City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-4
January 26, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission
Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Senior Traffic Engineer, Douglas Cobb

Public Speaker(s)
Maria Cruz
Javier Banos

Agenda Item G-4 [0:00:00 a.m.]
Presentation of San Amaro at Miller Roundabout Analysis.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Vice Mayor Lago: Next item is G-4. It's a presentation of San Amaro at Miller roundabout analysis. I'd like to have staff give a presentation of the current situation that we have. I want to be very clear. This is -- this roundabout is a stone's throw from my house, and I've had the pleasure of meeting with staff on multiple occasions, not only in the office, but also on the site to discuss

the current situation that we have there. The purpose of me putting this on the agenda today is just to lay this to rest. And I brought this -- and I made this very abundantly clear to our ACM because this has been a matter of discussion for the residents for many, many years. And I think it's taken a lot of time away from our staff, discussing this over and over, and also, we spent a lot of money. I think we spent about -- you can tell me the exact number, but we've had -- I think two studies were done in regards to this roundabout. And I want to be as efficient as possible in regards to the limited monies that we have currently. So, I wanted you to kind of go over where we stand, what the studies have stated and what the recommendations are in regards to the circle. And then I'd like to hear from one or two other residents that have been the most vocal in regards to something having to happen or revamping of the circle over the last few years. Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Vice Mayor. Our ACM…

Vice Mayor Lago: Oh, okay, perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: Will be presenting this item.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission. Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager, Operations and Infrastructure. Vice Mayor, you're correct. This is an item that dates back for a very long time. The earliest meetings that were held to discuss improvements at this particular intersection on San Amaro and Miller were conducted in 2008 when this came up before the Transportation Advisory Board. In 2012, after the initial meetings were held, the project eventually moved forward. And in May of that year, a community meeting was held and was attended by a number of residents in the community. Shortly thereafter, in June, permits were issued for the roundabout, and it was constructed by the University of Miami. The initial discussions regarding this particular right-of-way improvement involved a signalized intersection and also involved a roundabout. What eventually came to be is the roundabout that we have right now in place. In April of 2016, four years after the construction of the roundabout,

more or less, in response to resident concerns, a purchase order was issued to AECOM who did a study on the roundabout and its operational safety. The years studied in this analysis would involve 2013 through 2015. In February of 2017, this AECOM study was submitted to the County for their review. I'm sorry?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Say it again. I didn't…

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: In April of 2017, this AECOM study on the operational safety of the circle was submitted to the County for their review. In April of 2018, we had a change in personnel at the Public Works Department, where the then City engineer and traffic engineer left the City's employment and went to work for Miami-Dade County. During that time, we took on an in-house consultant to serve in that function and carry out the duties of that role. Eventually, in October of 2018, the County responded to AECOM's comments or AECOM's analysis and study, and they were in agreement with one of the solutions posed in that analysis. The following year in March of 2019, we instructed the traffic engineer who was the consultant, the in-house consultant, to proceed in advancing this project based on the County's concerns. She reviewed AECOM's original analysis, and in the effort of progressing the project, moving it forward, she considered AECOM's findings. She developed some concerns with regards to AECOM's findings. And so at that point, it was decided that we would update the study, which was now already at this point four years old, and we engaged Plummer and Associates, DPA, to conduct an update of this AECOM -- or the original AECOM study. David Plummer's findings slightly were different from AECOM's findings in that they believed that we should try some minor improvements first before trying to reconfigure the circle and converting what is an existing two-lane circle to one lane. The reason we got to DPA, David Plummer and Associates, was because one of the primary concerns expressed by the traffic engineer under our employ at the time was that the analysis took into account the first year that the traffic circle was in use, 2013, during which there were 19 accidents at the roundabout. Subsequent years in the study developed and showed lesser and lesser accidents. In fact, there were maybe six one year, five another, four another, in that range, nothing that would be as alarming as 19, which occurred during the first year. So, in order to move the project forward and in order to do so in a responsible way, the update by DPA was pursued, and

