

The Midway Boulevard Story

By Danny Quick, Public Works Director

During the 1960s, General Development Corporation built Midway Boulevard to serve as a major collector roadway across seven miles of Port Charlotte. The road connects residential areas adjacent to Charlotte Harbor in the vicinity of Lewis Creek and the Manchester Waterway, continues north and northeasterly to serve residences as direct access to and from U.S. 41, then finally terminates at King's Highway – again, providing direct access for residences to and from U.S. 41 including I-75 via King's Highway.

In the mid 1990's, the county recognized the need to improve traffic operations and traffic flow as traffic volumes increased. Charlotte County engineering design and permitting to widen the roadway from its two-lane cross section to an urban four-lane divided urban cross section for the segment that lies between Elkcam Boulevard and King's Highway.

Subsequently, partially-completed plans were shelved until 2010-2011, due to lack of dedicated funding sources plus further complications due to the economic downturn following Hurricane Charley.

An ancillary project and program, directly related to the Midway Boulevard road widening project, was the Charlotte County master stormwater management plan, which was completed in 1998. This master plan analyzed and quantified stormwater runoff occurring in greater Port Charlotte including drainage flows from the city of North Port. The study recommended significant upsizing and removal and replacement of water control structures and conveyances within the Elkcam, Fordham and Niagara waterways on Midway Boulevard. Charlotte County engineering staff obtained construction permits for the new structures in 2004.

Having permits in-hand, the county preceded to proactively construct the new structures on Midway Boulevard at the canal crossings in anticipation of the future road widening.

In 2008, the citizens of Charlotte County approved a sales tax extension beginning in 2009 that allowed for construction funding for the Midway Boulevard Improvements. Approximately \$30M has been allocated for the project from the 2009 sales tax.

Having construction funds available, the county recently completed engineering design and permitting of road and drainage improvements. Design and permitting of needed sanitary sewer and potable water facilities within the Midway Boulevard corridor are currently underway.

Most recently, as part of the Midway Boulevard improvements, major drainage conveyance upgrades are ongoing in the Pompano, Fordham and Elkcam waterways. These upgrades are comprised of new and lengthened weir structures in each waterway including directional tunneling of 60-inch and 72-inch diameter round concrete pipes under U.S. 41 to maximize drainage capacity and efficiency of the respective canal systems. More specifically, the bigger pipes are required in order to allow for the new Midway drainage system to operate properly and

meet both county code and southwest Florida water management district (state drainage regulations) requirements. According to the construction contractor, the directional tunneling effort is the largest project of this type ever undertaken in North America.

An additional benefit of the microtunneling, as a result of improved drainage flow within the canal systems, will be an overall enhancement of residential street drainage within the respective canal watersheds, including Parkside. An anticipated construction start for the road and drainage work on Midway Boulevard is early 2015, following final land and construction easement acquisition, final utilities design and permitting, soliciting construction bids, Board of County Commissioners award of a construction contract, and finally, a contractor beginning work.