



The Bradenton Times

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SUNDAY NEWSPAPER SIGNUP

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This Week's Poll

Should We Build a Wall on the Southern Border?

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☐ No

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Talk of DeSoto Bridge Overpass Lanes Leads to Heated Debate

Dennis Maley • Sunday, Nov 12, 2017

BRADENTON — An update on the Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis Project by the Florida Department of Transportation caused a stir at Tuesday's Manatee County Commission meeting, when FDOT officials brought up the idea of elevated flyover lanes for the next DeSoto Bridge.

The bridge, which is expected to be replaced within 15 years, takes U.S. 41 and U.S. 301 across the Manatee River, connecting Bradenton and Palmetto. About a third of the more than 64,000 cars that cross it each day, however, aren't traveling to or from either. FDOT officials think that separating traffic headed to and from places like Sarasota and St. Petersburg could go a long way in reducing the crippling gridlock on the bridge, especially since that traffic is expected to grow to over 100,000 cars daily by 2040.

The presentation depicted a new, wider bridge with lanes for regional traffic elevated, while local traffic was in separate lanes that exited to signalized intersections (see FDOT depictions at page bottom)

Commissioner Charles Smith, whose district includes most of Palmetto, wasn't having it. Smith said he was completely opposed to an overpass, saying it would "destroy" nearby businesses and that the underpass created would be a magnet for the homeless, leading to a "tent city." Smith criticized FDOT systems planning administrator Lawrence Massey for not getting enough public input.

Commission Chair Betsy Benac reminded Smith that the project has been ongoing and has included "many, many public meetings," but Smith said they needed meetings specific to the flyovers that were held right in the nearby community. Massey said he would be eager to work with Smith and setting that up, while reminding the board that no recommendation has been made.

Smith said he will only vote for the long-discussed third bridge somewhere in east Bradenton, but Benac said that a third bridge is fraught with challenges, including historic sites near the available options and community opposition in the areas it would impact. FDOT presented third bridge ideas at a meeting in June.

FDOT says it is also looking at taking Manatee Avenue and Sixth Avenue West in downtown Bradenton back to two-way traffic, while finding ways to divert more cars that are seeking to get around downtown Bradenton toward Ninth Avenue West and Third Avenue West, in order to alleviate the current bottleneck at Manatee and 301.

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Obituaries

Obituary: Ed Anderson

Obituary: Shirley T. Anderson

Obituary: Katherine Reedy

Obituary: Brenda G. Svetlick

Obituary: Margaret W. Lee



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Reader Comments

Oranges or traffic?

NOV 26 • Convert the Trop RR into a vehicle bridge! Right down the middle, already exists and no infringement on housing! Start trucking the oranges, creating jobs and transport to connecting RR line down the road!

WeNeedFinalSay

NOV 26 • EXACTLY William! And we say no to the county commissioners and the mayor on how they are the ruination of our area! They boot out the 1 with common core values and yet we can't boot them all out, when their ethics are obviously with underlying collusion with the developers! Wake up people, start and stop at the baseline...City Hall!

william moore

NOV 12 • I have a good idea how to alleviate traffic gridlock on Manatee Ave just tell our city council & our county commissioners to learn how to say "NO" to the developers on rezones, changing of codes, etc. We don't need to develop every square inch of Manatee County. If our elected officials don't want to listen to the voters who elected them, there is a sure cure for that problem it's called a ballot box.

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8 Comments

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Irene Ryan

Looks like the most sensible solution! I think 'someone' on the board needs to be for the good of the people for a change. Approving all the wrong items for all the wrong reasons and this one already a 'nay' vote? I sure hope the majority sees the positives in this version. The City elections can't come soon enough!

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Barbara Elliott

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