

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Town Commission

FROM: Howard Tipton, Town Manager

REPORT DATE: March 18, 2026

MEETING DATE: March 23, 2026

SUBJECT: Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Background

At its June 17, 2024, Regular Workshop, the Town Commission received a presentation from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the proposed construction of the Longboat Pass Bridge. Following this presentation, the Commission submitted correspondence to FDOT outlining the Town's preferred option for the bridge replacement.

FDOT has since conducted both in-person and virtual public hearings (March 12th and 17th, 2026) to share the preferred alternative, along with the analyses completed to date as part of the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. This study assesses and documents the anticipated benefits, costs, and potential impacts associated with replacing the existing S.R. 789 Bridge over Longboat Pass, including consideration of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

The FDOT preferred alternative identified in the study offered several potential advantages, including the preservation of multi-modal connectivity through enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improved emergency evacuation and response times, and the ability to maintain continuous vehicular and marine traffic during operations. Additionally, the project is expected to reduce long-term operating and maintenance costs while enhancing overall safety for all users of the bridge. In summary, the PD&E Study reflected a comprehensive evaluation of the bridge replacement project, attempting to balance infrastructure needs with community priorities and environmental considerations.

However, numerous public comments and objections were submitted in opposition to the proposed high fixed-span bridge. Concerns focused on the bridge's height and steep approach, with many stating it could pose safety risks for pedestrians and cyclists. Additional feedback indicated that the design would not alleviate traffic congestion heading north into Bradenton Beach and would be inconsistent with the character of Longboat Key.

Staff has prepared a draft letter to the FDOT project team for the Commission's discussion and consideration.

Staff Recommendation

Provide direction to the Town Manager.

Attachments

- A. Previous Commission correspondence to the Florida Department of Transportation
- B. Draft Correspondence for Approval
- C. PowerPoint Presentation



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Incorporated November 14, 1955

06/28/2024 TCSM
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June 28, 2024

The Honorable Lakshmikanth (LK) Nandam, Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation, District 1
801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830

RE: Longboat Key Pass Bridge Replacement

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Longboat Key Town Commission hosted an FDOT presentation on June 17, 2024 by Patrick Bateman and David Turley regarding the Longboat Pass Bridge replacement. First, we'd like to commend your staff for their excellent presentation and for answering so many questions from both the Commission and the public. We all understand that the current structure is beyond its useful life and needs to be replaced. The public meeting facilitated an informative session that allowed the Town Commission to come to a series of recommendations for your office to consider for this critical bridge replacement project for our community.

Our primary recommendation is that the fixed span bridge, while the less costly option, is not the right solution for several reasons. First, the bridge appears to cover a shorter distance than the Ringling Bridge and yet, based on our understanding, will be 13 feet higher at 78-feet high. That height necessitates at least a grade approaching 4.5% and likely more. Google Earth shows that the Ringling bridge covers approximately 2,100 feet of waterway and the proposed fixed span bridge for Longboat will cover 1,400 feet to 2,000 feet of waterway depending on location of measurement. If the fixed span bridge is utilized for Longboat Pass, and it is 13 feet higher, the math would indicate that the slope will be more severe than the Ringling Bridge.

That slope will be a significant challenge to many of our residents and visitors to walk or bike. Traversing the Ringling bridge is a challenge that many of our residents regularly tackle, and most will tell you that's about all the challenge they will take on. The next important reason the fixed span doesn't work is that the downslope speed from a 78 foot bridge may well exceed what our bikers can safely control. We know that pedestrian safety is a top priority for FDOT and a core reason for the contemplated bridge replacement. Increasing the grade to 5 times its current height would worsen, not improve, the span's safety.

Finally, a 78 foot high fixed span would be inconsistent with the character of Longboat Key. One of the area's few remaining residential communities

immune to high rises and hotel houses, Longboat has always been connected to its neighbors to the north and south by modest drawbridges over relatively narrow passes. There have been few, if any, complaints. The fixed span option would dramatically alter that character for the worse.

Town Commission recommendation: The 36 foot bascule bridge is the right option with a height that will require minimal openings each day (maximizing traffic flow) and exceeds all of the Coast Guard requirements.

Our next recommendation is to reduce the width of the proposed bridge. Your team has already evaluated opportunities to reduce the overall width by approximately 10 feet, but believe that further reductions can be achieved without compromising pedestrian, biker, or driver safety. In fact, mirroring the dimensions of lanes on the busier Ringling Bridge could achieve reduced width of 16 feet.