as a result, DPA made certain recommendations which were eventually implemented in April of 2020, during the pandemic. As staff will explain, we did a comparative analysis of this particular intersection, this traffic circle with other similar traffic circles throughout the City, as well as another traffic circle, which is a single-lane roundabout, which is just to the west of this traffic circle. And so I will at this point, unless there are any questions as to this timeline that transpired, I will at this point turn this over to Assistant Public Works Director Jessica Keller and Senior Traffic Engineer Doug Cobb for the report on our findings and analysis in relation to the circle. We hope that you use this information, consider it in your guidance moving forward as we carry out what it is that will be our mission on the circle.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: If you could bring the presentation up. So, good morning, Commissioners, Vice Mayor, Mayor. I'm here to talk on behalf of the roundabout analysis. So the presentation I'm going to go through, it's going to give a little background into roundabouts and why they're implemented, the safety implications of those. And then I'm going to talk a little bit about the existing conditions at this roundabout, what are some of the studies that have been done, what were the results of it. And then I'm going to go a little into the safety analysis. And the reason why we have it broken up into these parts is because I wanted to make sure that I was reading the studies that have been done and then also doing my analysis from my own perspective to make sure that the City is making a decision logically and with, you know, the correct, you know, information and research behind it. So, to start out, you know, roundabouts typically are implemented in areas where you want to improve safety, so we all know that at signalized intersections, they have a lot of problems. People run red lights, there's crossing patterns, so roundabouts help to reduce a lot of the crashes that happen at signalized intersections and un-signalized intersections. They also reduce conflict points. So, if you're not familiar with a conflict point, conflict points are where vehicles are either merging, diverging or crossing at an intersection. At lights this happens, all three of those are possible. But at a roundabout, you can see you're never going to be making a left turn and somebody T-boning you because you're always taking that right approach. So, there's a lot of benefits from a safety perspective. There's also benefits from an environmental and efficiency standpoint. You typically use less pavement because you have a landscape area in the center, and also there's some efficiency improvements

because, you know, we have some pre-timed intersections throughout the City and when we get to them and it's a red light, sometimes we wait and burn fuel and release emissions into the air when we're at that light. But with a roundabout, if there are no cars circulating in it, a vehicle is allowed to proceed, so there are some benefits in terms of efficiency. Now, with that being said, roundabouts do have some issues. It's, you know, not a crazy thing when they were brought into the United States. There was a lot of confusion, but education and guidance is probably the most important thing to make sure that roundabouts work effectively. So, some of the issues that we see with roundabouts are, you know, they're difficult to understand sometimes, depending on whether it's a one-lane or a two-lane roundabout. We have compliance issues. We have yielding behavior issues, that's the majority of where the crashes are. They're pretty much minor injury crashes that are happening because of a merge condition, and this really doesn't discriminate between one-lane and two-lane roundabouts. You see it at both of them. Now, lane changing is something that happens at two-lane roundabouts that doesn't happen at one lane. These are actually not that common because very rarely will you see two cars circulating at the same time right next to each other, but it does actually happen. So, a way that we can provide solutions -- and a lot of roundabouts in the country have had some issues with two-lane roundabouts -- they will provide a short-term solution and a long-term solution, and this is typically how a planning study is done. So, the short-term solution is updating striping and signage. You'll see the example to the right. This is a roundabout in Ohio that was having a crash issue with a two-lane circulating roundabout. They actually took the approach to provide striping and signage updates, and you can see it's a lot more vibrant, keeps vehicles on the road. You know, there's a lot more delineation between the vehicles, and you can actually see -- and when they did a post-result study, they found that the overall crashes reduced by 40 percent and injury crashes reduced by 90 percent. So, you can see that, you know, while Ohio is not exactly Coral Gables, we use research to fuel the decisions we use in the future. So, this is a great example of where striping actually improved it and they weren't reducing capacity or anything like that. So, following up, there was actually a study that was done by the IHS, which is the organization that rates cars. It's why we buy the cars that we do because IHS says that safety is good with that particular car. So they actually did a study in 2019 looking at the safety differences between one-lane roundabouts and two-lane roundabouts because it was a big question that people were asking. And they actually found that the number of crashes over

the seven-year period that they looked at over time two-lane roundabouts actually decreased their averages -- average crashes by 9 percent per year versus one-lane roundabouts reduced their crashes by 7 per -- increased their crashes by 7 percent. Now, I want to make it very clear. This does not mean that one-lane roundabouts are dangerous. It just is indicating that a particular design doesn't necessarily correlate with a higher safety performance. So, looking at our existing conditions, we have a two-lane roundabout, two lanes that circulate around the roundabout and then one that circulates on the north side. We recently, as Assistant City Manager just said, had DPA do a study and we implemented some signage and some small minor improvements to the intersection in April of 2020, so those have not even been, you know, kind of seen or observed and used for a calendar year yet. We're still observing those. So, the history of the roundabout, obviously in 2012, it was constructed into a two-lane roundabout, and then in 2015, Miami-Dade County had a recommendation. There was some concern from some residents regarding the safety of the two-lane roundabout. So Jeff Cohen went out with some individuals from Miami-Dade County and gave a recommendation to alter the geometry. The City was then, you know, concerned and asked AECOM to do a study in 2016, and the study included traffic data and crash data from 2013 to 2015, and they used that crash data to fuel their recommendations for their study. After reviewing the study, there's three issues with this study that I see just from, you know, an outsider's perspective. One, when you have a drastic change, like implementing a two-lane roundabout, you never use crash data immediately after the installation to fuel any recommendations because roundabouts have a familiarity timeline that goes with it. We as drivers have to get familiar with the roadway. We have to understand how it works, so it is common throughout the country that roundabouts when they get installed sometimes have a spike in crashes. However, they are minor crashes, and over time, that crash decreases. So that was the first issue I had with it. The second issue I had with it is that they looked at only existing conditions. They didn't look at a forecast year, which is troubling to me, because if we're looking at design and a planning aspect, we don't -- we want to make sure it works today, but also how it works in 10 years, so we're not reconstructing it again, which is probably why the two-lane roundabout was installed from the start. The third thing and the final thing that was a little odd to me is that the actual study didn't have a short-term, low-cost solution. With these planning studies, you typically have a short-term, low-cost solution and a long-term, high-cost solution. This particular study

