

**Edgewater Drive: Preparing for Charlotte County's Future  
Administrator's Update for 3/25/15  
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator**

A great deal of planning and coordination led to the 25-month Edgewater Drive Phase 2 (EP2) Improvements project, the project that included the closure of Edgewater Drive on March 2. Representatives of the Charlotte County public works department's engineering division met with the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners in public meetings several times over five years to review, revise and finalize plans that included expanding two miles of Edgewater Drive from two lanes to a divided four-lane residential roadway.

In addition to replacing the water and sanitary sewer main and an irrigation main, there will be installation of a grass median, landscaping, decorative lighting and bridge railing, and sidewalks. The Sunrise Waterway, East Spring Lake and West Spring Lake bridges are being replaced and roundabouts added at Midway Boulevard, Lakeview Boulevard, West Tarpon Boulevard and Port Charlotte Boulevard.

The goals in making these improvements were established early in the process: to improve safety and mobility for the traveling public, including drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians; to preserve and enhance the economic, historic, scenic and natural qualities of the roadway system; to enhance mobility for local residents for day-to-day activities; and to improve a critical corridor that provides a secondary hurricane evacuation route from coastal to inland areas.

Now, three weeks since the closure, motorists are becoming accustomed to the new traffic patterns. Some days are tougher than others, but we are all working to adjust our routes.

While closing Edgewater Drive and the bridges simultaneously was admittedly a difficult decision, it was a decision that was not made in a vacuum. Residents had opportunity for input at public meetings, including a survey regarding elements of the project. When given a choice between leaving the bridges open and shifting one lane of traffic in each direction as structures are built and demolished, or detouring and closing the bridges at different times to construct replacement bridges in a single phase, 80 percent chose the detour option to save \$2 million – roughly 25 percent of this portion of the project – and avoid up to 6 months of additional delays.

Prior to implementation, the EP2 project team met with stakeholders to ensure communication was coordinated among the Sheriff's department, emergency response personnel, Charlotte County Utilities (CCU), the Charlotte County school board transportation department, the Marine Advisory Committee, community services' parks and natural resources division, the U.S. Postal Service, UPS and FedEx.

Additionally, over 120 residents attended an open house in January to ask questions of the project team, which includes Owen-Ames-Kimball Co., contractor; Southwest Engineering & Design; American Consulting; and both Charlotte County engineering and CCU. Those who attended had the opportunity to review maps of the detour plan and construction staging zones and learn more about how roundabouts will enhance the project.

To date, more than 1,600 users have visited GoEP2.com, where all project information is available 24/7. Since January, 270 individuals have signed up through GoEP2.com for updates on construction and information for park visitors and boaters, as well as traffic alerts via email and text. Residents can contact the project team through the website or the project hotline at 941-62-GoEP2 (941-624-6372) to voice their concerns or questions.

We will continue to keep you informed through each step of this important project. I encourage you to visit [GoEP2.com](http://GoEP2.com) regularly and sign up for email and text alerts to keep current on closures and other timely news.

Even at this early stage, we're making strong progress on the project and appreciate your patience as we work to improve this critical corridor for Charlotte County's future. We welcome your feedback via the website or hotline anytime.