

MIAMI TODAY

March 25, 2021

Circulation: 28,665/ UMV: 32,940

Boulevard lane reduction rolls on

By KYLEA HENSELER

A 15-year-long push to reduce traffic lanes downtown on Miami's Biscayne Boulevard from eight to six or four is moving forward, with consultants developing concept plans and modeling ideas that are to be presented as a draft to the Florida Department of Transportation as early as July.

The effort is led by the city's Downtown Development Authority, which dubbed the project Biscayne Green.

"The long-term vision for Biscayne Green," a Downtown Development Authority spokesperson said via email, "stems directly from goals set forth in the 2025 Downtown Miami Masterplan. Some of the goals that are specific to Biscayne Boulevard include creating a grand promenade similar to Paseo Del Prado in Madrid or Las Ramblas in Barcelona; replacing median parking with pedestrian oriented green median; establishing thorough tree coverage and shade; implementing public art and landmarks; activating ground-floor and outdoor dining and retail; and rebalancing roadways towards transit, pedestrians and cyclists."

"The overall goal of this project," they said, "is to ensure that in the seven-block section of Biscayne Boulevard – from Southeast First Street to Northeast Sixth Street – is not only dedicated to cars, but also to pedestrians, cyclists and transit users."

Having a major highway like the one that exists so close to the heart of downtown, they said, is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, negatively impacts quality of life for residents and disincentivizes new business development.

The project, they said, is a partnership between the Downtown Development Authority, Miami Parking Authority and the city itself, but ultimately the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will have the power to approve or reject plans, as it owns Biscayne Boulevard.

Public feedback, according to the authority, has been mostly positive. "Overall," they said, "the highest rated priorities have been traffic calming, better/safer connections east-west to Bayfront Park, the addition of open space and green space, more lighting, and a dedicated and protected bike lane."

A consultant team led by T.Y. Lin, they said, has been working with FDOT, and plans to submit to the state a full analysis report by September. Between now and then there are to be multiple meetings and drafts, including a Community Liaison Team

meeting April 8.

If the project is approved, the authority said, the team can proceed with final design, acquiring permits and applying for grants.

The cost estimate for the project in 2014, they said, was \$24

million, but the analysis to be presented to FDOT in September will provide a more current estimate. The project could be eligible, they said, for numerous transportation grants at the federal and state level.