

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
June 2, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

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

Public Speaker(s)

Roland Rodriguez, TAB Chair

Agenda Item 2-1 [Start: 4:00 p.m.]

A Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the City Commission consider funding a study for a scramble crosswalk at the intersection of Miracle Mile and Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

Mayor Lago: Welcome back. Mr. Clerk, item 2-1, please.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Time certain for 2.30. Thank you very much.

Roland Rodriguez: Good afternoon. This item is to, the resolution asking the Commission to approve the study of a scrambled sidewalk. And just to be clear, it's to approve the study, not the actual construction of the scrambled sidewalk. So as a Transportation Advisory Board Chairperson, I've tasked my members to look for availability for safety and mobility throughout

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our city. Obviously, Ponce and Miracle Mile is one of the most traversed sections in our CBD. And I think it merits the additional study for pedestrian safety crossing through that area. Miracle Mile and Ponce are areas that are managed by the city. So basically, there's several things that need to be looked at in the studies. There are some, there are potential, there are benefits and there are cons like in any study. So, what this study would do is evaluate those and see if and determine if a crosswalk is feasible in this area. There is precedence of scrambled crosswalks. We have it at 57th and Sunset. There's also one in Brickell and 8th Street. I pulled up some general data on the cost. In this case, besides the cost of the study, if we were to proceed, the study shows that it's feasible and it's something that should be done. As far as in the field, constructing it, the infrastructure is there. I would basically do the re-stripe. The signing is in place and also the ramps are in place and then redo some of the signal timing to improve the phasing for pedestrian crossings.

Mayor Lago: First and foremost, more important than the scrambled sidewalk, I want to thank you for your service to the city. And as a resident, you do a lot and I'm happy that you're engaged and we're happy to use an engineer like yourself who wants to serve and who wants to spend time here. And I apologize, we're about an hour and a half late for this item. You know what I would like for you to do, if you would just appease me? I'd like for you to sit down with a Manager and have a conversation in regard to the scrambled sidewalk and see how we can collaborate on this issue and work together. I think that will be incredibly beneficial. The second thing I wanted to tell you was you've been incredibly patient in regard to the sidewalks and the roadwork that's being done in front of your house. Thank you very much.

Roland Rodriguez: That's accomplished, so it's looking well.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, so how is the residents and the-

Roland Rodriguez: I was talking with Vice Mayor and we see a lot of pedestrians walking through the area. They're actually, they enjoy it. I have a conversation with all my neighbors walking through it and I think it's coming through very safe. The traffic has calmed down, and I think it's accomplishing its effectiveness of what it was meant to do.

Mayor Lago: So, I use that street every single day. And one of the items, I had multiple visits with the Manager, and we talked about it, obviously we've been planning for this for a few years now with your help and the residents' help. And it's incredible how when you tighten the street and the sidewalk, when you tighten the street, besides the island that's right adjacent to the bridge, the tightening of the street has really slowed people down. It slows me down. You have to be obviously a lot more alert, more careful and more cognizant of it. So, but I'm happy to see that a lot of the people are using obviously a sidewalk, that's the intention. And that obviously we were able to save the trees and the canopy stayed intact. So, have you heard any of the residents in that area that are upset about it?

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Roland Rodriguez: I have not, no. We've had some concerns during construction, but those have been resolved with staff, have good communication with staff on that. And I think we finally got to the end product and it's looking great.

Mayor Lago: The only thing that I left in the hands of the Manager was Mr. Friedman, he had an issue. He has some, we were going to put a no parking sign on his house and obviously replace his grass that his grass was a little bit damaged, which is about, I think it's two doors down from you on the other side. He's on the golf course side. So that's the only thing that I've heard so far. I haven't had any other complaints.

Roland Rodriguez: No.

Mayor Lago: No, that makes me happy.

Roland Rodriguez: Great.

Mayor Lago: What I would like for you to do it first and foremost, will you send back a message on behalf of the Commission to everybody on the board, thanking them for their hard work.

Roland Rodriguez: Will do.

Mayor Lago: And I would like for you to schedule time with the Manager whenever you guys are available for the next week so that we can have more information moving forward on this project.

Roland Rodriguez: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor. Thank you, Mayor. I'll be happy to set up a meeting with the Public Works Department, with our Public Works Director and our Assistant Director of Transportation. So, we can all discuss and look to see whether we move forward with this or not.

Roland Rodriguez: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, you want to add?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sorry, I came in late.