only provided two recommendations, both of them were the reconstruction of the existing two-lane roundabout to a one-lane roundabout, and so they didn't have a short-term solution. And for me, it seems a bit premature, and you know, over the top to reconstruct a roundabout based on three years of data post the installation of the roundabout. So, following this, the City had DPA do a follow-up study to kind of mend some of the issues that the traffic engineer at the time had seen were a problem in the AECOM study, and that's where the two recommendations came in with the designing and striping recommendation, as well as DPA did say that if the signing and marking doesn't work, one lane -- a one-lane roundabout would be the recommendation. So the City went with the short-term solution; they implemented the signing and marking improvements, and that's where we're at right now. We're in the process of reviewing that. So where I came in is I requested data from the police department and I did my own safety analysis. So something that's super important when you're doing a safety analysis is looking at the conditions of whether a crash would have happened if a two-lane roundabout had been there versus a one-lane roundabout. So looking at the data, this data was taken from January 2017 to December 2019. And the reason why I want to make this very clear is I did not consider any of the crashes that were included in 2020 because this would over-project the safety of the intersection because the volumes are down, the traffic patterns have been very different based on COVID conditions. So looking at this, only 26 percent of the crashes that were recorded over this time were a result of this two-lane design, and there haven't been any types of crashes related to a two-lane design in over a year. In addition, the majority of the crashes that happened there are primarily property damage and minor injuries, which is very common for roundabouts. And since the installation of the improvements, there's only been one crash that's happened and it wasn't a result of a two-lane roundabout. So the other thing that I wanted to do when I was comparing some of this is trying to show what some of the roundabouts in the City are also operating at. Because if we're talking about reducing this down to one-lane roundabout, the ultimate goal from the request of the residents is that we make it a safer roundabout. So what I wanted to do is show a comparison of the roundabouts throughout the City that have different configurations and what their crash rates are over the past three years. So you can see at the top, the top line is Miller and San Amaro, two-lane roundabout. In the three-year study, it's the second highest crash rate in the City, which is 1.5. However, right below that, you'll see that a one-lane roundabout of Coral Way and Segovia has the exact same crash rate and

it's only one lane. Also continuing through Miller Road and San Amaro, if you look over the three-year period, the crash rate is actually decreasing, so it is improving over time, so we're seeing improvements from 2017 to 2019. This slide is meant to indicate to you that just because you have a one-lane roundabout doesn't mean that crashes are going to disappear and doesn't necessarily mean that things are going to improve. Ultimately, when it comes down to this, it's driver behavior. The issues we have at roundabouts often are not a design scenario, it's very much a driver doing what they want to do. Ultimately, too, if we're looking at crash rates to fuel what we choose to make -- what improvements we choose to make in the City, there's a number of intersections in the City, including Ponce at Granada, Ponce at Alhambra and Granada at Obispo that all have higher crash rates in comparison to Miller Road at San Amaro.

Vice Mayor Lago: May I ask you…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: So…

Vice Mayor Lago: May I ask you a quick question? I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Would you mind going back to that slide?

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yep.

Vice Mayor Lago: So that crash rate -- the crash rate the first year was 1.38, then it went to 1.47, or it's -- or am I looking at backwards?

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: No. So the three-year crash rate is -- so what I did was I looked at three…

Vice Mayor Lago: I need to get glasses is what I need to get.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: What?

Vice Mayor Lago: I need to get glasses is what I need to get. I'm starting to realize it.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Oh, okay. So the most recent crash rate in 2019 is 1.38; a three-year crash rate is 1.5, so it's been decreasing over time.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: But you can see even Miller Road at Alhambra, that's a one-lane roundabout, over the three-year crash period is just slightly less with a one lane, and then you're looking at Coral Way and Segovia over the three-year period, that's actually increasing in crashes.

Vice Mayor Lago: So out of all the -- let's say out of all the traffic circles that we have in Coral Gables…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah, yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't know how many we have. Would you say that the one on Miller Road and San Amaro, along with Coral Way and Segovia and Biltmore Way and Segovia, did you use those because those are the highest ones, or you just wanted to...

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Well, I was looking at some comparisons.

Vice Mayor Lago: They were similar comparisons.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: But would you say that the Miller Road and San Amaro Drive is top five percent in regards to crash rates for circles?

