

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: April 23, 2025

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION ("CITY COMMISSION") OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE, AT ITS MARCH 26, 2025 MEETING, DIRECTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO NEGOTIATE AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH AND NORTH BAY VILLAGE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A JOINT TROLLEY OPERATION, AND RETURN TO THE CITY COMMISSION WITH THE FINAL NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT FOR APPROVAL; FURTHERMORE, DIRECTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO PROCEED WITH OPTION 2 FOR A SHUTTLE PILOT SERVICE DURING CULTURE CRAWL EVENTS ("PILOT PROGRAM") OCCURRING DURING THE THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, BEGINNING IN MAY 2025 UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE CITY, AT A MINIMUM, HAS SECURED A LETTER OF COMMITMENT FROM NORTH BAY VILLAGE TO FUND THE PILOT PROGRAM.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The City Administration ("Administration") recommends that the Mayor and City Commission ("City Commission") adopt the Resolution.

### **BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

At the February 3, 2025, City Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner David Suarez, the City Commission referred an agenda item (C4 AY) to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee ("FERC" or "Committee") to discuss a possible intergovernmental agreement between the City of Miami Beach ("City") and North Bay Village to extend the Miami Beach Trolley route.

The City is currently in negotiations with three (3) selected vendors to secure a contract for a new citywide municipal transit circulator service. The goal of this procurement process is to enhance transit connectivity and mobility for residents and visitors while ensuring cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency. The Administration is aiming to finalize negotiations, select a vendor, and present a negotiated draft agreement to the FERC for review and approval within the next 60 days. Following a favorable recommendation by FERC, the agreement will be presented to the City Commission for consideration and approval.

At this time, due to the ongoing procurement process and the pending selection of a vendor and vehicle type/technology, the City does not have an anticipated timeline for launching the new service. Any proposed changes to the current trolley routes, including a potential extension of the North Beach Trolley Loop to serve North Bay Village, will be contingent upon the execution of a contract with the selected vendor and the launch of the new municipal transit circulator service.

On February 19, 2025, the Administration met with the North Bay Village Mayor and City Manager to discuss the potential extension of the Miami Beach Trolley into North Bay Village. The

discussion focused on the feasibility of extending the North Beach Trolley Loop for approximately two (2) miles to serve three (3) stops along the 79 Street Causeway in North Bay Village. During the discussion, there was consensus that a pilot program should be explored to assess demand and feasibility before considering implementing a permanent extension.

A potential pilot extension of the existing Miami Beach Culture Crawl service was proffered. The Culture Crawl is a monthly event occurring on the third Thursday of each month from October through July. This free event allows locals and visitors to explore Miami Beach's cultural institutions, including museums, music performances, and art exhibits, while utilizing public transit to navigate the area. At the conclusion of the meeting, the City and North Bay Village agreed to explore the feasibility of a pilot program and reconvene to discuss next steps.

At the March 26, 2025, FERC meeting, the Committee discussed this item and recommended to proceed to negotiate an intergovernmental agreement with North Bay Village for the implementation of a joint trolley operation and return to the City Commission with the final negotiated agreement for approval. Furthermore, the Committee expressed support for Option 2, described in the below Analysis section of this Committee Memorandum, consisting of a shuttle pilot service during Culture Crawl events to obtain ridership data, determine operational efficiency, and receive community feedback.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Administration evaluated the following two (2) potential options, as a pilot program, to extend transit service into and serve the North Bay Village community:

### **Option 1: Potential Pilot Extension of the North Beach Trolley Loop**

Before determining the feasibility of extending the North Beach Loop into North Bay Village, it is important to consider the potential benefits and challenges of such an expansion:

#### **Pros:**

- The extension of the North Beach Loop would provide a direct transit link between North Beach and North Bay Village, improving regional mobility for residents and visitors between the two cities.
- A well-planned extension could attract new riders from North Bay Village, strengthening overall transit usage and helping to reduce traffic congestion.

#### **Cons:**

- Extending the existing North Beach Loop without adding an additional vehicle would increase headways, travel time, and wait times for current passengers.
- The current North Beach Loop already faces operational inefficiencies given its reduced level of service frequency, and an approximate two (2) mile extension would exacerbate delays unless route alignment/operational changes are implemented to mitigate the increased route length and passenger wait times.

Notwithstanding, should the City Commission recommend proceeding with an extension of the North Beach Loop into North Bay Village, the Administration would need to first address the existing operational inefficiencies within the North Beach Loop to avoid exacerbating current operational issues.

The existing North Beach Loop (Attachment A) operates with three (3) vehicles and currently experiences operational inefficiencies due to its circuitous alignment. For example, residents traveling to Publix at 69 Street from most parts of North Beach must first travel through Normandy Isle, significantly increasing their travel time. Similarly, Normandy Isle residents returning from Publix must travel through North Beach before reaching their destination.

