

MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 347-2016

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: August 23, 2016

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON THE EXISTING SOUTH BEACH LOCAL AND PROPOSED SOUTH BEACH TROLLEY SERVICE**



The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to clarify some information that has circulated in the community with regard to the current South Beach Local and the proposed South Beach Trolley service. This document will also serve as a vehicle to educate the public regarding prior Commission policy direction on this issue and the Administration's direction with respect to the City's circulator service.

First, I would like to clarify that the City is not unilaterally cancelling or terminating the local circulator service to the south beach area. The South Beach Local service is owned and operated by Miami-Dade County as part of its bus service via an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Miami Beach that dates back to October, 2005. Since the inception of the South Beach Local, the City has been funding a portion (approximately 1/3) of the annual operations and maintenance cost of the service. The service frequently suffers from interruptions, break-downs, and other mechanical issues that affect service, and, as a result, the target headways of 13 minutes during peak hours and 20 minutes during off-peak hours are not being met in a consistent manner and ridership has been consistently decreasing over the past several years, from an all-time high of 6,835 annual average daily passengers in 2007 to an all-time low of 2,957 annual average daily passengers in 2015.

Due to the poor service level, declining ridership, and County statements that they were shifting from providing local circulator service to a focus on regional routes, the Commission began exploring alternatives almost 2 years ago and ultimately recommended replacing the South Beach Local with a South Beach Trolley in January of 2016.

BACKGROUND

In February 2014, the City initiated operation of the Alton West Trolley, intended to help mitigate construction impacts from the Alton Road reconstruction project. Separately from the South Beach Local service, the City operates the Alton-West Trolley service through a turnkey contract with its trolley operator. This service was approved by Miami-Dade County specifically as a temporary traffic mitigation strategy in connection with the FDOT Alton Road reconstruction project. Although the City was initially granted authority to operate the Alton-West Trolley service within the limits of the FDOT Alton Road project and until final completion of the project, the City worked with Miami-Dade County to authorize an extension of the Alton-West Trolley

service in light of ongoing and planned roadway construction along West Avenue in order to help mitigate the impacts to mobility and parking due to construction along the corridor for the next couple of years.

Immediately upon implementation, the average daily ridership of the Alton-West Trolley was in excess of 1,000 passengers per day. In October, 2014, the City rolled out the North Beach Trolley to provide local circulator service previously non-existent in North Beach. Ridership has grown consistently over time. In fact, for the third quarter of fiscal year 2015/16, the North Beach Trolley has carried an average of 2,431 passengers on a daily basis with only 4 trolleys, while the South Beach Local carried 2,308 passengers with its fleet of 10 buses in the same quarter. With the roll-out of these new trolley services, the City began to receive requests and demands to replace the South Beach Local with more reliable and frequent trolley service.

At the October 22, 2014 Commission meeting, as part of the discussion regarding the mid-beach trolley system, Mayor Levine expressed interest in a trolley network to connect north, mid and south beach adequately. At that time, I confirmed to the Commission that we were in talks with the County regarding our taking over the South Beach circulator service.

At the January 15, 2015 City Commission meeting, the City Commission referred a discussion item to the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee (NCAC) regarding the potential operation of the Alton-West Trolley service beyond the final completion of the Alton Road project. At the NCAC meeting on April 21, 2015, the Administration presented a couple of preliminary South Beach Trolley route options and service plans for discussion. At the meeting, the NCAC made a motion recommending the approval of a bi-directional South Beach Trolley route and service plan that would complement (but not replace) the current South Beach Local until its termination in February 2017. This recommendation was subsequently approved by the City Commission at its April 29, 2015 meeting via Resolution No. 2015-28999 (Attachment A) authorizing the Administration to implement a bi-directional South Beach Trolley route and service plan as part of a citywide interconnected trolley system under the City's control.

