

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-3
January 28, 2015
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-3 [Start: 10:37:18 a.m.]

Discussion regarding traffic flow in Downtown Coral Gables
Vice Mayor Kerdyk

Mayor Cason: Let's move on to F-3. Bill this is your item.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I'd really like to hear what everybody has to say about this traffic flow in the downtown area, but let me just say what I see. My observations of traffic in the downtown has increased exponentially over the last five years in the City of Coral Gables, and then when I look at that and when I look at what we have in the future, and while I was sitting here, I was just looking at some of the projects. We have the 900 Block, we have project going on that's 120,000 square feet; we have 2020 Ponce – 2020 Salzedo that's 200,000 square feet, that's the Codina project on Salzedo and Minorca; we have the Columbus Center, the Behar project, that Gables Rentals, that's another 200,000-plus square feet; we have the Loft that's on the corner of LeJeune Road and Valencia, 150,000 square feet; Publix, I haven't seen the site yet, but it has to be north or 200,000 square feet, I think its 300,000-plus square feet; two parking garages,

probably going to be in excess of 300,000 square feet; Mercedes Benz is going to put on 150,000 square feet; Old Spanish Village is right now, the proposal is 1.2 million square feet, that's 2.5 million square feet of office/retail/residential square footage coming in. What I know is that we can't widen Miracle Mile, we can't widen Ponce de Leon, but we need to make sure that our roadways are getting maximized as much as possible. Is there a better way to deal with this?— should traffic be going two ways on Valencia and two ways on Andalusia?— is the traffic signal synchronized the right way?— is there any way to take turn lanes, maybe a parking spot off, so the turn lanes, you can turn right better? Those are things that are really not my expertise, but I know that in the next 10 to 15 years this place is going to expand, and I think we need to be very progressive instead of regressive and not regressive, instead of waiting for something to happen, we need to be progressive and sort of look at things on a holistic perspective, instead of piecemeal. Right now, we have traffic – every time we have a project the traffic consultant comes in and actually we have one ourselves, and we look at that individual location and how it integrates into the overall surroundings, but I honestly believe that we need to do a master plan over the next 10 to 15 years for the downtown transportation; and you know it's not only the way the vehicular traffic is right now, we need to look at the trolley system, how it integrates; we need to look about bicyclists, safety of walkers, how people park in the valet parking program. I really, really believe that we need a transportation master plan for our downtown area. I think it's necessary and I want to hear what you have to say, and I really believe that we need to look at this trolley impact fee, so that our trolleys – because we are going to have to run more and more trolleys, and they are going to have to be quicker, and I know all of you are concerned that, that one route up and down Ponce, not only be the only route. To mitigate traffic in the City of Coral Gables we have to have a master plan, and we need to hire somebody that knows what's going on, that can give us a roadmap, so to speak, of where we go in the future. I really, really believe this at heart.

Mayor Cason: I think you are right and there is also some other options too, like these smaller vehicles that almost like connectors, I don't know what you call them, they connect five or six people and can run. In fact, I was at an event where somebody that has one of those companies. Cathy are you aware of those, these kinds of vehicles?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Yes – and some of them are actually electric vehicles and they've been very popular, sometimes they call them circulators – five-ten people that just a short route around the area. We can certainly look into that. That comment about a transportation master plan for the downtown going out 15-20 years, I've made notes of the different suggestions that you put on the table, but certainly we can come back with the framework and then work with the Public Works Department on how to schedule that and make that happen.

Mayor Cason: And the synchronization is important too, because if you go down this way, a lot of times cars are green and then there are a couple reds up there and it just seems to....

Commissioner Keon: I actually have asked Public Works have the County look at a group of signalized lights here, as you come down LeJeune and they asked the County and they said they looked at them and that they are perfect or whatever else, but you know you'll sit there and the light will turn green and you are looking ahead and the next one is turning red and it's like, you would expect that they would turn – they would be synchronized such that as one turns green then there is a period, the next one turns green or whatever, and they don't do that, and maybe it's because of the amount of traffic on the cross streets that they have to let the east-west traffic go longer on some of those than they do on other ones, so they are not synchronized, but maybe they can never be synchronized because of the volume of traffic on some of the streets as they cross go east-west and north-south.

Mayor Cason: But it could be the change of the different times of day.

Commissioner Keon: I would think it could be better. It really could be better, and maybe there is some signal in there we don't need, and maybe there are other places that we need a signal, but its that's stretch from like Sindia to Alhambra about, where all those lights are just here around Miracle Mile, everything just stops, once you get past it its better.

Mayor Cason: Frank.

Commissioner Quesada: I agree with you wholeheartedly, but I think it's the perfect time for it. I know a few months back we were talking about the RP's for the garages and the streetscape, I know that Carmen came up with a plan for as far as staggering everything, so the traffic wouldn't be as bad, so that things are not happening at the same time or the Public project anticipating it's coming as-a-right, so it basically could happen anytime. I agree with you. What I would suggest if we are all on the same page, we direct staff to go out and select the consultant and also take a look at the trolley master plan that was done maybe about a year ago. You guys all remember, maybe a year or year and-a-half ago, that has recommendation of the downtown loop that I remember, we all liked...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right.

