

TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH — 2008 PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

Application #: 2008-08-TEXT

Description: Delete Policy 7-H-3 regarding left-turns on Estero Boulevard as northbound traffic passes Times Square

Pages to be changed: Comprehensive Plan Pages 7-23 and 7-32 (proposed changes are attached)

Discussion in E/A Report (adopted on Jan 16 '07): From Page 23: “EVALUATION OF POLICY 7-H-3: Eliminating left turns for northbound traffic headed toward Lynn Hall Park would require those vehicles to instead travel north on Crescent Street, under the Sky Bridge, and south on Old San Carlos to reach their destinations. Unfamiliar drivers who miss the turn at Crescent Street would have no choice but to leave the island then circle back and return. These difficulties have to be balanced with any minor improvements in traffic flow that would occur by eliminating this left turn. As described beginning on page 30 [of E/A Report], new alternatives have been examined for this area that are more promising than the simple closure of the turn lane as described in Policy 7-H-3.”

Action by LPA: During a public hearing on May 20, 2008, the LPA recommended that the Town Council approve deletions to the narrative and to delete Policy 7-H-3 of the Transportation Element as presented in this report. ~~The minutes of the public hearing are attached.~~

Action by Town Council: During a public hearing on November 17, 2008, the Town Council voted unanimously to transmit this amendment for state review.

DCA Objection: None

DCA Recommendation: None

Response to DCA: N/A

Proposed Final Action: The Town Council should adopt the transmitted amendment, as described above, as part of Ordinance 09-03.

Final Action: The Town Council adopted this amendment on August 17, 2009, as part of Ordinance 09-03. (Text shown in red is new or has changed since the initial transmittal of this amendment in January 2009.)

5. Experiment Widely

Although many resort communities have severe traffic problems, the exact nature of the problems can differ greatly. Although Lee County and Florida DOT have tried to address traffic problems at Fort Myers Beach, their attention is inevitably divided across their entire jurisdiction. The Town of Fort Myers Beach needs to constantly search for innovative solutions to long-standing problems and to new problems as they develop.

Many traffic engineering solutions can be tried as closely monitored experiments. The town can be a catalyst for those experiments, and may wish to retain a creative traffic engineer to provide advice on a continuing basis. This would be especially helpful if the town experiments with complex changes such as reversible lanes (see pages 7-A-35 to 7-A-39 of Appendix A).

An official spirit of experimentation will allow creative ideas to be tested without any stigma of failure if they prove unpopular or unproductive. The following list of experiments and data needs has been compiled from citizen comments during the preparation of this plan:

- Signalized pedestrian crossing at Times Square: This important pedestrian crossing was recently provided with a full traffic signal, actuated by pedestrian push-buttons. Since Estero Boulevard has only two lanes here, and traffic often moves slowly around the bend, pedestrians often tire of waiting for the light to change and cross when they see a gap in traffic. Motorists are then forced to stop for no apparent purpose. This signal might operate better as a continuously flashing yellow, especially if pedestrians had a more protected refuge between the lanes. If such an experiment failed to allow pedestrian crossings at an acceptable level of safety, a pedestrian overpass may be able to reduce the number of pedestrians in the crosswalk without discouraging foot traffic in this highly congested area.
- San Carlos Boulevard approach to the Matanzas Pass Sky Bridge: The widening of San Carlos Boulevard from the mainland has created severe problems on the approach to the sky bridge where its five lanes are reduced to two lanes. Initial experiments have already been tried to discourage drivers from using side streets on San Carlos Island to get ahead of the line of cars waiting to enter the bridge. Another problem is cars that pass the waiting line and then take advantage of polite tourists by slipping in at the front of the line, greatly lengthening the wait for all other drivers. Creative experimentation is certainly called for here.
- ~~Left-turns from Estero Boulevard onto Fifth Street~~: ~~Just to the north of the crosswalk, a left-turn lane is provided for drivers headed for Lynn Hall Park or the north end of the island. This is convenient for those drivers but could be harmful if these turns interfere with traffic flow off the bridge or if they interfere with northbound traffic on Estero Boulevard. A 1994 traffic study for Lee County strongly recommended closing off this turn lane and directing northbound drivers across Crescent Street and under the bridge at First or Second Streets to reach the north end of the island. This detour has never been tried but has the potential to improve traffic flow.~~
- Variable message signs: These signs were discussed earlier as an ideal way to advise motorists of congestion delays and available parking. The signs themselves and their data-collection devices will require creative planning and engineering to fulfill their promise.
- Origin/destination data: The December 1993 origin/destination survey was a good source of data but

traffic flow at Fort Myers Beach. Some potential improvements are described in the following policies.

- POLICY 7-H- 1 **PEDESTRIAN OVERPASSES:** Although pedestrian overpasses are often ignored by pedestrians, an overpass providing a panoramic view of the Gulf might be attractive enough to reduce at-grade crossings at Times Square without discouraging foot traffic in this highly congested area. Even without an overpass, the pedestrian-actuated stop light may be replaceable with a flashing caution light to minimize effects of the crossing on traffic flow.
- POLICY 7-H- 2 **SAN CARLOS BOULEVARD:** The five-laning of San Carlos Boulevard has created severe problems near the approach to the Sky Bridge. Creative experiments are needed to discourage drivers from using the right-hand lane, or side streets on San Carlos Island, to bypass the line of cars waiting to enter the bridge.
- POLICY 7-H- 3 ~~**RESERVED LEFT-TURNS AT TIMES SQUARE:**~~ Northbound traffic headed for Lynn Hall Park now turns left just past Times Square. ~~These turns could interfere with traffic flow on Estero Boulevard; if so, alternatives using Crescent Street should be considered.~~
- POLICY 7-H- 4 **VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS:** These signs could advise motorists of congestion delays as well as available parking. The town should urge the detailed study of this concept by Lee County, FDOT, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- POLICY 7-H- 5 **ORIGIN/DESTINATION DATA:** Better data is needed on the origins and destinations of motorists during the peak

season, and the town supports the MPO's efforts to obtain this data.

- POLICY 7-H- 6 **TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT:** This part of a congestion avoidance strategy reduces the number of single-occupant vehicles during peak traffic periods, either by eliminating some trips completely, or by accommodating existing trips in fewer vehicles, or by moving some trips before or after the most congested periods. This strategy may alleviate peak-season traffic congestion if implemented aggressively in cooperation with area businesses.
- POLICY 7-H- 7 **DELIVERY VEHICLES:** To avoid interference with traffic and pedestrian flow, the town shall develop a strategy to limit commercial deliveries during peak traffic periods.
- POLICY 7-H- 8 **FLOODING:** During periods of minor flooding, the town shall monitor the performance of roadside drainage systems on and off Estero Island to identify areas where an evacuation could be prematurely halted.
- POLICY 7-H- 9 **PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE:** The town may wish to retain a creative traffic engineer to provide advice on these experiments on a continuing basis.
- POLICY 7-H- 10 **CONNECTIONS TO ESTERO BOULEVARD:** An excessive number of streets and driveways have direct access to Estero Boulevard, reducing its ability to handle peak-season traffic. The town shall take advantage of any suitable opportunities to consolidate street connections into fewer access points onto Estero Boulevard.