

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

**To:** Tom Harmer, Town Manager  
**From:** Isaac Brownman, Public Works Director  
**Report date:** September 20, 2022  
**Meeting date:** September 27, 2022  
**Subject:** Gulf of Mexico Drive (GMD) Complete Streets Corridor Plan Update

### **Recommended Action**

Provide direction to Town Manager.

### **Background**

The Town engaged Kimley-Horn and Associates (KHA) to develop a Gulf of Mexico Drive (GMD) Complete Streets Corridor Master Plan, to include safety and beautification strategies for segments along the full 10-mile roadway corridor. A “complete streets” approach to corridor plan elements can help increase pedestrian and cyclist safety, reduce congestion, improve connectivity, improve aesthetics, and enhance the Town’s sense of place. GMD is a State road known as State Road 789.

This planning effort is consistent with Town’s historical efforts to facilitate improvements along the State roadway. By funding and completing the study it provides a mechanism to advocate for the FDOT to ultimately fund future construction improvements consistent with the plan developed by the Town.

GMD Corridor Plan updates were provided to the Town Commission on November 15, 2021 and March 21, 2022. The presentations included a preferred typical section with wider bike lanes and multi-use trail, emergency vehicle considerations, turn lanes, landscape medians, pedestrian refuge areas, speed reduction zones and other concepts. The Town Commission agreed by consensus to a preferred typical section and to proceed with all elements except speed reduction areas, and also to coordinate with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on other possible pedestrian crossing treatments at 45-mph.

The primary improvement is related to whole, new typical sections and associated roadway and trail elements for the entire corridor. This includes a 12-foot wide multi-use trail on the East side, 7-foot wide buffered bicycle lanes, left-turn lanes at higher volume intersections, raised landscape medians where feasible, 6-to-8-foot wide sidewalk on the West side, and other corridor and intersection improvements.

Corridor plan improvements also include:

- Broadway Roundabout as a key intersection control feature at the North end
- Landscape additions and modifications where appropriate to improve sight lines and enhance aesthetics

- Lighting at existing mid-block crossings (being provided as part of Utilities Undergrounding Project)
- Longboat Club Road roundabout as a key intersection control feature at the South end at the time additional resort/condo development and consistent with the Barrier Island Traffic Study recommendations

Due to area and land use similarities, the roadway corridor can be broken into three primary segments: North, Central and South, with further segment/corridor breakdown at the time of Project Development & Environment (PD&E) planning, as needed, and engineering design.

The Central section is unique in that no development exists on the West side. This provides uninterrupted access from properties on the East side of GMD to cross to the West towards the beach. Over ten (10) crossing connections exist on the West side of GMD to the beach areas.

A public outreach workshop was held on May 3, 2022 at Town Hall and multiple meetings with the FDOT were conducted to seek public input prior to coming back to the final Commission Workshop.

A significant amount of public input surrounded improving pedestrian crossings along the Central section of the island near Bayport Condominiums and also Gulf Shores and Twin Shores mobile home parks. This also included input regarding potential speed reduction.

Since Gulf of Mexico Drive is a State road (SR 789), a number of coordination meetings and communications with FDOT were conducted. The FDOT agrees with and supports the idea of the corridor plan, the new typical sections, the roundabout, lighting and other elements. Regarding pedestrian crossing treatments, the only crossing treatment available at 45-mph is a pedestrian hybrid beacon and must be warranted and designed in such a manner to channelize pedestrians. Mid-block crosswalks, in-pavement lighting, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, and other such treatments can only be applied on 35-mph or less posted roadways. Having said that, FDOT is planning on applying special zone signage in this area due to the density and nature of the crossings occurring at this condensed location (about ½ mile). Finally, discussions with FDOT resulted in a context class designation for the roadway of C3R Suburban Residential.

Regarding a 6-to-8-foot sidewalk on the West side of the roadway, the Town and FDOT have received feedback in the past from residents indicating that if a full sidewalk existed on the West side, there would be no need to cross to the East side for recreational walking, dog walking or general movement. Thus, additional random crossings to reach the multi-use trail on the East side for those purposes would be reduced/eliminated by the presence of a West side sidewalk as well as providing the additional multi-modal connectivity.

Next steps include the following:

- Obtain final Town Commission feedback to incorporate into and produce the final corridor plan document for distribution

- Use the Gulf of Mexico Drive Complete Streets Corridor Plan as a guiding document for future improvements to the roadway
- Continue progressing Broadway Roundabout design to completion
- Pursue external funding for the construction of the Broadway Roundabout
- Work with FDOT, the MPO and others to incrementally build out the roadway improvements. Total planning level cost estimate cost for the full 10-mile corridor in 2022 dollars is about \$28 million. This does not include strategic elevation of the roadway in certain locations, which would be best estimated at about \$2.5 million per mile at this early stage.
- Work with consultants and vendors to pursue grants where appropriate

**Staff Recommendation**

Provide direction to Town Manager.

**Attachments**

- A. Gulf of Mexico Drive Complete Streets Corridor Plan – DRAFT (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)
- B. PowerPoint Presentation (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)

**End of Agenda Item**