

B: Public Engagement Summary



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Study Purpose

The Okeechobee Blvd. and SR 7 corridor is rapidly redeveloping in both residential and non-residential uses. The corridor is one of the most traversed corridors in the County but holds the potential to be home to more residences and jobs immediately adjacent to the roadway, while also offering people the opportunity to walk, bike or use transit. Okeechobee Blvd. plays a vital part in our regional goals because it is a main corridor linking western and eastern communities, provides access to a variety of destinations that need transportation options, and services transit-dependent riders, such as low income and senior population. This roadway provides connections to Tri-Rail and Brightline, two critical regional transit systems, and this corridor has the potential to support incremental, higher-density and mixed-use redevelopment necessary for premium transit.

Unfortunately, many people who use the corridor feel the current system is failing them and are worried about the future of mobility. On top of this issue, the corridor cannot expand outwards to support new growth and is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Everglades to the west.

A new vision for mobility must be created to meet the needs of a growing and prosperous community long into the future. This study envisions an Okeechobee Blvd. and SR 7 as a “transit-first” roadway, meaning a more efficient growth pattern, supported by mobility choices for all users.

The study corridor is 13.5 miles long and passes through Palm Beach County, the Village of Wellington, the Village of Royal Palm Beach and the City of West Palm Beach. Palm Beach County has several north/south transit lines, but there is still a need for a rapid and reliable east/west line.

Ultimately this study aims to rethink the current menu of transportation choices people have in Palm Beach County to get around as the area welcomes new residents and visitors. Its vision aims to open a conversation about what transit will best support a safe, connected and multimodal transportation system. This memorandum summarizes the study’s public and stakeholder engagement component.

STUDY COMPONENTS

The Okeechobee Blvd & SR 7 Multimodal Corridor Study has five key components. Each component independently analyzes the impacts of transportation improvements along the corridor. When coordinated together, they identify safe and efficient multimodal transportation alternatives connecting people to places they live, work or play.



