

Supporting Mobility in LaBelle, Florida:

May 8, 2025

How did we get here?

- Initial discussions in December of 2022 involved the feasibility of a bicycle library system; that task was eventually removed all together, as the SR29 project was at the forefront of the community's mind

Task	2022	2023												2024							
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
1 Project Management																					
Update Calls	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Status Update Reports			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
2 On-Site Kick-Off & Data Collection																					
3 The Impacts of the FDOT SR29 Project on Walkability of Downtown LaBelle																					
4 A Highway's Influence on Active Transportation in Small, Rural Downtowns																					
5 Summarizing the Crash Experience in LaBelle																					
6 Active Transportation Use in LaBelle																					
7 Feasibility of Active Transportation Improvements for LaBelle																					
8 Report																					X

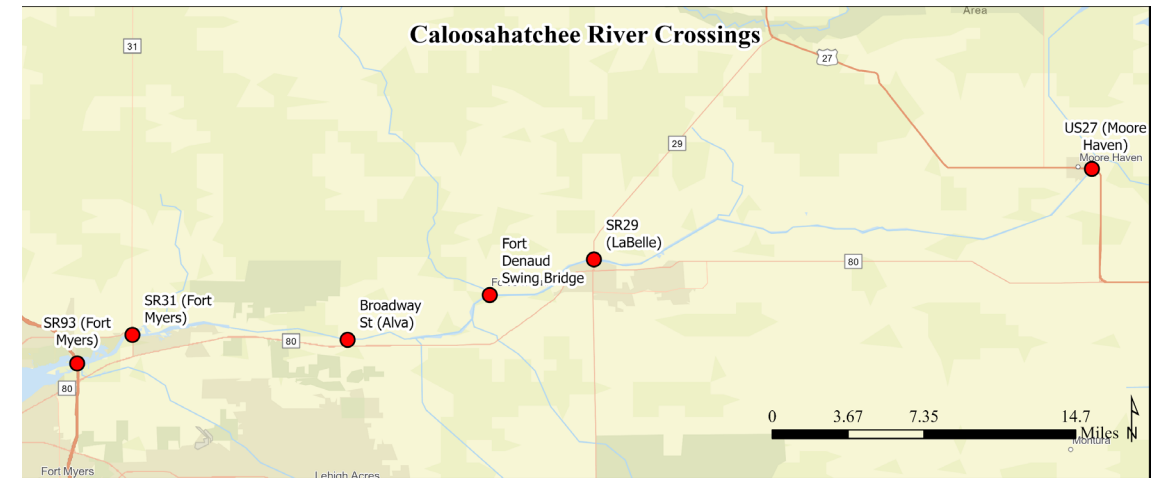
Check-In Meetings

- We scheduled 17 (including today) and ultimately held 15 meetings over the course of the project to check-in on the project and provide updates as the tasks were accomplished.
 - In April, July and August of 2023 (see notes) we talked about how they are pushing the two bridges for redundancy in case of a hurricane damaging one

