

Rickenbacker Causeway and Venetian Causeway

Safety and Resiliency Improvements and Replacements

Overview

For more than a decade, many different ideas for improving safety for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians on the Rickenbacker Causeway and Venetian Causeway have been discussed among traffic agencies, elected officials and the public. The Recent Resilient 305 Rapid Action Plan identifies both causeways and their bridge structures (Bear Cut Bridge and Venetian Bridges) as extremely vulnerable to storm surge and sea level rise. An important purpose of the solicitation of a Request for Proposal (RFP) is to address the much-needed and expeditious replacement of these bridges to protect Miami-Dade County residents and visitors who use them.

*In March 2021, the County received an Unsolicited Proposal that County agencies determined to be a viable solution to these urgent challenges. On July 8, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava proposed, and the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved, the solicitation of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to begin the Rickenbacker Causeway's formal public engagement process – seeking to design the best solution for road, bridge, park, bicycle, pedestrian and driver safety, coastal resiliency causeway improvements, the replacement of the Bear Cut Bridge, and the implementation of the Project Development & Engineering (PD&E) study for the replacement of bridges along the Venetian Causeway. This will be the beginning of a **two-step process** that consists of:*

- 1. First, we will select the best proposal following the County's RFP competitive process and enter into an Interim Agreement that will include:**
 - a. For Rickenbacker Causeway: The start of a robust public engagement process to develop the concept for the project. This will include conducting due diligence and analyzing driver safety, traffic flow improvements, bicycle and pedestrian safety to Rickenbacker Causeway and the replacement of Bear Cut Bridge to provide coastal resiliency and mitigate future storm surge and sea level rise impacts. It will also include the evaluation of accessible, complete, and safe streets, causeway and greenways, equitable outstanding recreational, natural experiences as well as determine the financial feasibility of the plan.*
 - b. For Venetian Causeway: The fundamental purpose of this RFP for the Venetian is the immediate ability to fund and expedite related construction approved through the completed FDOT/DTPW led Project Development and Engineering Study process for the replacement of bridges that will address hurricane storm surge and sea level rise impacts, bicycle and pedestrian safety. This project study has gone through an extensive public engagement process and is currently under final review by the Office of Environmental Management (OEM). Therefore, the period for public comment for Venetian Causeway PD&E is closed. FDOT has informed us that questions regarding the PD&E while the project is closed for public comment would jeopardize the current process and delay the next phases of the project funding and implementation. The most recent FDOT Venetian Causeway PD&E May 11, 2021 public hearing material can be found on the FDOT project website at:*

Public Hearing | Venetian Causeway PD&E Study (venetiancausewaypublichearing.com)

2. **Second, we will negotiate a Final Agreement.** *Following approval of the Interim Agreement by the Board of County Commissioners, and after significant public engagement and input, the county will work to negotiate the final project agreement. The final agreement will allow the County and the selected proposer to finalize the conceptual design, costs, financing, and revenue structure in addition to incorporating public feedback into the final project scope. The selected proposer will be required to take responsibility for funding and implementing all required repairs and upgrades to causeway infrastructure and to design, construct, maintain and operate the infrastructure for the term of the agreement in a manner that ensures continued operability in the face of uncertain impacts caused by hurricane storm surge and sea level rise.*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Why are these projects important?

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our residents and building infrastructure resiliency for the future are top priorities for Miami Dade County.

The RFP will help to promote cyclist, pedestrian, and driver safety along some of the most heavily traveled County corridors and aligns with “Vision Zero,” our commitment to reduce all traffic fatalities and severe injuries to zero, while increasing safe, equitable, and healthy mobility for all. The Rickenbacker Causeway and Venetian Causeway are traveled by more than 11 million vehicles annually. Cyclist and pedestrian counts for Rickenbacker Causeway are estimated at approximately 500,000 cyclists and 250,000 pedestrians per year. Although bicycling is extremely popular on the Rickenbacker Causeway and Venetian Causeway, no physical division exists between the cars and bikes. This lack of separation between bikes and cars, excessive speeds and driving under the influence have contributed to multiple fatalities since 2006 and spurred many cyclists and motorists to push for better bike lanes and barriers to protect them from the high-speed traffic on the bridge.

