



Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL)

Lee County Transit J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge City of Sanibel

Stakeholder Interview Summary

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1. Introduction

Lee County Transit (LeeTran) in cooperation with its partners, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and the City of Sanibel, Florida (City), was awarded a grant through the Federal Transit Administration under the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Program (ATPPL). The program is designed to assist national parks and public lands, including wildlife Refuges, manage their visitation and accompanying transportation needs while meeting their primary goals. The goals of the ATPPL program are to:

- Conserve natural, historical, and cultural resources;
- Reduce congestion and pollution;
- Improve visitor mobility and accessibility;
- Enhance the visitor experience; and
- Ensure access to all, including" persons with disabilities.

As one of the most visited Refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge experiences high traffic volumes. This study is designed to explore appropriate and environmentally-sensitive solutions for managing the volume of visitors and their transportation needs maintaining an enjoyable visitor experience while minimizing potential disturbances to wildlife.

The Public Engagement Plan includes the public in a meaningful dialogue about all elements of the study. The public will drive the development and revision of alternatives as the process moves forward. Stakeholder interviews were held to help the project team understand the distinct differences in opinions across key interest groups, as well as the commonalities. Stakeholders are groups or organizations that may have a particular insight to the habits, needs and sentiments of people who utilize transportation on Sanibel Island and/or J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. This exercise was to open the lines of communication and let the residents, environmental groups, community organizations, civic organizations and businesses know that it is a priority to include them in the study. The interviews also assisted the project team in developing surveys.

2. Interview Process

The stakeholder list was developed by the project steering committee which is comprised of representatives of the partnering agencies on the project. The list of stakeholders is attached as Appendix A. The stakeholders received a letter explaining the interview process, the questions to be asked in the interviews and information about the project. The interview package is attached as Appendix B. The interviews were



conducted September 16 through 18 and October 7 and 8, 2008. The first group of 21 stakeholders was interviewed at the Refuge's Education Center and the second group of five stakeholders was interviewed at their place of business. All interviews were conducted informally using the questions developed for the interviews as a guideline.

This was the first of many opportunities for public involvement. We urge those identified as stakeholders, as well as the general public, to participate in the project. We continue to accept comments and questions through the project Web site at www.dingdarlingtransportation.com, public information workshops and project surveys.

3. Interview Outcomes (Synopsis)

A summary of answers follows each question, with selected quotes from these discussions. Some quotes are representative of the majority of stakeholders and others are unique and are deserving of attention. Some stakeholders did not answer any of the questions that were presented, but the information provided is important to document for the project. Copies of written comments that were received will be a part of the final Public Engagement Program Report.

1. How familiar are you with this project?

Most stakeholders had read the information that was sent to them. Some were familiar with the project through newspaper articles and the project Web site. Others had attended City Council meetings where Island transportation was a topic. The following quotes are representative of the comments received back from the interviewees:

- "I have read the documents sent by the survey team and read information in the newspapers. I have distributed the information you sent to our members, condominium board members and owners, so they could participate in our answers to you."
- "We have been following it since last December."
- "I am happy to see that you are looking at this."

2. How would you describe this project?

Most stakeholders believed that the purpose of this project is to reduce the number of vehicles travelling through "Ding" Darling and Sanibel so not to damage the habitat or the visitor experience of Sanibel. It was also stated that this was an opportunity to investigate to learn if there really were transportation issues on Sanibel and within the Refuge. The following representative comments were collected:

- To explore different "environmentally-sensitive" transportation alternatives



- “We are concerned that the desire to identify and promote solutions might get ahead of problem identification. We point out that whatever problems there may be are highly seasonal, occurring during a peak period from mid-January to mid-April.”
- It seems likely that many mass transit alternatives aimed at serving visitors could entail infrastructure investments on both the mainland and the Island. Cost justifying these investments for use three months out of the year could be a formidable hurdle.

3. How much support and awareness of the Refuge is in the community? In your group? Is it viewed as a vital element of Sanibel Island?

Every stakeholder agreed that the Refuge is a vital element of Sanibel. It is the “jewel in the crown” that is Sanibel. There is a “symbiotic relationship” between the Island and the Refuge.

- “Residents respect the Island's natural eco-system and want to protect what is native to this Island. The Refuge draws people to the Island because the Refuge enhances, educates, and inspires visitors to care about our environment. Without the Refuge, Sanibel Island would not be a world-class destination.”
- “The presence of the Refuge has set the tone for the planned development and preservation philosophy of the Island and the unique Sanibel Vision.”
- The Partnership between businesses, Refuge & environment is very important. Businesses wouldn’t survive without the natural environment here. “Naturally...You’ll love it here” is the Chamber’s motto.
- Traffic in the area is only troublesome a few times out of the year. Even for the Sunset Cruise we don’t have trouble getting people here. Seems like there are fewer cars on the Causeway now.

4. Is transportation to and from the Island as well as to, from and within the Refuge a significant item of concern in the community? With your group? If so, how significant?

