

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

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**TO:** Jason E. Brown; County Administrator

**THROUGH:** Stan Boling, AICP; Community Development Director

**FROM:** Phil Matson, AICP; MPO Staff Director

**DATE:** November 2, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Request for Authorization to Explore the Extension of Aviation Boulevard and Other Access Improvements in the vicinity of the 37<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor

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It is requested that the information herein presented be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners at its regular meeting of November 14, 2017.

**DESCRIPTION & CONDITIONS**

37<sup>th</sup> Street is a vital corridor in Indian River County, as it is the primary point of access to the Indian River Medical Center (IRMC) and to a large number of medical-related facilities and businesses. 37<sup>th</sup> Street is approaching capacity. When vested trips are considered, together with existing traffic volumes, 37<sup>th</sup> Street is at approximately 90% of its adopted level of service. As a result, funding has been allocated in the County's Capital Improvement Element (CIE) for the widening of 37<sup>th</sup> Street (US 1 – Indian River Boulevard) from 3 to 5 lanes.

The widening of 37<sup>th</sup> Street presents a number of challenges. Although it is only 1.2 miles long, there are over 27 separate driveways, cross streets, and access points in the corridor as well as potentially numerous utility conflicts. As the primary – and to some extent only- access road to the Medical Center and over 1.6 million s.f. of medical-related businesses, the closures and disruptions to 37<sup>th</sup> Street during construction could greatly inconvenience and could possibly endanger a vulnerable population. Finally, widening the road and improving drainage will be costly given the age of the roadway and the complexity of the nearby drainage and infrastructure systems.

One alternative which has been considered by County and City public works and planning staff is to develop a new 2-lane alternative roadway serving the Medical Center to relieve the demand on 37<sup>th</sup> Street. In so doing, the County's objective is to both improve access to the area and maintain level of service on 37<sup>th</sup> Street at the same time.

## **ANALYSIS**

In assessing the area in the vicinity of the Medical Center, it appears that much of the land north and southwest of the Indian River Medical Center is presently vacant and/or underdeveloped (See Attachment 1). On the future land use maps of Indian River County and the City of Vero Beach, most of this property is anticipated to be developed for Commercial and Office purposes. As it develops, access to these parcels and connectivity to the larger roadway network will have to be provided by developers in accordance with Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations. In light of these facts, staff from the County, MPO, and City of Vero Beach have identified an opportunity to provide alternative roadway access to the Medical Center. Two concepts are described in detail below.

### **Aviation Boulevard Extension**

This 2-lane/3-lane connection would begin at the intersection of US 1 and Aviation Boulevard and travel north-east to the back entrance to the Medical Center. Staff has sketched two rough conceptual alignments to complete this connection (Attachment 2), both of which are variations on an Aviation Boulevard Extension concept formally considered by the MPO a number of years ago.

If constructed, this concept would have a number of ancillary benefits to the road network, including relieving traffic on US 1 (from Aviation Boulevard to 37<sup>th</sup> Street) and on 37<sup>th</sup> Street, and providing a speedier connection to the IRMC Emergency Room for traffic coming from the west and south. In addition, this project would complement the US 1/Aviation Blvd. intersection improvements now being explored by FDOT at the MPO's prompting.

### **New North-South Connection (41<sup>st</sup> Street – 37<sup>th</sup> Street)**

This 2-lane north-south roadway would align somewhere in the vicinity of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Avenues and connect 41<sup>st</sup> Street directly to the driveway entrance to the medical center on 37<sup>th</sup> Street (Attachment 3). That connection would enable traffic coming from the north to bypass 37<sup>th</sup> Street by turning eastbound on 41<sup>st</sup> Street and then southbound on the new roadway. The north-south roadway could be constructed through future development and re-development activity on the north side of 37<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff had undertaken some preliminary analysis and determined that the identified alternatives may be viable alternatives to widening 37<sup>th</sup> Street from a traffic flow standpoint. FSUTMS, the standardized FDOT travel demand forecasting model developed as part of the Long Range Transportation Plan, predicts that approximately 5,600 vehicles per day would use the Aviation Boulevard Extension. This represents a substantial amount of traffic that would otherwise be forced to use 37<sup>th</sup> Street. An additional 1,200 vehicles are predicted to use the new north-south connector. A full determination of the viability of the alternatives will require an analysis of

available ROW, construction costs, and willingness on the part of local land owners. Those efforts will be undertaken if the Board authorizes staff to further explore the alternative connector roads concept. With the Board's concurrence, staff will include the Aviation Boulevard Extension in the upcoming CIE update as a potential alternative to the 37<sup>th</sup> Street widening project.

### **FUNDING**

There is no cost associated with studying alternatives to 37<sup>th</sup> Street at this time. It is thought that the cost of constructing the Aviation Boulevard extension will be comparable to or less than the cost of widening 37<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners authorize staff to further explore the concept of constructing alternatives to 37<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1. Vacant Land in the Vicinity of the Indian River Medical Center
- Attachment 2. Aviation Boulevard Alternative Alignments
- Attachment 3. New North-South Roadway Corridor