

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: June 10, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS REPLACING THE DRAWBRIDGE AT 63RD STREET WITH A FLYOVER TO ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC CONGESTION.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Administration (“Administration”) recommends conducting the Phase 1 Analysis to evaluate the feasibility of raising the elevation of the 63 Street drawbridge (“Bridge”) or replacing the existing Bridge with a flyover to limit the number of openings in an effort to alleviate traffic congestion in the North Beach area.

The Administration also recommends that while the Land Use and Sustainability Committee (“LUSC” or “Committee”) evaluates the Phase 1 Analysis, it also carefully considers several critical factors that will significantly impact the Transportation Fund and General Fund budgets, beginning in Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2026:

1. The Transportation and Mobility Department’s increasing recurring operational needs, including the Municipal Transit Circulator Service to replace the current Miami Beach Trolley service, and the Citywide Water Taxi Service, both of which are currently in procurement;
2. The City’s increasing unfunded capital improvement program;
3. Long-term General Fund financial projections indicating a potential shortfall in upcoming fiscal years; and
4. The passage of Amendment 5 in November 2024, which increases the homestead exemption and further constrains the growth of taxable property values.

These considerations are essential to ensure that decisions regarding the Phase 1 Analysis align with the City’s broader long-term financial stability and strategic priorities. If the Committee recommends funding the Phase 1 Analysis, the Administration recommends it be considered as part of the FY 2026 budget process.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the December 11, 2024, City Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt, the Mayor and City Commission (“City Commission”) referred an agenda item (C4 L) to the LUSC to discuss replacing the existing drawbridge at 63 Street with a flyover to alleviate traffic congestion.

The Bridge is a double-leaf bascule bridge with an 11-foot vertical clearance over the Indian Creek waterway in the City of Miami Beach (“City”). The Bridge opening causes severe traffic congestion in the area on a regular basis, with no alternative for area residents and visitors. Although located within the City’s geographic boundary, the Bridge is owned and maintained by the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) which manages a contract with a third-party provider for bridge tender services. In addition, the United States Coast Guard (“USCG”) regulates the bridge opening schedule per the United States Code.

Historically, the configuration of the intersection at 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive consisted of both the existing Bridge on 63 Street (over the Indian Creek waterway) and a grade-separated one (1)-lane flyover structure east of the Bridge (but not over the Indian Creek waterway), which carried eastbound vehicular traffic from 63 Street to northbound Indian Creek Drive (Attachment). It is important to note that over time the flyover became obsolete and no longer complied with FDOT's roadway design standards, which contributed to numerous safety and operational issues. In particular, the flyover's low vertical clearance over Indian Creek Drive prevented many high vehicles from traversing beneath it, resulting in numerous large trucks getting wedged underneath the flyover.

In January 1999, to address the outstanding safety and operational issues associated with the flyover's low clearance, FDOT completed a report titled "63 Street at Indian Creek Drive Intersection, Final Preliminary Analysis, Evaluation, and Recommendation Report" ("January 1999 Report") to identify potential safety and traffic level of service ("LOS") operational improvements to the intersection of 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive. Several options were evaluated for the intersection as part of the January 1999 Report, including a no-build option and two (2) geometric reconfiguration/reconstruction alternatives. Alternative 1 consisted of removing the substandard flyover and reconstructing a new at-grade intersection; and Alternative 2 consisted of replacing the low flyover structure with a new flyover to provide fourteen (14) feet of vertical clearance over Indian Creek Drive. The January 1999 Report did not address the Bridge. A significant constraint adhered to throughout the alternatives analysis was that no appreciable right-of-way acquisition would be considered as it would render the project unfeasible. The January 1999 Report recommended Alternative 1 for construction, as it provided an improved LOS at the intersection. Specifically, the recommended improvements consisted of demolishing the substandard flyover and reconstructing a new at-grade intersection with three (3) left turn lanes for vehicles traveling eastbound on 63 Street to access northbound Indian Creek Drive, and the two (2) southbound free-flow right turn lanes on Indian Creek Drive to access westbound 63 Street would remain.

In March 1999, FDOT completed a Final Supplemental Report which expanded on the January 1999 Report and analyzed the pedestrian access and landscaping options on 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive. Based upon an in-depth review of the traffic operations, landscaping opportunities, and enhanced pedestrian access, Alternative 1A (premised on the geometric improvements recommended as part of Alternative 1 in the January 1999 Report) was recommended for construction as it would improve the LOS at the intersection, provide greater landscaping opportunities, and improve pedestrian access to Brittany Bay Park.