Mayor Lago: No, we're just talking about the scramble sidewalk and obviously they're asking us to recommend it. I don't have any issue with it at all. But I want to take advantage of the Manager's experience and these two individuals who are engineers can have, maybe we can come up with a plan that in my opinion, not only is a scramble sidewalk, but maybe we're not looking at all the angles. And I think that when we sit down at a table with your expertise, your background as a civil engineer, him as a structural engineer, we can sit down and have a real conversation and say, maybe there's other areas here that we're not looking at. Similar to what happens when I go to a job site and I go with staff, they see things that I don't see, and I see things that they don't see. So, I just want to take advantage of the fact that we have a team that we have here and especially

residents along with Hermes and Melissa who are the directors who are amazing and the DCM who could probably join us too and get engaged on this whole discussion.

Roland Rodriguez: Sure.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, through the Mayor. So yes, I agree. I believe in onsite meetings a lot because you get to see what's happening and the meeting that I did with the Secretary of District 6, Mr. Iglesias was eye-opening at the intersection. There's lit up no right-hand turn signs that remind drivers not to make a right when the pedestrians are crossing are wonderful. So yes, I hope that we can help improve safety there at Ponce and Coral Way. And I like those diagonal sidewalks as well because it just, I think it makes it much safer for pedestrians going forward.

Roland Rodriguez: So, in preparing for this, due diligence, I have acquaintances with some of the folks at District 6 as well and kind of had some conversations and they said, yeah, it could be feasible. And the same thing, we would sit down at the table, find other alternatives. In the current condition, something that may help is actually enforcement of the no right turn on red signs, which if you're crossing now, you're not only dealing with that, but you're also dealing with the left turns coming in. So again, in my opinion, I think scramble, it's worth looking at because you have a dedicated phase now. Instead of having two pedestrian phases, you reduce it to one. It's an increase a little bit. And obviously what's the impact of traffic and that the study will show all that.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. So, I don't believe the Manager is a really big fan of this proposal, especially in this intersection. But then again, I can refer to him. I'm just saying based on our conversation in our pre-agenda meeting. Now, how much, you said you went ahead and you found out how much the study would cost. How much is it?

Roland Rodriguez: Well, I can't speak to that because I'm not aware of what the consultant's rates and negotiation protocol is for the city. So that's something that city can determine. As far as construction costs, at 8th Street and Brickell, the cost there was about \$120,000, but that involved more infrastructural work than what we're talking about here.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, but-

Roland Rodriguez: It was just striping and-

Commissioner Castro: Just the study, because this is for a study, right?

Roland Rodriguez: Correct.

Commissioner Castro: Funding a study. Now, this item doesn't require action unless one of us moves it. And I'm willing to go ahead and move this item just for the study to find out if it's really convenient because it is an intersection where we're going to have to stop all traffic lanes to let

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people cross, right? So just for the study, for the funding of the study, I will go ahead and move this item.

Mayor Lago: Do you have a second?

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: So, in response to Commissioner Castro's comments, I was trying to eloquently get the Manager and you in a room without saying the Manager was in opposition because the Manager is not in opposition. The Manager has concerns. And as an engineer, I respect his concerns, and I want to make sure he can sit down and have a conversation with you and his staff and review it and see how we can find common ground. So that's the way that I've always done it. I'm not going to say whether he's in favor or against it. When I had a conversation with him, he told me his concerns. He also told me why he also was in favor of certain infrastructure upgrades. So, what I would like to see, what I would like to see is not just an approval. We can vote on this. It's very easy to vote on it. What I'd like to see is two people of your caliber get in a room with staff and find solutions and find different things in that intersection that can be benefited. Let me give you another example. We have signage in there, signage on the corners there. I think we can significantly reduce signage. I think that we can significantly assist in what the Vice Mayor has been advocating for years, which is ADA infrastructure in regard to the noise attenuation machines that are forthcoming on major intersections. There's a lot of work that can be done. And again, a person like yourself sitting with a Manager and sitting with our amazing staff is something that I think is more important than just saying, hey, the Manager's against it. The Manager's not against it. He just has concerns and that's his job. And that's why I appreciate the Manager every day more and more because he gives me the other side of the coin but says, let's review it. So, with a person like yourself who has probably more civil engineering experience and outside of maybe the DCM that I've met in a long time, I think we can find a lot of really important solutions and also kind of craft that area into being something special. Maybe the scramble sidewalk doesn't work. But guess what? maybe we find solutions to other issues that we're facing. That's my point. Yes, sir, Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor. I think it would be great to sit down and look at this intersection being such an important intersection, Miracle Mile and Ponce. And I think with all the engineering that we have in this room right now, I think it would be great to sit down, look it over and see what is the optimum solution for that?