Pursuant to this direction, the City's Transportation Department staff held various discussions with Miami-Dade County staff regarding the implementation of a permanent South Beach Trolley route that would complement the South Beach Local service. Miami-Dade County staff, however, rejected this proposal and indicated that the County desires to get out of the circulator business and focus on regional service, leaving the responsibility of operating municipal circulators to cities. Instead, the County recommended that the City develop a route and service plan for a South Beach Trolley service that would completely replace the South Beach Local upon the latter's scheduled termination by the County in February 2017. To this end, City staff worked with County staff and developed a comprehensive South Beach Trolley route and service plan (Attachment B) intended to replace the South Beach Local upon termination by the County.

Given the County staff position, the City did not explore the option to renew the South Beach Local Interlocal Agreement, and we do not know the terms, if any, under which the County would be willing to renew.

At the December 9, 2015 Commission meeting, as part of a discussion on the Alton-West Trolley, Jose Gonzalez, Transportation Director, updated the Commission on the County staff position to replace the South Beach Local with a City-provided trolley service.

On January 13, 2016, the City Commission, after discussion, approved the revised South Beach Trolley route and service plan, and authorized staff to negotiate a new Interlocal Agreement with Miami-Dade County to enable the City to operate the service upon the termination of the existing South Beach Local service by the County. The current City funding provided to the County for the South Beach Local would then be available to fund a portion of the new trolley service. The Alton-West Trolley service would also terminate and simply be serviced by the new South Beach Trolley. This resolution (Attachment C) was unanimously adopted by the City Commission on a 7-0 vote.

On May 11, 2016, the City Commission, during a discussion on South Beach circulator options in light of the anticipated schedule for implementation of a light rail/modern streetcar system in South Beach, reaffirmed its commitment to have a City-operated South Beach Trolley service replace the South Beach Local service and serve as a feeder system to the light rail/modern streetcar once in service (anticipated in 2020).

More recently, on July 20, 2016, the City Commission, after discussion, approved an amendment to the agreement with the City's trolley service provider to expedite the purchase and delivery of 12 low-floor trolley vehicles to be interspersed throughout the citywide trolley loops specifically to improve accessibility for the elderly and passengers in wheelchairs, subject to the County's approval of the Interlocal Agreement required for the City to operate this service.

I want to stress that City staff has been working closely with the County to ensure that no interruption in circulator service occurs at any point in time. The City will negotiate with the County that the Local should continue on a month-to-month basis until the South Beach Trolley comes on-line. We anticipate that the South Beach Trolley service will come on-line in the summer/fall of 2017; as such, the Local would continue until that date.

Additionally, while all of the trolley vehicles that are either in use by the City or on order comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we have taken additional steps to enhance accessibility. For example, we have custom-ordered 14 modified/kneeling high-floor trolley vehicles with steps that are lower in height specifically to improve accessibility for elderly and disabled passengers. Each of the 14 modified/kneeling high-floor trolleys will be equipped with an intercom system for improved communication between the wheelchair passenger and the trolley driver. The January 13, 2016, direction of the Commission was for 12 low-floor/kneeling vehicles to be deployed for the South Beach Trolley. However, in order to provide similar levels of accessibility Citywide, on July 20, 2016, the Commission directed that the low-floor/kneeling trolley vehicles be interspersed throughout all of the trolley loops; and we will modify the City's Trolley Tracker in our E-Gov app to clearly identify the location of the low-floor trolleys along the various routes for easy real-time tracking. The low-floor/kneeling trolleys will be just as accessible and easy to board and alight as the South Beach Local buses.

Lastly, it is important to note that we have not yet ordered any of the low-floor trolley vehicles, pending the County Commission approval of the interlocal necessary for the City to operate this service. The interlocal is tentatively scheduled to go to the County Commission on September 13, 2016.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Attachments:

- A: Resolution No. 2015-28999
- B: South Beach Trolley Route and Service Plan
- C: Resolution No. 2016-29269


JLM/KGB/JRG

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RESOLUTION NO. 2015-28999

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REGARDING THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALTON-WEST TROLLEY ROUTE AND DIRECTING THE ADMINISTRATION TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED BI-DIRECTIONAL SOUTH BEACH TROLLEY ROUTE AND SERVICE PLAN THAT CONNECTS COLLINS AVENUE IN THE EAST, 17TH STREET IN THE NORTH, ALTON ROAD IN THE WEST, AND 1ST STREET IN THE SOUTH.