Stakeholders believe that transportation leaving the Island, during Season in the afternoon is the only time there is an issue. Much of the congestion is created by service and maintenance workers, many who need their own vehicles/supplies, and day-trippers. With the construction of the new bridge, traffic leaving Island in the afternoon during Season is not as congested as it used to be. This traffic is not perceived to be a problem most of the year. However, it is important to provide for evacuation. Also, elderly residents often need to go off-Island to appointments and do not have a means of transportation. The following was said by interviewees:



- “Traffic on Sanibel is only bad about 400 hrs/yr so it is ridiculous to base all transportation on only 400 hours.”
- The four-way stop is not the culprit (modeled capacity actually less than what is there because traffic cop faster than a stop light). A traffic light would not help.
- “Need traffic help badly; on Periwinkle in peak Season (emergency) responses can be difficult. Traffic also backs up on Tarpon Bay Road.”
- “Transportation to the Island is not something that we should consider with this project. Day-trippers don’t spend money here, don’t understand the shelling rules and would just put more stress on the environment.”
- “The City has already addressed traffic and transportation issues and, should problems arise in the future, will consider implementing solutions suggested by the group of Sanibel citizens.”
- There is no problem getting here, the problem is leaving in afternoon during season.
- The problem is not the mode on the bike path, but the speed.
- Also could use some striping on the path

Discussions regarding concern about transportation through the Refuge:

Only a few stakeholders stated specifically that they believed transportation through the Refuge was a problem continuously through the year. Some said that parking was the biggest issue during Season. Another possibility discussed was that possibly it would be better for wildlife if private cars were no longer permitted. However, some mentioned that those who use the Refuge need access to private vehicles for equipment (cameras, fishing tackle, etc.). It was stated that the condition of the pavement and the length of Wildlife Drive are inhibiting factors to walking or biking through the Refuge.

- “Movement inside the Refuge seems okay as it is.”
- Cars on Wildlife Drive are the worst thing.

5. How do you and your group perceive the local balance of the environment, human activity and transportation? How do you think the community perceives the local balance of the environment, human activity and transportation?

The majority of stakeholders agree that currently there is a good balance but the increase in human activity and private vehicle usage will have a negative effect on the Island and the environment. Because of Sanibel’s high percentage of conservation lands, the stakeholders believe the community feels the same way. It is agreed that the community is environmentally focused and people



deliberately come to Sanibel for the environment. Any measures that are taken must be environmentally focused. The following comments were captured:

- Increasing human activity and greater dependence on automobile transportation threatens to upset the current balance that has been maintained in the past. In the future, the balance can only be maintained with environmentally-sensitive alternative transportation.
- "We regard the current balance as acceptable, but precarious."
- Environment first – people are guests. Transportation should fit within that idea to protect environment.
- Currently there is concern within our group due to decimation of wildlife population on the roads. Motorists follow too close and the second car hits the wildlife. Speed enforcement definitely helps with protecting the wildlife. 35 mph appears to be a good speed for everyone. Can't have speed limits too slow or else people will pass and that defeats the slower limit. Trash on roadsides creates more problems for wildlife as well.
- Alligators have become more defensive, possibly since they don't have as much of their own environment anymore. We must consider human activity and its role in the environment.

6. How do we protect the natural environment with the increase of human activity?

One of the most common suggestions to protect the environment was education. No matter how the transportation issues are addressed, they must include education about Sanibel and the natural ecosystem and how to "enjoy not destroy." The Islands are nearing full build-out, which should help limit the increase of people. The toll to enter the Island was identified as a factor that helps to limit the number of guests to the Island. Comments pertaining to protection of the natural environment include:

- It starts with education among the residents, visitors and employees on the Island. Everyone must make a conscious effort to create solutions for a better and cleaner future. Also, it may benefit the community to have an organization of citizens to help guide the community in balancing human activity with nature. This organization could act as a source of information for all citizens and businesses, take a strong leadership role in organizing efforts, and continually build an environment where humanity, wildlife, and natural habitats can co-exist.
- Limit cars (vehicles that use gasoline). Use electric or human powered transportation and make applicable to everyone.
- Need more efficient ways to get around the Island such as transit/trolley that ties to community



- Day-trippers should not have private gasoline vehicles on the island. They bring what they need and don't spend money. Need DVD presentation about how to be on a sanctuary island and not harm it
- Must co-exist with the critters here.
- Carrying capacity for beaches needs to be kept in mind, especially with snowy plover habitat
- Many more trolleys and trams, on & off-island with stops at restaurants, shopping, etc.
- Greener vehicles, but electric vehicles aren't big enough for whole family
- Increase the speed limit during the day on San-Cap Road and decrease it during the nighttime hours.
- No cars in Refuge
- Would be nice to have a more pedestrian friendly center/town center.
- Improve bike paths to include library and down Dunlop.
- Workers could use trolley from Ft. Myers from 7 a.m.-10 a.m. and again from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Cleaning people, maintenance & retail workers could use this.

7. What should be the transportation goals of the Refuge and the city?

City goals:

Stakeholders agree that the City's transportation goals should include reducing traffic congestion and encouraging alternate forms of transportation. The City should ensure that their goals do not negatively affect lifestyle and environment. If something new is introduced, it should be contextually correct for Sanibel.

Other ideas include:

- There should be a density/maximum capacity on Sanibel.
- No pollution, clean energy, no noise
- Make bike paths safer, especially on Periwinkle.
- During Season having an alternate way to get around
- Goal for transportation for Refuge and City: can be growth in visitation, but not with cars
- Ensure that existing shared paths are in shape to safely handle the traffic that uses them
- Provide directional signage to facilitate shared path traffic.
- Upgrade and maintain Sanibel's shared use path system so it can serve as an effective alternative to vehicular transportation on the Island.



