

TRAFFIC ADVISORY BOARD
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
OCTOBER 21, 2008

D J F M A M J J A S O

MEMBERS:

Ian Martinez
Larry D. Kries
Douglas Yoder
Frank Quesada
Christopher Morrison
Bertram Goldsmith, Jr.
Ramon Irigoyen

*	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	**	P	P
*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	**	P	E
*	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	**	P	E
*	P	P	E	P	A	E	P	**	E	P
*	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	**	P	P
*	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	**	P	P
*	P	P	P	A	A	E	P	**	A	P

APPOINTED BY:

Donald D. Slesnick, II
Maria Anderson
Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Wayne "Chip" Withers
Commission-as-a-Whole
City Manager

(*) Board recommended not holding a meeting due to holiday vacations

(**) Board meeting cancelled due to threatening hurricane

A - Absent
E - Excused
P - Present

STAFF

R. Alberto Delgado, P.E., Public Works Director
Esther Zabalo, Civil Engineer
Tim Plummer, David Plummer & Associates, Inc.
M. Francomacaro, Central

The community meeting was scheduled to discuss the proposed traffic signal at the intersection of Le Jeune Road and Sevilla Avenue. Attached and made a part of these Minutes is a list of attendees.

Chairman Morrison called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Mr. Morrison introduced the Board Members and thanked everyone for attending. He also introduced Tim Plummer, the consultant, and Mr. Delgado. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present and discuss the proposed plan for the installation of the traffic light at the intersection of Le Jeune Road and Sevilla Avenue, as part of the City's efforts to alleviate the traffic situation in the area. Juan Poleo and Jose Gonzalez, from Flagler Development (the developer of the Bacardi Project) were also present.

Mr. Delgado described the project with Anastasia to the south, Segovia to the west and Le Jeune Road to the east including a small area Catalonia and Palermo to the south of the project. This is the affected area. The first phase of that project was the implementation of traffic circles along Hernando. Those circles are intended to slow down the traffic down Sevilla Avenue, Almeria and all the east/west streets. In addition to that there is still another improvement that is still pending on Valencia.

In the second phase we will be addressing the streets along Le Jeune Road and along Segovia. This project requires the approval of the affected area residents and what we are doing with that particular phase is that we are postponing it until the completion of the project. Three months or six months, after the project is completed, when the traffic gets back to normal, Tim Plummer, the traffic consultant, will be taking traffic counts in that area to identify what traffic intrusion that project has created in that particular neighborhood.

What is being discussed tonight, and this is why it is being called the “affected area” because it will affect the entire neighborhood, is a proposed traffic light at the intersection of Le Jeune Road and Sevilla Avenue. That installation has been coordinated with the Fire Department since their station is in closed proximity to that area and they need access to Le Jeune Road. This proposed installation has been presented to the Department of Transportation and to Miami-Dade County to obtain their approval. The permits were granted with certain conditions that have to be implemented in order to be able to accommodate that light at that particular location.

Those conditions, and changes, will be discussed by our consultant, Tim Plummer (David Plummer & Associates, Inc.) so that you may understand what is going to happen to the Le Jeune Road and Sevilla Avenue intersection, and also the intersection of Le Jeune Road and Almeria.

Mr. Delgado thanked everyone for attending and acknowledged two representatives of Flagler Development Group, Messrs. Poleo and Gonzalez who will listen to the resident’s comments and concerns; introduced the Traffic Advisory Board members and noted that the Board is sponsoring this meeting and will recommend to the commission whether or not to support or deny a motion to install the traffic light. He then turned the floor over to Tim Plummer, consultant.

Tim Plummer, David Plummer and Associates, Inc.

