

MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # **245-2019**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: April 29, 2019

SUBJECT: **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) PROJECTS AFFECTING MOBILITY WITHIN AND IN PROXIMITY TO CITY OF MIAMI BEACH**

Pursuant to direction from the City Commission at its April 10, 2019 Commission meeting (re: Item R9L – Discussion Regarding FDOT Plans To Work On Both Causeways And Alton Road, sponsored by Commissioner Michael Gongora), the purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to provide information regarding various ongoing and upcoming FDOT roadway construction projects which are expected to affect mobility to/from and within Miami Beach. Some of this information was previously provided to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee (FCWPC) at its April 19, 2019 meeting as part of Item 19 – Update On The Progress Of The Traffic Mitigation Strategy To Help Reduce Traffic Impacts Of The FDOT “Connecting Miami” Construction Project (sponsored by Commissioner Mark Samuelian).

Below is a synopsis of the impact of various FDOT projects based on anticipated lane closures and what steps the Administration is taking to work with FDOT to help reduce the impacts to traffic congestion to the extent possible.

I-395/SR 836/I-95 Design/Build (“Connecting Miami”) Project

By far, the project with the greatest impact to traffic and accessibility to/from Miami Beach will be the Connecting Miami Project, also called the Signature Bridge Project - a partnership between FDOT and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX). The Connecting Miami Project commenced in Summer 2018 and is anticipated to be completed by Fall 2023. Construction limits on SR 836 begin at NW 17 Avenue and continue through the SR 836/I-395/I-95 (Midtown) Interchange. The limits on I-95 extend from NW 8 Street to NW 29 Street. Enhancements along I-395 extend from the SR 836/I-95/I-395 (Midtown) Interchange to the MacArthur Causeway, approximately 1.4 miles in length. The project will completely reconstruct the existing facility and create a signature bridge that will span 1,025 feet over NE 2 Avenue and SR5/Biscayne Boulevard, redefining the Miami skyline with its six (6) sweeping arches. Mobility will be enhanced for residents, commuters and tourists by increasing capacity on SR 836, I-95 and I-395. SR 836 will be double-decked to allow for a direct connection between SR 836 and I-395.

Traffic impacts during this multi-year construction project due to multiple and continuous lane/ramp closures and detours along I-95, SR 836, and I-395 are expected to adversely affect mobility for Miami Beach residents, visitors, and workforce. Experience has shown that these types of major roadway projects affect traffic patterns and create congestion on adjacent roadways. As an example, over the three (3) year period that the FDOT Alton Road Reconstruction Project from 5 Street to N. Michigan Avenue was under construction (from April 2013 to March 2016), average daily traffic volumes on the MacArthur Causeway decreased by approximately 9% as compared to pre-construction volumes. In contrast, average daily traffic volumes on the Julia Tuttle Causeway increased by approximately 7% (essentially, over 10,000 additional vehicles per day on the already congested Julia Tuttle Causeway). More recently, with

the ongoing eastbound lane closures on the MacArthur Causeway East Bridge, increased congestion has been observed along both the Venetian Causeway and Julia Tuttle Causeway. This magnitude of traffic diversion from one major thoroughfare to another as a result of a major roadway reconstruction project is not uncommon as these types of projects are known to effectuate changes in traffic patterns not only temporarily during construction, but sometimes permanently even after construction is over.

