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FEATURED

Traffic group has laundry list of improvements

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Traffic comes to a standstill on Plantation Key, an increasingly common occurrence in recent years. A local committee is proposing a list of actions to improve traffic flow for consideration by the Monroe County Commission and Florida Department of Transportation.

Photo provided

FLORIDA KEYS — Nine roadway improvement recommendations grew to 11 proposals adopted by the Florida Keys Transportation Coordination Committee during a recent public meeting.

The recommendations will be sent to the Monroe County Commission to correspond with the Florida Department of Transportation to alleviate traffic congestion and improve pedestrian and vehicular road safety along the U.S. 1 corridor that transects the Florida Keys.

The committee is made up of county and municipal representatives from throughout the island chain.

The resolution includes a request that FDOT consider pedestrian, bicycle and other users in all studies for impacts and potential improvements to the highway.

It also calls for an Upper Keys traffic congestion study to determine if merge and acceleration/deceleration lanes near businesses would improve traffic flow. It asks if such lanes, as well as dedicated left-turn lanes, would increase traffic flow where average travel speeds have fallen below required "Level of Service" requirements.

During public comment, Key Largo resident Jacquelyn Bello requested that the center median include directional arrows to direct traffic and left turn acceleration or deceleration lanes.

"I believe our long-term solution is with fixing the median," she said.

It further requests the county commission, in coordination with FDOT, consider creating an overlay zoning district from mile markers 96 to 100 that would require property owners developing transient uses, such as hotels, or adding to existing transient uses to provide right-turn-only lanes for vehicles exiting onto U.S. 1 where the median is forested or where U.S. 1 is split into separate southbound and northbound two-lane roadways.

Also in Key Largo, the resolution outlines a request that FDOT conduct a study of intersections where local roads intersect with U.S. 1 and experience high congestion and/or accidents to develop right-turn-only pavement marking and signage on local

roads.

The committee requests that FDOT conduct a study to improve signage at the intersection of County Road 905 and U.S. 1.

Additionally, the resolution proposes a study by FDOT, in coordination with the village of Islamorada, to evaluate the need for turn-lane improvements at the intersection of U.S. 1 and High Point Road, which leads from the Plantation Key courthouse.

Islamorada Councilman Pete Bacheler, who sits on the committee, requested a low guard rail along Sea Oats Beach and more signage along Anne's Beach.

Plantation Key resident Jill Zima Borski asked that the committee again look at disassembling the antiquated weigh station near the Snake Creek Bridge, install weigh plates in the road and redevelop the station as a rest stop with picnic tables, potable water and restrooms.

In Marathon, the committee requests a study in coordination with the city to develop a center turn lane on U.S. 1 from 15th Street to 11th Street.

For Big Pine Key, the committee is seeking a study to develop a right-turn deceleration lane for northbound U.S. 1 and a left-turn-only lane from southbound U.S. 1 at the entrance at Big Pine Key Swimming Hole and a request for FDOT consider developing a left-turn-only lane southbound along U.S. 1 to be extended to Ships Way.

For Stock Island, the committee has proposed a signal re-timing study and a feasibility study to reconfigure the intersection of U.S. 1 and Roosevelt Boulevard.

Mary Lou Hoover, who represents Key West on the committee, said she wanted to see pedestrians and bicycles be included in the language to improve safety. Language in the itemized list was modified to include Hoover's request.

"There were a couple ideas that we'll discuss at the next meeting. We don't want to ignore any good idea," said Monroe County Commissioner David Rice, who represents Marathon on the committee.

"We will transmit those 11 items to the county commission. We also got 177 recommendations out of the master plan that was completed recently. Some of those are five to 10 years out in the master plan, and we'll work to whittle them down to transmit. We will probably pick 20 to 30 of them and transmit them.

"Ultimately, this is a start of communications with the DOT with all of the cities and the county commission. Our biggest traffic jam is within Islamorada, and they have to take the lead on that."

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