If the current North Beach Loop were extended into North Bay Village without addressing these route operational issues, the additional route mileage and increased service area would further strain the service, resulting in longer passenger wait times and reduced reliability for both current and new riders. To mitigate the current operational challenges and service inefficiencies, independent of a potential extension of service into North Bay Village, the Administration is planning to realign the North Beach Loop via a bifurcation of the route into two (2) separate but interconnecting loops - the East-West Loop and the North-South Loop (Attachment B):

- East-West Loop: This loop would focus on serving Normandy Isle, offering more direct and efficient service without unnecessary detours. It would ensure quicker trips to key destinations such as Publix without traversing around North Beach.
- North-South Loop: This loop would operate between 65 Street and 85 Street, providing more direct north-south connectivity for passengers.

To implement this planned route realignment, the current fleet of three (3) trolley vehicles would be redistributed with one (1) vehicle dedicated to the East-West Loop and two (2) vehicles dedicated to the North-South Loop to maintain the desired service frequency of approximately 20 minutes. Additionally, to support a potential service extension into North Bay Village, an additional trolley vehicle would need to be dedicated to the East-West Loop to ensure efficient service to new stops while maintaining reasonable frequency of service.

Given the status of the ongoing procurement for the new municipal transit circulator service, as well as the potential impact to the currently strained frequency of service, a long-term service extension into North Bay Village should only be considered as part of the forthcoming municipal transit circulator service, and not the current trolley service. Therefore, the Administration does not recommend Option 1 at this time.

#### Option 2: Potential New Shuttle Pilot Service During Culture Crawl Events

On March 6, 2025, the Transportation and Mobility Department met with the Tourism and Culture Department to discuss the feasibility of a potential extension of the Miami Beach Culture Crawl event into North Bay Village. The Tourism and Culture Department confirmed that three (3) buses are currently utilized for the Miami Beach Culture Crawl service; however, the existing Culture Crawl service operates solely within South Beach and does not extend to North Beach. An extension of the South Beach Culture Crawl service to North Bay Village was determined to not be feasible due to logistical, operational, and budgetary constraints.

However, several events occur in North Beach concurrently with the Miami Beach Culture Crawl in South Beach, including the “North Beach Social” event at Bandshell Park and activities hosted by the Normandy Fountain Business Association. Given these activations in North Beach, a potential pilot program could consist of a new shuttle service connecting North Beach and North Bay Village while Culture Crawl is occurring in South Beach.

Based on City staff’s preliminary assessment, it is anticipated that two (2) to three (3) additional vehicles will be required to connect North Bay Village to North Beach while providing the desired frequency of service during Culture Crawl events. Additional coordination with North Bay Village will be necessary to refine the pilot parameters, determine stop locations, and establish an implementation and funding plan as part of an Intergovernmental Agreement.

The success of the pilot program would be assessed based on ridership, operational efficiency, and user feedback. If successful, further discussions could explore the possibility of integrating a long-term service extension into North Bay Village, subject to approval from the FERC and the City Commission, as part of the forthcoming municipal transit circulator service contract.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Option 1: To maintain the current headways on the North Beach Trolley Loop while accommodating a potential two (2) mile extension into North Bay Village, at least one (1) additional vehicle would be required. At the current rate of \$72.49 per service hour for the North Beach Loop, this would result in an estimated additional cost of approximately \$430,000 per year.

Option 2: Based on the current Culture Crawl model, the estimated cost to operate three (3) buses for four (4) hours each, at \$80/service hour, is approximately \$960 per Culture Crawl event. The final negotiated cost would depend on the number of vehicles in service, frequency of service, and hours of service. It is anticipated that North Bay Village would provide the necessary funding to implement this option as a pilot program.

### **Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?**

(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

**If applicable, 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**

The Administration remains committed to collaborating with neighboring communities to enhance regional transit connectivity while ensuring a reliable, efficient, and sustainable citywide trolley service to residents, visitors, and workforce. The Transportation and Mobility Department staff conducted a preliminary evaluation of two (2) potential options to extend transit service for approximately two (2) miles into North Bay Village as a pilot program.

Option 1 consists of a potential extension of the North Beach Trolley Loop. Given the status of the ongoing procurement for the new municipal transit circulator service, as well as the potential impacts (operational and financial) of extending the currently constrained North Beach Trolley Loop, an extension of the North Beach Loop into North Bay Village is not recommended at this time and should only be considered as part of the forthcoming municipal transit circulator service contract.

Option 2 consists of a potential new shuttle service operating during the monthly Culture Crawl events. Given the number of activations occurring in North Beach during Culture Crawl events in South Beach, the Administration recommends this option as a pilot program to connect to and serve the North Bay Village community and enhance transit connectivity between the two cities.

The Administration will continue working with North Bay Village to refine the pilot program scope, identify funding sources, and craft an Intergovernmental Agreement for City Commission approval. Given execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement is anticipated to take several months, in the interim, the Administration will work to secure a letter of funding commitment from North Bay Village in order to commence a pilot program during the current Culture Crawl season.

Any potential long-term service expansion into North Bay Village will be contingent upon the completion of the ongoing municipal transit circulator procurement process, execution of a contract with the selected vendor, securing adequate resources to launch the new service, and approval from the FERC and City Commission as necessary.

### **Applicable Area**

North 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 David Suarez

**Co-sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt  
Commissioner Alex Fernandez

**Condensed Title**

Accept Rec/Negotiate Intergovernmental Agmt w/ North Bay Village, Joint Trolley Operation.  
(DS/TB/AF) TR

**Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)**