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: I can't speak on behalf of that. I haven't done the crash rates for every circle in the City.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay. Go ahead. I just wanted to find out.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Continue, sorry for the interruption.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Okay. Oh, no, no, no, no. So after my analysis, looking at AECOM and DPA's studies, because the crash rate is decreasing over time, and we just implemented signing and pavement marking changes, it is the staff's recommendation right now to wait it out. I think that if we do have issues with the intersection and the crash rate goes up, I'm not opposed to doing a one-lane roundabout, like absolutely. Safety is our highest priority here at the City, and I don't want a dangerous intersection, but it's hard for me as the traffic engineer to review crash data, see that the crash rate is decreasing and knowing we just implemented improvements, you know, eight or nine months ago, to not wait it out and give it an opportunity to see if those improvements will help the intersection. Also, because it is a minor improvement and low cost, the City is not funding, you know, potentially a 250 to $300,000 improvement of the reconstruction. However, with that being said, I'm absolutely not opposed. If we find in a year that the crash rate has gone up and we find that the intersection is dangerous, reconstruction to a one-lane roundabout is definitely an option we can look at. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Mayor, I know that we have two individuals that wanted to give some comment. One of them lives in the neighborhood. Would you…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of course.

Vice Mayor Lago: Would you grant them the right to speak maybe two minutes?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would I what?

Vice Mayor Lago: Would you grant them the right to speak…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Maybe two minutes?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please, of course.

City Clerk Urquia: So, Mr. Mayor, first we have Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Hi. Good morning again. Can you hear me?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Cruz: Alright. I think it's important that we look at a little history. This was not meant to be a roundabout. As a matter of fact, I'm looking at the letter from the City, where it calls it a circle, traffic circle, back in 2012. But let me give you a little history. This project came about unbeknownst to the residents. Nothing was discussed with the residents. We found out by happenstance because one day I saw somebody walking around with what looked like plans, and I asked, and I was told that this was for the enhancement of Miller Road. Nobody knew, nobody had been consulted. There had been no meetings. The City proceeded on a request from the

University that wanted to make Miller Road one of the main entrances to the University, and the City went along with it with the County that they had to improve or enhance our neighborhood without asking us whether we wanted it or not. Alright, now, once we found out, we started fighting it. And the reason why we couldn't win the fight was because it was too far advanced. This had been going on from 2008. They had already discussed it with Miami-Dade. They had gotten permission from the people at the corners. Everything was done without anything having to do with us. Okay, we complained and complained, and let me tell you, I'm glad that Mr. Cobb has comments because let me tell you, this is not a normal situation. We have new students almost every semester, if not every semester, and they have to get used to it. This is not a normal setup. This is not a two-lane roundabout. This roundabout -- as we call it now -- has areas where there's two lanes, there's an area where there's a one-lane, there's an area where there's a lane and a half. It's an egg-shaped roundabout, if you want to call it like that. So we complained and complained and complained, and AECOM was hired, to the tune of $270,748. They came back with what we have said all along, this is not good. The trucks have no space to turn. And they offered the solution as make it one lane. Now, as I've said many times to you, this is one of the issues that we encounter. AECOM was requested to do the study. Their result was not what the staff wanted, so here we go. Alright, the staff sent it to Miami-Dade. They thought they had it in the bag, because remember, Miami-Dade usually did not agree with us, our traffic changes, so you know, everything was good. As of March 3, 2017, okay, I got an email from Mr. Santamaria who at that time was not Assistant City Manager. He was in charge of Public Works. And he told me…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maria, please. Please give us your recommendation.

Ms. Cruz: No, no, no, please let me -- because it's important…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, but Maria, let's get going. Come on.

Ms. Cruz: We were promised, okay -- and as far back as 2017, Mr. Santamaria told us that he was seeking funding to do this based on the County decision. So the County came back and said, yes, we agree with Alternative 2, make it one lane. Oh, no, no, no. The staff didn't want that, so they

got Plummer, another $18,600. And you know what Plummer said, oh, this was a Solomonic suggestion. Let's try this and if it doesn't work, yeah, let's do the one lane. So guess what? We believe that we need to make it a one lane; AECOM said that, the County approved that, unlike other things that we have requested. I do not understand -- oh, funding is an issue, funding. Mr. Santamaria, somewhere along the line, like I told you, was asking about funding. I have an issue with funding. We did not request this roundabout. This was not the City decision. The University requested it. If you don't believe it, I have the letter where they sent the neighbors saying they were getting the roundabout. This was for the University. They designed it, they paid for it. They did…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maria, what do you suggest?

Ms. Cruz: I would like -- and the neighbors would like -- and Mr. Lago has gone through this with us many times. This has been hanging since 2010.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, what do you suggest, Maria?

