

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Scenic Highway Program

Prepared For:
Martin Grade Scenic Highway
Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG)

Martin Grade Scenic Corridor Corridor Management Plan



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Corridor Management Plan (CMP) sets forth a Vision and Mission for the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor (including its CME and supporting organizations), documents its qualifications for designation as a Scenic Highway by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), analyzes its existing conditions and presents goals, objectives and strategies to attain the Vision through resource protection, promotion, development of opportunities for interaction, education and sustainable fundraising to support the Plan. The Action Plan sets forth specific steps and timelines to accomplish what is set forth here. The CMP was composed under the leadership of the Corridor Advisory Group (CAG), and with community input in various forms including through Martin County agencies and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The Martin Grade is an approximately 12-mile long portion of CR 714 (Martin Highway), running west-to-east through rural western Martin County between SR 710/Warfield Boulevard and CR 609/Allapattah Road. The most significant scenic feature is the majestic canopy formed by large, mature trees growing in the right-of-way next to the roadway, which is particularly prevalent in the western half of the Corridor. However, there is a great deal more scenic beauty along the Martin Grade, dominated by agriculture and conservation lands, and the Martin Grade itself is historically significant.

The road is currently two lanes with traffic volumes well within its adopted level of service (LOS). Adopted land use and transportation policies call for conditions to remain largely the same, though the possibility of future development pressures creating a real or perceived need to widen the road is a major area of concern, as significant infrastructure improvements would be challenging without damaging or destroying many of the trees.

The Vision foresees a future where preservation of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor is a priority for the community, who know about it through a Welcome Center and educational kiosks along it. The Plan envisions a greenway along the Grade, which helps to integrate the Scenic Corridor into the larger tourism economy in the area, and provides access to outdoor, low-impact recreational opportunities in publicly conserved lands. While tourism along the Grade itself would involve few people at one time and be extremely low-impact, it would raise awareness unique beauty and sense of place.

In broad terms, the CMP seeks to protect and enhance the canopy trees and other scenic resources by active protection and by educating the public about the Martin Grade's significance and otherwise being integrated into the consciousness and identity of the larger community. Active protection includes a vigorous role in planning efforts that might affect the Grade, caring for the trees and planting more and supporting land conservation. The advocates of this scenic highway designation explicitly recognize that the designation has no regulatory effect, but rather works toward protection of this important community resource through education, awareness and integration into the local tourism economy. Education and identity tactics include community outreach activities, development of recreational and educational resources directly on and nearby to the Grade and development of heritage and eco-tourism opportunities that are mutually compatible with and supportive of available tourism amenities in the area. Finally, the CMP addresses fundraising and sustained community support.

If successful, the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor Management Plan will achieve its vision, which is that the “Martin Grade Scenic Corridor’s rare Old-Florida ambiance, scenic beauty, and natural environment are preserved, maintained and enhanced for the enjoyment of countless generations.”

II. BACKGROUND CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

A. Summary of Findings

The Martin Grade Scenic Corridor is an approximately 12-mile long roadway corridor in western Martin County, between County Road (CR) 609 “Allapattah Road” west to State Road (SR) 710. The corridor is scenic due to its surroundings of environmental resources – much of it preserved through public ownership – rural countryside that exemplifies what is often colloquially called “Old Florida” and, significantly, a beautiful tree canopy formed by trees in the public right-of-way, which is especially dense in the western half of the corridor. The corridor, which has an approximate average width of ¼ mile on either side of the roadway, has significant historic, cultural and environmental resources.

The Martin Grade is a two-lane, minor arterial roadway and, given the low existing and projected traffic volumes, transportation plans in place now call for it to remain as such. Similarly, land use policies and public land acquisition policies currently in place can be expected to result in the Martin Grade and its environs remaining much as they are today. However, the scenic and cultural heritage of the Martin Grade, including its tree canopy, need additional protection, because as has been witnessed in many places in Florida and elsewhere, transportation and land use policies often change in response to a variety of pressures, and values such as natural beauty and protection of historic, cultural and natural resources typically do not factor into that calculation, or at least are often not given much weight.

From the perspective of advocates of the Martin Grade and its resources, additional and more explicit policies to protect the Martin Grade, and to give more weight to the important community values that it represents, would be beneficial. The advocates also believe that by building awareness in the community of this resource, and building a low-impact historic/cultural/environmental tourism around the Martin Grade, it will serve to make its preservation more likely. While it is understood that the scenic highway designation itself is not regulatory in nature, and will not directly protect the Grade, it is also believed that awareness by the community and making the Grade a contributor to the attractiveness of the area for tourism can be aided by the designation, and would help to make preservation more likely.

Currently, the roadway is only appropriate for vehicular traffic. Although standard transportation engineering standards would suggest that the roadway has safety issues due to its narrow lanes and steep banks along its edges, accident rates along the corridor are quite low, suggesting little real-world safety problems. Plans in place call for a greenway along the corridor, and there is significant community support for inclusion of the Martin Grade as part of a recreational and/or heritage tourism “loop” that might include vehicular traffic as well as non-vehicular users such as bicyclists and equestrians.

Although County records show the extent of the right-of-way along portions of the corridor (which varies substantially), there is a goal to help clarify the features which are inside and outside the corridor, and what right-of-way is available for improvements (such as a greenway, interpretive sites or educational kiosks) at different points along the corridor. This points to the need for surveying/mapping work to be completed, either along the entire corridor, or at specific points where improvements may be considered and the degree of right-of-way constraint is uncertain.

While some tourism and other user amenities exist along the corridor, there is clear need for additional facilities. Existing amenities include the conservation areas in public ownership that provide hiking, camping, hunting, equestrian and similar opportunities, and the small park at the volunteer fire station. As well as a potential greenway, Martin Grade advocates have identified the possibility of additional facilities to include interpretive sites, educational kiosks and picnic facilities where they may be feasible at points along the Grade, including at the eastern end of the Corridor.

B. Corridor Limits

The proposed Martin Grade Scenic Corridor runs an approximately 12 mile section of County Road 714 (Martin Highway). The eastern terminus of the Scenic Corridor is the intersection of CR 714 and State Road 609, which is named “Allapattah Road” and is regionally called “The Citrus Highway.” The western terminus is the intersection of CR 714 and SR 710, which is locally called “Warfield Boulevard.” At an estimated average visual depth of ¼ mile on each side, the total scenic corridor area is approximately 6 square miles.

It is important to note, however, that the Corridor provides access to thousands of acres of conservation lands not visible from the roadway. While most of these conservation lands are not visible from the roadway and thus not technically within the Corridor, they are inextricably linked to the Corridor and its historic, cultural and scenic qualities.

While at first glance, these facts might point to the need for a viewshed analysis to pinpoint exactly what is inside and outside the corridor, the practical benefits of such an endeavor would be low. Viewers of the scenic corridor will know its boundaries when they see it.

C. Roadway / Right-of-Way (ROW) Description

The Martin Grade is an arterial route that connects the City of Stuart, which is 15 miles to the east on the Atlantic coast, and Okeechobee City, which is 12 miles to the northwest on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee. Near its center point, the Corridor intersects with Fox Brown Road, which travels ten miles to the south to Indiantown, which is on the Intercoastal Waterway that connects the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean.

These termini were chosen because they mark the historical termini of the roadway known as the Martin Grade which was a two-rut, cut-and-grub road through woods and swamp from the 1920's until the 1950's and a graded sand road from then until the mid-1990's.

When the road was finally paved over a period of years, it was not paved in a conventional road cross section because the residents of the County demanded that the County find a way to improve the road without destroying its tree canopy. As a result, the termini of the Scenic Corridor have historical significance to the community in addition to marking the ends of a road corridor that is physically and visually different from all of the other roads in the area.

Although the Martin Grade is designated a minor arterial roadway, it is a two-lane road with narrow lanes and narrow shoulders in keeping with the fact that it has also been designated a Martin County Scenic Corridor. Its most distinctive features are the trees that grow in the right-of-way within 12 feet of the lanes of travel to form a canopy over much of the roadway.

Due to its narrow shoulders that are full of obstacles and lack of sidewalks and bicycle lanes, the Martin Grade is neither bicycle nor pedestrian friendly at this time.



Trees in the Right-of-Way

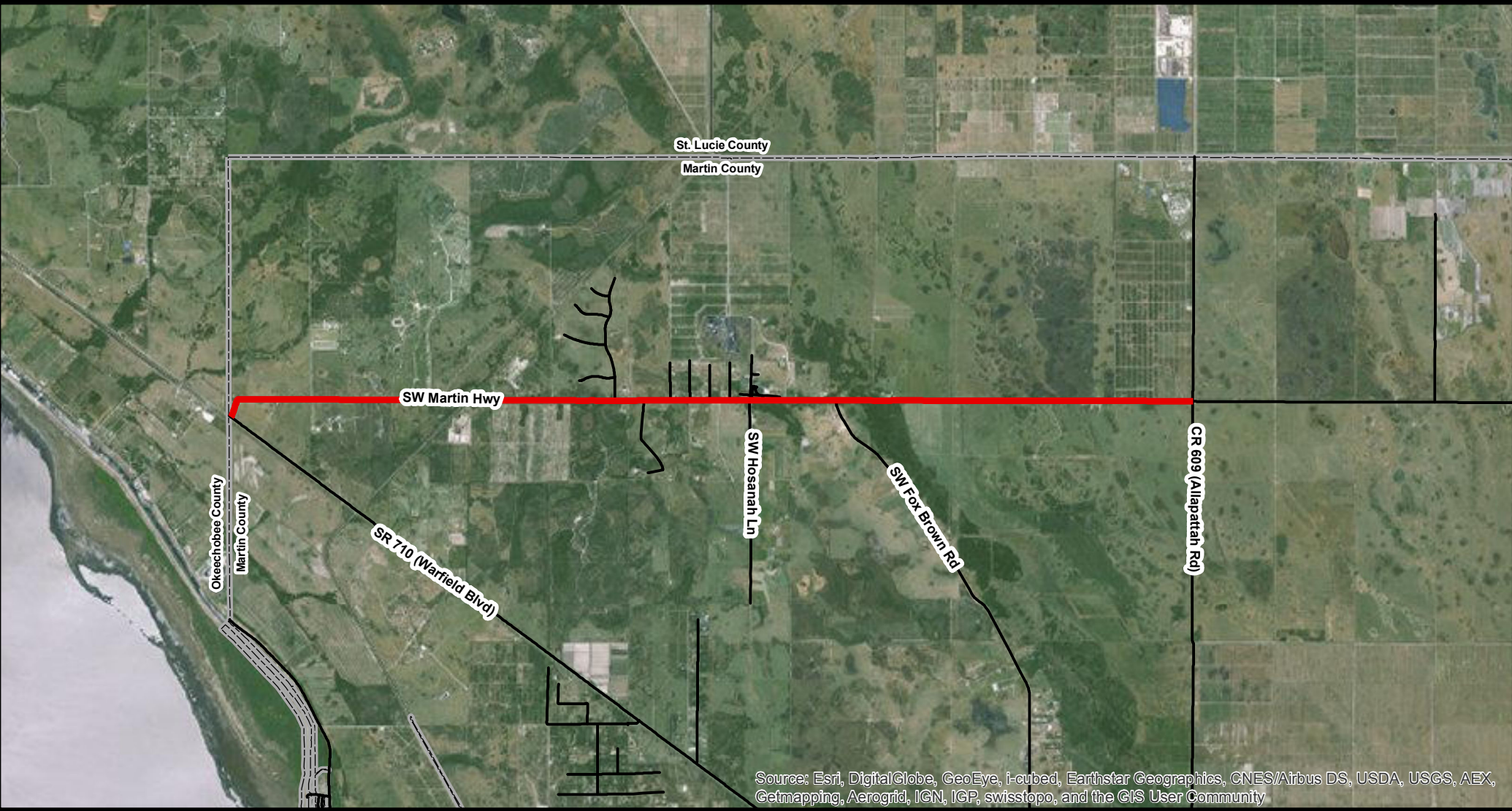
The flora includes pine trees, cabbage and sabal palms, palmetto shrubs, and majestic 100 year-old live oaks that have grown alongside the roadway to spread their branches from opposite sides of the Corridor, joining in the middle to form a canopy described by a *Palm Beach Post* writer as a “green cathedral” (Michael Browning, *Palm Beach Post*, May 11, 1999).






Photo looking east from the Grade's eastern terminus, showing a conventional modern road cross-section.



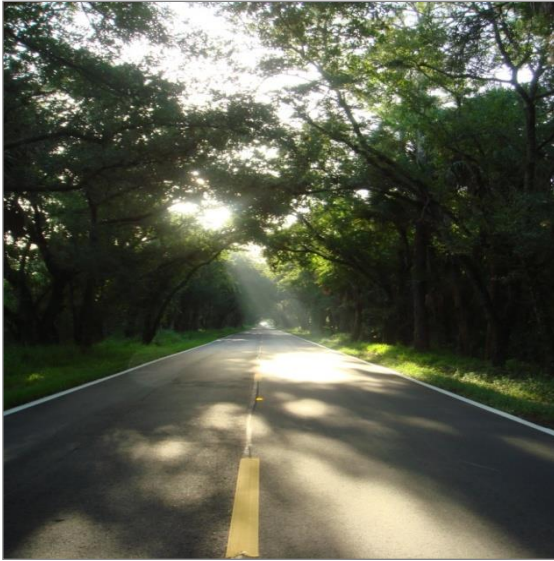
Photo looking west from the Grade's eastern terminus, showing a more old-fashioned road cross-section.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

-  Martin Grade Scenic Corridor
-  County Boundary
-  Road

September 26, 2014



The Martin Grade. Photo by Nancy Oliver.

There are no bridges crossing the road or other non-natural vertical obstructions. As a result, vertical clearance is determined for the most part by the height of the trucks that travel the roadway keeping the trees trimmed in a graceful arch.

Drainage features include rustic, old-style Florida ditches on both sides that were dredged to create the original road bed. There are also culverts that are almost invisible below the road bed, which were installed to allow the water to follow its natural path from northwest to southeast under the road.

Florida Power and Light poles run along the Corridor, providing electricity, phone and some cable service. The line crosses the road at one location near Fox Brown Road. With the exception of a two mile section of the Corridor just east of Fox Brown Road, the FPL utility poles are located well off the roadway on the far sides of the ditches, near the fences installed at the edges of the traditional right of way by private property owners. In that two-mile section the utility poles are between the ditch and the road requiring regular trimming of the canopy on that side.

There is little landscaping along the Corridor. Most of the beautiful vegetation consists of volunteer plants that have established themselves since the roadbed was first elevated over 80 years ago.

The County maintains paved roads such as the Martin Grade Corridor. This includes the repair of potholes and pavement edge breaks, bridge construction, lane painting and signage.

Martin County right-of-way maps and maintenance maps show a right-of-way that varies from 20 feet wide near the western terminus of the Corridor to 200 feet nearer the eastern terminus.

For a number of reasons, it may be necessary to ascertain the exact limits of the Martin Grade right-of-way, and how it relates to the existing pavement limits, as well as trees and other features. This is important for right-of-way maintenance (including maintenance of trees and landscaping), to understand the opportunities and limitations for infrastructure within the corridor, whether it be for wider pavement, a greenway trail, interpretive sites, etc. It is essential to address in the Corridor Management Plan the need to obtain the necessary surveying and right-of-way information strategically and economically.

D. Existing Land Use

Existing land use in the immediate vicinity of the Martin Grade is dominated by agricultural uses, with conservation land second. Some non-agricultural single family uses exist in the vicinity, as well as religious / government uses, including churches and related facilities, and a volunteer fire station site.

The table below shows the existing land use within ¼ mile of the centerline of the Martin Grade, which is considered the average width of the corridor.

Table 1: Existing Land Use within ¼ Mile of the Martin Grade

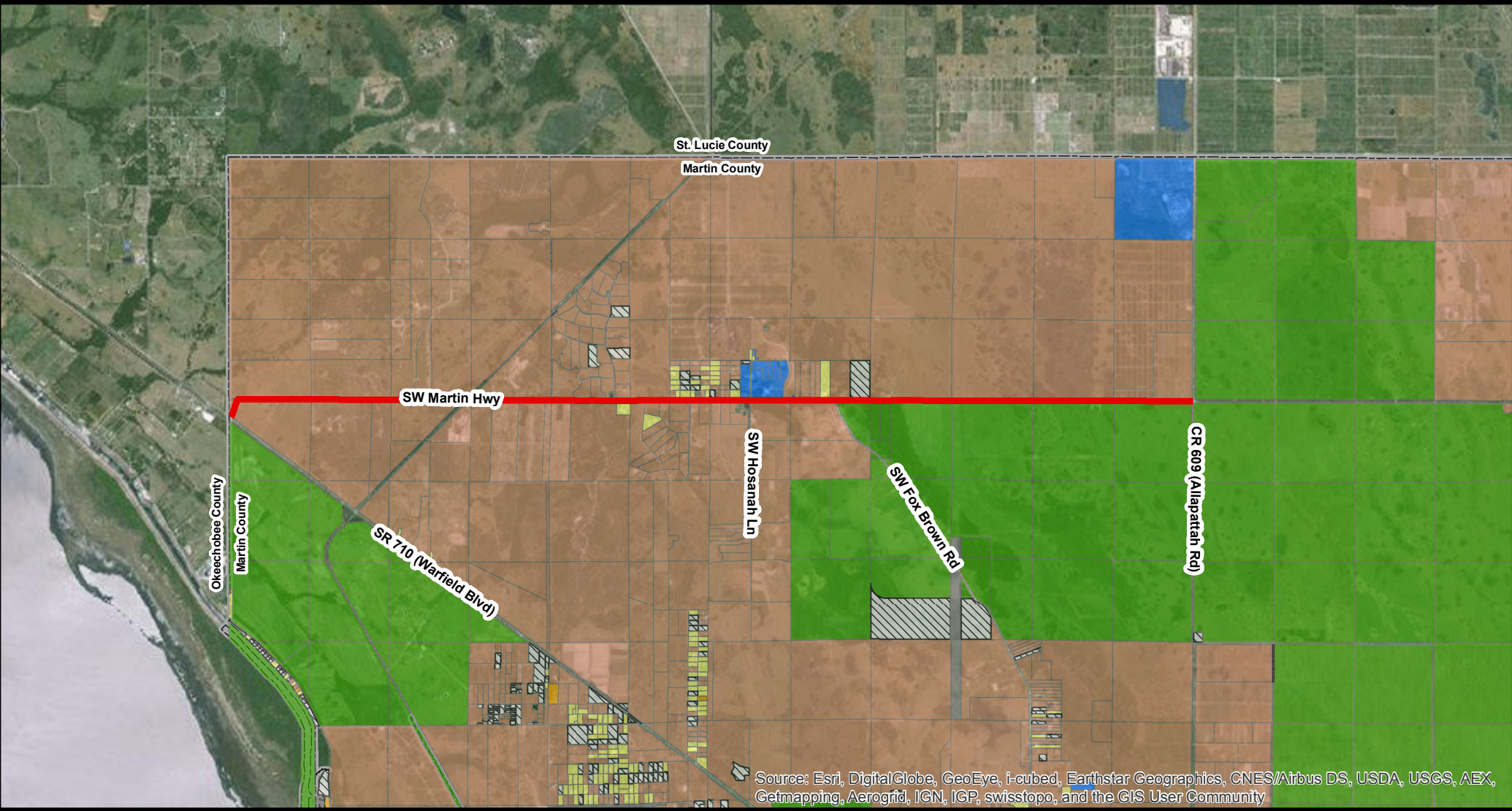
Land Use	Acres	% of total
Agricultural	2,724.1	69.2%
Conservation	727.7	18.5%
Right-of-Way / Other	228.9	5.8%
Single-Family Residential	102.5	2.6%
Religious / Institutional / Government	84.7	2.2%
Vacant	69.5	1.8%
TOTAL	3937.4	100%

Data Source: Martin County Property Appraiser, 2014












E. Future Land Use and Zoning / Relationship to Comprehensive Plan

The vast majority of the land adjacent and nearby to the Martin Grade has a future land use (FLU) designation of “Agricultural”. The exceptions are on the south side of the road beginning just east of Fox Brown Road east to Allapattah Road, where the FLU is “Conservation”; and, on the north side of the road for a distance of about ½ mile, between SW Buckskin Trail and SW Quail Covey Avenue, where the designation is “Agricultural Ranchette.” Conservation and agricultural (A-2 and AG-20A) zoning abuts the corridor. The Agricultural FLU designation requires a minimum lot size of 20 acres, limiting allowed density in the area. The Agricultural Ranchette designation allows as small as 5-acre lots.

