



TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY

Incorporated November 14, 1955

06/28/2024 TCSM
#4B
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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