Town Commission recommendation: Continue to push for additional width reduction.

Finally, how the new bridge ties in with GMD is critical to its impacts on the residents on the northwest corner of our island. It is critical that the tie-in be as close to the existing landing as possible to minimize those impacts including noise, privacy, and loss of foliage. We are prepared to discuss engineering solutions to achieve the minimum possible height and farthest eastward siting of the Longboat approach and landing.

Town Commission recommendation: Align the new bridge's southern landing as closely as possible to the existing landing elevation and location on GMD.

The Town of Longboat Key appreciates the close working relationship that we have had with FDOT over the years, and in particular appreciates your leadership of District 1. A bridge that best reflects the communities it connects while keeping biker, pedestrian and driver safety top of mind are complementary ideas our citizens and this Commission support. We are also grateful for the opportunity to provide this input on the Longboat Key Pass Bridge to you and the FDOT, and thank you in advance for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Ken Schneier
Mayor



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March 23, 2026

The Honorable Jamie Driggers, Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation
801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830

DRAFT

Re: Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Congratulations on your new position, and thank you for the positive coordination and interactions between FDOT District 1 and the town of Longboat Key. The Town looks forward to a continued partnership.

As you are aware, the Longboat Pass Bridge is one of two access bridges to the island. These bridges serve as the front door to our community, setting the tone for the island's quality and character for residents, visitors, business owners, and service providers alike. We understand that FDOT recently held two public meetings to discuss the long-awaited results of the PD&E study that began in June 2020.

While the Town acknowledges the substantial cost differential in the high fixed span bridge versus other, lower-level bascule bridges, as well as the vehicular and boating traffic benefit by creating a freer flow condition, it is difficult for the Town to imagine the magnitude of the fixed-span bridge.

On June 28, 2024, Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier submitted correspondence on behalf of the Town to your predecessor, Mr. LK Nandam, outlining the Town Commission's position on the bridge alternatives. We believe this position also reflects the views of many Town residents, particularly those at the north end of the island. The correspondence is attached for your reference, and the major points include the following:

- The bridge will be higher than the Ringling Bridge, with significant grades affecting the many walkers and bikers who utilize the bridge for a healthy lifestyle and to get to island areas to the north.
- The high fixed span would appear to be out of character for the north end of Longboat Key, which is not a community with high rises and hotels. For decades, Longboat has been connected by modest drawbridges.

The Town of Longboat Key values the strong working relationship it has maintained with FDOT over the years and looks forward to continuing that partnership under your leadership. Ensuring that the bridge reflects the character and needs of the communities it connects remains a

priority for the Town. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Longboat Pass Bridge.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Town Administration offices if you require further information.

Sincerely,

Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Attachment:
June 28, 2024 Correspondence