However, Policy 4.13A.8(6) of the County Comprehensive Plan establishes a Rural Services Node at the northwest corner of the Martin Grade and Allapattah Road. Limits on the types of uses allowed, design requirements and other restrictions are intended to ensure that the node remains rural in nature.



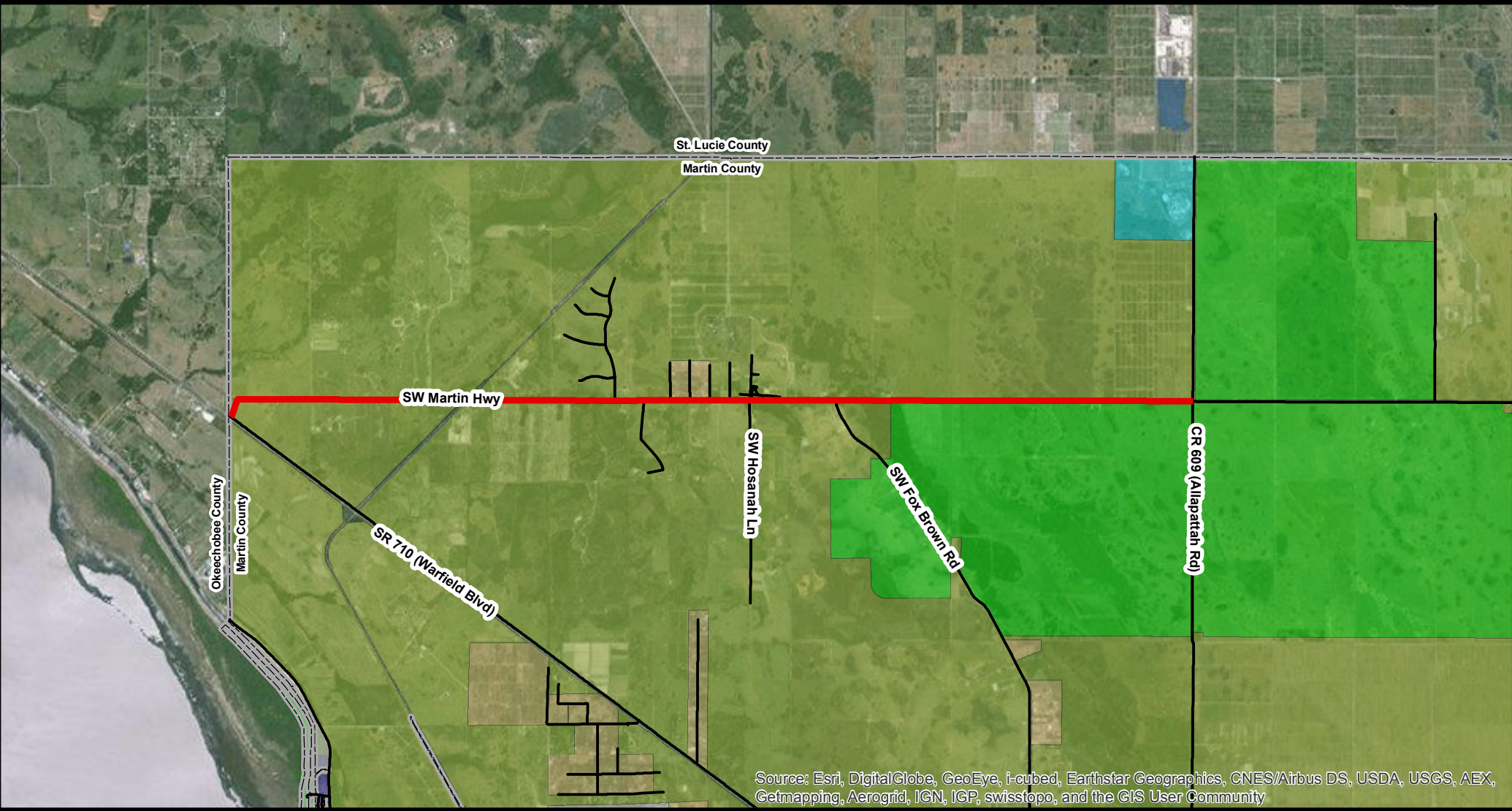
Existing Land Use

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Martin Grade Scenic Highway |  Vacant |  Agricultural |
|  Road |  Single Family |  Religious/Institutional |
|  County Boundary |  Mobile Homes |  Utility |
| |  Commercial |  Conservation |

September 26, 2014

Martin Grade Scenic Highway - Existing Land Use





Future Land Use

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Martin Grade Scenic Highway |  Public Conservation Area |  General Institutional |
|  Road |  Agricultural |  Commercial General |
|  County Boundary |  Agricultural Ranchette |  Commercial / Office / Residential |
| |  Rural Density -up to 0.5 UPA | |

August 29, 2014

Martin Grade Scenic Highway - Future Land Use



The portion of the Martin Grade west of Fox Brown Road has been specifically recognized by the County as both a Scenic Corridor, and as a Canopy Road Tree Protection Zone under the Land Development Regulations (LDR) Section 4.666A.1. The Canopy Road Tree Protection Zone means that special approval is required to remove any non-native trees within 100 feet of the centerline of the roadway. It should be noted, however, that this part of the LDRs also specifies that safety considerations (for pedestrians, vehicles, etc.) is one criterion for the removal of trees, even in these zones. It is thus important that the CME and the larger community exercise vigilance to ensure that safety is maintained without the need to remove the trees; protection is thus a cornerstone of the CMP goals and objectives.

Scenic highway corridor overlay zones are mentioned in Martin County Comprehensive Plan Policy 4.5B.1 as a way to protect environmentally sensitive features. Protection of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor is also specifically mentioned in Comprehensive Plan Policy 4.13A.9 governing the AgTec FLU designation, including a number of rural-oriented design principles and, particularly relevant, a requirement that developers, as part of any widening project on the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor, "... assist the county in exploring alternative traffic patterns, traffic timing, and roadway cross sections for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the scenic character of the corridor." While the attention in the Comprehensive Plan to the Martin Grade and its scenic character are encouraging, there are two points worth noting about these policies: 1) the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor, according to the County's designation, includes only that portion of the Martin Grade west of Fox Brown Road; and, 2) the canopy trees are not specifically identified in "protecting and enhancing the scenic character of the corridor."

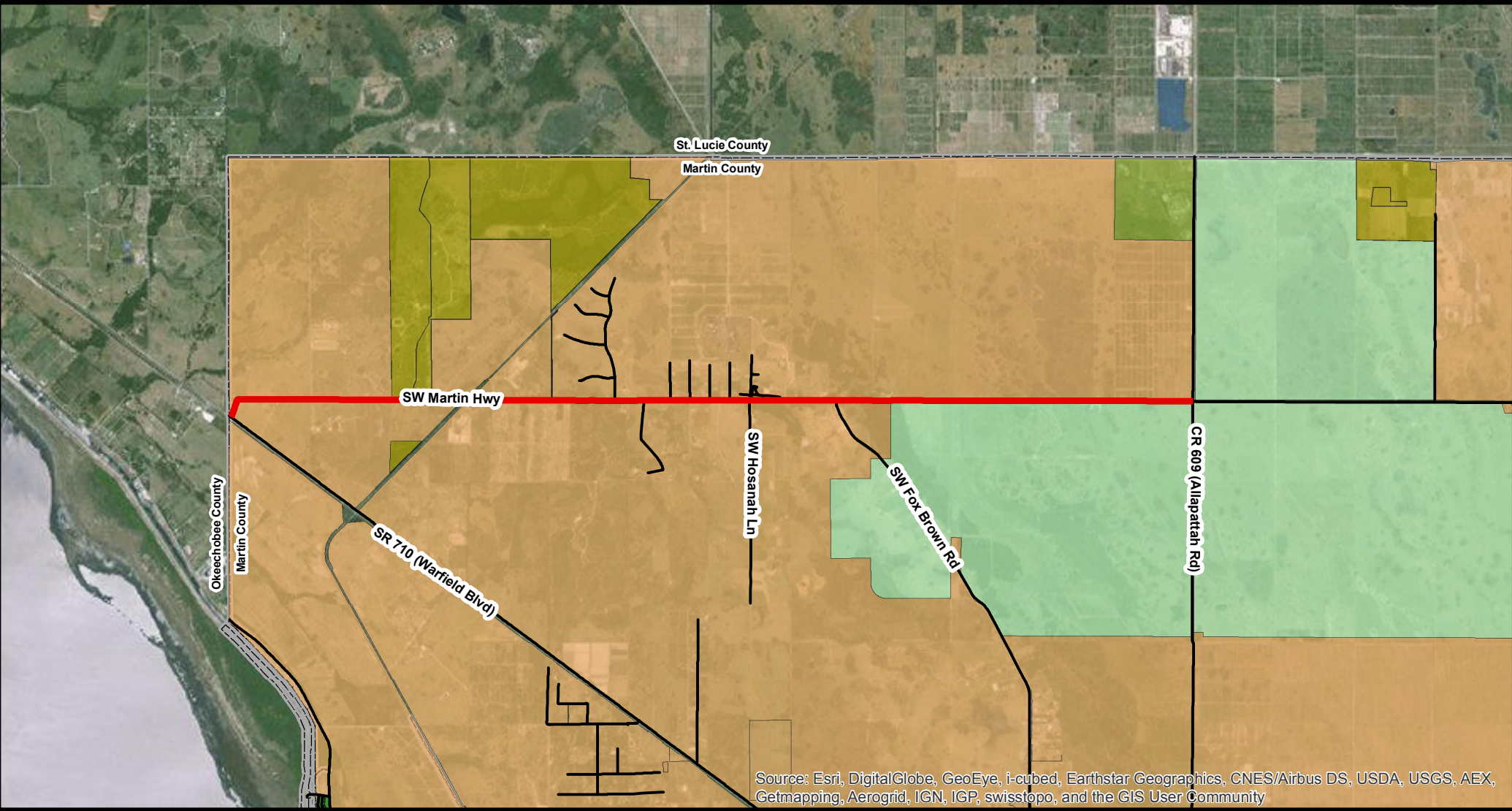
F. Signage

Signs within the Martin Grade Corridor are compatible with their surroundings, promote the character of the rural community, and promote traffic safety.


Generally, permanent commercial signs and billboards are prohibited on agricultural lands such as the Martin Grade land by Article 4, Division 16 of the Martin County Land Development Regulations.

Currently, the only signs within the Corridor right of way identify the road and inform the public about the speed limit and other potential hazards. Signs on private property are limited to those on the site of local agricultural and rural businesses.


Any non-traffic sign removal or addition will go through Martin County's permitting process as applicable and will be coordinated with the State Outdoor Advertising Administrator to assure compliance with Section 1046(c) of the ISTEA, 23 USC 131, which precludes the issuing of new permits for outdoor advertising signs within the control zone of the Interstate and National Highway Systems, the Federal Aid Primary System, and the State Highway System along the Corridor. Special rules governing outdoor advertising on Scenic Highways are not necessary on the Martin Grade Corridor, because existing sign ordinance are very strict and already prohibit off site signs.




Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community


 Martin Grade Scenic Highway


 Road


 County Boundary

Zoning

 PC (Public Conservation District)

 PS (Public Servicing District)

 A-2 (Agricultural)

 AG-20A (General Agricultural District)

August 29, 2014

Martin Grade Scenic Highway - Zoning



0 1 2
Miles

Because commercial signs are currently not allowed on the Martin Grade, there are no such existing signs. No orders or agreements regarding signs exist. Nor are they needed.

G. Safety Issues

Currently the Martin Grade is neither bicycle nor pedestrian friendly. However, it is a popular road bicycling amenity, providing rare shade amid the Florida sun and heat. It is a two-lane, country road with narrow shoulders, which has trees in the ROW and is bordered by steep and deep ditches. The Corridor is paved and can safely accommodate two-wheel drive motor vehicles. It is inappropriate only for regular non-vehicular traffic.

The maximum Corridor speed limit is 50 miles per hour. Along the scenic route there are several posted signs advising drivers not to pass or overtake vehicles. There is only one major intersection, and no portion of the Martin Grade has existing high accident frequencies.

H. Traffic Volumes / User Types / Levels of Service (LOS)

In 2013, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) for the Martin Grade between SR 710 and Fox Brown Road was 2,500, while peak hour directional travel was 144 trips. The comparable numbers for the segment of Martin Grade east from Fox Brown Road to Allapattah Road is 2,736 and 152. The resulting vehicular level of service (LOS) for both segments is A/B, according to the Martin County 2013 Roadway Level of Service Inventory Report.

The road is only considered safe for vehicular travel, and not for non-motorized users such as pedestrians, bicyclists or equestrians.

I. Transportation Planning / Roadway Improvements

The Martin County Growth Management Plan calls for the entire Martin Grade to remain a two-lane minor arterial roadway through 2035. The Plan does not project any portion of the Martin Grade to fail to meet the adopted roadway LOS, and does not designate the roadway as a hurricane evacuation route.

The 2035 Martin-St. Lucie Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) specifically seeks to protect the Martin Grade via Policy 2.1.5, which states: “Require transportation planning and actions to designate and protect the Martin Grade (CR 714) between CR 609 and SR 710 as a Scenic Highway and consider an alternate truck route, if feasible.” While this policy is not specific about what would constitute protection of the Martin Grade (aside from searching for an alternate truck route), it does demonstrate support for the Martin Grade’s scenic qualities.

The LRTP also designates the Martin Grade as a “proposed greenway,” but no funding source is identified.

Development of the 2040 LRTP is ongoing as of September 2014. It is essential that Martin Grade Scenic Corridor advocates participate in the Plan’s development.

As part of a Project Design and Engineering (PD&E) Study for improvements to SR 710, a recommendation has been made to realign the westernmost portion of the Grade, affecting less than a quarter mile of the roadway, softening its curve toward SR 710, aligning with Okeechobee County Road 15B to form a T-intersection. The reasons given are: 1) that one signalized intersection will operate at an LOS of “D” in 2040, whereas the two separate, unsignalized intersections are each projected to operate at LOS “F”; and, 2) that SR 710 will have a raised median after the improvements, and that, if they remain offset, only one or the other of the intersections of CR 714 or CR 15B will receive a median opening, which will result in higher numbers of dangerous U-turns, particularly by large trucks that use both roads.

Unfortunately, the potential impact of these changes on the scenic character of the Martin Grade was not a factor in the PD&E analysis. Potential impacts could include being more attractive for large trucks to connect from coastal highways to US 441, SR 710 and SR 70, resulting in more large trucks using the Martin Grade. This appears to be in conflict with LRTP Policy 2.1.5, cited above. The increase in truck traffic could itself have an impact on the corridor’s rural, scenic character, but could potentially lead to calls to widen the road, with potentially still larger impacts on the Grade. These factors should be explicitly analyzed before any such realignment is undertaken.

At this time, no funding has been identified for this project.