Mr. Plummer explained that he was going to try and be very brief in explaining where they are with the project. He referred to Mr. Delgado’s comments as they related to the improvements for the Bacardi and City National Bank building. One of the things that came forward was the need for a traffic light at the east leg of Sevilla and Le Jeune Road. He pointed to the board indicating the Bacardi Headquarters and the City National Bank, which has been opened for a year more or less. The access to the Bacardi Headquarters and the Bank is on Sevilla Avenue. The Fire Department was involved with this, as well, when Cook was the Fire Chief because of they want immediate access to Le Jeune Road when they come out of the fire house and will be able to make the light on Le Jeune Road. We started the approval process for that. We already received approval from the State and the County and have been in midst of designing the plans, which are 90% complete.

Today, if you are traveling northbound on Le Jeune Road there is a left turn Lane on Sevilla and there is also a left turn lane on Almeria. They are very short, not a lot of stacking. As you travel south we have left turn lane at Sevilla and you also have one at Palermo to go to the east. With the design of the traffic signal a couple of issues need to be resolved.

One of the things that the County insisted upon for its approval was that the original plan Bacardi had about four or five on-street parking spaces on the north side of Sevilla, at Le Jeune Road and the County wanted to make sure there would be enough capacity on the westbound approach, they wanted two lanes, not just one. Once this was designed, vehicles would be able to turn right or left. They want to have two lanes and have asked us to remove the five parking spaces that go up to the entrance of the garage on Sevilla so that there is adequate capacity. What does this mean? It means that it will not affect the green time on Le Jeune, as much. You won’t have to turn the cycle over as much because you will be able to get more cars through each time it turns green up for the westbound movement.

When we went through the approval process with Florida DOT, their major review comment was they did not like the inadequate spacing here of the left turn lane for southbound to eastbound. Le Jeune Road is a State Road; they control the approval process for Le Jeune Road. They have asked that a more standard left turn lane be put in southbound Le Jeune Road at Sevilla. What does that do? Right now, that will affect the northbound to westbound left turn. That movement will no longer be allowed. So that movement will be out. From the things we heard over the past couple of years from the neighbors that's going to turn out to be a positive thing for the neighbors, because right now, today, lots of people turn right and turned left and cut through Almeria to get to places west, western Gables, Westchester, to wherever they were headed. That will eliminate that cut through which is a positive thing for the neighborhood.

Then, as part of the approval process, we met with the neighbors. A concern came up that if the traffic signal is implemented to the end of Le Jeune, we are going to get a lot of people that are going to make the left hand turn, and are going to cut through Sevilla, now you have made it easier for them by giving them the opportunity to make the left turn, especially potentially the new folks for the Bacardi Headquarters. So with that, the promise was made from the developers that we would go through the process and make sure that the southbound to westbound right turn will be eliminated. So we have gone through that process in working with the City of Coral Gables Public Works, the best way to do that is something we call a one-way street semi-diverter. And that is to take just the east most section of Sevilla and make it one way, so now you will not be able to come south, make a left turn and now you also will not be able to make this other movement (pointing to the board) that happens in the afternoons from Palermo, people come out this way (again pointing to the board), get on the left turn lane and cut through on Sevilla. That movement will also be eliminated. So the cut through traffic on Almeria/Sevilla should go down significantly. I have been discussing back and forth with Police and Fire and they are concerned about one-way street semi-diverters. Public Works, Police, and Fire will have to get together and get a resolution on this and move forward and probably will be speaking with the Manager.

Let me just show you a similar installation right outside our doors here, on Sarto Avenue and University, a one-way street semi-diverter, which was part of the JCI project, another one that I worked on, and it was one of the solutions that kind of help the neighbors. They were afraid of the cut through traffic on Sarto Avenue. Pointing to the board, this is Sarto which is the block, I guess you would say, just south of Anastasia; University Drive, looking at the main pick-up/drop-off at the Coral Gables Youth Center. For a short section of the block it is westbound traffic, only. And this is what it looks like: curb and gutter. We maintained the 15' opening that the Fire Department requires, in case the Fire Department has to come the wrong direction down and attend to any emergency that may have. As you can see, is curbed and guttered all the way around. It is a little hard to see it here, but if you come around Sarto, we are looking back towards Le Jeune Road and Sarto, the curb and gutter run back about 50' to 75' then you enter into your normal residential section where there are curbs and gutters. That is the idea for this one-way street semi-diverter, which we are going to design very similarly to Sarto and University Drive.