Ms. Cruz: One lane real circle, not an egg, one lane real circle, the money to be found. And by the way, I know how to find the money already because I already talked to the Budget Director, and he specifically said if there's something that the people want, all they have to do is get to a Commissioner or the Commissioners, and we will find the money.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, thank you, Maria. Thank you very much.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, one lane, please.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Can I respond to that?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, of course.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah, of course.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Thank you, Maria, for your comments, and you brought up some good points. The City has spent some money, but this is particularly why we want to be careful not to jump ahead and spend a lot of money on reconstructing -- reconstruction of a roundabout when we are not sure that's necessarily going to solve the issue at rise. The pavement markings right now are a short-term, low-cost solution that the City is testing out, and I think we should see it out. The City and Public Works is not against the reconstruction of a one-lane roundabout pending the time we can take to see if these new improvements work. We're not against the idea. I'm glad that Maria is bringing up a point about safety, but I think that waiting it out would be a smarter choice from this point, particularly because she brought up the point of the City spending money, you know, on studies. The last thing I want to do is have the City spend hundreds of thousands of dollars reconstructing the intersection and then finding that it doesn't necessarily improve crash rates.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: So…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody else? Mr. Urquia.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. Javier Banos is next.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Mr. Mayor, if I may, just very briefly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, sir.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: The concept of a one-lane traffic circle here has only been modeled once as far as I know, which is back in 2008, and it was found not to be sufficient. This is reflected in minutes from the Transportation Advisory Board meeting. And so, if the consideration is to go to a one-lane traffic circle, that needs to be visited. Also, I will add that the crash rates over the past years since 2012, when the traffic circle or roundabout was constructed, don't indicate that this particular intersection is any more dangerous than any of the other ones. Any significant -- any more dangerous than any others. And so…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We think that it's prudent, and Mr. Cobb raised a very good point, which is, before we go ahead and disrupt this community for a year and reconstruct this traffic circle at a very high cost, we should take the steps of prudence and evaluate how these improvements right now are performing. And if at that point, if there's still a desire to modify the traffic circle, given all considerations, staff would be more than happy to take that on as a mission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: The other thing I want to comment too, and to answer your question, Maria, it is very common to have two circulating lanes on three approaches and then one circulating lane on one approach. So if you actually go back to my presentation, MUTCD has a design that's exactly like -- if you could bring the presentation up really quickly, please. So right there, you can see you have two circulating lanes on three approaches and one circulating lane on one approach, it's very common practice. So I just wanted to answer that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Mr. Banos, please be brief.

Javier Banos: I needed to be unmuted, Mr. Mayor. You know, I've been sporadically coming to City meetings for over 10 years since I've lived in this City, and more consistently over the past two years. I can remember -- and I've talked to the neighbors around there -- Maria brings this

issue up on a constant basis. She lives not just near the place; she lives right next to the place. So those who are there who are experiencing this particular problem more than anybody else should be the ones driving the conversation because they are the ones really enduring the problems with this particular circle. I've taken it in more than one occasion. It does encourage for people to go faster because there's a wider lane where they are, and it could potentially create problems for the neighbors. It gives the sense of a wider street, of a, you know, broader place where you can -- for where you can traverse, and therefore, it increases -- in my view likely -- more traffic and increases speed, and it could be potentially a danger to the neighborhood, especially when you have a church right next to it and folks who traditionally walk through there. So…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Mr. Banos.

Mr. Banos: You know, this is pushing the can down the road once more, after many, many studies and many, many delays. I'm not entirely sure it will dramatically improve the resolution by getting yet another document or yet another resolution when I think it's clear that there should be a modification.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Is that it?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes. Vice Mayor, the item is yours.

Vice Mayor Lago: So just to be brief, again…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to thank you and your staff as always for being available, meeting me on the site, meeting with the residents, understanding that we work for the residents and that we have to, you know, obviously listen to them, especially during these very difficult times. I live