Land Use & Economic
Development Analysis



Health Impact
Assessment



Public & Stakeholder
Engagement



Transit Analysis

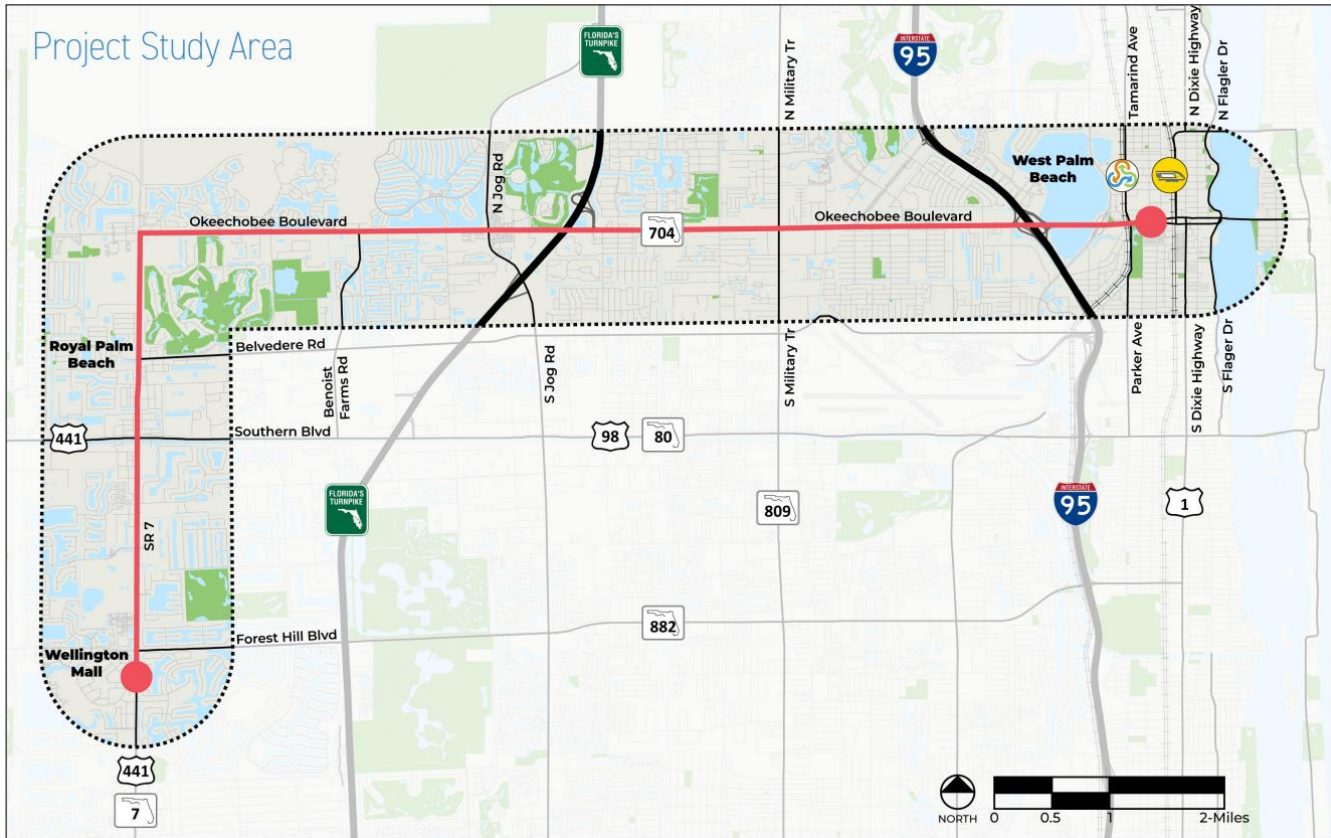


Roadway Analysis

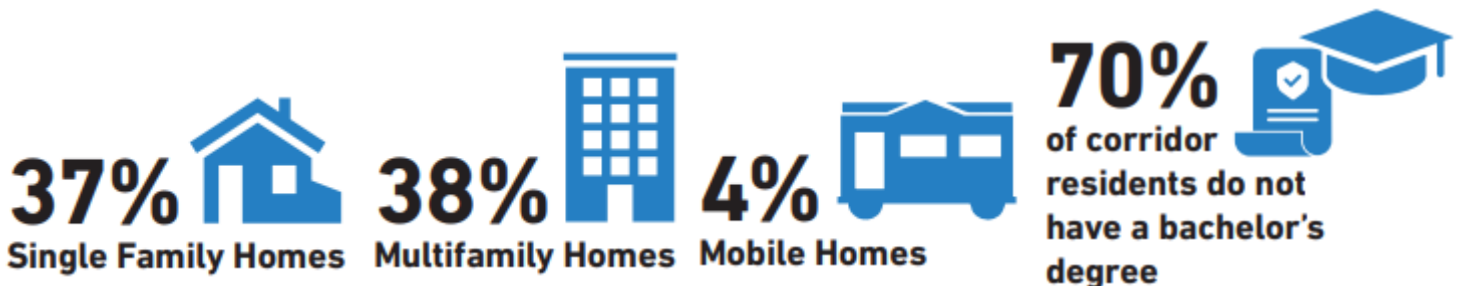
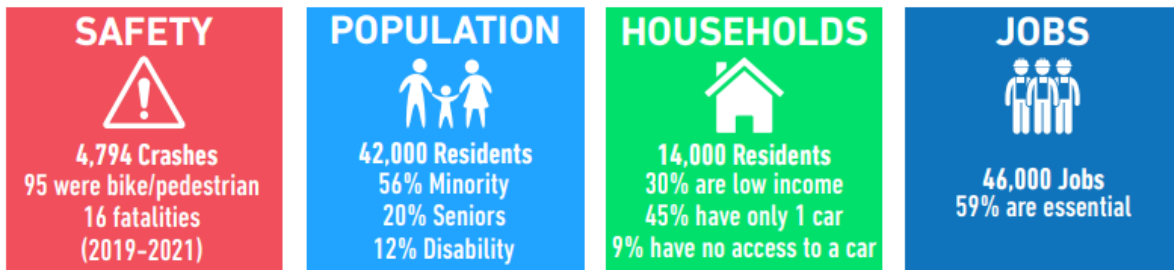
OKEECHOBEE BLVD & SR 7 MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR STUDY

Corridor Characteristics

The study corridor runs along SR 7 from The Wellington Mall to Okeechobee Blvd. and then east to downtown West Palm Beach.