That is where we are at the project right now, and I am ready to answer any questions that you or Alberto may have.

Mr. Goldsmith asked if these are requirements by the State and neighborhood requirements, because of the traffic light.

Mr. Plummer: (Pointing to the board) We have the County requirements here, State requirements here with the turn lane, and neighborhood requirements as far as they agree with the neighbors.

Carlos Perez, 534 Sevilla Avenue: The left hand lane going south, they are going to be narrow? Mr. Plummer noted that they had not gone that far, we may or may not have to have that. We have to work through that with the County.

A resident asked if they were going to have a pedestrian crossing and Mr. Plummer informed him that we were going to have a full pedestrian crossing, you will even have the countdown signal and you will know how long you have to get across. All of those features will be incorporated and instead of having to go all the way down to the left to cross, you can cross right here (pointing to the board).

Irene Koukios, 503 Almeria Avenue: What is the anticipated flow onto Almeria? Mr. Plummer: As Alberto mentioned what's going to happen now in the process is that once the Bacardi building is opened, it will probably be occupied anywhere from 90 to 180 days. So after that the traffic can be considered normalized. The lights and the signals will all have been installed, the travel patterns of the folks that are working there will have been set, so we are going out again with the City and we are going count all of these through and see what is happening to the volume. So if those three meet the traffic calming thresholds, we are committed to making traffic calming improvements to mitigate that.

To the question as to when the project will be finished, the Flagler Development representatives noted that it is expected to be finished September of next year. It had been originally scheduled for September this year, but because of the transition between Burger King and Bacardi, it had to be moved back as new approval permits, etc, had to be procured which took quite a long time.

Fernando Menoyo, 744 Biltmore Way: What is the difference between Almeria and Sevilla? You have pork chops on Sevilla and on Almeria you do not have them. Why not on Almeria and not on Sevilla?

Mr. Plummer: This was the original agreement with the neighbors that when the traffic signal would go in it would prevent people to do this movement (pointing to the board).

Mr. Delgado: Let me tell you what happened. On Sevilla what we are trying to prevent is the southbound right turn. On Almeria, you will still be able to make the right hand turn, but what you cannot do is the left turn. So you are not going to have room in the median or in the actual Le Jeune Road to make a left turn. The difference is this, (pointing to the board) in Sevilla, here, is very difficult by the police to make a right turn, and if you do not have that choker here, or that pork chop, cars can easily make a right turn. They are not being monitored or checked by the Police. So it is very easy to make a right turn. However, you do not have to move to make a left turn, because you have already a lane, for you to make a left turn here you need to actually come from that lane.

Discussion from those present.

Fernando Menoyo, 744 Biltmore Way: But Sevilla is more protected than any other street, much more than Almeria and much, much more than all the other streets.

Mr. Delgado explained that Sevilla is the problem. Remember we already have that situation like this on Valencia. When you are coming on Valencia, by Publix, and you make a left and then you make a right, this is what is going to happen on Sevilla if you put a light over there. Sevilla is a street that goes all the way and even when you get to Red Road is wide.

Wendy Cook, 424 Nervia Avenue: These are our concerns.

Mr. Plummer explained that what they are trying to do is have a minimum amount of penetration into residential areas. Mr. Plummer further explained that the agreement with the neighbors was that they would prevent the right turn southbound to westbound right turn because the traffic signal now is going to attract more traffic from other areas to the east in downtown for people who don't want to go south on University and on to Bird Road or wherever they are going down to US1. We recognized that, we talked to the neighbors about it that we would prevent this movement because they were very concerned that this would directly affect them.

