase if bike lanes are available.

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### **SMW Bike Lane Proposal**

#### **5. What is the Sugarmill Woods Bike Lane Proposal?**

The Sugarmill Woods Civic Association has been working for the past two years exploring various ideas to provide a safer environment for residents to walk and ride bicycles within our community. Working with Citrus County officials and the Property Owners Associations, we have jointly developed a proposal that we believe will benefit all of our existing residents, minimize some of the safety concerns that exist today, enhance the community, and make it an attractive place to live for future property owners.

A lot of background work was done to explore various proposals and their pros and cons. The Civic Association worked with the County to understand the advantages and disadvantages of these various options. We collectively concluded that adding separate bike lanes to “selected” existing roads appears to be the most economical and best approach. These proposed bike lanes could be used by both bike riders and walkers. Since the proposed bike lanes are directly adjacent to and part of the road extension, the same “Rules of the Road” apply. Bike Riders must ride with the flow of the traffic and walkers must face the traffic. By having these bike lanes identified separately from car traffic lanes and marked appropriately, their implementation should provide a much safer environment for all concerned.

#### **6. With this proposal which roads will have bike lanes?**

The following roads within the “extended” Sugarmill Woods community have been proposed as candidates to have bike lanes installed. Because we cannot do everything on day 1, we broke the proposal into a Phase 1 and Phase 2 implementation.

##### **Phase 1**

- **Oak Park Blvd West (CR 480)** from the intersection at Corkwood Blvd traveling west along Oak Park Blvd West (CR 480) and then extending it along Oak Park Lane connecting to the rear (east) entrance to Shoppes at Sugarmill Woods.
- **Cypress Village Blvd East** from the intersection at Cypress Circle traveling east and south along Cypress Blvd East to the intersection at Oak Park Blvd West (CR 480).
- **Oak Village Blvd** from the intersection at Oak Park Blvd (CR 480) traveling south along Oak Village Blvd to the intersection at US Hwy 98.
- **Oak Village Blvd South** from the intersection at US Hwy 98 traveling south along Oak Village Blvd South to end of the road at the intersection of Poppy Street.
- **US Hwy 98 South Side** from the intersection at Oak Village Blvd South traveling southeast parallel to US Hwy 98 all the way to the Suncoast Parkway 1 Trailhead. (This segment would have a single ten foot wide bike path on the south side of US Hwy 98 on the outer edge of the road right of way easement.)

##### **Phase 2**

- **Corkwood Blvd** from the intersection at Cypress Village Blvd East traveling northeast and south along Corkwood Blvd to the intersection at Oak Park Blvd West (CR 480).
- **Cypress Village Circle and Cypress Village Blvd West** from the intersection at Cypress Village Circle traveling west along Cypress Village Blvd West to the intersection at Douglas Street near the main entrance to Cypress Village.
- **Greenpark Blvd** from the intersection at US Hwy 98 traveling southwest along Greenpark Blvd to the intersection at Oak Village Blvd South.
- **Glenridge Blvd** from the intersection at Corkwood Blvd traveling northeast to the end of Glenridge Blvd.

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### **SMW Bike Lane Proposal**

#### **7. Why were these roads in Sugarmill Woods selected?**

The SMW roads identified as the best candidates were selected for several reasons. Cypress Village Blvd, Oak Village Blvd, and Oak Village Blvd South are the primary artery roads cutting through the center of Cypress Village and Oak Village. Residents living on both sides of these main artery Blvds have equal access to the proposed bike lanes to be able to bike safely from one end of the Sugarmill Woods community to the other end. All of the Boulevard roads in Sugarmill Woods were developed with 100 foot public road right-of-way. This allows enough space to easily add bike lanes to these roads with minimal impact to residents, minimal impact to the road right-of-way drainage areas, etc. With the speed limit at 35 mph for these Blvds, bike lanes on these roads will make it safer for both bike riders and walkers.

Oak Park Blvd West (CR 480) provides a safe path to bike to the Shoppes of Sugarmill Woods. The US Hwy 98 segment provides a safe path for residents to bike to the Suncoast Parkway Trailhead.

#### **8. Why are there a Phase 1 and Phase 2? How were the groupings determined?**

We cannot get enough Grant money to do everything at once. The County asked us to establish a priority which we did as a first pass. We tried to get bike lanes throughout the heart of the community in the first group. We need resident feedback if these are the right choices. We have received several comments already asking to include Corkwood Blvd, Cypress Village Circle, and Cypress Village Blvd West in Phase 1. One of the concerns that we need to deal with on Cypress Village Blvd West is the existing street lights are too close to the edge of the road and will probably need to be moved. We need to investigate this more to determine what is required.

