

Position of the Venetian Causeway Residents Regarding Its Renovation

The Residents living along the Venetian Causeway (VC), as well as the three Residents Associations representing most of these residents, support the major portion of the FDOT VC renovation recommendations. However, we support the east bascule alternative of **rehabilitation** rather than the **replacement** option recommended by FDOT.

Rehabilitation of the east bascule will take into consideration the safety issues and allow for the replacement of the shallow pilings with stronger drilled shafts, preserve the historic profile and the unique spoil islands as the “crown jewels” of the VC, while not jeopardizing the VC’s important designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Venetian Causeway needs attention. Many of the bridges are rated as "structurally deficient" and weight limits have been imposed to minimize further decay and damage. The Florida Department of Transportation is preparing a PD&E study of how to proceed with upgrades to the Venetian Causeway. The FDOT plan will be submitted to Miami-Dade County and the County will decide on the final design of the VC renovation.

We support a major portion of the FDOT plan which will address resiliency by replacing the 10 stationary bridges by providing deeper pilings and raising the bridges slightly. For the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, the sidewalks and bicycle lanes will be widened. The historic pattern of the bridge railings will be duplicated on the new bridges. No work is planned on the west bascule as it has been rebuilt. The PD&E study considered three options for the East Bascule... "do nothing", "rehabilitate", and "replace".

We believe that FDOT has made a serious error in their evaluation and renovation selection process regarding the east bascule. It is our firm belief that they have not given the required attention and weighting 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). We 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 is that the Rehabilitation option costs significantly less than the Replacement option while addressing all necessary issues. The Replacement option is “overkill” and will cost significantly more – a waste of taxpayer dollars. FDOT estimates that replacing the bridge will cost about \$20 million more than rehabilitating it.

The "replace" option dramatically- and negatively - changes the historic character of the causeway 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. Replacing beautiful historic bridges with a single massive bridge is an unacceptable change for our charming historic causeway.

The rehab alternative is a win-win for the FDOT and the residents of our neighborhood and most sensible alternative for all parties involved.

Respectfully submitted,

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