

Residents not high on proposed Vineland Road changes

By Ken Jackson
Editor

The Florida Department of Transportation held a public meeting last week to share with area residents a plan to affect — with a hope to improve — the flow of traffic along Vineland Road (State Road 535) between U.S. Highway 192 and International Drive heading toward Orange County.

Planned changes to intersections, including those at Poinciana Boulevard, Polynesian Isle Boulevard and at the LBV Factory Stores would restrict some turns and, in turn, hopefully improve safety along that stretch of highway.

But, some area residents aren't convinced it will help.

Resurfacing and improving sidewalks and bike lanes are part of the project, which is in the design and planning stages now, and if funded as expected wouldn't go under construction until the end of 2024.

To improve traffic flow, FDOT proposes a series of new intersection modifications. A Restricted Crossing U-Turn (RCUT) design is proposed at LBV Factory Stores Drive, which would not allow left turns out of the stores onto Vineland Road. A Partial Median U-Turn (PMUT) design is proposed at Polynesian Isle Boulevard and Poinciana Boulevard. At these intersections, traffic on Vineland can turn right or go straight through the intersection. Those on Vineland wishing to turn left onto those streets would go through the intersection, make a U-turn a few hundred feet past those intersections, then turn right onto the side streets.

Traffic from the side streets can go straight through the intersection, or turn right or left onto Vineland — that is unchanged from the current configuration. These designs enhance safety by reducing conflict points, or places where vehicles could potentially cross paths and collide.

Those dedicated U-Turns would also have traffic signals, putting a string of signals on Vineland in a rather short distance. But Kevin Powell, FDOT's project manager for this project, said those lights would all be synchronized to maximize the constant flow of traffic on Vineland. He also noted the few number of northbound left turns onto those streets shown by traffic studies rationalize the PMUT design.

Another planned pedestrian safety improvement is reconstructing and extending curbs to reduce crossing distances. New bicycle lanes next to right turn lanes (called keyhole lanes) are planned at Osceola County Parkway and Calypso Cay Way.

Other operational improvements include adding a third left turn lane from S.R. 535 and upgrading traffic signals



PHOTO/FDOT

A graphic of the proposed changes at Vineland Road intersections with Polynesian Isle and Poinciana boulevards that would restrict left turns onto those streets, and requiring a U-turn (shown at right) to come back at turn right.

at Kyngs Heath Road, the Osceola Parkway eastbound on-ramp, Poinciana Boulevard and LBV Factory Stores Drive. The turn lanes at Kyngs Heath Road will be extended and lighting will also be enhanced at signalized intersections.

Local residents of Indian Wells, which is along Polynesian Isle, who attended the meeting seemed concerned about the number of lights on Vineland Road, and the potential for cut-through traffic in their neighborhood to avoid a newly-configured Vineland.

"People were unhappy when they left," said Michele Molesky, the Indian Wells homeowner's association president. "Their video was confusing. Telling us it will cause less traffic, I don't see that. I see more people trying to avoid Vineland by cutting down Polynesian Isle, using us as a by-pass and creating more headaches if they know their way around. I see that traffic every day, it's obviously coming from somewhere. I don't necessarily think this needs to be done."

Police News

FHP arrests man after road rage shooting on Florida's Turnpike in Osceola

Florida Highway Patrol has reported it made an arrest in a road rage incident that occurred early Sunday evening on Florida's Turnpike north of Yeehaw Junction.

Zion Zaire-Vincent Waller of Leesburg was arrested and booked into the Osceola County Jail on a number of charges: three counts of attempted murder, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, shooting into or throwing deadly missiles into a vehicle, reckless driving and carrying an unlicensed firearm.

Troopers said Waller shot at another vehicle, and the victim's vehicle had three occupants inside

during this incident, including two adults and a five-year-old child, with one bullet striking their vehicle. Fortunately, there were no reported injuries.

According to the FHP incident report, around 6:20 p.m. Sunday a trooper observed a white sedan driving recklessly, changing lanes improperly around a white pickup truck. The trooper observed the two vehicles too closely at a high rate of speed. After catching the vehicle, which reached speeds of 100 mph according to the report, about four minutes north of Yeehaw Junction, troopers were able to pull it over after activating emergency equipment and got the driver, Waller, 22, and a passenger to exit the vehicle.

Waller was arrested for reckless driving, and

when another trooper inventoried the vehicle he found, in plain sight, a rifle and Glock handgun in clear view on the floorboard. At that time, the driver of the pickup truck pulled up to the traffic stop and said Waller shot at his vehicle, pointing out a bullet hole on the driver side.

Waller confirmed being involved in a road rage incident a few miles to the south, when he said the pickup truck was driving erratically around him, and at one point the driver pointed at him with what appeared to be a weapon. Waller said he feared for his life and shot one round at the truck, and sped up trying to stay away, saying he did not feel safe merely

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