



South Howard Flood Relief Project Business Alliance Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: The Epicurean

Attendees: Eric Potts, Bella's Italian Café
Joanie Corneil, Bella's Italian Café
Jarrod Dyer, Bella's Italian Café
Jordan Warshavsky, Ciccio Restaurant Group
James Lanza, Ciccio Restaurant Group
Stephen Michelini, SoHo Business Alliance
David Bell, Landmark Engineering
David Laxer, Berns
Hank Brown, Bar HWRD
Barry O'Connor, MacDinton's & Grove
Captain Whitney McCormick, Tampa Police Department
Vik Bhide, City of Tampa
Yuan Li, City of Tampa
Latrice Underwood, City of Tampa
Wayne Jackson, City of Tampa
Stephen Swann, City of Tampa
Adam Smith, City of Tampa
Janelle MacGregor, City of Tampa
Marley Wilkes, City of Tampa
Brenda McKenzie, City of Tampa
Elie Araj, Applied Sciences
John Zemina, Kimmins
Christine Girardin, Valerin Group
Michelle Robinson, Dialogue Public Relations

Stephen Michelini welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced Vik Bhide, City of Tampa. Vik introduced the project team and City staff. He noted the considerable presence of City staff, stating that the City understands the magnitude of the project and has brought numerous departments into the project. He then turned the meeting over to Brett Sillman, the

City's project manager, who went through a PowerPoint presentation. Brett said the genesis of the project is flooding in Parkland Estates. He said in 2015, eight or nine homes in the area were flooded; this project is being developed to alleviate that problem. He also discussed project benefits beyond flood relief, including the enhanced streetscape on South Howard; upgraded water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure; undergrounding of TECO power lines; improved water quality discharges to Hillsborough Bay; repaved roads near the project area as part of an "early works" phase; and establishment of a stormwater spine for other neighborhoods to tie into in the future.

Brett shared an overview of the route and alternative route segments for the stormwater conveyance system. The South Howard portion of the route is set because two box culverts already exist underneath the CSX railway and Bayshore Boulevard. The project team will perform additional research to finalize the best alternative route segment at the system's northern end to connect the South Howard portion of the route to Parkland Estates.

Brett then discussed the City's design criteria package that outlines requirements the contractor must include in the scope that becomes part of the contract. Those items include robust public outreach from start to finish, phased construction, stringent staging locations, full-time vehicular access as much as possible and other accommodations when needed (e.g. golf carts), and robust maintenance of traffic plans.

Brett said that the design criteria package specifies that, to the greatest extent practical, the design-build team shall construct the project in a manner that will minimize the disturbance and duration of access limitations to residences and businesses during construction. He said that the contractor expects that during the early part of construction, when utilities are being relocated, one lane will be open. During box culvert installation, the full road will be closed according to a phasing plan to be developed. Closures will typically last 5-7 weeks per 500-800 linear feet. The City is requiring that a phase be completed and opened to local traffic before construction starts on the next phase. Brett said that per the design criteria package, the contractor must maintain vehicular access, but when it cannot be maintained, the contractor will provide off-site parking and will use a golf cart to shuttle residents.

Brett talked about restoration and stated that disturbed areas must be restored to like or better condition with the exception of trees. Curb and gutter will be added where none exists, granite curb will be replaced with granite to the extent possible. He explained the streetscape enhancements and said community input will help shape the streetscape. Items to be included are green infrastructure, increased sidewalk coverage, traffic calming measures, expanded non-exclusive street parking, pervious pavers, lighting, and landscaping.

He discussed the early works and the schedule, noting that construction start is at least 3.5 years away. He then shared a list of the Business Alliance's concerns. After the presentation, the project team took questions and comments, summarized below.

How will all of this happen? Can you walk us through the phasing?

Brett showed the phasing plan animation. Vik explained that each phase is split into three sub-phases where one piece is storage, one is active work, and one is restoration. John Zemina, Kimmins, explained that phase 1, as an example, would close Howard and part of Bayshore. That closure would last approximately 8-10 weeks, during which Bayshore would be two lanes (one in either direction), and Howard would be closed by phase as construction moves north. John said segments of Howard would reopen behind the construction operation as work is completed. Vik said each phase would require a full closure of Howard for approximately 5-8 weeks per 500-800 linear feet.

