

Memorandum



Date: March 19, 2014

To: Honorable Xavier L. Suarez
Commissioner, District 7

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor 

Subject: Bicycle Safety / Rickenbacker Causeway

Thank you for your memorandum providing your suggestions for improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists along the Rickenbacker Causeway. As you know, I have been committed to the safety of all users of the Rickenbacker Causeway dating back to my tenure as the District 7 Commissioner and will continue to work collaboratively with all parties to find solutions.

As both your memorandum and the Board's resolution approved on March 4, 2014 (R-237-14), are directed towards a common goal, I have instructed staff to prepare a comprehensive report addressing all issues noted in each. The final report will build off previous correspondence from my office on these issues, as well as measures which are in place or underway, and will include input from various County Departments and the requested municipal and state agencies.

Attachment

c: Honorable Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa and Members, Board of County Commissioners
Alina T. Hudak, Deputy Mayor and Interim Director, Public Works and Waste Management
Antonio Cotarelo, County Engineer, Public Works and Waste Management



MEMORANDUM
COMMISSIONER XAVIER L. SUAREZ

111 NW First Street, Suite 220 Miami, Florida 33128 Tel. (305) 375-5680 Fax (305) 372-6103

TO: Carlos A Gimenez
Mayor

DATE: February 12, 2014

FROM: Xavier L. Suarez
Commissioner, District 7

RE: Bicycle Safety / Rickenbacker
Causeway

On Tuesday, February 11, 2014, I convened a meeting to bring together various members of the cycling community; representatives from Key Biscayne (including Village Manager John Gilbert); and law enforcement - Chief of Police Charlie Press (Village of Key Biscayne), Lt. Maria Robainas (Miami-Dade Police Department), Commander Manny Morales (City of Miami Police Department) to discuss bicycle and pedestrian safety in my district. In addition, the Chair of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) of the MPO, Eric Tullberg, and the Vice-Chair, Xavier Falconi, participated. Finally, included in the 23 attendees was the President of the Coconut Grove Village Council, Javier Gonzalez.

Many issues were discussed, including speed enforcement, drunk drivers / DUIs, signage, shared jurisdiction and participation, as well as solutions offered by various cycling activists. Additionally, yesterday afternoon, at a meeting of the Infrastructure and Capital Improvements Committee, I co-sponsored a resolution with Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz (District 12), directing you to prepare a report for the County Commission within sixty (60) days outlining the feasibility of implementing safety measures for bicyclists and pedestrians along the Rickenbacker Causeway, Brickell Avenue, South Bayshore Drive and the surrounding areas.

Vision:

- Develop the Rickenbacker Causeway / Bear Cut Bridge into a civic model for excellence, with a welcoming beacon for residents, tourists, cyclists, and other users, alike. The bridge should be seen as a model for cyclists, providing a safe haven and a shared resource for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to peacefully co-exist. A major goal is to turn the bridge into a welcoming gateway to the island paradise of Key Biscayne - a mixed-use playground. Incentives need to be developed and implemented for everyone, both motorists and cyclists, to slow down, while on the causeway, in either direction. The roadway will be viewed as a "shared roadway."

Goals and Objectives:

1. Develop a new series of signage along the causeway. This is particularly important once the implementation of the conversion to SunPass at the toll booth is complete as vehicles will no longer be required to stop at the entrance to the causeway. The signage would include a welcome sign saying, something like "You are now entering paradise." Another example of messaging could read, "Slow down, you are already in paradise, but so are many [cyclists, pedestrians, athletes in training, children, elderly, workers] who share this magnificent corner of the world." These signs would serve as a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to everyone upon arrival at the toll plaza.

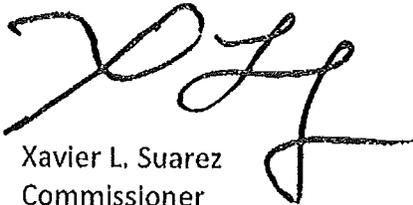
In addition, a sign outlining "terms of engagement" or a brief, bullet-point "rules of the road" – listing speed limits at various points of the causeway, as well as rights and responsibilities for cyclists when utilizing the causeway can be introduced. The signage can be used to convey a welcoming atmosphere upon entrance, but also to outline a sense of accountability.

2. Educate the residents of Key Biscayne and surrounding areas to address some of the main causes of accidents along the Causeway (excessive speed and driving under the influence). A "PSA" can be developed in conjunction with the Village of Key Biscayne, aimed at their residents and promoted using social media, newspaper ads (Islander News), or commercial spots on the Village of Key Biscayne's TV channel. These efforts could potentially involve elected officials from Key Biscayne, as well as the Village Manager and Chief of Police, and island residents (such as cyclists or parents with children). The PSAs would serve as a reminder to residents about the dangers of drinking and driving, and encourage residents to abide by the speed limits – both inside the Village boundaries (35 mph) and on the Causeway.
3. Propose to reduce the speed limit along the entire Causeway to a uniform speed of 35mph. This could either be on a permanent basis, or throughout the duration of the construction projections and the rebuilding of the bridge. In the interim, I will propose a discussion item for the County Commission to discuss ideas and suggestions to be implemented on a countywide basis.
4. Establish clear delineations and divisions between lanes – motorist lanes and cycling lanes – this could be in the form of boundaries, cones, vibratory speed bumps which flash and light up at night. In this fashion, it will establish a stronger separation and stronger warning signs between automobile drivers and cyclists – each can safely "stay in a lane."
5. Focus on bike lane improvements, based on input from members of the cycling community, as well as other stakeholders. This can be developed in conjunction with a cycling community task force, which I hope to set up with key stakeholders and representatives in that area, to keep me apprised of current and pertinent issues.
6. Focus on enhanced and continuous enforcement – from all three municipalities. This is an ongoing issue and resources need to be shared and implemented equally. The City and County police departments need to coordinate resources (manpower), and work together to jointly implement enforcement, for both drivers and cyclists. This includes shared DUI checkpoint enforcement, as well as increased and continual speed trap enforcement. The culture of island residents speeding upon entrance or exit of the island will shift once speed enforcement is

enhanced, on a long-term and semi-permanent, regular basis (18 months or so), not just for 30 days following a cycling accident, as has been the case in the past.

7. Enhance enforcement for the "pelotons" (bicycle rider gangs or groups of cyclists *en masse*) as the rules of the road apply equally to ALL citizens. Cyclists have the same rights to access and use of the Causeway as motorists, so they need to be held equally accountable for the rules of the road. If they are speeding or otherwise in violation of the laws, they need to be cited and given tickets, just as if they were a motorist in an automobile. Equal treatment for equal access should be the operating principle going forward.
8. Maintain continual outreach efforts and liaise with all stakeholders in the community – members of the cycling community, Key Biscayne elected officials and municipal representatives, City of Miami and Miami-Dade Police Departments, alike. Keep an open dialogue, and convene quarterly meetings, through my staff, with appropriate representation, with appropriate stakeholders and leaders, to discuss ongoing progress, measurement of shared goal attainment, shared responsibilities by all parties, as well as discuss new issues of importance to all parties. Shared and open communication between everyone on this issue is vital and critical to everyone's success in this ongoing, long-term project.
9. Develop and build support with the rest of the County Commission for continued and enhanced bicycle safety measures, to be implemented not just on the Rickenbacker Causeway, but on a countywide basis as well.

Our office will continue to seek solutions through active involvement with stakeholders in the community, and we will work hard to maintain open lines of communication among all involved parties. Thank you for your continued interest and participation in this process.



Xavier L. Suarez
Commissioner
District 7