

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: May 7, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS THE POSSIBLE ACQUISITION OF CERTAIN OUTLOTS ALONG INDIAN CREEK DRIVE FOR THE CREATION OF BUS PULLOUT BAY/BUS STOPS TO AMELIORATE TRAFFIC.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the reasons stated in the analysis, the City Administration (“Administration”) does not recommend the creation and use of a bus pullout bay at the bus stop at Indian Creek Drive and 43 Street (“Bus Stop”) at this time.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the March 13, 2024, City Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Alex Fernandez, the Mayor and City Commission (“City Commission”) referred an agenda item (C4 F) to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (“FERC” or “Committee”) to discuss the possible acquisition of certain outlots along Indian Creek Drive for the creation of bus bays to ameliorate traffic.

A total of 13 bus stops are currently situated along southbound Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue between 41 Street and 63 Street. The bus stops are utilized by Miami-Dade County (“County”) buses and the City of Miami Beach (“City”) trolleys. These transit vehicles currently stop on the rightmost travel lane of Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue to pick-up and drop-off passengers on the west sidewalk.

Recently, residents have raised concerns regarding the Bus Stop in particular, as buses and trolleys frequently serve this location and, while doing so, obstruct the flow of traffic along the single southbound right turn lane on Indian Creek Drive approaching 41 Street (Attachment A). The number and frequency of buses and trolleys serving the Bus Stop exacerbates traffic congestion in the area, particularly during afternoon peak hours.

Given that the acquisition of outlots and creation of bus bays require significant time and funding, the Transportation and Mobility Department (“Department”), in the interim, collaborated with the County on an alternative solution. As a result of this collaboration, in Summer 2024, County bus routes 79 and 100 were modified and no longer serve the Bus Stop. Passengers wishing to transfer to or from these routes in the area now use the southbound stop at Indian Creek and 44 Street, which requires a short walk to the Bus Stop. This service adjustment significantly reduced the number of buses serving the Bus Stop and, in turn, reduced the number of merging conflicts between buses and vehicles. Prior to the modifications to County routes 79 and 100, the Bus Stop had been served an average of twenty (20) times per hour among the five (5) County bus routes. After the change, the Bus Stop is currently served eight (8) times per hour, representing a 60% reduction in frequency of service at the Bus Stop.

The Bus Stop currently serves a total of five (5) public transit routes: three (3) County bus routes (14, 36, and 150) and two (2) City trolley routes (Collins Express and Middle Beach Loop).

ANALYSIS

While it is standard operating practice and customary for public transit vehicles to stop on the rightmost travel lane to serve bus stops on the sidewalks, the Administration recognizes that this operation can be disruptive to traffic flow along major thoroughfares, including, but not limited to, Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue in Mid-Beach. An option to ameliorate the frequent conflicts between vehicular traffic and public transit vehicles at bus stops along this corridor would be to create bus bays on the parcels of privately-owned land abutting the west side of Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue between 43 Street and 63 Street (“outlots”), i.e. the swale areas between the southbound right lane and the Indian Creek waterway. Bus bays would provide a dedicated space, separated from the travel lanes, for transit vehicles to pull into, thus eliminating the need for buses and trolleys to stop on the travel lane and impede traffic flow.

This option, however, would require the acquisition of certain outlots along the west side of Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue for the construction of bus bays to reduce traffic congestion and improve public transit functionality and safety on this highly traveled corridor. Furthermore, coordination with and approval from the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (“DTPW”), which operates the County bus service, would be required. A case-by-case evaluation of potential bus bay locations is essential in determining suitability, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness.

Engagement with DTPW

The Department has been engaged in discussions with DTPW to assess whether the construction of a potential bus bay at the Bus Stop located at Indian Creek Drive and 43 Street would align with DTPW's safety and operational standards for maintaining a safe and efficient transit environment. DTPW raised the following key concerns regarding the implementation of bus bays in this area:

1. **Operational Delays:** DTPW highlighted that bus bays, while intended to alleviate traffic congestion by removing buses from the travel lane, can actually introduce operational delays in areas like Indian Creek Drive. Buses would require additional time to decelerate, pull into the bay, and then re-enter the travel lane, often facing difficulty merging back into heavy traffic. This added delay could disrupt the overall efficiency of public transit services and cause longer trip times for passengers.
2. **Preference for On-Lane Stops:** DTPW expressed a general preference for maintaining stops within the travel lane in highly congested areas such as Indian Creek Drive, as this minimizes the delay associated with merging back into traffic. Stopping within the travel lane also allows buses to maintain their schedules more consistently, which is one of the key operational priorities for DTPW. As such, DTPW does not support the installation of a bus bay at the Bus Stop.
3. **Permanent Rerouting of Routes 79 and 100:** DTPW confirmed that even if the City were to construct a bus bay at this location, the County would not reinstate Routes 79 and 100 to the 43 Street Bus Stop, nor would the bus drivers of the routes which would continue to serve the Bus Stop be required to use the bus bay. The County's decision to remove these routes from serving the Bus Stop is permanent and based on safety considerations, particularly because both routes operate articulated buses. These larger vehicles face significant challenges in navigating lane changes within the limited right-of-way along Indian Creek Drive, creating conflict points and friction with adjacent vehicles that could pose operational and safety hazards.

The Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) is planning to commence a roadway construction project in late summer 2025 to create an additional southbound right turn lane at the intersection of Indian Creek Drive and 41 Street (i.e. creating dual southbound right turn lanes). In light of the FDOT project and the County's recent operational modifications to Routes 79 and 100 which no longer serve the Bus Stop, conflicts between the County buses and vehicular traffic making the southbound right turn onto 41 Street will be further ameliorated and traffic flow at this critical juncture is expected to improve once the FDOT project is completed.

Evaluation of Potential Bus Bay Locations

Due to the future configuration of Indian Creek Drive, the Bus Stop may need to be relocated to the north between 43 Street and 44 Street. Currently, there are two (2) private outlots within these boundaries that could be explored for a potential acquisition and evaluated to determine the feasibility of accommodating a bus bay (Attachment B).

For the remaining 12 bus stops located along southbound Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue between 44 Street and 63 Street, a similar approach can be adopted consisting of a detailed evaluation of each potential bus bay location to determine the need and feasibility of implementation. While the strategic positioning of bus bays along the corridor is anticipated to improve traffic flow and enhance the efficiency of public transit operations, the County's expressed lack of support for the creation and use of bus bays renders the acquisition of outlots a questionable strategy.

Bus Bay Design Standards

According to the FDOT standards (Attachment C), a bus bay should be designed to meet the following minimum specifications:

- Length: A minimum stopping length of 50 feet for a standard bus or 70 feet for an articulated bus, plus an additional 60-80 feet for the entry taper, and 60 feet for the exit taper, thus resulting in a total length of 170-210 feet.
- Width: Typically 12 feet to accommodate the width of a standard bus and ensure safe boarding and alighting for passengers.

Property Acquisition and Cost Considerations

Acquiring property for the implementation of a bus bay(s) involves substantial financial considerations, and the costs associated with acquiring outlots must be thoroughly researched and negotiated. To facilitate this process, the Administration engaged HML Public Outreach ("HML") to reach out to private parcel owner(s) to gauge their interest on a potential acquisition, land lease or similar arrangement. The Administration, along with HML staff, held an initial meeting with Charles Garage LLC, owner of the outlot parcel just north of the Bus Stop. The property is strategically located and of sufficient size to accommodate a bus bay at the Bus Stop.

On February 6, 2025, HML received a formal response from Amanda Vogel, representing Charles Garage LLC, confirming that the property owners are not willing to sell or grant an easement at this time. This decision follows multiple outreach attempts by HML over the past several months, including an initial meeting with representatives of Charles Garage LLC in mid-2024, as well as subsequent follow-ups in October 2024 and early 2025.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?

(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

CONCLUSION

Given the response from Charles Garage LLC, it is not feasible to build a bus bay at the Indian Creek Drive and 43 Street Bus Stop at this time. However, pursuant to the City's request, DTPW recently implemented modifications to County bus routes 79 and 100 which have significantly reduced the number and frequency of buses serving the Bus Stop. The approximately 60% reduction in the number of times the Bus Stop is served by buses has significantly helped reduce friction, congestion, and safety concerns at the Bus Stop. As such, as a result of DTPW's concerns and lack of support for the creation and use of bus pullout bays and the future FDOT project that will create an additional southbound right turn lane at the intersection of Indian Creek Drive and 41 Street (i.e. creating dual southbound right turn lanes), the Administration does not recommend the creation of a bus pullout bay at the Bus Stop.

The evaluation of the remaining 12 bus stops located on the west side of Indian Creek Drive/Collins Avenue between 44 Street and 63 Street will require a similar evaluation on a case-by-case basis to determine suitability, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness. Moreover, it is crucial for the City staff to continue to collaborate with the DTPW to ensure that any modifications or developments to the existing bus stops adhere to DTPW's safety and operational standards for maintaining a safe and efficient transit environment. While the strategic positioning of bus bays along the corridor is anticipated to improve traffic flow and enhance the efficiency of public transit operations, the County's expressed concerns and lack of support for the creation and use of bus bays renders the acquisition of outlots a questionable strategy.

Based on all the aforementioned challenges, the Administration Administration does not recommend the creation and use of a bus pullout bay at the bus stop at Indian Creek Drive and 43 Street.

Should the FERC recommend that the Administration explore the feasibility of acquiring outlots to construct a bus bay(s) along Collins Avenue/Indian Creek Drive, the Administration will take a resolution to the City Commission for acceptance of the FERC recommendation. Should the City Commission adopt a resolution accepting the FERC's recommendation, the Administration will proceed to approach the outlot owner(s) to explore the feasibility of acquisition.

The above information is presented to the FERC for discussion and input.

Applicable Area

Middle Beach

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s): N/A

Department

Transportation and Mobility

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner David Suarez

Condensed Title

Discuss Possible Acquisition of Outlots Along Indian Creek for Bus Pullouts