



December 3, 2024

Mr. Jason Debrincat, P.E.
Assistant Director of Public Works
Town of Palm Beach
951 Old Okeechobee Road, Suite A
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

RE: *Town of Palm Beach*
 Peak Season Traffic Update

Dear Mr. Debrincat:

Kimley-Horn has reviewed available data in an effort to best understand the impacts from the onset of the 2025 peak season as well as the consequences of the closure of South Ocean Boulevard at Mar-A-Lago and the impacts of areawide growth within and outside of the Town Limits.

Review of Growth through the 2024 Season

Daily and peak hour traffic volumes are collected annually at 14 locations throughout the Town during a typical peak week of traffic in season. A review of the historical data indicates growth patterns generally throughout the Town and on individual streets. In the five years prior to the 2024 season, the Town has seen an overall increase traffic at a rate of 2.7 percent growth annually, with a higher growth rate of 4.9 percent in the past three years. Although growth trends tend to be long-term in nature, the one-year growth rate between the 2023 and 2024 season was 6.31 percent. The trend of growth rates in the past five, three, and one year indicated an increasing rate of growth in recent years. These growth rate trends are consistent among daily volumes as well as during the peak hours, indicating that the growth is an overall town-wide trend and not the result of one specific traffic generator.

Initial Impacts of South Ocean Boulevard Closure

With South Ocean Boulevard closed between South County Road and the Southern Boulevard traffic circle, traffic originating or destined to Midtown Palm Beach from West Palm Beach and beyond must utilize the Royal Park or Flagler Memorial Bridge. Residents south of Southern Boulevard cannot access Midtown or north without detouring through West Palm Beach. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) maintains continuous traffic counts on the Flagler Memorial Bridge. Analysis of these traffic volumes can indicate overall growth on the two bridge crossings serving midtown and the north end. Furthermore, data collected by the Town's new adaptive traffic signal system was analyzed to determine year over year growth on both bridges.

A review of the annual data by FDOT reveals a year-over-year growth in October 2023 and in October 2024 of 0.9 percent growth. This generally represents growth in season traffic since South Ocean Boulevard was not consistently closed in October. The November year-over-year growth through November 21, 2024 is 8.6 percent.

Traffic data collected from the Town's new adaptive signal control system was then analyzed to review data on the Royal Park Bridge.

A typical weekday in November was analyzed in 2023 and 2024 to determine growth patterns. The traffic on Royal Palm Way increased by 1.2 percent between 2023 and 2024 representing a combination of overall growth and diversion of traffic from the south. Data was collected between 2017 and 2020 to determine the impacts of the road closure at that time. Traffic volumes increased from 3.5 percent to 5 percent in the Midtown area and north at times that the road closure was implemented.

The FDOT annual data on the Flagler Memorial Bridge indicates that the peak traffic impacts are in February. Therefore, it is expected that traffic volumes in the Town will continue to increase into February this year, compared to the traffic currently observed in the Town.

Review of Growth in West Palm Beach

The major corridors within West Palm Beach have also seen steady annual growth. Traffic entering the downtown area primarily uses the main corridors of Southern Boulevard, Belvedere Road, Okeechobee Boulevard, Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard, Dixie Highway and Flagler Drive. West Palm Beach draws workers from all parts of the County and region, and therefore traffic impacts are not restricted to just Okeechobee Boulevard. Traffic congestion is observed on all of the main corridors into and out of West Palm Beach during the peak hours of traffic. As the east-west corridors become more congested and cause longer delays, motorists often seek using east-west corridors further and north and south of downtown (such as 45th Street and Southern Boulevard). To enter downtown, these motorists must then utilize Dixie Highway or Flagler Drive, which have seen subsequent growth and congestion. During the peak times of travel, all of the east-west and north-south corridors into downtown West Palm Beach see congestion and delay.

The overall growth rate on the main corridors into downtown West Palm Beach is 1.7 percent annually. Even without any growth in the Town, growth in West Palm Beach would impact traffic volumes on the east-west corridors that provide access to the Town. No major capacity improvements have been completed or are planned on the major roadways into downtown West Palm Beach in the near future.

The Palm Beach County Traffic Division monitors the Okeechobee Corridor and other surrounding roadways via cameras at their Traffic Control Center. There, employees adjust signal timings to optimize flow and respond to traffic congestion due to accidents and construction lane closures. Although the County is committed to moving motorists into and out of West Palm Beach, given the volumes on the entire network, and not just Okeechobee Boulevard, there is often little opportunity to reroute traffic onto other corridors within West Palm Beach. Traffic flow through West Palm Beach is also impacted by the two railroad crossings and the Flagler Memorial and Royal Park bridges. When road closures occur due to rail or bridge operations, gridlock can occur with little opportunity to provide relief to the motorists regardless of signal timing or operations.

