



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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District 10 Community Meeting Soutel Road Traffic Calming Project Hosted by Council Member Brenda Priestly Jackson

March 1, 2021
6:00 P.M.

Location: Lincoln Villa Senior Center, 7866 New Kings Road, Jacksonville, FL 32219

Attendees: John Pappas, Director of Public Works; Chris LeDew, Chief of Traffic Engineering; Laurie Santana, Chief of Transportation Planning (Zoom); Council Members Sam Newby, Garrett Dennis, Terrance Freeman, Al Ferraro, Michael Boylan (Zoom); (additional attendees listed on sign-in sheet)

Meeting Convened: 6:01 P.M.

Council Member Priestly Jackson thanked everyone for taking the time to come to the meeting. She stated that the handout which was distributed is a copy of the meeting minutes from the initial meeting which took place at the Legends Center last year on March 4, 2020 on the same issue. She provided background and history on the project due to the amount of misinformation which has been communicated. CM Priestly Jackson emphasized that the intention of the previous meeting, which was held last year, was to make sure the community understood the nature of the project and the next step was to be community engagement. CM Priestly Jackson shared the project name change from Soutel Road Diet to Soutel Drive Traffic Calming. She wanted to highlight the difficulty of community buy-in with a road diet at the same time a food desert study is being conducted around the city.

John Pappas informed the neighbors that the project is joint efforts between Public Works, CM Priestly Jackson and the Planning Department. He restated that the purpose of the initial widening of the road was for a major transportation corridor, however times have changed. Now the corridor has other needs and challenges that this project will address by making Soutel Drive a living corridor. Mr. Pappas reiterated that the phrase 'road diet' seems like something is being taken away. With the Soutel Drive Traffic Calming project, \$10 million dollars is being invested into the corridor to create a safer and more livable area for all neighbors.

Chris LeDew presented the plans for the project and explained how it will improve safety and not affect the traffic flow. He spoke about traffic engineering and how it relates to being used to growth, but more lanes makes it difficult to cross. He stated that a new term called "complete streets" changes the concept of building road for cars to building roads for people. The traffic calming process is happening all over the United States, not just on Soutel Drive. Soutel Drive is 3.4 four miles long from Lem Turner Road to New Kings Road. Mr. LeDew presented the statistics surrounding the importance of safety



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related to the project. The project will provide safer for turning traffic and trucks, slows down vehicles, safer for pedestrians, bicyclist.

Council Member Al Ferraro shared that he was on City Council when the vote was going through and that one of the concerns he had was that people were getting hurt and wanted to make sure the value of the project was going to be met. He stated former Council Member Reggie Brown advised about the accidents in the area and that is why he supported it.

Council Member Garrett Dennis stated that he voted for it because former Council Member Reggie Brown sold it to the Council. He also stated that he had a road diet project in his district and they didn't want it. CM Dennis stated that the road diet projects were going on all over the county. CM Dennis said he relied on the Council Member who represented District 10 and he voted for it.

Council Member Priestly Jackson read into the record that on September 26, 2017 former Council Member Reggie Brown held a public meeting about Soutel Drive on April 4, 2017 and at that time current council members which include CM Lori Boyer, CM Katrina Brown, CM Garrett Dennis and CM Reggie Gaffney. On August 10, 2017 the Northwest CPAC had a mixed response for some enthusiastic, some support and some skepticism. Sherwood Forest Neighborhood Association August 5, 2017 apprehensive wants pedestrian and transit enhancements. These are some of the meetings which were held around the project. On June 13, 2019, prior to the official arrival to City Council, CM Priestly Jackson held a meeting with John Pappas about the project and received the extensive data that accompanied behind all the meetings and the studies.

Council Member Sam Newby stated he found out about the project in 2015 from former Council Member Brown and that he had worked on it for many years. He stated one of the reasons he voted for it is because of all of the accidents on the road and it would increase economic development in the area. Without the road diet it would be hard to bring new business to the area.

CM Priestly Jackson allotted time for questions from residents at the end of the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:54 P.M.

Minutes: Prepared by Kristen Hodges, Executive Council Assistant - District 10, 904-255-5146, klhodges@coj.net

The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments from this meeting, please listen to audio recording posted on COJ's website at City Council Meetings Online.