

Citizen Participation in Transportation Planning - the Habitat for Bears Campaign

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This paper outlines some of the tools, from statutory provisions to grassroots organizing, that are available to the citizen who wants to participate in transportation planning and specific road projects in the state of Florida. Section One describes the "Habitat For Bears Campaign" and the campaign's work 1) to protect the Florida black bear and wildlife habitat from adverse impacts of roads, and 2) to improve upon existing conditions where wildlife crossings and/or retrofitting of old roads and bridges are needed. Section Two gives brief summaries of the major laws and oversight bodies that provide an opportunity for the citizen to influence the transportation planning process. While this outline attempts to be comprehensive by addressing the federal, state, and local levels, it is not an exhaustive list. The last section relates some of the institutional, bureaucratic, legal and scientific challenges to the more effective consideration of wildlife in highway planning.

Section One: the Habitat for Bears Campaign

The Habitat For Bears Campaign, a joint project of Defenders of Wildlife and the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club, works to protect the Florida black bear, bear habitat, and associated biodiversity. The campaign was initiated by Defenders as the organization recognized the increasing threats to the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) and the need for protective action. The Florida black bear is a subspecies of the American black bear that is designated as a threatened species by the state and is a candidate for federal listing. Habitat For Bears receives its primary guidance and funding from Defenders.

Defenders of Wildlife has been a leading advocate for the protection of wildlife in their native habitats since 1947. It is a non-profit conservation organization based in Washington, DC with over 240,000 members and supporters nationwide. Defenders staff includes issue experts, conservation biologists, attorneys, legislative analysts and educators. The organization has taken a primary role in a variety of conservation campaigns, such as, the return of wolves to Yellowstone, establishing a livestock compensation fund, and protecting endangered species in the wild and in the courts. Defenders has recently expanded its involvement in highway issues affecting wildlife, and cosponsored the 1998 International Conference on Wildlife Ecology and Transportation.

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 and has over 650,000 members. Club volunteers are active in communities throughout the country, working to preserve wildlife and wild lands, conserve natural resources, and create healthy, pollution free communities. The 20,000 members of the Florida Chapter are organized into 16 local groups. Each group participates in conservation campaigns and political campaigns, holds monthly education meetings, and provides outings to Club members and the public. For many years Sierra Club volunteers have worked for increased regulatory protection of the Florida black bear, the development of a black bear management plan, and establishment of a state black bear management committee.

The Habitat For Bears Campaign (HFB or campaign) was launched in late 1993. Defenders staff in Washington, DC provide supervision, technical and support services, working with

the Florida Field Coordinators to establish program plans and priorities. The Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club provides issue expertise, an established grassroots conservation network in the state, and lobbying support. The two part-time HFB Field Coordinators, both wildlife biologists based in Florida, are assisted by volunteer Regional Coordinators and a growing network of 1000 citizen activists. Special HFB program goals may also be supported through volunteer or temporary staff positions, such as a Chairperson for the children's education program (Kids For Cubs) and an intern assisting in the campaign's work to establish a "Conserve Wildlife" specialty license plate. Staff and volunteers work on a variety of programs including public education, land acquisition, and transportation advocacy.

HFB focuses its work on three major issues: habitat protection, preventing habitat fragmentation, and preventing roadkills. Road projects are often at the heart of these issues. The primary direct cause of Florida black bear mortality is being victim to roadkill. Transportation projects can also have an immense impact on wildlife habitat. Effects can be direct, such as, the loss of habitat beneath and along the roadway or presenting a barrier to wildlife movement, or they can be indirect, such as, fragmentation of large natural areas into habitat islands that can result in population isolation and inbreeding.

The HFB campaign recognizes that transportation policy, plans, and projects are crucial factors affecting the survival and recovery of the Florida black bear. Ultimately, road projects can be the result of decisions made at the local, district, state, and federal levels, and thus, the campaign works at all these levels, through its own action or in a supportive role to the broader efforts of Defenders and the Sierra Club.