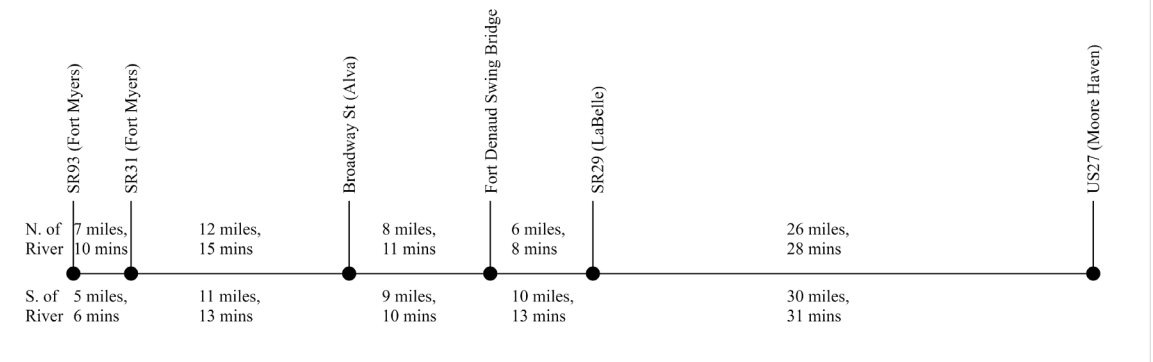
Conclusions

Reasons for SR29 Expansion

- Traffic volumes
- Redundancy in case of a hurricane

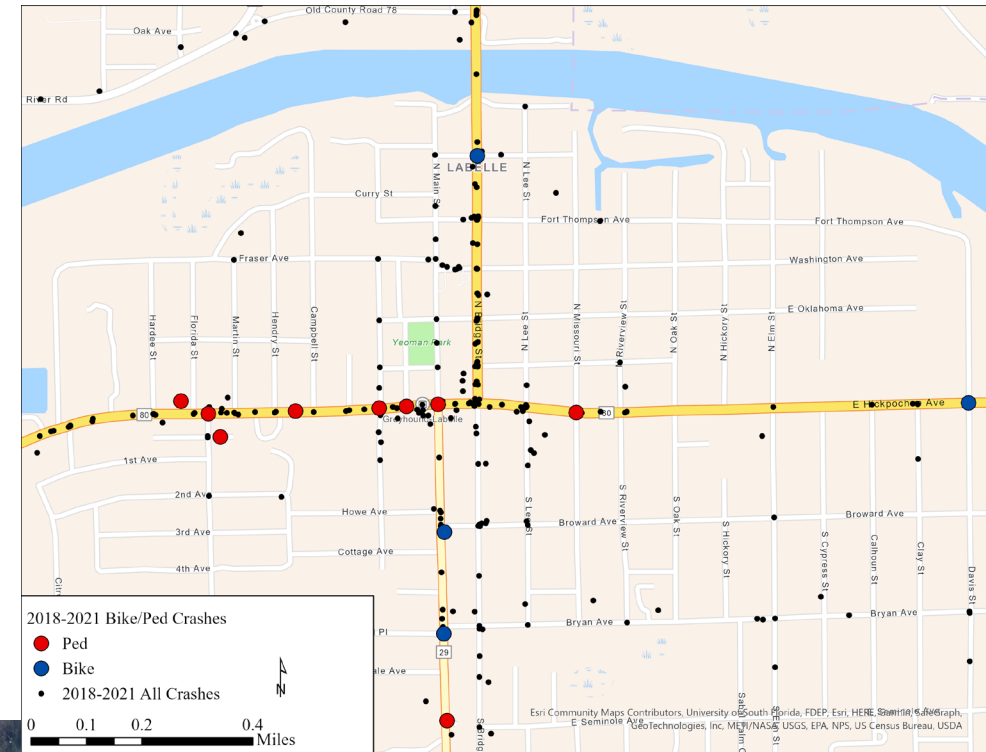


How Far Is The Next Bridge?



