

TRAFFIC ADVISORY BOARD
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
MAY 19, 2009

	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	
MEMBERS:													APPOINTED BY:
Ian Martinez	P	E	**	P	P	E	*	P	E	P	P	E	Donald D. Slesnick, II
Larry D. Kries	P	P	**	P	E	P	*	P	P	P	E	P	Maria Anderson
Douglas Yoder	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	E	P	P	E	P	Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Frank Quesada	E	P	**	E	P	P	*	P	E	P	A	A	William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Christopher Morrison	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	Wayne "Chip" Withers
Bertram Goldsmith, Jr.	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	E	Commission-as-a-Whole
Ramon Irigoyen	E	P	**	A	P	P	*	P	E	P	P	P	City Manager

(*) Board voted not to hold a meeting due to holiday vacations

(**) Board meeting cancelled due to threatening hurricane

A - Absent
E - Excused
P - Present

STAFF

R. Alberto Delgado, P.E., Public Works Director
Esther Zabalo, Civil Engineer
Lt. A. Diaz, Police Department

CONSULTANT

Ramon Soria, Marlin Engineering
Dr. Hesham Elbadrawi
Yamilet Senespleda

GUEST

Dr. Al Smith

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m. Chairman Morrison welcomed Dr. Al Smith who will be joining the Traffic Board in June. He was appointed by the City Manager. Chairman Morrison noted that Dr. Yoder, Chico Goldsmith and himself would be leaving the Board having served the maximum of eight years of service. He also noted that Mr. Goldsmith had requested to be excused from attending this meeting. Mr. Morrison asked that the minutes duly reflect that. Also Mr. Martinez had sent an e-mail requesting to be excused. Motion was made by Mr. Irigoyan to accept their requests, seconded by Dr. Yoder. All in favor, motion carried

Mr. Morrison: "I just received the April minutes over the week-end and I have not had a chance to review and correct them". Mr. Morrison asked for a motion to approve the minutes pending corrections from the members once they had had the opportunity to review them. Dr. Yoder moved, seconded by Mr. Kreis, motion carried.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. Delgado: “As you will remember, directly after our last Board meeting we had a meeting with the North Gables area residents. The meeting was very well attended. The residents not only discussed the traffic issues but also other issues such as police response, etc. that they were upset about. Since then Public Works has had a couple of meetings to discuss different aspects of the issues. The result was that we are going to have another meeting with the residents next month. It will be a separate meeting. Most likely around June 18 at which time we will present a new traffic plan for their consideration. In addition the Fire and Police Departments will be in attendance to address enforcement issues, as well as Public Service to address garbage and debris pick-up. Also, we will give them the good news that the Trolley Route Extension was approved by the City Commission, although this will not probably happen until next year because we need to buy a new trolley to have a sufficient number to extend the route without reducing the level of service.

Mr. Morrison interjected that the trolley route extension will be implemented on a trial basis. Mr. Delgado further explained that we will need an additional trolley for the peak hours and that is an important issue to clarify any misunderstandings. We must keep the wait very short, seven or eight minutes – matching Metro Rail. In order to keep that schedule during peak hours (which are early in the morning and late in the afternoon) we need to have an additional trolley to maintain the route and the wait time. According to Ed Cox, the Trolley Administrator, they can manage with the trolleys that we have for non-peak hours. The extension loop will add another eight minutes and we want to maintain the current level of service.

By the time the route is extended, the on-trolley advertisement program will be in place which hopefully will bring additional revenues to the City.

Mr. Kries asked how much the City would receive from the on-trolley advertising. Mr. Delgado noted that the agreement was for \$13,000.00 a month, however, they want to revise the schedule to pay \$10,000.00 a month and have a balloon payment at the end of the year to make up the difference. At the end of the two years the total would be equivalent to \$13,000.00 times 24 months, roughly \$300,000.00. Mr. Delgado noted that it would be good if the City receives \$150,000.00 per year. In addition to that, the trolley has been rented out during the week-ends for special events.

Mr. Morrison wanted to know what marketing is being done with the County so that the Metro Bus riders on Route 11 know that they have a new option at Flagler and Douglas to get to Coral Gables.