Review of Growth in Palm Beach County

Much of the traffic impacting the Town and West Palm Beach originates in the greater Palm Beach County region. To understand the overall growth in Palm Beach County, traffic volumes from several major corridors in the County were sampled. Based on the sample of traffic volumes on the major corridors in Palm Beach County, the County is experiencing growth at an annual rate of approximately one percent, with higher growth rates approaching three percent along the corridors serving West Palm Beach. The

Palm Beach County Engineering Department is responding to the growth by providing additional capacity, such as additional turn lanes at intersections and in some cases, widening roadways. These physical capacity improvements provide relief in the areas where they are constructed. However, due to right-of-way and cost constraints, fewer capacity improvements are planned in the more developed urban areas nearest to Palm Beach. However, the County will be implementing an advanced adaptive signal control along Okeechobee Boulevard will provide more capacity along Okeechobee Boulevard and reduce congestion, which will impact the Town in a positive manner. This multi-million-dollar system is expected to be implemented in 2025.

Outlook for the Town of Palm Beach

As demonstrated here, the growth affecting the Town is also affecting West Palm Beach and the region as a whole. The Town may consider and implement traffic relief measures within the Town, but ultimately, motorists will be impacted by the growth in the surrounding area and how West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County and FDOT manage the growth.

There are three (3) fundamental ways to reduce traffic congestion: increase capacity of the transportation network, reduce demand on the network, or spread the demand throughout the day.

Increase Capacity

Increasing the capacity of the transportation network can take many forms. It can include widening roads, adding turn lanes, or adding entirely new roads or connections. Removing connections increases congestion, as has been seen with the closure of South Ocean Boulevard.

Adding lanes does not always mean adding roadway width; removing on-street parking, either entirely or during certain times of day can free up lanes for moving cars. For example, streets such as South County Road near Royal Palm Way or Coconut Avenue could have more travel lanes if the parking was removed, or if parking was only allowed during non-peak hours. Some modifications to intersection and signage would be needed to implement this solution. Ultimately, the bridges and the railroad crossings will remain the constraint, however, since the bridges cannot feasibly be widened, and the rail crossings cannot be feasibly grade-separated.

The Town's new adaptive signal system seeks to optimize traffic flow, but there are limitations to how much more efficiently a system can operate when traffic volumes are high. The County's new signal system will increase capacity on Okeechobee Boulevard once implemented.

Reversible lanes are a measure that can be implemented when additional roadway lanes cannot be added. This solution has been implemented in large cities like Atlanta and Washington. This solution would work best on the corridors with highly directional traffic (such as Royal Palm Way which has heavy eastbound traffic in the morning and westbound in the afternoon) but would have limited benefit due to the constraint of the bridges.

Reduce Demand

Reducing the demand on the transportation network similarly can take many forms. Some cities require developers to implement Transportation Demand Measures, which require employers to provide incentives for carpooling, providing incentives to using public transportation, encouraging reduced work week schedules (such as four-day work weeks), incentivizing parking for carpools and impacting parking behavior

by increasing parking prices for single-occupant vehicles. These measure help reduce the demand on the transportation system by reducing the number of cars on the roadway network.

Promoting land uses that serve town residents will generate fewer trips on the bridges, since the patrons would be primarily in Town and would not need to utilize the bridges. However, employee traffic generally is generated from West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County; therefore, even if more businesses operate to serve Town residents, the employee traffic will still impact the bridges and the streets entering the Town.

Shuttling of employees and workers into Town would further reduce demand on the streets. This may require coordination among multiple employers to effectively reduce traffic since most of the businesses in Town employ a small number of employees. Furthermore, the shuttles would have to be a more desirable option to the employees than driving personal vehicles and parking in Town.

Spread Demand

If capacity cannot be increased and the overall traffic demand cannot be reduced, another option to relieve traffic congestions is to spread the traffic throughout the day. Although some of the traffic spreading may occur naturally, as some residents or workers may choose to commute during the non-peak times of traffic, spreading is primarily accomplished by changing the typical work hours for employees and service workers in Town. If service workers are allowed to start work earlier or finish later than currently allowed, or work on some weekend days, they would not be commuting during the peak times of traffic congestion, effectively reducing demand on the transportation network during the most congested times of day.

