



M, City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
May 25, 2021

ITEM TITLE:

Resolution. A Resolution of the Coral Gables City Commission supporting the designation of South Dixie Highway/U.S. Route 1/State Road 5, from the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line to State Road 9A/Interstate 95 Northbound as "Harriet Tubman Highway"/U.S. Route 1/State Road 5, including that portion of the roadway that lies within the city limits of Coral Gables, from SW 57th Avenue to Booker Street. (Sponsored by Mayor Vince Lago)

BRIEF HISTORY:

Harriet Ross Tubman, was an abolitionist and political activist who dedicated her life to the universal plight for freedom for all. She was born enslaved as Arminta "Minty" Ross in Dorchester County, Maryland around March of 1822, and would go on to change both her name and caste as she unapologetically proclaimed her right to liberty by successfully escaping the bonds of slavery. For Ms. Tubman, freedom for oneself was insufficient when others remained in bondage, and she risked her life to return to the horrors of bondage over 13 times during an 11-year period, in order to lead countless others to freedom.

Ms. Tubman is most known for helping to establish and mobilize the Underground Railroad, a network of abolitionists and safe houses that provided enslaved individuals with a passage to freedom. For the Underground Railroad, Ms. Tubman was the Conductor who is said to have never "lost a passenger". But her bravery extended far beyond the perils of the Underground Railroad, as she was the first documented woman to lead an armed assault during the Civil War. During the Civil War she also served as a nurse and an intelligence operative for the Union Army. She also solidified her place on the frontlines of the Women's Suffrage Movement, where she boldly advocated for women's right to vote.

In recognition of her immeasurable contributions to the fabric of this nation, the City Commission would like to honor the memory, legacy, and tenacity of Ms. Harriet Ross Tubman, who died on March 10, 1913, as well as take a stance on the necessary eradication of the lingering markers within our county and state which continue to celebrate a painful history of slavery and systemic racism, including Old Dixie Highway, West Dixie Highway, and South Dixie Highway.

Under its present moniker, Dixie represents a troubling time in our nation's past, marred by the inhumane celebration and unconscionable profit of the perils of racism, segregation, and the atrocities of slavery. It is unquestionable that "Dixie's" toxic history runs deeply through the veins of this country, as its racist roots date back to the 19th century and the deplorable comedic movement of blackface minstrels and would become the rallying cry and unofficial anthem of the Confederacy during the Civil War as they fought to uphold the institution of slavery.

It is only fitting that Dixie's current nomenclature be replaced by the matchless legacy of a warrior whose heroic and selfless fight for freedom and justice served Miami-Dade County, the state of Florida, the nation, and has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the City of Coral Gables.

On February 19, 2020, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution No. R-168-20, designating the portions of Old Dixie Highway and West Dixie Highway that encompass Miami-Dade County roadways, urging the Florida Legislature to rename the portions of the roadway that are state-controlled, and urging municipalities, including the City of Coral Gables, to join in the designation of the portions of U.S. Route 1 that fall within their boundaries.

The portions of West Dixie Highway/State Road 909 and South Dixie Highway/U.S. Route 1/State Road 5 that are state roads must be renamed by an act of the Florida Legislature. However, state roads can also receive an honorary designation by following the process set forth in Section 334.071, Florida Statutes. An honorary designation of a state road is contingent upon the appropriate city or county commission passing a resolution in support of the particular honorary designation. If a road is located in more than one city or county (as is the present case), resolutions supporting the designation must be passed by each affected local government prior to the erection of signage. As of January 14, 2021, nine out of ten of the municipalities affected by the County's resolution passed resolutions in support of the Harriet Tubman designation, including Florida City, the Town of Cutler Bay, the City of Miami, the City of South Miami, the City of North Miami, the Village of Pinecrest, the City of North Miami Beach, the Village of Palmetto Bay, and the City of Homestead.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Miami Dade County Resolution R-168-20