Mr. Delgado noted that once we have the trolley and we are ready to go we will notify the County so that people will use that stop on Flagler, actually two stops: the one on Douglas and the one on Ponce de Leon. They will be able to get on the trolley there, similar to the Metro Rail schedule, with service every 8 minutes.

Mr. Morrison asked if the City's Trolley Program had been introduced to the Metro Rail riders when it first started and Mr. Delgado replied, "Yes."

Mr. Kries asked if there had been conversations about taking the trolley down Coral Way. Mr. Morrison: "No."

Mr. Kries noted that there was an article in the paper twelve days ago that they (the City of Miami) want to spend some of the stimulus dollars for a trolley along Coral Way to connect to Coral Gables.

Mr. Delgado did not read that but reminded the Board Members that one of the best routes for buses is along Coral Way. Mr. Morrison thought it was ironic as years ago there were trolley tracks down Coral Way where ficus trees grow today connecting the two cities.

Mr. Delgado noted that by extending the trolley route to Flagler we will be connecting to Route 11 which is also one of the busiest routes. Our new service will be very good for persons who live in Coral Gables and want to go to Flagler. Or people who live somewhere else and want to come to Coral Gables to work, or whatever.

Mr. Morrison noted that the residents of that area will be glad to hear this because a significant number of commuters will make it a viable route.

Mr. Delgado brought the conversation back to the North Gables issues. The residents did not approve any of the recommendations so we are going back to meet with them. The most important thing is that we have engaged Marlin Engineering (Ramon Soria), we also have Yamilet Senespleda here with us this evening. They looked at the area again to see what would be the best recommendation to resolve the issues. They are suggesting several different recommendations, from minimal changes to the extreme of closing Boabadilla. I have asked Ramon Soria to attend this meeting and make a short presentation to the Board of what his approach will be. That area, Mr. Delgado noted, is more complicated than we knew because of their proximity to the City of Miami. There is a lot of diversion and other things that are happening on those streets.

Mr. Delgado made suggestions as to what type of traffic calming/traffic diverter would work for this neighborhood.

RAMON SORIA

The issue of Boabadilla is a very complicated one. We did a study in 2001 and made a recommendation based on traffic data collection at that time. We made a report for the County recommending some diverters and some median closures on Ponce but the County said no. That was because in part the County's street closure requirements. The County noted that in 2001 that the intersection of Le Jeune Road and Tamiami Trail (Eighth Street) was failing, therefore we cannot put any more traffic through that intersection. They also noted that the intersection of Ponce and Eighth Street was operating at a "D" level service in the PM; therefore, they did not want to

put any more traffic through that intersection either. That was the main reason why they rejected that original concept.

If you look at the traffic calming requirements it state that as part of your study you should not put additional traffic that will adversely impact surrounding roadways which in this case would be Le Jeune and Eighth Street. However, we have a different view on this and I think we can sell it to the County. That intersection is operating so poorly that adding another thousand vehicles a day is not going to increase the delays significantly where anybody will notice the difference. Yet, the decrease of a thousand vehicles trips per day in this residential community will make a tremendous positive impact for that community. I think that this approach is something that we will look at now.

Mr. Morrison: "Is the County going to be present at this meeting?" Mr. Delgado: "We are going to try and have someone from the County attend."

Mr. Soria noted that he is setting a meeting with Esther Calas, Miami-Dade County Public Works Director. We are going to get someone at this meeting, because our approach today is going to be a little different. We are going to approach this as if it were a project development study where we have gathered all this information and we have determined the problem and the causes of the problem and we are recommending four alternatives that will alleviate the problem at different levels.

One of the alternatives is street closure, which in this case to completely eliminate the problem as there is no alternative route for cut through traffic. But, that street closure will create another set of problems because what's happening is there were street closures before in that area just north of this area. This area is constrained by very busy arterials that are operating at very poor levels of service and that is the reason we have so much cut through traffic to the tune of 5,000 vehicles per day thru Boabadilla. Imagine living on Boabadilla with 5,000 vehicles a day traveling through and cut thru traffic means speeding. These people are in a hurry to get through. They want to avoid the area on Tamiami Trail, between Ponce and Le Jeune. And if we travel that in the afternoon it's bumper to bumper and that cut thru does reduce a lot of time, travel time. It works.

