

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee

FROM: Commissioner Alex J. Fernandez

DATE: May 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Referral to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee - Discussion regarding I-95/Julia Tuttle Causeway FDOT Project

Please place on the May 15, 2024 agenda a referral to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee (“LUSC”) to discuss whether the City Commission should urge the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) not to expand the Julia Tuttle Causeway.

At the Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Advisory Board meeting on April 5, 2024, representatives from the FDOT provided an overview of the Julia Tuttle Causeway Project Development and Environment study. The Julia Tuttle Causeway serves as a vital corridor connecting the City with the mainland and the airport, accommodating over 110,000 vehicles daily, a number anticipated to rise in the future.

A part of the proposed project aims to widen the causeway bridges on both the west and east sides of the causeway islands. While this expansion may appear to alleviate traffic congestion, it raises significant concerns about the potential ramifications for our community and environment.

Expanding the causeway could exacerbate existing traffic bottlenecks, notably at critical junctures such as 41st Street and Alton Road, where the infrastructure is ill-equipped to handle increased traffic volume from expanded traffic lanes. Moreover, the environmental impact cannot be overlooked, particularly regarding the preservation of the delicate seagrass ecosystem in Biscayne Bay.

Given these pressing issues, I would like for the Committee to receive a presentation from FDOT on this project to deliberate on this matter and issue a recommendation to the full City Commission on whether to urge the FDOT to consider alternative solutions that prioritize sustainability, community well-being, and environmental preservation.