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**Lee Commissioners approve construction contract for Big Carlos Pass Bridge**

*Board also approves adjustments to plans for Cape Coral Bridge and Sanibel Causeway*

Fort Myers, FL, Feb. 21, 2023 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners took action Tuesday on three bridge projects. Commissioners voted to award a construction contract to replace the Big Carlos Pass Bridge, as well as to approve design changes for the Cape Coral Bridge and resiliency measures and recreational amenities for the Sanibel Causeway.

**Big Carlos Pass Bridge**

The Big Carlos Pass Bridge connects the south end of Fort Myers Beach to Lover's Key on Estero Boulevard. The \$90.8 million construction contract with Superior Construction Co. Southeast LLC includes:

- a new fixed span bridge with a 60-foot navigation clearance over Big Carlos Pass with a lifespan of 75 years
- a fishing pier
- pedestrian/bicycle-friendly features

The new bridge will be constructed on the Gulf side of the existing bridge; motorists will continue to have access to the old bridge throughout construction. It will include one travel lane in each direction, bicycle lanes, a 6-foot-wide sidewalk along the north side of Estero Boulevard and a 10-foot shared use path along the south side of Estero Boulevard. The project also includes installation of new infrastructure for Lee County Utilities and Bonita Springs Utilities.

Construction is expected to begin in late spring. The construction contract also includes creation of an offshore artificial reef using the old bridge.

**Cape Coral Bridge**

The design changes for the Cape Coral Bridge are to replace both the eastbound and westbound spans gaining an additional 40-plus years of useful life at the present-day value of \$20 million. Commissioners reached consensus on that plan at a Feb. 6 workshop.

Previously, plans were to replace the westbound span with a new three lane bridge and widen the eastbound span to add a third lane. However, the latest Florida Department of Transportation design requirements would have significantly increased the cost of widening the eastbound lanes.

Construction on this project is slated to begin in 2027. The Cape Coral Bridge will remain open and the current four-lane configuration will be maintained throughout construction.

**Sanibel Causeway**

In February 2022, the Lee Board of County Commissioners directed staff to design additional improvements to the recreational area amenities along the Sanibel Causeway Islands to include a bike lane, turn lanes, designated parking areas and recreational improvements.

After Hurricane Ian caused catastrophic damage to the Sanibel Causeway in September 2022, the Florida Department of Transportation completed temporary repairs and then hired a contractor to complete permanent repairs. The FDOT team has recommended numerous resiliency measures as a part of the design, including sheet pile walls, rip rap, gabion baskets and landscaping improvements to help stabilize the roadway and Causeway Islands.

At the Feb. 6 workshop, commissioners reached consensus to incorporate the resiliency measures along with the previously approved recreational amenities into the FDOT project. The cost of the improvements to the Sanibel Causeway as a part of FDOT's proposed permanent repairs is \$285.3 million, of which Federal Highway Administration would fund \$239.3 million and Lee County would be responsible for \$46.1 million. Lee County is responsible for the \$5.6 million needed for recreational amenities.

To watch the board's workshop on the Cape Coral Bridge and the Sanibel Causeway, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK6vdjmw7M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK6vdjmw7M).

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