If we put diverters there, and we have four alternatives that we are going to be presenting, there will allow right-out only exiting from that area to 8th Street. So, if you live in that area bordered by Le June and Ponce and Eighth Street and Boabaila you will only be able to make a right; you cannot make a left. So once we cut off Boabadilla we are cutting off people that want to go east that live west of the enclosure; we are cutting them off from going east. They have to find a way to get to Flagler, to go east. They can't make a left on Tamiami Trail. So there are a lot of repercussions.

So we have made four recommendations. The recommendations vary in intensity. Some require median closures on Ponce. One of them requires a median closure on Le Jeune, which is a State Road outside the jurisdiction of the City and that one is probably, other than the street closure, the most effective one. Because what is happening is they have allowed a left turn into this community on Le Jeune a couple of blocks south of Flagler and that is how they are getting thru in the morning avoiding Eighth Street, and eventually get thru Boabadilla, Ponce and then take Flagler.

Mr. Morrison asked Ms. Senespleda to indicate where Boabadilla was on the map, which she did.

Mr. Soria had a computer program with him that he could show the four alternatives to the Members so they could get a better idea or he offered to use the story boards. To avoid taking the time to set up the computer program the members asked Mr. Soria to use the boards.

Ms. Senespleda further explained Alternative 1. Mr. Soria interjected that the reason for the presentation for the residents is to explain to them the issues they are faced with; explain to them what is causing the problems, hoping that they do apply for traffic calming, that they meet the requirements for traffic calming and tell them what the alternatives are.

We also want to explain the traffic calming procedures for Dade County because that is very important for them to understand what they are facing if they all say "I want street closure." It is basically teaching. If they want street closure, we will fight for street closure, but this is what we are up against with Miami-Dade County.

Mr. Morrison noted that a lot of the residents feel that way and they do not understand why it can't be that way and that there is a County moratorium against more street closures. They do not understand why what was allowed in the past is no longer allowed.

Mr. Soria said he can explain it. He will tell them why in the past they were allowed and the Police Department will be in attendance to help explain what happened in the past – Mr. Morrison: "There were two commissioners at that the last meeting (Anderson and Cabrera) and Commissioner Cabrera pointed out then that if they absolutely want the closure the City officials will stand behind the residents but the chances of them getting it approved were slim to none.

Mr. Soria explained that that is their approach as well and as the City's consultant that will be the approach we will be taking. We will fight for the street closure for them, because the reality is that that is the only thing that is going to completely alleviate the problem. Mr. Morrison: "And also it may take several years and then be all for naught". Mr. Soria noted that it will take at least a year and it will take money from the City to put this study together and I am going to give them the odds of approval, which are less than 10% . If they want to go through that, we are going to stand with them, but the odds are not in their favor.

What are the odds for the others? Because that issue about not allowing traffic to go to the arterial streets to me is going against what the reality is. We need to take the traffic that is not generated by the residential community and put it on the arterial streets. If the arterial streets are failing we should not hold these residents accountable for that.

Mr. Morrison: "The entire premise of traffic calming is to move traffic from residential streets to the arterials." Mr. Soria agreed. When they say that we have an intersection that is failing, we have an argument for that. If you have 40,000 vehicles going thru that intersection a day and we are adding another thousand on Le Jeune and a thousand on Ponce, what exactly will be the additional

delay at that intersection? It's going to fail; it's failing now. It's not going to change greatly. A thousand more vehicles? What is it going to do to the delay? It is not going to affect the delay. So, let's take the vehicles that do not belong in the residential community out.