Mayor Lago: Let me give you an example. He's going to laugh. I'll give you an example where the Manager and I disagree. Okay? I think we should remove, he's laughing, I think we should remove the stones at the intersections. Maintain is a nightmare. He's tried everything. He has invented, I don't know how many slabs and different concrete mixes and additional reinforcement rebar. And, you know, is it on sand? Is it not on sand? Staff, Hermes and Melissa, they've gone crazy trying to

figure out ways to do this. Okay. And they've gotten better. They've gotten better. They've gotten better. They don't fail like they used to fail. But they still, they're just, you can't have the weight of the trucks on those pavers. That was something that was not accounted for when you and I were there, when they were milling the first time that evening, when they started the transition to the new Miracle Mile Streetscape. So, I'd like to bring him in. And maybe that's something we look at and say, because it was up to me, as we're facing this tax issue now that's forthcoming from Tallahassee, and we have the COLA, and we have a lot of other expenses that we're taking. You know how much you're spending a year on the maintenance of the crosswalks? \$200,000. That's what we budget. A lot of money. Do I think they're worth it? They're stunning. But the material that is from Brazil, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Mayor Lago: From Brazil. It's just, it's not that it's fragile, but you can't have that much weight for trucks. And by the way, you can't stop trucks from going down Miracle Mile or crossing on Ponce. So, at the end of the day, those are one of the things that we disagree on. And guess what? You know, we've left it there because once they're refreshed, which happens once every, this has been a while. It's been a while. It's been about a year and change. I can't remember the last time we've had it, but I'll tell you, it's painful. It's painful to see staff having to go run out there and bring in a contractor to address the ditches that have been forming there. So that's one of the things that you can look at. Maybe you have a different idea.

Roland Rodriguez: There's multiple alternatives. I have the opportunity to work with multiple municipalities throughout the state. There's stamped asphalt, there's stamped concrete, there's combinations. So, there's multiple alternatives that are feasible and less cost or more cost-effective for maintenance.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to tell you now, I'm going to tell you now if I may, stamped concrete is not good.

Roland Rodriguez: I know. Again, I always like to look at alternatives and the global perspective and obviously come down to what's the safest and most cost-effective.

Mayor Lago: And I'll give you an example of something we're dealing with right now that the DCM is dealing with it. We had a meeting with it about yesterday. We're writing a memo on it. Lora from my office is working on that right now. And I think we may have submitted it already. When you go to Regions Bank, you see that we have three different tiles. We have the Miracle Miles Streetscape tile. Then we have, it was a paver, excuse me. And we have a very thin tile. And then we have the concrete. We have three different treatments. That tile in front of Regions Bank should not exist. Remove that tile and throw concrete there or extend the Miracle Miles Streetscape paver. If you go and look at that right now, it is an absolute disaster. The tile is lifting up. These are covenants that have been in place and we have in about three or four locations as in my memo.

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Can you do me a favor, Mr. Manager? And the DCM, can you share the memo with him? Yeah, share it with him.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Because we're trying to find solutions to beautify the city and obviously not be a tripping hazard. Because right now, if you walk in front of Regions, you'll see literally a pothole about this big.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to move to defer the vote on the study so that we can have the engineer symposium meet and see what we can get discussed and resolved and come with some suggestions and recommendations to the Commission on how to address all these variety of issues that we have here. As it looks like six more issues popped up in the process. So, I'll move to defer.

Mayor Lago: Let me ask you a question. How much is the study? What do you think is the study's going to be? Here comes the director. I could've had you up the whole time.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good afternoon, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. We have to look in detail, but a place like Ponce, you're probably looking somewhere between 50 to \$75,000. So, it needs to be a county-

Mayor Lago: Do you mind if we have this meeting and we bring this back in July?

Roland Rodriguez: No.

Mayor Lago: Because before I strike 50, \$75,000, we're looking for every penny right now. We may have to use those 50, \$75,000 at Regions Bank and come to some, if they're not going to do it, or we got to figure this out, you know. Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: Thank you, Mayor. I think that we should have our meeting before.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: And then we have a lot of engineering experience here. We can come up with different ideas, look at some of these solutions. And if we feel that a study at that time is done is appropriate, we will bring it back. You could give us till the meeting in August. It would be great to allow us a little bit of time to look at the intersection. And we also have some data that our Assistant Traffic Director has, and it would be a great meeting for all of us to see if we can improve really our most, one of our most important intersections, and certainly the one that's most important in our downtown area.

Mayor Lago: I just want to make sure I respect all of you, and especially obviously the resident who's going, you know, gracefully.

