

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager
DATE: October 17, 2018

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION ON THE STATUS OF THE USE OF THE JULIA TUTTLE CAUSEWAY SHOULDERS FOR THE BEACH EXPRESS NORTH BUS EXPRESS RAPID TRANSIT (BERT) DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is provided to the Mayor and City Commission for discussion and input.

ANALYSIS

This item provides an update on the County's proposed Beach Express North Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) service, and, in particular, the outcome of discussions with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the use of the shoulders of the Julia Tuttle Causeway for the proposed Beach Express North BERT service. Correspondence dated August 17, 2018 from FDOT on this topic is included as Attachment A.

On June 21, 2018, the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), via Resolution #29-18 (Attachment B), awarded the City of Miami Beach and the Miami-Dade Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) grant funding to begin the Beach Express North BERT demonstration service for a period of three (3) years. The service is intended to provide an express bus service for the City's workforce connecting the Golden Glades Multimodal Facility and the Earlington Heights Metrorail Station to major employment centers in Miami Beach, including Mount Sinai Medical Campus, major hotels, and the City Center area.

Operation on the Julia Tuttle Causeway shoulders is a crucial part of the BERT service plan. On June 21, 2018, the TPO passed Resolution #26-18 (Attachment C), sponsored by Mayor Dan Gelber, urging FDOT to make improvements to the Julia Tuttle Causeway shoulders to accommodate a dedicated lane for bus-on-shoulder operations. On July 25, 2018, the City Commission passed a similar Resolution, Resolution No. 2018-30408, also sponsored by Mayor Dan Gelber (Attachment D).

On August 8, 2018, City, DTPW, and FDOT staff met to discuss the proposed use of the shoulders along the Julia Tuttle Causeway for the Beach Express North BERT demonstration service. Meeting representatives included District Secretary Jim Wolfe, City Manager Jimmy L. Morales, and Transportation Director Jose R. Gonzalez, among others. At the meeting, FDOT staff presented the findings of their bus-on-shoulder analysis. The study concluded that the permanent use of the inside shoulders is preferred given that any conditional/temporary use of the outside shoulders would be very limited due to current State and County guidelines. Under the current State guidelines for conditional use of the shoulders, maximum bus-on-shoulder operating speed could not exceed 35 MPH. Additionally, the use of the outside shoulders is permissible only when average general traffic speed on the causeway is less than 35 MPH. Based on FDOT travel speed data, average general traffic speed is less than 35 MPH only on weekdays from 8:00 to 10:00 AM and from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Given these restrictions, coupled with the costs associated with improving the outside shoulders for bus-on-shoulder operation (i.e. removing the existing rumble strips, resurfacing, restriping and adding signage to the outside shoulder), the use of the outside shoulders for BERT demonstration service would not be cost-effective. Additionally, FDOT stated that if the existing Federal Highway Administration approved bike lane pilot on the outside shoulders was suspended for the BERT service, the bike lane pilot could not be reinstated.

It is worth noting that the BERT service on the inside shoulder can operate at speeds up to 55 MPH.

As a result, all parties agreed to evaluate the permanent use of the inside shoulders for the Beach Express North BERT demonstration service. The estimated cost of the inside shoulder improvements is approximately \$2,600,000. FDOT anticipates that the inside shoulder will open for service in 2022. Additionally, FDOT agreed to improve the intersection of Alton Road/41st Street with a bus by-pass lane for more efficient BERT service. The meeting minutes and PowerPoint presentation from the August 8th meeting with FDOT are included in Attachment E.

City staff is continuing to coordinate with all parties to move this project forward in an expedited timeframe. This includes evaluating ways to begin the BERT demonstration service earlier or potentially modifying existing County bus routes to provide service similar to the Beach Express North BERT.

CONCLUSION

Further updates will be provided via LTC as these discussions progress.

KEY INTENDED OUTCOMES SUPPORTED

Ensure Comprehensive Mobility Addressing All Modes Throughout The City

Legislative Tracking

Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Attachment A: FDOT Response to Miami Beach Resolution 2018-30408
- Attachment B: Resolution #2018-29 (TPO Board)
- Attachment C: Resolution #2018-26 (TPO Board)
- Attachment D: Miami Beach Resolution #2018-30408
- Attachment E: Bus on Shoulders Meeting Summary 08/08/2018