Refuge goals:

Fewer stakeholders could comment on what they felt the Refuge should have as its goals. Those who commented believe the Refuge needs to reduce the traffic and noise currently experienced. However, it was suggested that residents would be unlikely to use transit (fishermen, photographers, and people who come in to sit and relax) through the Refuge. It was also suggested that there is a conflict between the Refuge wanting more visitors and the city not wanting more people on the Island. *(Note: While the Refuge is not seeking ways to increase visitation it is expected that visitation will increase over the coming years and the Refuge must plan to be able to manage it while protecting the resources and the quality of the visitors' experience.*

Other suggestions include:

- “There should be a long-term strategy to eliminate traffic in “Ding” Darling altogether.”
- “The Refuge is for animals, not a park for people.”
- Take cars off of Wildlife Drive.
- Use frequent electric trams (guided) to learn about the environment.
- Needs to be quiet

8. Is there a need for alternatives to the way residents and visitors travel within the Refuge and the city?

Refuge:

Stakeholders seem to agree that the more travel alternatives available to visitors through the Refuge, the better. On the whole, stakeholders stated that they didn't believe that the Refuge has many transportation issues. The main focus was often the Island as a whole. The tram operating through the Refuge seems to be working well. The tram appears to be a good step to getting more private vehicles off of Wildlife Drive and it is educational. The following alternative transportation opinions were mentioned by the interviewees:

- Many visitors to the Refuge bike to and through the Refuge or use bike-surreys.
- The new Tarpon Bay Explorers offers a very full and affordable range of transportation modes within the Refuge - bikes, kayaks, canoes.
- Tarpon Bay Explorers has trams but they aren't full & trailers aren't used. Have not added to fleet since 1989
- People are married to cars; drive through Refuge often coincides with low tide.



- Within Refuge, bikes are good, but some people need trolley availability.
- There have not been wildlife injuries along Wildlife Drive due to vehicles.
- Don't take the tram off of Wildlife Drive. People enjoy it.
- Segway would be good, but possible problem with surface.
- Most people are more concerned with wildlife. If you didn't allow private vehicles, allow trams, walking & biking. Could use golf carts, but would need to limit the number in there at one time.
- An alternative could be a mini-rail at intervals where people could get out and walk. Small that would fit on one side of the road. Establish time frames for vehicular access because not everyone wants a guided tour.

City:

Stakeholders have differing perspectives on this question. Most believe that current traffic congestion on the Island places a tremendous strain on the natural resources and that the City should seek alternative transportation options. Improvements to the shared use paths, such as striping and signage, are options that various stakeholders brought up.

- "Because everything is within a 10-mile radius, it makes it almost effortless to travel without leaving a carbon footprint."
- In regards to the shared use path, "We cannot legislate common sense or courtesy."
- Yes, bike paths are dangerous at night due to wildlife.

9. Are you and your group open to all transportation options (alternatives) in the Refuge and on the Island? Do you think the community is open to all transportation options (alternatives) in the Refuge and on the Island?

It appears that stakeholders are very open to transportation options. It was mentioned that Island residents and guests fully embrace and many prefer transportation options other than cars. Statements that support this include:

- "Our residents already enthusiastically bike, kayak, canoe and walk."
- "Sanibel's shared use paths are wonderful and are continually being improved."
- "We promote environmentally-friendly options enthusiastically. Guests often rent and enjoy bike-surreys."
- Bike paths have been the success on Sanibel.
- Widen the bike paths.
- A messenger service, whether on Segway or bike, might alleviate a lot of traffic from Island businesses (going to the bank, etc.) We are open to all alternatives.



- “It would be ideal to have vehicular traffic restricted to residents.”
- In Boca Grande the golf carts work great – could use small motorized vehicles if the speed limit were enforced.
- The Segways make it easy, effortless, and cost effective to transport oneself.
- Bicycles are also an easy, effortless, and cost effective way to transport oneself. There are many different styles to choose from according to your age and/or physical condition. There are recumbent bikes, trikes, electric bikes, and step-through bikes.
- Motor devices, such as motor scooters, get around 95 miles to the gallon. It makes it easy to save on gas, pollution, and the environment.
- Larger vehicles now interrupt the community since there is no weight limit on bridge. Set hours for commercial trucks if it would be enforceable
- Free bicycles throughout Island. Make them so no one would want to steal them.

Views Regarding Off-Island Alternatives:

- We would welcome public transportation for day-trippers with off-Island parking. However our employees would not use it because they need their cars.
- Tourists could park off-Island and there could be a permit situation for residents and workers.
- Would be great to have options to bring people over – especially with the high tolls. Electric buses are cool – here it would be particularly appropriate due to the noise reduction and the emissions reductions
- Tastefully done transit. Make connectivity in the community. Out of 78 head of households only 11 do not drive. They would probably take transport.
- Ferry could provide economic boost for Island. We would support offsite parking with a shuttle.
- Establish a remote parking facility and reception point on the mainland where visitors can leave their cars and use bikes or some form of low-pollution mass transit (such as trams) to visit the Island.
- Would need parking for an alternative that included off-Island stops
- Need to look at the average age of those who live here and amenities that are off-island, there is no system to help people to services on or off-island
- A tram would be wonderful to keep visitor vehicles off the Island. Ferries were used until 1964. If trams are used, visitors should be able to enter and leave the trams at strategically located points along the route so they can visit Sanibel shops and restaurants before or after their visit to “Ding” Darling. If possible, trams should be equipped with bike racks.
- Workers could use to get to employment, ‘Tween Waters, South Seas, etc. Workers will work as many hours as you give them, so have one



early in the morning and later at night for workers. A number of staff do not have a drivers' license.

