Strategies for Improving Access to and Traffic Circulation within the Town of Fort Myers Beach

SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared for:

The Town of Fort Myers Beach

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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Fort Myers Beach is one of Lee County's major assets. Home to 6,100 residents year round, the Town is also a popular destination with tourists and Lee County residents alike. The Town hosts thousands of visitors each month, with particularly intense activity during the winter months, the traditional "season" in Southwest Florida. As with many island communities, access to the Town and travel within it can be challenging, particularly during the winter tourist season.

In addition to the problems facing any community in meeting its transportation needs, the Town of Fort Myers Beach faces additional issues, many of which relate to its island community status. Physical space upon which to place new transportation facilities or upgrade existing facilities is limited, many travelers are unfamiliar with the area, and there is a high volume of bicycles and pedestrians. Due to the many tourist related businesses in the Town, numerous roadway access points are needed. Additionally, the Town's major roadway, Estero Boulevard, serves as a through route for north/south travel.

The goal of any transportation access and internal circulation program the Town might undertake is to increase access to the Town and its businesses and recreational opportunities while reducing traffic congestion in and around the Town. These two seemingly conflicting goals will require innovative approaches if they are both to be achieved.

Addressing these issues can be broken done into three major objectives:

- Reduction of peak demand periods by providing incentives to drivers to travel during periods of less demand.
- Interception or capture of automobile trips prior to their reaching the Town and provision of an alternative means of access.
- Transfer of demand for through trips to alternative facilities better able to accommodate them.

In the Spring of 2001, the Town retained CRSPE, Inc. to investigate possibilities for addressing these objectives as well as make a determination of the revenue impact on the Lee County economy from tourism on Fort Myers Beach. CRSPE, Inc. enlisted the services of Mohsen Salehi, AICP, and Research Data Services, Inc. to assist in developing concepts to meet the above objectives.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the study is straightforward and includes four basic steps:

- Design a System Able to Accommodate the Total Demand
- Develop Costs for the System
- Develop Funding Options
- Assess Public Attitudes Towards Options

For the Town of Fort Myers Beach, the options for accommodating the demand for travel to the Beach are limited. Due to the relatively small land area and environmental issues, options for additional routes to or on the island are not practical, and were therefore quickly eliminated. Further, due to limited right-of-way on Estero Boulevard, and the high financial and social costs of obtaining additional right-of-way, significant widening of Estero Boulevard is also not considered practical.

Given the limitations on providing additional capacity for automobile traffic, options involving other modes, particularly transit held the most likely option for producing a system that could accommodate the demand. Thus the study focused on the provision of significant additional transit capacity and the management of automobile travel demand.

REVENUE IMPACT OF FORT MYERS BEACH TOURISM

In a study of this type, understanding the magnitude of the issues involved can provide insight into the level of solution that should reasonably be considered. For this reason, an analysis of the revenue impact of Fort Myers Beach tourism on the Lee County economy was investigated. Research Data Services, Inc., an economic research firm with a long history of working in Lee County, was selected to conduct this analysis under the direction of Walter Klages, Ph.D.

Based on the analysis conducted by Research Data Services, direct expenditures in the Town of Fort Myers Beach related to visitors is $194,700,000 per year. In addition to direct expenditures, additional impact is generated as expenditures that were made as a result of these initial expenditures. When the multiplying effect is included, the revenue impact of Fort Myers Beach tourism on the Lee County economy climbs to $327,000,000 per year.

It should be noted that this is not the entire revenue impact of the Town of Fort Myers Beach. The expenditures of residents of Lee County visiting Fort Myers Beach represent expenditures that were generated within the County, these were not included in Research Data Services' calculations. Further the spending of seasonal residents includes only the initial expenditures of $26.48 made by those residents. The $26.48 per seasonal resident per year reflected in the research is obviously far less than the total expenditure per seasonal resident during their stay.

The revenue impact of Fort Myers Beach on the Lee County economy is clearly significant. Research Data Services' report is included in its entirety as Appendix A to this report.

RECOMMENDED SYSTEM

Throughout the study, there was consistent agreement that demand for access to Fort Myers Beach, at least at its present level, should be accommodated. There was little, if any, sentiment that the Town should be reserved for "locals only". While there is little

doubt that the Town welcomes visitors, a separation can clearly be made between welcoming the visitor and accommodating his/her automobile on the Town's limited roadway infrastructure and storing the vehicle when not in use in the limited space available on the Island.

Intercepting automobile trips destined to the Town outside of Town limits and then transporting them into the Town in a high occupancy vehicle such as a trolley or bus, can significantly reduce demand on the Town's roadway network. However, providing a high level of service on a system of this type is vital to its success. Drivers do not easily decide to take modes of travel other than private automobiles. One only has to observe the long delays drivers currently endure traveling to and from the Town to validate this.

A high level of service requires several components. These include:

- Convenient, Reliable and Safe Parking at the Remote Location
- Short Headways (time between trolleys/buses)
- Preferential Treatment for Trolleys/Busses
- Good Access Points in the Town
- Reasonable Price
- Cargo Space for Beach Accessories

Development of a system such as this begins with development of reasonable remote parking sites. For the Town of Fort Myers Beach, locations would likely be in the vicinity of the Summerlin Road/San Carlos Boulevard intersection. Transportation from the remote parking to the town would have to arrive frequently. How frequently would depend on demand, however public input on acceptable waits should be solicited. For purposes of this study, headways (time between transit vehicles) of a minimum of ten to a maximum of twenty minutes were assumed.

Preferential treatment for the trolleys/busses accessing the Town will be needed to both attract and retain riders. There are several types of preferential treatment that might be possible. Preferential treatment should include priority lanes or other techniques to allow the trolley/bus to avoid traffic queues. While right-of-way to construct new lanes for priority use would be difficult to obtain, innovative use of the existing two-way left turn lane on San Carlos Boulevard may be a possibility. Additionally, a trolley/bus priority lane could possibly be established across the bridge.

Reliable information on trolley arrivals is likely to play a key role in the acceptability of transit as an alternative to automotive travel. New technologies, such as the NextBus system (www.nextbus.com) are available that can provide real time information to transit users. This real time information significantly increases the ability of a potential transit patron to reliably make decisions regarding transit travel, thereby significantly increasing the desirability of the mode when compared with existing conditions.

Given the island nature of the Town, the possibility of some type of ferry service should also be considered. Ferry service by itself is not likely to be able to provide all new capacity necessary to meet the demand for access to and circulation within the Town, and should be considered as an adjunct to, rather than a replacement of, more traditional transit service. Therefore, for purposes of this study, ferry service was included only to the extent necessary to determine if there were any apparent reasons for eliminating it from further consideration.