The Request for Proposal is a competitive response to the urgent need to address safety and resilience concerns through design and development that prioritizes greater road, bridge, park, bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as coastal resiliency improvements and replacements for the Rickenbacker Causeway and Venetian Causeway.

Key features of the Rickenbacker Causeway project:

- Coastal resiliency, vehicular traffic flow, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and recreation improvements along the Rickenbacker Causeway that preserves the beauty, heritage, and function of Causeway
- Addresses roadway and bridge storm surge and sea level rise impacts by raising the road base, replacing Bear Cut Bridge and providing for its maintenance
- Traffic lanes analysis and redesign to provide improved vehicle access on and off Virginia Key and Key Biscayne.
- Improve traffic flow, public safety, including creating a separated and dedicated bicycle and pedestrian pathway, replacing the existing pathway with an improved capacity pathway to

eliminate bicycle and pedestrian conflict with automobiles, thus reducing potential injury and fatalities for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.

- Continued maintenance of the West Bridge, William Powell Bridge, and fishing pier elements.
- The expansion of parkland and beachfront along the Rickenbacker Causeway.

Key features of the Venetian Causeway project:

- Immediate ability to fund and expedite construction approved through the current FDOT PD&E Study that replaces bridges along the Venetian Causeway to address storm surge and sea level rise impacts, improves the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and ensures the traveling safety of Venetian Island residents and visitors.
- This project study has gone through an extensive public engagement process and is currently under final review by the Office of Environmental Management (OEM). Therefore, the period for public comment for Venetian Causeway PD&E is closed. FDOT has informed us that questions regarding the PD&E while the project is closed for public comment would jeopardize the current process and delay the next phases of the project funding and implementation. The most recent FDOT Venetian Causeway PD&E May 11, 2021 public hearing material can be found on the FDOT project website at:

Public Hearing | Venetian Causeway PD&E Study (venetiancausewaypublichearing.com)
www.fdotmiamidade.com/VenetianBridgeStudy

How will the RFP process help?

- It will address, at an accelerated pace and all at once, the urgent issues of safety, resiliency, road and bridge infrastructure and safe and equitable access to recreational space.
- **All risk and responsibility for funding and expediting the design, repairs, construction, operation, and maintenance of the causeways is shifted to a county approved private entity, which will be managed through contract oversight procedures, audit, and inspection by county officials, in a manner that ensures continued operability in the face of uncertain impacts from hurricane storm surge and sea level rise.**
- It is a holistic approach to key issues; multimodal bike and pedestrian safety; coastal resiliency by replacing outdated infrastructure and creating equitable access to recreation amenities.

What is the RFP process?

1. Public Meeting to be held August 4, 2021
2. RFP is developed and published August 2021
3. The RFP will be published as an open and competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) for safety and resiliency improvements to Rickenbacker Causeway and replacement of Bear Cut Bridge and implementation of PD&E Study for Venetian Causeway for the replacement of bridges.
4. A selection of the best proposal from the RFP process is made, and the County enters into negotiation for an Interim Agreement

5. Upon successful negotiations, the Interim Agreement is brought before the Board for approval. Anticipated date July 2022.
6. Upon Interim agreement approval, the County will enter into negotiations for the final project agreement.
7. The Board of County Commissioners will have final approval of the project agreement

Will there be opportunity for input from stakeholders?

- In addition to the public meeting hosted by Miami-Dade County on August 4, 2021, the public engagement process for the Rickenbacker will occur after the RFP selection is made and during the interim agreement phase – which will allow for due diligence and public meetings with citizens and causeway stakeholders to determine design, construction, operations, and maintenance requirements for the causeways.
- The Venetian Causeway Bridge Replacement Project has already gone through a Florida Department of Transport led Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study which began in 2014, included a robust public engagement process and is expected to end in 2021. The project is currently under final review by the Office of Environmental Management (OEM). The most recent FDOT Venetian Causeway PD&E May 11, 2021 public hearing material can be found on the FDOT project website at:

Public Hearing | Venetian Causeway PD&E Study (venetiancausewaypublichearing.com)
www.fdotmiamidade.com/VenetianBridgeStudy

What are the benefits of a public / private partnership?