on this neighborhood; I live in the street. I live maybe two blocks down, two or three blocks down on San Amaro. I traverse this circle. I use this circle consistently, so I'm very intimately aware of what happens on this circle. There are also thousands of UM students and people who drive down San Amaro, I don't want to say every day, but close to it. It's a highly used road. And I love the neighborhood. The only point that I see from the residents and for myself is very simple, I want the best thing for the neighborhood. I want to make sure that if we can do something right now that works better to reduce traffic, to reduce accidents, to reduce people's inability to make decisions quickly because they're nervous -- we were there; we saw people kind of being a little uncertain, a little unsure, and I see it all the time. I spent some time yesterday at the church in St. Augustine, and when I stepped outside, I wanted to see the flow pattern. And you saw a lot of people, especially elderly people, who when they get to the roundabout, they get a little bit nervous, and then people get frustrated and they go around them. Again, do those people live in the neighborhood? Maybe not, maybe they do, maybe it's a level of frustration. The idea of one lane, it makes a lot of sense, right, because everybody would stack behind each other. There would only be one way of doing things, but I'm not a traffic engineer, and I'm not going to pretend to be one. We have a study in place from AECOM that said maybe we can move in the direction of one lane. That's what hooked the residents immediately and says, look, we pay for a traffic study. The traffic study says let's move in this direction; the City's not moving in that direction. Then the County said the same thing, let's move in the direction of one lane and get away from two lanes. Then obviously, we move in a different direction, and now we have a competing view in regards to whether one lane or two lanes. I agree with your comments about spending money. I mean, right now is not the time to start spending money. We're not here, you know, just to try everything out, start ripping things out to see how we can figure this -- to figure this out, and then hopefully, it resolves the issue, or the traffic rates get better. What if they don't get better? What if they stay the same and we spend all this money? What I would like to do is put a cap in regards to time and really study this again. I'm not stating we have to spend money, but we have to do something because the residents aren't going to let up. They haven't let up for 10 years. It's been a continued issue, that's why I've been forced to put this on the agenda today. We've been dealing it, you know, off the dais, but now it's come to the point we have no other choice. I don't want to get more studies. I don't want to spend any more money. I think we spent probably $50,000 on studies

looking at this circle. If something needs to happen, what can we do to resolve it or to make the traffic or make the crash rates be even less and appease the residents? Can we take what we have existing and make it one lane? Can we tighten -- just get rid of the striping and make it one lane, or do you feel that people won't comply, and they'll pass each other? Explain to me -- because I'm not a traffic engineer -- what can we do right now at the most least cost to get down to one lane, if that's really the answer.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But that -- we've heard that that is not the answer.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So we'd have to simulate…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You live there, but that doesn't mean anything if we have all of these traffic studies that say that that is not the answer. His recommendation…

Vice Mayor Lago: But we do have…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is look at the situation as it is for a period of time. You're asking for a definite period of time, which is very valid.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah. I'm…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And let's continue with…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Not against the one…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Give him a chance to do the study.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: I'm not against the one-lane roundabout at all. All I'm saying is let's wait out the improvements that the City just...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Spent money on.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's wait them out.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Like they're -- you know, right now, we're in the middle of COVID. Conditions aren't the same as they are. Let's see it out. Let's like give the improvements an opportunity to show if they do have benefits.

Vice Mayor Lago: So give me a timeline, give me a schedule. That I do deal with every single day. Give me a construction schedule.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That depends on COVID and when…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We're post pandemic.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah, because we're…

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And I will also add this…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Still not even collecting data in the City right now.

Vice Mayor Lago: You know, let me be -- because I'm trying to give you an out here, but obviously it's not going to happen. You know, when I look to my college to the left, Commissioner Mena, and we discuss issues in his neighborhood, you know, I'm sensitive to what happens on Sunset, and you know, I understand the situation very clearly because I drive through that neighborhood and I know the onslaught that he has to deal with with people who don't live in that neighborhood,

and he's got to deal with people parking in his driveway, parking on the swales, cut-through traffic, a litany of things. Let's talk about the Mayor's neighborhood. You know, we talk about people, again, who are driving in front of his home, people who are running. We've had some significant accidents there, so I understand we all have issues in their neighborhoods. Commission Fors, the same thing in his neighborhood. We all have issues in our neighborhood. I'm just asking you, just so that I can go back to the residents that I represent -- that's all I'm asking. I'm not asking you to go out there with a hammer right now and pull -- and chip it all out and give me one lane. I'm just saying…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: No, I think…

Vice Mayor Lago: I know that -- and the ACM makes a good point about COVID, and I respect that.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah. I think a timeline is important. I think you're absolutely right. I think -- I can't give you a timeline right now because I don't know when COVID's going to end and when conditions are going to go back, but once we have the City telling us that we can collect traffic data because traffic conditions have normalized, I would say maybe a calendar year from that point. Look at the crash data, see how it goes. If it's increased over that period of time, then we look at another option. But I can't give you a definitive timeline right now because we don't know what's happening with COVID.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I want you to -- that's fine, but I want you to acknowledge to me -- and we had this conversation on the ground. The residents have a right to be frustrated about this. You know, they've been dealing with this for 10 years. And it comes a point where, you know, I told the Manager -- and I'm going to be very frank with what I told the ACM. I said I can't deal with this anymore. It's been going on for too long. Because it's not only about me, it's about you. You have limited resources. You have a lot of things that you got to deal with throughout the City, and this is a constant onslaught issue. We haven't been able to address it. We haven't been able to put it to -- lay it to rest. And I'm very frustrated about -- with myself because I like to be able fix

things and move on to the next problem, and we haven't been able to fix this because we have conflicting reports, we have the County saying one thing, we have David Plummer saying another. So I get -- you make too much sense and so does the ACM. There isn't a way to fix it right now, but it's just...

