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Midtown Traffic Forum

Seven years ago, the City of Boca Raton established the legal basis for a comprehensive, forward-thinking approach to the future of our neighborhood by passing legislation that would transform Midtown Boca from a 100% commercial-only area into a walkable, multi-modal community that offers residential, retail, office, hospitality, and transit options.

With plans to become the future home to a new Tri-Rail station, Midtown Boca has the additional benefit of becoming a **Transportation Oriented Development (“TOD”)**, which further enhances our neighborhood. These mixed-use environments are the cutting edge of urban planning and design. Younger workers, ‘empty nesters’, and corporations desire to relocate to these areas to live, work, and play – all without leaving their neighborhood. For those who prefer single-family home living, they too can take advantage of these areas by purchasing existing homes in our neighborhood – which is why the value appreciation of single-family homes located near TOD projects outpace other areas by a 2.7:1 margin.

In Midtown Boca, the addition of residential units will attract new residents who desire to reduce their reliance on cars and have options to commute by foot, bike, rail, trolley service, and community car sharing (e.g. Zipcar). This is known as a multi-modal environment.

More importantly, as opposed to other types of development, the creation of a multi-modal project such as Midtown Boca will not add to the existing traffic issues. As illogical as it may seem, this reality has been evidenced by many existing mixed-use developments located throughout the US. Like you, we believe that effective management of traffic in Midtown will be critical to a successful redevelopment of our neighborhood.

The Problem: Traffic is already here

- **Commuting Creates Congestion** – Boca Raton is a regional employment center that is home to more than 90,000 jobs. 80,000 of those jobs (90% of the total) are held by non-residents who commute into Boca Raton from other cities. Midtown Boca will eliminate a tremendous amount of those commutes and help shift the traffic patterns to reduce current peak congestion times. Midtown Boca is home to 6,500 jobs (and thousands more if you include areas adjacent to Midtown), 2.4 million square feet of retail and restaurants, but no residential dwellings. That means that everyone who works, shops, or dines in Midtown Boca is required to drive to and from their destinations, putting thousands of cars on our roads everyday and clogging our area roadways during morning and evening rush hours.
- **Traffic is currently forecasted to get worse** – If current development patterns persist without regard to the planned mobility policies that are encouraged by the City’s Comprehensive Plan, then roadway traffic will only increase over time. Future developments in adjacent communities that have already been approved will further increase non-resident,





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commuter traffic. Simply put, traffic will worsen if current land use patterns are not changed from 100% commercial to a mix of commercial and residential with new multi-modal infrastructure and enhancements.

Traffic terminology:

These terms will be used in the chart that follows.

- **Trip:** A 'trip' is generated any time a car either drives into or out of the area.
- **Internal Capture:** The portion of trips on City roads that would have otherwise been generated, but are eliminated because the destinations are developed within the area. For example, rather than driving from home to Starbucks for coffee and then driving to work, a resident will walk from their home to Starbucks and then to their place of work all within the same development.
- **Pass-By Trips:** Trips already on the road going to another destination (i.e., driving from work to home, during which the driver stops at one or more locations on the way home.)
- **Non-Auto:** Traveling by walking, bike, carpool, Tri-Rail, Palm Tran, Shuttle, or any other form of transit in place of driving your vehicle.
- **Multi-modal:** A transportation system that provides users with a range of auto and non-auto modes of travel (e.g. walking, cycling, transit, automobiles) that are integrated with connections between modes that provide a high degree of accessibility for drivers and non-drivers.

The Solution: Smart development and careful planning to combat traffic and congestion

- **Neighborhood Cooperation and Feedback** – We want to work with you to help our neighborhood deal with the state, county, and local governments to control these issues.
- **Impact of Additional Housing** – Over the next 10 years, the current proposed zoning regulations would permit up to 2,500 residential units. If existing commuters occupy a portion of these units, the development will actually **decrease** rush hour traffic.
- **Why Midtown?** – Midtown has the City's highest job concentration and is surrounded by other major employment areas, including Glades Corporate Center, Boca Corporate Center, the Yamato office corridor, and FAU. Midtown is uniquely positioned to attract commuters looking to avoid rush hour drives to work. The reduction of traffic will be further enhanced by the fact that the developers are targeting renters who want to be reducing their reliance on automobiles.
- **Actual Mixed-Use Traffic Benefits** – Traffic can be reduced with the right mix of uses and location of development.