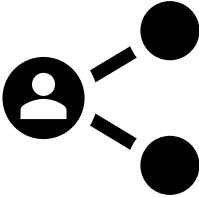


CORRIDOR CHARACTERISTICS



Increasing Awareness & Spreading the Word

The Palm Beach TPA and consultant team used various methods to help spread the word about the study and opportunities to engage. These methods are summarized below.

Social Media	
	<p>The TPA posted about the study and opportunities to engage via their social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.</p>
Newsletters	
	<p>The TPA included information in their newsletters about the study including links to a study survey and workshops.</p>
Direct Engagement with Local Agencies & Stakeholders	
	<p>The TPA engaged agencies and municipalities along the study corridor including Palm Beach County, the Village of Wellington, the Village of Royal Palm Beach, the City of West Palm Beach, and Westgate CRA, Palm Beach County Community Services, Palm Tran, Tri-Rail, Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council asking them to share the workshop and survey with their residents, riders, members and overall networks.</p>

Direct In-person Engagement with the Community



The TPA conducted one-on-one interviews of those traveling the corridor. TPA staff also went to the Royal Palm Beach Green Market. Staff shared study information, including survey opportunities to share their opinions.

Presentations to TPA Board and TAC, CAC, & VZAC Committees

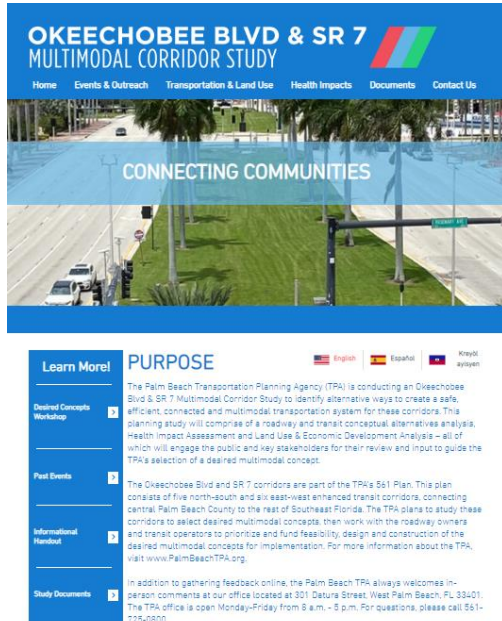


The consultant team, working closely with the TPA, presented about the study and opportunities to engage three individual times throughout the study process.

What tools did we use to engage?

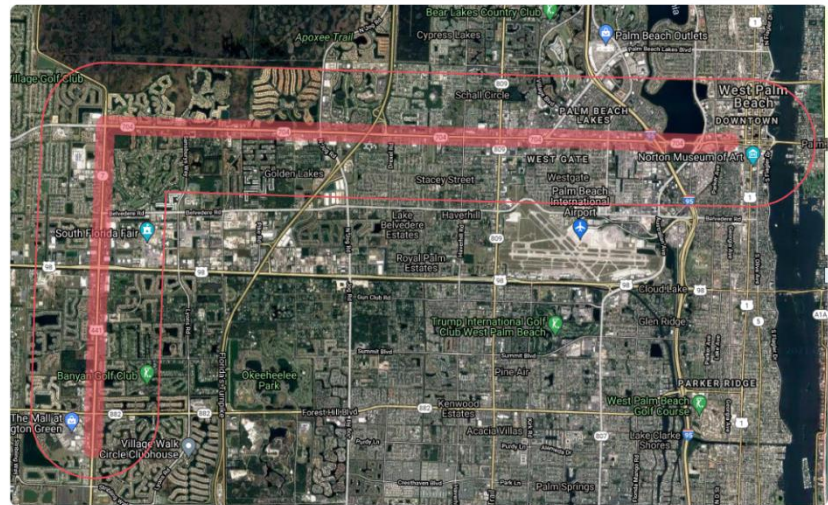
WEBSITE WITH INTERACTIVE MAP

A project website with an interactive map was launched and maintained throughout the study process. The website contained the study purpose, background, timeline, engagement opportunities, study documents, and an interactive map where website goers could leave comments either for specific locations or in general.



COMMENT MAP

Click on the map below to leave a comment



Some stats about the website are below:

- Launched August 19th, 2021
- Visits to the Website as of October 2022
 - 5,155
 - 2,255 unique visitors
- Interactive map comments: 106

A majority of the comments on the interactive map discussed issues involving pedestrian and bicycle safety, level of comfort walking and/or biking along the corridor and/or at intersections, lack of pedestrian crossings, speeding and lastly connectivity to places of interest.