J. Tourism and User Facilities

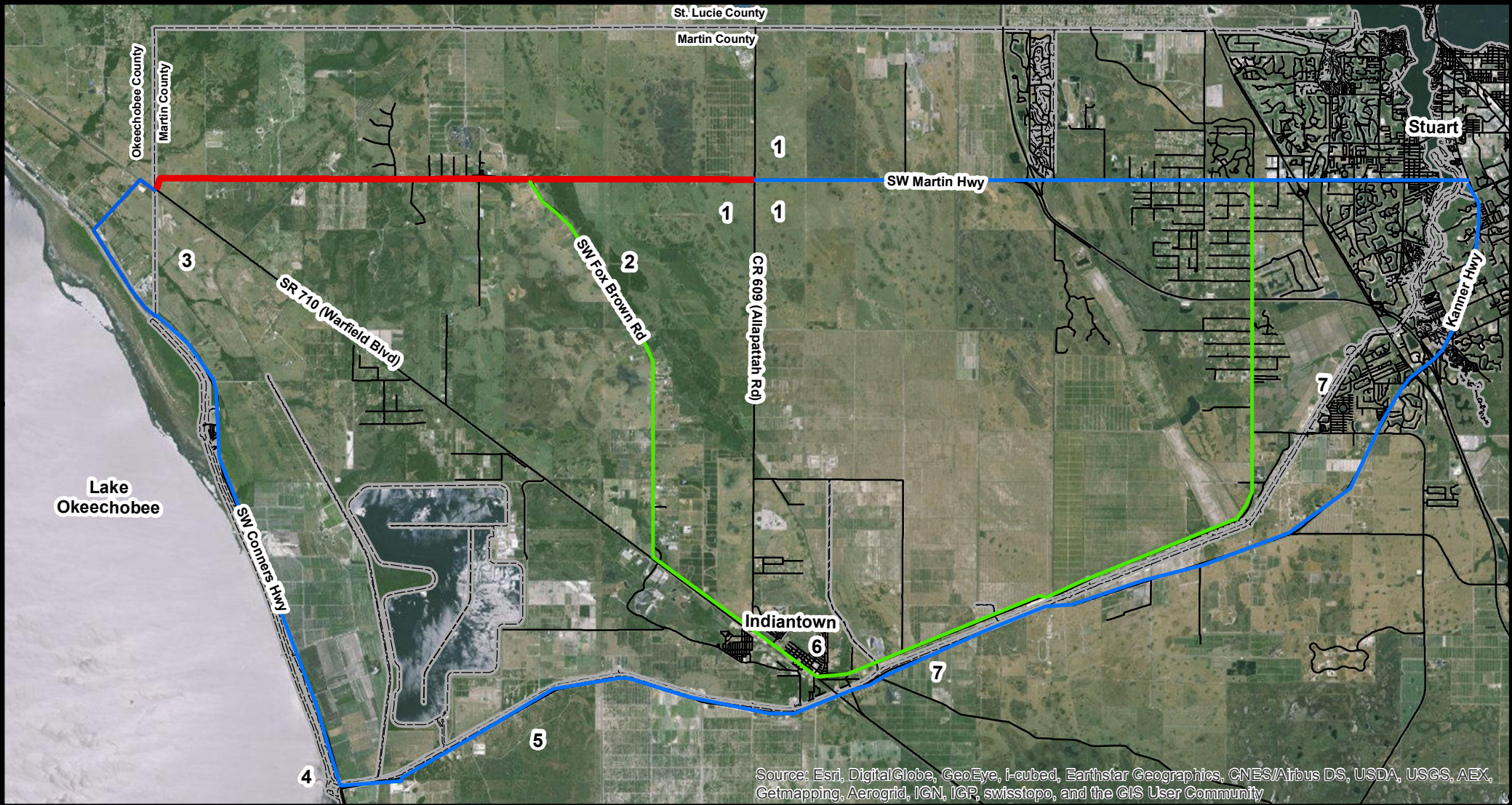
Existing Amenities

The land itself is the greatest tourism amenity along the Martin Grade. It gives a historical perspective, because the natural environment is similar to what it was before 1900. Land is in agricultural uses- predominantly cattle grazing and citrus farming. There are significant wetland areas, and a magnificent tree canopy made up of oaks, cabbage palms, pines, and maples has overgrown at least six of the Corridor’s 12 miles.

The Martin Grade Fire Station Park is a small public park at the old Martin Grade Volunteer Fire Station. It is located on the north side of the Grade just west of Fox Brown Road. Facilities include a small playground and picnic tables. Perhaps most importantly, it is a place to pull off the road safely and enjoy the ambiance.

Immediately adjacent to the Martin Grade, the 21,000-acre Allapattah Flats Wildlife Management Area is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) and was originally part of the Northern Everglades known as the Alpatiokee Swamp. It is operated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The Allapattah Flats are being reflooded and encouraged to return to their pre-1900 natural state. The facility offers recreation experiences in keeping with the culture and society of the region in the late 1800’s. Activities include biking, hiking, and primitive camping facilities. Seasonal hunting is allowed.



County Boundary



Martin Grade Scenic Highway



Conceptual "Western Martin Grade Scenic Loop"



Conceptual "Indiantown Loop"

1

Allapattah Flats

2

Equestrian Trails

3

Lakeside Ranch

4

Port Mayaca

5

Dupuis Reserve

6

Seminole Inn

7

Stuart Locks

September 12, 2014

Conceptual Scenic Loops and Resources



Because of these vast areas of land that are left in their natural state in accordance with the CERP project and its historical land use patterns, the area is teeming with wildlife, wild flowers, insects, and birds that are as exotic to visitors today as they were when tourists and adventurers in the area described their tales in popular magazines in the 1870s.

On the south side of the Martin Grade, east of Fox Brown Road, is an entrance to the hiking trails in the southwestern section of the Allapattah Flats.

The entrance to the Allapattah Flats Fox Brown Road Equestrian Trail, which provides opportunities for horseback riding in the southwestern section of the Flats, is located on Fox Brown Road, 1.35 miles south of Corridor.

Four more entrances to the northeastern and southeastern Allapattah Flats are located approximately one mile and two miles east of the eastern terminus of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor on CR 714 (Martin Highway).

The entrances on the north side of CR-714 access hiking trails and a primitive camp ground.

The entrances on the south side access hiking trails and a horse area.

The Martin Grade terminates in the west at the Lakeside Ranch, a 1,200-acre Storm Water Treatment Area that borders the Lake Okeechobee Rim Canal. It is currently being restored to wetlands as part of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project. Plans also include public access for birding and hiking.

Indian mounds have also been discovered on site. The status of their accessibility to the public is unknown at this time.

Although it does not abut the Corridor, there is an entrance to the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail approximately two miles from the Corridor's western terminus. This bicycle and hiking trail circumnavigates Lake Okeechobee, giving enthusiasts spectacular views of the lake, opportunities to see wildlife such as alligators and birds, and access to all of the historical Lake Okeechobee towns and points of interest.

Opportunities for Addressing Future Tourism for the Corridor

Opportunities for addressing tourism and user facilities for the Corridor include the following:

- Addition of Scenic Corridor information at its termini and at entrances to Allapattah Flats.
- Coordination with the tourism entities in Stuart, Indiantown and Okeechobee. Because the Corridor's story is the story of rural, agriculture, natural Florida, it is not the story of a destination so much as the story of a road that connected discrete population centers. As a result, the Corridor information will direct tourism to Stuart, Indiantown, and Okeechobee, which have distinct cultural and historical stories of their own that played a key role in the Corridor's fascinating history.
- Creation of an information center/educational kiosk with possible picnic facilities. A preliminary rendering (below) has been produced, and an initial meeting was conducted

with the South Florida Water Management District seeking a candidate property near the SR 609/CR 714 corner to accommodate such use through a cooperative agreement.

- The community has demonstrated an interest in integration of the Martin Grade into a larger regional scenic/ecotourism trail. For example, in 2014 a grassroots community group produced “Indiantown

Heritage: Living History,” a strategic plan for the creation of a heritage center and trail to

showcase the Indiantown area’s unique cultural and environmental history. The western portion of the Martin Grade was identified specifically as a potential heritage trail site. CAG members have developed a concept involving the Martin Grade as part of two larger “loops” highlighting scenic, historic and recreational/environmental features in western Martin County, including the Allapattah Flats, equestrian trails, Lakeside Ranch, Port Mayaca, the shore of Lake Okeechobee, Dupuis Reserve, Seminole Inn and Stuart Locks. As mentioned elsewhere, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) envisions the Martin Grade as a greenway (Map 4-8 and Table 4-8 of the 2035 LRTP). Development of the grade as part of a larger trail or network would assist in bringing interest and low-impact tourists to the Martin Grade. Interpretive sites and scenic stops along the Grade fit neatly into this paradigm.

- The potential Rural Services Node commercial center at the northwest corner of the Martin Grade and Allapattah Road represents a potential opportunity to work with its developer to create education and tourist focal points.
- Work with the County, the SFWMD, and the FWC to enhance access opportunities to Allapattah Flats and to the Lakeside Ranch at the Corridor’s western terminus.
- Work with the County, and SFWMD, to acquire land, bordering Corridor to the north, that is targeted for acquisition and restoration as part of CERP and to design public access, recreation, and educational experiences on that property.
- Work with the County and private landowners to acquire public access and viewing points on the western half of Corridor through land acquisition, development design, or use of conservation easements.
- Coordinate and partner with property owners along the Corridor, in Indiantown, and in western Martin County to promote their nature-based tourism and adventure businesses and/or their traditional and/or new agricultural and other green businesses.



Early conceptual rendering of a potential informational center at northeast corner of Martin Grade and Allapattah Road.

III. INTRINSIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION CRITERIA

The criteria for designation as a Scenic Highway were addressed in great detail in the Eligibility Application. Following is a brief summary of how the Martin Grade meets each of these eligibility criteria. For brevity and clarity, more than one criterion has been addressed together, where appropriate.

A. Criteria #1, #4 & #6

Universal Criterion #1 is that “Resources Must be Visible from the Roadway.”

Universal Criterion #4 is that “The Corridor must exhibit significant, exceptional and distinctive features of the region it traverses.”

Universal Criterion #6 is that “A majority of the corridor must exhibit scenic or heritage qualifying resources. These resources should be continuous as possible throughout the corridor.”

The Martin Grade forms part of a larger cluster of historical, cultural, scenic and environmental resources, some of which are visible from the roadway, and some of which are not. Resources visible from the roadway include conservation lands (as well as privately-owned wetland areas) immediately adjacent to the roadway, particularly in its eastern half, especially the Allapattah Flats Wildlife Management Area. Also directly accessible from the Martin Grade is the Allapattah Ranch. Together, these resources provide not only natural scenery, but also recreational opportunities for hikers, campers, hunters and equestrians. It is also expected that similar recreational opportunities will become available at Lakeside Ranch, visible from the western terminus of the Martin Grade.

Also visible from the Martin Grade, particularly in parts of its western half, is rural countryside largely unchanged from the late 19th century, and increasingly rare in Florida this near to the coast. Along with both the conservation and rural areas is a great deal of plant and animal life.

Finally, the Martin Grade itself, as well as its beautiful and distinctive tree canopy, are historical resources. The Grade is the same path that connected three diverse, history-rich, small historic towns – Okeechobee, Indiantown and Stuart – each approximately 10 miles away.

B. Criterion #2

Universal Criterion #2 is that “The Corridor must ‘tell a story’ that relates to it’s intrinsic resources.”

As told in more detail in the “Corridor Story” portion of the CMP, the Martin Grade has a story waiting to be discovered. Traveling along the roadway allows the traveler a “tour” of significant parts of Florida’s past. From the lagoons and rivers on the Atlantic coast, to the second-largest

freshwater lake in the U.S. (Lake Okeechobee) to the west, the Martin Grade displays rural lands and agricultural uses, as well as lands conserved in their natural – often swampy – state.

The Martin Grade also formed an essential part of the historical connections between Stuart and Okeechobee. Along the Corridor are remnants of the area's history – cowboys and Indians, railroads and land booms.

As part of its Scenic Highway designation, the CME and backers in the community must work to make the Corridor's story more accessible and meaningful, through increased educational and recreational opportunities in the Corridor that involve people with the Corridor's intrinsic resources and explain their significance.

C. Criterion #3

Universal Criterion #3 is that "The roadway must be a public road that safely accommodates two-wheel drive motor vehicles."

Currently the Martin Grade is a two-lane, country road with narrow shoulders, which has trees in the ROW and is bordered by steep and deep ditches. The Corridor is paved and can safely accommodate two-wheel drive motor vehicles. The maximum speed limit is 50 miles per hour, and along the scenic route are posted signs advising drivers not to pass or overtake vehicles. With only one major intersection (at Fox Brown Road) between the Scenic Highway's two termini, accident frequencies are low.

D. Criterion #5

Universal Criterion #5 is that "The roadway generally should be more than one mile in length and, if appropriate, provide access to the resources."

The Martin Grade Scenic Corridor is approximately 12 miles long. The Grade currently provides drivers direct access to many of its most important resources, including scenic views of the magnificent tree canopy, natural areas and rural countryside. Direct physical access is currently provided to the Allapattah Flats.

One of the main foci in implementing this CMP will be the development of interpretive sites and similar places where people may stop and safely access the visual beauty and natural/historic resources that the corridor has to offer. Also potentially important in this regard is future development of a greenway or other infrastructure to safely accommodate access to these resources by non-motorized means.

E. Criterion #7

Universal Criterion #7 is that “A corridor advocacy group (CAG) must be organized to support the scenic highway designation.”

The Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) has existed since 2006. The CAG has shepherded the Eligibility Application through approval, and has now produced this Corridor Management Plan. The CAG is also taking necessary steps to create the Corridor Management Entity (CME) that will steer implementation of the Corridor Management Plan.

F. Criterion #8

Universal Criterion #8 is that “A community participation program must be developed and implemented.”

The Martin Grade Community Outreach Program (COP) is a multi-faceted program designed to gain the support of community leaders and the general public in Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie Counties. It began before submission of the Eligibility Application and is building during Designation Phase to give the CME and CMP a firm foundation on which to go forward into the Implementation Phase.

The CPP takes advantage of the absolute beauty of the Corridor’s tree canopy and the widespread support in the community for finding a way to protect the trees. The CPP has a number of areas of focus, including public relations, publicity materials, social media, outreach and individuals and organizations.

Refinement and continued implementation of the COP is addressed in both Section VI: Goals, Objectives and Strategies and in Section VIII: Community Participation Program of this Corridor Management Plan.

G. Criterion #9

Universal Criterion #9 is that “Strong local support must be demonstrated.”

Local support is demonstrated by the plethora of articles in local publications supporting the Martin Grade project.

It is also demonstrated by the statements of support that have been received from the following organizations:

The Martin Grade Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group acknowledges and thanks the following elected officials, governmental subdivisions, and community organizations for their assistance and support in completing this application:

- Members of US Congress Tom Rooney and Patrick Murphy
- Florida State Senator, District 28, Joe Negron
- Former Florida State Representative, District 82, William Snyder
- Former Florida State Representative, District 81, Adam Fetterman
- Board of County Commissioners, Martin County, Florida: Former Commissioners – Ed Ciampi, Patrick Hayes, Susan Valliere; Current Commisioners John Haddox, Doug Smith and Sarah Heard.
- City of Stuart
- Town of Jupiter Island
- Town of Sewall’s Point
- South Florida Water Management District
- Audubon of Martin County
- Business Development Board of Martin County
- Economic Council of Martin County
- Florida Department of Transportation, District 4
- Historical Society of Martin County
- Jensen Beach Chamber of Commerce
- Martin County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
- Martin County Tourism Development Board
- Palm City Chamber of Commerce
- Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce
- The Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties

Representatives of the Scenic Corridor project have also met with the executive directors of the Okeechobee County Business Development Board, Okeechobee City Main Street Program, and the Okeechobee County Economic Council. They were very supportive and are in the process of fashioning partnerships.

Emails and letters of support from individuals have also been received.

In, 2010, the Martin County Board of the County Commissioners voted to support designation of Martin Grade as a Florida Scenic Highway. Heads of the County Engineering Department and County Administrators have also voiced their support for the project. Resolutions in support were also passed in 2010 by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the Martin County Soil and Water Conservation District. These resolutions are included in Appendix B.

Continued support is demonstrable by the following more recent events:

1. July 2013—Martin County District 5 Commissioner gives SCL a grant to help complete the application and initiate the Community Participation Program
2. 2014—Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization authorizes staff time to help achieve the designation.
3. May 2014 – A representative of Sustaining Community Lands was invited to make a presentation explaining The Martin Grade Scenic Highway Project was made at the Peter and Julie Cummings Library, 2551 S.W. Matheson Ave., Palm City. 772-221-1403; www.library.martin.fl.us. It was attended by 50 people.
4. July 2014—U.S. Congressman Patrick Murphy chose a photo of The Martin Grade by Geoff Tucker on his website.
5. 2013 – The Indiantown Chamber of Commerce placed a photo of the Martin Grade on its website.
6. 2013, 2014 and continuing - The Stuart-Martin County Chamber and Indiantown Chamber provide facilities for CAG meetings.
7. 2014- The Indiantown Cogeneration Plant gave SCL a grant to help complete the Martin Grade Scenic Highway application and start the Community Participation Program.
8. 2014 - Property owners who live on the Grade gave SCL grants to help complete the project.
9. 2014 - SCL made presentations to all MPO advisory committees and received support.
10. 2014 - New members joined the CAG and established committees to implement the Work Plan included in the CMP.



Photo of the Martin Grade by Geoff Tucker that was chosen by Congressman Patrick Murphy for his website in 2014.

11. Ongoing and growing support on social media. Social media metrics (likes, interactions, etc.) are continuing to trend upward.
12. Fall 2014 – There was an article published about the Martin Grade – “Oak Highway” by Donna Crary – in the Fall 2014 issue of one of the Treasure Coast’s most popular magazines, *Indian River*. See the full article in Appendix C, page 82.

H. Criterion #10

Universal Criterion #10 is that “A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) must be developed with the endorsement of local government(s) and a Corridor Management Entity (CME).”

The development of this Corridor Management Plan fulfills one portion of this criterion.

The creation of the CME is addressed specifically in Section VII of this Plan.

Finally, and as noted above, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners have voted to support designation of the Martin Grade as a Florida Scenic Highway.

IV. CORRIDOR VISION

Martin Grade Scenic Corridor’s rare Old-Florida ambiance, scenic beauty, and natural environment are preserved, maintained and enhanced for the enjoyment of countless generations.

V. CORRIDOR MISSION

Preserve and enhance this Martin County treasure in its rural and natural character by:

- Accommodating reasonable needs for transportation of people, goods, non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians on this designated greenway linked to an eco-tourism/heritage trail;
- Respecting local residents/landowners needs and desires;
- Preventing over development, road encroachment or damage to the tree canopy;
- Educating the public and tourists about its story and significance for appreciation of history and heritage, environment, recreation, and scenic vistas;
- Providing access to adjacent outdoor recreation; and
- Complementing adjacent and regional water and environmental restoration goals.

VI. CORRIDOR STORY

A drive across the Martin Grade is a drive through Florida's last frontier – on a road that time seems to have forgotten. To the east lie barrier islands, rich lagoons, and flowing rivers that characterize Florida's Atlantic Coast. To the west lies Lake Okeechobee, the second largest fresh water lake in the United States.

In between, are the Allapattah Flats, remnants of the impenetrable sloughs and wet prairies, cypress heads, oak hammocks, and pine flat woods, that once made up the Alpatiokee Swamp in the northern Everglades.