- All risk and responsibility for funding and expediting the design, repairs, construction, operation, and maintenance of the causeways is shifted to a county approved private entity, which will be managed through regular contract oversight, audit, and inspection by county officials, in a manner that ensures continued operability in the face of uncertain impacts from hurricane storm surge and sea level rise.
 - Transferring the financial risk from taxpayers to investors. The proposer will be contractually obligated to deliver the project on-time and on-budget.
 - The selected proposer is responsible for operating and maintaining the project over the contract’s life to ensure high-quality design and construction.
 - The selected proposer is responsible for the repair and ongoing maintenance of the project on timely manner.

Will the county give up ownership of the Causeways?

- No, the county retains ownership of the property. All streets and roads will remain public rights-of-way.

Will there be maintenance and operation oversight by the county?

- Yes, there will always be a county team of engineers from Department of Transportation and Public Works and Miami-Dade Parks to provide infrastructure, maintenance, and inspection

oversight to make sure the causeways are properly maintained following Department of Transportation standards, for the duration of the agreement.

Will toll revenue from Venetian Causeway be used for Rickenbacker or vice versa?

- No, the toll revenues will continue to remain independent from each other, dedicated to the causeway on which they were collected, and will not be commingled in anyway.

Will this require increasing tolls for both Causeways?

- No future toll rate increases will be established without prior approval by the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners. This RFP is simply the beginning of a competitive process. All proposers will be required to submit pro-forma with projections for toll rates that will be evaluated and further negotiated before coming back to the Board for final approval.
- Furthermore, the County will pursue all opportunities for federal, state and other funding to support the projects contemplated by this RFP and thereby minimize the need for any toll rate increases.

What are the long-term benefits?

- Improved traffic flow, coastal climate resilience for all infrastructure, public safety for residents of Key Biscayne and Venetian Islands, bicycle and pedestrian safety as prescribed in "Vision Zero", private financing and federal, state, and local grants that eliminates public subsidy and provides for immediate expediting of construction process and ongoing operation and maintenance.

When would the project start and how long would it take to be completed?

- For the Rickenbacker: Upon award of an interim agreement, the Rickenbacker due diligence and public engagement work begins to determine design, construction and operations cost and timeline. Upon final agreement followed by the issuance of a notice to proceed, construction is estimated to require approximately 3-5 years.
- For the Venetian: Venetian Causeway current FDOT projected construction completion for the project is listed as 2028. However, upon final approval of Venetian Causeway design, a revised projected date for completion may be established to expedite construction.

Will the causeways be closed during construction?

- No, each causeway will have a phased traffic plan that requires the traffic flow to be maintained during the entire construction period. The Rickenbacker right of way is large enough to accommodate phased construction and the FDOT Venetian plan calls for temporary bypass bridges to be used during construction.

How will this impact residents of Key Biscayne?

- The RFP will allow for immediate funding and expedited replacement of the Bear Cut Bridge and sea level raising of the Causeway road base to provide more hurricane and coastal flood resistant infrastructure that will protect Key Biscayne residents and their homes and businesses. Traffic lanes will be redesigned to provide improved vehicle access on and off Virginia Key and Key Biscayne. The project is further expected to improve traffic flow by providing adequate

capacity in the separated/protected bicycle pedestrian facility to reduce the number of cyclists on the roadway. Phased approach to construction will minimize the impact to causeway traffic.

How will this impact residents of Venetian Islands?

- The RFP will allow for an expedited implementation of the FDOT plan for construction utilizing private financing that can later be reimbursed through federal, state, and local funding sources to reduce tolling impacts. Phased approach to construction and temporary bypass bridges will minimize the impact to causeway traffic.

How will Rickenbacker Causeway connect with other projects (Miami Loop, Underline, Ludlam Trail, Miami River Greenway, Commodore Trail)?

- The Rickenbacker Causeway, particularly, as a Heritage/Scenic Street defined in the Parks Master Plan, provides a key piece of the green infrastructure linkage to the Miami Loop consisting of Ludlam Trail, the Underline, the Commodore Trail, and the Miami River Greenway, and together feed into Miami-Dade County Park’s vision of greenways, parkways, and overall connectivity to the County’s transportation corridors. The successful completion of the Project should significantly improve safety for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, improve automobile traffic flow, access and connectivity to causeway amenities and businesses, improve the overall quality of life for citizens and visitors, improve access to heritage sites and scenic natural resources, parks and public spaces on Virginia Key and Key Biscayne, and improve connectivity to downtown Miami, and the Miami River and help the County further realize the Board-approved vision contained in the Parks Master Plan.