One of the campaign's key objectives is to participate proactively in Florida's long-term transportation planning process. Prior to the establishment of the campaign, state transportation officials in Florida claimed that conservationists became involved in the transportation process too late. They argued that conservationists became involved after projects had gained widespread political support and were in the final planning stages. Since its inception, the campaign has been actively involved in the public involvement process for state transportation projects established by Congress in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). This process is a highly decentralized one. Local counties and urban entities called "metropolitan planning organizations" or MPO's develop lists of transportation priorities. These priorities are communicated to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regional districts and provide the basis for annual five year work programs generated by each work program proposed by various FDOT regional districts. In fact, the HFB campaign's statewide Regional Coordinator structure was established to be consistent with FDOT's district boundaries.

In analyzing the five year work programs developed by various FDOT regions, the campaign has relied on valuable studies conducted by the state wildlife agency, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. In particular, in 1994, the Commission completed a comprehensive study of wildlife habitat areas in Florida that should be conserved if key components of the

state's biological diversity are to be maintained. The study entitled "Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System", identifies "strategic habitat conservation areas throughout the state that are in need of additional protection. In addition, the Commission has produced maps identifying highway locations where Florida bears are frequently killed. The "Gaps" report and the bear roadkill data provided invaluable tools. The "Gaps" report helps to identify strategically important wildlife habitat that should not be further fragmented through construction of new or expanded highways. The bear roadkill maps provide a basis for identifying where additional wildlife underpasses should be built.

The transportation objectives of the campaign focus on selected priority projects and policy issues. With respect to specific road proposals HFB's top priority is Florida's State Road 40. SR-40 runs east-west through the Ocala National Forest and connects the cities of Daytona Beach and Ocala. HFB has made a commitment to assuring that road projects do not harm, but instead help, the Ocala National Forest and the Ocala/Wekiwa region so that it can remain of adequate size and habitat quality to support long-term survival of the Florida black bear population. HFB has helped to organize its activist network and allies to stop the construction of road widening projects (e.g., SR 40, 19) that would lead to habitat loss and fragmentation in the Ocala National Forest and other public lands, maintain the Ocala/Wekiwa habitat connection, assure that wildlife crossings are installed at the sites identified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission as persistent bear roadkill locations, support research to determine the density of forest roads and access routes that can be accommodated by a bear population without causing adverse impacts, and explore scenic highway status for SR 40. Currently, plans to expand SR-40 through the Ocala National Forest from two to four lanes have been dropped; however, road projects that could harm the area continue and a suitable regional transportation plan that will help relieve encroachment on the national forest and Ocala/Wekiwa ecosystem has yet to be developed. (Listed below are a variety of the HFB campaign actions, many in association with conservation allies, that are being undertaken on this project.)

Another area of the state that HFB is focusing in on is Florida's upper west coast, or Big Bend region. Several major road proposals, including diversion of traffic into the region, threaten to change the Big Bend's "Nature Coast" into a reflection of the east coast's linear metropolis. These road projects include the Suncoast Tollway, the Northern Extension of the Florida Turnpike, and the eventual conversion of Highways 19/98 into a limited access interstate.

With respect to statewide issues, the campaign was successful in requesting that the Florida Transportation Commission require a review and report on FDOT environmental policies and status. The campaign continues to work for the implementation of FDOT's policies relating to avoidance of adverse impacts to wildlife habitat and for installation of wildlife crossings where appropriate. Another of HFB's goals is to ensure that the numerous bridge replacements that will be necessary throughout the state during the next 10 to 20 years, will be designed to span both the waterway and the adjacent unsubmerged areas that are needed as movement corridors for bears and other wildlife species. In this regard, the campaign recently was successful in advocating a wider replacement for the bridge spanning the St Johns river on State Road 46 near Sanford in central Florida.

The Habitat For Bears Campaign uses a wide range of methods to communicate the message that transportation decisions can significantly affect wildlife protection and to urge decision makers to implement environmentally-sound transportation policies and road projects. Following are examples of actions that HFB staff and volunteers are using to influence decisions that are being made about the fate of our Florida road

system, the fate of the Florida bear, and Florida's rich biological diversity. The list begins with HFB's work to stop the multi-laning of State Road 40 and is followed by other transportation related actions undertaken by the campaign, categorized as: Federal and State Policy, Public Education, Coordination with Agencies, Media, Litigation, Research, and Funding.