In terms of a ferry that would provide service for both passengers and their vehicles, the inherent limitation in ferry capacity, particularly relative to cost, is likely to be sufficient to eliminate it from further consideration. Further, finding acceptable loading and unloading areas is likely to be problematic. However, passenger only ferry service may serve a useful function in an overall transportation solution for the Town, and should be considered in further study. In addition to the natural appeal of ferry service in an island setting, the ability of a water-borne service to bypass congested areas of the island is a positive. Finally, during the study effort no obvious financial, environmental, or administrative block to ferry implementation was found.

COSTS

Costs for transportation improvements are of two different types, operating costs and capital costs. If bonding or other financing techniques are used, financing costs also are incurred, however, these are ancillary to the capital costs and, while included where appropriate, strategies to minimize these costs are not directly analyzed in this study.

Summaries of costs are presented in this section to allow for an overview of projected operating and capital costs to be developed. Details of cost development and assumptions are found in Appendix B.

Operating Costs

Operating costs are the consumable costs associated with the provision of a service or facility. These costs routinely include labor costs, consumable materials, such as fuel, and depreciation costs. Primary operating costs identified include trolley/transit-operating costs, NextBus (or equivalent), parking operation costs (assuming provision of 750 off-island parking spaces), roadway operating and maintenance costs, and a violation enforcement system for transit priority on San Carlos Boulevard.[1]

Operating costs for the trolley/transit system are based on LeeTran's operating experience in Lee County. Currently, LeeTran uses a rate of $42.66 per hour to project the non-capital cost of operation. This cost was applied to the number of trolley hours required to

[1] It should be noted that, if tolls were used, there would be an operating cost associated with toll collection. For purposes of this report, collection costs have been included on a per transaction basis based on Lee County experience at the Sanibel Toll Facility. Toll revenues presented herein represent projected net revenue after collection costs.

provide short headway (10 to 20 minutes) service for the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Differences between seasonal and non-seasonal conditions were taken into account. Annual operating costs for the trolley system have been calculated as $2.8 million.
NextBus operating costs were developed based on discussions with NextBus regarding system-operating costs. The costs were developed based on a five-year lease of the system. After the initial five-year period, costs could move up or down depending on the technology then available and the Town's desires regarding the NextBus system. For purposes of this study, operating costs of $100,000 annually have been assumed.

Parking operational costs include costs required for the operation and maintenance of the parking facility. For purposes of this study, a rate of $200 per year per space was chosen based on data from the Urban Land Institute. This results in an annual operating cost of $150,000.

Roadway operating and maintenance costs will vary depending on facility ownership arrangements that may be made as part of an overall program to address the Town's traffic issues. The majority of Estero Boulevard is currently under County maintenance and there is no reason to assume for purposes of this study that funding sources currently available for Estero Boulevard maintenance would change. Therefore, no additional costs have been included. Costs for enhancements to Estero Boulevard, such as are contemplated in the Town's Streetscape program, are discussed as capital improvement costs in the following section.

The Florida Department of Transportation is currently responsible for maintenance of San Carlos Boulevard and the Matanzas Pass Bridge. Both facilities are in good repair, and transfer of the facilities to County or Town ownership is possible. While it is difficult to predict what the terms of the transfer would be, if a transfer to the Town were done, it is probable that maintenance costs will transfer to the Town. For study purposes, maintenance costs have been projected as $100,000 annually.

The cost for a violation enforcement system (VES) for a possible trolley/transit lane on Estero Boulevard has been projected for study purposes at $100,000. Several issues potentially impact this projection. First, it is possible that the VES system will be self-funding through fine collection. In fact, a reasonable way to develop enforcement levels is to balance enforcement revenues with costs. Second, VES costs will vary based on the ability of the Town to work with Lee County in its enforcement efforts. Finally, technology advances in this area are occurring rapidly. As a result, costs may vary over the next few years.

Capital Costs

Capital Costs are those costs associated with tangible infrastructure necessary to provide services. While this infrastructure may depreciate over time for various reasons, it is not directly consumed in the provision of services, as are operational items. Capital costs considered included:

- Trolley Purchase

- Parking Deck Construction
- Bridge Replacement Costs
- Toll Facility Development
- Improvements to Infrastructure within the Town

As with operating costs, an overview of these costs is presented in the text. A more detailed development is presented in Appendix B.

Trolley purchase costs are based on costs for new trolleys at $175,000 each and an additional cost of $15,000 to outfit the vehicles for beach-goers. To provide the short time between transit vehicles previously discussed, 14 vehicles will be needed during periods of heaviest demand. Having two vehicles in reserve to cover breakdowns and routine maintenance brings the recommended total to 16. Total capital costs are therefore $3.04 million.

There are several additional factors that make a significant impact on trolley purchase costs. LeeTran currently operates trolley service to and within the Town. These trolleys, perhaps with some level of retrofit, are likely to continue to be available. For trolleys that are purchased, there is the possibility of grant funding. Capital expenses for rolling stock have traditionally competed well for grant money. Finally, LeeTran in the past has had vehicle leasing arrangements with other transit operators with peak seasons that mirror the Lee County peak season. Such an arrangement could reduce annualized costs of the trolleys.

Parking deck costs are based on parking deck construction experience in Lee County. A per space construction cost of $12,800 per space was developed based on the cost of the 1996 parking deck constructed in Fort Myers. This cost does include an allowance for the increases in construction costs based on the construction cost index published by Engineering News Record (www.enr.com). The cost of land associated with the parking deck was based on research into land costs in the Summerlin/San Carlos area. A cost of $10 per square foot was assumed for study purposes.

Shell Point Village, a retirement community in Lee County, uses its parking deck as a hurricane shelter for over 1000 residents. For study purposes, the cost to outfit the parking garage as a hurricane shelter is based on the ratio of construction cost to total cost for the Shell Point Village parking deck.

The number of possible permutations of numbers of spaces and whether or not the parking deck will be used as a hurricane shelter, leads to a number of permutations of potential parking deck scenarios. The potential for differing long-term discount rates and financing terms adds further permutations. For study purposes, a minimum capital cost of $11.65M and a maximum cost of $21.86 million have been developed.

The costs associated with replacement of the Matanzas Pass Bridge have been considered based on public input into the study process. In a traditional toll project, whereby a specific capital project is financed by tolls, the bonding period is significantly less than the

design life of the facility and the eventual replacement of the facility is usually not contemplated in the financing.

The potential plan for the Town of Fort Myers Beach is unique for two reasons. First, the bulk of the costs are in the provision of service rather than the purchase of new capital elements. Second, because of the service nature, there is no established ending date as there is for the payoff of a capital facility. This factor, if properly accounted for in project implementation, allows exceptional flexibility in project implementation. Without long term capital obligations targeted for the entire revenue stream available, it is possible to refocus elements of the plan to optimize their effectiveness, and increase or decrease the intensity of various plan elements. It is even possible to eliminate a program entirely if the effectiveness is questionable. However, assuming a successful program, it is conceivable that funding will still be required at the time the bridge will require replacement, even though that event is not likely for more than 30 years.

