

Kendall Parkway shifting into gear as county now seeks state ok to proceed

By: [Bill Kress](#) July 2, 2018

It's not an easy commute from the western reaches of the county into downtown Miami, but hundreds of concerned residents were driven to do just that, in order to have their voices heard at County Hall regarding the future of the Kendall Parkway – and their community.

And the drive was well worth it as Miami-Dade County Commissioners gave a green light to a key step in the process to ensure delivery of the much-needed traffic solution for the people who live, work, learn, play in West Dade and West Kendall. Before the hundreds of concerned citizens who gathered at County Hall, the commission gave its preliminary approval to include the Kendall Parkway as a new transportation corridor in their Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP).

A necessary part of the overall process, the item will now proceed to the Florida State officials for review before coming back for a final vote by the county commissioners in September or October of this year.

In what was described as a meeting full of passion on both sides of the issue, as the voices of the many residents of the area where this multimodal facility would serve were heard loud and clear by the majority of the County Commissioners who approved the measure.

This is big news for area residents, as it represents the first time they would ever be served by a transportation facility that not only moves cars – a lot of cars – but also offers express-bus service and a 14-mile nature trail. To have all these options so close at hand is remarkable because this has long been an area of the county that has been allowed to grow despite the total lack of suitable transportation infrastructure.

Yet it appears the clear facts about the project did little to placate the position of the environmentalist opposing it.

Lee Hefty , County Director of the Division Environmental Resources Management, made the case that the project is not in the Everglades and east of the area identified by the South Florida Management District for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), and that there exist protection measures for environmentally sensitive areas that are in the path of the corridor.

This includes the requirement of mitigation onsite, which results in MDX purchasing 1,000 acres of sensitive lands for conservation.

One interesting claim made by opponents is that the Kendall Parkway would adversely impact the West Wellfield and drinking water in the area. However, as it turns out, most of the wellfields in Miami-Dade County that provide drinking water are actually located in the heart of the county, directly under existing residential communities and commercial businesses – and there are effective safeguards in place that protect these very important resources.

Another common myth expressed by opponents is that the highway will somehow compete with transit for funding. This is a very unfortunate misunderstanding. The Kendall Parkway, which is the only proposed transit component in West Kendall, will be funded exclusively by the tolls paid by area users. There simply are no taxes or any other funds slated for the project. In fact, it is designed to complement the other corridors of the “Smart Plan” such as the Kendall corridor and the East-West Corridor. Also there is no pot of existing money, the project is funded by the money it generates from tolls.

At the end of the day, the voice of the every residents and businesses who will benefit from their Kendall Parkway made a strong show of support at the meeting, primarily through 6,000 registered-voter household petitions, resolutions entered into the record by homeowner associations representing in excess of 10,000 residents, and dozens of individual speakers who personally stepped up.

Not only did residents make their voices heard, but prominent community leaders did as well, such as West Kendall Baptist CEO Javier Hernandez-Lichtl. A strong supporter of the project, he shared the frustrations of his medical staff whose work is critical to the health and welfare of people living in the area.

With each step in the process, the Kendall Parkway is emerging as the preferred solution for the people of West Dade and West Kendall.

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