

MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 331-2020

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: September 21, 2020

SUBJECT: **Commuter Waterborne Transportation Service by Poseidon Ferry LLC**

The purpose of this LTC is to inform the City Commission of Poseidon Ferry LLC's ongoing efforts to establish commuter water ferry service between Miami Beach and downtown Miami using double deck vessels with an air-conditioned lower deck. **The service is privately owned and operated with no public subsidy from the County, City of Miami, or City of Miami Beach.**

The service is intended to cater to commuters during morning and afternoon peak periods on weekdays, and the proposed fare structure is competitive with current public transit fares (\$3/passenger each way). The service is scheduled to operate 7 days a week from approximately 6am-9:30pm Monday through Thursday, and 6am-8pm Friday through Sunday with as many as 16 scheduled hourly departures from Miami Beach each day. The proposed pick-up and drop-off locations are the Bentley Bay Condominium marina in South Beach and the Hyatt Regency/James L. Knight Center marina in downtown Miami in proximity to the Knight Center Metromover station. Poseidon is planning to add a second vessel which would double the number of departures and provide a service frequency of approximately 30 minutes.

In Miami Beach, Poseidon explored various docking locations within and in proximity to the Miami Beach Marina. Unfortunately, after almost a year of coordinating with the Miami Beach Marina management, Poseidon was unable to secure docking rights at the marina. As an alternative, Poseidon approached the Bentley Bay Condominium for use of its marina and retail space within the building for a ticket office and passenger waiting area with restrooms. The Bentley Bay marina allows for commercial vessel operation.

Poseidon presented its proposed water ferry service operating plan to the City's Marine and Waterfront Protection Authority (MWPA) meeting on September 8, 2020 and responded to questions from board members and the public. The water ferry item was continued by the MWPA to November/December 2020 to provide Poseidon time to secure the required permits and approvals. The proposed service has received mixed feedback from some residents of the Bentley Bay Condominium; and Poseidon is working closely with the Bentley Bay Condominium Association to address any outstanding concerns with the proposed service.

Poseidon anticipates that it will take at least six months to secure all permits and approvals required for docking and mooring of the vessel(s). In the interim, Poseidon is currently pursuing

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) approval to use the existing dock at the Bentley Bay marina on a temporary basis while the lease with the Bentley Bay marina is amended to allow for permanent use of the dock. For the time being, the City has placed Poseidon's BTR on a pending status until all necessary permit approvals are secured. **It is important to note that the City has no role in this private venture other than the ministerial function of issuing a BTR once Poseidon secures all required approvals.**

From the standpoint of transit connectivity and parking, the Bentley Bay marina is strategically located as it is in close proximity to the South Beach Trolley service, County regional bus service, and the Alton Road/5th Street parking garage which can serve as a park-and-ride facility for the proposed ferry service.

In addition to the commuter ferry service, Poseidon is seeking to establish sightseeing and music cruises to subsidize the commuter service. Based on information received from the County and Poseidon, these recreational services, if provided, will operate only on the City of Miami side and will not be arriving or departing from the Bentley Bay marina.

In December 2016, the City launched a water taxi pilot program at Purdy Dock. Due to its high fares, infrequent service, and weekend service only, the pilot program was ineffective and terminated by the City in December 2017. In contrast, the service proposed by Poseidon is a low fare, high frequency, and commuter-based ferry service.

The proposed service aligns with City Commission Resolution No. 2019-30757 (attached) which recommends that the Administration pursue strategies to help mitigate traffic impacts and ensure mobility for residents, visitors, and workforce employees during the construction of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) I-395 Signature Bridge project and other active and planned FDOT roadway projects in and around the City.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Attachment: Resolution No. 2019-30757


JLM/ATH/JRG/MM

[https://miamibeach-my.sharepoint.com/personal/milosmajstorovic_miamibeachfl_gov/Documents/Waterborne/Poseidon Ferry/LTC - Waterborne Transportation Service by Poseidon v4.docx](https://miamibeach-my.sharepoint.com/personal/milosmajstorovic_miamibeachfl_gov/Documents/Waterborne/Poseidon%20Ferry/LTC%20-%20Waterborne%20Transportation%20Service%20by%20Poseidon%20v4.docx)

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-30757

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC MITIGATION STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY THE CITY ADMINISTRATION, RECOMMENDING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WORK WITH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DEPLOY THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO HELP REDUCE THE TRAFFIC IMPACTS OF THE "CONNECTING MIAMI" CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON THE RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND WORKFORCE OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH; AND, REFERRING THE ITEM TO THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE TO MONITOR PROGRESS ON THE ISSUE AND DISCUSS RESULTS AND IMPACTS.

