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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT FROM THE
SCOPING MEETING
GULF COAST PARKWAY PROJECT
PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: November 14, 2007
TIME: 10:00 A.M. (CDT)
LOCATION: Springfield Community Center

Reported by:
PATSY C. WILSON, Court Reporter

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PRESENT

Rosemary Woods, PBS&J, Project Manager for the Gulf

Coast Parkway Project.

Greg Vaughn, PBS&J

Cesar Segovia, PBS&J

Lee Strickland, PBS&J

Elizabeth Moore, PBS&J

Wendy Lasher, PBS&J

Eric Schneider, PBS&J

Cathie Cash, PBS&J

Greg Garrett, PBS&J

Ernest Ladkani, PBS&J

Howard Lovett, FDOT

Peggy Kelley, FDOT

Laura Haddock, FDOT

Brandon Bruner, FDOT

Trinetta Ballard, FHWA

Psritesh Mehta, FHWA

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MEETING

MS. WOODS: Good morning, my name is Rosemary Woods. I'm with PBS&J, and I'm the Project Manager for the Gulf Coast Parkway Project. Representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, District 3, as well as the Federal Highway Administration are here today with us, as well, as co lead agents through this project.

This is the Scoping Meeting for the Gulf Coast Parkway Project, not to be confused with alternatives public meeting or a public hearing. I'll discuss the purpose and goals of the Scoping Meeting during the presentation, and will hold all public comments until the end of the presentation. We'll take a very brief break between the presentation and the public comment period, and if you would like to speak, you will need to fill out a speaker card that's available at the back of the room. I will be collecting those, also, at that location. During the comment period, we will call you to the microphone and ask you to state your name and address for the minutes. If you'd prefer not to speak during that time, we do have a

1 court reporter available here that you can
2 speak to after the meeting or you can email us
3 your comments or you can also fill out a
4 comment sheet and leave it here with us today
5 or mail it to us later. I'm going to ask you
6 to please limit your comments to issues that
7 need to be addressed in the EIS, or
8 Environmental Impact Study, since that is the
9 purpose of today's meeting. We will only be
10 responding to comments that pertain to the
11 scoping process at the meeting today. And that
12 will be like what needs to be included in the
13 Environmental Impact Study. We'll be having
14 additional meetings later beginning of next
15 year, and alternatives public meetings where we
16 will ask for public comment and your thoughts
17 on the project at that time. But this meeting
18 today is strictly for scoping purposes.

19 The Gulf Coast Parkway Project is
20 located in Gulf, Calhoun and Bay counties. The
21 limits are to the north along US 231 and to the
22 south along US 98 up into Springfield.

23 This project is being conducted by
24 Opportunity Florida, who has a joint
25 participation agreement, or JPA, with the

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1 Florida Department of Transportation.
2 Opportunity Florida is regional economic
3 development alliance representing an eight
4 county area that was declared economically
5 deprived by the Governor in 1999. The counties
6 that they represent are shown here on the
7 slide. The representatives are made up of
8 county and city governments, business and
9 utility companies, and economic organizations.
10 Their intent is to improve the quality of life
11 in these counties, as well as to help in
12 strengthening their economies.

13 The purpose and goals of this meeting
14 today is for continuation of the scoping
15 process, which has been ongoing for the last
16 two years. We've had kickoff meetings with
17 the agencies in November of 2005, and also had
18 field reviews with those agencies, as well.
19 We've had coordination meetings and conference
20 calls for the past few years.

21 We'll be identifying and eliminating
22 from the detailed study those issues which are
23 not significant or which have been covered by
24 prior environmental studies, thereby narrowing
25 the discussion in the Environmental Impact

1 Statement of why they will not have a
2 significant effect on the environment or
3 provide a reference to the coverage elsewhere.

4 We'll be identifying any public
5 environmental assessments or impact statements,
6 which are prepared and or related, but are not
7 a part of, the scope of the impact statement
8 under consideration.

9 Identify other environmental review
10 and consultation requirements, so that the lead
11 and cooperating agencies may prepare other
12 required analysis and studies concurrently
13 with, and integrated with, the EIS. Examples
14 of additional requirements include surveys and
15 studies required by the Fish and Wildlife
16 Coordination Act, the National Historic
17 Preservation ACT, the Endangered Species Act,
18 and other environmental review laws and
19 executive orders.

