

IRL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2019-03
A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE INCLUSION OF IMPROVEMENTS
BENEFICIAL TO THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON SYSTEM RESTORATION AND
REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLANNING STUDIES FOR
STATE ROAD 528 AND STATE ROAD 520

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon ("Lagoon") is a diverse, shallow-water estuary stretching across 40 percent of Florida's East Coast; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon represents a complex estuarine ecosystem comprised of three water bodies: the Indian River, Mosquito Lagoon and Banana River that together have been designated as an "Estuary of National Significance" by the U.S. Congress in 1990; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon supports important commercial and recreational fisheries and economic resources that are vital to the interests of the region, the State of Florida and the nation with an estimated annual economic impact of \$7.6 billion; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon has become one of the most vulnerable estuaries in the United States that is threatened throughout its geographic range and watershed by water quality decline, habitat alteration and loss, fisheries decline, loss of biological diversity, and altered hydrologic flow; and

WHEREAS, the earthen causeways for State Road (SR) 528 and SR 520 have impacted the natural water flow of the Lagoon and impede dispersal mechanisms of Lagoon organisms; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is a key partner with the Canaveral Port Authority in planning and construction of intermodal and port facility projects; and

WHEREAS, FDOT is conducting a causeway improvement study (FM #407402-3&4) for the future widening of State Road 528 (the "Project") and has plans to conduct future studies for State Road 520; and

WHEREAS, the Project is listed as a priority by the Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Alliance and the Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization on which the Canaveral Port Authority serves as a Member of the Governing Board; and

WHEREAS, both SR 528 and SR 520 are designated hurricane evacuation routes; and

WHEREAS, SR 528 serves as an essential transportation corridor that links the goods entering Port Canaveral (including fuel) to all of Central Florida for hurricane preparedness and during post-hurricane response and recovery periods; and

WHEREAS, the Canaveral Port Authority partnered with the IRL Council (an independent, special district of Florida) and Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRLNEP) to complete a study of potential improvements to improve the flushing of the Lagoon system based on increasing bridge spans, adding additional relief spans, and elevating portions of the causeways;

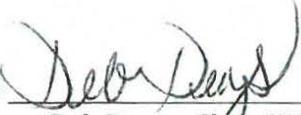
WHEREAS, the study, Numerical Model Flushing Experiments, Final Report, dated September 2018 was presented at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Canaveral Port Authority's Board of Commissioners on October 31, 2018;

WHEREAS, the results of the study show that flushing may be improved by almost 10% with causeway elevating alterations to SR 528 and SR 520; and

WHEREAS, causeway elevating alterations can provide 21st century transportation corridor improvements that deliver the following additional benefits: Improved infrastructure resiliency to storm surge; Shoreline erosion and sea level rise; Restoration of Lagoon bottom lost during causeway construction; Restoration of historic sea grass beds lost in causeway construction; Improved recreational fishing associated with elevated roadway structure; and Opportunities for long-term mitigation planning.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THE IRL COUNCIL in a regularly scheduled meeting assembled on February 8, 2019, supports FDOT's efforts to study and evaluate infrastructure improvements options to SR 528 and SR 520 and encourages the inclusion of any and all infrastructure improvements that will benefit the Lagoon, the economy and the resiliency of essential transportation corridors and infrastructure.

DONE at New Smyrna Beach Florida, this 8th day of February 2019.

By: 
Deb Denys, Chair IRL Council

ATTEST:


Stacey Hetherington, Secretary IRL Council

Approved as to legal form and sufficiency:


Carolyn S. Ansay
IRL Council, Legal Counsel