

5. **PRESENTATION(S)**

- b. Sanibel Causeway Variable Pricing presentation by Paul Wingard, Deputy Director Lee County Department of Transportation and Cella Molnar

## **Sanibel Island Value Pricing Study**

### **Project Status:**

In working with the City of Sanibel to address congestion issues, Lee County received a grant from the Federal Highway Administration to perform a study to determine the potential reduction in congestion that may be achieved utilizing value pricing. At the request of the City of Sanibel, Lee County delayed this study from the spring of 2007 to the peak traffic season of 2008. Lee County is requesting that the City of Sanibel provide input into the alternatives that should be studied in depth as this study moves forward.

### **Project Description:**

For the last several years Lee County has recognized that peak hour congestion is a concern on all of the County's toll facilities connecting the mainland with the Gulf Coast islands. With the assistance of the Federal Highway Administration, Lee County has instituted peak hour pricing to manage the peak hour travel demand on both the Mid-Point and the Cape Coral Bridges. These solutions have proven successful in managing demand. This study is to determine if there is a feasible value pricing strategy that will successfully manage the peak hour congestion on the Sanibel Island Causeway. While value pricing strategies have been successful at other locations in Lee County, it is understood that the trip characteristics on the Sanibel Island Causeway are different than the trip characteristics on the other facilities. It is also understood that any alternative strategy should be revenue neutral unless alternative funding strategies to make up for any shortfall can be found.

### **Project Team:**

Lee County-Project Manager-Paul Wingard, Deputy Director Lee County DOT  
Wilbur Smith Associates-Project Manager-Bill Austin  
Cella-Molnar Associates-Project Principal Kris Cella


### **Project Tasks and Schedule:**

- 1) Data Collection and Alternatives Development-In field data collection, project kickoff meeting. Develop draft alternative pricing strategies for evaluation. This task has been essentially completed.
- 2) Project Focus Groups-Targeted focus groups to provide feed back on strategies. This task has been completed.
- 3) Presentation of Value Pricing Plans-Preliminary evaluation of pricing strategies and presentation to elected officials and the public for feed back. The City of Sanibel's input is being solicited today.
- 4) Selection of preferred alternatives-The Lee County Board of County Commissioners will select two preferred alternatives for further analysis.
- 5) Stated Preference Surveys and Market Profile Surveys-In depth surveys to determine on how many people would be willing to change their travel times if variable pricing is utilized in the peak periods and how sensitive they are to various prices. The surveys took place March 13<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 6) Plan Refinement and Analysis-In depth analysis of the impacts of both alternatives including public acceptance and the impact on traffic and revenue.
- 7) Project Implementation Decision-Presentation of the alternatives analysis to key decision makers to determine if any of the alternatives should be implemented.

TASKS	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
<b>Task 1:</b> Data Collection - Define Value Pricing Plans	█	█						
<b>Task 2:</b> Project Focus Groups		█						
<b>Task 3:</b> Presentation of Value Pricing Plans			█					
<b>Task 4:</b> Selection of Preferred Plans				█				
<b>Task 5:</b> Stated Preference and Market Profile Surveys				█				
<b>Task 6:</b> Plan Refinement and Analysis					█			
<b>Task 7:</b> Project Implementation Decisions						█	█	

**Project Alternatives Under Consideration:**

<b>Summary of Alternatives Under Consideration</b>					
	<b>ON-ISLAND TRAVEL (AM Only)</b>		<b>OFF-ISLAND TRAVEL (PM Only)</b>		
	<b>PEAK HOUR SURCHARGE</b>	<b>SHOULDER DISCOUNT</b>	<b>PEAK HOUR SURCHARGE</b>	<b>SHOULDER DISCOUNT</b>	<b>SHOULDER REBATE</b>
<b>Alternatives 1a, 1b</b>	--	--	--	--	✓
<b>Alternative 2a</b>	✓	--	--	--	--
<b>Alternative 2b</b>	--	✓	--	--	--
<b>Alternative 2c</b>	✓	✓	--	--	--
<b>Alternatives 3a, 3b</b>	✓	--	--	--	✓
<b>Alternative 3c</b>	--	✓	--	--	✓
<b>Alternative 3d</b>	✓	✓	--	--	✓
<b>Alternative 4 is based on two-way tolling (pay half the toll in each direction)</b>					
<b>Alternative 4a</b>	✓	--	✓	--	--
<b>Alternative 4b</b>	--	✓	--	✓	--
<b>Alternative 4c</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	--



**Overview Of Alternatives**

The alternatives below are examples of value (variable) pricing programs that could be implemented at the Sanibel Causeway. Lee County DOT is interested in exploring ALL alternatives. There is not yet a preferred alternative. Each alternative could be varied in a number of different ways.

