

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee

FROM: Alina T. Hudak, City Manager

DATE: May 17, 2022

SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION AND TAKE ACTION ON THE SLOW STREETS PROGRAM**

### **HISTORY**

In May 2020, and in response to shifts in the needs of communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) released a guideline for the implementation of Open/Slow Streets. NACTO defines Open/Slow Streets as streets with low vehicle volume and low to moderate speeds, where vehicle volumes have dropped, or serve a redundant through-traffic role where through traffic can be discouraged and the road is opened for bicycles and pedestrians to become the priority.

The City's Modal Prioritization Resolution, adopted by the City Commission in 2015, places pedestrians first; bicycles and transit second; and private vehicles third. Furthermore, the City's Transportation Master Plan, Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan, and Street Design Guide, adopted by the City Commission in 2016, propose policies and strategies to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and calm traffic, particularly in residential neighborhoods. As such, the Transportation and Mobility Department is progressively looking to adopt measures to address the mobility needs of the community and provide safer streets.

At the July 29, 2020 City Commission meeting, Commissioner Mark Samuelian sponsored a referral item to the Neighborhood and Quality of Life Committee (NQLC) to discuss the implementation of an Open/Slow Streets pilot program in the Flamingo Park neighborhood.

At the September 23, 2020 NQLC meeting, the Committee discussed open/slow streets in Miami Beach and recommended that the Administration pursue a slow streets pilot program in the Flamingo Park neighborhood.

At the October 14, 2020 City Commission meeting, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 2020-31465 accepting the recommendation of the NQLC to implement an open/slow streets pilot in the Flamingo Park neighborhood.

Prior to the deployment of the pilot program, the Transportation and Mobility Department staff conducted an in-depth review of the Flamingo Park neighborhood streets to determine the feasibility of implementing an open/slow Streets network in this neighborhood. Various streets were considered for inclusion in the pilot program given their connectivity to Flamingo Park, Feinberg Fisher Elementary K-8 School, Publix supermarket, and pharmacies. The City Commission approved a budget of \$75,000 for the maintenance of the pilot program.

In late October 2020, the Transportation and Mobility Department deployed the Flamingo Park Neighborhood Slow Streets Pilot Program on an expedited schedule utilizing temporary and readily available construction signs and barricades (i.e. ROAD CLOSED - LOCAL TRAFFIC ONLY) to rebalance the mobility needs of the community and provide an opportunity for safe walking and cycling during the pandemic. Following concerns from the neighborhood regarding the aesthetics of the pilot program, the City removed the construction signs and, in collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Department, proceeded to design and deploy contextual slim signs and flexible planters with pictorial signs and low-level landscape throughout the slow streets network. The slim signs and planters were positioned on the centerline of the slow streets for maximum visibility and effectiveness. However, given their exposure, the signs and planters were frequently struck and damaged by vehicles, particularly trucks, requiring a high level of maintenance and frequent replacement of signs and planters by staff.

Ultimately, in early March 2022, the Administration determined that the pilot, as deployed, was not sustainable from a long-term maintenance perspective and, as a result, removed all slim signs and planters from the slow streets network. As a supplementary measure, however, the City painted numerous 9' wide x 15' long textured pavement markings along the slow streets with the following message: SLOW 20 MPH to emphasize the reduced speed limit along the slow streets network (Attachment A).

At the April 6, 2022 City Commission meeting, Commissioner Samuelian sponsored a referral item to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee entitled Discussion and Take Action on The Slow Streets Program. Additionally, during a discussion of the Flamingo Park neighborhood slow streets pilot program at the Commission meeting, the City Commission directed the Administration to pursue a Slow Streets 2.0 pilot program in the Flamingo Park neighborhood on an expedited basis.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Transportation and Mobility Department has retained the services of Streetplans Collaborative, a local consultant specialized in tactical urbanism, to assist staff with developing a Slow Streets program that provides an improved aesthetic quality and sustainable quick-build interventions (i.e. Slow Streets 2.0).

As part of the development of Slow Streets 2.0, consideration is being given to the program's connectivity to other modes of transportation, interface with neighborhood traffic calming plans, aesthetics, and maintenance costs to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the program. Furthermore, implementation of the program will require working with Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works as the agency with jurisdictional authority over traffic control devices, including permitting slow streets and tactical urbanism treatments on public roadways.

The Transportation and Mobility Department is working closely with the Neighborhood Affairs Team in the Marketing and Communications Department to coordinate and conduct community workshops and walk-throughs to help create a Slow Streets 2.0 pilot program in the Flamingo Park neighborhood.

On Saturday, April 30, 2022, the Transportation and Mobility Department staff conducted a community charette to provide information on the potential types of tactical urbanism treatments being considered for Slow Streets 2.0 (i.e. traffic diverters, median islands, curb extensions, etc.)

(Attachment B). The charette included an interactive planning exercise that asked residents to rank locations and treatment types. The goal of the charette was to educate the community about tactical urbanism, best practices for safe streets , and readily-available temporary/quick-build materials that can be used to expedite Slow Streets 2.0 and to determine the interventions most desired by residents.

Contingent upon securing City Commission approval, County approval, and funding, City staff anticipates implementing the proposed Flamingo Park Neighborhood Slow Streets 2.0 pilot program this fiscal year.

## **CONCLUSION**

Open/Slow Streets is an initiative which has been successfully implemented by various cities throughout the country to meet the changing mobility needs of communities. The initiative consists of installing temporary traffic control signs and tactical urbanism interventions to discourage cut-through traffic on residential streets, calm vehicular speeds, and prioritize streets for pedestrians and bicyclists, including context-sensitive signage to inform and educate the community on the new “rules of the road”.

The Transportation and Mobility Department initially deployed the Flamingo Park Neighborhood Slow Street Pilot Program in October 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pilot program was effective in reducing vehicular speeds and increasing bicycle and pedestrian trips throughout the neighborhood, the pilot program was not sustainable from a long-term maintenance perspective.

Staff is currently developing Slow Streets 2.0 plan for the Flamingo Park neighborhood with the goal of enhancing program aesthetics and sustainability through the application of temporary tactical urbanism interventions. Staff is currently tabulating the input received from residents at a recent community charette and addressing questions and specific concerns from residents. In parallel, City staff will work with Miami-Dade County to secure the required permit with the goal of implementing Slow Streets 2.0 this fiscal year, contingent upon City Commission and County approvals and funding.

The above information is being presented to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee for discussion and input.

## **Applicable Area**

South Beach

## **Is this a Resident Right to Know item?**

Yes

## **Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?**

No

## **Strategic Connection**

Mobility – Improve the walking and biking experience.

## **Attachments:**

### **Description**

A: Photo of Slow Street Textured Pavement Markings

B: Potential Tactical Urbanism Interventions for Slow Streets 2.0