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Roland Rodriguez: Again, this is a conversation starter, and I think it's, there's a lot of good items, and then these are also items that I can bring up to the TAB as well for further conversation and elaboration as well. So, I think this helps. At the end of the day, we want to improve our walkability, our safety, and mobility in our city, and I think good collaboration helps.

Mayor Lago: I may add one more thing for the meeting, just for the meeting, because how can we get through the DCM if you speak to Lora, I sent our District 6 Commissioner, Natalie Orbis, I've sent her two letters, and one was a memo. We had a conversation in between about the infrastructure that addresses the lighting, the lighting, obviously, the traffic lighting, and that there's new technology, and maybe we can do a pilot program using some of the subcontractors in the county to just basically address it on Ponce in certain areas. I would like to do a traffic, give me a pilot program where maybe we, the intersection, for example, in front of Hillstone, we can remove that box, or at least minimize that box, and just push it into the bushes a little bit, which is not that far, it's three or four feet away. I know it costs money to relocate it, but can you imagine the beautification that we could do? And I think it's something that the City of Coral Gables would be willing to do if our staff really finds areas that are high impact, like Ponce and Miracle Mile. We have a box right in front. So that's one of the items that I think we could talk, and we can get that memo that I wrote this week to the District 6 Commissioner, and she was very interested. We had a conversation, she's all in on that front.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think if you're having the meeting, have a conversation about the entire Miracle Mile, because we have three intersections in Miracle Mile. And maybe there's one of them that you'd be more open to, having our first scramble crosswalk in, and test out, see what works, what doesn't work, so that we can move down Miracle Mile and have them all be the same. Because at the end of the day, if you're in Miracle Mile, most of the time you're trying to cross the street, whether it's because you parked across the street, or whether you're going to an establishment across the street, those scramble crosswalks are going to make it a lot easier for people to get across. Because most of the time, you're crossing north-south or east-west, and then you're having to stop there, wait for the next light to then be able to cross. So, especially in the hot summer months, when people are just standing there baking in the sun, it's something that we can really make the walkability of Miracle Mile a lot better and maybe help some of the businesses. We always talk about that southwest block on Miracle Mile being the one that struggles the most. If all of a sudden, we're making those scramble crosswalks that make it easier to get there, you may be able to get that pedestrian traffic there and get people frequenting the businesses that are there that are struggling. Most of our businesses on that strip are the ones that are the first to close. They'll open for six months, but they just can't sustain the pedestrian traffic. People end at

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Starbucks. They don't take that extra block over. So, I think if you're having the conversation, have the conversation about the entire strip and see what we can make it better. I know the city has done work in the past and has done studies on what best practices would be and stuff, and I agree with the Mayor. I think those crosswalks, for me in particular, the days that it rains, I have certain shoes that I cannot wear to walk on those crosswalks because I slip all the way through it. You hydroplane. So, any suggestions? And maybe we can consider selling them. Maybe we can sell them to somebody else who could use them and use some of that funding for... Yeah, you never know, right. So, I appreciate the work that the TAB does. I think it's one of the advisory boards that has been underutilized for years, but I'm glad to see that you're all taking initiative on moving some of these great projects forward. It's going to help with ADA issues if we get something like this done as well. So, it's welcome and I really appreciate your efforts on it.

Roland Rodriguez: You're welcome, and we're privileged because now I'm not the only engineer. Santamarina is on there as well, who's also an engineer. So, we have two engineers now on the board.

Mayor Lago: Got a good group. Okay. So, we have marching orders, Mr. Manager?

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: The issue, Commissioner, is the devil's always in the details. So, we want to make sure we look at the details, but it'd be a pleasure working with you and looking at the intersection. Maybe we could look at the entire mile, and it would be a great meeting for us to do so. So, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Clerk, we'll bring this back in the August?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

City Attorney Suarez: So, there is a motion and a second that's pending.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And I had a motion to defer, and I think we need to ask if there's a second on that so that we can have the engineer symposium.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm okay with the meeting moving forward and then having us bring this back in August. If the mover of the item is okay with it, I withdraw my second.

Commissioner Castro: I'll go ahead and retract my motion.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: But we need a second for the deferral, right?

City Attorney Suarez: No. I think there's consensus to just bring it back in.

Mayor Lago: So, August it's on the agenda already. So, and we'll just look at everything holistically, everything from, like we mentioned, sidewalks, obviously, to all the equipment, all the technology, all the poles, all the signage, everything, I'd love to see that. That's great.

Roland Rodriguez: All right, thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, my friend, I appreciate you. Moving on to item F-2.