There are things that we could do that aren't street closures that will alleviate a lot of the traffic in this area. The original proposal that we did is part of it and I would add eliminating that left turn on Le Jeune will decrease their traffic by at least 50%. So it will go from 5,000 vehicles to approximately 2,000 vehicles per day. It is still high and 2,000 still requires some traffic calming in the empirical. We can put a circle or do something else to alleviate the 2,000 vehicles per day, but let's take the other 2,000 out. But if I am going to hear closure, closure, closure – closure is one of the alternatives. We have not taken that out of our design, but closure – these are the obstacles and I will mention them one by one. The requirements from closure are on the Power Point presentation and you will see that there are requirements for the street closures.

The Board Members exchanged comments with Mr. Soria. Mr. Delgado noted that in the presentation it will be number 4. South of Flagler – The Board Members reviewed the maps and discussed the four alternatives. Mr. Morrison asked as to which street was previously closed: Campina Court.

At this point in the meeting Mr. Soria and Ms. Senespleda discussed and explained further the proposed plan of Marlin Engineering to be presented at the next meeting with the residents of the North Gables area.

Mr. Soria continued: The Alternatives –

He will fully describe the alternatives and he will come up with a percentage of traffic reduction for the alternatives and the probability that the higher the traffic reduction, the lower the possibility of approval, which means that the more restrictive we get the less probable we'll get approval.

Mr. Morrison: Is it likely that the County will come back and say we want to hear the alternative which has the least amount of impact on the arterial first and prove that that doesn't work before you go to any other alternative."

Mr. Soria: "The traffic calming standards of guidelines require that you use the least restrictive first and then work your way down to the most restrictive. But, because of the way it reads and how this community feels right now, we should use a more restrictive approach. We will tell them that these are all available options but these are the probabilities of approval. Because I can go to the County and they tell me to use the most restrictive, but remind them I brought them a proposal before that is not as restrictive as a street closure and you said NO! We have a lot of people here and we need to do something for them.

I don't like to throw a monkey wrench into the works, but in this case I think the County needs to come in and take some of the heat because they do need to approve it, whatever you recommend.

Mr. Morrison: "This we made very clear at the last meeting. We repeatedly told the residents the County had the final say".

Mr. Soria: "We do project development and environmental studies. TNE Studies for transportation and for railroads and part of a TNE Study is to come up with alternatives after a data collection and analysis phase, you come up with alternatives. You do not select an alternative until you go to a public meeting and present or when you present it, you, as a professional, do not recommend one yet. You just present them and you hear the people and then, based on their feedback, we go back to the drawing board, we all sit together again, and based on their feedback they want closure, closure, closure, or no they heard us out and they saw the probabilities and they are thinking let's try something else. If they want street closure they will have to make a decision. Are we going to push in that direction and get a quick response from the County? We could. And what we will try to do is not spend a lot of money on a study but do enough to get the County to say yey or nay.

Mr. Morrison: "We know the nay is coming so can we speed up the process?"

Mr. Soria: Right, so we get a nay and we say look the County said no, so let's go with the next... Actually we are going backwards. You go from least restrictive to most restrictive. Here we are going to eliminate the most restrictive quickly and work back to something that will be approved by the County. And I think that also puts a little pressure on the County by saying they came in with alternatives. We need to do something for these people. Let's at least meet them half way. Like for bargaining, we are going to go in with the worst knowing that we can bargain to here and we have the County and we have the residents that we need to look at; get them to let us go middle of the line; not the least restrictive, but go half way, which is what the study of a few years back did, except that I would fight for that left turn. We have to do something about that left turn and that is outside the City limits, but part of the street calming guidelines tell you that the affected area could fall outside the City limits and in this case the County is going to say the affected area is not just the City limits. The affected area is going to be Le Jeune across, Eighth Street to Flagler, so that tells you where we are going with Boabadilla.

Let me show how we are going to go about it. Street closure is part of our alternatives and I think that will defuse them and shorten the list. That's the approach.

Mr. Morrison: "Okay, so are the other alternatives harder?"

Mr. Soria: "We have median closures on Ponce; we have diverters on ... Mr. Delgado suggested using the map while describing the alternatives,

Ms. Senesplada: "The first one we have is Alternative 1, the most restrictive alternative."