The Ocala/Wekiwa Region and State Road 40

- *Highlight SR 40 and the Ocala National Forest in statewide educational slide programs
- *Provide background and updates in the HFB newsletter "Florida Bear"
- *Cosponsor a celebration of the opening of the SR 46 Bear/Wildlife Underpass, promote media coverage of the event.
- *Lobby legislature for reinstatement of FDOT funds to continue the SR 46 underpass research
- *Submit written comments in response to the 'clearinghouse' process in which all agencies and interested parties are provided an opportunity to comment on state actions. State reasons for opposition to the multi-laning of SR 40.
- *Forward SR 40 notice to US Fish and Wildlife Service and request comments.
- *Distribute Action Alerts to volunteer network when significant action public hearings are imminent. Volunteers respond with letters, faxes, and calls, and testify at public hearings.
- *Form alliances with local and state conservation groups working to protect the region.
- *Obtain information from the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission regarding bear roadkills and the priority sites for installation of bear crossings.
- *Cosponsor (with Wildlands CPR) a road activist training workshop, "Highways and Habitat," to educate participants about the ecological effects of roads and citizen access to the transportation planning process. Workshop was held in the Ocala National Forest and SR 40 was a primary subject in our field trip.
- *Meet with the regional director of the Federal Highway Administration
- *Meet with the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation
- *Meet with the Supervisor of the national forests in Florida
- *Meet with Transportation District Supervisor
- *Meet with SR-40 Project Supervisor
- *Review and copy files at the FDOT district office and Tallahassee office to obtain information about the agency's review of the project
- *Testify before the Florida Transportation Commission
- *Testify during Five Year Workplan review hearings, in District V and elsewhere in the state.
- *Participate in focus group meetings to identify issues to be examined in an Environmental Impact Statement
- *Through letters, testimony, and visits to agency heads and elected officials, protest the attempt to avoid NEPA responsibility to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement examining the region and completing an alternatives analysis.
- *Participate as member of Technical Advisory Group
- *Lead field trips into bear habitat and examine bear sign along with exploration of other aspects of the natural community
- *Support land acquisition projects that contribute to conservation and connection of the greater ecosystem -- submit list of priority projects to the Conservation and Recreation Lands Program, support purchase of acreage in the vicinity of planned wildlife crossings, support purchase of acreage situated between existing public lands and the roadway to prevent commercial development and sprawl and to complete the public lands system.
- *Participate as member of the Wekiwa Ecosystem Working Group

- *Explore legislative options for changing the status of the roadways in the region
- *Secure the assistance of an attorney to advise SR 40 working group.
- *Plan a festival to celebrate the values (ecological, economic, recreational, etc) of the bear, the forest, and the character of the region.

Federal and State Transportation Policy

Present testimony to the Florida Transportation Commission requesting a review and report on FDOT environmental policies and policy implementation. This request was subsequently granted.

- *Gather petition signatures, subsequently presented to the Secretary of Transportation, calling for avoidance of wildlife habitat and supporting the installation of wildlife crossings where appropriate.
- *ISTEA- Join with Washington staff to visit with Florida Senators and Representatives to request funding and legislative language that support DOT projects that enhance wildlife protection.
- *National Forest Management Act - Lobby for forest management reforms that maintain the integrity of our national forests and prohibit unnecessary and costly road building.
- *National Forest Management Plans - Provide comments, including recommendations regarding density and uses of forest roads.

Public Education

- *Present slide program, "The Imperiled Bears of Florida," at meetings of civic and conservation groups throughout the state. The program centers on the bear but educates listeners about wildlife conservation in general, and uses the Ocala road projects as examples.
- *Distribute fact sheets at meetings, presentation, events, etc.
- *Display the Habitat For Bears exhibit at events (an 8' x 8' professional display, that can be accompanied by a brief video that is an abbreviated version of the slide program).
- *Present the Kids for Cubs children's program at schools, boys and girls clubs, etc. The program includes slides, bear artifacts (skull, paw print), bear foods, and involves interactive games and worksheets.
- *Respond to requests for presentations at conferences and seminars.