20 Identify any permits, license or
21 entitlements that may be necessary, and to
22 discuss any relationship between the timing of
23 the preparation of the environmental analysis
24 and the agency's tentative planning and
25 decision making schedule.

1 The purpose and need for the project
2 is listed below and the criteria for the
3 purpose and need is shown in your handout, as
4 well. These are located on the back, if you
5 picked up your handout in the back of the room.
6 I'll briefly go through now a description of
7 these.

8 The purpose and need for the project
9 is to reduce travel time for residents in south
10 Bay and Gulf counties to employment centers in
11 Panama City that are highlighted in yellow.
12 Also to provide a more direct route between US
13 98 and transfer facilities on US 231 within Bay
14 County. That's also highlighted in yellow.

15 This is a means to provide a more
16 direct route to move goods into and out of Gulf
17 County.

18 To improve the access between the
19 Gulf County enterprise zones along County 386
20 and US 98 and the major freight transportation
21 route out of Bay County, which is US 231.

22 To provide a direct route for
23 tourists traveling US 231 to reach vacation and
24 recreation opportunities in south Gulf County.

25 Also to provide a more direct route

1 from south Gulf County to the existing and
2 proposed airports in Panama City.

3 To increase traffic capacity of
4 existing roadways, and particularly the current
5 congested sections of US 98 or Tyndall Parkway.

6 To improve security for the Tyndall
7 Air Force Base reservation by providing an
8 alternative route to US 98 through Tyndall.
9 And, no, we will not be closing US 98 through
10 the Tyndall Air Force Base as part of this
11 project. It's just providing an alternative
12 route.

13 To provide an alternative to existing
14 emergency evacuation routes. As you can see in
15 yellow, those are the existing roadways, and
16 this would provide a more direct route up to
17 231 and on to I-10.

18 And to provide a new corridor which
19 is consistent with the adopted Bay County Long
20 Range Transportation Plan and the adopted Bay
21 County and proposed Gulf County Comprehensive
22 Plan.

23 Now to give you a little bit of
24 background on the project, the original
25 corridor studies started back in 2003. The

1 project limits began on US 98 in Gulf and Bay
2 County along the Mexico Beach area, continued
3 to the north about 30 to 35 miles up to 231,
4 and the western boundaries were along Star
5 Avenue in Bay County. It also included parts
6 of Calhoun County, as well.

7 During the study we had kickoff
8 meetings with Gulf, Bay and Calhoun counties,
9 with all the cities and county governments in
10 the area, as well as the Bay County TPO. We
11 did an analysis of the entire project and
12 developed numerous corridors within the study
13 area. Five of those corridors moved forward
14 for further analysis and were presented at
15 public workshops. These are the five corridors
16 that moved forward at that time.

17 After further analysis and input from
18 the public at the workshops, it was determined
19 that Corridor B, as it was previously called,
20 should move forward into a PD&E. And that's
21 shown here, Corridor B.

22 Now before the PD&E began, and after
23 the Corridor Study was completed, the scope was
24 expanded to include additional termini at the
25 intersection of US 231 and County Road 390 and

1 County Road 2321 intersections. That's this
2 area here. This is 2321 and 390 comes back.
3 This was in order to provide possible
4 continuity in the future with other proposed
5 corridors. A leg tying into the existing US 98
6 at Springfield was also added to complete a
7 bypass of Tyndall Air Force Base and tie back
8 into existing 98. At the request of the
9 public, additional crossings of Wetappo Creek
10 were also added. The one in the middle is the
11 original Corridor B, and the alternative to the
12 right and left were added for the PD&E study.

13 The PD&E study began in 2005. Since
14 no federal funds were involved in the project,
15 it was determined that a State Environmental
16 Impact Report would be required. After the
17 PD&E began, \$25 million in federal funds were
18 allocated to the project to complete future
19 segments of design and right-of-way
20 acquisition. This federal funding triggered a
21 change in the environmental document. It was
22 determined that an EIS would probably be
23 required, therefore the scope of the project
24 changed. Since a Notice of Intent to issue an
25 EIS had not occurred before August 11th of

1 2005, the project was then required to follow
2 what's called the Efficient Transportation
3 Decision Making Process, or ETDM which will be
4 referred to in the presentation.