- Some people really don't want people off-island to come over. I can see the point but we should have access for everyone too.

Views Regarding Trams:

- Must not be obtrusive.
- Internal system would be much better
- On-Island only to shopping areas, West Gulf resorts
- Off-line stops only for merchants
- Could help FISH and affordable housing with transportation accessibility
- Give people in hotels/condos the ability to use interconnected system.
- Need two separate loops. One for inter-island and one for Refuge.
- Sanibel and Captiva combined is too long
- Cannot have transit directly to Refuge without stopping at retail/restaurants on Sanibel.
- Open air trolley okay. Nothing too commercialized. Anything that fits in with the Island would be acceptable.
- A blend for residents and tourists. Need retail stops. A trolley system that doesn't use gas is environmentally friendly, 30-40 passenger, blends in with Island.
- Does a trolley or bus really make sense when you run the numbers of people /car and the amount of impact vs. the people in a trolley and the amount of impact? Is it a neutral gain/loss?
- Can't be open air in the summer. People don't want to sweat before going to dinner.

Views Regarding On-Island Alternatives:

- Free, frequent, go everywhere. Not really opposed to any mode. Environmentally friendly would be nice, but not mandatory.
- Condos with bookings & parking could be stops.
- Whatever it is should be inter-island
- Should have smaller trolley / tram around Island and larger for Refuge.
- Need gravel (permeable) lots at strategic locations & stops at critical places of interest.
- You need some cars on the Island because of the kayaks, photographers. How would these people use a tram?

Refuge Alternatives:

- What about closing Wildlife Drive to traffic and just have buses with the narrative.



- Electric vehicles, hydrogen engines, try alternating days with tram days and car days.
- The current tram is too steep a price.
- People need to be able to drive through Refuge.
- I think trams keep people too far away from the experience in "Ding" Darling.
- If you limit days where people can drive those days would be too jammed. Maybe need to think of a bigger plan e.g. ferry or rail.
- We think that trolley, bike, hike through the Refuge is a good idea, but the numbers will drop and that probably isn't what the Refuge wants. There would also be parking issues since cars couldn't go through drive.
- Ferry to the Refuge could be fun.
- Don't want to take away ability to stop for calming experience. Islanders could get access to golf carts (with locking area for equipment) with their yearly dues (entrance pass). More people bicycle during season
- A ferry would take at least 40 minutes to get from Tarpon Bay Explorers to open water due to idle zones, if there were to be enough dock space, and the dock was public, and if the channel was dredged more. Only about 3 ½ - 4 feet in low tide. About one hour, 10 minutes to get to mainland. Too difficult to combine ferry with trolley and other Islands.

10. Is there a transportation option (alternative) that you or your group perceives to not be palatable? Is there a transportation option (alternative) that the community perceives to not be palatable? What is the greatest challenge to transportation solutions at the Refuge and on the Island?

Stakeholders were consistent in saying that there should not be any busses on the Islands. Mass transit is not supported by the stakeholders. High cost is not acceptable. Stakeholders did not want a trolley like Fort Myers Beach where frequent in-line stops hold up traffic. Stops would have to be off-line and perhaps would be limited to specific areas and not service the entire Island. The carrying capacities of the beach were discussed and with limited parking now, the City has control over numbers. One stakeholder did not like the option of scooters as transportation.

Concerning off-Island alternatives:

- No off-Island parking and bringing people on.
- Don't need to take people off-island. Need too much parking and other facilities to accommodate this type of transit.
- "Any plan to bring people to the Island to play if they don't understand or appreciate the sensitive needs of our environment would obviously be counterproductive and disastrous. It will destroy the very thing you say you're trying to protect - Sanibel and the Refuge."



- “Implementing free or cheap transportation to get people to the Islands who will find it boring or lacking action and fun will kill the golden goose.”
- The systems need to connect to the rest of the county or you exclude social groups. Some people are concerned about more people – we may have more people but you will have fewer cars.
- Land not available to support off-Island visitors (includes parking, shelter, restaurants, restrooms) coming by mass transit.

Inter-Island alternatives:

- If I were a visitor and it didn’t stop on demand I would want them to and shouldn’t miss businesses – I see it as part of the experience
- Don’t want advertising, megaphones, double-decker, no big buses with diesel. Not sure people would want it to go by their homes, but would be important to have full Island service.
- Do not increase capacity on Periwinkle Way
- NO off-Island transit system. Don’t want to take away ability to stop where one wants.
- Unacceptable options include poorly scheduled or costly options, as the unlimited (toll) pass is available now.
- Do not shuttle people from mainland and dump them here.
- Worst idea: one that would require staff to use to get on & off Sanibel. No traffic lights
- No total elimination of vehicles for a long while
- One-way pairs (i.e. Periwinkle Way, northbound only and Gulf roads, southbound only) would not work here
- There should not be big buses but maybe a trolley system or a 40 ft Lee Tran bus.
- Four-way stops are much better than traffic lights