People are walking and bicycling in LaBelle

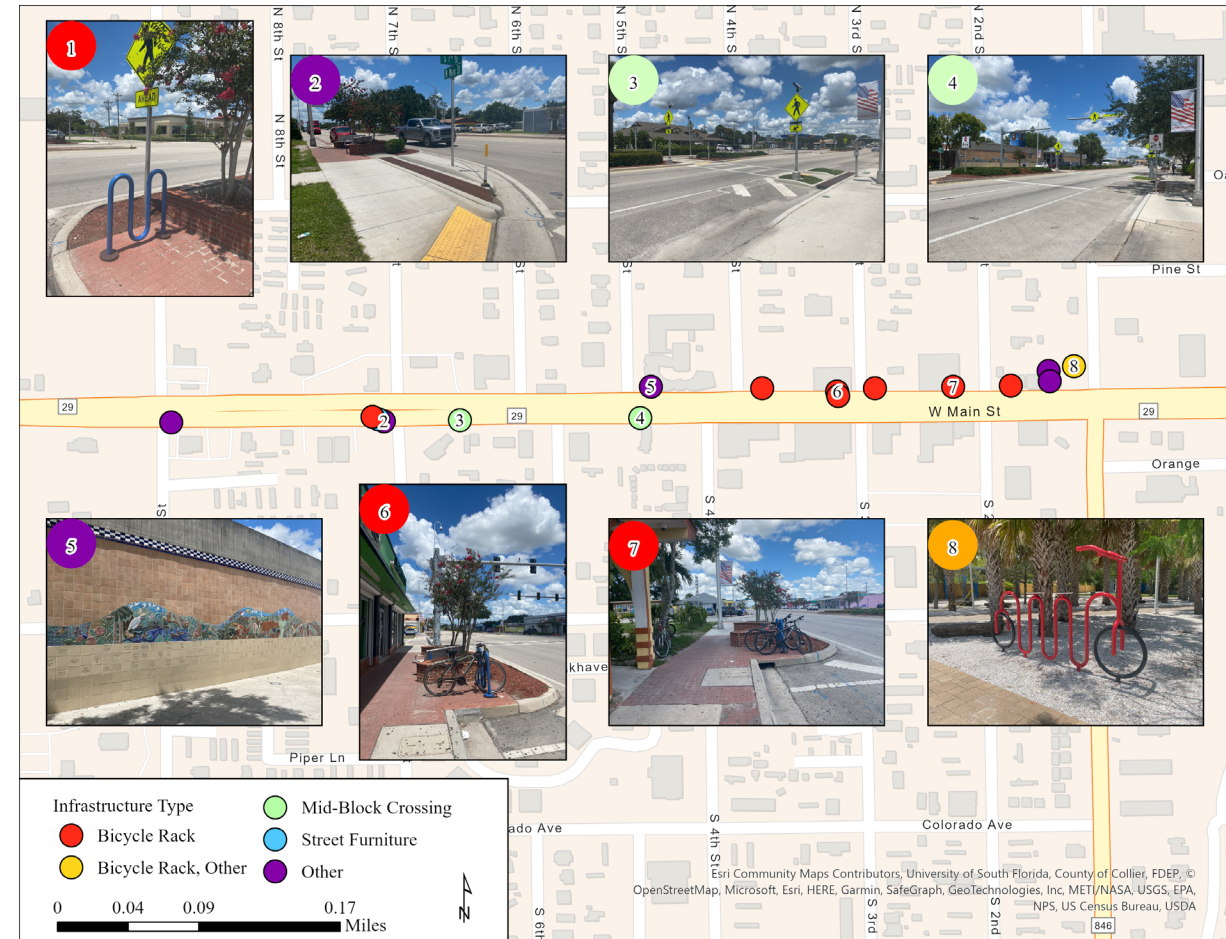
- Manual counts conducted at 6 intersections; while only 2 hours or less in duration, bicyclists and/or pedestrians were counted at all but 1 intersection
- Automatic counts, 3 locations, 4-5 bicyclists per day, 45-145 pedestrians per day
- Main Street, which the new bridge would make as a parallel roadway for SR29 through the community, is an economic connection for LaBelle between their docks and the downtown; this new designation could impact the use of the docks
- Poor yielding behavior by motorists for pedestrians trying to cross SR29