5 Since an EIS was required, the
6 original five corridors along with additional
7 corridors that were submitted by the
8 Environmental Technical Advisory Team, or ETAT,
9 was submitted for consideration in the ETDM
10 programming screen review.

11 These 18 corridors are shown here.
12 As you can see, we pretty much covered the old
13 project area from 231 to 98, through Calhoun,
14 Gulf and Bay County over to Star Avenue.

15 The 18 corridors were reviewed to
16 determine if they met the majority of the
17 project's purpose and need criteria, as shown
18 previously shown.

19 Of those 18 corridors, 12 met the
20 majority of the criteria and were entered into
21 ETDM programming screen for review. These 12
22 are shown here and they're also in your handout
23 and are shown on the boards here in the room
24 today.

25 You're probably wondering what an

1 ETDM is, for those of you who were not involved
2 with ETAT Committee. The ETDM process allows
3 an opportunity for the state and federal
4 agencies to provide early comments and concerns
5 for roadway projects. In the programming
6 screen they reviewed the 12 corridors for all
7 issues from the environmental to
8 socio-economic. The intent is to streamline
9 the transportation decision making process.
10 The programming screen review began in February
11 of 2007 and was completed in April of this
12 year. As part of the ETDM review, ETAT
13 reviewers marked the degree of effect that they
14 anticipate that the project will have for
15 different issues. This ranges from a no
16 involvement all the way to dispute resolution.
17 Dispute resolution was identified by several
18 agencies. Because dispute resolution was
19 identified, a teleconference was held with the
20 ETAT in order to work towards a resolution.
21 During this conference call and additional
22 coordination meetings with ETAT members, Issue
23 Action Plans were developed to address ETAT
24 members comments and concerns. These are
25 available here today in the back of the room in

1 a handout, if you would like to get one of
2 those. The Programming Screen Summary Report
3 for ETDM was published this past August. A
4 meeting with ETAT members was also held where
5 the Issue Action Plans were discussed. these
6 were approved and distributed to ETAT and
7 posted to the Environmental Screening Tool in
8 September of this year. The Notice of Intent
9 to perform an Environmental Impact Study for
10 the Gulf Coast Parkway was published by the
11 Federal Highway Administration on November 1st.

12 Public and agency involvement has
13 been a big part of this project beginning at
14 the corridor study and continuing through the
15 PD&E process. A public involvement program was
16 developed at the beginning of the kickoff
17 meeting being held in Bay and Gulf County, as
18 well as with all local governments. We've
19 established a website so that the public can go
20 directly to the Gulf Coast Parkway dot com to
21 get information. We update that periodically
22 to keep you up to speed with the project.
23 Public alternatives meeting, as I mentioned
24 before, will be held at the beginning of next
25 year where we will present further information

1 and allow the public to give their comments on
2 the project and their concerns. An interagency
3 coordination began with kickoff meetings and
4 field reviews and has been ongoing and will
5 continue to do so throughout the project's
6 length. Cooperating agencies will be doing
7 document review of the draft before it is
8 published for public availability. After the
9 Draft EIS is approved, a public hearing will
10 occur which will again allow for additional
11 comment.

12 A Corridor Alternatives Evaluation
13 Summary Report was submitted by the Florida
14 Department of Transportation and the Federal
15 Highway Administration and is currently under
16 review. That discusses the 12 corridors you
17 see here today. This will be made available
18 once it's approved by the Federal Highway
19 Administration. A meeting with the ETAT
20 members will be scheduled after the approval is
21 received to review the findings and discuss
22 alternative alignments within each of these
23 corridors.

24 Now I'll discuss the issues that will
25 be addressed in the Environmental Impact

1 Statement. Issues to be addressed concerning
2 engineering will include the proposed typical
3 section of the project, which is a four-lane
4 divided highway with adjacent multi use trail,
5 which you've seen on our boards earlier. This
6 is shown here as well as in the next slide and
7 I'll go into more detail. Although traffic
8 projections currently show a need for a two
9 lane facility, right-of-way will be acquired
10 for a four-lane roadway to allow for expansion
11 when needed in the future. Our analysis will
12 also be done for a four-lane facility. Some
13 other engineering issues that will be discussed
14 in the EIS will be Intracoastal Waterway and
15 structures. Our intent is to look at a high
16 level bridge crossing over the Wetappo Creek.
17 We will also be looking at intersection design
18 and drainage for the project as part of
19 engineering.