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: I want you to also acknowledge the fact that it's very frustrating because the answer that we're about to basically walk away with is not the answer that everybody wants, is a resolution.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: I think it's also important to note that we're not saying no to the one-lane roundabout. We're just saying, let's wait it out.

Vice Mayor Lago: And you've made that…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Let's give it...

Vice Mayor Lago: You've made that abundantly clear and I respect that.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah, so…

Vice Mayor Lago: And I appreciate that.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: I'm not against at all any of the residents' recommendations or those considerations. I just think that waiting it out until we can see how it works is a smart choice financially. Also, when you're looking at the data, data speaks for itself; that's not an opinion, that's not any sort of basis, that is just straight facts. So my opinion -- I mean, my perspective on this from just looking at the two studies that were done and my safety analysis, I think we should wait out, see where it goes, and then absolutely you're absolutely right, Vice Mayor, we should put

-- we should absolutely put a deadline on it and say, hey, within this time period, if things don't improve, then we seriously consider...

Vice Mayor Lago: Because we may not have to rip it out, maybe we can just do some alternative concrete work, get rid of the striping, figure something out that, again, is not -- does not have such an implication in regards to cost.

Commissioner Mena: But let's be -- you know, I've been waiting. I hear what you're saying, and I understand where you are today, I do. I do think there has to be a recognition that there was a real failure in the process here, because from a resident's perspective, if the process was, hey, we're going to evaluate this circle back at the time, hey, we're going to pay AECOM to do a study. AECOM's going to give an opinion on what should happen. We're then going to submit that opinion to the County, the County's going to agree with the opinion, and then we're going to say, that's not the approach. Let's hire a new engineer; that's where things here, in my opinion, really went astray. Because if I'm a resident and I'm told, hey, there's a study. We're going to look at it. They're recommending one lane. The County agrees. How can I not be frustrated when the City then comes back and says, oh, we're going to get another engineer to look at this a different way. It's going to be a few more years of evaluation, and then now in 2020, based on current data statistics, et cetera -- I understand the position you're in today, but that process -- and I've talked to the Manager, I've talked to Ed about this -- that's where things fell apart here. And I'm not saying that was your decision. I'm not saying -- you know, this has been over the span of many years now, but that's what's hard here. That...

Vice Mayor Lago: Listen, none of us were here. None of us were here. No one on this Commission was here when this was done.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: But we got to face the music. So I know that the moment we move on from this, we're not going to find a resolution here because obviously COVID is really hindering that

ability, and let's be honest with ourselves, I'm going to have to deal with the residents the moment I get off the floor here, and the residents are going to give me an earful because they're sick and tired of it. And you know, it's like what Commissioner Mena says, it's -- you have conflicting reports. We spent a lot of money. We spent tens and tens of thousands of dollars on this. I think that we need to figure out what to do after COVID, put a schedule together and really bring this in for a landing. I mean, if not, I don't know what else to do.

Commissioner Mena: And it's a bit of a catch-22 right now, because -- and I rec -- to your point, like if you do a study now and the numbers are very low, you know, the residents will likely say...

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah, I wouldn't even recommend it at all.

Commissioner Mena: Well, it's COVID, there's not as many people driving. There's not as many students at UM. The numbers are obviously deflated and reduced whatever, artificially, you know, and so they're not going to necessarily want that either. So I recognize that it's a weird time right now, and that it's a difficult time to assess this kind of thing.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: And you just made certain changes that may or may not help. So you know…

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So if I may suggest, we can come back with a plan to move forward in terms of establishing some sort of a deadline. Obviously, it's all pending the pandemic and how things move forward over the next few months, and that can be the start date when the clock starts ticking. One thing is important to note that we are going to at least have to revisit modeling the intersection to see if traffic patterns, traffic volumes will accommodate a one-lane roundabout, a one-lane traffic circle. That is very important because if we go ahead and modify this intersection and create a one-lane condition in a traffic circle, we may be really blowing up

traffic in the area, and then we'd have another problem to deal with. So that modeling, I think, is very critical to assess what the impact of converting it into a one-lane will be.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: And to tap into that, and it's not just about today's volumes, which both of the studies did, they just did existing volumes. So we're not talking about any growth that's happening within the City, you know, just general traffic growth, as well as any programs that are growing from University of Miami, which was originally why the talks were back in 2008, putting the two-lane roundabout, about the growth of the law school or other programs, that was in discussion. So I do think it's super important when you're doing a planning level study like that, that you have to do forecasted years. I mean, we don't want to reconstruct an intersection ten years from now.

Vice Mayor Lago: So why don't we do this because I think we've discussed this at length today. Why don't we move on and we put this on the agenda for the next Commission meeting, and we put forth a schedule of some sort taking into consideration, hopefully COVID, you know, sunsets pretty soon over the next six months.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I would like to suggest right now something. You know, as soon as traffic patterns get to a point where Miami-Dade County feels comfortable in having the data that's collected studied, then we can provide maybe an additional year from there to see…

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Yeah.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: What's happening in the traffic circle, and then take it from there. That's my suggestion.