WHEREAS, the I-395/SR 836/I-95 Project ("Connecting Miami") is a partnership between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX), with construction limits on State Road (SR) 836 beginning at NW 17 Avenue and continuing through the SR 836/I-395/I-95 (Midtown) Interchange to the MacArthur Causeway Bridge; and

WHEREAS, the Connecting Miami Project commenced in Summer 2018 and is anticipated to be completed by Fall 2023; and

WHEREAS, traffic impacts during the multi-year construction project due to multiple and continuous lane and 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 employees; and

WHEREAS, the City Administration recommends that various traffic mitigation strategies be explored and deployed, in collaboration with FDOT and Miami-Dade County, to reduce the impact of the construction of this major project on the Miami Beach community; and

WHEREAS, the traffic mitigation strategies to be explored should include, but not be limited to, the following:

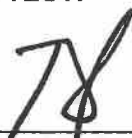
1. Accelerate the implementation of the Beach Express North Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) Demonstration Service and Route 150 (Airport Express) modifications
2. Enhance service of the County Route "A"
3. Explore waiving tolls on the Venetian Causeway
4. Explore waterborne transportation service connecting Downtown Miami and Miami Beach; and

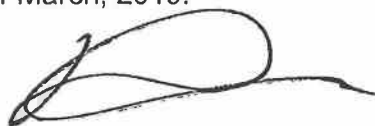
WHEREAS, the City Commission deems it advisable to refer this item to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to monitor the Connecting Miami Project and discuss results and impacts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA that the Mayor and City Commission hereby approve the potential traffic mitigation strategies recommended by the Administration, recommend that the Administration work with Miami-Dade County and the Florida Department of Transportation to deploy the potential traffic mitigation strategies to help reduce the impact on mobility from the construction of the Connecting Miami Project on the residents, visitors, and workforce of the City of Miami Beach, and refer the item to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to monitor progress on the issue and discuss results and impacts.

PASSED and ADOPTED this 13th day of March, 2019.

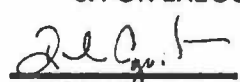

ATTEST:

 3/25/19
Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

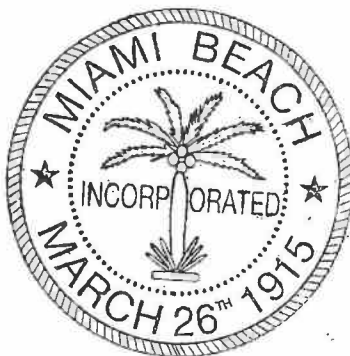


Dan Gelber, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION

 3-5-19
City Attorney  Date

T:\AGENDA\2019\03 March\Transportation\Resolution Traffic Mitigation



MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager
DATE: March 13, 2019

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC MITIGATION STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY THE CITY ADMINISTRATION, RECOMMENDING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WORK WITH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DEPLOY THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO HELP REDUCE THE TRAFFIC IMPACTS OF THE "CONNECTING MIAMI" CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON THE RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND WORKFORCE OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH; AND, REFERRING THE ITEM TO THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE TO MONITOR PROGRESS ON THE ISSUE AND DISCUSS RESULTS AND IMPACTS.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Mayor and City Commission approve the Resolution.

BACKGROUND

The I-395/SR 836/I-95 Project ("Connecting Miami") is a partnership between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX), with construction limits on State Road (SR) 836 beginning at NW 17 Avenue and continuing through the SR 836/I-395/I-95 (Midtown) Interchange to the MacArthur Causeway Bridge. The limits on I-95 are from NW 8 Street to NW 29 Street.

