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[Community Redevelopment Area](#)

Downtown traffic study due Dec. 20

Roads and bridges of future envisioned

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No aspirin at rush hour.

That's the hope, anyway, with the soon-to-be-released Community Redevelopment Area traffic study, which encompasses 18 miles of major roadways and the headache-inducing traffic in the southeastern Cape.

The study aims to enhance traffic circulation and safety, mobility of pedestrians, economic growth, parking distribution and to reduce delays in the downtown area.

Its release has been put on hold for review twice since it was green-lighted in May 2005, but the final draft is expected to be finished Dec. 20 and sent to council for approval sometime next month.

"It's a proactive approach to anticipated traffic flows and volumes," Richard Orth, project manager at the CRA, said. "The idea is to come up with as many different ideas as we can on how to progress into the next 30 years. As problems are identified, we have this study we can refer to to implement different recommendations."

Keeping in mind the potential growth is crucial, Orth said. The city's population is at 160,000 and is expected to reach nearly 400,000 by the time it is built out later this century.

A total of 83 recommendations are proposed. The effort is a collaboration between the city, the CRA and the Lee County Department of Transportation. Each was involved in reviewing the proposals of consultants at Gray-Calhoun & Associates.

It's broken down into short-term improvements, mid-term improvements and long-term improvements that focus mainly near the area surrounding the intersection of Cape Coral Parkway and Del Prado Boulevard.

One of the plans includes making the four-lane section of Cape Coral Parkway into six lanes by using the parking areas as right-turn only lanes, with parking an option in off-peak hours. There is also the possibility of widening the Cape Coral Bridge from four lanes to eight, creating several roundabouts, installing and uninstalling traffic lights and building a two-lane flyover bridge that begins south of S.E. 46th Lane and ends west of the Cape Coral Bridge.



Terry Allen Williams/news-press.com

A driver, immersed in rush hour traffic, waits to turn left from Del Prado Boulevard onto Cape Coral Parkway Wednesday around 6 p.m. The Cape Downtown Redevelopment Agency has almost completed a traffic study that is nearly two years in the works. The goal is to "find a balance between creating a pedestrian-friendly area while meeting the traffic demands of the high volume roadways of Cape Coral Parkway and Del Prado Boulevard."

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PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Short term

(Would begin next year)

A sampling of the 39 short-term improvements proposed by the consultant as part of the CRA traffic study:

- Change the four-lane section of Cape Coral Parkway to six lanes by using the outside parking lane/right turn lane. Option of maintaining on-street parking during the off-peak hours.
- Benefit: Reduces delays
- Change the two eastbound left-turn lanes to one at Cape Coral Parkway and Coronado Parkway. Remove the left-only markings and signs.
- Benefit: reduces overall delays

Mid-term

(Proposed for 2015)

A sampling of the 38 mid-term improvements proposed by the consultant as part of the CRA traffic study:

- Widen S.E. 46th Lane from Coronado to S.E. 17th Place from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane roadway with turns at significant intersections.
- Benefit: Provide additional traffic capacity for improved circulation.
- Remove traffic signal on Del Prado Boulevard at S.E. 47th Terrace and modify the intersection for a

City traffic engineer Rashad Hanbali has overseen the project since its inception, and said the short-term ideas could be ushered into the design phase as soon as next year upon council approval.

The consultant sought public contribution during the course of the study with 1,335 residents responding to a survey released in January and more than 100 residents showing up at an informational session in February.

"We encouraged public input during the course of study," Hanbali said. "And input received from the public was forwarded to the study consultant to include for consideration in the analysis."

Hanbali stressed the importance of the research in evaluating ideas through an engineering process in order for the ideas to become warranted for a design and implementation.

"In order for the study to have a low risk to work, it has to go through sound technical analysis and evaluation prior to design," Hanbali said. "If the study is just based on general ideas, then there is no guarantee the changes would help the situation."

Some of the proposals were recently presented at the Nov. 13 committee of the whole meeting.

Hanbali said the timeline for the improvements are as follows:

- Short-term improvements would begin next year.
- Mid-term improvements would begin in 2015.
- Long-term improvements would begin by 2030.

The schedule could be quicker, though, depending on the allocation of funding and how quickly the changes are approved.

Anthony Farina, 57, has lived in the southwest Cape for eight years, and said he is tired of the traffic.

"The morning commute is getting worse every year," Farina said. "Sometimes it takes 45 minutes to cross the bridge, and if something happens on the bridge you might as well just go home for a few hours."

But he hopes he'll see some positive results soon.

"I wish they'd take a very good look at it and plan very carefully, because once you put something up there, you can't go back and change your mind," he said. "No matter what you do, you're not really going to please everybody, but they have to do something because it's not getting any better."

The cost of the study — \$350,000 — has stayed on target, Hanbali said, with the CRA contributing 30 percent and LCDOT contributing \$60,000 and the city the remainder.

southbound directional opening.

- Benefit: Improves traffic flow on Del Prado and reduces vehicle conflicts associated with close proximity of signals.
- Add parking structures to replace parking lot spaces and utilize Club Square for shops and pedestrian use only (with the option of extending S.E. 47th Street through Club Square and installing a roundabout at S.E. 10th and S.E. 47th Street).
- Benefit: Provides for a Downtown Center.

Long-term

(Proposed for 2030)

Six proposed long-term improvements:

- Extend S.E. 46th Lane between Santa Barbara and S.E. 6th Avenue as a four-lane roadway.
- Benefit: Provide east-west connection to provide additional capacity and improve traffic circulation.
- Provide for two eastbound right-turn lanes onto Del Prado Boulevard from S.E. 46th Lane.
- Benefit: Additional capacity needed for right-turn volume onto the flyover.
- Widen the Cape Coral Bridge from four lanes to eight.
- Benefit: Provide additional traffic capacity due to traffic growth.
- Add a two-lane, left-turn flyover bridge on Del Prado that begins south of S.E. 46th Lane and ends west of the Cape Coral Bridge.
- Benefit: Reduce traffic delays and crashes associated with congested area.
- Reinstall the signal at Del Prado at S.E. 47th Terrace in conjunction with reduced volumes on Del Prado due to the left-turn flyover.
- Benefit: Improves circulation for downtown traffic
- Investigate locations for an additional bridge across the Caloosahatchee River.
- Benefit: Reduce delays and conflicts in the study area.

*For more information, visit:
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