The history of the Martin Grade is the history of the last pioneers in Florida's last frontier. It is a tale of two cities, born at the beginning of the 20th Century less than 40 miles apart, but separated by culture, fortune, and the impenetrable north Everglades. It is a tale full of cowboys and Indians – Florida style. Of land booms, railroad tycoons, future presidents, and hopeful visions. Ultimately, it is the story of how the forces of Mother Nature and human nature combined to preserve the look, the feel, and the spirit of Florida when pioneers first opened up its last frontier over a hundred years ago.

Although the land has been changed by human hands, along the Grade land is being used in the same manner it was used 100 years ago. Much of it has been targeted for public acquisition and protection or has already been acquired and is being reclaimed by its native habitats. Time on the land along the Martin Grade once seemed to be standing still, and now it seems to be going backward.

To the northwest, Okeechobee City is on the northern shore of the second largest freshwater lake in the United States, which the Seminole Indians simply called "Big Water." It is a small, country town, steeped in the rural traditions of Florida's last frontier, which holds both annual fishing and livestock rodeos.

To the east, the City of Stuart lies on the banks of the St. Lucie River near the Indian River Lagoon, the St. Lucie Inlet, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is the last small town on Florida's east coast and its atmosphere hearkens back to the cosmopolitan fishing village that first attracted wealthy northern tourists more than a hundred years ago. Although the distance between the two is small and both seem to be throwbacks to an earlier era, they are two different worlds.



The Martin Grade, circa 1930's

Between them lies the Martin Grade.

Why is it Called “The Grade”?

Calling Martin Highway between SR 609 and SR 710 “The Grade” encapsulates the historical pattern of road building in Martin County during the late 19th and early 20th Century. Roads were few and far between and varied greatly in their quality. Settlers tended to describe them according to their state of construction and repair, which alerted travelers immediately to what kind of traveling experience to expect.

Martin County was Florida’s last frontier, a wild land populated mostly by Seminoles and a handful of white settlers until the late 19th Century. Like most of Florida’s southeast coast, its initial communities sprang up in coastal areas settlers could easily reach by boat, and there was little need for roads to connect them. As a result, Martin County’s first roads were game and Indian trails and overgrown remnants of roads the military had built during the Seminole Wars which had ended fifty-years earlier.

Newcomers who settled on outlying properties away from the coast were forced to build their own roads by hand. The first were “cut-and-grub” roads which were named after the way they were constructed—by cutting down the trees and palmettos and grubbing out their roots. Where they ran through wetlands, tree trunks were laid side-by-side across the muck creating a bumpy but serviceable “corduroy” roads. In dry areas, where wagon wheels dug deep crevasses into the sand or dirt base, these narrow one lane passages were called “two-rut” roads.



By the 1940s, the Martin Grade had already reverted to a two-rut road.

As traffic on these frontier roads grew, they often became too costly to maintain by individuals. It was a day of rejoicing when they were eventually taken over by a local government that could expand them and maintain them using a motorized grader. These wider, flatter, and significantly smoother sand and dirt roads were referred to as “grades.”

The next step up in roadway construction in the early 1900’s was to harden heavily-traveled roads with a layer of crushed stone or shell rock that had to be hauled in from south Florida. By 1914, in an effort to encourage growth, the newly-created City of Stuart proudly publicized the fact that many of its streets were



The Grade as a dirt road with tree canopy in the mid-1990s.

such “hard” roads. Ultimately, these layers of imported material became the foundations for today’s asphalt roads.

Within this context, the fact that the last twelve miles of Martin Highway was not paved until the mid-1990’s and was therefore referred to as “The Grade” for seventy years reveals the uniqueness of both the road and the community it serves. Martin County is now and always has been different than the rest of southeast Florida.

As population exploded in south Florida beginning in the mid-20th Century, development moved inexorably westward from the coast, and new east-west roads were constructed using the most modern and up-to date methods. Not so the Martin Grade. It was constructed before it was needed and, because western Martin County remains rural to this day, the county focused its road building energy and growth along the coast. As a result the Grade remained the only major unpaved road in the county for decades.

Why is the Martin Grade There?

Martin County is the transitional county between Central and South Florida. It is bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by Lake Okeechobee, with the northernmost Everglades, which the Seminole Indians called the Alpatiokee Swamp, separating the two. Due to this topography and its location along with the fact that this part of Florida saw some of the fiercest fighting during the Seminole Wars, which ran on-and-off again from 1819 to 1857, Martin County was Florida’s last frontier.

Even after rich northerners started had taking the Florida East Coast Railway down to Palm Beach and Miami for the winter in the late 1800’s, Martin County west of the St. Lucie River largely remained Florida Jungle, inhabited only by Seminole Indians, panthers, alligators, and a handful of hardy white settlers.

Martin County was the last county established in Florida. When it was carved out of Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties in 1925, it was customary to build a road connecting a newly created County Seat with the county Seats of adjoining counties. The designation of Stuart as Martin County’s County Seat created a problem. Stuart was already linked to the county seats of Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties to the south and north by the Montreal to Miami Highway which ran along Florida’s east coast. However, no road had ever been built between Stuart and Okeechobee City, the county seat of its western neighbor Okeechobee County, because the Alpatiokee Swamp, which ran more than four



Martin Grade Near Fox Brown Rd. 1948.

The Grade on the Osceola Plain near Fox Brown Road in 1948.

feet deep in the rain season, separated the two.

To build the eastern half of the road through the swamp, road builders relied on technology they were familiar with from the digging of the St. Lucie Canal, which had been completed from Stuart to Lake Okeechobee in 1923. Using a dredge, they dug two parallel canals through the swamp and threw the dirt removed to create them up into a berm that ran between the two. Then they installed wooden bridges every few miles to let the water continue its natural flow from northwest to southeast. This system worked perfectly during the winter dry season and handled normal wet-season rains fairly well.

Although the western half of the Grade crosses the sand ridge known as the Osceola Plain, which separated Lake Okeechobee from the Alpatiokee Swamp, they used the same technique because, although the plain was at a higher elevation, it was still full of wetlands and prone to flooding during the wet season.

Today, Martin Highway east of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor has been entirely rebuilt using modern road design construction techniques. The Martin Grade, however, was not paved that way. In the mid 1990's, when the county finally decided to pave it, the community convinced the County Commission that preserving the tree canopy that has been growing along its path for almost 100 years was a top priority, and the county chose not to disturb its original roadbed. As a result, The Grade still runs beneath those trees along its original berm with narrow shoulders bordered by deep drainage ditches. This gives it a distinctive road cross section and makes the drive both inspirational and educational.

Everything went well when the Martin Grade was constructed, but there was one major problem. It turned out to be a road that nobody used. By 1925, Okeechobee City had been in existence for a decade and both it and the City of Stuart had already developed good rail and roadway connections to the major cities of West Palm Beach and Tampa, as well as a long historical connection with the older settlement of Fort Pierce.



Fishing on the Grade in 1930.

By the mid 1930's, people from Stuart and Palm City used only the eastern half of the road, going for picnics and fishing for bass and bream. The new county's road building efforts turned to building bridges and improving roads in the coastal areas and the Martin Highway reversed the history of roads in the area by deteriorating into a two rut road. By 1948, on the high ground of the Osceola Plain it was merely two white-sand ruts that meandered between the pine trees like a Seminole trail.

By the mid 1950's, the road had fallen into such ill repair that the few residents who along it filed a case in the Florida Supreme Court trying to get the county to make improvements by stalling a bond issue for a new bridge. They argued as follows in State v. Florida State Improvement Commission, 75 So.2d 1 (1954):

"All of Martin County, except a little fringe along the Dixie Highway on the East side of the County, is agricultural, and as an agricultural and stock raising county, it has great possibilities and is potentially rich. However, its development has been very seriously impaired and retarded for lack of roads through vast areas, there being vast districts in said county that are many miles from any possible highway. Some of the few roads at one time built have been abandoned, and even a portion of the Martin Highway known as the Martin Grade, has become utterly impassable for ordinary traffic. A very substantial portion of the gas tax money that comes into the hands of the State Road Department for the benefit of the State roads and bridges of Martin County is needed in this vast area."

How Did the Martin Grade Get There?

Although the early settlers of Okeechobee and Stuart began arriving about the same time, they came from different places, traveled different paths to get there, lived different kinds of lives, and had little to do with each other. For the first 50 years, they were separated by an almost impassable portion of the Northern Everglades now known as the Allapattah Flats.

When the Martin Grade first forged through that wet wilderness to connect them in the 1920's, it was a dirt and sand track raised above the swamps by dirt dredged from the ditches at its side.

By then, the fortunes of Stuart and the newly formed Martin County were linked by rail and sea to the Atlantic Coast, and their residents turned their back to the coastal backlands except for picnics and fishing expeditions. As a result, the Martin Grade remained a cut-and-grub road and then a sand track for 70 years – through storms and wars, booms and busts, and law suits.

There were few settlers in either area before 1880, due to a combination of hostile Indians, geography, and unfortunate timing. First, Florida belonged to Spain. Right before Spain ceded it to the United States in 1819, however, the First Seminole War broke out. At its end, the Seminoles were given most of central Florida by a treaty, and the threat of Indian attack limited settlement in the area along the banks of Lake Okeechobee and the Indian River for the next 40 years.

The army linked the forts it constructed on the Kissimmee River and near the Indian River and Jupiter Inlets by building military trails, but then the Second Seminole War broke out. It ended after the decisive battle of Okeechobee in 1837, and, in 1842, Congress offered 160 acres of land to any homesteaders who were armed and prepared to defend themselves. But the threat

or renewed Indian attack had driven most of the new homesteaders away before the end of the third Seminole War in 1858.

With the main body of the unconquered Seminoles moving into the southwestern Florida Everglades in 1858, the Martin Grade area was opened for new settlement, but, once again the possibilities were dashed by bad timing. The rest of the nation was gearing up for the Civil War which started in 1860, and Florida joined the Confederacy a year later.

As the war wore on, displaced southerners looked south for their fortune. Cut off from northern investors, Florida's major industry became feeding the Confederate Army by capturing wild hogs and cattle that had been set free by the Spanish three hundred years before. Thus, the Cracker Cowboy/Cow Hunter heritage was born, and it has dominated the culture of the great prairies north of Lake Okeechobee ever since.

These pioneers were often poor and carried all they possessed with them as they traveled. Those who settled in the Martin Grade area led a traditional frontier life, hunting and farming for food, relying on horses and oxen for transportation, and building their homes of rough hewn timbers, even as tall buildings and trolleys were transforming cities such as New York and Philadelphia into major metropolitan areas in the Gilded Age.

Modern settlement did not begin in the Martin Grade area until the coming of the railroads, and they were a long time coming. In 1855, the United States had turned over all of its "swamp and overflowed lands" in Florida to the State for the purpose of reclaiming them, and the new State of Florida had offered free land as an incentive to railroad and canal builders to develop Florida. But railroad building was not a top priority during the Civil War.

In 1869, not long after the War ended, the Golden Spike had connected the Atlantic Seaboard with the Pacific Coast by rail. Nonetheless, railroad building in Florida lagged behind during the Reconstruction Era of the 1870's.

It did not begin in earnest until 1881, when Hamilton Disston, a rich Philadelphia industrialist, refinanced Florida's Internal Improvement Fund by buying 4 million acres in central Florida – including most of the first Seminole Reservation between Orlando and Lake Okeechobee – for 25 cents an acre.

Disston also reached agreement with the state to drain all of the lands overflowed by Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River in exchange for half of the reclaimed land. He began dredging a series of canals to drain the Everglades and, in the 1880's, he opened steamboat routes from Lake Okeechobee west through the Caloosahatchee River to the Gulf of Mexico and north up the Kissimmee River to the Atlantic Ocean.

Disston started the first true Florida land rush, and from that day forward the history of the Martin Grade region was linked to the fortunes of wealthy industrial capitalists living in northern

states along the Atlantic Seaboard. But, due to logistics and geography, it took another quarter century for the canals and trains to reach the Martin Grade area, itself.



By then, three independent groups of newcomers had set the region on its path to the future. They shared the area peacefully with the remaining Seminoles, who had never left the area and who lived in Indian Town about ten miles south of the Martin Grade, where the community of Indiantown would ultimately be created.

One group of settlers, many of whom became Florida Cowboys, were from north Florida or southern states. They worked their way south, down the center of the state to the northeastern shores of Lake Okeechobee. These hardy men and women settled near the old forts and military trails and soon adopted Florida Cracker ways. In the settled areas, they operated ferries and general stores and began to civilize the region.

In more remote areas, they became Cow Hunters who rounded up herds of wild Cracker Cattle in the Kissimmee River valley, using bullwhips from which they got their “Cracker” nickname, to keep the cattle under control.

When not hunting cattle, they planted vegetables and citrus on the high ground, hunted deer and turkeys, fished in the rivers and the lake, and built homes out of rough-cut, virgin cypress that kept out the alligators, panthers, bears, and poisonous snakes.

The land was bountiful, but communication and commerce with the outside world was difficult, and their Florida Cracker culture developed in the freedom of relative isolation.

Less than forty miles to the east as the egret flies, a different breed of settlers began taking title to the lands along the St. Lucie and Indian Rivers that had been abandoned in the Indian scare of 1849. With immediate access to the outside world on navigable waterways leading to the ocean, settlers along the coast had always been able to rely on the transportation opportunities created by the rivers and ocean to market their goods to cities on the east coast.

Many earlier settlers had laid out pineapple and citrus plantations before abandoning their claims during the Indian Wars. Many of the new settlers along the Indian and St. Lucie Rivers were businessmen and entrepreneurs who rekindled those commercial dreams and gave new breath to those industries.

In the 1880's, settlers from New York and Germany started a town on the banks of the St. Lucie River, where Stuart is today. One of the first settlers made his living building boats, which

started an industry for which Stuart remains famous in the 21st Century. Soon, there was a store, and the foundations of a new town were laid.

The third group of newcomers were harbingers of change who ushered in the modern era. They were the tourists and adventurers who published tales of their journeys into Florida's east-coast wilderness in popular magazines during the 1870's. The stories of their explorations into the country's southernmost frontier – which included the Martin Grade area - read like Livingston's travels in darkest Africa.

They described encounters with giant alligators and writhing snakes, killing panthers in mangrove swamps with Bowie knives, shooting bears on the beach while hunting turtle eggs, eating gopher tortoises cooked with swamp cabbage with the Seminoles, shooting wild turkeys that weighed 25 pounds, catching 12-pound bass by the boatload, and waves that crashed like thunder or artillery shells on Lake Okeechobee but remained unseen behind an impenetrable cypress forest.

Their tales of adventure amidst abundance tantalized east coast sportsmen with money in their pockets, time on their hands, and a taste for exotic adventure. One of the key allures of darkest south-central Florida was that it was just a short steamboat trip down the east coast from the wealthy cities of the coming Gilded Age. Newly-wealthy residents of the northeast could experience such wondrous adventures on short vacations. It was even accessible to the not-so-wealthy, as one writer touted how to take a three-month trip to Florida for \$100.

These writers also reveled in the winter weather which they described as a cure for anything that ailed the modern eastern city dweller. In response, the first "Snowbirds" started coming to Florida to spend the harsh northern winters hunting, fishing, and soaking up the sun. Thus, the seed was sown for Florida's number one industry, tourism, even before the railroads reached the Treasure Coast where the Martin Grade area lay sleeping.

Within this bubbling melting pot that was Florida at the turn of the 20th Century, the Martin Grade started out as a "cut and grub" path through the wilderness that was impassable during the wet season. After Martin County became the last county created on Florida's East Coast in 1925, it announced that it would build the Martin Highway which would become Florida's newest road connecting two county seats – Stuart and Okeechobee City. It was proudly named for the governor who had helped create the County.

This was the height of the 1920's Florida land boom during which the Okeechobee Canal was completed and the Seaboard Airline Railroad was built to connect Tampa to Okeechobee City and West Palm Beach. Where the two crossed, near the old Indian Town on the high sand ridge that bordered the Alpatiokee Swamp, the new town of Indiantown was created. Owned and professionally planned by Seaboard Airline Railway, Indiantown was perhaps the last of the historically typical railroad development projects. The future was coming at last! And then the bubble burst.

Only then was the true nature of the Martin Grade Story revealed. The Martin Grade became Florida's forgotten highway. It was not even graded as a county road until the 1950's. Even then it was left alone on Florida's sleeping bosom – almost untouched by modern man, living and breathing in the soul of nature.

By the early 1990's, nature had built a linear oak hammock along its raised roadbed. This created a Green Cathedral of trees that sheltered the road and those of God's creatures who crossed or traversed it. When plans were laid in the 1990's, to make the Grade what appears to have been the last highway in Florida directly connecting two county seats to be paved, the people of Martin County recognized the gift they had been given by time and nature and demanded that the road be paved in a manner that did not destroy the tree canopy.

Role In Florida Cracker Cow Hunting Culture

The cattle industry helped define Florida, and The Martin Grade played a part in the history of Florida's cattle industry. After Spain ceded Florida to the United States in 1819, Americans started moving in, and they discovered that the countryside teemed with wild cattle, horses, and hogs, which had descended from livestock the original Spanish settlers had released almost 300 years earlier. Some of Florida's greatest cattlemen got their start hunting down those wild cows and driving them to Punta Rassa on Florida's southwest coast to sell to the Spanish for shipment to Cuba.

But having adapted to Florida's environment, Florida's wild scrub cattle were small and tough. After the Civil War, the emphasis shifted from "cow hunting" to developing more profitable breeds. By 1900, Florida most of Florida's cattlemen had fenced their land, and even though Florida law still favored letting livestock wander the open range, most of Florida's cattle country had been fenced off to keep the wild Florida scrub cows out.

But not in Martin County. Cattle roamed the open range along the Martin Grade until 1948. This had a tremendous impact on the rebirth of "Cracker Culture" in the late 20th Century, because it gave two of Florida's most revered representatives of the cattle industry, Iris Wall, a member of the Cracker Hall of Fame, and Bud Adams, whose Adams Ranch was named America's Ranch of the Century for the 20th Century, a unique understanding of and commitment to preserving that culture long after it had slipped away in the rest of Florida.

Iris Wall grew up in Indiantown, south of the Martin Grade and spent her youth fishing for bream in the canals that lined it and cooking them in the middle of the road. She also hunted cattle that roamed the Allapattah by horseback.