This eventuality can be handled in two ways. First, it can be assumed that when bridge replacement is required, an appropriate funding mechanism will be developed at that point. Given the length of the planning horizon involved, this would not be an inappropriate approach.

A more conservative approach is to provide for a sinking fund for eventual bridge replacement in current planning efforts. While significant assumptions will need to be made, a reasonable projection is possible. Based on assumptions and calculations presented in Appendix B, a sinking fund cost of $500,000 per year is assumed for study purposes.

If a toll is necessary for program implementation, costs for toll collection facilities will vary substantially depending on the type of toll collection system chosen. If a traditional electronic toll collection (ETC) system is chosen, capital costs will be higher than if an alternative "open road" tolling system is used. The more traditional system is currently in use in Lee County and is the basis for the $7.5 million total capital cost figure developed for the study. Of this, the facility for the northern entrance to the island is the more expensive and complex of the two. For this study, a detailed cost estimate of $6.0 million was developed by PBS&J for the northern facility. While the decision on location of a potential southern toll facility is as complex as the northern facility, the construction elements associated with it are far less complicated, and a construction cost of $1.5 million was assumed for study purposes.

An open road tolling system relies on a combination of ETC transponders and video capture of license plates for toll collection. Transponders are used for toll collection in the same manner as in a more traditional system. Those vehicles without transponders are billed based on video capture of the license plates. As a service fee is traditionally added for license plate billing, frequent users of the facility usually obtain transponders.

Currently, over one million open road transaction billings are generated per month in North America by highway 407 in Toronto, Canada. Highway 407 is currently the only

facility of this specific type, however, a similar operation is in place in Australia, and an open road toll facility is planned in Israel. Open road tolling is of interest in Florida, and the Governor has requested that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) evaluate its use for toll facilities in the State. As part of that effort, an evaluation is ongoing by TEAM Florida, an industry group comprised of the major toll authorities in Florida as well as leading vendors and consultants.

The capital costs of an open road tolling system are significantly less than a more traditional collection program. The infrastructure visible on the roadway is no more than that required for an overhead sign. There is, therefore, exceptional flexibility in developing an appropriate location for the tolling infrastructure. Operational costs for open road tolling are, to date at least, significantly greater than more traditional tolling methods and offset, at least to some extent, capital cost savings.

For purposes of this study, costs have been based on those associated with a more traditional tolling system. It is felt that this represents a more conservative approach as the costs and technologies are better established, and the costs for the traditional system are likely to be greater overall than for an open road system. Open road tolling, however, has significant potential for the Fort Myers Beach project. If the project moves forward with tolling under consideration, open road tolling should be fully examined, particularly as technology continues to advance rapidly.

As previously discussed, improvement of infrastructure within the Town to enhance mobility, particularly bicycle and pedestrian mobility within the Town, are an integral element to the ability of the enhanced transit service to provide reasonable congestion relief. The Town has addressed these issues in the development of its streetscape plan. Implementation of parts of that plan as part of the overall congestion relief effort should be incorporated into the planning process. Because of the exceptional flexibility that can be achieved in program implementation, costs for streetscape development may vary significantly by year.

Capital costs have been converted into annualized costs based on assumptions shown in Appendix B. Because of the number of options available to the Town, costs are broken down into non-discretionary costs, non-discretionary costs with other potential funding sources, and discretionary costs.

Non-discretionary costs are those that are deemed to be required for system implementation. Without expenditures at or near these levels, it is not likely that a viable program can be developed. Non-discretionary costs are further broken down by their ability to attract funding beyond revenue streams that could be developed by the Town. Grant funding is one of the more promising forms of other funding.

Discretionary costs are those that are either optional, or may at least be delayed until the overall effectiveness of the program can be evaluated. Discretionary costs also have the ability to attract alternative funding such as grant funding for bridge replacement or emergency management funding for parking decks that can also serve as a hurricane

shelter. The implementation, and level of implementation, of these items may depend on availability of other funding sources.

For costs where the level of implementation could vary, or the level of funds available from other sources could vary, the impact of those costs on the revenue stream were broken down into low, moderate, or high. The low cost is often zero, indicating that grant funding covering the entire cost is a possibility. The high cost was bounded by what the Town was most likely to construct if alternative funds were not available to it. For instance, without alternative funding, the most expensive parking deck scenario, which could likely accommodate parking demand beyond that generated by the Town and double as a hurricane shelter, is not likely to be undertaken by the Town.

Annual costs for the system developed for study purposes is shown in Table 1:

Fort Myers Beach Access and Circulation Study
Cost Summary

Non Discretionary Expenses

Transit Operating	$2,800,000
Next Bus	$100,000
VES	$100,000
O & M	$100,000
Total	$3,100,000

Non Discretionary Expenses with Other Potential Funding Sources

	Revenue Stream Impact		
	Low	Moderate	High
Trolley Purchase	$0	$100,000	$700,000
Toll Facility	$0	$300,000	$550,000
Total	$0	$400,000	$1,250,000

Discretionary Expenses

	Revenue Stream Impact		
	Low	Moderate	High
Parking Deck (net)	$0	$450,000	$850,000
Bridge Sinking Fund	$0	$500,000	$800,000
Total	$0	$950,000	$1,650,000
Total Costs Excluding Streetscape Improvements	$3,100,000	$4,450,000	$6,000,000

Table 1 Cost Summary

REVENUES

The costs outlined previously represent a significant investment of resources by the Town. It should be noted, however, that expenditures of this magnitude are not uncommon when addressing significant transportation issues.

During the study, input was solicited on potential options to providing alternative capacity through use of transit. One of the more frequent suggestions was the provision of a mid-island bridge. It is extremely doubtful that such a project could attain approval under the current environmental guidelines and requirements. However, as a basis for comparison, such a project is estimated to cost $126 million, using an all-inclusive cost of $100 per square foot for construction. Bonding such a project would require that the Town produce annual revenues of $6 million, very comparable to the cost of the solution being considered. Further, due to the capital nature of the project, the Town would be committed to produce this revenue stream for a period of 30 years for this project alone regardless of the effectiveness of the solution or the need for providing other improvements during that time.

Given the level of funding required, it is likely that funding sources beyond those currently available to the Town will be required. As previously discussed, there is potential for grant funding for some project elements. It is recommended that if the Town proceeds with any type of project that the possibility of grant funding be pursued aggressively.

Even with the possibility of grant funding, other funding sources are likely to be needed. Funding alternatives available to the Town are relatively limited. By law, gasoline and sales taxes are not within the Town's ability to impose, and such sources are not necessarily a reasonable device for fairly allocating costs associated with an improved transportation system. While ad valorem taxes are theoretically a possibility, imposing the cost of transportation improvements on Town residents is not considered reasonable or equitable. Toll funding, while controversial, is recommended for strong consideration as it represents a mechanism that, if it is properly applied, can equitably distribute the benefits and costs of transportation improvements.