Mr. Martinez asked Mr. Plummer about the concern of the Fire Department and the concern of the residents to have the traffic diverters on Sevilla which will prevent, perhaps, traffic going through. Have this been discussed with the Fire Department regarding their concerns. Mr. Plummer noted that this had all been discussed with the Fire Department and that there are a couple of ways around that. One is, for some reason that they have to go on Sevilla. This aspect was introduced during Chief Cook's tenure so the Fire Department could get direct access to Le Jeune so they could go South and get to University or wherever they had to go quickly. It really was not for this movement, but if that movement came in I would imagine the Fire Department would come out this way, (pointing to the board) from Palermo the lights would go in and we met the minimum requirements so the 15' width so that they could go the wrong way for 100 feet. With most flashing lights in Miami-Dade County, people pull to the side and although it may take a few extra seconds for people do stop. We are not preventing the Fire Department from going westbound on Sevilla.

Mr. Martinez's concern if they are blocking an intersection, which is always feasible in Dade County, and we put a traffic light, you have the possibility of creating a blocked intersection at Palermo for the fire vehicles to get through. Mr. Plummer, (pointing to the board) Oh, because if the signal is here, yes. Mr. Martinez: The traffic backs up. Let's say hypothetically ---- vehicle in Palermo and traffic will get backed up for quite a ways.

Mr. Plummer: What will happen now, when they have to go this way on Palermo, they are not going to use their preemption device to have the light at Sevilla go green. About 70% of the green time is on Le Jeune Road. Maybe when they pull up and this just turned red (pointing to the light) with the handful of times would they ever go down Sevilla in a year, those are the things that all have to be kind of balanced.

Mr. Delgado noted that the developer was committed to do certain things that the City required before allowing the project to go through, and that this is only the first meeting. We are coming back with a second phase to either to tell you that everything is fine, or if we have some traffic intrusion, then we will be addressing those streets that have been affected. That is why we are here because the City wants to make sure that the impact that this project is going to cause will be mitigated somehow. Phase 1 has already been completed, now we are going to the second phase.

Mr. Plummer explained that they are probably six to eight weeks away from obtaining their final permit for the plans. There was a lot of conversation with the residents and Mr. Plummer.

Mr. Menoyo made the comment that once this was implemented nothing else will happen. He was reassured that the developer will have the contractor on site to address any additional construction issues that may arise as a result of the post-project volume counts, etc. Mr. Menoyo asked if there was going to be a sign that said “no left turn”, why can’t there be sign on Sevilla that says “no right turn?” Why the difference?

Mr. Delgado: Let me tell why the difference. It is very difficult to control a right turn, which is a very narrow movement. When you are going to make a right turn, you can very easily do it. When making a left turn is more visible and people usually don’t do it. You are crossing an incoming lane and making a turn. A comment from a Board Member: People are going to do it. Mr. Delgado: I know people are going to do it, but not as openly as people making right turns. Mr. Delgado explained further what drivers do when making right turns and many claim that they did not see the sign.

Mr. Delgado explained that what happened in South Miami, at the Shops of Sunset, it took about six months for the traffic to settle. At the beginning people were looking for the best way to go.

Mr. Delgado and Mr. Plummer noted that it would take about six months to get everyone use to the routes to come and go from the building. So that is why six months is a prudent time allow for patterns to become established. After the developer gets the CO (Certificate of Occupancy) we can wait three to six months and revisit the project and we will be able to do further modifications, if necessary.

Mr. Delgado reiterated that the City approved a Resolution and is behind this project and will handle any necessary traffic calming installations after the post-project traffic counts, etc. More discussion from the neighbors and the Board.

Terry Hansen, 444 Malaga Avenue: When traffic is heading southbound and they are about to pass the area, they may turn right onto Almeria and we are worried about it. Mr. Plummer explained that we will wait for traffic counts after the project is completed. After Sevilla is closed and the signal is in, we will recount and compare those numbers with the previous numbers and determine if it will need to be mitigated. I don’t know what the solution will be yet, but it all will be taken care of. We will go to the County again, come before the Traffic Advisory Board and do whatever is needed to correct the situation.