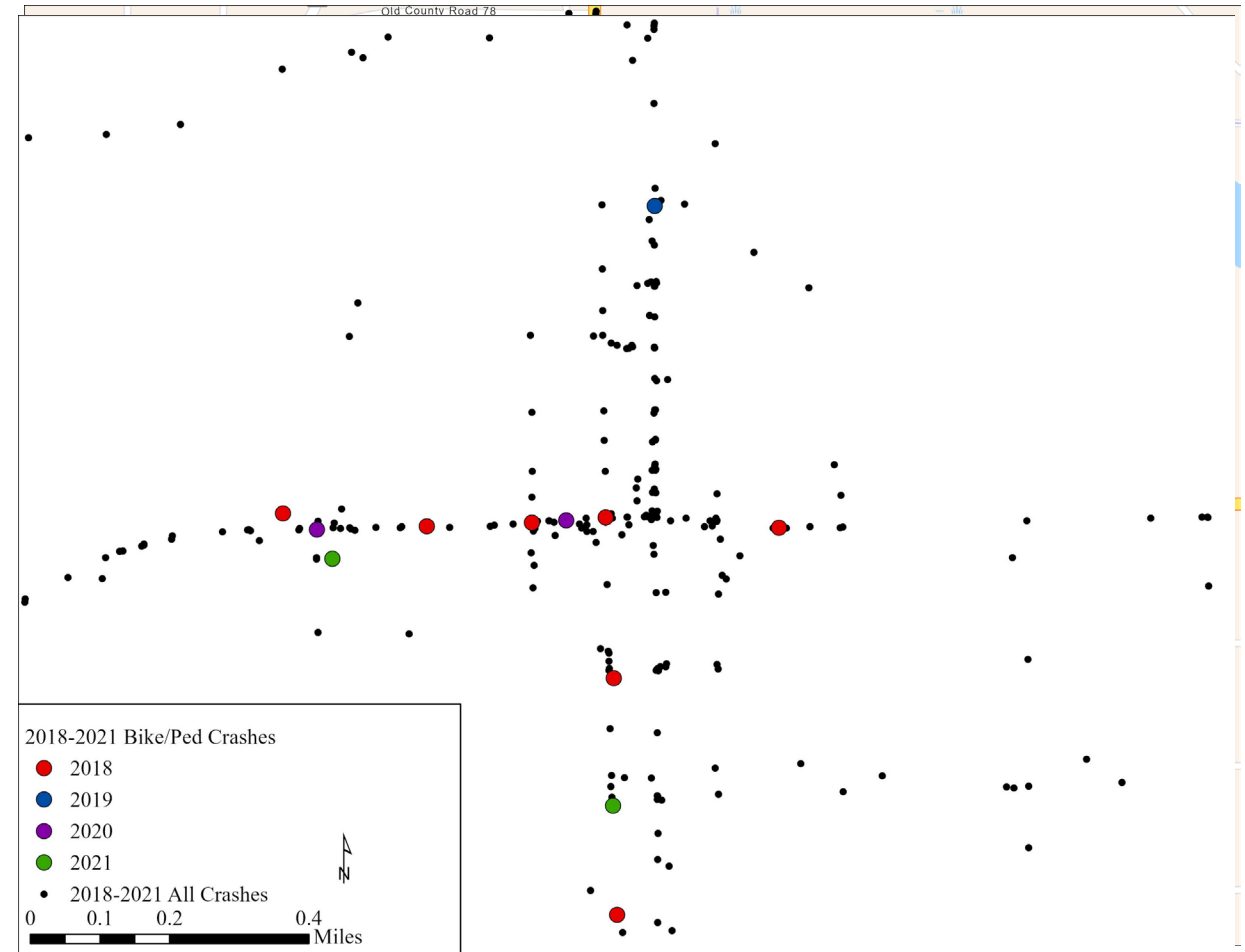
Findings from Peer Communities

- Immokalee, Punta Gorda, ~~Moore Haven~~
- Six Best Practices
 1. Work with local volunteer and advocacy groups
 2. Work with local law enforcement to conduct high visibility enforcement
 3. Develop bicycle and pedestrian planning documents
 4. Inventory bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as a benchmark
 5. Obtain feedback from the public
 6. Pursue federal funding



Bicycle & Pedestrian Crash Analysis

- While few, bicycle and pedestrian crashes are almost always severe, resulting in injury or death
- Clustered around the state roadways
- More likely to occur when it's dark
- Older drivers are involved with about 1/5 of bicycle and pedestrian crashes



Active Transportation Induced Demand

- 30 reviewed literature pieces
- Much literature is focused on the urban context, but there are a few rural examples
- Main takeaway: providing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure supports people walking and bicycling
- The type of infrastructure (e.g., striped bike lane next to heavy traffic vs. separated cycle track) heavily influences use
- Providing connections to where people want to go do (e.g., downtown restaurants) is important



Recommendations

3 Controlled Crossings for SR29 & SR80

- Conduct high visibility enforcement campaigns, as was done by Collier County's Sheriff's Office Traffic Safety Enforcement Bureau in Immokalee.
- Better education about the rectangular rapid flash beacon's (RRFB's) purpose and how to drive in response to what is conveyed (assuming it has remained)
- Another crossing east of SR29 on SR80



Improvements to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Bridge Crossing Experience

- Very narrow existing space; slippery at draw bridge, even when not wet
- Understand the magnitude of use
- Should a second bridge on Main Street be built, it and the original bridge should have space, at least a 10-foot wide separated pathway if bidirectional, for bicyclists and pedestrians