Enhancements along I-395 are from the SR 836/I-95/I-395 (Midtown) Interchange to the MacArthur Causeway, approximately 1.4 miles long. 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 sweeping arches.

The project will create additional capacity on I-395 with a total of three (3) through lanes in each direction and provide separate connector ramps for traffic to and from I-95. The existing I-395 eastbound off-ramps at NE 2 Avenue will be moved west to North Miami Avenue, and the westbound on-ramps at NE 1 Avenue will be shifted to the west of North Miami Avenue. NW 2 Avenue will also be reconnected under I-395, providing residents greater access.

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.

The Connecting Miami Project commenced in Summer 2018 and is anticipated to be completed by Fall 2023. Traffic impacts during the 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 employees.

As an example, over the three (3) year period that the FDOT Alton Road Reconstruction Project from 5 Street to 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).

This magnitude of traffic diversion from one major arterial 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.

ANALYSIS

The City of Miami Beach is concerned with the potential effects of the multi-year construction of the Connecting Miami Project and recommends that various traffic mitigation strategies be explored and deployed to ensure mobility for residents, visitors, and workforce employees during the construction of this major project.

The traffic mitigation strategies to be explored should include, but not be limited to, the following:

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

The Miami-Dade County Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan contains six (6) Rapid Transit Corridors and nine (9) Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) routes for Miami-Dade County. BERT service consists of enhanced branded buses operating limited stop service on shoulders or dedicated transit lanes, where feasible, to reduce travel time and help ensure service schedule reliability. Advancing the BERT routes to Miami Beach could help mitigate the impacts of the Connecting Miami projects.

There are three (3) BERT routes that are proposed to connect the mainland to Miami Beach. The Beach Express North BERT route will run from Golden Glades Multimodal Center to the Miami Beach City Center area via the Julia Tuttle Causeway. The Beach Express Central BERT route will run from the Miami Civic Center/Health District complex to the Miami Beach City Center area via the Julia Tuttle Causeway. The Beach Express South BERT route will run from Downtown Miami to the Miami Beach City Center area via the MacArthur Causeway.

Via a Resolution of the City Commission, the City of Miami Beach allocated funding in the amount of \$5.1 million for a 3-year Beach Express North BERT demonstration service using the shoulders of the Julia Tuttle Causeway. The City's contribution is equally matched by FDOT funds for the demonstration service.

As of December 5, 2018, FDOT has programmed funds for the design and construction of the inside shoulders modifications needed to operate the BERT service on the Julia Tuttle Causeway by 2022. A goal of all parties is to work toward implementation prior to the estimated 2022 completion date.

Additionally, the Administration is working with the County to potentially modify existing bus routes (such as the Airport Express (Route 150)) to provide a connection to the Earlington Heights Metrorail station (providing access to commuters from northwest Miami-Dade and west Broward) and stop at Mt. Sinai and Fontainebleau, as an interim service enhancement. The goal is to implement the interim service as part of the County's new service line-up in November 2019. Advancing a modified Route 150 could also help mitigate the traffic impacts of the Connecting Miami Project.

2. Enhance service of the County Route "A"

The original Route A operated along the Venetian Causeway connecting Omni Station in Miami and Washington Avenue/Lincoln Road area in Miami Beach. As a result of weight restrictions imposed by the County on the Venetian Causeway bridges in 2014, the route and service plan was modified and currently consists of limited service between Omni Station and Sunset Harbour using smaller vehicles (cutaways), operating on a limited schedule of 7.5 hours per day (7:00AM to 9:32AM and 2:00PM to 6:52PM). On a long term basis, the County's plan is to reestablish the original Route A service plan when all the Venetian Causeway bridges are reconstructed and allow for operation of regular bus service. In the meanwhile, the County does not have any plans for enhancing the current service. Route A service enhancement was most recently discussed by the City Commission in February 2018 and a Resolution was adopted by the City Commission urging Miami-Dade County to reinstate, at no cost to the City of Miami Beach, the original Route A service plan; however, no service improvements have been made by the County.

