

# marco eagle

## NEWS

# Marco Island Council endorses Collier's 'island trolley,' ride-share, bus routes proposals

**Omar Rodríguez Ortiz** Marco Eagle

Published 7:03 a.m. ET Aug. 21, 2020 | Updated 7:05 a.m. ET Aug. 21, 2020

Marco Island City Council endorsed by consent on Monday proposals from Collier County to add trolley and ride-share services on the island and to make changes to two bus routes.

The county made the proposals as part of its Transit Development Plan, which sets the strategic guidance for public transportation in the community for the next 10 years. The TDP receives a major update every five years.

"If a project is going to be funded with federal or state transportation dollars it has to be in the TDP," said Randall Farwell, project consultant with Tindale Oliver.

The "island trolley" route would start at the Marco Town Center and go south on North Collier Boulevard until it reaches South Beach before heading back north, Farwell said.

Bus Route 21, which currently starts by the Walmart on Collier Boulevard south of U.S. 41 East would instead start at the Collier County Government Center at U.S. 41 and Airport-Pulling Road. It would stop by the same Walmart and make a final stop on the island, connecting passengers to the trolley before heading back north.

Route 21 currently loops around the island with stops by Marco Island Center for the Arts, Mackle Park, YMCA, Shops of Marco and City Hall. In fiscal year 2019, it transported 11,688 people, according to Arnold.

**From 2019:** Number of bus riders on the decline in Collier County

City Council Vice Chairman Jared Grifoni said the trolley's proposed route does not include important stops like Veterans' Community Park, where the city is making a multi-million dollar investment to build new facilities.

"It would be a missed opportunity," he said.

Michelle Arnold, director of the county's Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement division, said the trolley's route is not final and that the county is open to changes.

City Councilor Charlette Roman said she supports the trolley proposal if the service is free of charge to allow passengers to quickly get in and out of the trolley.

City Councilor Howard Reed said he supported Roman's idea but that he is opposed to finance the service by allowing advertisements on the outside of the trolleys.

"I'm opposed to solving the funding problem with advertising," he said.

The county's proposal includes adding one morning and one evening trip to bus Route 121, totaling four daily trips. In fiscal year 2019, it transported 22,229 people.

Route 121 goes from Immokalee, stopping by several high-end hotels and condos on the island, and ends by South Beach.

Dianna Dohm, executive director of the Marco Island Area Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber is very excited to hear the county is proposing two more trips to bus route 121.

"Our business community really needs the support to get our workers from that area (Immokalee) to here on Marco Island," she said.

The last part of the proposal includes adding a ride-share service for people on the island to request a ride by using an app or calling a call center to take them to locations within city limits, Arnold said.

Unlike popular ride-share apps, this service would not allow passengers to request to ride by themselves. This would make the cost per ride cheaper, according to Arnold.

Arnold said in a phone interview Aug. 12 the ride-share service does not include the town of Goodland.

These transportation initiatives would increase annual ridership on the island by 45,000, Farwell said. The cost has not been fully determined because route and service details are pending, Arnold said.

The start of the "island trolley" and the changes to bus routes 21 and 121 may be "fiscally feasible" during the first half of the 10-year plan, according to Farwell. The ride-share program is yet to be funded and may be available during the second half.

Including other initiatives benefiting more areas in the county, the annual cost to operate the TDP is estimated to be \$6.9 million, Arnold said. The annual capital costs during the 10-year period are estimated to be more than \$5.3 million.

The board of the Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization will review the TDP on Sept. 11 and the Board of County Commissioners will review and be asked to adopt it on Oct. 13.

*Contact Omar at [omar.rodriquezortiz@naplesnews.com](mailto:omar.rodriquezortiz@naplesnews.com), and follow him on Twitter as @Omar\_fromPR. Support his work by subscribing to Naples Daily News.*