New Non-Motorized Count Station Proposal

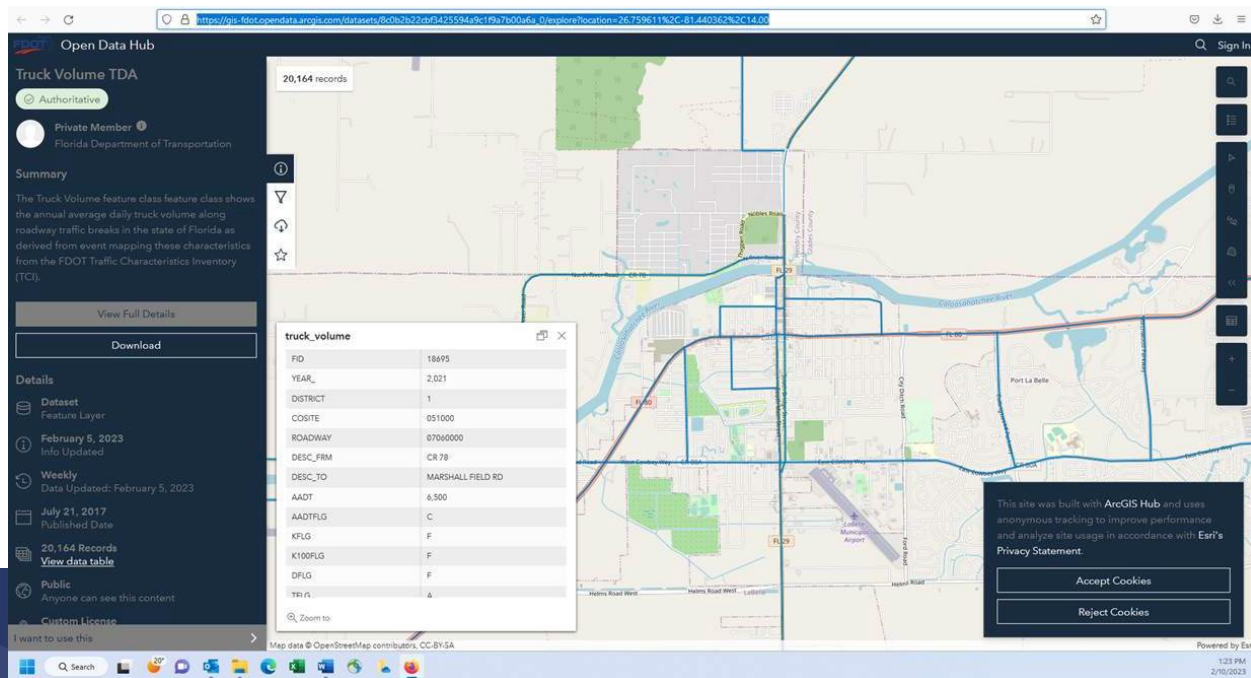
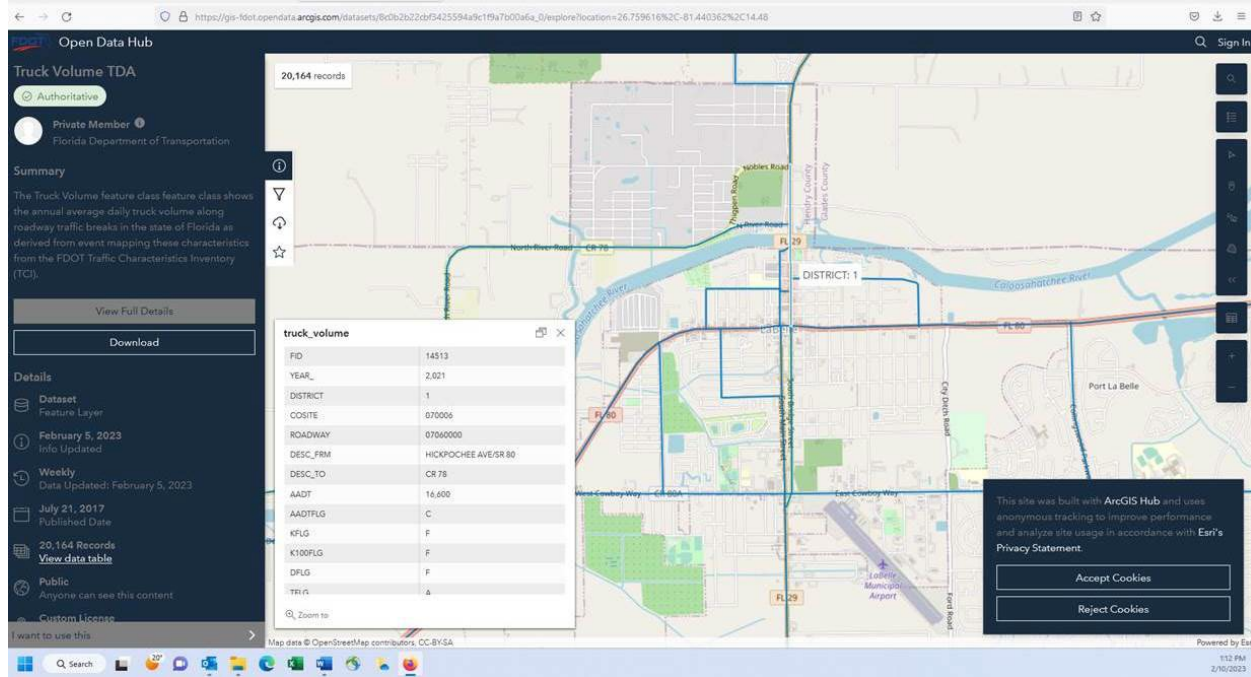