Enhancing the Route A service could be a potential traffic mitigation strategy. Based on an previous analysis conducted by staff in coordination with the County, the incremental cost of restoring the original Route A service plan would be approximately \$230,000/year for approximately 11 hours of service per day from Monday to Sunday.

3. Explore waiving tolls on the Venetian Causeway

During previous construction projects on the City's causeways, at the request of the City, Miami-Dade County has waived toll collection along the Venetian Causeway. This initiative has been put into effect to improve capacity and mobility between Miami Beach and the mainland. Waiving tolls on the Venetian Causeway can assist in reducing traffic demand on the MacArthur Causeway which will be affected by the Connecting Miami Project. Further, this initiative could help balance traffic volumes along the other causeways into the City and reduce the overall

impact of the project. This measure would require prior approval by the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners, thus, coordination with Miami-Dade County would be required if this option is explored.

4. Explore waterborne transportation service connecting Downtown Miami and Miami Beach

The City's most recent solicitation for waterborne transportation services was issued in 2014 and resulted in only one (1) operator (Water Taxi Miami, Inc.) submitting a bid and ultimately operating a one (1) year water taxi pilot program from December 30, 2016 to December 30, 2017, connecting the Purdy Avenue Dock, Sea Isle Marina, Bayside Marketplace, and Miami Beach Marina. The original solicitation stipulated that the water taxi services shall be provided at no cost to the City and for the operator to provide necessary infrastructure for the safe operation, including docking facility, of the service. The water taxi pilot program with Water Taxi Miami was terminated on December 30, 2017 and for various reasons, the pilot was not deemed to be a practical, competitive, reliable, convenient, or financially viable operation.

A temporary water taxi service operating between Miami and Miami Beach could potentially help mitigate the traffic impacts of the Connecting Miami Project. The same docks used during the City's previous water taxi pilot program could be used for the temporary service. Establishing a reliable water taxi service, albeit as a temporary traffic mitigation strategy, would likely require an operating subsidy. Moreover, given a water taxi service would need to connect the cities of Miami Beach and Miami, it is recommended that this option be explored in collaboration with Miami-Dade County and current water taxi operators.

Active Work Zone Traffic Monitoring and Management

As part of the Connecting Miami Project, FDOT will deploy Active Work Zone Traffic Monitoring and Management services along the affected project corridors. This initiative consists of deploying cameras to monitor traffic conditions, wi-fi/Bluetooth devices to gauge travel time, Variable Message Signs to disseminate real-time information on closures and incidents to the motoring public, and Road Rangers to help clear incidents blocking travel lanes. This effort will be managed by FDOT SunGuide Traffic Management Center and the same contractor that has been providing Traffic Monitoring and Management Services for the City of Miami Beach for over 4 years.

This initiative was utilized during the Alton Road Reconstruction Project between 5 Street and N. Michigan Avenue and proved to be successful in reducing some of the congestion created by the lane closures and detours. The implementation of Active Work Zone Traffic Monitoring and Management for the FDOT Connecting Miami Project would extend the capabilities of the City's current Traffic Monitoring and Management effort and planned Intelligent Transportation System and Smart Parking System Project by enhancing the sharing of real-time traffic information, traffic data, incident information, and other relevant items to assist in managing congestion and help reduce spill-back onto City roads.

CONCLUSION

The construction of the \$800 million Connecting Miami Project currently being undertaken in a partnership between FDOT and MDX is expected to have a significant impact on mobility for

Miami Beach residents, visitors, and workforce employees due to multi-year lane closures, ramp closures, and detours on I-95, I-395, and SR 836.

The City is concerned with the anticipated impacts to mobility during project construction and believes that the implementation of traffic mitigation strategies in collaboration with FDOT and the County is essential to reduce the impact of the project on the Miami Beach community.

KEY INTENDED OUTCOMES SUPPORTED

Ensure Comprehensive Mobility Addressing All Modes Throughout The City

Legislative Tracking

Transportation

Sponsor

Commissioner Mark Samuelian

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Resolution