



VOLUME 01 » ISSUE 01 » MARCH 2009

# J.N. "Ding" Darling

## NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### Alternative Transportation In Parks & Public Lands Study

#### The Goal of the Project

As one of the most visited refuges in the United States Fish and Wildlife Service network, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge strives to meet its goal of ecological conservation and wildlife habitat protection while attempting to accommodate increased vehicular and foot traffic generated by visitors to the Refuge and Sanibel Island. This concern is also felt by the City of Sanibel, which is committed to remaining a sanctuary barrier island community.

In response to this concern the Refuge, in partnership with the City of Sanibel and Lee County, applied for a grant from the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) Program in 2006. This program, sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 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

#### Project Details

This project partnership provides a great opportunity to identify environmentally sensitive solutions for managing the number of vehicles entering the Refuge and circulating on Sanibel Island, creating a safer environment for residents and visitors seeking to enjoy the islands numerous walks, paths, bikeways, and natural habitats.

The ATPPL Program provides funding for planning and construction of alternative transportation systems in national parks and public lands. The adoption of an interlocal agreement in May 2007 empowers the Refuge, the City, and the County to cooperate on this ATPPL project. Preliminary feasibility studies and public outreach are being conducted now and will continue through summer 2009. Next, the refined alternatives will be thoroughly analyzed and possible implementation strategies will be developed. A project schedule is included in this newsletter.

*This project evaluates alternative transportation techniques and scenarios for the Refuge and Sanibel/Captiva Islands while continuing to balance human activities with the commitment to preserve and protect natural areas.*

## Public Engagement - We Want Your Input!

The public is encouraged to participate in a meaningful dialogue regarding all elements of this study and to contribute to the development and revision of alternatives as the process moves forward. The public engagement opportunities include stakeholder interviews, public opinion surveys, public information workshops and a project web site where project documents are available for viewing and comments and questions may be submitted.

Public outreach in April will identify and refine each scenario, ranking these potential alternatives based on their ability to satisfy the needs of the Refuge and the Island and their consistency with the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan and the Sanibel Plan.

### Public Information Workshops - Why April is so Important!

*First Public Workshop held on January 29th, 2009*

Three public workshops are included as a part of this project. The first of these was held on January 29, 2009. The public was asked for their input on various transportation methods. There were 45 attendees including staff that participated. **TWO MORE WORKSHOPS ARE SCHEDULED IN APRIL.** Time, dates and location of these workshops are listed to the right and on the back page of this newsletter.

At workshop #2 scheduled for **April 2, 2009**, the public will assist in developing preliminary alternative transportation scenarios for the project. At Workshop #3, scheduled for **April 16, 2009**, these scenarios will be presented for public ranking. The scenarios that are ranked highest will be studied in detail. **Each workshop will begin at 4:30 with a formal presentation. For more workshop details, see the back of this newsletter.**

*Your input is essential for us to identify the scenarios that will work for the Refuge and the Island and we are depending on your comments to help guide a successful project.*



**Public Information Workshop #2  
Preliminary Alternatives Development  
Public Workshop  
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.  
Thursday, April 2, 2009  
Sanibel Community House  
2173 Periwinkle Way  
Sanibel, FL**

**Public Information Workshop #3  
Refined Alternatives Public Workshop  
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.  
Thursday, April 16, 2009  
Sanibel Community House  
2173 Periwinkle Way  
Sanibel, FL**

If you would like more information about this project or if you will be attending one of the public information workshops and need accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 please contact Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc. at:

Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc.  
1631 Hendry Street  
Fort Myers, Florida 33901  
Phone: (239) 337-1071  
Toll-free: 1-877-496-1076  
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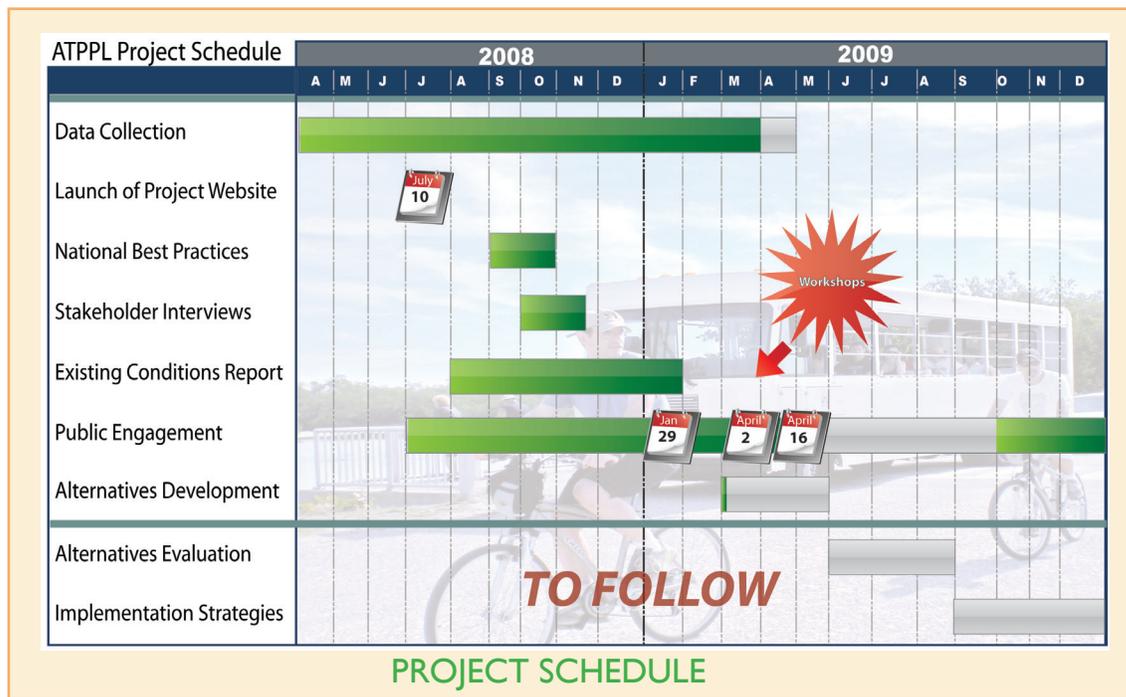
## Stakeholder Interviews

In the fall of 2008, 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 into the habits, needs and sentiments of people who use the transportation networks on Sanibel Island and/or within the Refuge. These interviews opened the lines of communication and let the residents, environmental groups, community organizations, civic organizations and businesses know that public engagement is a priority in this study and public knowledge is valued. The *Stakeholder Interviews Summary Report* is complete and can be viewed at:

[www.DingDarlingTransportation.com/downloads](http://www.DingDarlingTransportation.com/downloads)

Stakeholder groups interviewed included, but were not limited to:

- J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR visitors, volunteers, and Friends group
- Sanibel & Captiva Chamber of Commerce
- Sanibel Bicycle Club
- Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)
- Care and Rehabilitation of Wildlife (C.R.O.W.)
- Committee of the Islands (COTI)
- Audubon Society of Sanibel
- Tarpon Bay Explorers
- Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum
- Zonta Club of Sanibel & Captiva



## Public Opinion Surveys

As a means of collecting more public input and providing dialogue between residents, visitors, and project partners, public opinion surveys were developed. The surveys were conducted in person at the Refuge, Island retail locations, and Lighthouse Beach. Surveys were also available for the public to complete at Sanibel City Hall, Sanibel Library, Sanibel Recreation Center and the

Refuge as well as various Island resorts until March 6, 2009. The survey was also available on the web site from January 29, 2009 through March 6, 2009. Over 2,100 completed surveys were received. Detailed survey results will be presented at the preliminary alternatives public workshop on Thursday April 2, 2009.





**LEE COUNTY**  
S O U T H W E S T F L O R I D A

c/o: Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc.  
1631 Hendry Street  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

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

*Preliminary Alternatives  
Public Workshop*

*Thursday, April 2, 2009  
4:30-6:30 p.m.  
Sanibel Community House*

This workshop will build upon the public opinions expressed and comments collected at the first public workshop as well as comments collected from recent surveys and stakeholder interviews. The workshop is the start of the alternative building process. The workshop will begin with a formal presentation describing the project efforts to date, followed by a break-out session that asks participants to identify and develop preliminary alternative transportation scenarios. At the conclusion of the workshop, another presentation will summarize the comments heard during the break-out session and describe the next steps in the study.

*Refined Alternatives  
Public Workshop*

*Thursday, April 16, 2009  
4:30-6:30 p.m.  
Sanibel Community House*

This workshop will build upon the public opinions expressed and comments collected at the first two public workshops. The workshop will open with a formal presentation describing the project efforts to date, followed by a break-out session that asks participants to rank preliminary alternative transportation scenarios, identifying the scenario(s) that should be refined and studied in detail, possibly resulting in implementation recommendations. At the conclusion of the workshop, another presentation will summarize the comments heard during the break-out session and describe the next steps in the study.

[www.DingDarlingTransportation.com](http://www.DingDarlingTransportation.com)