Greatest Challenges:

- Providing” enough frequency in stops to reduce wait times
- Would need more than one trolley
- Motivating people to use it
- Community buy-in
- The challenge is that time is more valuable than money
- When you have small children, you can’t sit around and wait for a trolley
- Probably can’t accomplish all goals with one system
- If bringing people on-island, would also need adequate off-Island parking

11. What would encourage people to use other modes than automobiles?

Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL)

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, City of Sanibel
Stakeholder Interview Summary



Stakeholders generally agreed that to get people to use other modes of transportation, they must be frequent, flexible and free. If other modes became inconvenient or more expensive to use personal automobiles, then more people would choose to use the alternate transportation. Also, by educating people and building awareness on the negative impacts from vehicle pollutants will encourage people to find other sources of transportation. Stakeholders generally agreed that most permanent residents would not use alternative transportation but visitors would. Residents/long term visitors seem least likely candidates for sacrificing the convenience of the automobile for any other alternative. Stakeholders believed that if the connectivity of the shared use paths over the Causeway and to the Summerlin path was better, more people may bike over instead of using automobiles. Other comments included:

- People need to know and understand the many different sources of alternative transportation.
- Encourage day-trip visitors to park off-Island (or on one of the causeway Islands) and use bicycles to reach Sanibel and "Ding" Darling.
- Place designated bike lanes or improved breakdown lanes along Summerlin Road and McGregor Boulevard to facilitate bicycle travel to the Sanibel Causeway.
- Refine the Causeway breakdown lanes to insure a continuous, safe passage of bicycles across all bridges and causeways. This should include the toll booth area, where cyclists are currently forced to merge with vehicles in the traffic lanes.
- Consider replacing the current breakdown lanes with designated bike lanes. This could be achieved rather easily by selecting an existing parking lot on Sanibel near the causeway and designating it as a "**trailhead**" for the Island. This would require: a) clearly and formally labeling the designated lot as a "trailhead" and directing visitors to it; and b) installing an Island directional map showing roads and pathways that would help guide visitors on their way. Two possible locations would seem to be candidates for serving as a trailhead: An obvious candidate is the parking lot next to the Sanibel-Captiva Visitors Center on Causeway Boulevard, which is ideally located at the entrance to the Island. Another is the current "Roadside Park" facility on Periwinkle Way near Donax Street, which is adjacent to the shared use path and close to major road intersections that lead to different parts of the Island.
- Incorporate the ferry into marketing for the Refuge on Sanibel.
- "Maybe you should provide an incentive for people to take special transport."
- Something that is unique, like a trolley but with hydrogen fuel, maybe an electric car with fins!
- Make more fun than a car
- Ability to put bikes on it



12. Are you involved in any statewide, county, city, etc. planning efforts that might impact this planning effort?

Many stakeholders attend City Council meetings and a few of them participate on various committees and boards that involve transportation issues. Some of these include: Lee County Pedestrian Committee, working on the City of Sanibel Shared Use Path Master Plan, Inter-local agreement for Sanibel's participation in the Lee County Transit Authority, Chamber of Commerce Board, Lee County Tourism Development Council and other transit research on Sanibel.

13. How has energy costs influenced the need for alternative transportation options?

Stakeholders on the average believed that the rising energy costs didn't affect residents' travel inter-island as much as it affected the tourists who had to come from somewhere else to the Island. We were told that some residents have made changes such as patronizing Island businesses instead of going to the mainland due to gas prices, but if people needed to go somewhere, it didn't stop them. On a whole though, throughout the country, stakeholders believed that energy prices were instrumental in changing people's habits, especially in transportation. Specific comments regarding energy costs included:

- "With the spike in gas prices, more people want to use conscience solutions for transportation that preserve and protect our Island's alternative transportation to become more cost effective while feeling environmentally friendly."
- "Energy costs have not influenced much of the Island population."
- "We would speculate that the greatest cost sensitivity will be found in short-term visitors. Here the impact may be whether the out-of-area visitors come to Southwest Florida at all, rather than whether they ride the few extra miles to Sanibel."
- People are still coming into stores, but not spending as much, if any.

14. What do you think it will take for this project to be successful?

Stakeholders agree that it may be a difficult task to get people to change their habits. However, if the program is branded to be better for Sanibel and the environment, and for the good of the Refuge, people may be more open to accepting it. The suggestion of a "trial period" or "pilot program" is thought to make the project more palatable. Public outreach and education was again suggested as a major component of the project. The more ownership people have in it the more successful it could be. It needs to be "Sanibel specific." Must be able to show that there is a need for changes. Requests included the following:



- “Maybe the Island papers could do a series on transportation alternatives used throughout country.”
- “Community and City must be on board. The public education component very important.”
- “Requirement is the big question.”
- Needs to be separate through “Ding” Darling. Something that would not impact community.
- Needs to be higher class, frequent, inexpensive.
- “Well considered and documented solutions will probably achieve wide acceptance; ill considered or bad ideas will face a chilly reception.”