- The map had the following categories for the public to choose from when making comments:
 - General comment
 - Bicycle
 - Development
 - Pedestrian
 - Public transportation
 - Vehicular
- General related comments included:
 - Lack of shade and walking facilities was a major theme.



OKEECHOBEE BLVD & SR 7 MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR STUDY

- Many felt the design of the corridor created unsafe conditions while traveling.
- Many felt the corridor did not adequately provide alternative options other than drive.
- Many felt the corridor created a highway-like division through their communities.
- Bicycle related comments:
 - Respondents commented about the level of comfort when biking along this corridor. Examples included (these are verbatim comments and have not been edited):
 - Okee from SR 7 to Turnpike ramps moves quick from a traffic perspective. Traffic signal coordination works well. Consider adding shared-use path on both sides of road since vehicles travel at a high rate of speed.
 - need safe bicycle trail to commute to downtown with kids
 - Deadly bike lane design
 - SO much room here to build nice well shaded multi-use trail. 14ft wide, a tree every 15 feet.
 - Everything is so far apart it isn't mass transportation, but it should be a cheap way to add a safe option
 - If there was a shared use path, this east/west canal could provide really useful access to the shopping centers on SR-7 from Lyons Road without having to suffer/brave the trek around the block.
 - The Southern Blvd bike lanes are terrifying. The sidewalk is protected by barricades, but cyclists are mere feet from 50+ MPH vehicles.
- Development related comments:
 - The following are a sampling of verbatim comments related to development:
 - Redevelop north side near West Gate to be more "urban" fronting street, reducing turning traffic
 - UPZONE all of Okeechobee Blvd east of Military Trail. Should have at least 4 or 5 story buildings with shops on the first floor and apartments on top. We have a housing affordability crisis, and we desperately need more housing. Turn this into a dense mixed used walkable corridor.
 - The land use west of the Turnpike is not conducive to high transit use. These planned unit developments cause so much car traffic, adding to congestion and pollution.
 - This intersection of Southern and 441, should be made into a cloverleaf to keep traffic moving on 441
 - Turn this "alley" along the canal into a multiuse trail, add some stage, bridge over 95 to a path around the lake. It could be a development driver similar to the BeltLine in Atlanta
- Pedestrian related comments included:
 - Respondents commented about the level of comfort when walking along and across this corridor. A sampling of verbatim comments is below:
 - While there are sidewalks along Okeechobee Blvd, with 8 lanes of traffic, the road noise of the sheer speed (70mph plus... it is a speedway between Jog Road and 441), we need green buffers and medians.
 - Too many lanes to cross. Why is Congress so many lanes?
 - Need shade here
 - Scary too cross here. Walk symbol too short, cars go too fast, run the red light
 - Wide radius of the corner and location of the crosswalk make pedestrians hard to see by vehicles turning right on red

- Public transportation related comments included:
 - Comments on Public Transportation included issues with connection to the downtown area, transfer locations, and last mile connections to origins and destinations. Having to make multiple transfers to get around was not a pleasant experience for some residents. A sampling of verbatim comments is shown below:
 - Include Okeechobee downtown and on Palm Beach, and *this* bus should go to the beach!!!
 - Convert middle lanes into a Bus Rapid Transit or Light Rail. Okeechobee is so dangerous with speeding up, slowing down, speeding up, slowing down, and just terrible design. Redevelop north side near West Gate to be more "urban" fronting street, reducing turning traffic.

WORKSHOPS

The TPA planned several public outreach opportunities through multimedia platforms as well as emails, handouts, and social media. Specifically, one in-person and virtual (i.e., hybrid) workshop, one virtual only workshop due to COVID-19, and one in-person only workshop. Feedback gathering tools used during the workshops and throughout the study included an online survey, an interactive map, and direct one-on-one discussions.

2 In-Person Workshops	2 Virtual Workshops	Online survey
		

Public Workshop 1:

Topic: Focused on identifying the issues and opportunities within the corridor.

Dates: In-person August 19, 2021, along with the virtual platform available to participants from August 19, 2021, through November 12, 2021

Public Workshop 2:

Topic: Focused on providing an overview of evaluated multimodal alternatives.

