

RESOLUTION NO. _____

PROPOSED RESOLUTION NO. 19-081

**A RESOLUTION OF THE LAKELAND CITY COMMISSION
SUPPORTING THE “DOWNTOWN WEST, OPTION B”
ALTERNATIVE FOR THE LAKELAND INTERMODAL CENTER
AS IDENTIFIED IN THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION’S FEASIBILITY STUDY.**

WHEREAS, Downtown Lakeland is a transportation hub for Polk County, with the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (doing business as the “Citrus Connection”), AMTRAK and Greyhound operating mass transportation facilities and/or services for residents, employees and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Citrus Connection operates nine transit routes that travel through its main passenger terminal, located at 200 North Florida Avenue; and

WHEREAS, this terminal is approximately 30 years old and is functionally-obsolete, having neither the capacity nor physical design to safely and efficiently serve our community’s transit needs; and

WHEREAS, the terminal’s location on State Road 37 (Florida Avenue) at the CSX rail crossing creates significant delays due to the expected increase in freight rail traffic, particularly for its Gold Line (formerly Route #1); and

WHEREAS, significant development and re-development is occurring or planned within Downtown Lakeland, such as the new Mirrorton residential community, Springhill Suites Hotel at RP Funding Center, re-development of the former West Lake community on Lake Beulah, new office and employment-based development around Lake Mirror and Bonnet Springs Park with an associated

mixed-use development program for the former Florida Tile Site near Lake Wire;
and

WHEREAS, several “catalyst sites” were evaluated throughout Downtown to establish a vision for more intensive development activity and coordinated public improvements to increase Lakeland’s tax base and promote efficient use of our community’s infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the RP Funding Center is Polk County’s largest events and convention venue, home to the Lakeland Magic National Basketball Association G-League affiliate of the Orlando Magic, the Florida Tropics SC indoor soccer club of the Major Arena Soccer League and host to hundreds of other annual events including conferences, trade shows, cheer and dance competitions, entertainment events and civic events; and

WHEREAS, Downtown Lakeland is located at the core of the City’s Central City Transit Supportive Area as designated in the Lakeland Comprehensive Plan 2010-2020, with policies that recognize and encourage the availability of alternative transportation options; and

WHEREAS, numerous existing and planned Lake-to-Lake Bikeway routes converge in Downtown Lakeland, with premier bicycle and pedestrian routes that connect Lakeland’s neighborhoods, employment centers, parks and lakes with regional trail facilities such as the future West Lake Hunter Trail (Lakeland-Plant City Connector) and the Fort Fraser Trail; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) continues to fund substantial investments in multi-modal transportation within the central

Lakeland area, including the SR 37/Florida Avenue Road-Diet Test (FPN# 444627-1), Capital and Operating components of the SR 37/Florida Avenue Transit Circulator (FPNs# 44915-1, 44916-1), Central Lakeland Transit Signal Prioritization Project (FPN# 440319-1), New York Avenue Cycle Track (FPN# 433260-1) and New York Avenue Pedestrian Overpass over the CSX Rail Line (FPN# 436656-1) and additional future investments identified through FDOT's Lakeland Area Alternatives Analysis completed in 2018 and supported through City Commission Resolution #5495; and

WHEREAS, FDOT is currently conducting a US 98 Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study between Downtown Lakeland and Interstate 4, which is intended to ultimately provide a dedicated busway through the medical district (home to the main campuses for Lakeland Regional Health and Watson Clinic) and Mid-Town Community Redevelopment Area to planned Interstate 4 Express Bus and Brightline/Virgin Trains high-speed rail services; and

WHEREAS, the Momentum 2040 long-range transportation plan developed by the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) includes a future extension of the SunRail commuter rail line from the Orlando Metropolitan Area to Lakeland, with interim bus service between Lakeland and Haines City, Lake Alfred and Auburndale concurrent with each incremental westward extension of this commuter rail line; and

WHEREAS, FDOT commenced the Lakeland Intermodal Center Feasibility Study in 2018 to evaluate alternative sites for a new transportation hub in a location more conducive to the transit system expansion a.) with additional transit vehicle

capacity, b.) constructed to today's modern safety standards with technology supporting future transportation innovations c.) to be coordinated with station(s) serving either high-speed (Interstate 4) or regional passenger (CSX line) rail services, d.) with parking facilities to serve surrounding development with sufficient excess capacity to support future regional rail services and e.) enhanced pedestrian access routes to achieve stated goals of an efficient, multi-modal transportation center that can support and enhance our community's mobility options and encourage private investment and public-private partnerships to support the community's vision for Downtown; and