Investigate the Feasibility of Replacing the Existing Bridge Street Bridge Using Lateral or Slide-In Bridge Construction

- Lateral or slide-in bridge construction, used by other state departments of transportation, would minimize traffic disruptions during construction of a new bridge
- SR167 Puyallup River Bridge in Puyallup, Washington is one example

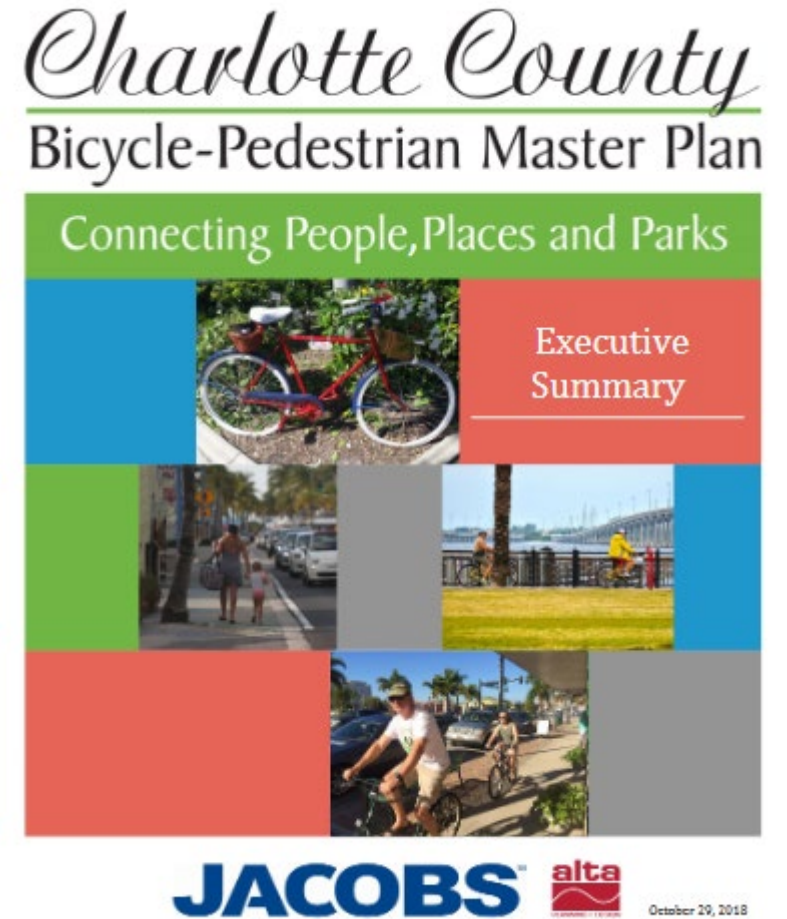
Bridge Street Segment AADT Discrepancies

