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Subject: Escambia Long Range Traffic planning
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I am unable to be at the 2 PM meeting today, so thank you for this opportunity to comment.

I believe the traffic on Pensacola Beach and a traffic analysis on Pensacola Beach was reviewed and analyzed approximately two years ago. It is my understanding that Traffic situations get reviewed every five years. I know that Commissioner Bender worked hard on this as is Commissioner Hofberger. As a resident on the beach, and as president of the Pensacola Beach Advocates, I am pleading with you to put additional boots on the ground with sheriff deputies to manage the traffic situation at Casino Beach parking lot and the main intersection on Pensacola Beach. Every single beautiful weekend we average more people than on Blue Angels weekend. I am unaware if you regularly come out to the beach on the weekends, or if your staff who monitor the lights, ever travel the beach on the weekends, but every weekend has become a Blue Angels weekend when the weather is perfect.

Add to that, check in for 3000 hotel rooms is between 3 PM and 4 PM along with those homes that are rented for short term rentals every Saturday. Also take into consideration that the morning visitors to the beach are leaving the beach at 3 PM. Fort Pickens is gridlock. Via de Luna is gridlock. We understand the light is being monitored 24/7. If it is not, please provide the active monitoring timeframe for the Beach light. During the peak summer hours between the hours of 10 AM and 8 PM there's never a time when people are not constantly coming onto the beach or constantly leaving the beach, leaving the timing of the light at the intersection in a quandary.

We understand the tremendous growth that has taken place in Escambia County, and we also understand that other parts of the county are as important as the beach, however, given the importance of tourism, and the fact that the growth in Escambia County appears to enjoy being on the beaches every beautiful day... We feel our traffic situation should be given a priority and analyzed annually. We know that the prior commissioner worked to keep traffic moving through Highway 98 in Gulf Breeze, but as taxpayers in Escambia County, we feel that a priority should be given to us when it comes to being able to come and go on the beach and moving the traffic in an efficient manner.

We also know that it is a very important to remove the pedestrians from the traffic situation, but you must know that without the police there to monitor jaywalking, and crowds that just walk across the street, even though they do not have the right to walk across the street, all of this adds to traffic problems. As someone who lives on the beach and travels it day in and day out during peak times in the summer we really must insist that Traffic deputies be implemented to move pedestrians and to monitor traffic coming out of casino Beach and at the light.

In another observation, it is not when Casino Beach fills up that the traffic begins to back up. We have greatly reduced wait time to get onto the beach now let's work on getting people off of the beach. Removing the toll booth is the start and will greatly improve time getting onto the beach. And as mentioned before, when the lots fill up, that is not why Traffic begins to back up. Poor signage and newcomers, not knowing where they want to go is also part of the problem.

Another scenario we have encountered is when there is an accident. I've spoken with Lt. Barnes on the beach and we have discussed the need for communication protocol between 911, state troopers who must deal with any accidents, and deputies who must move the traffic, even though the scene of an accident is being attended to. This seems to be one of the biggest reasons for back up onto the beach during late afternoon exit times.

Last, but not least, we truly need to think about congestion pricing for our toll booths, an HOV lane when the Bob Sykes bridge is rebuilt, park and rides from other areas of the city like downtown Bay Center, UWF, PSC, in addition to the free ECAT from the transfer station. We must begin to think like Disney World when it comes to moving people out to the beach. We would also like the trolleys to run all day long on the weekends and not just at 4 PM. Residents need to be offered special bus rates to get them on mass transportation out to the beach.

I realize that agencies must work with other agencies, and this needs to be a multifaceted approach, but I am here to tell you that just monitoring the light on the beach does not work. I welcome any feedback, comments, or propose solution solutions to the problem.

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