In considering tolls, care must be taken to insure that residents are not disproportionately impacted. Traffic congestion in and leading to the Town of Fort Myers Beach is a strongly seasonal phenomenon. Outside of peak tourist season, the existing transportation infrastructure provides reasonably for movement to and within the Town. It can therefore be supported that a reasonable balance exists, during off-peak season, between current transportation funding sources and transportation needs.

It is obviously not possible to provide roadways that exist only in peak season and, therefore, only need to be paid for during peak season. Traditional funding sources, such as gasoline taxes, depend on a stable revenue stream existing throughout the year. In areas with high seasonal variations, the effectiveness of such funding is significantly reduced. Tourist and seasonal visitors are a significant part of the Town of Fort Myers

Beach and make a significant contribution to the Town. However, seasonal traffic impacts are significant and worsening. As a practical matter, the imbalance between the impact and the revenue stream from traditional funding sources must be recognized.

In considering a response to the traffic issue, three main options are available to the Town. First is to do nothing. During the public involvement process, many persons noted, correctly, that due to the Town's island nature, traffic was a significant issue that would be difficult to deal with. Some felt that simply "living with" the traffic was a viable solution. While the do nothing alternative is always a possibility, its potential impacts are significant. In addition to its continuing impact on the quality of life on the island, traffic congestion is a significant disincentive to the island as a destination for tourists and other visitors.

The second option is to continue to pursue traditional transportation funding sources. Difficulties with this approach have already been discussed.

The final alternative is to consider funding sources that are appropriate to the seasonal fluctuation experienced by the island. Existing funding sources can be considered for use in reducing the disproportionate impact on residents that tolls can impose by "buying down", completely or partially, resident's tolls. This allows the Town to balance its transportation funding and its transportation needs by leveraging its existing transportation funding.

In evaluating the traffic issue for the Town, the approach has been taken that sufficient capacity to accommodate total demand for access to the Town should be provided. Utilizing existing roadway capacity, and enhancing existing transit service holds the most promise to accomplish this, and technically, there are no obstacles to implementing this type of system. The issue will almost certainly be to balance the demand for various modes with the capacity available for various modes. While it is also possible to collect revenues from transit patrons, to balance demand for vehicle access and transit access, minimizing costs associated with transit travel will likely be required. Therefore, for purposes of this study, it is assumed that no revenues will be generated from transit fares. This also maintains a no cost alternative for accessing the island.

Revenue Stream

To determine if there is a reasonable match between improvements proposed and potential revenues, a potential toll structure was developed for the island. It was assumed that tolls would be collected at both the Northern and Southern entrances. The revenue stream developed should ***not*** be considered a ***recommended*** toll structure for the island. The purpose behind its development was to provide an order of magnitude projection of potential toll revenues to determine what toll level would be required to fund the improvements outlined in the previous section.

Traditionally, tolls have been used as the means to pay for a specific, physical transportation facility. In Lee County, examples include the Cape Coral and Midpoint Memorial Bridges and the Sanibel Causeway.

In recent years, tolls are also being used as a transportation demand management (TDM) tool. Traditionally, transportation planning has focused on providing a sufficient supply of transportation capacity. This has usually been achieved by expanding existing roadways or by providing new roadway facilities. TDM, as its name implies, focuses on the demand side of the equation and seeks to make ***more efficient use*** of existing roadway capacity. A TDM measure that varies tolls by time of day, often called variable or value pricing is being tested in several areas of the country to determine if it can have a positive affect on traffic flow. One such pilot program is underway in Lee County, and the results are exceptionally promising.

For purposes of this study, it was assumed that tolls were collected one way: moving onto the island. This assumption was made for two primary reasons. First, if traditional collection methods are used, one-way toll collection is a more efficient collection mechanism. Second, if traditional toll collection techniques are employed, the physical space limitations for locating the collection facility are better suited to one-way collection, particularly on the northern entrance to Estero Island.

Toll patrons were defined as either full toll or discount toll patrons. This designation is similar in concept to the current toll discount programs offered by Lee County on its toll facilities. A full toll patron, as the name implies, receives no discount to the standard toll in place at the time the patron travels the bridge. The discount patron pays a lesser amount based on frequency of use, purchase of a discount, or possibly, residency

Finally, while this study does not produce a recommended toll structure, the toll structure analyzed does take into account similar tolls in similar areas. To provide a reasonable boundary for the study, it was determined that the average toll should not exceed that paid for access to the Sanibel Island causeway. Due to the variable nature of the toll structure, during certain times of the day the toll schedule produced for study purposes exceeds the Sanibel flat rate, however, the average toll is lower than the Sanibel rate. Average toll rates, and a comparison with the toll rates on the Sanibel Causeway are shown in Table 2.

Variable tolls apply for both full and discount patrons. Tolls vary by time of day, and the toll schedule varies between peak and off peak season. Tolls are designed to be highest during periods of high demand and lower during off peak times. The example toll schedules developed for study purposes for peak season, defined as January through April, and off peak season, May through December, are shown in Appendix C.

	Peak Season	Off Peak	Annual	Sanibel (Annual)
Average Toll	**$1.46**	**$0.85**	**$1.07**	**$1.86**
Average Full Toll	**$2.03**	**$1.31**	**$1.62**	**$3.00**
Average Discount Toll	**$0.67**	**$0.51**	**$0.56**	**$0.91**

Table 2 Sanibel Toll Comparison

In addition to toll revenues, LeeTran currently incurs a net cost of $850,000 to operate the bus system impacting the Beach. While no additional funding from LeeTran is likely, it has been assumed that the current level of net funding will remain. Revenue projections for the Town are shown in Table 3.

Fort Myers Beach Access and Circulation Study Revenue Projection Summary	
North Bridge (net)	$4,700,000
South Bridge (net)	$1,650,000
LeeTran (net)	$850,000
Total	$7,200,000

Table 3 Revenue Projections

Based on the above projections, revenues of between of $1.2 million and $4.1 million annually are anticipated to be available to the Town for discretionary spending on transportation improvement projects such as those outlined in the Town's Streetscape Plan. Details of the toll projections developed for this study are included as Appendix D.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public support is key to developing successful solutions. The issues most important to the community are the issues that determine the ability of a project to successfully meet the needs of a community and therefore move to implementation. Issues and concerns need to be discerned and addressed early in any project during the development of project objectives and public input should continue throughout the life to the project.

For this study, public outreach was conducted to explain the purpose of the study, to stimulate discussion and ideas, and to determine the desires and acceptability of proposed solutions from the residents and business people of the Beach. This research was qualitative in nature, seeking to get a general feeling of the opinions. It was not designed

as a statistically rigorous exercise and did not produce a specific percentage of the population's views or opinions.

The public outreach was conducted over the summer and a variety of methods were used to communicate with the community of Fort Myers Beach. The methods are discussed below.
A brochure explaining the purpose of the study and answering frequently asked questions was developed and distributed during public presentations. The brochure was also distributed at various locations in the Town and was published on the Town's web page.