Other Ongoing FDOT Construction Projects

- I-95 Concrete Replacement from NW 29 St to NW 131 St (Feb 2017 – Oct 2020 but contractor expects to finish by Jan 2020 to receive a \$1.5 million bonus). This project will be closing several ramps that provide access between I-95 and I-195/Julia Tuttle Causeway. The ramp closures are occurring on Friday and Saturday nights from 11PM to 11AM the next day and on Sunday through Thursday from 9PM to 5:30 AM.
- MacArthur Causeway East Bridge Rehabilitation (Aug 2018 – Jun 2020) – 1 eastbound lane closed 24/7 until Oct 2019. The work will also require the full closure of the Alton Road/5 Street flyover ramp for a two (2) week period in June 2019. Intermittent single and double lane closures can occur in either direction from Oct 2019 to Jun 2020.
- Alton Road/Dade Boulevard Bridge Rehabilitation (April 2019 to Nov 2019) - potential nighttime closures).
- Indian Creek Drive from 26 St to 41 St (FDOT/City project) (2017 - 2020).
- Alton Road Maintenance Work from Pine Tree Drive to 53rd Street (April 22, 2019 to Summer 2019) – lane closures during non-peak hours

Upcoming FDOT Construction Projects

- Alton Road and Michigan Ave - new southbound left turn lane (May 1, 2019 – Nov 2019) – will require continuous closure of one (1) lane at any one time in either direction of Alton Road.
- Districtwide Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Device Replacement and Installation – May 2019 (3 nights only to replace the overhead Digital Message Sign on Eastbound I-195) – full nightly closure of all eastbound lanes on I-195.
- Indian Creek Drive Resurfacing and ADA Curb Ramp Construction between 63 St and Abbott Ave - nighttime lane closures (Jun 2019 to Oct 2019).
- Julia Tuttle Causeway Inside Shoulder Rehab for Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) Service - nighttime lane closures on the Julia Tuttle Causeway (2020 - 2022).
- Alton Road from Michigan Ave to 43 St (2022/23- 2024/25).
- Alton Road from 43 St to Allison Road (2022/23 – 2024/25).

City Administration staff met with FDOT District 6 Secretary Jim Wolfe and members of his staff on April 5, 2019. City staff representatives included City Manager Jimmy L. Morales, Assistant City Manager Kathie G. Brooks, and Transportation Director José R. González. County representatives attended via conference call and included Transportation and Public Works Director Alice Bravo. At the meeting, City Administration expressed concerns with the number of overlapping projects affecting Miami Beach. Subsequent to expressing concerns with the impacts, City staff presented several requests for FDOT's consideration, including potentially deferring the work for the Connecting Miami project on the I-395/I-95 ramps until after completion of the ongoing I-95 Concrete Replacement and the ongoing MacArthur Causeway East Bridge Rehabilitation work (i.e. 2020). Additionally, the City requested that FDOT defer the upcoming Indian Creek Drive resurfacing project in North Beach as well as the intersection work at Alton Road and Michigan Avenue until 2021. FDOT expressed serious concerns with deferring any of the aforementioned upcoming construction projects due to potentially significant delay costs for which FDOT would be liable to the contractor (e.g. FDOT stated that it would incur approximately

\$1 million per day for any delay to the contractor caused by FDOT on the Connecting Miami Project); however, FDOT agreed to work closely with the City on upcoming projects to close lanes during off-peak weekday periods (9AM to 3:30PM) and during night-time (after 9PM) if the work is not occurring in a residential area. Further, FDOT agreed to inform City staff of any unforeseen or emergency lane closures during peak traffic periods such that the City would have the opportunity to disseminate the lane closure information to the community on a timely basis.

Additionally, at the City's request, FDOT agreed to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, and interactive map of all FDOT construction projects affecting Miami Beach, including projects on I-95 and the causeways, and to provide this map to the City for input on a weekly basis. The map will help ensure coordination among the various individual FDOT construction projects and will serve as a communication tool and an information resource both for City staff as well as for the Miami Beach community to obtain the latest information on lane/ramp closures and detours associated with various FDOT construction projects in and around the City.

Resolution No. 2019-30757 - sponsored by Commissioner Mark Samuelian and adopted by the City Commission on March 13, 2019 - directed the Administration to pursue various traffic mitigation strategies in connection with the FDOT Connecting Miami Project. Below is an update on the status of the mitigation strategies recommended in the Resolution:

1. Accelerate the implementation of the Beach Express North Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) Demonstration Service or Route 150 (Airport Express) Modifications.