WHEREAS, the Alton-West Trolley circulator service was approved by Miami-Dade County as a temporary traffic mitigation strategy in connection with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Alton Road reconstruction project; and, as such, has been operating under a temporary certificate of transportation issued by Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, the City is authorized to operate the Alton-West Trolley service within the limits of the FDOT Alton Road project and until final completion of the project, scheduled for August 2015; and

WHEREAS, should the City wish to continue the provision of a circulator service in South Beach on a permanent basis, a proposed route and service plan must be approved by Miami-Dade County via an Interlocal Agreement; and

WHEREAS, as advised by Miami-Dade County staff, said proposed route and service plan should, to the extent possible, avoid duplication of service and competition with the existing circulator service in the South Beach area (the South Beach Local); and

WHEREAS, the Administration believes that the most effective and efficient manner to complement the South Beach local service is to provide a more direct bidirectional connection between Collins Avenue and Alton Road; and

WHEREAS, the Administration presented two (2) alternative routes for a proposed South Beach Trolley service to the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee (NCAC) at its April 21, 2015 meeting for input, Alternative 1a (service loop traveling in one direction) and Alternative 1b (bi-directional service loop), each connecting Collins Avenue in the east, 17th Street in the north, Alton Road in the west, and 1st Street in the south; and

WHEREAS, the NCAC made a motion recommending the implementation of a South Beach Trolley route and service plan corresponding to Alternative 1b, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit 1; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 1b is proposed to operate with six (6) vehicles from 6:00 AM to 12:00 AM Monday through Saturdays and from 8:00 AM to 12:00 AM on Sundays, with a frequency of 15 minutes; and

WHEREAS, the operating and maintenance cost of Alternative 1b is estimated at approximately \$2.9 Million annually; and

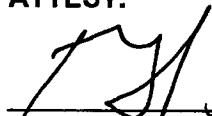
WHEREAS, the Administration will commence discussions with Miami-Dade County in connection with developing a plan for an interlocal agreement and securing the requisite certificate of transportation, which would govern this South Beach Trolley Route; and

WHEREAS, the Administration is identifying additional funding and resources needed to develop and implement a citywide interconnected trolley system as part of the Fiscal Year 2015/2016 budget process; and

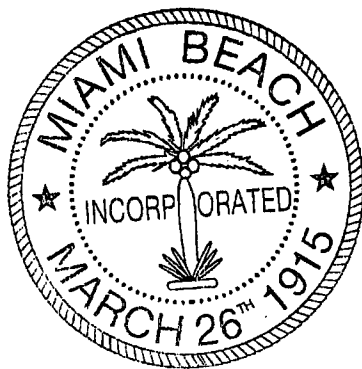
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, that the Mayor and City Commission hereby accept the recommendation of the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee regarding the continuation of the Alton-West Trolley route and direct the Administration to implement the proposed bi-directional South Beach Trolley route and service plan that connects Collins Avenue in the east, 17th Street in the North, Alton Road in the west, and 1st Street in the south.

PASSED and ADOPTED this 29 day of April, 2015.


ATTEST:


5/5/15
Rafael E. Granada, City Clerk


Philip Levine, Mayor



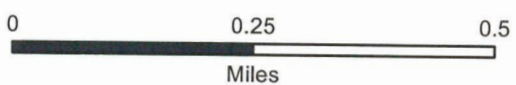
APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION


City Attorney 4-24-15
Date



| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Hours of Operation: | Mon- Sat, 6am-12am Sundays, 8am-12am |
| Frequency of Service: | 10-15 minutes |
| Fare: | FREE |
| No. of Stops: | 72 approx. (36 in each direction) |

| Legend | |
|---|--|
| | Middle Beach Loop Connection |
| South Beach Trolley (Bi-Directional) | |
| | Blue Route |
| | Green Route |
| | Belle Isle Extension (Frequency: 30 minutes) |
| | Middle Beach Loop |
| | Public Park |



South Beach Trolley Service Area



RESOLUTION NO. 2016-29269

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, AND APPROVING THE PROPOSED SOUTH BEACH TROLLEY ROUTE AND SERVICE PLAN; AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO NEGOTIATE AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FOR THE APPROVED SOUTH BEACH ROUTE, WHICH NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT SHALL BE SUBMITTED TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION FOR APPROVAL PRIOR TO EXECUTION.