Public presentations were offered to the Fort Myers Beach Condominium Association members, civic and social clubs and organizations, and then Town Council candidates. Presentations were actually made to the Beach Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the MPO's Citizens Advisory Committee, the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee and the MPO's Bike & Pedestrian Coordinating Committee.

Additionally, three public input groups were established and each group met for discussions twice during the course of the study. The groups were representative of FMB residents, business people, and governmental agencies that would be affected by development of transportation options for the Town. The governmental agencies represented at the meetings included: the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the Lee County Department of Transportation, LeeTran, the City of Bonita Springs, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the City of Cape Coral, and the City of Sanibel.

During these discussions the groups were briefed on the purpose of the study and were asked for input into the direction of the study. Specialized graphic software was utilized so the participants could see and review the comments in written form as they were offered. Copies of the comments were then mailed to the participants following the meeting. Copies of the comments are provided in Appendix E.

In addition, numerous discussions with interested individuals were conducted via letters, telephone calls, e-mails, and face-to-face meetings. Frequent media interviews were conducted to facilitate accurate dissemination of information on the study and proposed solutions.

The final purpose of the public outreach was to determine if there was support for further study of transportation solutions similar to those suggested in this study. Based on results from the public input groups, there is support for further study of the transportation issues and possible solutions.

ADMINISTRATIVE

While the impact of traffic congestion is a significant issue for the Town of Fort Myers Beach, the roadways and bridges that bring about those impacts are not owned by the Town, and, in fact, often are outside of the Town's corporate limits. As a practical matter,

addressing transportation issues is usually best handled by cooperation between several governmental agencies. In the case of the Town of Fort Myers Beach, the Florida Department of Transportation, who owns San Carlos Boulevard and the Matanzas Pass Bridge, and Lee County, who owns Estero Boulevard, must be involved.

Both entities were contacted for informal discussions during the study. Given the preliminary nature of the study, no endorsement, formal or informal, of any concepts developed was requested or received. General consensus was reached, however, that reasonable alternatives to alleviating traffic congestion within and approaching the Town of Fort Myers Beach deserve evaluation. Further, if reasonable alternatives are developed, it is likely that, if any administrative issues relating to implementation exist, they can be resolved through interlocal agreement or by transfer of facility ownership.

While no endorsement of the concept was sought or received, it should be pointed out that the concepts developed as part of this study are consistent with many of the goals and objectives of both the Lee County Comprehensive Plan, and the Florida Transportation Plan. Further, the Town's application to the Federal Highway Administration to further study the concepts developed during this study was unanimously endorsed by the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is composed of representatives from all local governmental agencies in the County. Also, the Florida Department of Transportation has agreed to act in an administrative role in a study produced by the Town's grant application.

CONCLUSIONS

Developing a comprehensive approach to dealing with the Town's transportation needs will be critical in successfully addressing the issues involved. It will require innovative approaches and effective application of available technologies. However, of equal importance will be support for the project from the Town's residents and business community.

To achieve the goals the Town is striving for, solutions need to be designed in such a way that traffic demand is brought under control while overall access to the Town is increased and mobility within the Town is improved. Residents benefit from the reduction in congestion the plan can bring about, and the business community can be assured that they are supporting concepts that can increase the overall flow of potential patrons into the town.

To achieve acceptance from visitors, any plan must provide an increased level of service whose perceived value equals, or preferably exceeds, the cost being imposed. Innovative application of techniques and technology can assist in achieving this goal, but a strong program of involvement from all stakeholders in the effort, public and private, will be key to the overall success of any program developed by the Town.

APPENDIX

A Research Data Services, Inc. Economic Report

B Cost Development

C Potential Toll Structure

D Revenue Projections

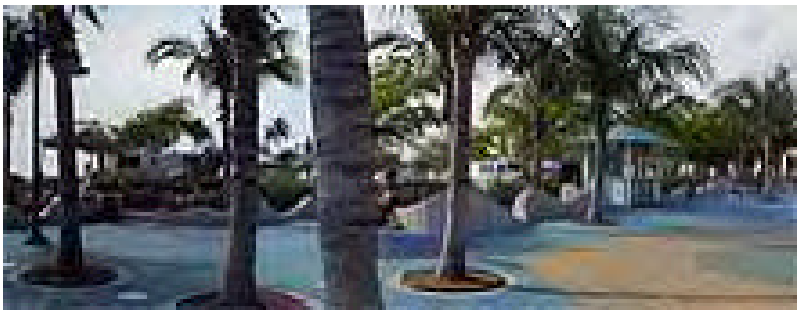
E Public Input Group Comments

Appendix A

Research Data Services, Inc. Economic Report

RESEARCH DATA SERVICES, INC.
600 SOUTH MAGNOLIA AVENUE • SUITE 350
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33606
TEL (813) 254-2975 • FAX (813) 254-2986

FORT MYERS BEACH ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY



Prepared for:

The Town of Fort Myers Beach
and
CRSPE, Inc.

Prepared by:

Walter J. Klages, Ph.D., President
Research Data Services, Inc.

October 16, 2001

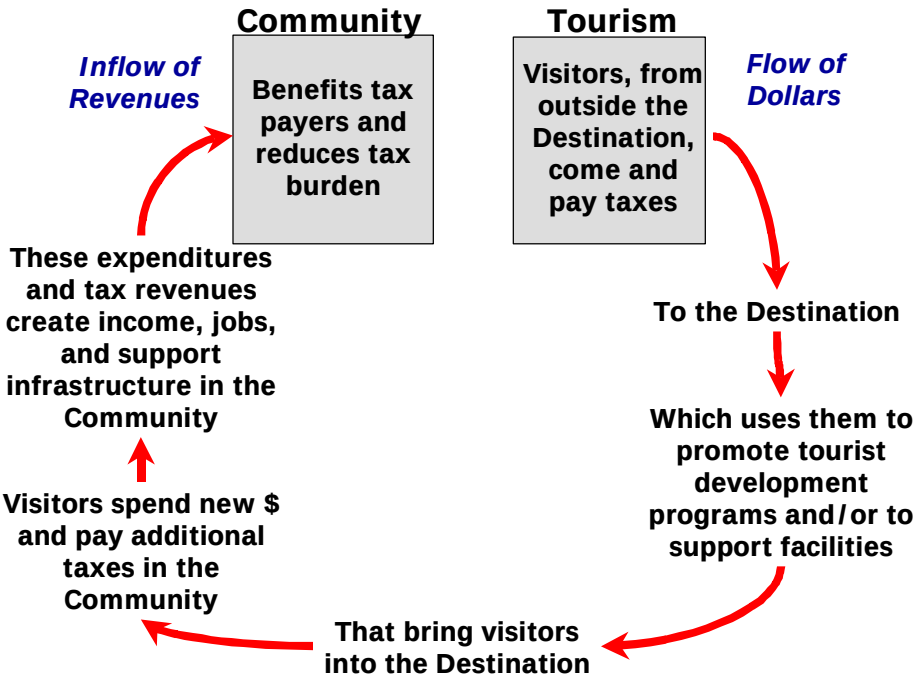
INTRODUCTION

In August 2001, the Town of Fort Myers Beach and CRSPE, Inc. commissioned **Research Data Services, Inc. (RDS)** to prepare a detailed Economic Impact Statement (utilizing existing databases) for the destination.

