

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-7
April 12, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-7 [Start: 3:06:12 p.m.]

Update on Grand Avenue Trolley Route

Mayor Cason: Let's pick up H-7 and then we are going to do H-8.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: H-7 is the Grand Avenue trolley route. You'll remember when we created the extended trolley route with McFarlane, we promised to come back and give you an update, and this is the update.

Mr. Kinney: Mr. Mayor, Commission, if we can have the PowerPoint, this will be pretty quick. If I had to sum up the six month report in one sentence, I would just simply say that operationally staff is very pleased. It worked well. We haven't had as many problems with headways as we anticipated and the service seems to be well received. We'll just go through a few key points. We pay about \$10,000 a month for this service to keep a ten minute headway during our operating hours, and for this first year half of that has been through a grant. So our actual cost, operation cost is about \$5,000 a month.

Mayor Cason: Likely of getting that grant again?

Mr. Kinney: I won't say it's impossible, but it's a service start-up grant, is what we got. It's to encourage cities to try new things, but there is a possibility. We have been fairly successful at getting grant funds from the state and from other sources. We operate this trolley with just one trolley per day. You'll see the route, it just consistently does a loop from Douglas Station down to Grand Avenue around and back and it runs that route all day. We are able to – and we did buy a few new trolleys, we appreciate the funding for that. We are able to maintain ten to eleven minute headways, which is a pretty good surface and it stops on every loop at the Douglas Station, at which location people can opt to jump on the Ponce route and come downtown, if they chose, or they can get on the Metrorail. Actually this was at the end of six months, so as of the end of February we were running between 140 and 150 passengers a day. I will tell you that that continues to improve. In fact, in March I just got the numbers from March last year, and if you factor out spring break, which is always a very slow time, we are up around 156 passengers a day now. This is just a simple slide to show what our passenger counts are. If you look at the green that's our Ponce route. The one on the left is August through February of two years ago, and the one on the right is August through February this year. We are up around 6 percent total in those six months. About 31,000 passengers are what our increase is in those six months and about half that entry has been the Grand Avenue route. There are things that we are considering as potential enhancements, and in the budgeting process we will actually just be looking at enhancements overall in the trolley system, but for this specific location the first one additional stops with the continued development in the Gables Ponce projects down there at LeJeune and Ponce. We are getting a lot of residential there with Phase 3 coming in the near future. We will be looking at a stop in that area. One of the unanticipated things that we found was, there are actually students that use this trolley to get to Gables High School, so we will have a stop at that location. At some point we are trying to figure out what the development of those residential units, what the best location is, we'll get to that. The second bullet point, we do go down Grand Avenue. We currently with the City of Miami have a connection on Coral Way. If there were a City of Miami trolley that came down Grand Avenue to the location where we are at Douglas, that would another convenient location, and at that point we may even see people take public transportation, rather than drive between downtown Coconut Grove and downtown Coral Gables. I believe that would enhance our ridership significantly. The other one in this area that we may consider in the future that we have had some thought and study about is, at some point connecting with the UM Shuttle, and that's still an open question whether that would be us going toward them, or they would come up to where we are at Ponce and LeJeune. And then finally, we have considered expansions of the route, but right now since we can serve the route relatively well with one trolley, that's probably not at the top of our list, but it is something we keep track of. And with that, our plan is to continue, unless directed otherwise.

Mayor Cason: Great. Super.

Commissioner Keon: I know that the community along Grand Avenue is very grateful for your work. Thank you.

Mr. Kinney: My pleasure.

[End: 3:12:50 p.m.]