

DORAL JULY 12, 2016 6:00 AM

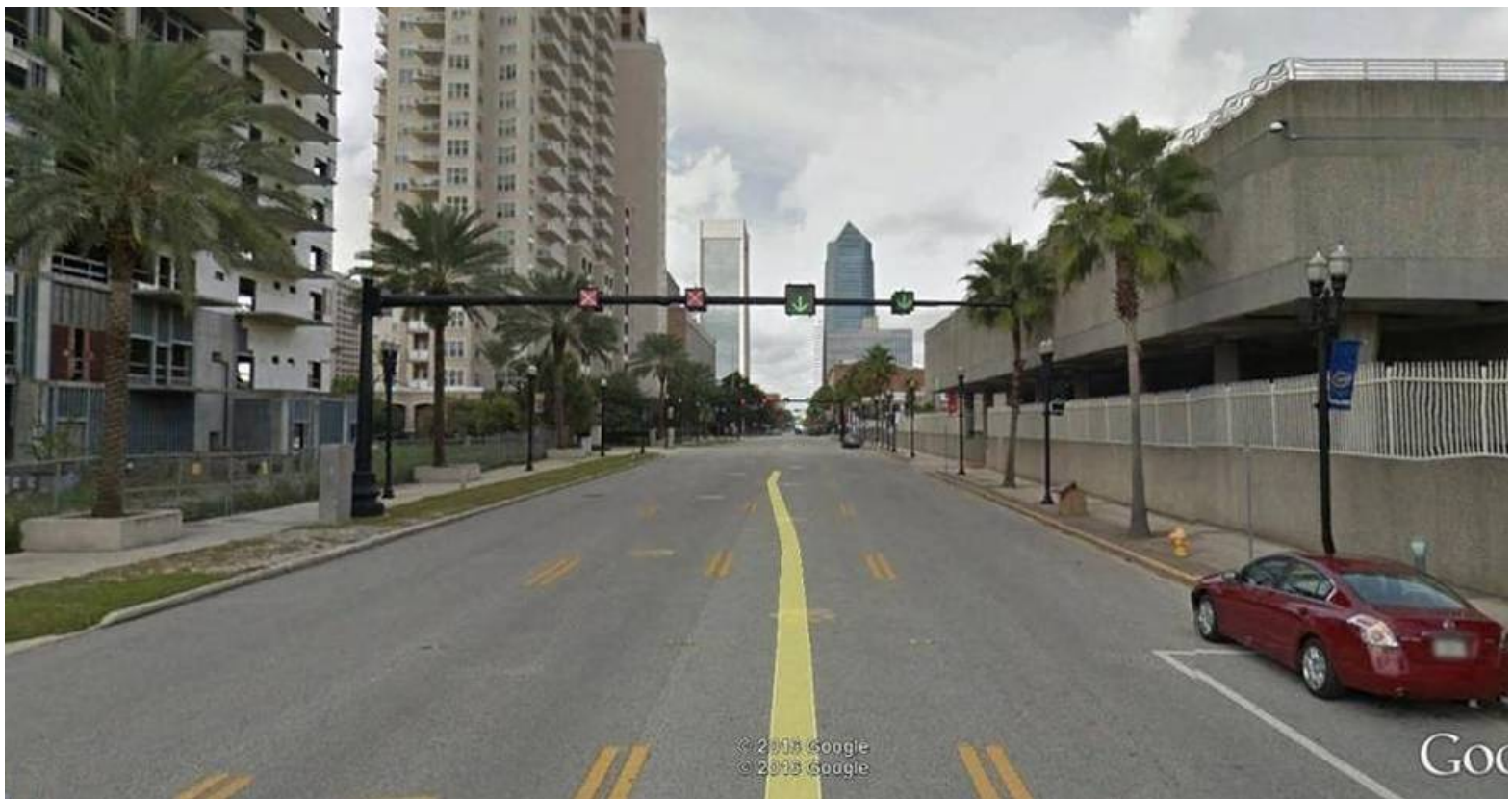
Would reversible lanes ease Doral's traffic? Answer still a ways off

HIGHLIGHTS

The Metropolitan Planning Organization is conducting a countywide study on reversible lanes