Coordination with Agencies

- *Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (FGFWFC)
- *"Conserve Wildlife" license plate -- HFB has committed significant time and resources to state adoption of a specialty license plate (depicting the bear, the snowy egret, and the palmetto) in order to raise funds for FGFWFC habitat management, research, education, and law enforcement programs
- *Lobbied for establishment of the FGFWFC State Black Bear Coordinator
- *FGFWFC Budget lobbying support
- *Work on reinstatement of SR 46 bear underpass research funds
- *Use FGFWFC as a resource for information to identify priority habitat for land acquisition (core habitat and key connections), on roadkill statistics, to ascertain locations at which bear crossings are needed, etc. HFB, in turn uses such information to assure the sound scientific underpinnings of the campaign and performs the service of disseminating information to the public.
- *HFB and the FGFWFC have formed a partnership to develop a school curriculum focusing on the Florida black bear that teaches third through fifth graders about wildlife, habitat,

and basic conservation biology, including ecological impacts of roads.

- *The campaign worked for adoption of the Black Bear Management Plan adopted by the FGFWFC and is now working for implementation and improvement of the Plan, not only with the Commission but to gain support outside the agency.
- *Participated in the development of the Appalachicola Black Bear Habitat Management Plan and will now work for establishment of permanent implementation teams for each of the bear population's Habitat Management Plans in order to assure the recommendations are carried out.
- *Legislative - testimony before the Senate Transportation Committee to maintain revenue for the Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund raised through speeding ticket fees. Many Committee members were unaware of the direct relationship between vehicles, speeding, and wildlife deaths.
- *Support on the writing of two bear brochures, one by HFB is a general public education piece which urges support for bear and habitat protection, the other by FGFWFC educates the public on avoiding and dealing with bear encounters.
- *Other examples of coordination with agencies include:
 - Florida Department of Transportation
 - Sponsorship of conferences
 - US Forest Service
 - Joint sponsorship - highways and federal lands protection seminar

Research/Scientific underpinnings of the Campaign

- *Defenders has compiled and published a bibliography of scientific papers related to roads and wildlife
- *Participate in the Eastern Black Bear Workshops
- *Provide comments on and support for research studies in the national forests that will yield information on the relationship between road densities, types, and usage and the bear.

Litigation

- *Defenders and others negotiated a settlement of a lawsuit with US Fish and Wildlife Service calling for a decision regarding the federal listing of the Florida black bear by December 1998. If listed as a threatened species, the bear would receive greater protection from harm that would be caused by road projects.
- *Provide expert testimony at a rulemaking challenge to the state Environmental Resources Permit, regarding inadequacies in wildlife and habitat protection provisions, in particular, for wetland dependent species, such as, the black bear.

Funding

- *Raised donations for the application fee for the "Conserve Wildlife" license plate through a variety of means including requests to large individual donors, requests to corporations, magazine and newsletter articles, campaign handouts, and contributions received through a donation box. T-shirts and buttons were sold at events and presentations both as fundraising and educational tools.

Section Two: Opportunities for Citizen Input to Transportation Planning

Following is a list of key federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and planning instruments, along with some of the oversight boards, that set standards and policy, and offer the citizen an opportunity to participate in transportation planning and road projects. This list and the brief descriptions offered, are by no means an exhaustive survey of the avenues open to road activists.

***Federal Highway Act (Section 4-F)**

The Federal Highway Act Section 4-F states: "The [Federal Highway] Administration may not approve the use of land from a significant publicly owned public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that: (i) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the property; and (ii) the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use."

***National Environmental Policy Act**

The National Environmental Policy Act imposes procedural requirements on federal agencies. A citizen can use NEPA to ensure that agencies carry out their duty to conduct sufficient environmental impact reviews of proposed federal actions and analyses of project alternatives. Reviews are required by NEPA when a major federal agency action is proposed. If impacts are expected to be minimal a "categorical exclusion" may be granted. Otherwise, depending upon the scope and anticipated impacts of the project either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or the more extensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required. An EA may lead to an EIS. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts as well as project alternatives must be analyzed.

***Federal Endangered Species Act**

The Endangered Species Act provides several important protections for federally threatened or endangered species, or their critical habitat. Depending on the species, either the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service is required to list federally threatened and endangered species and to develop and implement species "Recovery Plans".

1. Projects must be consistent with species Recovery Plans (however, many species have not yet had recovery plans developed).