- **Alternative 1a & 1b:** A LeeWay transponder reader would be set up in the off-island direction. LeeWay customers would receive a rebate to their account when leaving the island in the PM shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 2b:** LeeWay customers would receive a discounted toll rate for traveling on-island in the shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 2c:** LeeWay customers would be charged a surcharge for traveling on-island during the AM peak hours, but would receive a discounted toll rate for traveling on-island in the shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 3a & b:** This is a combination of alternatives 1 and 2 and assumes that in addition to the current toll plaza, a LeeWay transponder reader would be set up in the off-island direction. A rebate would always be offered for off-island travel in the PM shoulder

hours. In addition, LeeWay customers would pay a higher toll to travel on-island in the AM peak hours.

- **Alternative 3c:** A rebate would be offered for off-island travel in the PM shoulder hours. LeeWay customers would receive a discount for on-island travel in the AM shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 3d:** A rebate would be offered for off-island travel in the PM shoulder hours. In addition, LeeWay customers would pay a surcharge for on-island travel in the AM peak hours and would receive a discount for on-island travel in the AM shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 4a:** The current toll plaza would be converted for two-way tolling. This does not mean that the toll would double, but rather split in half for each segment of the trip. LeeWay customers would pay a surcharge for on-island travel in the AM peak hours and for off-island travel in the PM peak hours.
- **Alternative 4b:** LeeWay customers could receive a discounted toll for on-island travel in the AM shoulder hours and a discounted toll for off-island travel in the PM shoulder hours.
- **Alternative 4c:** LeeWay customers would pay a surcharge for on-island travel in the AM peak hours and for off-island travel in the PM peak hours. Customers would receive a discount for on-island travel in the AM shoulder hours and for off-island travel in the PM shoulder hours.

#### **Public Involvement to Date**

To date two public involvement activities have been conducted to determine public opinion on the alternatives noted above. The first activity was four focus groups where the various alternatives were presented to participants for discussion. These meetings were held at the Sanibel Public Library and the Lee County Public Works Building. The focus groups consisted of frequent users (three trips or more a week) of the causeway who were either, Sanibel Residents, representatives Sanibel Businesses, Lee County Residents, or representatives of Lee County Businesses.

Comments from the Sanibel businesses included:

- Retail businesses can't change their hours;
- The 4-way stop at Periwinkle causes traffic issues. The causeway traffic flows well;
- The people who pay cash cause more of the traffic than the transponder users;
- There is not a traffic issue in the morning;
- If we change our hours to get discount, then wage costs increase;
- Since the construction of the new bridge, the congestion is better;
- Sunset discount -- Encourage visitors to arrive at night; and
- Discount needs to be for all, not just transponder users.

Comments for Sanibel Residents included:

- Some residents have flex hours and traveling in the peak hours is not an issue;
- Residents would try to change travel times in some cases for a discount toll;
- The 4-way stop and the traffic cop at Periwinkle causes the congestion;
- Suggest trolley or ferry to bring more people and fewer vehicles; and
- Stagger business times to reduce traffic leaving the island.

Comments from Lee County businesses included:

- Residents may be able to change travel times;
- Businesses find it hard to change their trip times - many travel by demand/request from customers;

- Entice “day trippers” to come out later for cheaper tolls, and stay later, keeping them out of the 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. rush hour;
- Businesses say they won’t change their hours, but many traveling the Cape;
- Midpoint Bridges did change their hours once the variable pricing program was in place; and
- Eliminate 4-way stop at Periwinkle.

**Comments from Lee County Residents Included:**

- Lower toll in the afternoon. A lower toll will encourage people to go to the island in the afternoon, instead of in the morning;
- Try a “pilot” program for 3 or 6 months in and out of season;
- Introduce a “sunset pass” in the evening. Would use the bridge in the evening (outside of peak hours) if there was a reasonable toll; and
- If there was a lower toll at a different time, maybe at night, might change trip behavior.

The second public involvement activity was a public meeting held to present the alternatives to the public for their comment. This meeting was held from 4:30 to 6:30 on February 26 at the Sanibel Recreation Center. Thirty eight persons signed into the meeting with twenty two comments being submitted. There was not a strong preference for any of the alternatives expressed in the comments. There were several comments in opposition to the imposition of two way tolling and against the surcharges for travel during the peak periods. Also, several businesses attended the meeting expressed the concern that they could not change the hours of business to accommodate a change in the toll structure. A more complete summary of the comments received at this meeting will be made available.

**Next Steps**

Study staff would appreciate the City of Sanibel’s input on which two of the alternatives presented above should be more comprehensively evaluated. Study Staff will also seek the Lee County Board of County Commissioner’s direction on this matter at their April 7, Meeting. Once this direction is given the Study will proceed as shown on the attached schedule.