Dates: Held virtually from December 3, 2021, through January 17, 2022

Public Workshop 3: Focused on the desired multimodal concepts & next steps

Topic: Focused on identifying the issues and opportunities within the corridor.

Dates: In-person May 10, 2022

The project website has a summary of the workshop dates and in-person materials for Workshop 3: Events & Outreach | Okeechobee Blvd (palmbeachtpaokeestudy.org).

Workshop 1 - Issues and Opportunities

Topic: Focused on identifying the issues and opportunities within the corridor.

Dates: In-person August 19, 2021, along with the virtual platform available to participants from August 19, 2021, through November 12, 2021

Number of participants: 40 participants attended the workshop

Workshop Engagement Statistics:

- 1,326 Website views
- 508 unique views
- 809 survey visits & 236 completed surveys

Survey Feedback Statistics:

- 46% participants said they would use transit if it were introduced in the study area
- 26% participants voted for Congestion relief as #1 priority
- 20% participants voted for Health & Safety as #1 priority
- 15% participants voted to see alternative mobility choices on this corridor as a #1 priority

Survey Feedback by Focus Area:

To evaluate the opportunities, participants were asked about particular focus areas that included Multimodal Transportation, Land Use & Economic Development and Health and Equity.

Multimodal Transportation Ranking

They were specifically asked to rank what improvements they would like to see in terms of transportation along the corridor.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Automobile travel times | Building addition travel lanes and/or overpasses to reduce congestion and commute times. |
| 2. New roadway technologies | Improving road capacity and efficiency through enhanced signalization and technology |
| 3. Enhanced transit service | Implementing light rail or bus rapid transit with high frequency, long service hours and rapid boarding through level platforms and advance ticket purchasing. |
| 4. Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities | Increasing the quality of the pedestrian and bicycle environment with safe, connected facilities and supporting amenities |

Land Use & Economic Development Ranking

Participants were asked what they would like to see in the areas surrounding the transportation network.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Placemaking and Beautification | Enhancing community appearance through increased landscaping. Lighting, signage and/or architectural standards. |
| 2. Supporting Redevelopment | Encouraging redevelopment and repurposing of existing commercial centers and infill of vacant or underutilized properties |
| 3. Increasing Mixed-Use Development | Focusing on opportunities to integrate office, retail and housing. |
| 4. Increasing Density | Increasing density and intensity of new development by concentrating development building up rather than out and reducing surface parking. |



Health & Equity Ranking

With a focus on improving the quality of life and equitable access to services and amenities, participants were asked to rank the following topics.

1. Safety
2. Housing
3. Access
4. Health
5. Active Living

Virtual Public Workshop 2 Multimodal Alternatives

The second public workshop was open to participants from December 3rd, 2021, and was closed on January 17th, 2022. This workshop enabled participants to provide feedback on a set of alternatives as well as participate in an online survey to rank the different alternatives such as Elevated Light Rail Transit, Light Rail Transit, Center Bus Rapid Transit, Curb Bus Rapid Transit, BAT, Mixed and Existing.

Workshop Engagement Statistics:

- 1,112 Website views
- 446 unique views
- 726 survey visits & 188 completed surveys

Survey Feedback Statistics on Preferred Alternative:

- Transit alternative preferences of survey takers was:
 - 27% Elevated Light Rail Transit (LRT)
 - 14% Center-running LRT
 - 26% Center-running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
 - 15% Curbside Dedicated BRT
 - 2% Business Access and Transit (BAT) Lanes
 - 2% Mixed Traffic Bus
 - 15% Existing conditions

Comment Themes

Eighty-eight comments were shared with the TPA, most being very specific to current conditions and locations.

Workshop 3 – Transit Alternatives

Topic: Focused on identifying the issues and opportunities within the corridor.

Dates: The third public workshop held in-person on 10th May 2022.

Number of participants: 40 participants attended the workshop

Comment Cards Feedback:

- Thoughts about the study and findings

Responses:

- 'Light rail with express bus service to commercial district'
- 'Driving to downtown is stressful and time consuming'
- 'I am happy to see health and travel time as a metric. It was also interesting to see how the improvements can have an impact on affordable housing'
- 'The investment would benefit the county in both growth and equality'

- Thoughts on Center-Platform Dedicated Lane Light Rail Transit? Would you use it?

