

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
July 1, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez (Absent)
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Deputy City Manager, Joe Gomez
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-6 [4:05 p.m.]

Discussion regarding traffic safety measures at Old Cutler Road and Cartagena Plaza (Cocoplum Circle). (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

Mayor Lago: Moving on, F-6.

Commissioner Castro: Discussion regarding traffic safety measures at Old Cutler Road and Cartagena Plaza (Cocoplum Circle). Thank you very much. Deputy City Manager and Hermes Diaz for coming up to present this. I think my major concern here was some residents have reached out to me and there is a lot of traffic, and I know that the Deputy City Manager reached back to me with a very detailed response saying basically that there is really nothing we can do. So, I decided to bring it up to the Commission anyway, because five heads think better than one. Do you want to present it?

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Agenda Item F-6 – Discussion regarding traffic safety measures at Old Cutler Road and Cartagena Plaza (Cocoplum Circle)

Deputy City Manager Gomez: Thank you, Commissioner. Through the Mayor. So, as I articulated in my response to and I think all of you got copies of my response regarding Cartagena Circle, also known as Cocoplum Circle is a county facility. Three of the four roads that connect to that circle are all county roads: LeJeune Road, Sunset, and Old Cutler Road. All of these roads take a tremendous amount of traffic, because again, Old Cutler Road is a two-lane road with a tremendous amount of traffic that comes from the south; Sunset brings in traffic as well as LeJeune. The Circle – right now, our process is traffic, the county has two projects that are going to be let at the same time, February of 2027, want us to replace the bridge on LeJeune Road which has been deemed deficient and the county has the project for it; and then they are also going to be doing improvements to the circle itself. And part of those improvements – I’ve looked at the plans, is to channelize the traffic better through the use of separators to be able to route the traffic through. Now, the circle operates in lieu of a traffic signal, and the reason it’s so successful is because when you have roads coming in at different angles, it’s very difficult to be able to have a traffic signal process all that without substantial delays. The purpose of the circle is to be able to move the traffic through. That’s the ultimate purpose of the circle. So, I understand the concerns from the residents, but the alternative will be far greater. What I mean by that is, if you were to put a traffic signal in lieu of the circle, or if you were to institute traffic calming on these major collector roads, what would happen is the spillover will start going into the neighborhoods. So, before you know it, the cure becomes worse than the problem. So, in this particular case, what I’m saying is that, let’s give the chance, the county’s plan a chance, both the bridge project, which is going to improve the LeJeune Road bridge, as well as the improvement on Cartagena Circle, let that work and I think there will be improvements to traffic, but it’s a reality. All these roads – it’s a confluence of roads that are coming in together in a traffic circle and they do carry a lot of traffic.

Commissioner Castro: So, in conclusion, let’s let the county do their thing to see if would be a better fit.

Public Works Director Diaz: And if I may add. One of the benefits of a traffic circle as opposed to an intersection when you have the potential of a T-bone crash, when let’s say somebody takes a red light, accidents in a traffic circle have a tendency of being milder because you are more likely getting side swiped. So, you are looking at a reduced severity of accidents when you are dealing with a circle, as opposed to a traffic signal. It doesn’t eliminate them, obviously.

Deputy City Manager Gomez: In fact, studies that have been done, at 30 to 40 percent less accidents happen at traffic circles and roundabouts than with traffic signals, because you don’t have that stop condition or somebody will hit you from behind or you get T-boned.

Mayor Lago: Mr. DCM, I know you weren’t here. Mr. Diaz, how many times have I brought up this item on the agenda, have we talked about Cartagena Circle.

Public Works Director Diaz: I believe several times.

Mayor Lago: And what is the outcome.

Public Works Director Diaz: The county is doing the project.

Mayor Lago: So, this is simple. When residents write you an email and they call you and they say there's an issue, what I would do is, I would write to the Manager and say, Mr. Manager, I know we talked about Cartagena Circle many times, its not under our jurisdiction, can you please provide us an update in regards to where we are in the current process. Mr. Diaz, the Manager, will pass it onto Mr. Diaz and Mr. Diaz will verbatim provide you with an update where we are in regard to the issue. This is nothing new. This has been brought up many, many times. We've discussed this issue. We have to wait for the county to finish the work. We are pushing the county. I've talked to the DCM about this, the DCM, the Manager. Again, this is a very complex intersection and by the way, its only getting more complicated now with the bridge, and there are issues there where we have traffic issues in front of the park. So, at the end of the day, I know that the residents want action, but again, this is under the auspice of the county and there is limited, limited jurisdiction and we have to work with Commissioner Regalado, who's sees this as an important issue and it's very complicated, very complicated. We've talked about lights; we've talked about one lane versus two lanes; two lanes versus one lane. We've been discussing this for years, but at the end of the day, it's under the county's jurisdiction.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: One other thing I want to add to that because I know Commissioner Castro hasn't been here during that era and I remember watching the meetings. The bridge issue has been going on for over six years that I can recall, and replacing that bridge is very, very complicated because where is all that traffic going to go now. So, the dance that the county has to do is dealing with all this traffic, rerouting all this traffic and finding the perfect time to try to do this project as efficiently and quickly as possible. For every traffic issue, calming, etc., that I've encountered, I direct it to staff to get a response back and Mr. Diaz, Mr. Gomez, I'm sorry you are the recipient of a lot of these emails, but its not something that needs to be on the agenda, because the answers we can get from our staff. Please give us an update. Periodically, we can do updates on major things, and we have one coming up here so that everybody is abreast of what the current timing is and what's been done and what is planned, but that will be coming later on the agenda here. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Anything else for the good of the order on this item.

City Manager Iglesias: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor. The bridge is operational...has been downgraded from a load perspective. It does have structural issues, so it makes sense to do the bridge and the circle intersection at the same time, because that way one diversion works.

Deputy City Manager Gomez: Feel the pain at one time to finish the construction.

Mayor Lago: Mr. DCM, same situation, Alhambra, same point at Alhambra.

Deputy City Manager Gomez: Yes sir.

Mayor Lago: We've been ready. Alhambra looks like a war zone. It's horrific the asphalt there and we don't want to spend money twice on that issue. So, we are literally ready to go sidewalk, traffic calming, fixing whatever is necessary on the bridge, and then the asphalt.

Public Works Director Diaz: We actually relocated a force-main from the old bridge to the new one precisely ahead of the county's project, so we've been working on this for a while.

Mayor Lago: I know you have. I know you have, trust me. Okay. Thank you, gentlemen.