20 This shows the proposed typical
21 section on what's the roadway going to look
22 like, with the four-lane rural roadway up at
23 the top. This will require approximately 200
24 feet of right-of-way providing four lanes with
25 a 64 foot median, and 12 foot multi use trail

1 within the right-of-way. This is the multi use
2 trail to the side. For the urban areas, 160
3 feet of right-of-way will be needed for a
4 four-lane roadway with a 46 foot median and 5
5 foot sidewalk on each side. Bike paths will be
6 adjacent to the lanes for the urban section.

7 Issues to be addressed in the EIS for
8 socio-economics include hurricane evacuation,
9 emergency services access, economic development
10 and community impacts, such as potential
11 business or residential relocation, noise and
12 air, as well as cultural resources will be
13 addressed along with intermodal connectivity,
14 such as connections to ports, airports and
15 railways. These are just some of the
16 socio-economic issues that will be included.
17 Of course, all engineering, socio-economic and
18 environmental analysis will be conducted
19 according to the guidelines in what's called
20 the Project Development and Environmental
21 Manual that's published by the Department of
22 Transportation.

23 Environmental issues to be addressed
24 include wetlands, coastal and marine, wildlife
25 and habitat, and indirect and cumulative

1 effects, and all other environmental
2 considerations, as well. The Issue Action
3 Plans discusses how some of the environmental
4 concerns will be addressed in the EIS. This
5 will be to define the boundaries for each
6 issues or resource, to inventory notable
7 features, to identify project impact causing
8 activities, to evaluate the analytical results,
9 and to assess the consequences and develop
10 strategies for avoidance, minimization and
11 mitigation.

12 In the Issue Action Plans for
13 wetlands the following steps were agreed to, a
14 uniform mitigation assessment method will be
15 utilized for wetland analysis. This is
16 underway. We're coordinating with agencies to
17 minimize or avoid impacts where feasible to do
18 so. If this cannot occur, we will coordinate
19 with the agency to determine the measures for
20 minimization of those impacts. A Wetlands
21 Evaluation Report will be done, and with all
22 issues we will continue to coordinate with all
23 ETAT members throughout the EIS process.

24 In the Issue Action Plan for Coastal
25 and Marine, a methodology has been submitted

1 and agreed upon for Essential Fish Habitat
2 survey. Field investigations are underway.
3 Consideration for barrier effects and the
4 potential for impacts on coastal and riverine
5 flooding will occur. And EFH assessment report
6 will be prepared and the project will be
7 submitted for determination to be consistent
8 with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

9 In the Issue Action Plan for wildlife
10 and habitat, analysis of potential impacts is
11 also underway. Coordination with agencies is
12 occurring in order to avoid impacts where
13 feasible to do so. Informal discussions are
14 occurring to determine if a Section 7
15 consultation will be required. The Biological
16 Assessment Report is currently underway, which
17 incorporates the Essential Fish Habitat
18 assessment.

19 In the Issue Action Plan for Indirect
20 and Cumulative Effects, the identification of
21 resources to be included in the analysis is
22 underway. The boundaries for each issue or
23 resource are currently being defined, as well
24 as notable features. Identification of project
25 impact-causing activities is also underway.

1 The significance of the potential secondary and
2 cumulative effects will be determined upon
3 completion of the previously mentioned
4 analysis. In turn, the secondary and
5 cumulative effects will be analyzed and those
6 results will be evaluated. Upon completion of
7 this analysis an assessment of the consequences
8 and a strategy for avoidance, minimization and
9 mitigation will be developed.

10 Our tentative project schedule
11 includes, after the meeting today a proposed
12 alternatives meeting, which will be held at the
13 beginning of next year. Following that we are
14 proposing to submit the Draft Environmental
15 Impact Statement for public availability at the
16 beginning of next summer to follow with a
17 public hearing, as well. With publishing of
18 the final Environmental Impact Statement in the
19 fall, and then conclusion with the location
20 Concept Design Acceptance at the end of next
21 year.