The expressed objective of the extant study is to measure and quantify the return that accrues to Lee County residents from tourist activity in Fort Myers Beach. Central to the analysis is the fact that economic impact, as defined in the following, relates solely to additional dollars spent in the area's economy by non-resident tourists and visitors to the Town of Fort Myers Beach, including day-trippers and seasonal residents. As a result, residents receive benefits in the form of new jobs, more income, a reduced tax burden, and a diversified economy. In the same vein, the resort (bed) tax paid by visitors staying in the Town of Fort Myers Beach represents additional seed money, leveraging significant future economic gains for the County.

Conceptually, the following circular flow illustrates this process:

The flow of visitor expenditures



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of the Economic Impact Study are summarized in the following:

1. **On an annual basis, the Town of Fort Myers Beach hosts:**

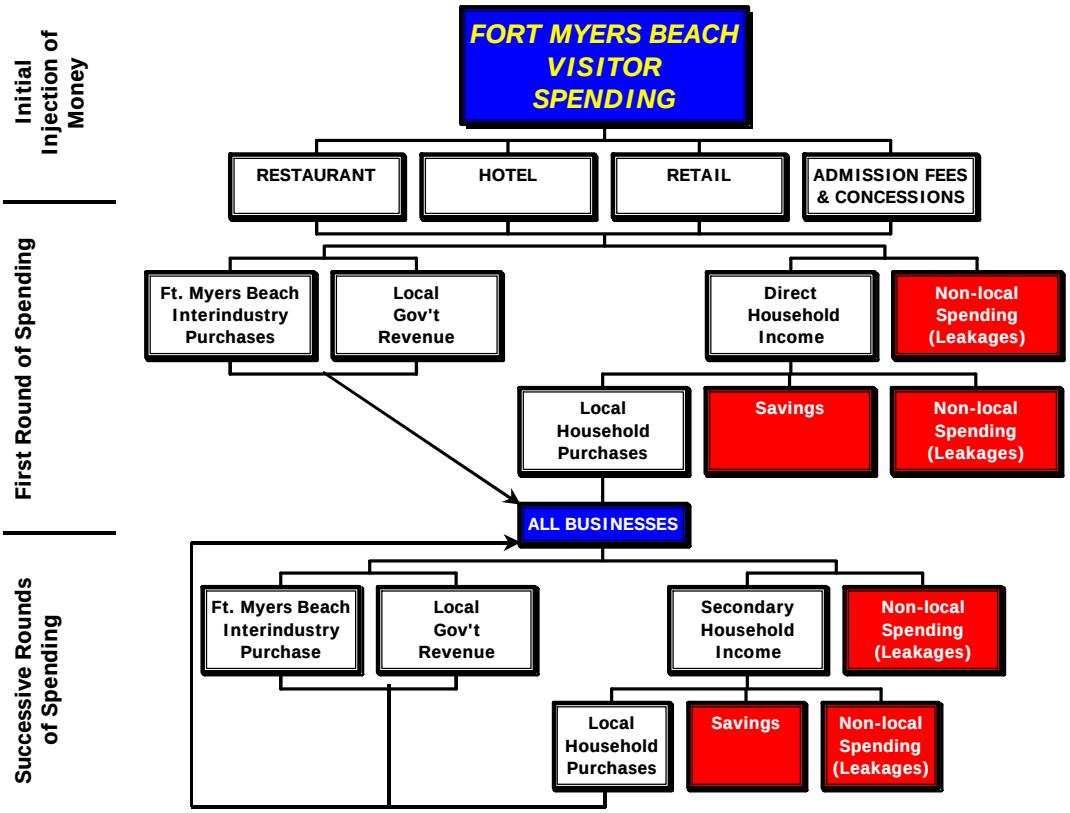
Visitor Group	Number of Visitors
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying on Fort Myers Beach	**373,133**
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying Elsewhere in Lee County, but Visiting Fort Myers Beach	**261,910**
Day Trippers Residing Outside of Lee County	**61,829**
Seasonal Residents	**37,094**
Lee County Residents who do Not Reside in Fort Myers Beach	**135,755**
TOTAL	869,721

Please note: H/M/C/C refers to visitors from outside the County who stay for at least one (1) night and not more than sixty (60) nights in a commercial lodging facility (Hotel / Motel / Condominium / Campground). A seasonal resident is an individual who does not use commercial lodging, but stays in a residence he owns or rents long-term (but less than a year).

2. **Fort Myers Beach supports the following direct expenditures from these groups for their visit to or stay on Fort Myers Beach:**

Visitor Group	Direct Expenditures
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying on Fort Myers Beach	**$192,253,047**
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying Elsewhere in Lee County, but Visiting Fort Myers Beach	**1,075,926**
Day Trippers Residing Outside of Lee County	**385,570**
Seasonal Residents	**982,260**
Lee County Residents who do Not Reside in Fort Myers Beach	**N/A**
TOTAL	$194,696,803

3. **How tourism dollars work their way through the economy of Lee County and tourism's multiplier effect are demonstrated by the following flow chart:**



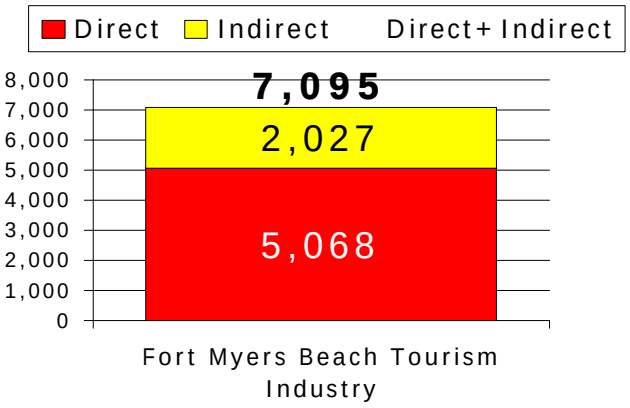
4. Including the multiplier effect, the impact of Fort Myers Beach visitor's spending on the Lee County's economy is:

Visitor Group	Direct + Indirect Expenditures
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying on Fort Myers Beach	**$322,927,443**
H/M/C/C Visitors Staying Elsewhere in Lee County, but Visiting Fort Myers Beach	**1,807,233**
Day Trippers Residing Outside of Lee County	**647,642**
Seasonal Residents	**1,649,902**
Lee County Residents who do Not Reside in Fort Myers Beach	**N/A**
TOTAL	$327,032,220

