



Memorandum

To: Edward Lavalley, City Manager

From: Kathleen Weeden, City Engineer
John Veneziano, Public Works Director

Date: April 30, 2014

Subject: Traffic Signals

Background

The City at present is responsible for maintenance of 11 traffic signals; nine of these signals are along Business 41 from Hatchett Creek Drive to Avenida Del Circo with the remaining two at Bahama/Indian and West Venice/Harbor. The City does not have dedicated technicians who only work on traffic signals. There are two employees and one foreman with basic knowledge about signals and electrical repair and some training.

Recently, Sarasota County began to install new equipment that provides for communication between each of the nine Business 41 signals and a central traffic control system. This system's capabilities are highly sophisticated. Highly trained technicians and engineers operate this system. The City cannot realize the benefits of this system directly as we lack trained staff and the equipment necessary to access the many features that this technology can provide.

At present, the City, through an agreement with FDOT, receives some revenue for maintenance of the nine Business 41 signals. These funds cover roughly one-half the City's annual cost of maintaining the nine signals covered by the agreement.

The signal at Bahama and Indian is old and not functioning most of the time. It is set for flash operation most days, traffic sensors are inoperable and there are no working pedestrian signals. The traffic volumes at this location are not sufficient to meet traffic signal warrants, so it is questionable having a signal at this location. Officials at the school concur that this signal may be removed.

Recommendation

There does not appear to be much benefit to the city operating or maintaining most of these signals. A traffic engineer (which the city does not have on staff) must design changes in signal operation. Those changes must then go through an FDOT review process before implementation. Signal maintenance costs more than FDOT provides. The city staff would have to go through extensive training to learn how to maintain the new equipment. Not dealing with the new equipment on a daily basis makes it difficult for the staff to retain that knowledge which will result in longer delays when signals need to be repaired.

For these reasons, the following steps are recommended:

1. Immediately remove the signal at Bahama/Indian and convert to a two-way stop with stop signs on Bahama.
2. Explore returning maintenance and operation of the nine Business 41 signals to FDOT or transferring the responsibility to the County.