

## Expressway interchange work to start

By YUDY PINEIRO Posted on Sun, Aug. 03, 2008

Even as Miami-Dade Expressway Authority officials prepare to begin work next month on Killian Parkway Interchange improvements on the Don Shula Expressway, the agency is still grappling with issues on where to place noise walls.

The matter dates back six years when expressway officials first presented Kendale homeowners with plans to erect five miles of walls as a way to minimize highway noise from proposed additional lanes and new ramp.

Back then, residents who lived next to the CSX railroad tracks on the west side of State Road 874 urged officials to obtain the railroad right-of-way from CSX so the walls could be built west of the tracks, shielding the community from loud passing trains.

But, much to their surprise, officials heard a different cry from Kendale homeowners on July 24 at Riverside Baptist Church as they showed residents details of the project.

Residents whose property line would touch the wall -- if built west of the train tracks -- now worry a 22-foot wall would block out the sun and be unsightly in their backyards.

Activist Eric Prince, who has long fought for the walls to be placed west of the tracks, said he understands the concerns of those who live closest to the walls.

"It's a very sticky problem and it's much more complex than I ever thought, but I defer to the people who would have to live with this the most," he said. "I'm for what's best for the community."

The issue of where to place the walls is not so clear cut either from the expressway authority's standpoint. The agency has been trying for years to get permission from CSX to build the noise walls on their right-of-way, but haven't received much cooperation.

Officials plan to take care of the noise walls on the east side first to allow time for a final decision on where to place the westside walls. But they only have a six- to nine-month gap before a decision must be made. For that, they need CSX to respond.

"I'm hopeful something will come back within the next month," said Alfred Lurigados, a project engineer for MDX, during a meeting in his office Thursday.

Regardless, MDX officials have promised Kendale residents an update in three months.

Expressway officials have already hired a contractor and plan to start the approximately \$90 million lane work by mid-September. Besides the seven noise walls on the east and west sides, plans include adding a lane in each direction from the existing toll plaza to the Killian Parkway Interchange and a new parallel bridge over the 874.

Also part of the plan: Demolishing the toll plaza in exchange for open-road tolling, a cashless system with roofless gantries that electronically collect tolls at high speeds.

According to MDX officials, the purpose of the project is alleviate expressway traffic at the Killian Parkway Interchange and ease traffic flow. The proposed ramp will have three lanes, allowing for a direct connection to Killian Parkway through the signal at 107th Avenue, alleviating congestion at the intersection of Killian and 107th Avenue.

The project, which begins just south of the Southwest 117th Avenue overpass and ends at the south end of the bridge over Kendall Drive, should be completed by 2011.