Are Phases 3a and 3b going to be closed at the same time? That's a huge impact to a lot of businesses with employment and tax revenue in 3a and 3b.

The phasing plan is a schematic for general understanding and will be refined during the design state. The design will begin with significant engagement to understand what those impacts are. The contractor will ensure access throughout. Kimmins was selected for this project due to their commitment to John Zemina being the point of contact for the businesses and their willingness to be creative within the contract to facilitate deliveries, shuttle residents or any other needs. The City does anticipate impacts to businesses but will work with you to try to mitigate that impact.

A golf cart doesn't allow for trash disposal, grease trap pumping and other existential needs for businesses. Is there financial remuneration or compensation for loss of revenue?

The City is not aware of a mechanism within the City for compensation for business loss. The City is aware of the different business needs.

It feels like South Howard Avenue and the businesses on Howard are bearing the brunt of the project to benefit the neighborhood. Did you look at coming down MacDill, where you could keep lanes open, to Mississippi to avoid part of South Howard?

The City did perform an alternatives analysis. The route selected was the most feasible because there is already a box culvert underneath the CSX railroad and there is an existing box under Bayshore. The existence of these two box culverts minimizes disturbances and saves money. However, there are many things we don't know at this point because the design has not yet started. Once the designer sits down with all the stakeholders to understand their individual needs through each phase, not just disruption but also traffic, there are things they may be able to account for.

When you get beyond Mississippi, from Southview to Morrison, there are no lateral roads that connect to South Howard, and access is restricted due to the Crosstown and the railroad. A full lane closure is a major disruption in this area due to no lateral access. Have you considered prefabricating the box culverts to minimize the closure timeframe.

Kimmins is buying prefabricated structures. The boxes are 10 feet long by about 6 feet tall. Kimmins can typically install three or four in a day if everything goes well. The trench is about 18 feet wide and 16-20 feet deep.

In other urban areas, they have a big metal plate that they drop back over the road to maintain access. Could you all incorporate that?

We could put a plate over it, but there will still be construction equipment in that work zone. These machines are 12 feet across, plus loaders and more. Kimmins will backfill behind themselves every night and put down road base as soon as possible to get people back on the road and functioning as soon as possible.

Will you be able to keep one lane open?

The contractor will try to keep one lane open during utility relocation work, but during box culvert installation, that will not be feasible due to the size of the structure and the space required side to side and in front and back of the active construction zone.

During utility relocation work, will both lanes be open at night? Will one lane be open during the day? What about weekends?

John Zemina said they will try to keep one lane open during the day and will try to open both lanes at night, but he said he couldn't make a commitment at this time because he doesn't know the location of the existing utilities. He reiterated that if they can open all lanes at night, they will. Once Kimmins' team starts design, they will find out where the underground utilities are along Howard, and they will work with each business to understand their operations and needs, including dumpster location, access and more. Then as design proceeds, they can answer these questions with more certainty. He said they try not to work on weekends.

What happened on Central was very disruptive.

The City has learned from past experience and has taken measures with this project to avoid similar issues. The design criteria package specifies measures the contractor must take. There will be more transparency on this project, and we included a communications plan, phasing plans, restoring as construction moves and more. That's why this project costs more. The project won't be without impact, but until we begin design, we can't answer all these questions.

Can you cover the boxes for the weekend?

No, but ahead of and behind the box culvert, the contractor will look at ways to ensure pedestrian access, such as walkways or pedestrian bridges. They are also looking at renting lots for patron parking so they can shuttle patrons with a six- or eight-person golf cart.

There is limited ingress and egress to South Howard, and residents may be unhappy with traffic. Due to lack of lateral access, 3a and 3b going at the same time will shut down those businesses. A lot still businesses are still recovering from Covid with hospitality workers going elsewhere, so staffing is still an issue. And customers can go elsewhere, too. Is there a way to condense the construction timeframe? Perhaps work 16-24 hours a day and pay overtime? It would reduce the impact.

Kimmins can look at working more shifts, within the City's noise ordinance and stakeholders' tolerance level, but it won't cut the closure time in half. Productivity for night work is less than daytime work.