Responses:

- I would absolutely use LRT. This corridor is very important in my daily life. I would like to see more on intersection design
- Alternative 6 and Alternative 5 – "high quality, you could combat feelings of typical bus ride"

- Key Destinations users would like to connect to:

- Downtown West Palm Beach
- Waterfront
- Brightline

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

STORIES OF THE CORRIDOR

To evaluate the transit needs within the corridor, the team asked individuals about their experience with existing transit facilities. We learned about some of the unique struggles that they face while traveling along the corridor and how the incomplete multimodal facilities affected their everyday lives. Herein is a sampling of who we spoke to and their stories.

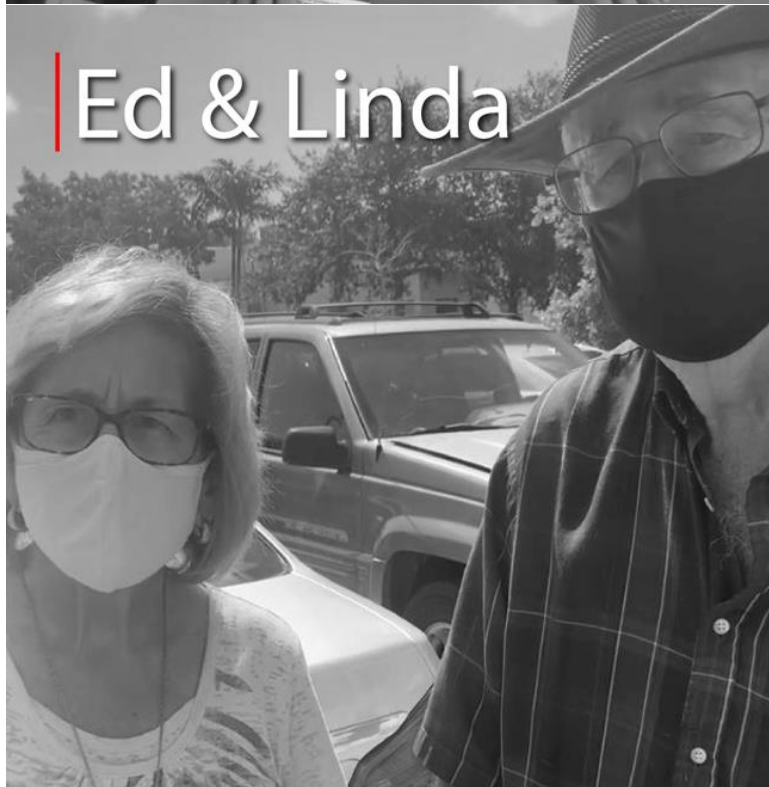


James

James—Royal Palm Beach

James is originally from New York and said he would consider a train as an option if it was convenient and reliable but feels like he will likely always need to drive in this area of the county. He commutes daily to his management job at the GNC from Royal Palm Beach along Okeechobee Blvd. He often uses alternative routes in the evening to return home to save time.

“A train could save me from having to own two vehicles, but the westbound evening traffic would have to be very bad.”