WHEREAS, five locations were evaluated for the Lakeland Intermodal Center facility by FDOT, three in the Downtown area and two near the Interstate 4/US 98 interchange at Exit 32; and

WHEREAS, based on analysis and comments received from the public and Project Advisory Committee, the number of alternative sites were reduced to the Lakeland Police Department Parking Lot ("Downtown East") and City-owned land immediately north of the RP Funding Center between Lemon and Main Streets ("Downtown West"); and

WHEREAS, FDOT's project team developed alternative layout options for the Downtown East and Downtown West sites, with each Downtown East option yielding fewer new bus staging positions than the Downtown West options and bus ingress/egress points that would have to be located on Bay Street directly opposite to the townhomes being constructed within the Mirrorton residential community; and

WHEREAS, the Lakeland Police Department has expressed concerns regarding the security of its officers and employees associated with the development of an intermodal center on the Downtown East site and the reduction in number of secured parking spaces that could accommodate its employees relative to the current space count in its parking lot; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown West site can accommodate more bus staging positions and a substantial amount of vehicular parking spaces that can increase according to the ultimate number of desired garage levels, offsetting some of the surface parking space losses associated with the RP Funding Center catalyst site vision; and

WHEREAS, the AMTRAK Station should be moved to the Downtown West site from its current Lake Mirror site location, incurring additional initial capital cost but providing opportunities for redevelopment of the Lake Mirror site; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown West site can be used to incentivize desired growth to the north and west of the RP Funding Center, provide connectivity to private investments on the former Florida Tile site and Bonnet Springs Park, public investments in the New York Avenue corridor and the City's investment in a new roundabout on the north shore of Lake Beulah at the western gateway to Downtown;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. The Downtown West site best meets the goals of the Lakeland Intermodal Center project and supports the long-term visions for Lakeland's Downtown and the larger transportation network.

SECTION 2. Option B for the Downtown West site includes a parking garage that can accommodate more vehicular parking spaces than a surface lot and can fit within City-owned lands bound by Main Street, Lemon Street and Ohio Avenue, allowing the remaining private properties on that block to be utilized for non-transportation uses that will contribute to the City's tax base.

SECTION 3. The Downtown West, Option B alternative can include appropriate transit, commuter/intercity rail, ridesharing, bicycle/pedestrian and other amenities of an urban transportation center that provide a true hub for Lakeland, Polk County and the Central Florida Region.

SECTION 4. The Downtown West, Option B alternative can include a grade-separated crossing of Main Street to provide a safer route for pedestrians accessing a new rail passenger platform.

SECTION 5. The Downtown West, Option B alternative is positioned to provide direct access to the RP Funding Center, future mixed-use development on the former Florida Tile site via an elevated walkway, and other future development and re-development opportunities on the west side of Downtown between State Road 37 (Florida Avenue) and Lake Beulah.

SECTION 6. The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District Board selected Downtown West, Option B as its preferred alternative at its December 11, 2019

meeting. The Lakeland Intermodal Center Project Advisory Committee likewise approved this alternative at its December 12, 2019 meeting.

SECTION 7. The Florida Department of Transportation and Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (Citrus Connection) are requested to commence the necessary planning and design exercises to implement the Downtown West, Option B alternative.

SECTION 8. The Polk Transportation Planning Organization, Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Transit Administration are requested to allocate funds for the discrete project implementation phases for the Downtown West, Option B alternative, including but not limited to environmental analyses, design and/or construction, for inclusion in the Five-Year Work Program or at the earliest available opportunity.

SECTION 9. The Polk Transportation Planning Organization is requested to likewise include any programmed State and Federal funding for the Lakeland Intermodal Center in its Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program.

SECTION 10. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage.

PASSED AND CERTIFIED AS TO PASSAGE this 16th day of December, A.D. 2019.

H. WILLIAM MUTZ, MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
KELLY S. KOOS, CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CORRECTNESS: _____
PALMER C. DAVIS
INTERIM CITY ATTORNEY