- The inflows and outflows surrounding the bridge do not add up to the counts over the bridge
- Discussed during the June 2024 meeting; John (FDOT) indicated that he would follow-up
 - Mike indicated that he was interested in the modeled count to 2050 as well
 - Changes to the signal light timing did not result in a user-experience improvement



Develop a LaBelle Bicycle Friendly Community Plan

- Peer community Punta Gorda conducted a similar effort:
https://ccpgmpo.gov/attachments/CCPG_BikePedPlan_ExecutiveSummary_020319_SD.pdf
- Should Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) be put out for RFP again, it is an opportunity; the 20% match can include in-kind match



Leverage Community Support to Measure Pedestrian Friendliness of Existing Infrastructure

- AARP's Walking Audit: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html>
- AARP's Bicycling Audit: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/aarp-bike-audit-tool-kit.html>
- Could be led by a community member, a high school teacher, local university students; could be conducted as part of a class (e.g., data collection and analysis)

Resist Main Street's Designation as SR29 and Implement Pilot Configurations that Support Walking & Bicycling

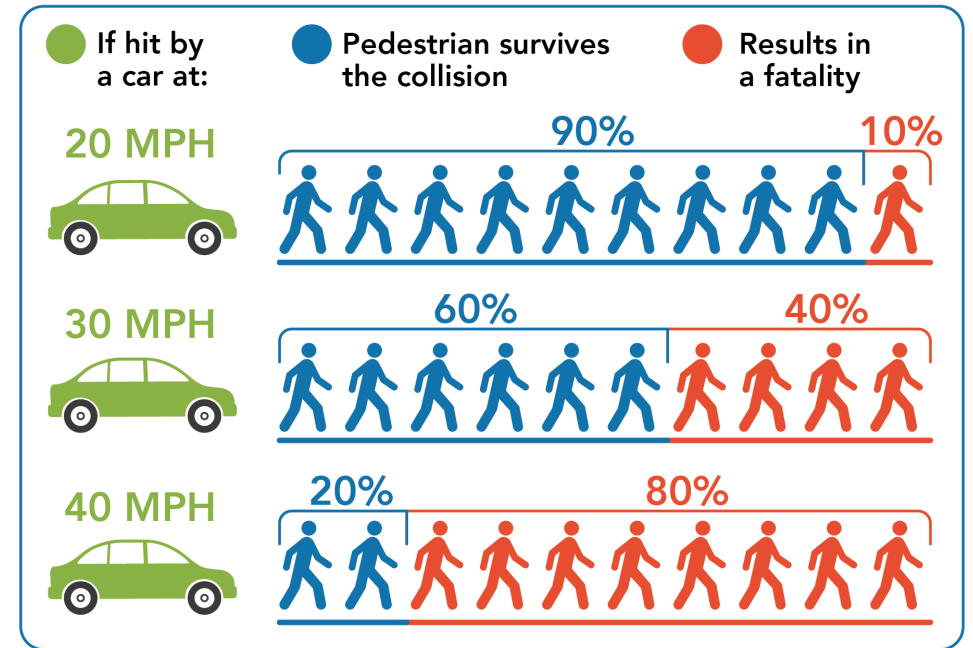
- Main Street is an important local roadway in LaBelle
 - Many oak trees (likely would be impacted by large trucks)
 - Those coming to the LaBelle City Dock are believed to use this corridor to travel into downtown (and they do not come to town with vehicles)
- Pilot study
 - Defined space for bicyclists
 - Shorter crossings for pedestrians



Conduct Public Education Campaigns & High Visibility Enforcement

- Crash data suggested that older drivers are overrepresented in crashes with bicyclists and pedestrians
- Peer communities (Punta Gorda and Immokalee) are conducting public education campaigns to encourage motorists to look for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Potentially work with Best Foot Forward:

<https://www.iyield4peds.org/what-we-do/educate/>



Consider Community “Book-Ends” to Demonstrate to State Highway Users That They Have Entered a Community

- Traffic on SR80 are moving at high rates of speed and behavior suggests that they are unaware that they have entered a community
- Florida’s Target Zero plan seeks to mitigate dangerous driving behaviors (e.g., speeding through a community) before serious and fatal crashes occur



Discussion