2. If the project involves a federal agency's action (e.g., constructing an interstate highway or granting a dredge and fill permit to another entity and the action may affect a listed species or its critical habitat) the agency must consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if the project is likely to jeopardize the survival of a listed species. A determination also must be made regarding whether the project will adversely modify or destroy any area designated as critical habitat. The outcome of the consultation can range from no follow up action, to project modification, to the seldom invoked disapproval of a project.

A conference with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is required if a project is likely to jeopardize a species that has been proposed for listing. In these cases, the Service can make recommendations regarding ways to minimize or avoid adverse effects.

3. When an entity or individual other than a federal agency proposes a project that will result in the take (kill, harm, harassment, etc.) of a listed species, an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) may be granted. The ITP must be accompanied by a Habitat Conservation Plan to minimize or mitigate for the impacts of the taking.

***Federal Clean Water Act**

The Clean Water Act protects waters of the United States by preventing pollution, protecting wetlands and rivers, and restoring degraded waterways. Other legal tools, such as state water quality criteria, and coastal zone protection laws, are incorporated into the act as standards under the CWA. Applications for permits under the CWA are assessed for direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Permit applications are reviewed to determine if there will be any adverse impacts of water and/or wetlands, if the project can be modified to avoid such impacts, if impacts can be minimized, and determine what mitigation is necessary to compensate for the impacts.

Regulations implementing the CWA provide that a project can be denied if "practicable alternatives" exist. On balance, the detrimental aspects of the project (detriments to conservation, economics, fish and wildlife, recreation, water quality, etc.) must not outweigh the public benefits of disapproving the project. The public has the right to receive notice, comment on, and challenge permits which can lead to project modifications, increased mitigation, or project denial.

***Florida: Environmental Resource Permits**

An ERP must be obtained from the relevant Water Management District or the Department of Environmental Protection whenever a road project will impact water quality, wetlands or wetland dependent species. A determination is made as to whether the wetland impacts are "not contrary to" the public interest. Direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts are addressed.

Typically, the ERP is processed after the location of the road project has been determined. Generally, mitigation is required as compensation for wetland impacts. In rare instances wetland impacts may not be allowed to be offset by mitigation and the permit application is not approved. Through the ERP there is a limited ability to effect road design and minor modifications in alignment, and to obtain increased mitigation for wetland impacts.

Public notice is given (although not in all instances) at the time an application is received by the agency or as a notice of proposed agency action, i.e. permit approval is imminent. A citizen can contest the agency approval of the permit -- strict time guidelines apply and the assistance of an attorney is necessary. As with most environmental protection matters, early contact with the agency is generally more effective than challenging a permit decision.

***Florida Growth Management Act**

State Transportation Plan
Strategic Regional Policy Plans
Local Government Comprehensive Plans

For the most effective involvement in these plans the citizen should take part in the periodic plan revisions that determine future land uses and guide community development, especially the natural resource and transportation elements of the plans. When questioning the need and design of a specific road project, check to see if building this roadway is consistent with the regional and local plans. The SRPPs include policies to protect resources that qualify as "resources of regional significance."

***Florida Department of Transportation**

Along with the avenues of public input that are provided through FDOT's need to comply with federal, state, and local standards, the citizen can participate in annual public hearings to review and revise the districts' Five Year Workplans and periodic reviews of the Long Range Transportation Plans.

***Florida Transportation Commission**

Provides policy oversight and guidance to the Florida Dept of Transportation.

***Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

The local MPOs are key entities in the early planning of transportation projects as they set priorities for road construction. The MPOs are assisted by Citizen Advisory Committees whose members are selected by the MPOs.

***Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission**

The FGFWFC determines which wildlife species to designate as endangered, threatened or of special concern for the state list. The FGFWFC provides comments about the environmental impacts of projects as part of a coordination process with other agencies.