Conclusion

Traffic volumes continue to grow in Palm Beach. However, the traffic in West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County also continue to grow, creating congestion on streets not just within the Town and the bridges serving the Town, but in surrounding West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County. West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County are attempting to manage the transportation system through capacity improvements, signalization upgrades, and through land planning measures to reduce the need for vehicles and promote walking and biking. Nonetheless, the growth of the region impacts the Town as well as the surrounding areas. Without the ability for meaningful street capacity improvements in the Town, reducing demand and spreading the trips throughout the day are the best opportunities to help reduce congestion.

We appreciate this opportunity to work with you on this project. Please contact me at 561-840-0874 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Adam B. Kerr, P.E.
Transportation Engineer
Florida Registration Number 64773

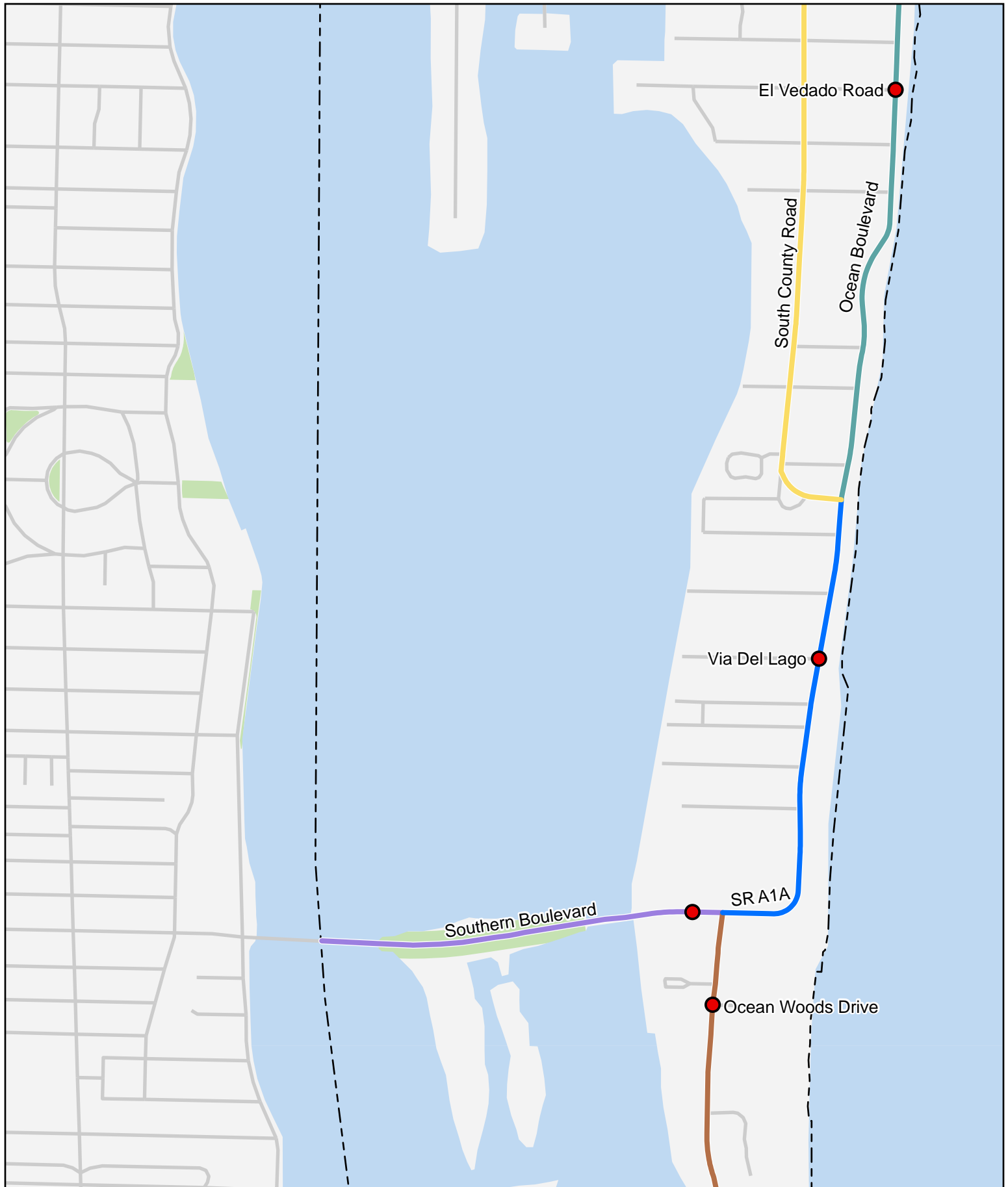
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Traffic Count Locations and Link Map Town of Palm Beach (North)

Legend

- Traffic Count Location
- Royal Palm Way Roadway Link



Traffic Count Locations and Link Map Town of Palm Beach (South)

Legend

-  Traffic Count Location
-  SR A1A Roadway Link