Longboat Pass Bridge Discussion

Town Commission Regular Workshop
March 23, 2026

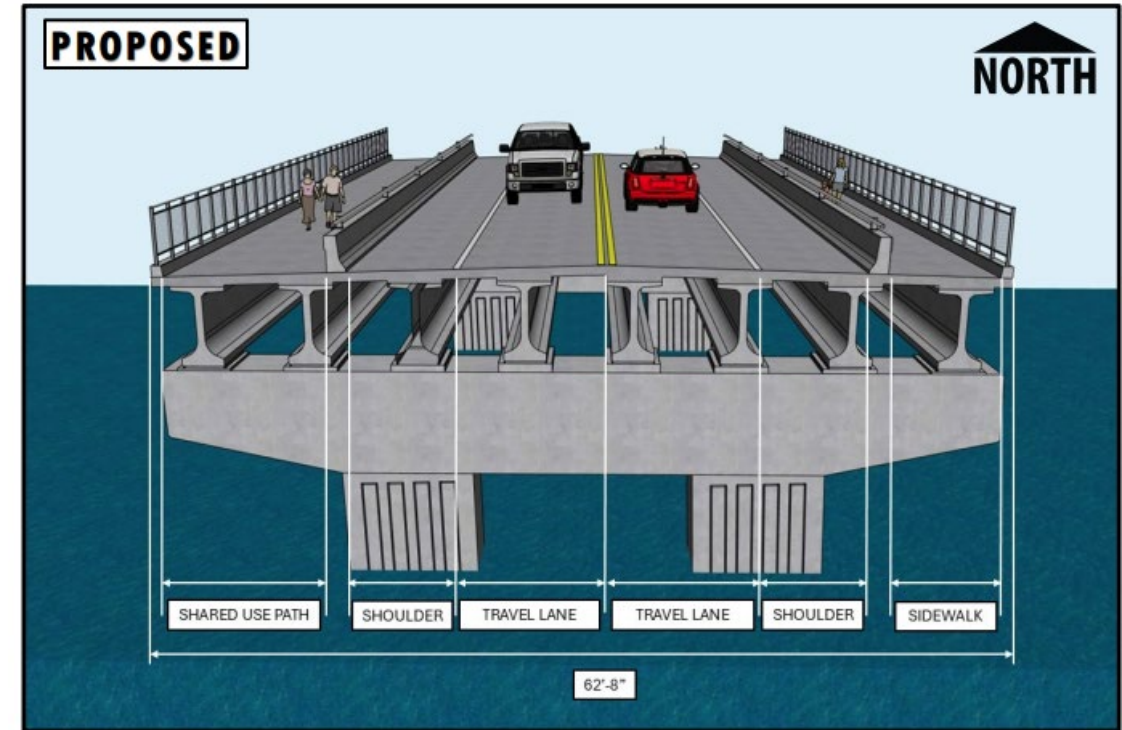


TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Background and PD&E Alternatives Analysis Results

- Existing bridge built in 1957, improved in 2005 and 2020. Typical 50-year service life for this bridge.
- FDOT began PD&E in early 2020 to analyze Bridge alternatives. Completion expected early 2026 at a cost of \$2.1 million.
- PD&E analyzed alternatives below (cost estimates are about a year old and need to be updated):
 - Low-Level Single Leaf Bascule: \$176 million
 - Low-Level Double Leaf Bascule: \$185 million
 - Mid-Level Single Leaf Bascule: \$184 million
 - Mid-Level Double Leaf Bascule: \$194 million
 - High-Span Fixed Bridge: \$138 million**
- Based on notable cost differences, **FDOT is preferring the high-span fixed bridge alternative.**
- Bridge is planned for a **75-year service life.**



Bridge Notes:

- **High Span: No Bridge Openings for Navigation**
- Travel Lane Shoulders for flex and transit
- Shared Use Path/ Multi-Use Trail



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Total Project Cost Estimate (2025 dollars):

COST	Design	\$4.5 million	\$0
	Right-of-Way Acquisition	\$0*	\$0
	Construction	\$137.64 million	\$0
	Utility Relocation	\$725,000	\$0
	Wetland Mitigation	\$25,000	\$0
	Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI)	\$16.5 million	\$0
	Total Project Costs (2025)	\$159.39 million	\$0**

Draft Schedule:

PHASE	FISCAL YEAR	FUNDING
Design	2026	\$4.5M
Right-of-Way	No Private Right-of-Way Acquisition	\$0
Construction	N/A	Unfunded



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Rendered images shared at previous workshops (Existing):



Manatee County - Coquina



Longboat Key – Greer Island



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Rendered images shared at previous workshops (Proposed):



Manatee County - Coquina



Longboat Key – Greer Island



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

FDOT and Town, Next Steps

- Final Public Meetings for the PD&E and alternative analysis were conducted by FDOT on March 12th (in-person) and March 17th (virtual).
- Once PD&E is concluded, FDOT will plan the design effort. Construction currently remains unfunded.

WAYS TO COMMENT

There are multiple ways to submit your comments:



Fill out a speaker card to make a verbal comment during the formal testimony portion of the evening.



Scan and submit a digital comment form from the project website.



Visit the comment table to place a written comment in the comment box or take it home with you to submit later.

Mail or email in your comment.



David Turley, P.E., MS 1-40
Florida Department of Transportation
801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830



David Turley, P.E.
FDOT Project Manager
David.Turley@dot.state.fl.us

Though comments are accepted at any time, they must be received or postmarked by **March 23, 2026**, to be included in the formal hearing record.



Manatee County
Financial Project ID: 436676-1

S.R. 789 from North Shore Road to Coquina Park Entrance

PUBLIC HEARING | MARCH 2026



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Ideas borrowed from the Cortez Bridge project. Things like:



Bridge overlooks, ex. sculpted



Decorative railing



Landscape and texture-softened retaining walls



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Thank You!

End of Agenda Item