At this time we are not entertaining any non-Blvd side streets so as to not complicate this proposal. We want to use the October 13 meeting and the feedback we receive to finalize the content of Phase 1 before submitting the initial Grant Application Requests.

#### **9. Were other bike lane options considered?**

Other options were discussed but not considered for various reasons. Some of the suggestions included bike lanes through the Greenbelt or around the perimeter of the Sugarmill Woods property. In both cases, the POAs and probably the individual village residents would have to approve such a proposal. Since the property is privately owned by the POAs, SMW residents would have to fund the project themselves via an MSBU or through a special assessment of property owners. In addition, lighting of these paths would probably be required for safety concerns resulting in added cost. The ongoing maintenance was also a concern requiring ongoing funding. There also was a concern as to how much use they would get if located within the Greenbelt. Locating the Bike Lanes as extensions of the existing County owned and maintained roads was considered the best and most economical solution. The street lighting which already existed throughout the community was also a huge benefit.

#### **10. How will foreign owners be notified and how can they get more information through the construction phase?**

The POAs have committed to work with their property owners who live overseas to make sure they receive pdf copies of documentation, etc from the County in sufficient time to allow them to make any necessary prior arrangements to minimize any potential problems for the County, themselves and any tenants.

#### **11. How will the proposed bike lanes be constructed?**

The proposed bike lanes would be approximately five foot wide and appear as a direct side extension of the selected roads. The bike lane would be clearly designated as a Bike Lane for the community.

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Separate striping would delineate the bike lane from the motorized traffic lane. These lanes would also have the familiar bike symbol painted on the bike lane path.

**12. Will the bike path be a continuation of the camber of the road?**

Yes. The bike lanes are an extension of the road and will be designed and implemented appropriately to ensure proper drainage, etc.

**13. Once completed, will the County be responsible for the maintenance of the bike path or will homeowners be expected to maintain "their section"?**

The bike lanes are extensions of the County owned roads. The County will be solely responsible for maintenance of the complete road which includes the bike lanes.

**14. Will service vehicles be allowed to park on these streets where the new bike lanes are proposed to be located?**

There will probably be no change in this area. Since this is part of the road for traffic, emergency temporary parking is allowed on the road. The advantage of adding the bike lanes and the extra five feet will allow these vehicles to move further away from the center of the road. While we have a lot of lawn maintenance companies serving residents in Sugarmill Woods, many of them park in the public road right-of-way of undeveloped lots and we would encourage them to continue to do that. If they park on the road, they are required to use emergency red cones in the front and back to alert approaching traffic.

**15. Is it possible to make the proposed Bike Lanes wider for possible use by Golf Carts?**

Bike Lanes have specific design requirements to meet state and local codes. In most if not all cases, motorized vehicles are not allowed on bike paths. In addition, since bike paths are part of the existing roads, golf carts are not allowed to be used on roads unless they are "street legal and equipped appropriately". If they were so equipped, the golf carts would have to be used only in the auto traffic lanes and not the bike lanes.

**16. Will parking will be available for bike riders or walkers?**

There are no plans to offer any additional parking. The purpose of these bike lanes is for use by residents and we anticipate that residents will ride their bike or walk to get on the bike lane. Offering separate parking would encourage people to drive which is not the intent. We want to encourage residents to ride bikes and walk for exercise purposes and provide the facilities for them to do that. For those that live some distance from the bike lanes, we believe that bike riding or walking on the side streets near their home is still a practical and safe alternative.

For those that do want to haul their bikes to a separate trail area, there are parking facilities at the Suncoast Parkway Trailhead on US Hwy 98 and at various points along the Withlacoochee Trail.

**17. Will there be added signage along this path?**

Our objective is to restrict bike lane signage to the entrances into Sugarmill Woods Villages and have no other signs within the community. We would also propose that the bike lanes be marked across side street intersections to make sure approaching traffic is aware of the bike lanes and bike traffic. All of these details need to be worked out with Citrus County officials to make sure all state and local codes are followed.

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**18. How will the road right-of-way drainage be changed or affected?**

The existing drainage areas will be retained as much as possible. If changes are required, County officials have assured us that the needed changes will be implemented so as to not impact any resident's property.

**19. Will the County take the opportunity to install any drainage channels?**

Where possible, the preferred solution is to have natural drainage channels vs. installing culverts, etc. If additional drainage is required as a result of the changes to add the bike lanes or because drainage problems exist today without the bike lanes, we are using this opportunity to request the County to make all of those changes at the same time.