Section Three: Roadblocks

The Habitat For Bears campaign strongly encourages citizens to learn about and become a part of transportation solutions. Depending upon the situation and objectives, citizen action may support, coordinate with, oppose, or be adversarial to an agency action. In any of these cases participation in the transportation planning process can be a daunting and confusing undertaking. Some of the roadblocks to be aware of are:

- *the process is multi-layered, involving decision making by many entities over many years;
- *accountability, who to turn to? - citizens can find that each entity involved in the process says that responsibility for decisions lies elsewhere,
- *lack of continuity, knowledge and experience with a project over time due to turnover in volunteers, agency staff and management, and even political representatives
- *if a citizen has not been active in the early stages of road planning (which may have been years before), the ability to change alignments or make design modifications are reduced
- *projects wink in and out of the limelight - a project that appears abandoned or dormant can suddenly be back on the drawing board or set for construction
- *documents can be difficult to wade through, such as, the transportation district

Five Year Workplans which are set up in such a way that it is hard to identify the projects that are relevant to the reviewer,

- *the assistance of an attorney and technical experts may be necessary
- *funding may be needed to pursue a matter in depth and over time
- *Natural resource values can take a back seat to lifestyles that look for convenience, speed, and quick economic return. However, a growing number of studies are demonstrating the high economic value of natural areas and public lands.

From a national and organizational systems perspective, institutional, bureaucratic and legal challenges can hinder effective consideration of wildlife in road planning. Lack of scientific knowledge is an important factor. Conservation organizations may not be able to support activists who are searching for a way to become involved in a local project. Examples of these system-wide problems follow:

- *The general public as well as state and federal natural resource agencies and conservationists are largely unaware of the ecological impacts of transportation projects. There is a critical need for more public outreach and education.

Conservation Groups - Few national conservation groups have attempted to address systematically issues associated with the impact of highways on wildlife. In the fall of 1997, for example, Defenders of Wildlife hosted a presentation by Bill Reudiger, of the U.S. Forest Service, on the impacts of highways on rare carnivores. Although many national conservation groups were among those invited to the event, held in Washington, DC, the World Wildlife Fund was the only organization other than Defenders to attend.

Federal Agencies - In 1997, for example, the U.S. Forest Service transferred 120 miles of highway right-of-way in the Clearwater National Forest to the state of Idaho. The transfer will likely impact numerous species, many of which are federally listed as threatened or endangered. Nevertheless, the transfer was made without any formal consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and was categorically excluded by the U. S.

Forest Service from environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act.

State Agencies - Few state wildlife agencies or transportation departments have staff dedicated to interagency coordination to address concerns with potential impacts of highway projects on wildlife populations.

- *There is a lack of good biological information relating to habitat usage for many imperiled species. The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and state wildlife agencies must expand data collection. Increased funding is needed.

An accurate assessment of potential wildlife impacts and mitigation strategies requires extensive data collection, either by federal land management agencies, state wildlife agencies or private consultants. In some instances, these data are not available at the time a project is proposed. Whether or not the data are ever collected depends partly on funding availability and the rigor with which various agencies conduct environmental assessments to determine the necessity of developing more comprehensive environmental impact statements. Moreover, questions have been raised about the objectivity of some biological studies conducted by consultants hired by state transportation agencies.

- *The "indirect," "secondary," and "cumulative" impacts of projects can be difficult to assess and may not be recognized at the outset of project planning. In particular, more scientific information about the role highways play in isolating wildlife populations in habitat fragments is needed especially on questions relating to the genetics and inbreeding. Indirect, secondary, and cumulative impacts analysis must receive increased attention along with examination of the problems caused by different types of highways and levels of traffic volume.

- *In addressing the problem of roadkills, the current approach to funding highways creates a disincentive for state DOTs to allocate money for underpasses that can reduce wildlife mortality. Funding for underpasses must now compete with money for road building, which is given a higher priority by state transportation departments. Making money for underpasses available through federal highway funds dedicated for environmental "enhancements" would help solve this issue.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that greater public scrutiny is being given to transportation projects and decision makers than in the past. An increasing number of citizens are aware of and taking action on road proposals. [The Habitat For Bears Campaign may itself assume a leadership role in the future for educating and organizing transportation activists around the state of Florida.] Notably, the Florida Department of Transportation is a leader in the effort to share information and experience relating to the impacts of roads on wildlife habitat. But the true test of the effectiveness of our efforts to protect bears, wildlife habitat, and Florida's biological diversity will not be measured in the years ahead by the number of words generated or meetings attended. Rather the success of sound transportation planning will be determined by which roads do and do not get built, the safety, alignment and design of new roads, and the retrofitting of the old roads and bridges where problems had been identified. That's where the rubber meets the road.

(The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Robert Dewey and Sidney Maddock in the writing of this paper.)