Alternative 4: "On that one we are proposing the entire closure of Ponce de Leon Median and two right-only diverters on Boabadilla and Cibao. This was presented at the previous meeting."

Mr. Delgado explained that the residents on one side, east of Ponce west of Douglas did not want it.”

Mr. Morrison: “Basically, the resident's bottom line is whatever you are proposing is inconveniencing our neighborhood. You should not inconvenience us to solve your problem.”

Mr. Soria: “We have to think about how we are going to respond to that, because whatever we do here, except street closure, will inconvenience the neighborhood. If it doesn’t, then it is not going to work for the people who are cutting thru either.”

Mr. Delgado noted that they would have to deal with the inconvenience in order to be able to stop the cut thru traffic. Mr. Morrison noted that there must be a trade off. Mr. Soria agreed that there is a trade off, because other than a street closure, which will inconvenience everybody on the west side, because they will not be able to go east any more, other than a street closure, everything else will have some inconvenience to the residents there because if it doesn’t, that means it will not inconvenience the cut thru traffic either. I remember going to a commission meeting, many years ago before the Traffic Advisory Board, when the Valdes Fauli was Mayor. I was sitting there when an elderly lady comes up and she wants to speak. So she says: “Mr. Mayor, I hate these traffic circles.” He asked her why did she hate them. “Because they are inconveniencing me, they make me slow down.” He said that was exactly why they are there for.

Mr. Soria noted that traffic circles will inconvenience some residents; diverters will inconvenience some of the people who live there, because you have to slow down. There is a trade off.

Ms. Senespleda: “On the first three alternatives we are trying to eliminate the PM traffic intrusion. The ones that we are playing with the median closure on Ponce de Leon and if you see the PM map you will notice that the PM and AM roads you will see that the PM road, which is the blue one, will be completely eliminated completely with the first three alternatives. But the AM will be the problem.

The first one is the entire closure. The second alternative will close-in the Ponce de Leon Median, from Boabadilla and Cibao. We are allowing some movement between the east and west side of Ponce de Leon, but U-turns are not allowed to avoid that PM traffic intrusion to Boabadilla.

The third one we are trying to accommodate the median opening. We are trying to avoid also the PM traffic intrusion to Boabadilla, but allowing some connections between the east and the west side of Ponce de Leon.

Alternative Four, is the one that we are proposing the closure of Le Jeune and Second Street median. In this one we will completely eliminate AM traffic intrusion. Closing access to all those streets, second, third, fourth, will only be right-out, going northbound to Le Jeune. The only access is Second Street and Le Jeune. Mr. Soria noted that this is one of the ones he likes.

Mr. Morrison noted that on the corner of Fonseca and Ponce de Leon, where the curve starts, there is a resident very concerned about speeding. She was at the last meeting and I am sure she will be at the next.

Alternative Five is the street closure. She recapped by saying that at the next meeting of the North Gables residents the consultant will discuss the County's guidelines for the installation of traffic calming.

Mr. Delgado said that the City of Miami residents will be stranded with Alternative 5. Mr. Soria noted that that is the reason why the County gets involved with the Municipalities.

Mr. Morrison commented that the Board had one success in bringing all the stakeholders to the table with regard to the Carver school drop-off problem. This Board took the initiative and brought all the groups together, the County, the City of Miami, the School Board, City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade Water & Sewer. They had a problem with the drop-off zone. The Water Department donated the land, Coral Gables paid for the study and a new drop-off area was paved. And, finally the County gave us the light at Loquat and LeJeune (three years later) for southbound traffic to exit the area. He felt that was a great success, but getting everybody to the same table was the key.

Mr. Soria: We may have to. Let's say we choose one alternative, the one that I like and I feel is the best to go with. We should sit with the City of Miami and with all the residents. The residents on the other side will fight with force."