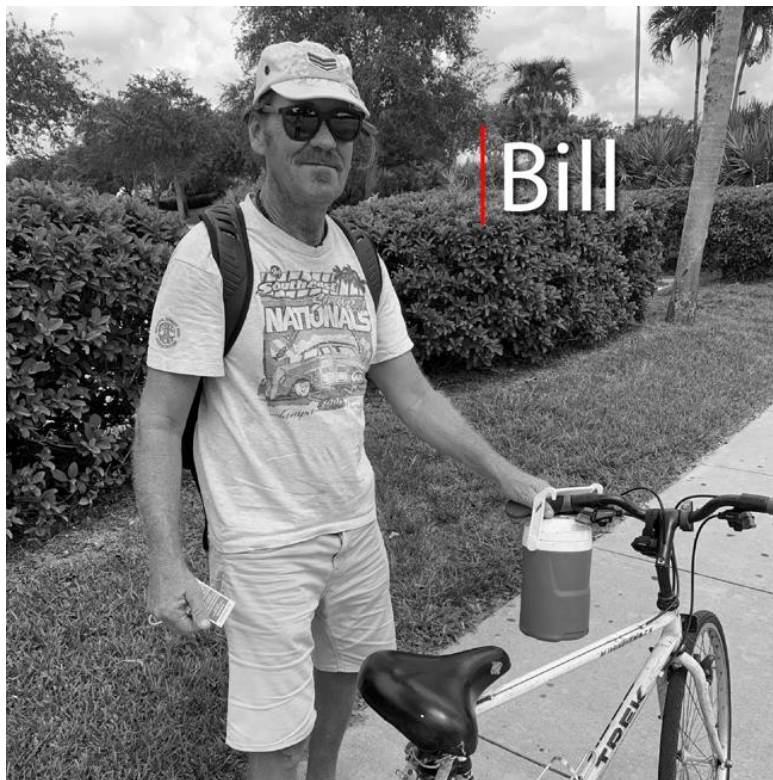


Ed & Linda

Ed & Linda - Haverhill

Originally from Buffalo, Ed and Linda have lived in the area for 50 years and drive everywhere. They would not feel safe riding a bike anywhere on Okeechobee Blvd. and indicated that the general auto-oriented environment and the business need for abundant parking makes transit a challenge.

“People just need to get off of their phones and police need to do more enforcement.”



Bill—Wellington

Bill has been riding his bike in the area for years and connects with transit, when convenient. He used to bike all the way from West Palm Beach to Royal Palm on Okeechobee Boulevard daily.

“...It’s very scary. Especially at Congress (Ave)”



Josette—Royal Palm

Josette is retired and has lived in Palm Beach for over 30 years. He generally rides the 52 twice per week to run errands and save money. He would like enhanced transit as a viable option for east west commuting.

“My bus is 30 minutes late and it isn’t showing me when it will come. I just called an Uber.”

Crystal



Crystal—Palm Beach

Crystal uses the bus every day to pick her children up from daycare and run errands. She says the bus is convenient especially for her relatively short commutes, but she would like to see a safe midblock crossing near her regular stop at Military Trail and Okeechobee Blvd.

“I have a special needs son... if they call, I have to get there and that means I will just cross whenever it looks clear.”

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AGENCIES & STAKEHOLDERS

Dozens of stakeholders were engaged throughout the study process covering various agencies and topics of interest. Herein is a list of the general list of stakeholders. This group of people were engaged in one-on-one discussions either at the onset of the study or towards the conclusion of the study to get feedback on a vision and the desired concept.

Name	Title	Jurisdiction/Business
Alberto Micha-Buzali	Manager	Atlas Royal Palm LLC
Ali Soule	Chief of Staff	Brightline
Mary Lou Bedford	Executive Director	Central Palm Beach Chamber Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches
Donald Burgess	President/CEO	
Christina Lambert	City Commissioner	City of West Palm Beach
Christy Fox	City Commissioner	City of West Palm Beach
Joe Peduzzi	City Commissioner	City of West Palm Beach
Keith James	Mayor of West Palm Beach	City of West Palm Beach
Kelly Shoaf	City Commissioner	City of West Palm Beach
Rick Greene	Development Services Director	City of West Palm Beach
Nathan Zieg	Manager	Cross County Owner LLC
Michele Jacobs	President/CEO	Economic Council
Andrew Waldman	MGRM	Fairways LLC



Name	Title	Jurisdiction/Business
Birgit Olkuch	Modal Development	Florida Department of Transportation
Steve Braun	Director of Development	Florida Department of Transportation
Mario Lamar	Partner	Four On Partners, Inc
Adam Freedman	Manager	Lotis Wellington
Ann-Marie Taylor	VP	Palm Beach Atlantic University
Greg Weiss	County Commissioner	Palm Beach County
Melissa McKinlay	County Commissioner	Palm Beach County
Patrick Rutter	Assistant County Administrator	Palm Beach County
David Ricks	County Engineer	Palm Beach County
Mack Bernard	County Commissioner	Palm Beach County
Ramsay Bulkeley	PZB Director	Palm Beach County
Todd Bonlarron	Assistant County Administrator	Palm Beach County
Verdenia Baker	County Administrator	Palm Beach County
Shawn J. Hall	cc for Clinton Forbes, Exec. Dir.	Palm Beach County
Denise Pennell	Senior Planner/Project Manager	Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency
Elizee Michel	Executive Director	Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency
Clinton Forbes	Executive Director	Palm Tran
Joe Carosella	Registered Agent	Pine Trail Square LLC
Craig Menin	Manager	Rosebud Wellington Regal One LLC
Loraine Cargill	Tri-Rail SFRTA Executive Director	SFRTA
		TM Wellington Green Mall
Merja Tuttle	Manager	Tuttle Land Holdings, LLC
Jeff Hmara	Councilman and TPA Board Alternate	Village of Royal Palm Beach
Fred Pinto	Mayor and TPA Chair	Village of Royal Palm Beach
Ray Liggins	Village Manager	Village of Royal Palm Beach
Jim Barnes	Village Manager	Village of Wellington
Anne Gerwig	Mayor of Wellington	Village of Wellington
John T. McGovern	Councilman and TPA Board Alternate	Village of Wellington
Michael Napoleone	Councilman and TPA Board Member	Village of Wellington
Raphael Clemente	Executive Director	WPB DDA

