

1.0 Executive Summary

In 2005 the U.S. Census Bureau reported that St. Johns County, Florida was the 9th fastest-growing county within the United States. Between 2003 and 2004, the population of the county increased by 6.7%. Contributing to this population growth are numerous developments of regional impact (DRI's) and planned urban developments (PUD's), particularly in the northwest portion of the county. Other than I-95, no multi-lane north-south arterials exist in this area.

In 1995 St. Johns County petitioned the Florida Department of Transportation to lower I-95's minimum level of service standard pursuant to Chapter 14-94 of the Florida Administrative Code. Both parties subsequently signed a variance agreement, allowing the County to continue to approve developments while the Department temporarily lowered the level of service standard on I-95. As part of the agreement, St. Johns County was required to develop a Northwest Sector Plan as an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Department's primary requirement of the Northwest Sector Plan was that it include an arterial roadway connecting Racetrack Road and CR 208 (see Figure 1.1 – Project Location Map).

Following a corridor study for this arterial, the County commenced a Preliminary Engineering Study to examine alternative alignments, select a preferred alignment, and develop right-of-way plans. The arterial roadway, known as CR 2209, is to be a high-speed, rural, arterial with access control and is divided into north, central, and south segments, each with a specific time frame for the development of right-of-way plans, construction, and opening date.

Using design criteria from the FDOT Plans Preparation Manual, Design Standards, Florida Intersection Design Guide, and county land development regulations, numerous alignment alternatives were examined within the previously approved 1000'-wide corridor. The alignments traversed land dominated by agricultural and silvicultural land uses and remnant natural areas and wetlands, including a significant wetland system just east of the corridor. Major intersections are planned at CR 210, Leo Maguire Parkway, International Golf Parkway (IGP), SR 16, and CR 208. Stream crossings are planned at tributary of Trout Creek (south of CR 210), Mill Creek (north of IGP), and Turnbull Creek, which is located on a large tract of land owned by the County south of SR 16.

A comprehensive traffic study was undertaken and resulted in the need for 4 lanes between CR 208 and midway between IGP and SR 16. Six lanes are proposed between this point and CR 210. FDOT is in the process of performing studies for an Outer Beltway and SR 9B, both of which have a significant impact on traffic on CR 2209. A rural typical section featuring a 40'-wide median, 60 mph design speed, 12' multi-use path, 250' of right-of-way, and Class 3 access management along with four alternatives were carried forward to a public alternatives meeting on August 4, 2005 and a Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting on September 13, 2005. Of the four alternatives, a preferred alternative (Alternative 4) was requested for adoption by the BCC. No significant environmental or cultural impacts are encountered with the preferred alternative.

SilverLeaf Plantation is a proposed DRI (currently under county review) extending from IGP to just south of CR 210. The developer of SilverLeaf is proposing to provide the necessary right-of-way, design services, and construct CR 2209 from IGP to CR 210. At the September 13, 2005 BCC meeting, the County was directed to resolve typical section and alignment differences between Alternative 4 and the developer's proposal for CR 2209 through SilverLeaf. Subsequently, a consensus was achieved on the alignment and typical section for SilverLeaf and two other developments - World Commerce Center (between IGP and SR 16), and Murabella (south of SR 16). These agreements follow a previous 2005 agreement with the owner of the Rayland Tract (2 miles south of CR 210) regarding a right-of-way reservation of 250' across this tract, which is proposed to be used as wetland mitigation for another development.

The negotiations resulted in a new alternative, called the **Consensus Alignment**, which featured a 10' reduction in the median width and introduction of curb and gutter on the median side. An interim typical section between Leo Maguire Parkway (relocated within SilverLeaf) to the existing CR 2209 south of CR 210 consists of 6 lanes with curb and gutter. The design speed is reduced from 60 mph to 55 mph, although the access management remains Class 3. The reduced typical section allows 6 lanes to be placed in 200' of right-of-way if the 12' multi-use path is placed within a 75' scenic buffer, which is required by the County's land development regulations for DRI's and PUD's. Where a scenic buffer is not available, 250' of right-of-way is proposed between SR 16 and CR 210. South of SR 16, a 4-lane section is proposed within 200' of right-of-way.

The BCC adopted the Consensus Alignment and corresponding design criteria on January 24, 2006.