Mr. Delgado noted that the response we have received from the City of Miami in the past has not been a good one. He noted that when the City had proposed roadway changes at Andalusia and Douglas near the location of the new Palace, Miami did not support it. This intersection is infamous. We proposed to Miami to carry the traffic across Douglas into what is called 23rd or 22nd Street. This is a commercial area and we proposed to widen the Street so cars could get to the next intersection, make a left and go to Coral Way. We sat down with the City of Miami, their consultant, and the Palace developer who was willing to pay for all the work. This happened a year ago. We met with Jose Gonzalez but they wanted to talk to the Commission. This would have been a staff recommendation but it did not happen. This was a traffic situation, not a political situation. But that is not how it turned out.

The Board Members reviewed the alternatives and looking at the map discussed which alternative would be best to serve all involved.

Mr. Soria noted that he made field observations a week or so before, at lunch time, and at all times during the day constant traffic, not only at peak hours. They have a huge problem. It can be alleviated with that alternative and he thinks the median closure on Le Jeune is a good possibility of approval. He believes that we can do it which that will shift the traffic outside the community. It could be a combination of things, but if we can reduce the AM cut thru to basically 0 and reduce the PM cut thru by 50% we reduce over 2,000 vehicles a day from that community.

Mr. Morrison thanked the consultants for the preview of his presentation for the North Gables residents.

Blue Road Circles: Mr. Delgado reported on these circles. He hopes to have a new bid. Dr. Yoder asked when was the bid to happen and when would construction start. Supposed to have gone out for advertisement on May 15; bid opening is in June. Once it is awarded we can start construction. Mr. Delgado mentioned that the plan is to finish before the Xmas. Holidays.

Mr. Morrison suggested that Dr. Yoder be invited to the ground breaking as he has waited his entire term to see these projects completed.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that he was taking the Segovia Median project to the next Commission meeting for approval of the JPA. Then it will be taken to the County Commission for their approval. Based on the County Commission process time, approximately three months, it is expected we will break ground before the end of the year.

The Biltmore Way and Segovia roundabout has already been approved. We are waiting for Bid approval. Bid accepted in June, awarded in July, construction can start August/September.

Mr. Morrison, reviewing the Project List and for the benefit of Dr. Smith, recommended that each Zone Representative pay particular attention to projects within their respective zones so they know which projects they should champion during the budget process. August and September is when this Board finds out what the budget will be for the year and how much money we will have to spend on traffic calming. This year we had less to spend than in any year since the Board came into existence and he thought that it seemed likely we would be affected by budgetary constraints again this coming year. So, please go through the list and prioritize the projects based on need and safety. If there are "turkeys", take them off the list. Our plan of work is set by the beginning of the City's fiscal year (October 1). And most work is begun after the first of the year as there is a construction moratorium from Thanksgiving through New Year's. Most of the work is carried out during the summer after school lets out.

Mr. Delgado noted that the long process is the approval of the calming devices, obtaining approval from the County and construction is actually is what takes the shortest time.

Mr. Kries asked if we will have the same contractor but Mr. Delgado said that they are going out for bid, so we may get another contractor. He also asked if we will continue with the same landscaping theme for the new roundabouts. Mr. Delgado said we will use the same plant materials.

Mr. Delgado discussed the planting material and ground cover for the newly constructed Segovia/Coral Way. The re-alignment of Segovia, to Alhambra. This will also have to go to the historic Board because of Alhambra Circle.

BOARD RELATED ISSUES:

None

CITY ISSUES:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Kries noted that he had just received a text message from Mr. Quesada asking to be excused as he was not aware there was a meeting scheduled. Mr. Morrison stated (again for Dr. Smith's benefit) that the Board had voted to meet the third Tuesday of each month except December and he could not understand why some Board members did not have the meetings on their calendars. Further, it has been this Board's policy to only accept a members request for an excused absence if it were made in advance of the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Morrison stated he was pleased to have served on the Citizens' Traffic Advisory Board for these last eight years and felt that the Board could be proud of its many accomplishments. He thanked Dr. Yoder and Chico Goldsmith for their service and contributions and wished the members who would remain on the Board much success in the future. He also thanked Alberto Delgado, Esther Zabalo, Mirtha Francomacaro, Lt. Diaz and Marlin Engineering for their professionalism. He stated that they had offered great staff support and were a pleasure to work with.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 P.M.