15. Have you been involved in any past transportation or planning efforts on Sanibel?

Stakeholders had participated in various efforts on Sanibel that involved alternative transportation. Many were involved in the Shared Use Path Plan, some worked with other organizations to share transportation for events, and some were involved in trolley services that were available on the Island in the past. There was also a transportation study completed at the Refuge approximately ten years ago that some had participated in. Another stakeholder has had discussions with Lee Tran about getting transportation to/from Captiva Island.

16. As a commercial operator, are there any specific economic concerns you may have?

Stakeholders that fit the category of “commercial operator” were asked this question directly.

- Difficult to get people to work out here. During Season even harder. Off-Island transit may help that.
- Don’t want to increase crime on the Island and the environment needs to be preserved
- With the city's assistance, we have been able to provide limited alternative transportation options. We have been trying to bring more transportation options to the Island and Refuge, but there are limitations according to city, state, and federal laws. Our business would like to be a part of leading the community in seeking alternative transportation options.
- Commercial center here is remote to the beach unlike Fort Myers Beach.
- We currently enjoy working with FWS and the Refuge.
- Keep in mind that Captiva has a liquor license until 2 a.m. and Sanibel is until 1 a.m. BIG Arts often has events that continue until 10 p.m.



17. Do you have any questions?

Stakeholders were very interested in the timeline of the project and when and if they would have more opportunities for input. They were interested in what other types of information we would be gathering and if the project team was aware of information that has been collected in the past. Stakeholders also wondered why Lee Tran was involved.

- What is the next phase of the study?
- Are you looking at other unique places around the country?

Other Useful Information from Stakeholder Interviews

In addition, to providing responses to the questions developed for the interviews, many interviewees had additional ideas, comments and history that warrant presenting in this report.

Possible User Groups:

- Affordable housing would mean that fewer workers would have to commute to Island.
- Other modes may be difficult for the elderly.
- Need to keep in mind transit of kids, after school programs and the recreation system.
- At a minimum, we need to distinguish workers, residents/long term visitors and short-term visitors. They have different needs out of transit.
- On a typical peak work day, some 4000 workers use the causeway from the mainland. Within this group there is an important subdivision for contractors. These individuals, whether self-employed or employed by others, typically arrive alone and carrying tools or supplies. It seems unlikely that very many of them can be tempted away from their trucks.
- The other workers are largely employees of condominiums or retailers, with restaurants as a significant subcategory. This group of travelers has long been the focus of thinking about carpooling or mass transit, but thus far with no results.
- How many short-term visitors would actually use mass transit whatever form it took?
- Transportation for the students could possibly be included in these options if it would be supervised and blocked out for school children only. Need to meet safety requirements for children. Children are now prohibited from riding the trolleys while under school supervision.
- Shouldn't expect much usage of public transit by residents. If you had a tram, you would need stops within walking distance. The problem is if someone sees



something in "Ding" Darling and they want to stay and observe they can't because they are with a group. It must reduce emissions and be interpretive.

Shared Use Paths:

- Captiva should have a designated bike lane put on the road.
- The multi-uses allowed on the bike path crowd it.
- A speed limit on the bike path may keep cyclists off of it and put them on the road to alleviate the speed and congestion on path.
- Biking through the toll booth leaving the Island is an area of great concern.
- Make sure there are paths in place to connect residents and visitors with the facilities they need to reach. As one example, the complex of municipal buildings along Dunlop Road (City Hall, Police Department, BIG Arts, & Library) is a major destination for many Islanders but is currently not served by a shared use path.
- This includes factors such as path width, paving condition, vegetation encroachment, visibility at intersections, safety signage, etc. As an example, the Rabbit Road path could be a major artery for moving visitors from the beach area to the Refuge, but it is currently too narrow to carry much traffic.
- Since Sanibel's path users are often visitors who are unfamiliar with the Island, path directional signage could be very helpful.

Funding Alternatives:

- Possibly a sponsorship system?

History of Transportation Options and Additional Resources:

- There had been a trolley around 1981 on Sanibel that did run to Captiva
- We had a trolley from six resort properties to Periwinkle but we stopped after September 11th due to the economy. Currently we bring people from the Island to our location on the mainland for tours or guided fishing trips so that people don't have to pay the toll.
- 10 years ago were involved in a study to see how to get people through the Refuge. Should contact Lou Hinds, former Refuge director to see DVD, training manual (Sanibel & "Ding" were a case study). Can see historical visitor patterns. Info now at National Conservation Training Center.
- We asked the city for permission for a tram for a historical trolley tour but it was turned down. Was decided a trolley for historical purposes is not viable, but maybe for other purposes.
- City has denied them the possibility of a historical tour that would start from Royal Shell welcome center.
- Consult the Sanibel Report, 1975 with John Clark



- Get recent O+D surveys, especially one from Kittleson Associates. (contact John "Jack" Freeman in Orlando)
- City Traffic Committee Report, may not be as valuable
- You should speak with Jack Shelton with Lee County School District Transportation. Now using elaborate system to balance loads and track buses. Currently buses are not stored or maintained on-island. Buses often get stuck in congestion getting off-island.
- Docents at Refuge have huge insight
- Stop by and talk with Jimmy Anholt at the Fire Station on Palm Ridge. He used to run trolley on Sanibel.
- We are partnered with "Ding" Darling this year and we share school trips so instead of bringing two school buses over the school children can visit both the Refuge and the Shell Factory.