In April 2000, FDOT completed a subsequent traffic study which reaffirmed the traffic safety and operational benefits associated with the recommended Alternative 1 in the January 1999 Report consisting of the removal of the substandard flyover and construction of a new at-grade intersection. Subsequently, FDOT removed the 63 Street flyover in 2006.

On March 27, 2023, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 2023-32538, requesting the Administration conduct a study relating to the feasibility of a potential flyover project at 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive, to allow the City Commission to determine whether to urge FDOT to develop and approve a new flyover project, in an effort to ease traffic congestion in the area.

In May 2024, the Transportation and Mobility Department completed a draft traffic analysis to evaluate the impacts to both vehicular and marine traffic of a potential modification of the current Bridge schedule to reduce the number of openings during the weekday non-peak/non-restricted hours from every half hour to hourly openings (only if there is demand) as well as a weekend schedule change to help reduce traffic congestion in the area. The Administration transmitted the draft traffic analysis via letter to the FDOT and the USCG for review. In December 2024, the USCG responded via letter denying the City's request. However, the USCG advised that it would support a modification to the weekday and weekend schedules from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. consisting of removing the current on-demand schedule to opening every half-hour (only if there

is demand). This proposed modification is expected to reduce the number of openings and improve traffic flow in the area during the weekday and weekend evening hours.

ANALYSIS

The Transportation and Mobility Department reached out to one of the City's pre-qualified rotational transportation consultants to prepare a scope of services and price proposal to conduct a two-phase analysis to evaluate the feasibility of the following two (2) alternatives: 1) raising the elevation of the Bridge (while maintaining the 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive intersection at-grade); and 2) replacing the Bridge with a new flyover structure. The Phase 1 Analysis would consist of a high-level analysis to gain a broad understanding of traffic flow and patterns and determine the geometric impact that a potential flyover - in lieu of the existing at-grade intersection - would have on the neighboring community, and whether right-of-way acquisition would be required. Additionally, the Phase 1 Analysis would evaluate the potential replacement of the Bridge with a new drawbridge constructed at a higher elevation than the current structure, with the objective of reducing the frequency of the Bridge openings by accommodating a greater number of vessels that can pass underneath without requiring the Bridge to open, based on an assessment of average vessel heights. The Phase 2 Analysis would consist of a more detailed examination and would include preparation of concept plans and cost estimates for design and construction of the recommended alternative from the Phase 1 Analysis.

It is important to note that any new Bridge or flyover structure shall meet a minimum clearance of 12 feet above Mean High Water (MHW) per the 2018 Florida Design Manual (FDM) section 260.8.1. The flyover bridge option is anticipated to have major impacts (physical and visual) to Allison Island, and may require substantial right-of-way acquisition, major environmental studies, and multiple conflicts with existing utilities.

At the February 20, 2025 LUSC meeting, the Committee briefly discussed this item (Item 21) and continued the discussion to the May 8, 2025 LUSC meeting.

This discussion item (Item 18) was not reached during the May 8, 2025 LUSC meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Phase 1 Analysis: The estimated cost for a high-level feasibility analysis to explore two (2) alternatives: 1) raising the elevation of the Bridge (while maintaining the 63 Street and Indian Creek Drive intersection at-grade); and 2) replacing the Bridge with a flyover structure would be approximately \$225,000.

Phase 2 Analysis: The estimated cost for a comprehensive feasibility study to further refine the recommended alternative from the Phase 1 Analysis would be approximately \$410,000.

At this time, funding for a feasibility analysis has not been identified or budgeted in the Transportation and Mobility Department's FY 2025 Operating Budget. Should the LUSC recommend that the Administration move forward with conducting an analysis to explore the feasibility of either the potential raising of the elevation of the Bridge or the potential replacement of the Bridge with a flyover structure, it may be prudent for the City Commission to prioritize this initiative within the FY 2026 budget development process.

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

The Administration recommends conducting a Phase 1 Analysis, subject to funding availability, to be reviewed and approved by FDOT and USCG, to evaluate the feasibility of either raising the Bridge to a higher elevation or replacing the Bridge with a new flyover structure to ease traffic congestion in the area. The funding for the Analysis should be considered as part of the FY 26 budget development process.

Applicable Area

Citywide

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 Tanya K. Bhatt

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Discuss Replacing Drawbridge at 63rd St with Flyover to Alleviate Traffic Congestion.