WHEREAS, on April 29, 2015, the City Commission passed Resolution No. 2015-28999 authorizing the Administration to implement the proposed bi-directional South Beach Trolley route and service plan to connect Collins Avenue in the East, 17th Street in the North, Alton Road in the west, and 1st Street in the South; and

WHEREAS, Miami-Dade County Transportation has expressed concerns regarding duplication of service with the current County-operated South Beach Local route and has consequently rejected the City's proposed trolley route; and

WHEREAS, as a result, the Administration has been working with MDT staff to identify an enhanced route alignment that can continue to provide the robust coverage currently provided by the South Beach Local bus service while also addressing existing deficiencies of the service such as the poor east to west connection; and

WHEREAS, the proposed South Beach trolley route alignment takes into consideration land use/density and is designed to ensure the highest ridership potential and best use of the City's resources; and

WHEREAS, the proposed South Beach Trolley service is anticipated to operate Monday through Saturday from 6:00 AM to 12:00 AM and Sundays from 8:00 AM to 12:00 AM with a frequency of 10 -15 minutes at all times; and

WHEREAS, while the proposed route continues to service Belle Isle, consistent with the recommendation from the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee, the Belle Isle service would be at a lesser frequency of 30 minutes; and

WHEREAS, by replacing the existing Miami-Dade bus route (South Beach Local) with the proposed South Beach trolley route, the City would incur the entire cost of the South Beach route, but would save \$1.3 Million, which it currently contributes to the South Beach Local bus service; and

WHEREAS, the Administration, in contemplation of implementing the South Beach trolley route, is working with Miami-Dade County (the County) to reinvest the County's previously allocated funds for the existing South Beach Local bus service route in connection with a proposed enhanced bus connection between the City and the City of Miami; and

WHEREAS, the anticipated annual cost of maintenance and operation of the proposed South Beach trolley service is \$4.5 Million; and

WHEREAS, funding is budgeted in the FY 2015/16 Operating Budget from the Resort Tax Quality of Life Transportation fund and will be requested for FY 2016/17; and

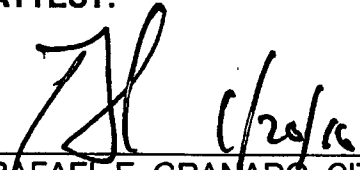
WHEREAS, the Administration recommends that the City Commission approve the proposed South Beach trolley route, replacing the South Beach Local bus service; and

WHEREAS, the Administration recommends that the City Commission authorize the City Manager to negotiate an interlocal agreement with Miami-Dade County for the proposed South Beach trolley route, which negotiated agreement would be brought back to the City Commission for consideration and approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, that the Mayor and City Commission hereby accept the recommendation of the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee, and approve the proposed South Beach trolley route and service plan; and further authorize the City Manager to negotiate an interlocal agreement with Miami-Dade County for the approved South Beach route, which negotiated agreement shall be submitted to the Mayor and City Commission for approval prior to execution.

PASSED and ADOPTED this 13th day of January, 2016.

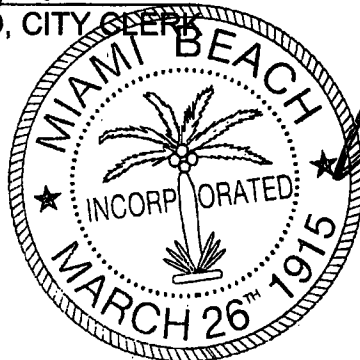
ATTEST:




RAFAEL E. GRANADO, CITY CLERK




PHILIP LEVINE, MAYOR



APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION



City Attorney 

1/15/16

Date