The study's outcome will be released in September

In the meantime, Doral continues to struggle with traffic snarls



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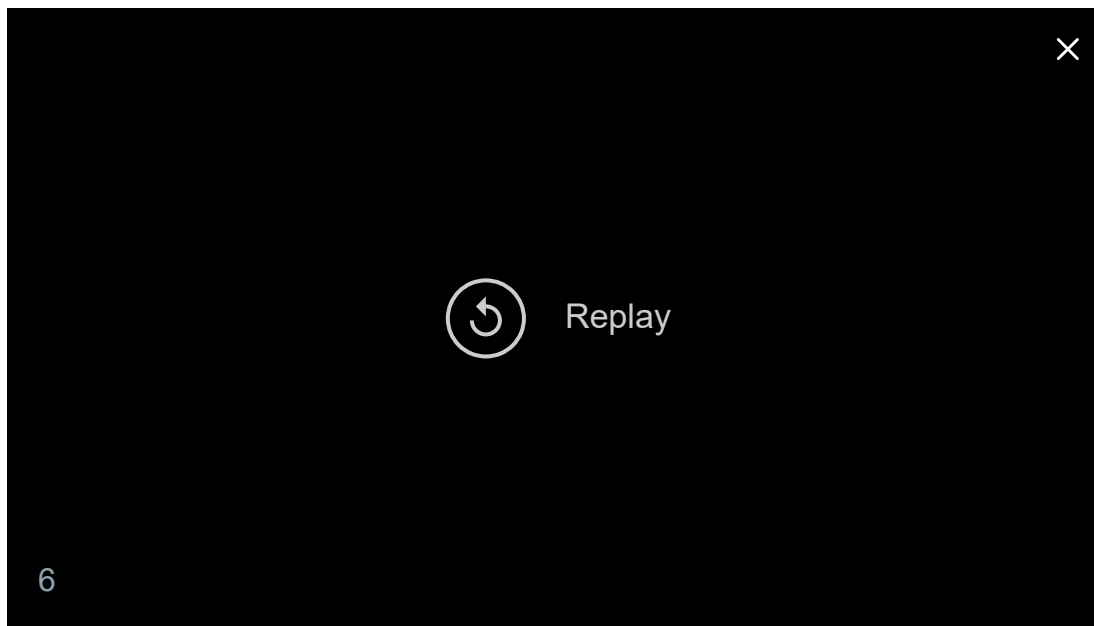
A study that could have helped solve Doral's traffic woes will take longer than expected.

In March, the Miami-Dade County Commission asked the Metropolitan Planning Organization to finance and conduct a 90-day study in Doral in hope of identifying the best roads for a pilot program on reversible lanes.

However, after discovering that the planning organization had already started a countywide study on reversible lanes in December, County Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, who sponsored the resolution requesting the study, scratched it.

Reversible lanes allow traffic, at different times, to travel in different directions depending on congestion. Traffic is directed by overhead signals with a green arrow or a red X into the correct lanes. They are used to improve traffic flow during rush hours — in the morning, certain lanes might be designated as eastbound, then by 5 p.m., be used for westbound traffic.

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Doral, a city plagued by bumper-to-bumper traffic, is eager to implement the pilot program.

The study would have cost about \$55,000, Doral officials said.

“There was a conflicting study by the [Metropolitan Planning Organization]. There's no reason to put out taxpayers' money to do the same effort twice,” Diaz said. “Reality is, we can study things to death. The idea is to put an actual pilot program. People are tired and mad, and that's where we're at right now, trying to find a solution.”

The countywide study will be finished in September, according to the planning organization.

Diaz told the Miami Herald it is still unknown when the program will start. "That's what we're working on and trying to figure out," he said.

Doral officials say they hope Northwest 25th Street west of 87th Avenue will be one of the first streets to experiment with reversible lanes, mainly because of the heavy traffic volume. Also, it doesn't have raised medians with trees or grass, which require more work to convert to traffic lanes.

But not everyone is on board.

"I'm open to studying it and to see what that reveals for us. However I'm concerned that there will be more confusion and more accidents because of the heavy transit traffic in our city," said Doral Vice Mayor Christi Fraga.

Last month, Diaz met with Doral staff to discuss another roadway project that could dramatically increase the flow of traffic: connecting 82nd Avenue. The avenue splits at Northwest 12th Street and does not connect through, causing traffic snarls.

Next week, Diaz and County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa will have a Sunshine meeting (meeting one-on-one but open to the public) to discuss getting it done.

"All it needs is to be paved and a few other little things," Diaz said.

Joan Shen, Doral's advisor for traffic and transit, said the city's "priority is working with the county and MDX to connect Northwest 82nd Avenue and partnering with the [Metropolitan Planning Organization] to study paired one-way streets to improve traffic circulation in Doral."

On average, Doral has more than 100,000 drivers entering and coming through the city on a weekday, and more than 106,000 cars leaving every weekday, city spokesman Evan Owen said.

Reversible lanes have been used minimally at the Miami Dolphins' stadium in Miami Gardens immediately before and after games. They were also used during the rebuilding of bridges linking the mainland with Key Biscayne. Interstate 595 in Broward also has reversible express lanes.

Other cities that have used reversible lanes are Jacksonville, Washington, D.C., Denver and San Francisco.

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