The first job Adams had when he came home from the Navy after World War II was on the Martin Grade, and it was a tough one. An industrialist from Pennsylvania who had just purchased the 20,000-acre Allapattah Ranch through which the Grade ran, hired Adams to make

it operational. His first task was to inform the local cow hunters whose cattle ranged the area that he was going to close the range.

Adams feared they would rebel and take down his fences, but his family's reputation combined with the fact that he was a veteran just home from the war, convinced them not to. Once the fences were up, Adams was put in charge of a cattle drive for the first time. To this day, he smiles when he remembers the thousands of cattle he unloaded from trucks in Palm City and drove out the Martin Grade without losing a single head. Within the year, the Florida Legislature officially closed the open Range in Florida and Adams had helped establish his ranch.

Residents report that, as late as the 1960's, cowmen would still drive their herds west on the Grade to the Livestock Auction in Okeechobee.

So, the story of the Martin Grade is not the story of a road that brought the disparate groups of settlers together in Florida's 20th Century melting pot to form the new Florida.

It is the story of how those settlers, the land around them, and the road that connected them ignored the rest of the world as it rushed past them and drifted as if lost in time and space, maintaining their separate cultures and life styles for 100 years.

Today, at the start of the 21st Century these communities are beginning to come together – but not with the thought that they are one community with a single heritage. Instead, they recognize each other as unique and respect and honor each other's history.

The Martin Grade Scenic Corridor stands as the symbol of that coming together – that linkage between the uplands and the shore, the east and the west, the slow and the fast, the old and the new. The one thing they all agree on is that the tree canopy that grew up to shelter them through this transition epitomizes the best of all of them. It is too beautiful to lose.

As is clear from this story, the Martin Grade is an integral part of a larger local history in western Martin County and the region as a whole, and is inextricably linked to many other nearby resources that each preserve a small part of the area's past. Though by no means an exhaustive list, the following are some of the resources that are also part of the Martin Grade's story:

- The **Allapattah Flats**, already mentioned above, is an approximately 21,000-acre Wildlife Management Area operated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC). The intention is that this area should be in its natural state as far as possible, and offers recreational opportunities including biking, hiking and primitive camping, as well as the Fox Brown Road Equestrian Trail. Allapattah Flats is immediately adjacent to the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor.
- **Indiantown** was originally established by members of the Seminole tribe, and later by white migrants around the 1890s. In the 1920s, Indiantown was professionally planned by Seaboard Airline Railway, which had come to own the land, as part of the extension

of the railroad from Coleman, Florida to West Palm Beach, Florida. Indiantown was perhaps the last of the historically typical railroad development projects. One of Indiantown's most prominent resources is the **Seminole Inn** (aka the "Seminole Country Inn"), which was built by S. Davies Warfield, who was president of the Seaboard Air Line Railway. The Seminole Inn was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.

- The **Lakeside Ranch** is a 2,600-acre Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) near the western terminus of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor, bordering the Lake Okeechobee Rim Canal. Wetlands are being restored on the site, which will allow the propagation of aquatic vegetation to remove phosphorous from stormwater runoff before it returns to the natural system, including the northern Everglades. The site is considered highly desirable as a destination for birding and hiking. Indian mounds have also been discovered here.
- The **Dupuis Reserve** or **Dupuis Management Area** is nearly 22,000 acres and is operated by the South Florida Water Management District. It spans across northern Palm Beach and southwest Martin counties. Wetland restoration has been ongoing for over a decade, and provides miles of hiking and equestrian trails, picnicking, backpack and group campsites and hunting opportunities, as well as a visitor's center with interpretive displays.
- **Port Mayaca** is a small place on the eastern side of Lake Okeechobee, named for the Mayaca Tribe. Significant features include the Cypress Lodge, which was added to the National Register for Historic Places in 2008, and Port Mayaca Memorial Gardens, the final resting place of a number of those killed by a 1928 unnamed category 5 hurricane.
- The **Stuart Locks** (aka "St. Lucie Locks") were constructed in 1941, and are one of five locks on the Okeechobee Waterway (also the St. Lucie River in this location) built for navigation and flood control purposes, including management of the water level in Lake Okeechobee. As part of South Florida's extensive water control system, this facility helps to tell the story of western Martin County's history. Non-marine visitors can enjoy the locks and watch boats pass through at the adjacent Phipps Park, which offers both primitive and RV camping amenities, as well as a dog walk, boat ramp and hiking trails.

VII. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: *Resource protection, maintenance, preservation and enhancement* - Protect and enhance the Martin Grade Tree Canopy.

- 1.1 Objective: Ensure that protection for the Martin Grade is included in the Martin County Growth Management Plan and Land Development Regulations.
 - 1.1.1 *Strategy: Provide to Martin County and other public agencies the Martin Grade State Scenic Highway eligibility application, designation application and Corridor*

Management Plan (CMP) as background, and as a source of “data and analysis” for any legislative initiatives involving or impacting the Martin Grade.

- 1.1.2 *Strategy: Designate one member of the Corridor Management Entity (CME) board to monitor the agendas of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and County advisory boards for agenda items that might impact (positively or negatively) the protection, maintenance, preservation and/or enhancement of the Martin Grade. Whenever possible, the CME Board should discuss such agenda item(s) prior to their consideration and, where appropriate, send a representative to the meeting.*
- 1.1.3 *Strategy: Participate in any and all public forums where the Martin Grade, or issues or proposals relevant to the protection, maintenance, preservation and/or enhancement of the Martin Grade will be discussed.*
- 1.2 Objective: Evaluate the health of the trees and implement programs to improve their health.
 - 1.2.1 *Strategy: Enlist an environmental professional and/or landscape architect to determine what type of extent of studies are needed to properly assess the health of trees along the Martin Grade, and the likely cost of such studies. Then, establish a timeline to complete these studies based on prioritization of trees and likely funding availability.*
 - 1.2.2 *Strategy: Study and make recommendations to improve mowing techniques.*
 - 1.2.3 *Strategy: Study and make recommendations to improve ditch cleaning techniques.*
 - 1.2.4 *Strategy: Remove intrusive exotic species.*
- 1.3 Objective: Develop and implement a program for enhancing the existing Martin Grade Tree Canopy and extending the length of the canopy.
 - 1.3.1 *Strategy: Create a plan for appropriate plantings of trees and other vegetation, including infill and understory planting.*
 - 1.3.2 *Strategy: Identify funding sources for installation of trees and additional vegetation, including if possible assisting Martin County to apply for grant funding.*

Goal 2: *Resource protection, maintenance, preservation and enhancement – Maximize preservation and enhancement of protected lands and water resources along the Martin Grade.*

- 2.1 Objective: Complement where possible the implementation by other agencies of the Indian River Lagoon Restoration Plan – South, as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) (including the C-44 project).
 - 2.1.1 *Strategy: Demonstrate public and political support for Plan implementation.*
 - 2.1.2 *Strategy: Through the strategies identified in Objective 4.2, educate members of the public about the benefits of conservation of lands along the Martin Grade.*

- 2.2 Objective: Support other agencies' or environmental groups' acquisition of lands near or adjacent to the Grade that are targeted for conservation or water management purposes.
 - 2.2.1 *Strategy: Support SFWMD and Martin County efforts to secure grants and additional funding for implementation.*
- 2.3 Objective: Creation of conservation/water management easements along the Grade over public lands, and over private lands with willing owners.
 - 2.3.1 *Strategy: Develop and effectively distribute information to encourage the use of conservation easements by landowners along the Martin Grade, explaining the benefits of such easements (i.e. tax benefits).*
 - 2.3.2 *Strategy: Respond to requests from landowners for technical assistance with conservation and water management easements by referral to appropriate jurisdictional agencies.*

Goal 3: *Resource enhancement and Community support and participation* - Enhance recreational opportunities on lands abutting the Martin Grade that are compatible with the rural and scenic character of the roadway and community.

- 3.1 Objective: Development and improvement of public access on the lands that abut the Scenic Corridor and are owned by other governmental entities, such as the Allapattah Flats at the eastern terminus of the Scenic Corridor, the Fox Brown Equestrian Trails near the middle of the Corridor, and the Lakeside Ranch Water Treatment Area at the western terminus of the Scenic Corridor.
 - 3.1.1 *Strategy: Complete research of property records and other relevant sources to accurately identify and map all rights-of-way, publicly owned land and easements that could be utilized to improve public access.*
 - 3.1.2 *Strategy: Establish points of contact with all public agencies owning land adjacent to the Martin Grade, and maintain regular communication with those agencies to inform them of the CME's goals for public access, and understand and address any concerns those agencies may have.*
 - 3.1.3 *Strategy: Participate in efforts to establish heritage and eco-tourism "loops" that include the Martin Grade and resources along the corridor.*
- 3.2 Objective: Partnership with Martin County that creates low-impact, Scenic Corridor-oriented recreational opportunity on the volunteer fire station site.
 - 3.2.1 *Strategy: Approach Martin County to determine next steps to create a low-impact, Scenic Corridor-oriented recreational opportunity on the volunteer fire station site.*
 - 3.2.2 *Strategy: Develop a recreational use plan for the fire station site.*
 - 3.2.3 *Strategy: Identify funding to implement the recreational use plan for the fire station site, including fundraising and/or working with Martin County to pursue grant funding, such as from the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails and the FDOT Transportation Alternatives program.*

- 3.3 Objective: Development of a picnic area and scenic viewing opportunity on the part of the road with the deepest part of the tree canopy.
 - 3.3.1 *Strategy: Assist a public or non-profit agency with site selection and acquisition of land or easements for the picnic area / scenic viewing opportunity.*
 - 3.3.2 *Strategy: Pursue fundraising opportunities for acquisition and/or development of the picnic area/scenic viewing opportunity.*

Goal 4: Education and Corridor story and Community support and participation - Educate visitors and local residents regarding the natural and historical resources along the Corridor.

- 4.1 Objective: Development of a comprehensive system of Stations that describe the resources and history of the -Martin Grade.
 - 4.1.1 *Strategy: Partner to locate Interpretive sites at all property and recreation facilities owned and operated by governmental entities.*
 - 4.1.2 *Strategy: Partner to locate educational materials at the Rural Services Node (if developed) at the eastern entrance to the Martin Grade.*
- 4.2 Objective: Develop and implement a Community Outreach Program that keeps the scenic, historical, and recreational values of the Martin Grade in the public eye in Martin County, the region, and the state.
 - 4.2.1 *Strategy: Establish relationships with local schools to include visits by local experts on the history of the Martin Grade and/or adding information to the local history curricula, and small group field trips by students to the Martin Grade.*
 - 4.2.2 *Strategy: Spread the word about the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor and its importance through press releases, a social media campaign and similar low/no cost promotional activities.*
 - 4.2.3 *Strategy: Develop and deploy a Martin Grade Scenic Corridor website and mobile application to disseminate information about the Martin Grade and provide a means for interested persons to contact knowledgeable sources about specific information about the Martin Grade.*
 - 4.2.4 *Strategy: Begin an annual "Awakening Allapattah" event to highlight Allapattah Flats' natural beauty and resources, educate the community about the ecology of western Martin County and raise awareness of opportunities for recreational activities in the area.*
 - 4.2.5 *Strategy: Establish a presence at community events in Stuart, Indiantown and Okeechobee to distribute informational pamphlets and maps, sell postcards and similar and provide an opportunity to advertise sponsors.*

Goal 5: Transportation planning and safety - Ensure that driving across the Martin Grade is a safe and enjoyable experience.

- 5.1 Objective: Partner with appropriate governmental entities in the region to ensure that support, enhancement and protection for the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor is included in the Martin County Growth Management Plan and regional transportation plans.
 - 5.1.1 *Strategy: Ensure that the CME is involved in the process of developing the Martin County MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).*
 - 5.1.2 *Strategy: Involve the CME and Corridor advocates in participatory forums regarding public policy and infrastructure design that has the potential to impact the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor.*
- 5.2 Objective: Partner with appropriate governmental entities in the region, private landowners, and developers to reduce traffic impacts on the Martin Grade, to avoid having to widen the road due to increased traffic.
 - 5.2.1 *Strategy: Assist in the designation of new road corridors.*
 - 5.2.2 *Strategy: Encourage the utilization of traffic timing techniques.*
 - 5.2.3 *Strategy: Through CME participation in the development of the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, any amendments to the Martin County Comprehensive Plan and planning efforts at all levels, encourage governmental entities to consider the possibility of increased traffic due to road improvements or other transportation changes, and the potential impact of that increased traffic on the Martin Grade's resources.*
- 5.3 Objective: Evaluate the safety of the Martin Grade for existing and future users, and appropriately disseminate information to enhance safety on and around the roadway. Utilize resources from the FDOT District 4 Community Traffic Safety Program.
 - 5.3.1 *Strategy: Study signage solutions used on other similar and/or other unique roadways, and make recommendations for appropriate signage on the Martin Grade to help drivers operate safely.*
 - 5.3.2 *Strategy: Include safe driving recommendations on all brochures or other digital/print promotional pieces regarding the Martin Grade (i.e. the website called for in Strategy 4.2.3).*

Goal 6: Economic development and tourism – Use the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor designation to enhance tourism in a manner that is compatible with the rural nature of the community.

- 6.1 Objective: Brand and market the Martin Grade to attract low-impact, nature-based tourists who share the values of the Grade community and Martin County.
 - 6.1.1 *Strategy: Develop a Martin Grade brand that can be utilized for consistency in any future marketing or promotion pieces or activities.*
 - 6.1.2 *Strategy: Develop a brochure about the scenic and historic attributes of the Martin Grade, and distribute at locations of similar low-impact, eco-tourism activities in the Treasure Coast and northern Palm Beach County.*
- 6.2 Objective: Partner with the Chambers of Commerce and tourism agencies in Stuart, Indiantown, and Okeechobee City to develop a tourism package that develops interest

in the Martin Grade region and highlights the unique attractions and experiences available in each of those communities.

6.2.1 *Strategy: Develop compatible signage that directs tourists to each community.*

6.2.2 *Strategy: Create a description of each community and historical relationship to the Martin Grade, for use in the Interpretive sites and other educational materials.*

6.3 Objective: Encourage that any future development along and near the Corridor, and the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor are mutually beneficial.

6.3.1 *Strategy: Encourage the potential general store at the eastern end of the Corridor to sell preferred supplies by providing them with a list of preferred/necessary supplies for outdoor and tourist activities consistent with the Corridor Management Plan, such as hiking, camping, equestrian activities and fishing.*

6.3.2 *Strategy: Develop a Community Outreach Program (COP) that encourages residents to purchase agricultural supplies and home provisions from the general store, if developed.*

6.4 Objective: Work in collaboration with community partners to establish the Martin Grade as part of a larger heritage trail and/or recreational “loop” in western Martin County for both motorized and non-motorized visitors.

6.4.1 *Strategy: Identify businesses and other land uses along and near the potential loops that are compatible with heritage tourism and eco tourism activities and seek partnerships for the establishment and promotion of one or more loops.*

6.4.2 *Strategy: Create maps of established loops and distribute them through the Martin Grade website (called for in Strategy 4.2.3.), hotels and marinas in the region, chambers of commerce, at community events, at the Florida Scenic Highways website and at similar appropriate venues.*

Goal 7: Economic viability of Martin Grade Scenic Corridor CME and CMP – Ensure the fiscal stability of the CME and CMP.

7.1 Objective: Create a fiscally sound funding base that supports the CME’s implementation of the CMP throughout the years.

7.1.1 *Strategy: Form business partnerships with private entities, including sponsors that can be advertised on promotional pieces, the Martin Grade website and social media pages and similar venues.*

7.1.2 *Strategy: Form partnership with Martin County and the Martin County Tourism Development Council.*

7.1.3 *Strategy: Form partnerships with similar entities in Okeechobee and St. Lucie Counties.*

7.1.4 *Strategy: Continue to implement a Community Outreach Program (COP) that maximizes private contributions.*

7.1.5 *Strategy: Pursue grant opportunities.*

7.1.6 *Strategy: Develop and implement a fundraising plan.*

7.1.7 *Strategy: Organize and hold an annual Gala Fundraiser for the benefit of activities to implement the CMP.*

VIII. CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT ENTITY

The Corridor Management Entity (CME) of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor will be the organization with primary responsibility for implementing the Corridor Management Plan (CMP) and maintaining the Florida Scenic Highway status of the Corridor. The Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) that has been shepherding the Scenic Highway application through the approval process will become the CME upon adoption and approval of the CMP.

The Goals, Objectives and Strategies, and the Action Plan, lay out an ambitious agenda. However, the CME is well-served by a dedicated group that together have the appropriate expertise and commitment to make the Action Plan a reality. The CME is composed of an Executive Board, whose members have voting power, and standing committees, whose members bring special expertise, and some of which come from organizations with a stake in the success of the project. In some cases, the nominal member will appoint a representative to carry out their duties on the standing committee.

Current members of the Executive Board are:

- John Haddox (County Commissioner District 5)
- Hilary Mckiech (Exec Director Indiantown Chamber)
- Joe Capra (Owner/CEO Captec Engineering)
- Lee Jones (Resident)
- Brian Powers (Owner: Indiantown Gas Co)

The Standing Committees and their current members are as follows:

- Government Relations Committee
 - District 5 Commissioner (John Haddox)
 - MPO (Muriah Diekle)
 - Engineering (Mark Gavitt)
 - WMD (Kathy LaMartina)
- Outreach Committee
 - SCLands Inc. (Rob Dawson)

- Indiantown Chamber (Hilary McKiech)
- Katey Bourgeois (Palm City Realtor)
- Martin County Tourism Dept
- Sergio Nativi (President Sailfish Regatta)
- Engineering/Public Works Committee
 - Joe Capra (Captec Engineering)
 - Representative of Martin County Engineering Department (Mark Gavitt)
 - Representative from Florida Power and Light (FPL)
- Fundraising Committee
 - Rob Dawson (SCLands)
 - Jorge Sanches (Resident/Landscape Architect)
 - Don White (Resident/White Financial Group)

Sustaining Community Lands, Inc. (SCLands) is an organization developed to assist the CAG, and now the CME, to gain scenic highway designation and implement the CMP. SCLands is led by Executive Director/Project Manager Rob Dawson. Board members include Sergio Nativi of Bridge Financial and President of Sailfish Regatta; Dan Martinelli of TC Wildlife Hospital; and Mary Dawson, a local author and historian.

