



Town of Highland Beach

3614 South Ocean Boulevard • Highland Beach, Florida 33487

In 2015, FDOT conducted a thorough Drainage Evaluation Study of the Town of Highland Beach.

FDOT stated in the report's Executive Summary: "A total of 56 (fifty-six) flood points were documented. Each of these locations differed with severity and cause. The result of this evaluation concluded the flood problem will be best resolved by installing a means for the runoff to reach a permeable surface that will promote soil infiltration."

FDOT repaired seven swales and ceased work. Reasons for this are unknown.

Additionally, the A1A corridor also fails to meet basic crosswalk and crosswalk lighting elements installed in other municipalities along A1A such as Pompano Beach and Hillsboro Beach. The Town dedicated funds this year to upgrading lighted crosswalks and install crossing flags at several locations.

In the meantime, Town residents continue to have their safety compromised by the failed drainage system on A1A. One town resident passed away a few years ago after a collision, and another resident was critically injured in February when a vehicle slammed into her at the crosswalk. A U.S. Federal Judge was killed and two others injured at the highly travelled intersection at A1A and Spanish River Boulevard, which feeds northbound into Highland Beach. The Town residents, drivers and bicyclists has suffered numerous accidents along A1A.

The current Town Manager and Town Commission were not in office at that time of the FDOT Drainage Study. Two town referendums for street and sidewalk repairs failed to pass in two elections. FDOT plans were included in the second vote, which failed by 95 percent.

Attempting to pursue the Drainage Repairs on behalf of its deserving residents, the Town filed Appropriations Requests with its elected state officials in FY19-20 and FY20-21, both of which failed due to covid budget constraints.

The Town of Highland Beach Commissioners and Town Manager are requesting action in the on these failed swales that daily threaten its population.

FDOT itself identified these problems. Last week, the SE Coastal Resiliency Partnership presented the results of the climate vulnerability study and reported at the Town Commission meeting that the swales showed considerable areas of flooding on A1A. They stated the swales could be properly reconstructed to alleviate the puddling and pooling.

The Resiliency representatives, stated that initial improvements of standard scale such as digging to lower the elevation of grassy areas of the road and use of pervious fill such as gravel would initially make inroads toward relieving the flooding. They stated these were basic and efficient methods of beginning remediation of the obvious flooding of A1A. Not making these swale repairs and flooding mitigation will only serve to exacerbate the problems and put residents in even greater harm's way.

The SE Palm Beach County Coastal Resiliency Coalition is a coalition of municipalities working to address the impacts of climate change. Many counties are watching the outcome of this group to compare with their flooding and sea-level rise, as reported at the Florida League of Cities.

If one state agency identified and offered solutions for the flooding problems, and another state agency agreed with the assessment and provided initial and eventual alarming forecasts for not alleviating the flooding, Town Commissioners, Town Staff and residents request information as to why FDOT will not finish the project they identified and commenced.

Further, the crosswalk striping is in bad condition and in need of new paint. The “unofficial” bike path is nonexistent and its side roadway striping is in poor shape as well.

I met with FDOT Chief of Staff Shannon Dunaway Schuessler in 2018 at the Tallahassee Headquarters. She stated FDOT would be willing to move ahead with further swale repairs in partnership with the town. I also met with SE Office Rep Roberto Bettencourt in February 2018. He stated the same.

State Sen. Tina Polsky arranged a Zoom meeting last month with myself, FDOT Sec. Kevin Thibault and other FDOT officials. In response, the SE FDOT Office sent a 2017 A1A Maintenance Agreement with the Town. For your information, this is not a replacement for swale mitigation and repairs. This refers to maintenance AFTER the swales are repaired.

We look forward to having this resolved. We at the Town Commission, Town Manager Marshall Labadie, and 8,000 residents DO NOT wish to wait until FDOT conducts its RRR Project scheduled tentatively to be completed by 2024-25.

That would mean that the Town must wait TEN YEARS since the initial swale study to have flooding on A1A be repaired. This is plainly unacceptable to our good residents, backed by Sen. Polsky and our State Rep. Mike Caruso. Both of the elected state officials drive on our A1A regularly and have deemed it to be “dangerous” and in dire need of repairs.

Please set a time we can forge plans to make these swale repairs in the coming fiscal year. Thank you.

Your expertise in this would elevate our small seaside town to a shining example of FDOT’s capabilities of improving safety and serenity for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peggy Gossett-Seidman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peggy" being more prominent.

Peggy Gossett-Seidman
Highland Beach Town Commissioner
On behalf of the Highland Beach Town Commission and Town Manager