Tim Plummer: Again explained that the signal will be on the east leg of Sevilla at Le Jeune Road (the business side) not on the residential side. There will be a crosswalk with a pedestrian signal that will count down, like at Miracle Mile, so you know how long you have to cross. Sevilla, on the west side (the residential side) as agreed by the developers with the residents, was to prevent this movement because once the signal comes in place there is going to be more traffic on Sevilla, travelling south, north and west, so the one-way street semi-diverters will be put on Almeria just between the driveway of the first house on the north and Le Jeune Road. This is only about 100’, one way. You will not be able to come southbound and turn west on Almeria. You will not be able to come northbound on Le Jeune and turn west onto Sevilla.

Jose A. Marquez, 418 Sevilla Avenue: He complained about the fact that they have never had any problems with parking in that area, and that now they want to charge \$25.00 a year for parking. He does not agree with that and would like to know the reason why.

Mr. Delgado noted that Kevin Kinney, the Parking Director, will meet with the residents on Sevilla to discuss that situation. This is not a part of this meeting but he will call a meeting. The reason for that, we think, is because of this project, people from the commercial district are going to park across the street over there and this is something that we are going to keep an eye on. We do not believe that anyone from the headquarters is going to park there, but More comments about people parking on the residential areas that is why there are signs that indicate no parking allowed between certain times.

Wendy Cook, 424 Nervia: We back the project. We do not oppose the project and have no objections.

Mr. Menoyo lives on Almeria and is worried about the burden it will place on the other streets. He was wondering if there is any other way to resolve the situation.

Tim Plummer, pointing to the board, explained to Mr. Menoyo that he does realize that the worst movement on Almeria is in the afternoons. And the semi-diverter is planned to mitigate the problem.

Mr. Morrison: Originally we were asked to host this presentation and I was not aware that we would be asked to make a resolution in favor, or not in favor of the project as designed. So we are going to move towards that this evening so I want to find out if there is any more input from those here. He explained that the Traffic Advisory Board has a long history of modifying, correcting, traffic calming situations in its four year history. At South Alhambra we are working on our third project to satisfy the neighbors and will continue working until they are happy and we have a solution. This is not the end of this project by any means. After the studies are in and we determine what actually happens, we will be making further modifications if necessary. The traffic light and the other things that have been described are not taken lightly as they are intended to become permanent. I guess we will move to a resolution. I ask the Members of the Board to make a motion. Mr. Martinez noted that as we had not anticipated voting this evening, but only hosting this meeting, we were no longer in session. Therefore, Mr. Morrison reconvened the Citizen's Advisory Board and again called for a motion.

Chico Goldsmith moved to recommend to the Commission that this project move forward. Mr. Martinez seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to discuss the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

SIGN-IN SHEET

10-21-08 6:30pm

Irene Koukios	503 Almeria Ave.
Rhonda Anderson	2715 Hernando Ave
Carlos V. Perez	534 Sevilla Ave.
TIM PLUMER	
TROY EASLEY	2815 S. 12th ST
Carlos Harding	2702 S. LE JEUNE
TERRY HANSEN	444 Malaga Ave CG
Anthony Touthey	444 Malaga Ave
FERNANDO MENDOZA	744 BILTMORE WAY
JOAN PEREZ	FLORIAN DEV. GROUP 2855 LE JEUNE RD. 4TH Floor
Jose Gonzalez FDG	2855 Le Jeune Road 4th Fl
Jose I. Garcia	700 Sevilla Ave. CG
Wandy Cook	404 Almeria Ave
RENE MARTINEZ	418 SEVILLA AV
JOSE A. MARQUEZ	432 SEVILLA AVE.
Emilio PEREZ	422 SEVILLA AVE
Jason Ekstein	431 Sevilla
MARGOT B. FRIEDMAN	425 MALAGA
Goppy Chumales	419 Catalonia Ave.

Le Jeune Rd + Sevilla Ave.
Traffic light