Perhaps the most ambitious portions of the Action Plan relate to outreach and community events. The Outreach Committee includes superb talent and experience. It includes: Hilary McKiech of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, whose experience includes organizing the annual Indiantown Rodeo, an annual golf tournament and monthly Chamber breakfasts; Katey Bourgeois, the owner of Facebook marketing site, a volunteer for Goombay Bash, the annual Martin Memorial gala fundraiser; Sergio Nativi, President of Sailfish Regatta, an annual three-day power boat race with over 10,000 visitors per day of the event; and Rob Dawson, the project manager for the Martin Grade Scenic Highway effort. The individuals have the skills, experience and passion to marshal the resources needed to implement the Outreach Program.

IX. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

The Martin Grade Community Participation Program is a multi-faceted program designed to gain the support of community leaders and the general public in Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie Counties. The CPP takes advantage of the absolute beauty of the Corridor's tree canopy and the widespread support in the community for finding a way to protect the trees. The CPP

has focused on a number of distinct but interrelated areas, including public relations, publicity materials, social media and outreach to individuals and organizations.

Moving forward, the CPP will focus on community outreach primarily through three avenues: annual events, a Western Martin County Scenic Loop and community events.

Annual events are planned to include “Awakening Allapattah,” an event to highlight Allapattah Flats’ natural resources and beauty. Awakening Allapattah will educate visitors on the ecology of Western Martin County and raise awareness of recreational activities in western Martin County. Annual events should also include a Gala Fundraiser.

The “Western Martin County Scenic Loop” is addressed in Section I.J “Tourism and User Facilities” and Section VI: Goals, Objectives and Strategies” of this Plan, and seeks to integrate the Martin Grade into two larger “loops” highlighting scenic, historic and recreational/environmental features in western Martin County and, more generally, seeks to make the Martin Grade part of a larger low-impact tourism industry centered around the environmental and rural-scenic features of Martin County. The CPP portion of this effort includes identification of compatible businesses along and near the “Loop” for cross-promotion, as well as the creation and distribution of maps on the future Martin Grade website, at hotels and marinas in the region, through local chambers of commerce, at community events and at the Visit Florida/Florida Scenic Highways website.

Finally, a presence at community events will include a booth at events in Stuart, Indiantown and Okeechobee, including distribution of informational pamphlets and maps, sale of postcards and other incidentals and advertisements for sponsors.

X. PARTNERSHIPS AND AGREEMENTS

A. Private Partnerships

One source of funding will be the development of partnerships with private entities. One example of the kinds of partnerships that could be used to support the Corridor may set the tone for the future. In 2010, the Consolidated Citrus Corporation filed an application to amend the Martin County Growth Management Plan to allow a mix of agricultural and technological uses on 1,700 acres fronting Martin Highway five miles east of the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor’s eastern terminus. This project, known as the AgTec project, included language in its Comp Plan amendment that requires the project to support the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor by providing funding and conducting a variety of traffic planning tasks. The CME may participate extensively in land use and development decisions in the future, in order to advocate for similar protections.

Another partnership opportunity that arose during the spring 2010 comprehensive Plan Amendment processes is the request of the Becker Groves Holding Company to add language to the Comp Plan that would allow a 5-acre Rural Service Node at the Martin Grade's eastern terminus at its intersection with Allapattah Road. If developed, this node may provide the opportunity to locate educational materials about the Martin Grade there.

Martin County is a community with a large number of affluent residents and privately-funded local foundations. It is anticipated that the CME will make every effort to attract the attention of one or more of them and that there will be opportunities to apply successfully for grants from these foundations for enhancement of the health and beauty of the tree canopy and the road in general.

B. Public Partnerships

One very logical partnership would be to align the CME with the Martin County Tourism Development Board, which is funded by the Martin County tourism development tax. A scenic corridor, with a spectacular tree canopy, unique recreational activities, and a cultural and historical story will be an adjunct to the Tourism Development Board's efforts to market Martin County to high-quality tourists.

Its proximity to existing and targeted properties that are part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project increases the possibility of partnering to acquire grant funding for acquisition of thousands more acres of land along the Corridor.

A relationship may be established with Keep Martin Beautiful, which is concerned with maintaining quality rights-of-way within the County.

XI. ACTION PLAN

The following pages are the Action Plan for implementation of the CMP. The Action Plan lays out a timeline to complete each of the strategies identified in the Goals, Objectives and Strategies.

Goal 1 and Objectives: Protect and enhance the Martin Grade tree canopy through ensuring protective measures are included in the County Growth Management Plan and Land Development Regulations, evaluating and improving the health of existing trees and extending the length of the tree canopy.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 1.1.1:</u> Provide to Martin County and other public agencies the Martin Grade State Scenic Highway eligibility application, designation application and Corridor Management Plan (CMP) as background, and as a source of “data and analysis” for any legislative initiatives involving or impacting the Martin Grade.						
<u>Strategy 1.1.2:</u> Designate one member of the Corridor Management Entity (CME) board to monitor the agendas of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and County advisory boards for agenda items that might impact (positively or negatively) the protection, maintenance, preservation and/or enhancement of the Martin Grade. Whenever possible, the CME Board should discuss such agenda item(s) prior to their consideration and, where appropriate, send a representative to the meeting.						
<u>Strategy 1.1.3:</u> Participate in any and all public forums where the Martin Grade, or issues or proposals relevant to the protection, maintenance, preservation and/or enhancement of the Martin Grade will be discussed.						
<u>Strategy 1.2.1:</u> Enlist an environmental professional or landscape architect to determine what type of extent of studies are needed to properly assess the health of trees along the Martin Grade, and the likely cost of such studies. Then, establish a timeline to complete these studies based on prioritization of trees and likely funding availability.						
<u>Strategy 1.2.2:</u> Study and make recommendations to improve mowing techniques.						
<u>Strategy 1.2.3:</u> Study and make recommendations to improve ditch cleaning techniques.						
<u>Strategy 1.2.4:</u> Remove intrusive exotic species.						
<u>Strategy 1.3.1:</u> Create a plan for appropriate plantings of trees and other vegetation, including infill and understory planting.						
<u>Strategy 1.3.2:</u> Identify funding sources for installation of trees and additional vegetation, including if possible assisting Martin County to apply for grant funding.						

Goal 2 & Objectives: Maximize preservation and enhancement of the natural environment on lands along the Martin Grade through acquisition of land targeted for conservation and the creation of conservation easements.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 2.1.1:</u> <i>Demonstrate public and political support for Plan implementation.</i>						
<u>Strategy 2.1.2:</u> <i>Through the strategies identified in Objective 4.2, educate members of the public about the benefits of conservation of lands along the Martin Grade.</i>						
<u>Strategy 2.2.1:</u> <i>Support SFWMD and Martin County efforts to secure grants and additional funding for implementation.</i>						
<u>Strategy 2.3.1:</u> <i>Develop and effectively distribute information to encourage the use of conservation easements along the Martin Grade, explaining the benefits of such easements (i.e. tax benefits).</i>						
<u>Strategy 2.3.2:</u> <i>Respond to requests for technical assistance with conservation or water management easements by referral to appropriate jurisdictional agencies.</i>						

Goal 3 & Objectives: Enhance recreational opportunities on lands abutting the Martin Grade that are compatible with the rural and scenic character of the roadway and community through development and improvement of public access to public lands along the Corridor, creation of a Scenic Corridor-oriented recreational opportunity at the volunteer fire station site and development of a picnic area and scenic viewing opportunity on the part of the road with the deepest tree canopy.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 3.1.1:</u> Complete research of property records and other relevant sources to accurately identify and map all rights-of-way, publicly owned land and easements that could be utilized to improve public access.						
<u>Strategy 3.1.2:</u> Establish points of contact with all public agencies owning land adjacent to the Martin Grade, and maintain regular communication with those agencies to inform them of the CME's goals for public access, and understand and address any concerns those agencies may have.						
<u>Strategy 3.1.3:</u> Participate in efforts to establish heritage and eco-tourism "loops" that include the Martin Grade and resources along the Corridor.						
<u>Strategy 3.2.1:</u> Approach Martin County to determine next steps to create a low-impact, Scenic-Corridor oriented recreational opportunity at the volunteer fire station site.						
<u>Strategy 3.2.2:</u> Develop a recreational use plan for the fire station site.						
<u>Strategy 3.2.3:</u> Identify funding to implement the recreational use plan for the fire station site, including fundraising and/or working with Martin County to pursue grant funding, such as from the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails and the FDOT Transportation Alternatives Program.						

<p><u>Strategy 3.3.1:</u> Assist a public or non-profit agency with site selection and acquisition of land or easements for the picnic area / scenic viewing opportunity.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 3.3.2:</u> Pursue fundraising opportunities to for acquisition and/or development of the picnic area/scenic viewing opportunity.</p>		

Goal 4 & Objectives: Educate visitors and local residents regarding the natural and historical resources along the Corridor by development of a comprehensive system of stations that describe the resources and history of the Martin Grade, and implementation of a Community Outreach Program.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 4.1.1:</u> Partner to locate Way Stations at all property and recreation facilities owned and operated by governmental entities.						
<u>Strategy 4.1.2:</u> Partner to locate educational materials at the Rural Services Node (if developed) at the eastern entrance to the Martin Grade.						
<u>Strategy 4.2.1:</u> Establish relationships with local schools to include visits by local experts on the history of the Martin Grade and/or adding information to the local history curricula, and small group field trips by students to the Martin Grade.						
<u>Strategy 4.2.2:</u> Spread the word about the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor and its importance through press releases, a social media campaign and similar low/no cost promotional activities.						
<u>Strategy 4.2.3:</u> Develop and deploy a Martin Grade Scenic Corridor website disseminate information about the Martin Grade and provide a means for interested persons to contact knowledgeable sources about specific information about the Martin Grade.						
<u>Strategy 4.2.4:</u> Begin an annual “Awakening Allapattah” event to highlight Allapattah Flats’ natural beauty and resources, educate the community about the ecology of western Martin County and raise awareness of opportunities for recreational activities in the area.						
<u>Strategy 4.2.5:</u> Establish a presence at community events in Stuart, Indiantown and Okeechobee to distribute informational pamphlets and maps, sell postcards and similar and provide an opportunity to advertise sponsors.						

Goal 5 & Objectives: Ensure that driving across the Martin Grade is a safe and enjoyable experience through partnerships with governmental agencies to ensure that support, protection and enhancement of the Martin Grade is considered in planning efforts, working with appropriate partners to reduce traffic impacts on the Grade and educating drivers about safe operation on the Grade.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 5.1.1:</u> Ensure that the CME is involved in the process of developing the Martin County MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).						
<u>Strategy 5.1.2:</u> Involve the CME and Corridor advocates in participatory forums regarding public policy and infrastructure design that has the potential to impact the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor.						
<u>Strategy 5.2.1:</u> Assist in the designation of new road corridors.						
<u>Strategy 5.2.2:</u> Encourage the utilization of traffic timing techniques.						
<u>Strategy 5.2.3:</u> Through CME participation in the development of the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, any amendments to the Martin County Comprehensive Plan and planning efforts at all levels, encourage governmental entities to consider the possibility of increased traffic due to road improvements or other transportation changes, and the potential impact of that increased traffic on the Martin Grade's resources.						
<u>Strategy 5.3.1:</u> Study signage solutions used on other similar and/or other unique roadways, and make recommendations for appropriate signage on the Martin Grade to help drivers operate safely.						
<u>Strategy 5.3.2:</u> Include safe driving recommendations on all brochures or other digital/print promotional pieces regarding the Martin Grade (i.e. the website called for in Strategy 4.2.3).						

Goal 6 & Objectives: Use the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor designation to enhance tourism in a manner that is compatible with the rural nature of the community by branding/marketing the Martin Grade to attract low-impact, nature-based tourists, partnering with chambers of commerce and tourism agencies in Stuart, Indiantown and Okeechobee, ensuring that the potential rural services node at the eastern end of the Corridor is mutually compatible and beneficial to the Scenic Highway and establishing the Martin Grade as part of a larger heritage trail and/or scenic "loop."

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 6.1.1:</u> <i>Develop a Martin Grade brand that can be utilized for consistency in any future marketing or promotion pieces or activities.</i>						
<u>Strategy 6.1.2:</u> <i>Develop a brochure about the scenic and historic attributes of the Martin Grade, and distribute at locations of similar low-impact, eco-tourism activities in the Treasure Coast and northern Palm Beach County.</i>						
<u>Strategy 6.2.1:</u> <i>Develop compatible signage that directs tourists to each community.</i>						
<u>Strategy 6.2.2:</u> <i>Create a description of each community and its historical relationship to the Martin Grade, for use in the Way Stations and other educational materials.</i>						
<u>Strategy 6.3.1:</u> <i>Encourage the potential general store at the eastern end of the Corridor to sell preferred supplies by providing them with a list of preferred/necessary supplies for outdoor and tourist activities consistent with the Corridor Management Plan, such as hiking, camping, equestrian activities and fishing.</i>						
<u>Strategy 6.3.2:</u> <i>Help develop a Community Outreach Program (COP) that encourages local residents to purchase agricultural supplies and home provisions from the General Store.</i>						

Strategy 6.4.1: <i>Identify businesses and other land uses along and near the potential loops that are compatible with heritage tourism and eco tourism activities and seek partnerships for the establishment and promotion of one or more loops.</i>				
Strategy 6.4.2: <i>Create maps of established loops and distribute them through the Martin Grade website (called for in Strategy 4.2.3.), hotels and marinas in the region, chambers of commerce, at community events, at the Florida Scenic Highways website and at similar appropriate venues.</i>				

Goal 7 & Objectives: Ensure the fiscal stability of the CME and CMP through creation of a fiscally sound funding base that supports the CME's implementation of the CMP.

Strategy	YEAR					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 and beyond
<u>Strategy 7.1.1:</u> Form business partnerships with private entities, including sponsors that can be advertised on promotional pieces, the Martin Grade website and social media pages and similar venues.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.2:</u> Form partnership with Martin County and the Martin County Tourist Development Council.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.3:</u> Form partnerships with similar entities in Okeechobee and St. Lucie Counties.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.4:</u> Continue to maximize Community Outreach Program (COP) that maximizes private contributions.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.5:</u> Pursue grant opportunities.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.6:</u> Develop and implement a fundraising plan.						
<u>Strategy 7.1.7:</u> Organize and hold an annual Gala Fundraiser for the benefit of activities to implement the CMP.						

XII. APPENDICES

A. Martin County Growth Management Plan Provisions Relevant to the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor

The following was provided by the Martin County Growth Management Department, and represents provisions of the Martin County Growth Management Plan that are directly relevant to the Martin Grade.

Martin County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan contains policies relating to the designation, protection and enhancement of scenic highways. According to the Plan, the County's policies are designed to preserve the very attributes that make the area attractive for growth. "Certain areas in Martin County are recognized by federal, state and local programs as environmentally sensitive. Some of these are identified as lands to be protected by the Indian River Lagoon (South) Restoration Plan, Save Our Rivers, Florida Forever and other restoration programs recognized by Martin County. To implement the objectives of Policy 9.1K.1. and Section 13.2.E., and to encourage implementation of recognized land protection programs, Martin County has adopted policies under Objective 4.5F encouraging agricultural preservation, conservation of public open space and restoration of natural areas. These areas provide special public benefits, including recreational opportunities, life support services, tourism, commercial and sport fishing, scenic values, water purification, water recharge and storage, and sensitive habitats critical to the survival of endangered wildlife and plants." (Section 4.--)

Below is a listing of Martin County Plan objectives and policies, regarding scenic highways from the Future Land Use Element of the Plan.

Objective 4.5B. To evaluate and monitor innovative techniques to protect environmentally sensitive features and areas and consider the effectiveness of implementing these innovations in Martin County.

Policy 4.5B.1. Innovative techniques to be investigated. Use of the following techniques shall be investigated, at a minimum:

- (1) Overlay zoning districts for environmentally sensitive geographic areas. The underlying zoning district boundaries will retain the applicable minimum development regulations;

- (2) Scenic highway corridor overlay zones to protect natural beauty and scenic vistas along roadways that serve as major access ways, gateways and canopy routes through Martin County;
- (3) Fiscally sound mechanisms such as tax incentives and transfer of development rights to (1) encourage landowners to preserve critical habitats and (2) discourage development adjacent to lands held for conservation or preservation that are identified in the Conservation Element;
- 4) Natural systems used for multiple purposes to the maximum extent possible, such as combining wellfields in natural system preserve areas and designating parks to prevent development in floodplains or high-hazard coastal areas;
- (5) Transfer of development rights or other flexible methods of land development transfer to direct development from unsuitable lands to those most suitable for active use.

Policy 4.5B.2. Evaluation of environmental programs for exclusionary impacts. All programs designed to protect environmentally sensitive areas shall be evaluated for any possible exclusionary impacts. Such programs shall be implemented only upon determination that all regulations are fair and equitable.

Policy 4.9F.1. Enhancement of scenic vistas. Special attention shall be given to enhancing scenic vistas along the Atlantic Ocean, Intracoastal Waterway, St. Lucie River, Loxahatchee River, Indian River, Savannas and major transportation corridors by preservation of open space, installation and maintenance of landscaping, and application of community appearance criteria that reinforce good principles of design, as noted under Goal 4.5.

In addition, Martin County has expressly recognized the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor by including policies that are protective of its unique features. These specific policies are found in a site specific future land use designation that is assigned to land adjacent to Martin Grade. Those policies are found in Policy 4.13A.9. and require any future development on this site to incorporate design features to protect the Martin Grade. The specific references are excerpted below:

(8) Any PUD zoning within the AgTEC shall, at a minimum, incorporate the following design principles:

- (a) In order to support the "Martin Grade Scenic Corridor," any development within the AgTEC land use designation shall provide a minimum 100 foot building setback from the Martin Highway right-of-way, which shall include a minimum 50 foot buffer preserve area adjacent to the right-of-way.
- (e) In order to reinforce the rural character of properties located to the west of the AgTEC site, and to support the "Scenic Highway" designation of portions of Martin Highway, only agricultural uses that are consistent with the Agricultural land use category and AG-20A zoning shall be permitted on the western 40 percent of the frontage of Martin Highway to a depth of 1,000, subject to the necessary site development plan approval.
- (f) In cooperation with Martin County, the State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District, the land owner/developer shall investigate the opportunity to incorporate additional water storage capacity within the proposed water management system of the AgTEC area for any future widening of Martin Highway. As part of any such widening project that includes the Martin Grade Scenic Corridor, the land owner/developer will assist the county in exploring alternative traffic patterns, traffic timing, and roadway cross sections for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the scenic character of the corridor.

