

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission  
FROM: Commissioner Mark Samuelian  
DATE: December 8, 2021

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE LAND USE AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE POSITION OF THE VENETIAN ISLAND'S RESIDENTS REGARDING THE VENETIAN CAUSEWAY BRIDGE RENOVATIONS.

### BACKGROUND/HISTORY

In October, three Residents Associations who represent most of these homeowners, wrote a letter supporting a major portion of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) VC renovation recommendations. However, the residents support the east bascule alternative of rehabilitation rather than the replacement option recommended by FDOT.

The rehabilitation of the east bascule will take into consideration several safety issues and allow for the replacement of the shallow pilings with 10 stationary bridges by providing deeper pilings and raising the bridges slightly. The residents also support the widening of the sidewalks and bicycle lanes for the safety of both pedestrians and bicyclist. This proposal will also preserve the historic profile and the unique spoil islands as the "crown jewel" of the VC by duplicating the historic pattern of the bridge railings in the new bridge, therefore, not jeopardizing the VC's important designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

The VC, like many bridges are rated as "structurally deficient." Due to this designation, weight limits have been imposed to minimize further decay and damage. FDOT is preparing a PD&E study of how to proceed with upgrades to the Venetian Causeway. The PD&E study considered three options for the East Bascule... "do nothing", "rehabilitate", and "replace". FDOT's final design will be submitted to Miami-Dade County for approval. The west bascule has been rebuilt and therefore no work required.

The VC residents believe that FDOT has made a serious error in their evaluation and renovation selection process regarding the east bascule. It is their firm belief that they have not given the required attention and weight to the historic aspects of our bridges and spoil islands (5 significant grassy parklike areas on both sides of the VC which permit magnificent scenic water views and resting areas for bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicle occupants). The VC residents strongly recommend the 'rehabilitate' option as it retains the historic profile of the VC and does not endanger the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) designation as the replacement option does (FDOT PD&E study p. 26)

Another major factor in support of the 'rehabilitation' option is the cost, which is significantly less. The 'replace' option is "overkill" and will cost significantly more, which the VC residents believe is, "a waste of taxpayer dollars." FDOT estimates that replacing the bridge will cost about \$20 million more than rehabilitating it.

The VC residents believe that the 'replace' option dramatically and negatively changes the historic character of the VC between Belle Isle and Rivo Alto Island by building a single bridge that is massively high and long. The result will be an unnecessarily raised roadway with railings that will block the beautiful view on the two spoil islands adjacent to the East Bascule.

The residents believe the 'rehabilitate' alternative is a win-win for both the VC residents and FDOT.

### SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

### Applicable Area

Middle Beach

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?

No

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

### Legislative Tracking

Commissioner Mark Samuelian

### ATTACHMENTS:

Description

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