22 We're now going to take a 10 minute
23 break to allow for those of you who may have
24 not filled out speaker cards to do so, and you
25 can turn them in to the desk in the back. When

1 we reconvene, we'll take the ETAT member
2 questions or comments first, following with
3 other governmental agencies in order to insure
4 that their comments received are included in
5 the scoping process. We'll then open it up to
6 the public for your comments. Again, we would
7 like to remind you to please limit your
8 comments to issues that need to be addressed in
9 the Environmental Impact Statement, since that
10 is the purpose of today's meeting. We will
11 only be responding to comments that pertain to
12 the scoping process at the meeting today.
13 After the comments have been received, we will
14 continue with an open house and we'll have
15 staff available at the boards for any
16 additional questions or comments. And, of
17 course, the Court Reporter will be here
18 available to take your statement. We do
19 encourage you to give us your comments, either
20 through a statement with the Court Reporter or
21 mail them in or email them to us, because that
22 is why we're here today is to hear your
23 concerns. At this time we'll take a 10 minute
24 break and reconvene in a moment.

25 (Recess taken at this time)

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1 MS. WOODS: Before we get started in
2 the public comment area, I want to qualify I
3 actually stated that the typical section for
4 the rural areas was 200 feet. It's actually
5 250 feet. As you can on the board, it's 250
6 for the rule typical section. Also I wanted to
7 restate we do welcome all your comments. If
8 they don't pertain to scoping, please still see
9 the Court Reporter or one of our staff or mail
10 your comments in, because we do want to hear
11 your concerns and your comments, so we do
12 encourage you to do that.

13 And at this time I would like to
14 introduce the staff that we have here today.
15 I'm going to actually pass the mike around the
16 room to let each staff member from the
17 Department of Transportation, Federal Highway
18 Administration and from PBS&J introduce
19 themselves, as well as Preble Rish, who is the
20 sub consultant to us on this project.

21 On the phone from the Federal Highway
22 Administration we have George Hadley, Cathy
23 Kendall and George Rivera. If you could pass
24 the mike around. If you would please stand and
25 state your name and your role, please.

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1 MR. LOVETT: My name is Howard
2 Lovett, and I'm with the Florida Department of
3 Transportation out of the Chipley Office, and
4 I'm the project manager liaison with DOT.

5 MS. KELLEY: Peggy Kelley with the
6 Florida Department of Transportation, and I
7 assist Howard as liaison on this project.

8 MS. HADDOCK: Laura Haddock,
9 Department of Transportation.

10 MR. BRUNER: I'm Brandon Bruner the
11 DOT Environmental Managing Engineer.

12 MS. BALLARD: My name is Trinetta
13 Ballard with the Federal Highway
14 Administration.

15 MR. VAUGHN: I'm Greg Vaughn with
16 PBS&J.

17 MR. SEGOVIA: My name is Cesar
18 Segovia, PBS&J.

19 MR. STRICKLAND: I'm Lee Strickland
20 with PBS&J.

21 MS. MOORE: My name is Elizabeth
22 Moore, I'm with Preble Rish. We're a sub
23 consultant to this project.

24 MS. LASHER: Wendy Lasher, PBS&J.

25 MS. MARTIN: I'm Blair Martin,

1 Florida Department of Transportation
2 Environmental Protection Office.

3 MR. MEHTA: I am Pritesh Mehta,
4 Federal Highway Administration.

5 MR. SCHNEIDER: Eric Schneider, PBS&J
6 Environmental Sciences.

7 MS. CASH: Cathie Cash, PBS&J. I
8 work with the socio-economic analysis.

9 MR. GARRETT: My name is Greg
10 Garrett. I work with PBS&J as the Deputy
11 Project Manager.

12 MR. LADKANI: My name is Ernest
13 Ladkani. I'm with PBS&J. I just do what do
14 what I'm told. I work for Rosemary.

15 MS. WOODS: We have one comment card.
16 Deborah Keller with The Nature Conservancy. If
17 you could, please, just state your name and
18 address for the minutes.

19 MS. KELLER: I'm Deborah Keller. I
20 work for The Nature Conservancy, 625 North
21 Adams Street, Tallahassee. And I just briefly
22 wanted to state that this area, the Sandy Creek
23 area is known to be an area of intense high
24 density of threatened and endangered species in
25 the study that we published in 1996. We

1 identified this region of the state as being a
2 biological hot spot, having more species and
3 the quality of habitat for these species to
4 reside and better conditions than almost any
5 other place in the country. It was number six
6 on the country's list of biological hot spots.
7 That to us is our mission to protect the
8 biodiversity of the life. There are plants in
9 this region that are found almost nowhere else
10 on the planet. We're concerned primarily with
11 the road causing increased development in the
12 area, secondary impact of these roads, the
13 routing of these roads, how they will bisect
14 important habitats of these species balance to
15 survive. So we would appreciate care to really
16 be taken, not just avoiding the species
17 themselves, but protecting the habitat that it
18 needs to survive and mitigate those areas so
19 that the entire region can continue to function
20 as an ecosystem, as it has. That's why these
21 species are found here is because it has not
22 been minimized and it has not been degraded at
23 this point. And secondary development has not
24 arrived. So we're deeply concerned about those
25 issues, and hope they're paid attention to.