Below is a listing of Martin County Plan objectives and policies, regarding scenic highways from the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Plan.

Section 9.3.A. The County will continue to support efforts to increase the amount and protection of publicly accessible open spaces, such as scenic roadway corridors and neighborhood native areas. Such areas define the look and feel of Martin County and are closely tied to its quality of life. While it is important to preserve inaccessible areas for their natural values, it is also important to preserve areas that are easily accessible to give the public constant

and easy access to the County in its natural state. This effort would include a program to maintain or increase:

- (1) Preservation of native trees and vegetation along roadway corridors with natural scenic qualities (example: U.S. 1 through Jonathan Dickinson State Park); and
- (2) Areas of native plants and animals within or near neighborhoods (example: Rocky Point Hammock, Seabrook Property).

Lastly the County's stormwater policies contain specific protections for scenic highways as well. Capital Improvement Elements and the Drainage and Natural Aquifer Recharge Element both contain this provision for scenic highways:

Section 14.1A.2 (2)(b)

All project sites shall control the timing of discharges to preclude any off-site impact for any storm event. The peak discharge rate shall not exceed the predevelopment discharge rate for the 25-year frequency, 3-day duration storm event.

The minimum roadway flood protection design storm shall be the 10-year frequency, 24-hour duration storm event unless the roadway is classified as a scenic corridor, in which case the flood protection design storm will consider maintaining the character of the roadway.

*B. Documentation of Local Support for the Martin Grade Scenic
Corridor Designation*

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

RESOLUTION NUMBER 07-5.13

**A RESOLUTION TO CLASSIFY A PORTION OF COUNTY ROAD 714
AS A SCENIC CORRIDOR**

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners has directed the Growth Management Department to develop an overlay to provide for the protection of the canopy trees located on County Road 714, also known as Martin Grade; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.661.C, Land Development Regulations, Martin County Code, states that all lands within 100 feet of the centerlines of existing roads where trees form a continuous canopy over the roadway are to be treated as canopy road tree protection zones; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.666.A.3, Land Development Regulations, Martin County Code, provides that any native tree in a Canopy Road Tree Protection Zone shall not be removed or damaged without specific approval; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.849.A, Land Development Regulations, Martin County Code, provides that the Board of County Commissioners may classify segments of County-maintained roads as scenic corridors through roadway classification or the use of a corridor overlay zone; and

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Department recommends classifying a segment of County Road 714 as a Scenic Corridor and acknowledging this road segment as a Canopy Road Tree Protection Zone;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA; THAT, PURSUANT
TO SECTIONS 4.849.A, 4.661.C, and 4.666.A.3, LAND DEVELOPMENT
REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE:**

The Martin County Board of County Commissioners hereby classifies that segment of County Road 714, also known as Martin Grade, from State Road 710 to Fox Brown Road, as a Scenic Corridor. Such designation is justified because this roadway warrants special protection because of its unique cultural, historical and environmental characteristics.

Page 1 of 2

The Board of County Commissioners also acknowledges that this road segment meets the definition of the Canopy Road Tree Protection Zone and that the trees in this road segment are to be provided protection according to the tree protection provisions of the Land Development Regulations, Martin County Code.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 22ND DAY OF MAY, 2007.

ATTEST:


MARSHA EWING, CLERK

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY: 
MICHAEL DiTERLIZZI, CHAIRMAN

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
CORRECTNESS:


STEPHEN FRY, COUNTY ATTORNEY

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4C2



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

PLACEMENT: CONSENT

PRESET:

TITLE: AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION AND OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT THE DESIGNATION OF FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY ON CR-714 (SW MARTIN GRADE)

AGENDA ITEM DATES:

MEETING DATE: 8/10/2010	COUNTY ATTORNEY: 7/19/2010
COMPLETED DATE: 7/29/2010	ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: 7/26/2010

REQUESTED BY:	DEPARTMENT:	PREPARED BY:
Name: Martin Grade Corridor Advisory Group	Engineering	Lisa A. Wichser, P.E.
Name:		Traffic Engineering / Development Review Administrator

Procedures: None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Board is asked to authorize the Chairman to sign documents that support the designation of Florida Scenic Highway on CR-714 (SW Martin Grade).

APPROVAL:

LEG
ACA
CA

80117155

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

PLACEMENT: Consent		PRESET:
AGENDA ITEM DATES:		
MEETING DATE: 3/11/2008		COUNTY ATTORNEY: 2/18/2008
COMPLETE BY: 2/13/2008		DCA AND ACA: 2/25/2008
TITLE:		
MARTIN GRADE - FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY LETTER OF INTENT		
REQUESTED BY: Martin County Board of County Commissioners	Engineering: Don G. Donaldson, P.E. Engineering Department Director	PREPARED BY: Bette McMillan Executive Aide
DOCUMENT(S) REQUIRING ACTION: Letter of Intent		
QUASI-JUDICIAL: NO		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) is ready to move forward with the Florida Scenic Highways Program Process to designate a twelve (12) mile segment of County Road 714 between SR 710 and Allapattah Road/CR 609 as a Florida Scenic Highway. The first step in the process requires submitting a Letter of Intent to the Florida Department of Transportation Scenic Highways Advisory Committee signed by a representative of the Martin Grade CAG and the Chairman of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for consideration and approval.

APPROVAL:

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
COUNTY ATTORNEY



June 1, 2010

Mary Dawson
Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Subject: Proposed Scenic Highway Designation for Martin Highway

Dear Mary:

Thank you for your efforts to conserve and preserve the vegetative corridor along Martin Highway. The Board of Directors of the Martin County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has unanimously endorsed the initiative to have the western twelve miles of Martin highway designated as a Scenic Highway.

Several of our members have visited the area and we are impressed with the diversity and size of the native plants that exist in areas adjacent to the highway. The area's floral diversity is related to it's location near the northern end of the range on many sub-tropical plants while simultaneously being near the southern boundary of many temperate species. The varying plant communities also provide habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife.

We endorse the initiative to have the area designated as a Scenic Highway.

Sincerely, *Horace Chetowsky*
President, MCFNPS
for the Martin County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

*Preserving, Conserving and Restoring
the Real Florida Since 1980.*



Audubon of Martin County

621 SE Palm Beach Road
Stuart FL 34994
772 -288-2637
audubonmartincounty.org

July 14, 2010

Mary Dawson
Sustaining Communities Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Subject: Proposed Scenic Highway Designation for Martin Highway

Dear Mary:

The Board of Directors of Audubon of Martin County has voted unanimously to support the initiative by Sustaining Communities Lands, Inc. to conserve and preserve the vegetative corridor along Martin Highway by nominating its western twelve miles for designation as a Scenic Highway.

As you know, during the last 18 months AoMC members have conducted several birding field trips along the roadway corridor, and through this work we are compiling an ever-increasing database of the diverse bird life that use the area for foraging, resting and/or nesting. It is apparent that the area's floral diversity attracts a variety of species of migratory and resident birds. Notable species that use the corridor include raptors (e.g., crested caracaras, bald eagles and swallow-tailed kites) wading birds (e.g., herons and egrets), waterfowl (e.g., whistling ducks), sandhill cranes, and eastern bluebirds. We've documented that the combination of wetlands, forested uplands and grasslands present within the road corridor provides nesting, foraging and/or roosting habitat for dozens of species of birds, and that number will likely continue to climb as we complete additional surveys. The birds and other wildlife are all there as a direct result of the presence of trees and other vegetative communities, and so we are extremely supportive of the preservation initiative.

Audubon of Martin County endorses the initiative to have the area designated as a Scenic Highway, and we applaud your efforts to involve a variety of interested parties in this worthwhile endeavor. Please let me know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Greg Braun

Greg Braun
Executive Director



1002 SE Monterey Commons Boulevard, Ste. 203A • Stuart, FL 34996
Phone: (772) 221-1380 • Fax: (772) 221-1381 • www.bdbmc.org

July 28, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

On behalf of the Business Development Board of Martin County, we are submitting this letter as support for the efforts to have Martin County Road 714, between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, known locally as "The Martin Grade", designated a Florida Scenic Highway.

This initiative is a key component for preserving the iconographic image of western Martin County; a tree canopy, a rare and beautiful natural resource, that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12 mile length.

We believe by designating Martin Grade as part of the Florida Scenic Highway program, this will create opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor, provide community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life, and improve economic development through resource-based tourism.

Additionally, this designation will create opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological and natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature and resource based businesses that are compatible with the community's vision.

We support your efforts and look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Sustaining Community Lands organization in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Ronald Bunch
Executive Director

BDBMC is Martin County's official economic development organization, and Enterprise Florida, Inc., partner.



July 28, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group Chairman
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Mr. Jones:

The Economic Council of Martin County is an invitation only, C.E.O. non-profit organization. Our mission is to provide guidance and leadership that will create a healthy and diverse local economy, a quality-built community and a healthy natural environment. Celebrating over 25 years, we have a long-standing commitment to improving our future and working at diversifying our economy. We strongly believe that a natural, healthy, clean environment and protection of our water, land and natural resources is paramount in achieving this goal.

The Martin Grade has become one of the iconographic images of Martin County. The beautiful tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12 mile stretch is a rare and historic natural treasure. Martin County residents young and old recognize and cherish the historical and cultural stretch of road on Martin County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in Western Martin County known as the "Martin Grade."

Tourism is a large component of Martin County's economy. We believe that protection of the Martin Grade will enhance our efforts to formalize this type of resource-based tourism and eco-tourism. Protection of this invaluable asset will ensure an "economic return on investment" to our community.

Martin County is challenged to balance regional growth efforts and increasing transportation needs while preserving our natural resources. In obtaining the Florida Scenic Highway designation, we envision additional opportunities such as: the engagement our citizens and professionals in the future planning and design of our transportation needs; community-based consensus building; grass-roots involvement; and the creation of new partnerships within our region.

Therefore, on behalf of the Economic Council of Martin County, we would like to lend our support of the scenic designation and offer our expertise and leadership in protecting and preserving the Martin Grade.

Sincerely,

Tammy Simoneau
Executive Director

1002 SE Monterey Commons Blvd. Suite 201 Stuart FL 34990 (772) 288-1225



Historical Society Of Martin County

Yesterday's Ingenuity. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Historical Society of Martin County
Elliot Museum
House of Refuge Museum
2010 Board of Directors

CHAIRPERSON
Scott Baratta
Executive Committee Chair
Exhibits Committee Chair
Capital Campaign Steering
Committee Co-Chair
Nominating Committee Chair

CHAIR ELECTION
Debra Duvall

VICED CHAIR
Jean Strickland
Finance Committee Chair

TREASURER
Kevin Youngblood

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
Pam Foyl
Development Committee Chair

DIRECTORS
Scott MacDonald
Marlee Matheson
Gentry Arts Committee Chair
Margaret Richebourg
Peter Upton
Gregory Wheeler
Patricia Williams
Walter Woods

President/CEO
Robin Hicks Connors, CFRE

Mr. Lee Jones

Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

I am pleased to lend my support to the designation of Martin Grade, which is County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, as a Florida Scenic Highway.

Designating the Martin Grade as part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create several opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural heritage through eco-based tourism and increased educational programming. The 100 year old tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure within a thriving rural community. It is a vital piece of the splendor and the history of Martin County and is too beautiful to lose.

As stewards of local history and preservation, the Historical Society of Martin County highly recommends the designation of the Martin Grade as a Florida Scenic Highway to help sustain the rural nature of the area for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Robin Hicks Connors
President/CEO
Historical Society of Martin County

Elliot Museum - Historical Society Of Martin County - House Of Refuge Museum
329 NE Ocean Blvd - Hutchinson Island - Stuart - Florida - 34994-1624
Voice: 772-225-1961 - Fax: 772-225-2033 - www.elliotmuseum.org



July 20, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
PO Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

This letter is a statement of support on behalf of our 525 business members to designate Martin County Road 714 (between State Road 609 and State Road 710) in western Martin County, Florida, a Florida Scenic Highway. This stretch of road is locally known as "The Martin Grade."

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose and every effort available should be used for its preservation.

Designating the Martin Grade as part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning, and strengthening the local economy through resource-based tourism.
- Opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature and resource based businesses that are compatible with the community's vision.

Sincerely,

Devin Teal
President

1900 Ricou Terrace • Post Office Box 1536 • Jensen Beach, Florida 34958-1536 • 772.334.3444 • 772.334.0817 fax
info@jensenbeachchamber.biz • www.jensenbeachchamber.biz

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

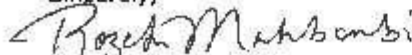
Dear Chairman Jones,

The Martin County Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors voted unanimously at the August 4, 2010 meeting in support of the Martin Grade Corridor. This letter serves as an official board resolution and a statement of support for the efforts to designate Martin County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, which is locally known as "The Martin Grade," as a part of Florida Scenic Highway. The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12 mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose.

Designating the Martin Grade part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor which promotes "ECO" tourism.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic and tourism prosperity in addition to quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning and improved economic development through resource-based tourism.
- Opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature- and resource-based businesses that are compatible with the community and tourism visions

Sincerely,



Rozeta Mahboubi
Executive Director



July 20, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 15170
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

The Palm City Chamber of Commerce is in full support for the efforts of the Martin Grade Advocacy Group to designate "The Martin Grade" designated a Florida Scenic Highway.

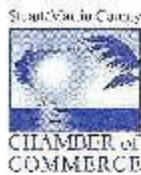
The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12 mile length between Martin County Road 714 and State Road 609 is a rare and beautiful natural treasure in Martin County.

We ask that you designate the Martin Grade as part of the Florida Scenic Highway program.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Davis
Executive Director
Palm City Chamber of Commerce

772/285-8123 • Fax 772/285-3331 • www.palmcitychamber.com • E-mail: info@palmcitychamber.com
Mailing Address: 803 W. Martin Downs Blvd., Palm City, Florida 34990



Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce

Enjoy our good natural!

1650 South Karner Highway, Stuart, Florida 34991-7199 (772) 287-1688 Fax (772) 220-1437
www.stuartmartinchamber.org info@stuartmartinchamber.org

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Judy Gold Jewels, Inc.

Vice Chairman-Ret.
Michael Corbett
The McGraw Group, Inc.

Vice Chairman
Linda Sheehan
Coastal Wholesale Corporation

Vice Chairman
Tom Volksen
A/S/AM

Past Chairman
Michael Thompson
Thompson Cherry Group, Inc.

Directors
Edmund Collins
Martin Memorial Health Systems

Michael Doolen
CRS Financial Services, Inc.

James Hoot
Retail Financial Inc.

Wick Harleman
Huffman Real Estate

Robin Hinkle-Chambers
First Medicare Hospital Industry

Dennis Clinton
Shelton Mortgage
Services of the Treasure Coast

Clayton McKenna
A-1 Florida

John O'Brien
Robertson Automotive & Service Corp.

Shawn Pymall
Cape and Florida Loan, LLC

Karin Powers
Industrious Realty

Steve Riedel
The Realty Group

Patty Smith
Shelton Services, Inc.

Brian Threlle
Church & Dwight Co.

John Wardley
Massey-Wardley, Inc.

Ex-Officio Directors
Treasurer
Gordon Proctor
Proctor, Goad, Crocker & Fogel CPAs

Dan Hanson
Stuart City Manager

Doug Smith
Martin County Commissioner

Lorie Sheehan
Martin County School Board

Jane Harms
Indian River State College

President/CEO
Joseph A. Catambone

August 23, 2010

Lee Jones
Co-Chair of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Mary Dawson
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Reference: Martin Grade

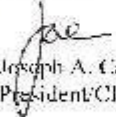
Dear Lee,

The Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted to support the recommendation of our joint Local Government Affairs/Transportation Committee approval to lend our support to the Martin Grade Scenic Highway Project.

It is Martin County Highway 714 between Alapattah Road and State Road 710, referred to as "The Martin Grade". It is an historic, 12-mile road shaded by a canopy of hundred year old oaks trees. There is grave concern long term growth could force it to be widened to four-lanes, which would destroy the canopy of trees and the history, character and beauty of the scenic highway.

Thank you for bringing this initiative to our chamber and good luck with your efforts

Sincerely,


Joseph A. Catambone
President/CEO





Mayor
City Commission

City of Stuart

121 S.W. Flagler Avenue • Stuart • Florida • 34994

Telephone: (772) 288-5312

June 10, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

The Stuart City Commission asked me to write this letter of support for the efforts to have Martin County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, which is locally known as "The Martin Grade," designated a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12 mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose.

Designating the Martin Grade part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning, and improved economic development through resource-based tourism.
- Opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature- and resource-based businesses that are compatible with the community's vision.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Mortell
Mayor

Cc: City Commission
City Manager
City Attorney

TOWN OF JUPITER ISLAND

2 BRIDGE ROAD

HOBE SOUND, FLORIDA 33455

TELEPHONE
(772) 545-0100

FAX
(772) 545-0188

July 29, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones, Chair
Martin Grade Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

This letter is a statement of support for designating the roadway known as Martin Grade (County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida) a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose.

Designating the Martin Grade as part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning.
- Opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature- and resource-based enterprises that are compatible with the community's vision.

Sincerely,



Gene A. Rauth
Town Manager

MARK KLINGENSMITH
Mayor

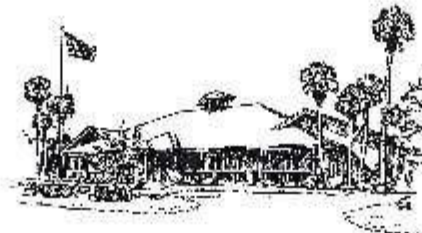
JACQUI THURLLOW-LIPPISCH
Vice Mayor

THOMAS BAUSCH
Commissioner

PAMELA M. BUSH
Commissioner

PAUL SCHOPPE
Commissioner

TOWN OF SEWALL'S POINT



ROBERT L. KELLOGG
Town Manager

ANN MARIE S. BASLER
Town Clerk

ERIC CERNIGLIA
Chief of Police

JOHN ADAMS
Building Official

JOSE TORRES
Maintenance

August 29, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones, Chairman
Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34992

Dear Chairman Jones:

This letter is a statement of support for designating the Martin Grade, which is County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose.

Designating the Martin Grade part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based, consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning, and improved economic development through resource-based tourism.
- Opportunities to enhance and promote our area's cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources in a manner that helps sustain nature- and resource-based enterprises that are compatible with the community's vision.