5a. The proportions of **Lee County's tourist-related labor force** employed directly and/or indirectly in **Fort Myers Beach's tourism industry** are:

$$\textbf{Direct:} \quad \frac{5{,}068}{25{,}082} = \boxed{\textbf{20.2\%}}$$

$$\textbf{Direct + Indirect:} \quad \frac{7{,}095}{35{,}115} = \boxed{\textbf{20.2\%}}$$



Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Office of Workforce Information Services, Labor Market Statistics

5b. This generates the following wage incomes for the Lee County residents:

	Fort Myers Beach Tourism
Direct Wages	$110,685,120
Indirect Wages	58,109,688
Direct + Indirect	$168,794,808

Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Office of Workforce Information Services, Labor Market Statistics

6. Tourism on Fort Myers Beach generates the following occupancies and Average Daily Room Rates (ADR):

	Occupancy Percent			Room Rate Per Day		
	1999	2000	Point Change	1999	2000	% Change
January	79.4%	80.5%	+1.1	$104.53	$108.69	+4.0
February	92.7	94.5	+1.8	122.86	132.53	+7.9
March	93.8	95.0	+1.2	127.54	134.03	+5.1
April	83.9	84.1	+0.2	96.83	108.22	+11.8
WINTER	**87.5%**	**88.5%**	**+1.0**	**$112.94**	**$120.87**	**+7.0**
May	64.7%	66.6%	+1.9	$73.20	$76.55	+4.6
June	61.8	64.5	+2.7	68.72	71.35	+3.8
July	71.5	74.7	+3.2	71.46	75.20	+5.2
August	63.2	63.6	+0.4	66.75	71.58	+7.2
SPRING/ SUMMER	**65.3%**	**67.4%**	**+2.1**	**$70.03**	**$73.67**	**+5.2**
September	51.3%	52.1%	+0.8	$68.71	$70.77	+3.0
October	58.7	60.5	+1.8	67.58	69.69	+3.1
November	72.2	72.5	+0.3	69.96	72.00	+2.9
December	61.0	61.7	+0.7	90.88	90.83	-0.1
FALL	**60.8%**	**61.7%**	**+0.9**	**$74.28**	**$75.82**	**+2.1**
ANNUALIZED AVERAGE	**71.2%**	**72.5%**	**+1.3**	**$85.75**	**$90.12**	**+5.1**

APPENDIX

	Fort Myers Beach Reaches							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total Defined Reaches
H/M/C Visitors								
# of beach users	44,577	142,450	16,096	2,151	14,749	9,854	1,947	231,824
# of beach trips	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	
Total beach days	**57,950**	**156,695**	**19,315**	**2,151**	**17,699**	**9,854**	**1,947**	**265,611**
% of H/M/C visitor use	21.8%	59.0%	7.3%	0.8%	6.7%	3.7%	0.7%	100.0%
% reach use by user type	53.9%	20.9%	48.6%	7.7%	25.8%	17.4%	10.5%	24.9%
Beach day dollar value	$10.27	$10.27	$10.27	$10.27	$10.27	$10.27	$10.33	
Total Annual Dollar Value	**$595,148**	**$1,609,258**	**$198,367**	**$22,091**	**$181,767**	**$101,201**	**$20,113**	**$2,727,943**
V F/R Visitors								
# of beach users	15,772	141,384	n/a	n/a	6,468	n/a	n/a	163,624
# of beach trips	1.5	1.5	n/a	n/a	1.5	n/a	n/a	
Total beach days	**23,658**	**212,076**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**9,702**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**245,436**
% of V F/R visitor use	9.6%	86.4%	--	--	4.0%	--	--	100.0%
% reach use by user type	22.0%	28.3%	--	--	14.1%	--	--	23.0%
Beach day dollar value	$12.96	$12.96	n/a	n/a	$12.96	n/a	n/a	
Total Annual Dollar Value	**$306,608**	**$2,748,505**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**$125,738**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**$3,180,851**
Lee Residents								
# of beach users	2,671	44,018	2,226	1,336	2,671	3,088	1,307	57,317
# of beach trips	6.2	7.5	5.9	4.9	4.2	10.4	11.4	
Total beach days	**16,560**	**330,135**	**13,133**	**6,546**	**11,218**	**32,115**	**14,900**	**424,608**
% of Lee Resident use	3.9%	77.8%	3.1%	1.5%	2.6%	7.6%	3.5%	100.0%
% reach use by user type	15.4%	44.1%	33.0%	23.3%	16.4%	56.6%	80.2%	39.8%
Beach day dollar value	$9.98	$9.98	$9.98	$9.98	$9.98	$9.98	$10.04	
Total Annual Dollar Value	**$165,271**	**$3,294,747**	**$131,071**	**$65,333**	**$111,958**	**$320,510**	**$149,594**	**$4,238,484**
Seasonal Residents								
# of beach users	896	5,885	896	1,406	2,302	1,406	n/a	12,791
# of beach trips	6.2	6.2	6.2	9.9	9.9	9.9	n/a	
Total beach days	**5,555**	**36,487**	**5,555**	**13,919**	**22,790**	**13,919**	**n/a**	**98,226**
% of Seasonal Res. Use	5.7%	37.1%	5.7%	14.2%	23.2%	14.2%	--	100.0%
% reach use by user type	5.2%	4.9%	14.0%	49.6%	33.2%	24.5%	--	9.2%
Beach day dollar value	$10.00	$10.00	$10.00	$10.00	$10.00	$10.00	n/a	
Total Annual Dollar Value	**$55,552**	**$364,870**	**$55,552**	**$139,194**	**$227,898**	**$139,194**	**n/a**	**$982,260**
Daytrippers								
# of beach users	2,328	8,338	1,087	939	1,237	150	300	14,379
# of beach trips	1.6	1.6	1.6	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	
Total beach days	**3,725**	**13,341**	**1,739**	**5,446**	**7,175**	**870**	**1,740**	**34,036**
% of Daytripper use	10.9%	39.2%	5.1%	16.0%	21.1%	2.6%	5.1%	100.0%
% reach use by user type	3.5%	1.8%	4.4%	19.4%	10.5%	1.5%	9.4%	3.2%
Beach day dollar value	$11.40	$11.40	$11.40	$11.40	$11.40	$11.40	$10.00	
Total Annual Dollar Value	**$42,463**	**$152,085**	**$19,827**	**$62,087**	**$81,790**	**$9,918**	**$17,400**	**$385,570**
Total Beach Days	**107,448**	**748,734**	**39,743**	**28,063**	**68,583**	**56,759**	**18,587**	**1,067,917**
% of Total use	**10.1%**	**70.1%**	**3.7%**	**2.6%**	**6.4%**	**5.3%**	**1.7%**	
% of reach use by user	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	
TOTAL DOLLAR VALUE	**$1,165,041**	**$8,169,465**	**$404,817**	**$288,705**	**$729,151**	**$570,822**	**$187,107**	**$11,515,107**