Miscellaneous comments:

- "With events, there is sort of adequate parking (on-island). At the Community Center, for the shell fair, there are only about 144 parking spots. We use a police officer to get people across the street. Could use outlets for off-Island parking.
- Don't landscape too close to road because then wildlife is close to road
- Anytime you can keep traffic down on-island is a good thing.
- People like the idea of being dropped off somewhere for a certain amount of time.

4. Conclusion

The feedback provided by the stakeholders clearly demonstrates wide support for the Refuge. Most stakeholders acknowledged that traffic congestion occurs while leaving the Island in the afternoon and that congestion is a problem that is further exacerbated during season. There appears to be a consensus on one element. Stakeholders do not want transit buses to be introduced, but are amenable some other type of tram (trolley) that is energy efficient. Should some type of transit mode of transportation be provided, it needs to be reliable, have one or more incentives such as cost, and a high level of frequency that would encourage people to use the system.

Stakeholders believe that reducing automobile traffic in the Refuge would be beneficial to the environment and that alternative types of transportation could accommodate visitors and reduce congestion.

The stakeholders will continue their involvement with the project by attending public workshops and providing feedback as alternatives are developed.



Appendix A Stakeholder List

	AGENCIES				
	Sanibel School	3840 Sanibel-Captiva Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	CHR	2401 Library Way	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Sanibel Historic Village and Museum	950 Dunlop Rd.	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Captiva Fire Control District	P.O. Box 477	Captiva	FL	33924
	Sanibel Police Department	800 Dunlop Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Sanibel Fire & Rescue District	2351 Palm Ridge Rd.	Sanibel	FL	33957
	ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS				
	Clinic for Rehabilitation of Wildlife	3883 Sanibel Captiva Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation	3333 Sanibel-Captiva Rd.	Sanibel	FL	33957
	BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS				
	Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce	1159 Causeway Rd.	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum	3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Sanibel Bicycle Club	P.O. Box 951	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Billy's Bikes	1509 Periwinkle Way	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Sanibel Taxi	695 Tarpon Bay Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Island Water Association	3651 Sanibel-Captiva Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS				
	Captiva Civic Association	11550 Chapin Lane	Captiva	FL	33934
	Sanibel Community Association	2173 Periwinkle Way	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Zonta Club of Sanibel & Captiva	P.O. Box 1244	Sanibel	FL	33957
	BIG (Barrier Island Group for the) Arts	900 Dunlop Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Committee of the Islands (COTI)	P.O. Box 88	Sanibel	FL	33957
	FISH (Friends in Service Here) of Sanibel	P.O. Box 854	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Condominium Association of Sanibel	P.O. Box 1041	Sanibel	FL	33957
	COMMERCIAL OPERATORS				
	RLR Investments	695 Tarpon Bay Road, Suite #2	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Adventures in Paradise	14341 Port Comfort Road	Fort Myers	FL	33908
	West Wind Inn	3345 West Gulf Drive	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Tarpon Bay Explorers	900 Tarpon Bay Road	Sanibel	FL	33957
	Stilwell Enterprises	11509 Andy Rosse Lane	Captiva	FL	33924



Appendix B
Stakeholder Interview Package

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Bob Janes
District One

October 6, 2008

Brian Bigelow
District Two

Interested Stakeholders

Ray Judah
District Three

**Subject: J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge
Alternative Transportation in Parks & Public Lands Study**

Tammy Hall
District Four

Frank Mann
District Five

Dear Stakeholders:

Donald D. Stilwell
County Manager

You were recently contacted about participating in an interview for the referenced study and are receiving this letter and a list of questions to prepare for the interview. Public input is a very important element of this project. An overview of the project is provided below. The interview questions are attached for your consideration prior to a scheduled interview. The thoughts and ideas of your organization will be very helpful to the project team. There will be many opportunities for public input throughout the project process such as public workshops and participation in surveys. Your organization will be notified of any upcoming public events. For additional information visit the project web site at www.DingDarlingTransportation.com

David M. Owen
County Attorney

Diana M. Parker
County Hearing Examiner

Project Overview

Lee County Transit (LeeTran) in cooperation with its partners, the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Sanibel, Florida, was awarded a grant through the Federal Transit Administration under the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Program (ATPPL). The program is designed to assist national parks and public lands (including wildlife refuges) in managing their visitation, while meeting the primary goal of providing sanctuary habitats for various wildlife. The goals of the ATPPL program are to:

- Conserve natural, historical, and cultural resources
- Reduce congestion and pollution
- Improve visitor mobility and accessibility
- Enhance the visitor experience

As one of the most visited refuges in the system, the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge experiences high traffic volumes. This study is designed to explore appropriate and environmentally sensitive solutions for managing the volume of visitors and their transportation needs in order to achieve an appropriate balance between an enjoyable visitor experience and the potential resultant disturbance of wildlife.

Traffic Studies, Capacity Studies and Alternatives

An inventory of all available information will lay the foundation for the development of feasible and implementable alternatives and analysis of the environmental consequences of those alternatives. The inventory will include information such as recreation use data, vegetative inventories, wildlife management plans, species recovery plans, recent project plans, GIS data, mailing lists, and other relevant information.

The project team will collect and analyze available crash data related to refuge access on Sanibel island to assist with the development of engineering alternatives that improve access, safety, and a multi-modal transportation environment. In addition, an origin-destination survey will be conducted of traffic entering/exiting Sanibel Island via Sanibel Causeway.