Sincerely,



Mark Klingsmith
Mayor



If any person desires to appeal any decision made by the Town Commission with regard to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, notice will need to be given in a written form of the proceedings in issue, which notice includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

One South Sewall's Point Road, Sewall's Point, Florida 34996

Town Hall (772) 267-2435 • Fax (772) 220-4765 • E-Mail: clerk@sewallspoint.martin.fl.us
Police Department (772) 781-3378 • Fax (772) 266-7965 • E-Mail: spdc@sewallspoint.martin.fl.us



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

August 14, 2010

Mary Dawson, Chair
c/o Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

SUBJECT: Support for the Martin Grade Scenic Highway Designation

Dear Ms. Dawson:

The South Florida Water Management District (District) strongly supports the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group's application to designate a portion of CR-714 (SW Martin Highway) west of CR-609 (SW Allapattah Road), also known as Martin Grade, as a Florida Scenic Highway. This highway corridor serves as an important connection for the public to access and recreate on the District's Allapattah Flats Management Area, over 20,000 acres of conservation land, located in Martin County.

The District is committed to encouraging and promoting public use and access on District lands and this endeavor would further compliment and link recreational use to the Allapattah Flats property. Currently recreational users, including hikers, equestrian riders, hurlers, and bicyclists, utilize trails within Allapattah which would connect to this project.

We thank the Advocacy Group for taking the lead in implementing this undertaking. Please feel free to contact BJ Kattel, 561-682-6640, if the District can be of any further assistance in support of this important effort.

Sincerely,



Kevin Powers
Governing Board Member
South Florida Water Management District

c: Tommy Strowd
Steve Coughlin
Dan Thayer
Dan Cottor
BJ Kattel
Beth Kacvinsky

2701 Gue Clay Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33409 • (561) 686-6600 • FAX (561) 686-6605
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3499, West Palm Beach, FL 33409-0499 • correspondence@swfwmd.com

THOMAS J. ROONEY
18th District, Florida

ARMED SERVICES
JUDICIARY

1529 LINCOLN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-6762

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0916

August 18, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones, Co-chair
Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
P.O. Box 1517
Palm city, FL 34991

RE: Designating Martin Grade a Florida Scenic Highway

This is a letter of support for the efforts to have the Martin Grade, Martin County Road 714 between State Road 710 and County Road 609 in western Martin County, Florida, designated a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose, and I support this grass-roots effort to protect it.

Designating the Martin Grade a Florida Scenic Highway will create opportunities to enhance and promote the natural beauty of this corridor along with the cultural, historical and natural scenic resources of the region in a manner that helps sustain nature-based and resource-based businesses and recreation that are compatible with the community's vision.

The members of the Martin Grade Advocacy Group are to be commended for initiating this effort and for reaching out into the wider community to create the opportunity for broad-based consensus building and the development of partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life in the region served by the Martin Grade.

Sincerely,



Thomas Rooney
Member of Congress
335 SE Ocean Blvd.
Stuart, FL 34994

STUART DISTRICT OFFICE:
335 SE Ocean Boulevard
Stuart, FL 34994
772-288-4088 Phone
772-288-4031 Fax

PALESTINE DISTRICT OFFICE:
226 Taylor Street, #500
Palm Bay, FL 32909
941-575-8101 Phone
941-575-8102 Fax

ST. LUCIE COUNTY DISTRICT OFFICE:
County Administration Center
3380 Victoria Avenue, Suite 206
Fort Pierce, FL 34982
772-461-2000 Phone
772-461-1894 Fax

WILMINGTON DISTRICT OFFICE:
Wilmington Community Center
12100 West Forest Hill Boulevard
Wilmington, FL 32614
By Appointment
Office: 772-388-6888

SEBASTIAN DISTRICT OFFICE:
HIGHLAND COUNTY Government Center
600 South Commerce Avenue
Sebastian, FL 32959
By Appointment
Office: 888-471-1915

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SENATOR JOE NEGRON
28th District

THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

COMMITTEES:
Judiciary, Chief
Banking and Insurance
Communications, Energy, and Public Utilities
Health and Human Services Appropriations
Reapportionment
Rules
Social Responsibility - Policy and Steering
Ways and Means - Policy and Steering
SELECT COMMITTEE:
Florida's Economy

August 30, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
Post Office Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34990

Re: Florida Scenic Highway

Dear Mr. Jones:

This letter is a statement of support for designating the Martin Grade, which is County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County, Florida, a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County.

Sincerely yours,

Joe Negron
State Senator
District 28

JN/hd

REPLY TO:
□ 3500 SW Corporate Parkway, Suite 204, Palm City, Florida 34960 (772) 219-1065
□ 10700 Civic Lane, Post St. Lucie, Florida 34966 (772) 345-3951
□ 306 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5088

Senator's Website: www.fsenate.gov

JEFF ATWATER
President of the Senate

MIKE FASANO
President Pro Tempore

Florida House of Representatives

Representative William D. Snyder

District 82

District Office:
2400 South Federal Hwy.
Suite 250
Stuart, FL 34994-4590
(772) 221-4904
(772) 221-4906 fax

Tallahassee Office:
410 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 488-8832

Email: William.Snyder@myfloridahouse.gov

August 30, 2010

Mr. Lee Jones
Chairman of the Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
C/O Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Chairman Jones,

It is my privilege to express my support for designating the Martin Grade, which is County Road 714 between State Road 609 and State Road 710 in western Martin County a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become the iconographic image of western Martin County. It is too beautiful to lose.

Designating the Martin Grade part of the Florida Scenic Highway program will create:

- Opportunities to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor.
- Opportunities for grass-roots, community-based consensus building and partnerships designed to promote economic prosperity and quality of life by enhancing and broadening the recreational and educational experiences available in the area.
- Opportunities for additional resource protection, community recognition and visioning, and improved economic development through resource-based tourism.

Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council, Chair
Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee

Committees:

Finance and Tax Council
Policy Council



Florida House of Representatives
81st District

Adam M. Fetterman

☒ 121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd., Building B
Port St. Lucie, FL 34984
Office: 772-873-6500
Fax: 772-873-6502

Reply To:

☐ 1401 The Capitol
402 South Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850-488-8749

September 3, 2010

Lee Jones, Co-Chair
Nancy Oliver, Co-Chair
Martin Grade Corridor Advocacy Group
c/o Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.
P.O. Box 1517
Palm City, FL 34991

Dear Mr. Jones and Mrs. Oliver:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write in support of the designating the Martin Grade in western Martin County, Florida, as a Florida Scenic Highway.

The tree canopy that covers almost half of the Martin Grade's 12-mile length is a rare and beautiful natural treasure that has become an iconographic image of western Martin County. The canopy has been enjoyed for generations and the official designation of a Florida Scenic Highway will provide the status necessary to protect and enhance the heritage and beauty of this corridor for generations to come. Martin County residents pride themselves on proactive stewardship of their local natural and rural environments. The potential for this route to become just another 4-lane highway would frustrate the very quality of life that the citizens of Martin County desire to maintain.

A Scenic Highway designation would promote recreation and educational experiences, enhance the area's cultural, historical and archaeological significance, and sustain passive, resource-based enterprises compatible with the community's vision.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these comments and feel free to contact me should you need anything during your pursuit of this effort.

Sincerely,

Adam M. Fetterman

cc: Keren Carmel

Rules and Calendar Council Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council
Joint Legislative Sunset Committee Civil Justice & Courts Policy Committee Natural Resources Appropriations Committee
Chair-St. Lucie County Legislative Delegation

RESOLUTION #10-05

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES, FLORIDA SUPPORTING DESIGNATION OF THE MARTIN GRADE SCENIC HIGHWAY IN WESTERN MARTIN COUNTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Martin Grade is a 2-lane segment of County Road 714 that extends approximately 12 miles from County Road 609 to State Road 710 in western Martin County; and

WHEREAS, a unique canopy of mature native trees covers a significant portion of the Martin Grade corridor; and

WHEREAS, the unique tree canopy adjacent to the Martin Grade could be threatened by future road widening projects, poor maintenance practices, and invasive exotic species; and

WHEREAS, the Martin Grade Scenic Highway project is an effort to designate the Martin Grade as a Scenic Corridor in accordance with the Florida Scenic Highway Program; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Martin Grade Scenic Highway project is to protect the unique canopy of mature native trees that covers a significant portion of the corridor and to help sustain the rural character of the area; and

WHEREAS, designation as a scenic highway will lead to development of a Corridor Management Plan, Corridor Management Entity, and Community Participation Program; and

WHEREAS, the Martin Grade Scenic Highway project is consistent with the Strategic Regional Policy Plan and the designation would help to further Regional Goal 1.1 a sustainable countryside; Regional 2.1 preserve natural systems; and Regional Goal 8.1, public facilities which provide a high quality of life;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL SUPPORTS THE DESIGNATION OF THE MARTIN GRADE SCENIC HIGHWAY IN WESTERN MARTIN COUNTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM.

DULY ADOPTED by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council this 17th day of September 2010.



Samuel J. Ferreri
Chairman



Michael J. Busha
Executive Director

DRAFT
Subject to modifications

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 6

From: Staff

Date: September 17, 2010 Council Meeting

Subject: Martin Grade Scenic Highway Resolution and Presentation by Mary Dawson,
Chair, Sustaining Community Lands, Inc.

Introduction

Sustaining Community Lands, Inc, a non-profit organization, is preparing an application for the Florida Scenic Highway Program to designate a portion of County Road 714 in western Martin County as a Florida Scenic Highway. The designation would apply to a 12-mile segment of a 2-lane road known as the Martin Grade, which extends from County Road 609 to State Road 710 (Exhibit 1). The main emphasis of the Martin Grade Scenic Highway project is to protect the unique canopy of mature native trees that covers a significant portion of the corridor and to help sustain the rural character of the area. Sustaining Community Lands, Inc. has requested that Council adopt a resolution in support of the proposed designation (Attachment A).

The tree canopy could be threatened by road widening, poor maintenance practices, and exotic species. Designation as a scenic highway will result in the development of a Corridor Management Plan, a Corridor Management Entity, and a Community Participation Program. These programs will create opportunities to improve and maintain the natural features of the corridor and remove invasive exotic species. More details on these programs are provided in Attachment B. Mary Dawson, Sustaining Community Lands, Inc. Chair and former Martin County Commissioner, will address Council at the meeting and request support for the project.

Recommendation

Council should adopt the attached resolution supporting designation of the Martin Grade Scenic Highway.

Attachments

SERVING ST. LUCIE, MARTIN AND INDIAN RIVER COUNTIES

Indian River

A TREASURE TO READ

ANNUAL ISSUE

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COAST**

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INTEREST

Vero's
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www.Indianrivermag.com \$4.95



FALL 2014

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volunteers

OAK HIGHWAY

BY DONNA CRARY



The Martin Grade Scenic Highway Project was formed to save one of the most beautiful highways in Martin County.

TOM CLAUD

A drive on the picturesque Martin Grade is a step back in time to Old Florida

It's not well known, and it's not long, but a picturesque stretch of road west of Stuart has attracted quite a bit of attention. Martin Grade, or The Grade as locals call it, is a 12-mile stretch from just east of Lake Okeechobee to the Allapattah Flats. Its official designation is Martin County Road 714.

It was "a two-rut, cut and grub road through woods and swamp from the 1920s until the 1950s and a graded sand road from then until the mid-1990s," according to an application to designate it a scenic highway. It is paved now and is a unique, densely lush green tunnel through much of its length.

Oaks, slash pines and palmettos line both sides of the road, their miles-long canopy both shading the road and offering up a vista not seen in other parts of Florida.

Driving The Grade is to journey back to a time in Florida's past when the peninsula was untouched by present-day civilization. "It is such a special place to go," said Brian Powers, a native resident of the area. "Once you get there you feel like you are in a wonderland, because there really isn't any place like it."

A movement is afoot to protect this treasure. Former Martin County commissioner Mary Dawson considers the project of extreme importance.

LIVING HISTORY



White-tailed deer are commonly seen in Allapattah Flats Preserve, which borders Martin Grade.

PAUL STRAUSS




THURLOW COLLECTION

Historic Martin Grade as it appeared in the 1930s.

“The tree canopy here is the visual symbol of what we’re trying to do in Martin County, which is to preserve the land, restore the wetlands to the point they can clean up the rivers, and to keep an agricultural lifestyle and ambience,” she said.

Dawson, with other community leaders, formed the Martin Grade Scenic Highway Project, a state-sponsored program run by the Florida Department of Transportation. Its mission is to designate Martin Grade a Florida Scenic Highway. They see the designation as a way to protect the tree canopy along the road and to preserve the rural nature of the area. “What you get from the Scenic Highway Project is an institution — a permanent group of citizens who care for the road,” said >>



A water lily is one of the many plants you may find at Allapattah Flats. The flowers are fragrant and are an important source of food to fish and wildlife.

PAUL STRAUSS

Dawson. "They are the watchdogs."

There is good reason to be vigilant about protecting Martin Grade. It has been in danger before.

In the early '90s, when Dawson was a commissioner, she worked closely with the local community to save the trees when the county paved the corridor. The state had wanted to widen the road, and that would have necessitated destruction of the canopy, which has sprung up through the years on what is now the road right of way. Dawson and the other commissioners were determined the trees would stay.

"The state required a plan that everything 100 feet from the center line of the road would come down," Dawson said. "The people in the community said: 'No. That's not what we want to do.' We worked with the people and came up with a plan to save the trees. By the mid-'90s, they paved the road. Everyone was very happy."

Then in 2006, another scare surfaced. Real estate development was the order of the day, the housing market was booming along the Treasure Coast, and the regional transportation agency wanted to four-lane Martin Grade. With no other east-west highway in the area, the situation for the trees seemed dire. But once again, local citizens united and spoke up for them. The people decided that the Florida Scenic Highway designation was a way to save The Grade.

"We needed to shine a light on the problem and to capture people's imaginations," said Dawson. "We found that this program was the best plan or way to go. It was successful at removing four-laning Martin Grade in the long-range planning. It would give us the weight to fight with."

If it is approved, the scenic designation will protect the canopy by removing invasive plants and establishing proper tree maintenance. It will also open the door to essential >>

funding to improve Martin Grade and the Allapattah Flats Management Area, a 20,000-acre public preserve located nearby. Setting up kiosks, picnic tables, and restrooms might make it friendly for passive recreation. Plans are under way to advertise on state and national websites to draw tourists who can enjoy hiking, fishing, horseback riding, primitive camping and hunting in the preserve.

If you're planning a hike through Allapattah Flats, be prepared for the rustic Florida outdoors. Bring some binoculars because you might well spot deer, gopher tortoises, gators and diverse bird and plant life. "You'll feel like one with nature," said Brian Powers, a member of the scenic project. "You'll feel more like you're a part of their world than they're a part of your world."

The Martin Grade Scenic Project also plans to provide educational programs by partnering with the University of Florida, Florida Atlantic University and the South Florida Water Management District. With all the recent concern about the health of the Indian River Lagoon, residents and visitors can learn about the importance of the uplands' ecosystem and its strong linkage to the lagoon and to the rivers that feed it.

Martin Grade is more than the green cathedral-like canopy that decorates the highway. The Grade is a way of connecting to Old Florida.

In another time, the rhythm of life moved to a slower beat in these parts as no one seemed to be in a hurry. The early Floridians were a hardy breed with grit and determination, who lived off the land and enjoyed its plenty.

Iris Wall, a resident of Indiantown since 1929, spent much of her childhood along The Grade. She vividly remembers when the ditches were bursting with bream. "We'd go out >>>



Wildlife is abundant in the wetlands near Martin Grade.



THOMAS WINTER

Martin Highway is a favorite Sunday drive for many.

there fishing, and Grandma would fry them for us right there on the road, and we'd have the best time," Wall said.

They hunted alligators there, too. "When you could get \$1.35 a foot for a gator hide, you know darn well Crackers would gator hunt," Wall said. "Gators were just all over the place." Selling those prized hides that were turned into purses and boots produced a good source of income.

Life in western Martin County was like a scene from Patrick Smith's *A Land Remembered*. Cattle ranching was king here. Herds of cows — lots of them — freely mixed and mingled in the swamps, scrub forests, and palmetto thickets until the fence law of 1949.

Bud Adams, one of Florida's top ranchers, remembers those days well. Griscom Bettle, a Philadelphia industrialist, purchased what is now Allapattah Flats from Southern States for \$22 an acre. Bettle wanted to fence in his large tract of land, so he hired Adams to inform neighboring ranchers of his intentions.

>>

CHECK IT OUT



The 12-mile Martin Grade, a half hour west of Stuart, runs on County Road 714 (Martin Highway) between State Road 609 (Allapattah Road) and State Road 710 (Warfield Boulevard). The Martin Grade takes you to the 22,000-acre Allapattah Flats Wildlife Management Area, which is open year-round to the public.

For more information about the Martin Grade Scenic Project, visit www.martingrade.org

Driving up to The Grade in his beat-up Mercury at dark, Adams was preparing to face trouble, but instead was met with a pleasant surprise. "They asked, 'Who's going to manage this land?' Then I said, 'We've hired a World War II veteran,'" Adams recalled. "Then they said, 'Well, we'll tell everybody he's the meanest son-of-a-gun in the country and to leave his fences and cattle alone.' I said, you know, I'd really appreciate that."

The property was fenced without incident, and Adams arranged for 1,500 Brahman cows to be sent to Bettel's ranch. Only three men on horseback, Adams included, drove those herds down Martin Grade.

One Grade local even credits the highway with miracles. Laura Mae Evans, who, with her husband, Mickey, has operated Dunklin Memorial Camp, an alcohol rehabilitation center along The Grade, since 1962, says they have witnessed divine interventions here for years, seeing men's lives changed and restored from drug abuse. But one particular memory stands out with her:

"It was our first Thanksgiving. We didn't have a turkey, and so we prayed," said Evans. "On the way driving home, I killed a turkey. I ran into him with my car and brought it back for Thanksgiving dinner."

Those early days are past, but traces of Old Florida remain, and the Martin Grade Scenic Highway Group is bent on preserving them, along with the timeless beauty of the canopy.

Says Mary Dawson: "If we can't save something that is so unique, so beautiful, and so meaningful — then what can we save?"

For more information about the Martin Grade Scenic Project, visit www.martingrade.org



Bud Adams, one of Florida's leading ranchers, once led a cattle drive down Martin Grade.