	Lee County Residents	**Seasonal Residents**	**V F/R Visitors**
Total Person Trips *(Attributable to Fort Myers Beach Residents)*	78,390	35,150	48,180
Total Person Trips Countywide	424,608	98,226	245,436
Percentage of Total Person Trips *(Attributable to Fort Myers Beach Residents)*	18.5%	35.8%	19.6%
Total Dollar Value *(Attributable to Fort Myers Beach Residents)*	$909,324	$351,500	$624,413
Total Dollar Value Countywide	$4,238,484	$982,260	$3,180,851
Percentage of Total Dollar Value *(Attributable to Fort Myers Beach Residents)*	21.5%	35.8%	19.6%

Appendix B

Cost Development

FMB Trolley Operating Costs

Season

North Shuttle	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	2	5	10
8AM to 6PM	4	10	40
6PM to 1AM	2	7	14
Island	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	3	5	15
8AM to 6PM	6	10	60
6PM to 1AM	3	7	21
South Shuttle	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	2	5	10
8AM to 6PM	4	10	40
6PM to 1AM	2	7	14
Total			224
Cost		$42.66	$9,555.84
	Days		
Total	120		$1,146,701

Off Season

North Shuttle	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	2	5	10
8AM to 6PM	2	10	20
6PM to 1AM	2	7	14
Island	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	2.5	5	12.5
8AM to 6PM	4	10	40
6PM to 1AM	2.5	7	17.5
South Shuttle	# of Shuttles	Hours	Total
5AM to 8AM	2	5	10
8AM to 6PM	2	10	20
6PM to 1AM	2	7	14
Total			158
Cost		$42.66	$6,740.28
	Days		
Total	245		$1,651,369

Total $2,798,069

NextBus Costs

	Units	Cost/Unit	Total
Trolley Hardware	16	$7,000.00	$112,000.00
Shelter Signs	25	$4,000.00	$100,000.00
Operation and Management			$42,400.00
Trolley Stop Construction	25	$2,500.00	$62,500.00
Total			$316,900.00

Annualized Costs

Discount Rate	6.00%
Years	5
Capital and Interest Costs	$75,230.92
Maintenance	$25,000.00
Total	$100,230.92

Trolley Purchase Costs

	Units	Cost/Unit	Total
Trolleys (new)	16	$175,000.00	$2,800,000.00
Conversion for Beach Passengers	16	$15,000.00	$240,000.00
Total			$3,040,000.00

Annualized Costs

Discount Rate	6.00%
Years	5
Capital and Interest Costs	$721,685.06

Toll Facilities Cost

Total	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$7,500,000
Annualized Costs					
Discount Rate	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Years	5	10	15	20	30
Capital and Interest Costs	$1,780,473.00	$1,019,009.69	$772,220.73	$653,884.18	$544,866.84

Bridge Replacement Sinking Fund

Life Span	50 year	50 year	60 year	60 year	70 year	70 year
Reconstruction Year	2028	2028	2038	2038	2048	2048
Construction Cost	$50,900,000	$50,900,000	$109,900,000	$109,900,000	$163,800,000	$163,800,000
Discount Rate	6.00%	8.00%	6.00%	8.00%	6.00%	8.00%
Years until Reconstruction	27	27	37	37	47	47
Capital and Interest Costs	$798,985.77	$582,708.10	$863,531.27	$541,191.84	$679,390.06	$361,669.12

Orignial construction cost factored to 2001 construction cost based on ENR's Construction Cost Index. Future construction costs are based on a projection of the ENR CCI at the time of construction assuming that the growth in the CCI will be similar to historic growth patterns.

Construction Cost (1978 $)	$7,000,000	ENR CCI	
Estimated 2001 Cost	$16,100,000	Dec 2001	6390
Est 2028 Cost (50 yr)	$50,900,000		
Est 2038 Cost (60 yr)	$109,900,000	1954 Avg	628
Est 2048 Cost (70 yr)	$163,800,000	1964 Avg	936
		1974 Avg	2020
		1978 Avg	2776
		2028 (est)	20214
		2038 (est)	43624
		2048 (est)	65019

Parking Deck Capital and Operating Costs

Number of Spaces	750	750	1000	1000	750	750	1000	1000	750	750	1000	1000
Construction Costs	$9,612,908	$9,612,908	$12,817,211	$12,817,211	$9,612,908	$9,612,908	$12,817,211	$12,817,211	$9,612,908	$9,612,908	$12,817,211	$12,817,211
Land Costs (@$10/sqft)	$522,273	$522,273	$696,364	$696,364	$522,273	$522,273	$696,364	$696,364	$522,273	$522,273	$696,364	$696,364
Hurricane Shelter	$0	$4,119,818	$0	$5,493,091	$0	$4,119,818	$0	$5,493,091	$0	$4,119,818	$0	$5,493,091
Contingency	$1,520,277	$2,138,250	$2,027,036	$2,851,000	$1,520,277	$2,138,250	$2,027,036	$2,851,000	$1,520,277	$2,138,250	$2,027,036	$2,851,000
Total	$11,655,458	$16,393,249	$15,540,611	$21,857,665	$11,655,458	$16,393,249	$15,540,611	$21,857,665	$11,655,458	$16,393,249	$15,540,611	$21,857,665
Annualized Costs												
Discount Rate	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Years	10	10	10	10	20	20	20	20	30	30	30	30
Capital and Interest Costs	$1,583,603.33	$2,227,317.26	$2,111,471.10	$2,969,756.35	$1,016,175.97	$1,429,238.15	$1,354,901.30	$1,905,650.86	$846,756.36	$1,190,951.69	$1,129,008.48	$1,587,935.59
Operating ($200/space/year)	$150,000.00	$150,000.00	$200,000.00	$200,000.00	$150,000.00	$150,000.00	$200,000.00	$200,000.00	$150,000.00	$150,000.00	$200,000.00	$200,000.00
Total	$1,733,603.33	$2,377,317.26	$2,311,471.10	$3,169,756.35	$1,166,175.97	$1,579,238.15	$1,554,901.30	$2,105,650.86	$996,756.36	$1,340,951.69	$1,329,008.48	$1,787,935.59

Note: Costs are based on the Construction of two parking decks in Lee County, the Fort Myers Parking Deck and the parking deck for Shell Point Village. The Fort Myers Deck was used to determine land requirements per space and construction costs per space. Shell Point was used to determine the relationship of Hurricane Shelter Cost to initial construction costs. The Calculations are as follows:

Construction Cost (1996)	$6,200,000		ENR CCI	
ENR CCI Adjustment	113.70%			
Estimated 2001 Cost	$7,049,466		Dec 2001	6390
			1996 Avg	5620
Number of Spaces	550			
Cost per Space	$12,817			
Deck Footprint	38,300.0			
Land per Space (5 level deck)	69.6			
Hurricane Shelter	600/1400	0.428571429		