

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee Members
FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager
DATE: November 25, 2024
TITLE: DISCUSS DEDICATED BUS LANES ON WASHINGTON AVE.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Administration (“Administration”) supports and recommends advancing the feasibility studies, design, and implementation of dedicated bus lanes along Washington Avenue from 5 Street to 17 Street/Miami Beach Convention Center area, pursuant to the City’s adopted Transportation Master Plan, the Miami-Dade County Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (“SMART”) Plan, and the adopted Art Deco Cultural District (“ADCD”) Vision Plan.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the June 26, 2024 City Commission meeting, at the request of Vice-Mayor Alex Fernandez, the Mayor and City Commission (“City Commission”) referred an agenda item (C4 W) to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee (“LUSC” or “Committee”) to discuss dedicated bus lanes on Washington Avenue.

The SMART Plan is a comprehensive transit expansion strategy for Miami-Dade County (“County”), with the primary goal of providing a robust transit network with enhanced connectivity, sustainability, and service coverage. One of the key features of the SMART Plan is the Bus Express Rapid Transit (“BERT”) Network, which is designed to provide reliable and convenient express bus service, improve travel times, and reduce congestion on major corridors. Buses on the BERT Network will operate on the express lanes, managed lanes and shoulders of expressways, and dedicated bus lanes, so buses can travel at a higher speed than the adjacent vehicular traffic. Attachment A includes the BERT Network Fact Sheet.

As part of the BERT Network, three (3) routes are proposed to connect the City of Miami Beach (“City”) to the mainland (Beach Express North, Beach Express Central, and Beach Express South). In particular, the Beach Express South BERT proposes to connect the Miami Beach Convention Center to Miami Central Station in Downtown Miami via Washington Avenue, 5 Street, and the MacArthur Causeway (see pages 2 and 6 of Attachment A depicting the route alignment). Dedicated bus lanes are proposed along Washington Avenue through the repurposing of one (1) travel lane in each direction. The addition of dedicated bus lanes is consistent with the goals of the BERT Network element of the SMART Plan, which prioritize high-speed, efficient bus service along major corridors, and contribute to reducing congestion and carbon emissions in the region.

ANALYSIS

The Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (“DTPW”) prepared a traffic analysis, entitled the “Washington Avenue Dynamic Traffic Analysis” (“DTA”) to evaluate the level of vehicular traffic diversion from Washington Avenue to Collins Avenue and adjacent local streets as a result of repurposing an existing travel lane in each direction to create dedicated bus lanes along Washington Avenue. The Washington Avenue DTA has been reviewed by both the Transportation and Mobility Department and the Florida Department of Transportation

("FDOT"). Currently, FDOT has requested that DTPW conduct additional traffic analysis; and DTPW is in the process of developing the scope of services for the additional analysis necessary to complete a comprehensive DTA. While DTPW has not provided a timeline for completion of the additional analysis, DTPW will continue to work closely with FDOT and the City to ensure a thorough and accurate assessment of the traffic impacts resulting from creating dedicated bus lanes on Washington Avenue.

On February 23, 2022, the City Commission adopted Resolution 2022-32056 adopting the ADCD Vision Plan in concept and authorizing the Administration to move forward with the implementation of the ADCD Vision Plan for Ocean Drive, with the inclusion of Lummus Park. The ADCD Vision Plan proposes Washington Avenue as a direct access transit street with dedicated bus lanes in the center of the roadway, one (1) travel lane in each direction for general use traffic, and a protected bicycle lane on both sides of the street.

Pursuant to the ADCD Vision Plan, the City has programmed a future corridor improvement project along Washington Avenue ("Washington Avenue Corridor Project" or "Project") as part of the City's 2022 General Obligation Bond ("GOB") Program, allocating \$10 million for the proposed improvements. Attachment B includes a Project description. It is important to note, however, that the Project is currently underfunded and design has not been initiated. The Project is an integral component of a larger urban development plan aimed at rejuvenating the City's iconic ADCD in South Beach. The proposed transformation envisions a multifaceted approach to accommodate various transportation modes effectively. Consistent with the adopted ADCD Vision Plan, the Project will include dedicated bus lanes, raised cycle tracks on both sides of the street for cyclists' safety, and curb management on the east side, allowing for on-street parking, loading zones, ride-share spaces, and convenient pick-up/drop-off areas.

The Administration applied for grant funding under the 2024 County Incentive Grant Program to supplement the existing GOB funds in the Project and potentially advance the construction of the above-ground improvements, including the dedicated bus lanes. However, the City's application was not selected for funding. The Administration will resubmit an application for the dedicated transit lanes on Washington Avenue under the same grant program in 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

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CONCLUSION

This item is being presented to the LUSC for discussion.

Applicable Area

South 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)

Vice-Mayor Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Discuss Dedicated Bus Lanes on Washington Avenue.