**20. Will the drainage areas be re-sodded to their original condition?**

Yes, any reconstruction of drainage areas required because of the added bike lanes will be handled by the County and returned to their original condition.

**21. What if a resident has sprinkler heads located next to the affected road?**

Sprinkler heads will be relocated appropriately to the new edge of the road which incorporates the bike lane at no cost to the resident.

**22. A resident asks, "We have 5 x 360 degree sprinkler heads across our front yard that are about 8' from the road. The proposed bike path will not directly affect the sprinkler heads but they will be wrongly positioned if the bike path proceeds. Will the contractor be responsible for moving the sprinkler heads back 5'? We also have 2 x 180 degree sprinkler heads by the side of our drive which are 8' from the road."**

Since the position of these sprinklers are "being affected by the new bike lane path", the County should include them in those affected and relocate them appropriately. In all cases, we will be asking the County to work with each affected homeowner to ensure there is complete satisfaction with the changes.

**23. When the road is extended to incorporate the bike lane, will my driveway apron be affected?**

Any changes to driveway aprons that may be required will also be made at no expense to the resident. Repairs will be made to match the existing driveway apron.

**24. Will the contractor provide a complete new apron at the end of the drive or will they merely add two 'concrete triangles' to the remaining drive?**

This would depend on the exact situation and configuration of the driveway apron and if they have to integrate any slope/drainage changes. It could be a simple change or a complete replacement of the apron. Again, the County will work with the resident to make sure there is complete satisfaction with the changes.

**25. Will the County repair all damage to the lawn in the affected area?**

All lawn areas damaged by the addition of the bike lanes will be repaired and sod replaced using the same material which matches the existing lawn. Bahia with Bahia; Floratam St Augustine with Floratam St. Augustine; Empire Zoysia with Empire Zoysia; etc. This would be done at no cost to the resident.

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### **SMW Bike Lane Funding**

#### **26. Who is going to fund the construction of these proposed bike lanes?**

With respect to funding we explored various alternatives and determined that projects like this one are eligible candidate projects which can be funded by federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. United States Code requires that 10% of the STP funds be reserved for "Transportation Enhancement Activities" such as bike paths, landscaping for roads, etc. "Transportation Enhancement Funds" are distributed annually to each Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District and the Florida DOT then decides which projects will be funded.

This program is funded on an annual basis and has been ongoing for many years. It has spanned the terms of several presidents, so it is safe to say that the program is not specifically tied to the current administration. It is not part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that is generally referred to as "stimulus money".

The "Transportation Enhancement Funds" that we are seeking are already a part of the FDOT District 7 budget. The funding is provided through the current Transportation Act - SAFETEA-LU. These funds are part of the normal Federal budget and not part of the recent "stimulus" funding. In general terms, the funds will be spent in FDOT District 7, of which Citrus is a part, whether we use them or not. Our competitors for the funds in other counties and cities who we will be competing with (Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, and incorporated cities) would be glad get them if we don't apply. The program is basically a return of Federal tax funds to local governments for implementation of specific types of projects that provide enhancements to existing transportation systems. The County and both the City of Inverness and the City of Crystal River have completed similar projects through this program.

If approved, these projects are 100% funded. Matching local funds are not required. Surface Transportation Program Funds are our tax dollars at work. Since we are all tax payers contributing to STP funds, it would be appropriate to see some of this money put to work in the SMW community.

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### **SMW Bike Lane Grant Request Process**

#### **27. What is the process for submitting and receiving approval for the Grant Request for Funds?**

On August 23, 2011, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved a recommendation from County staff to submit Grant Application Requests for Funding. There will actually be several Grant Requests to complete the whole project.

First, there will be two Grant Application Requests for Funds submitted for work to do a survey of the roads and land affected and to develop very detailed cost estimate of the construction costs and the proposed schedule to complete the work. One Grant Application Request covers the SMW Roads in Phase 1 and the second Grant Application Request covers the US Hwy 98 segment which crosses county boundaries and has to be submitted with Hernando County's Grant Application Request.

After this first set of Grants are submitted and approved, the County will complete the survey work and prepare the detailed cost estimates. The County expects to complete this work by the end of the year.

The next step is to then submit a second set of Grant Application Requests for Funds to actually complete the construction of the bike lanes. This process will take a little longer because Citrus County will be competing with other county governments and incorporated cities in Florida DOT District 7 for the limited "Transportation Enhancement Funds" available. Florida DOT District 7 officials make the final decision as to which Grant Requests are funded. For this cycle Florida DOT District 7 officials are expected to award their Transportation Enhancement Fund Grants by June, 2012.

If approved, the County work effort to create these bike lanes would be completed in the fall of 2012.