	Internal Capture	Non-Auto	Pass-By
Boca Center	41%	4%	26%
Mizner Park	40%	8%	29%
Abacoa	48%	10%	N/A
Midtown Boca	45%	8%	18%

A study that examined the traffic impact from 17 TOD projects found that the TOD-areas averaged **44% fewer vehicle trips** over the course of an entire workday. During peak times (rush hour), the reduction was even greater, with **49% fewer vehicle trips** during the AM peak and **48% fewer vehicle trips** during the PM peak.





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Earlier this month, the premiere traffic consultant in Palm Beach County completed a long-term traffic analysis requested by City staff to determine the impact of adding residential to Midtown Boca. He determined that, by integrating residential units into Midtown, there would be a reduction of more than 36,000 daily trips as workers, shoppers, and diners would be removed from the roadways.



Our own Mizner Park shows how a well-designed, mixed-use project can reduce traffic. If each element in Mizner Park had been developed separately, the project would have generated 2,408 trips daily on Boca Raton's streets.¹ But a traffic analysis performed after Mizner Park opened determined that, in reality, it only generated 1,440 additional trips, as the people who lived and worked in Mizner Park had fewer reasons to leave. Rather, they could accomplish their daily tasks throughout area without the need to drive outside of the park.

New Roadway Improvements Planned

Smart development and \$12 million in traffic impact fees to be funded by Midtown Boca developers will be used to pay for road/intersection improvements concurrently with the redevelopment in order to lessen traffic impact. Even without the impact fees, the following pre-approved and funded roadway projects will also improve traffic:

- **Military Trail & Palmetto Park Road Intersection** – A dedicated turn lane westbound from Palmetto Park Road, turning northbound onto Military Trail will reduce waiting time at the traffic signal. Rather than widening lanes, this merge lane has been approved to improve congestion.
- **Glades Road and Palmetto Park Road** – New Spanish River interchange will divert traffic from Midtown Boca roads and improve the level of service on these roads.
- **Other Options** – Midtown Boca will evaluate options to alleviate traffic such as: improving traffic signal time, expanded pedestrian walkways, bike lanes, reduced speed limit.





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A Multi-Modal Transportation System

Midtown Boca will incorporate the following alternative transportation systems as well as incentive programs for current office and retail employees:

- Donation of land to South Florida Regional Transportation Authority for the development and use of a Tri-Rail station.
- Trolley service between the Tri-Rail station and throughout Midtown Boca.
- Extensive sidewalk, bike lane, and crosswalk network to facilitate attractive and safe pedestrian and bike traffic that connects all modes and destinations throughout Midtown.
- Incorporation of design elements and internal traffic control to facilitate on-demand car services like Uber and Lyft.
- Complimentary on-demand door-to-door golf cart service (e.g., the Downtowner).
- Community car sharing services (e.g., Zipcar).
- Incentive programs for office and retail employees to use Tri-Rail.
- Premium parking spaces and discounted parking charges for carpoolers.

Ensuring Solutions: Traffic Review Process

As a requirement to obtaining site plan approval, both Boca Raton and Palm Beach County mandate thorough, multi-phase traffic review processes to address all aspects of vehicular traffic, pedestrian flow, and alternate transit around and within the Planned Mobility District (PMD). These include:

- **Long Range Traffic Evaluation** – Conducted by the City of Boca Raton (Completed) Models traffic, pedestrian, and mass transit conditions 20-25 years in the future using data provided by the Palm Beach County Metropolitan Planning Organization.²
- **Concurrency Evaluation** – Palm Beach County (To be completed summer 2017) Addresses trip generation, including factors such as location and size, modal split (car, bus, rail, walk, bike), and levels of service studies.
- **Planned Mobility Matrix** – City of Boca Raton (To be completed summer 2017) Geared to reduce trips and trip length and promote non-vehicular travel. Examines internal capture, site design, mobility programs, and alternate modes of transportation, complementary uses and connectivity.

If you have any questions or comments on this information or the Midtown Boca project, contact us at info@midtownboca.com.



¹ Districtwide Trip Generation Study, Task V: Final Report (State Project No. 99004-1623), Walter H. Keller, Inc., (March 1995).

² "Planning Level Traffic Analysis Year 2040" dated November 21, 2016 as updated April 3, 2017