The following land use and economic development stakeholders were engaged throughout the study process. Two series of one-on-one sessions occurred with the land use stakeholders as well as an overall workshop. Current development and development potential was discussed with this group.

Name	Title	Jurisdiction/Business
Alex Hansen	Development Services Staff Member	City of West Palm Beach
Allison Justice	Deputy Director	West Palm Beach CRA
Bryan Davis		Palm Beach County Planning & Zoning
Chris Marsh	Village Engineer	Royal Palm Beach
Chris Roog	Executive Director	West Palm Beach CRA
Dana Little	Urban Design Director	Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
Denise Pennell	Senior Planner/Project Manager	Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency
Donald Burgess	President/CEO	Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches
Elizee Michel	Executive Director	Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency
Kevin Fischer	Deputy Planning Director	Palm Beach County Planning
Mary-Lou Bedford	CEO	Central Chamber of Commerce
Michael O'Dell	Assistant Planning Director	Wellington
Patricia Behn	GISP - Planning Director	Palm Beach County Planning
Ramsay Bulkeley	Executive Director of Planning & Zoning	Palm Beach County Planning
Ray Liggins	Village Manager	Royal Palm Beach
Rick Greene	Director of Development Services	West Palm Beach
Tim Stillings	Director of Planning	Wellington

The following health related stakeholders were engaged throughout the study process. This group met four times throughout the process to give feedback on existing issues, potential strategies and needs and the overall health assessment process and integration into the overall study.

Name	Title	Business
Ken Reinhardt	Community Leader	AARP
Jennifer Bustamante	Representative	American Cancer Society
Tonya Ehrhardt	Regional V.P. of Community Health & CPR	American Heart Association
Sheree Wolliston	Facilitator	American Heart Association Health Equity Committee
Jayson Babel	Project Manager	Ann Storck Center, Inc.
Dennis Martin	Representative	Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach/Treasure Coast
Monique Wellons	Representative	Changes Center
Eric Dumbaugh	Professor	FAU School of Urban & Regional Planning
David Summers	Trauma Nurse Outreach Coordinator	HCD PBC
Andrea Stephenson	Executive Director	Health Council of SE Florida
Celine Ginsburg	Director of Planning	Health Council of SE Florida
Joseph Rombough	Health Planner & Special Program Manager	Health Council of SE Florida



Name	Title	Business
Brittani Coore	Health Planner and Program Manager	Health Council of SE Florida
Jeanette Marshall	Representative	Healthier Together PBC
Phyllis King	Dean, School of Nursing	Palm Beach Atlantic University
Lou Ferri	Representative	Palm Beach County
James Greene	Director	Palm Beach County Community Services
Shirley Lanier	Health Planner II	Palm Beach County Community Services
David Martin Rafaidus	Senior Planner	Palm Beach County Department of Community Services
Abby Goodwin	V.P. Grant & Community Investments	Palm Healthcare Foundation
Eric Stern	Physical, Health, & Driver Edu Administrator	PBC Schools
Melissa Jordan	Interim Director	Public Health Research
Nate Cousineau	Program Officer	Quantum Foundation
Randy Scheid	V.P. Programs	Quantum Foundation
Don Chester	Assistant Administrator	St. Mary's Medical Center
Seth Bernstein	Exec V.P. of Community Investments	United Way PBC
JohnMark Atchley	Chief Operating Officer	Wellington Regional Medical Center
Colleen Thielk	Chief Nursing Officer	Wellington Regional Medical Center
Andy McCausland	Representative	Palm Healthcare Foundation
Sally Chester	RN & Education Manager	Palm Healthcare Foundation