Commissioner Quesada: And they also discussed a Saturday and Sunday route also, I think that touched Matheson Hammock, Fairchild, all the different places, so to make sure that whatever traffic consultant is used they take a look at that.

Mayor Cason: And plug in the valet because the valets will be part of the solution as well.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think that's very good. I also wanted – once we have this transportation master plan, you know we can use this as a tool with developers, meaning the Ponce median, we started that from scratch many years ago, but the way we pay for the Ponce median, yes, we did take impact fees, but a lot of times we would go to the developer and say, hey you need to pay for this portion of that median there, it might cost \$300,000, but that would be something that they would do. So once we have this master plan, and I don't expect that we would implement it immediately, but we certainly, it would be bits and pieces maybe that we utilize that, but please, unless we do it in the next couple months, I probably won't be voting on this, but please do not forget the trolley impact fees, because those are things – that's what you really need, that's what we really need is transportation that people don't hop in their cars, we know that.

Commissioner Lago: And I agree with you. I think it's really crucial to really look at that over the next few months because we have major projects that are coming down the line and they need to buy in, they need to buy in to reducing the congestion. I can't believe we mentioned the light synchronization that's so funny, I think the same thing.

Commissioner Keon: But they looked at it – the county told me its perfect.

Commissioner Lago: You look at traffic on Ponce and its just backed up.

Commissioner Quesada: Hold on – we did change the synchronization. When the Mayor and I first got elected, the light coming out of Edgewater, if you are going down 37th Avenue and you stop, where Ingraham comes in, we actually got that light changed. I had heard of a lot of complaints and the back-up, but it probably took 8 to 10 months.

Commissioner Keon: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Quesada: There are algorithms because every light affects every other light.

Commissioner Keon: These lights right here on LeJeune that are...

Mayor Cason: Other than what's being developed in the Gables, an awful lot of our traffic, probably 80 percent of it is people going elsewhere, that's downtown, and Brickell and all that development, you are going to have even more traffic, apart from whatever is going to be done in the Gables.

Commissioner Quesada: So I want to make a motion.

Commissioner Keon: Could I say one thing. It's interesting to know about many of these developments is they are largely, most of the square footage is residential, as opposed to office, so its not that you are attracting – you are bringing people in to live so, I think that's why the trolley is sort of mass transit is very, very, very important to move people, so they don't have to move in cars, because once people come into downtown hopefully, you know they work downtown, they live downtown, they go to dinner downtown, the only time they are going to get in their car is if they are leaving downtown.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's how I vision it, just the trolley running around all the time.

Commissioner Keon: Yes. If we have a very good system to move people around downtown that will help,

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's why we need that trolley impact fee, so that everybody participates.

Commissioner Keon: So you'll stick around to work on this with us?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes maybe so, reconsideration.

[Laughter]

Mayor Cason: So what's your resolution?

Commissioner Quesada: So it's to direct staff to start looking into the creation of a master plan for traffic in downtown Coral Gables and if it goes beyond downtown Coral Gables then so be it, to take a look at the trolley study that was done, to look at the bike master plan that we've created to take a look at that, and also when developers are looking at a new project there are requirements that they conduct a traffic study to make sure moving forward with implementation that the traffic study is consistent with whatever master plan, so that they are not only looking at the immediate area, but they are looking at how it impacts the City as a whole.

Commissioner Lago: Can I just add one little item, just to appease the Vice Mayor, which I agree with. Can we have staff look into the potential of giving us a quick synopsis on trolley impact fees, potential trolley impact fees, how we could put that forth?- and that could be another layer. I hate to have more bureaucracy, but a layer that if someone is coming to the City is going to do a development that they really are cognizant of the fact that there is going to be that fee...

Commissioner Keon: Well there is a funding source too.

Commissioner Lago: Yes, there is a funding source to having an additional 2,000 people in our City, so we can hopefully do that other loop that we discussed; and by the way, I know that we are talking – the trolley is going to be important, obviously, adding another loop is going to be incredibly important, but the third thing that's going to be also incredibly important is minimizing congestion, how do you minimize congestion? Once we have the app 100 percent running, we are going to be able – instead of driving up and down streets, they'll be able to look at their app and say, go to this parking garage. All that's good, that's just going to help out.

Commissioner Keon: Can you include all of the addressing the whole issue of the valet too...?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Valet is one of them.

Commissioner Lago: I'm going to bring up the valets on our Commission Discussion Items. I had an issue with a valet this weekend that I'm going to bring up.

Commissioner Keon: OK. But we need to look at the valets and who operates them and I think they are just kind of given whoever asks.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And the pedestrians walking through the City, but yes all that would be incorporated.

Commissioner Keon: Yes – that people can safely.

Mayor Cason: So Commissioner Quesada has made the motion and the Vice Mayor seconds it.

Commissioner Quesada: One last addition to it. If they determine that they need to hire an outside consultant...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Oh, they are going to have to.

Commissioner Quesada: Let the decision be made by the City Manager if they need to, then we give her the authority to do so.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I agree 100 percent.

Mayor Cason: City Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Quesada: Yes
Commissioner Keon: Yes
Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes
Mayor Cason: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 10:50:40 a.m.]