The County has engaged a consultant to develop the BERT Project Justification Report required by FDOT. The report is anticipated to be completed by end of November 2019. The report will include pertinent information needed by FDOT in order to begin designing the bus by-pass or "queue jumper" lanes and transit signal priority technology at key intersections along the BERT route in addition to the structural improvements to the inside shoulders of the Julia Tuttle Causeway. Transit signal priority for the BERT service is essential as it will allow the downstream traffic signal controllers and the BERT bus to communicate as the bus approaches the traffic signal. Once the bus is detected by the traffic signal, the signal timing will automatically adapt (in real-time) to prioritize the bus movement through the intersection. This technology will improve the efficiency and reliability of the future BERT service, by reducing travel times.

Additionally, on a parallel and more immediate track, the Administration is working with the County to potentially modify existing bus routes (such as the Airport Express (Route 150)) to provide service similar to the proposed Beach Express North BERT service in the short-term as an interim service enhancement, in particular, connecting to the Earlington Heights Metrorail Station and Mount Sinai Medical Campus. City staff met with County staff on February 14, 2019 to discuss the proposed Route 150 modifications. The County stated that it would evaluate the proposed route modification, and, if approved, the County could potentially implement the interim Route 150 service as part of the County's new service line-up in November 2019.

2. Enhance service of the County Route "A"

To date, the County has not made any progress on the City's prior requests, including a City Commission Resolution, to enhance the Route A service across the Venetian Causeway. Based on a recent discussion with County staff, the County has not been able to identify the funding required for the enhanced service in its operating budget for Fiscal Year 2018/19. At the March 13 City Commission meeting, County Commissioner Higgins stated that she has been working with County staff and advocating for this enhanced service. The City's Administration will continue

working with the County to identify funding for this service in the County's budget for FY 2019/20.

3. Explore waiving tolls on the Venetian Causeway

At the April 5 meeting, FDOT stated that it would support the City's efforts to seek approval from the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for a waiver of tolls on the Venetian Causeway on an as-needed basis during the construction duration of the Connecting Miami Project. Given the time required to seek and obtain BCC approval of a toll waiver, the City and FDOT will work collaboratively to secure a Resolution from the BCC as early as possible such that the toll waiver is available to be exercised when needed over the four (4) year construction duration of the Connecting Miami Project to help mitigate traffic impacts.

4. Interagency Agreement for Communications Protocol

As mentioned above, FDOT is developing an interactive map with real-time lane closures and detour information for all active FDOT projects in and around Miami Beach. The map will be shared with City staff and disseminated to the community through the City's various communication networks, including traffic text alerts, email blasts, and social media. In addition, the City's Communications Department is working with FDOT on the communication protocols requested by the City Commission for the FDOT Connecting Miami Project and other major FDOT projects occurring concurrently in and around the City of Miami Beach.

Additionally, the City's Traffic Monitoring and Management contractor will work closely with the FDOT SunGuide 511 Traffic Management Center to inform motorists in advance of any lane/ramp closures and detours using the City's and FDOT's Digital Message Signs strategically located throughout the City. To inform inbound traffic, the City and FDOT will communicate to ensure the overhead Digital Message Signs on I-95, SR 836/I-395 eastbound, and SR 112/I-195 eastbound are programmed in advance of and during lane closures so that motorists coming to Miami Beach can make informed decisions as to which route to take.

Lastly, City staff and County staff are having discussions regarding potential commuter waterborne transportation (i.e. water ferry) service between Downtown Miami and Miami Beach as a traffic mitigation strategy in connection with the FDOT Connecting Miami Project.

Per the request of the FCWPC, quarterly updates on the above FDOT projects and mitigation strategies will be provided to the FCWPC in conjunction with the status of the Beach Express North BERT project on the Julia Tuttle Causeway. These updates will also be transmitted on a quarterly basis to the Mayor and City Commission via LTC.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.


JLM/KGB/JRG/JFD