Data collected during the public involvement process will be instrumental in identifying recreational opportunities and desired outcomes. The evaluation of data will provide the needed information to identify desirable, as well as undesirable, recreational opportunities that currently exist or may be desirable in the future. This information will be used to assist recreation management in the allocation of specific areas of Sanibel Island to address recreation opportunities while also providing protection for the environment.

Environmental Analysis & Resource Management

Any project in a sensitive habitat area requires recognition of the potential impacts of a project's actions on all natural resources.

To ensure that this complex natural environment is fully understood, the capacity analysis and resource studies will encompass the full context of the sensitive habitats on Sanibel Island and incorporate them into the alternatives development. Resource capacity data and analysis will focus on the limits of human interaction with:

- Threatened and endangered species protected under the Endangered Species Act (federally listed species), state listed species, and other species of special concern
- All species (avian, mammalian, reptilian, amphibian, aquatic, etc.) with special breeding and reproduction needs on the island and refuge
- Sensitive habitat
- Natural processes
- Encroachment of non-native species
- Beaches (breeding/nesting habitat, protection, condition, restoration and erosion)
- Noise and air quality thresholds

October 6, 2008

page 3

The consultant will examine existing and desired capacities for automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and waterborne traffic, in addition to parking through public interaction and technical analysis. The identification of shared use path facilities needs and recommendations will build upon those outlined in the Comprehensive Shared Use Path Plan, such as, but not limited to:

- Identification of new paths
- Locations of path amenities,
- Mid-block crossing needs
- Safety and security
- Usage and maintenance

Thank you for your participation in the referenced study. If you have any questions, please contact the project's public involvement consultant, Kris Cella, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc. at 239-337-1071 or by email at kcella@cella.cc.

Sincerely,

Steve Myers
CEO
Lee County Transit

Paul Tritaik
Refuge Manager
J.N. "Ding" Darling
National Wildlife Refuge

Robert J. Duffy, AICP
Planning Director
City of Sanibel, Florida



J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge
Alternative Transportation in Parks & Public Lands Study
Stakeholders' Questions
October 6, 2008

1. How familiar are you with this project?
2. How would you describe this project?
3. How much support and awareness of the refuge is in the community? In your group? Is it viewed as a vital element of Sanibel Island?
4. Is transportation to and from the island as well as to, from and within the refuge a significant item of concern in the community? With your group? If so, how significant?
5. How do you and your group perceive the local balance of the environment, human activity and transportation? How do you think the community perceives the local balance of the environment, human activity and transportation?
6. How do we protect the natural environment with the increase of human activity?
7. What should be the transportation goals of the refuge and the city?
8. Is there a need for alternatives to the way residents and visitors travel within the refuge and the city?
9. Are you and your group open to all transportation options (alternatives) in the refuge and on the island? Do you think the community is open to all transportation options (alternatives) in the refuge and on the island?
10. Is there a transportation option (alternative) that you or your group perceives to not be palatable? Is there a transportation option (alternative) that the community perceives to not be palatable? What is the greatest challenge to transportation solutions at the refuge and on the island?
11. What would encourage people to use other modes than automobiles?
12. Are you involved in any statewide, county, city, etc. planning efforts that might impact this planning effort?

13. How has energy costs influenced the need for alternative transportation options?
14. As a commercial operator, are there any specific economic concerns you may have?
15. What do you think it will take for this project to be successful?
16. Have you been involved in any past transportation or planning efforts on Sanibel?
17. Do you have any questions?

Lee County Transit (LeeTran)
6035 Landing View Road
Fort Myers, FL 33907

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT:
Kris Cella, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc.
239-337-1071 FAX: 239-337-1076
kcella@cella.cc

**Local Agencies Partner on \$750,000
Alternative Transportation Study for J.N. “Ding” Darling, National Wildlife Refuge**

Visit the project web site to learn more and GET INVOLVED!

Fort Myers, FL, July 24, 2008 – Lee County Transit (LeeTran) in cooperation with its partners, the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Sanibel, Florida, was awarded a \$750,000 grant through the Federal Transit Administration under the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Program (ATPPL). The program is designed to assist national parks and public lands (including wildlife refuges) in managing their visitation, while meeting the primary goal of providing sanctuary habitats for various wildlife. The goals of the ATPPL program are to:

- Conserve natural, historical, and cultural resources
- Reduce congestion and pollution
- Improve visitor mobility and accessibility
- Enhance the visitor experience

The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most visited refuges in the country. With over 800,000 visitors annually, the refuge experiences high traffic volumes. This 22-month-long study is designed to explore appropriate and environmentally sensitive solutions for managing the volume of visitors and their transportation needs. In the coming months, the project team will be conducting interviews and surveys on Sanibel with stakeholders, residents, businesses, workers and visitors to obtain public insight and thoughts about transportation strategies.

For more information about Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands as it relates to J.N. “Ding” Darling, visit the new project website at www.dingdarlingtransportation.com. This web site will be updated throughout the study and will have links to public questionnaires, upcoming project events throughout the City of Sanibel, as well as post project results and efforts completed to date. We encourage everyone to check it out!

For more information contact Kris Cella, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc., 1631 Hendry Street, Fort Myers, FL 33901, call 239-337-1071, 1-877-496-1076 (toll-free) or email kcella@cella.cc