

RESOLUTION NO. _____

PROPOSED RESOLUTION NO. 22-058

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION; MAKING FINDINGS; REQUESTING THAT THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IMPLEMENT A THREE-LANE CROSS-SECTION ON FLORIDA AVENUE (STATE ROAD 37) FROM ARIANA STREET TO LIME STREET, WITH RELATED MOBILITY, SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS, CORRIDOR AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY PROJECTS ON SURROUNDING STREETS, AND A FUNDING PLAN FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Lakeland Comprehensive Plan: Our Community 2030 contains a Vision Zero Goal to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries; and

WHEREAS, Florida Avenue (State Road 37) is a north-south roadway within the City of Lakeland that is operated by the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) and is not on the National Highway or Strategic Intermodal Systems; and

WHEREAS, Florida Avenue traverses the Dixieland and Downtown Community Redevelopment Areas, running between the Dixieland and South Lake Morton neighborhoods, which are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the City’s Downtown and Dixieland Community Redevelopment Areas, established in 1979 and 2001, respectively, have identified Florida Avenue as needing improvements in order to increase the economic vitality of these districts; and

WHEREAS, Florida Avenue was configured with a five-lane cross-section consisting of narrow travel lanes (from 8½ to 9 feet wide) and sidewalks not meeting State and Federal criteria for public rights-of-way; and

WHEREAS, at the City's request, FDOT commenced the South Florida Avenue (SR 37) Complete Streets Master Plan for the segment of the roadway between Ariana Street and Pine Street, evaluating mobility needs, improvement options and economic development potential within the corridor, and conducting extensive technical analyses and a public engagement process to solicit direct input from all stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, upon the completion of the Master Plan Study, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 5370 on May 1, 2017, finding that the current roadway design within the study area did not adhere to the City's adopted Complete Streets Policy, created significant safety concerns and did not contribute to the economic development objectives of the Downtown and Dixieland CRA's; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 5370 requested that the FDOT proceed with a Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study, or other acceptable detailed engineering-level analysis, with stakeholder input on alternative projects that could improve safety and mobility options for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit patrons within the Master Plan Study area, including a lane elimination (road-diet) project encompassing all or portions of the study area; and

WHEREAS, if a lane elimination alternative was ultimately recommended for implementation, it was recommended that FDOT establish a test period of no less than one year to allow for an evaluation of travel speeds, delays, volumes, crash data

and transit operations within the study area and the impact of diverted trips on parallel streets and neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 5370 concluded that, regardless of the recommended improvement alternative, a detailed multi-modal option should be implemented and contain project costs and timelines, funding sources and mitigation measures related to existing transit routes, parallel streets and adjacent neighborhoods to address roadway cross-section changes and potential diverted traffic; and

WHEREAS, in April 2020, FDOT commenced construction of a temporary three-lane cross-section between Ariana Street and Lime Street to test the impacts of a lane elimination alternative, and, with funding from FDOT, the Citrus Connection commenced circulator transit service (the “Peach Line”) in the surrounding neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the formal road-diet test period began in October 2020, using pre- and post-traffic data collected on over 90 roadway segments and intersections within and adjacent to the Florida Avenue corridor, with travel times collected via Bluetooth signal sensors on Florida Avenue and parallel arterial roadway corridors; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission held a workshop on December 2, 2022, at which data was presented showing that travel times during the test period were not significantly increased from the pre-test condition, with the average PM Peak travel time increasing by 14 seconds in the northbound direction, 72 seconds in the southbound direction, and a 95th percentile worst case average of 2 minutes 25 seconds; and

WHEREAS, the average travel speed decreased from 33 miles per hour (mph) to the 30-mph posted speed limit and the 85th percentile speed dropped from 38 to 35 mph; and

WHEREAS, the overall traffic volume on Florida Avenue within the study area has decreased by 14.7%, with a 5-10% diversion to Sikes Boulevard (SR 563); and

WHEREAS, the number of crashes before and after commencement of the test (October 2019 to February 2020 and October 2021 to February 2022) are comparable (increasing from 29 to 35), with fewer crashes occurring at more severe head-on, left-turn and sideswipe angles, but more rear-end collisions taking place; and

WHEREAS, emergency response times were determined to be comparable before and after commencement of the test; and

WHEREAS, extensive public input was received via social media, public meetings, e-mails, an on-line MetroQuest survey and written comments; and

WHEREAS, overall feedback received from public outreach was approximately 49% negative, 26% positive and 25% neutral, with area residents and businesses tending to be more supportive and commuters being more critical of the three-lane roadway configuration; and

WHEREAS, City staff has received letters of support for a three-lane cross-section from the Lakeland CRA Advisory Board, Lakeland Downtown Development Authority, Historic Lakeland, Inc., and the Lake Morton Neighborhood Association; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has determined that it cannot restore Florida Avenue to the previous five-lane cross-section due to documented deficiencies and the non-conforming nature of a five-lane cross section, and that a “No-Build” scenario would result in a four-lane corridor with no turn lanes and the existing six-foot wide sidewalks remaining in place; and

WHEREAS, City staff reviewed traffic data and public input to identify recommended improvements for City streets parallel to and intersecting with Florida Avenue in the vicinity of the study area;

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

1. The foregoing findings are true and correct and are incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof.
2. The City Commission recommends that the FDOT implement the following modifications and improvements to Florida Avenue:
 - a. Construct a three-lane cross-section for that portion of Florida Avenue between Ariana Street and Lime Street, with shared sidewalks being expanded to 11- to 12-foot widths to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists through the removal of the existing concrete barriers.
 - b. Improve pedestrian crossings within the corridor by installing audible signals at each signalized intersection and adding an on-demand crossing at East Belmar Street.
 - c. Add left-turn signals as appropriate at the Orange Street, Frank Lloyd Wright Way – Cresap Street, and East Belmar Street intersections to improve access onto and from the Florida Avenue corridor.
 - d. Improve the merge areas north and south of the project area during the design phase of the permanent corridor project.
 - e. Identify options to widen the sidewalk area along the west side of Florida Avenue in the vicinity of the Polk Theater.

- f. Ban non-delivery tractor-trailers on Florida Avenue, with an alternate truck route being determined around the Downtown and Dixieland Districts.
3. The City Commission makes the following additional findings and recommendations:
- a. The Peach Line circulator service should be made permanent, with future consideration for Gold Line improvements with bus bays and covered shelters if recommended and approved by the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District.
 - b. The City and the CRA will work with FDOT to incorporate beautification enhancements into the permanent Florida Avenue corridor improvement package.
 - c. The City commits to funding the design phase of the requested corridor improvements and requests that FDOT program funds for right-of-way acquisition and construction in its Five-Year Work Program.
 - d. As part of its annual budgeting process, the City will seek to prioritize and identify operational and safety improvements on its adjacent roadway system, such as the installation of speed humps, brick restoration, and the installation of raised crosswalks, with consideration for additional funding for alleyway improvements.
 - e. The City will continue to seek funding for the construction phase of the South Wabash Avenue Extension (Ariana Street to Harden Boulevard) and requests that the FDOT fund the implementation of capacity and operational improvements along US Highway 98 (Bartow Road) between Edgewood Drive and Main Street.

PASSED AND CERTIFIED AS TO PASSAGE this 19th day of December,

A.D. 2022.

H. WILLIAM MUTZ, MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
KELLY S. KOOS, CITY CLERK

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