1 We've consulted with FNA, as I know that you
2 have, Federal Natural Area Inventory. PBS&J
3 has that list of species and know where they
4 are and know the population density and know
5 what type of habitat they need to survive. I'd
6 like to see this process assure us that species
7 can be protected and proper mitigation for
8 wetlands is accomplished in this region, as
9 well as for those species. Also I would like
10 to just mention connectivity. We've talked a
11 lot about that in the environmental world, in
12 the conservation world here in Florida and
13 throughout the county, that now what we're
14 looking at to preserve many of these species is
15 the connectivity of their habitat. The Florida
16 black bear is one of the species we like to
17 point out. They just don't do well crossing
18 roads, and the cars that intersect with them
19 don't do well either. So proper construction
20 of these roads and underpasses and connectivity
21 for those mega species can continue to exist in
22 this region. It's very important. And also
23 just because this map up here with a diagram of
24 how the road will be built, this is my personal
25 comment. I am a bike rider, but I'm not a

1 brave bike rider. And I choose to try to
2 commute by bicycling as often as I possibly
3 can. I find commuting on the lane next to the
4 lane the cars are traveling is a frightening
5 thing. And that's one thing I will not allow
6 my daughter to do and I choose not to do that.
7 If you really truly are going to promote
8 alternate modes of transportation in an area
9 like this -- I just spent the weekend at
10 Watercolor and biked all over the place, biked
11 to the grocery store, and went around. And we
12 need to make it attractive and safe and
13 something you can say to your teenager, sure,
14 you can ride over to Johnny's house and not be
15 afraid that a truck mirror is going to take
16 your arm off. So I hope your design build
17 features start to incorporate attractive and
18 really accommodate bikers in a way that's
19 completely safe for them, not just
20 accommodating to them by making a space
21 available to them. In closing, just the
22 mitigation of this project is something that
23 it's very difficult for us to say what is going
24 on with this project because you have no idea
25 where the mitigation will be, how large it will

1 be, what will it encompass, what species need
2 to be mitigated for it. So that's a step we
3 would like to be commenting on when that comes.

4 MS. WOODS: At this point that's the
5 only comment card that we have. Again, we will
6 be available to answer any questions that you
7 may have. We'll have staff available at the
8 boards throughout the room, if you'd like to
9 ask questions or give us your comments then.
10 And the Court Reporter will be here available,
11 and you can email your comments in if you like.
12 Hopefully we'll be back at the beginning of
13 next year with an alternatives public meeting.
14 Our next step after we receive approval on our
15 corridor alternatives evaluation report is to
16 move forward with alignments in some of the
17 corridors you see here today. So we'll see you
18 hopefully at the beginning of the year and
19 we'll be here as long as we need to today.
20 Thank you for coming.

21 (Meeting concluded)

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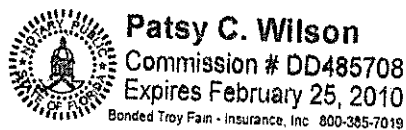
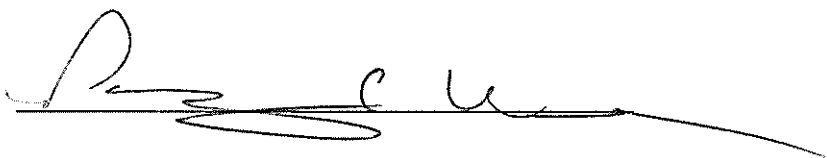
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)

COUNTY OF BAY)

I, Patsy C. Wilson, the undersigned authority, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the Scoping Meeting in the above-styled proceeding, and that the foregoing transcript, pages 1 through 28, is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

DATED this 15th day of November, 2007.



ACCURATE COURT REPORTERS, INC.
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