Are you expecting businesses to close because the road will be completely impassable?

The City's goal, through the contract and design process, is to maintain access to businesses across the board.

What the City considers business access might not work for hotels, with people coming with luggage, in the rain. It will be a terrible experience for customers, and patrons will blame the business owner.

The City considers deliveries when they say access has to be maintained, and there are options for access from the north and south. How that would work is not yet known but will be figured out during the design phase.

All businesses are in close proximity to residences, so when we have a missed trash pick-up, we are impacting the businesses. How can you ensure access to dumpsters, especially Southview to Morrison?

The City understands that is an issue, and that's why so many City staff members are present at the meeting. The City is committed to meeting with the community as the plans move along to be able to answer these questions.

Will the City take another look at the business interruption insurance issue?

Yes. We will follow up with our risk team and research what other cities have done.

Is it possible to restrict on-street parking on side streets so that trucks can pass? Can the Gasparilla parking plan be put in place during construction to maintain means of access for emergency responders and trucks?

The City will do anything that is feasible and is committed to working with the neighborhoods and the business community. The City has been piloting three different things: 1) parking on one side of the street only, 2) staggered parking, and 3) not allowing parking on certain segments of streets. They will learn from that, and it will inform this plan.

Can you confirm that during box culvert installation, both lanes are closed for 5-8 weeks? What about during the other work?

During box culvert installation, at this time, the plan is to shut both lanes day and night. During utility relocation, Kimmins will try to keep one lane open, which is different from our last meeting. For about one year, we will be doing utility relocations during which we hope to keep one lane open at the very least.

Could the City's Solid Waste Department comment on how services will be maintained?

Stephen Swan, City of Tampa, said that during construction for any given phase, as long as there are alternative routes and parking is controlled, the City can put trucks on the side roads. If needed, they can provide additional dumpsters as well. He acknowledged that they do have access issues from time to time, with trailers or lawn service vehicles blocking access. He said his department will work closely with the project team.

Will the City consider granting easements to access properties during construction? Such as granting an easement on side road?

If it's right of way, yes. The City will do whatever it can to facilitate access.

At what point will you know potential complications and how that could affect the schedule, the phasing plan and more?

Potential complications at this time include unknowns that are underground. We will stay in continuous contact with you on potential complications, and business owners are encouraged to contact the project team if they see a potential complication. Then when the Kimmins team reaches 30% design, we'll have more information to share.

Can the businesses meet by phase to discuss access needs?

It is too early to hold that meeting now, but Kimmins will meet with each of the businesses to understand individual operations and needs.

Can construction be limited to May through October?

The Tampa Bay region gets most of its rain from May through October, and there is also hurricane season, so that would significantly increase the possibility of construction delays.

How long is each length of box culvert?

Each segment is 6 feet in length.

Are there incentives in the contract for early finish?

Indirectly, there are incentives in the contract through shared savings.

What are the green lines shown on the map?

Those are smaller pipelines and likely we'll be able to keep a lane open during that work.

Vik asked the participants whether the suppliers would consider deliveries in smaller trucks. Attendees said it would require more trips, which would increase transportation costs for those suppliers, and those costs would be passed on to the businesses.

Vik said meeting summaries from this meeting and others will be shared on the City's website. He said the business community will have more direct engagement with the City on this project than they may have experienced on other projects.

Vik asked Brenda McKenzie, City of Tampa workforce development director, to speak. She said that the City recognizes that South Howard is an important employment base and is committed to working with businesses to help keep the workforce in place. They can also work with Workforce Tampa Bay to support the businesses.

Michelle Robinson pointed out the project email and phone number on the back of the FAQ page. She also said that Kimmins off-site parking would be staffed 24/7 by a security company, which can also help shuttle employees.

A discussion ensued about when to schedule the next meeting. The project team thinks meeting in approximately four months would give the City time to get Kimmins under contract. More information will be available closer to the 30% design phase. Vik explained that City Council has approved the budget, but the design contract will go before City Council for approval as well.

Vik thanked the Business Alliance for their time and thanked the Epicurean for hosting and providing lunch.

The meeting concluded at approximately 1:15 p.m.