City Manager Iglesias: Ed, let me say something.

Vice Mayor Lago: Fine, but let me ask…

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, if I may say something. We don't do traffic studies in the summer.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know.

City Manager Iglesias: Because we realize there's a huge traffic shift.

Vice Mayor Lago: That would be a nightmare.

City Manager Iglesias: And we have a similar situation now, except it's a pandemic, so we want to make sure that what we do is, one, is an accurate study, so that the studies can be done accurately and the projections can be done accurately. And two, we want to make sure that we don't reverse trends and it becomes an unsafe condition because I'm all about safety and so are all of us. So we just want to make sure that this is done in a professional way, and it's hard to set a date right now because that date -- it's not like the summer where we've got a clear schedule as to when that traffic shift is going to be. So if we can set up…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

City Manager Iglesias: If -- so I don't really want to put a time frame right now because it's not out of -- it's out of our control. But I can say that what we can say right now is that when traffic is relatively back to normal, then we can project let's say a year after that and then say, okay, here's what we need to do. If it does need to be changed, I think we should look at it carefully and not simply go with one solution that we've come up with right now, but there can be multiple solutions that really are important from a life safety perspective.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's fine.

City Manager Iglesias: And so if we do something like that, I think it's a rational approach, and it's something we can promise the residents right now that we will do.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I just want to say one thing, and I agree with you. You made a very good point, the ACM brought this up. We don't want to have a traffic logjam, but I'd rather take a traffic logjam that have an unsafe area for people to traverse because there's thousands of people that are walking, that are working out. There's a lot of elderly people. There's a lot of disabled people. There's even a gentleman who's blind who walks in that area, okay. So if it's unsafe for cars and that's a high intersection where there's a lot of students, they're leaving the music school, they're leaving in St. Augustine Church. You have a lot of cut-through traffic there coming from Miller, people going -- that are trying to avoid Bird Road, that are trying to avoid Coral Way. So what do they do, they cut down San Amaro, which is fine. I chose to live in that street, I chose to live in a street. They take San Amaro, they cut, you know, Blue Road. They're trying to avoid having to get on Bird Road or go on Coral Way. So my point is that if you tell me that we go down to a one-lane circle, it'll be a logjam, but it'd be a lot safer, I'll take it.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: At that point too, we have to consider emergency vehicles…

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Into the mix. So that's a…

Vice Mayor Lago: That's a good point.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Life safety is considered. So there are a number of things to be considered.

Vice Mayor Lago: Understood.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: But we'll look at them all.

Vice Mayor Lago: But let's talk about it -- let's bring it back at the next Commission meeting. By the way, again, thank you for your efforts.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: What would you like us to bring back at next Commission? I just want to understand so that we can bring...

Vice Mayor Lago: I want to see -- I want to put something on paper. I want to see a plan of action. I want to see -- I know, obviously, it'll even flow depending on COVID and like the Manager stated in regards to the County allowing us to take the proper data, but I need something. I need something where we're all accountable. Everyone here in this room is accountable to delivering something and putting this to rest. It's been 10 years, and to be honest with you, when I get off this dais, I'm going to hear from the residents, when I see them in the neighborhood, when I walk with my kids on Saturday and Sundays, I hear it, and I think it's something that needs to be addressed.

City Manager Iglesias: I think, Vice Mayor…

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We can definitely do that.

City Manager Iglesias: I think we are ready to do that right now.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know you are.

City Manager Iglesias: I think we can say that once traffic patterns become normal again, within one year of that time, we will re-study the intersection. I don't agree with going to one solution right now because I don't believe that we have it. I think if there is an issue, we re-study that intersection to find out what is the best solution for that, because if we're looking for safety -- for not only vehicular safety, but pedestrian safety, then we should be very careful as to what we do there and not take a haphazard approach in saying we're going to do something right now.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: But I can commit to as soon as traffic stabilizes, within one year of that, do a traffic study, and if there are issues, then revisit that intersection and from the ground up to see what is the best solution for that intersection. We look at signalization, we looked at one -- at a traffic circle with two lanes, traffic circle with one lane; what is the best solution from a safety perspective for the drivers and for the pedestrians because that is used quite a bit.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Vice Mayor, in November of 2019, we had a meeting involving the residents. It was in the first-floor conference room. And at that point, I said that in two years we would be reassessing things, and that happens to dovetail with the timeline that we're on right now. 2019 happened, 2020 is a wash. We all know why. And so, if things move forward and we have stability in traffic patterns and traffic counts, then we can go ahead, analyze and have the proper fix in place.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then shall we go on?

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Senior Traffic Engineer Cobb: Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, team.