



PHILIP LEVINE
MAYOR

April 21, 2015

Dear Resident,

This past Saturday's eastern bridge malfunctions on the Venetian Causeway reminded all of us of the disruption and consternation that we all fear could result from the planned closure of the western bridge for repairs and reconstruction. We have not rested since Saturday in putting together and implementing a strategy to prevent the worst case scenario moving forward.

First, we reached out to the County to seriously encourage them to delay commencement of the western bridge work until such time as repairs could be made on the eastern bridge. Based on meetings today at the County (including the Coast Guard), we are happy to report that the County is going to keep the eastern bridge in the down position for the foreseeable future since it is currently inoperable. It will take at least 4-6 weeks to accomplish the necessary repairs to the bridge. Until such repairs are completed, the eastern bridge will remain in the down position and the work on the western bridge will not begin.

During today's discussions, the Coast Guard acknowledged that it is, in fact, evaluating whether there are any circumstances under which it could promise that the eastern bridge would not open at all (including for emergencies) while the western bridge was being reconstructed. If they are able to identify and acquire smaller vessels that do not require the bridge to be raised, then they might be able to make that commitment. Although no guarantees can be made, at least we now see a path that could lead to what everyone desires. We will, of course, reach out to our federal leaders to assist in this regard.

We have also continued to work on our contingency plans for those occasions when the eastern bridge gets stuck. We have worked out a set of protocols with Miami police to follow if and when the eastern bridge gets stuck again. These include a VMS sign at the west entrance of the islands to notify commuters of the status of the bridge, a Miami patrol Officer will be utilized to curtail/divert traffic and inform residents, and City of Miami PD and Fire providing emergency services to the islands until MB units can respond. This is in addition to our efforts on the east end, which include locating fire personnel and equipment at the Purdy avenue marina and having Police Marine Patrol ready to transport Fire and Police personnel as needed.



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Finally, as promised at last week's community meeting at the Police station, we will be doing a full-scale exercise simulating an emergency response to the Venetian Islands with both the eastern and western bridge out simultaneously. This will be a multiple agency exercise, including City of Miami Beach, City of Miami, Miami-Dade County and the Coast Guard. We are looking to do this in May and will advise of the date once it is set.

As I mentioned at last week's meeting, the City is doing everything in its power to address your concerns. We will continue to work with the other government agencies that have jurisdiction over the bridge to make sure that our collective voices and concerns are heard. And we will provide the residents updates as we receive additional information. Hopefully you can sleep a little more soundly tonight knowing that we are making progress. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Philip Levine
Mayor

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

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