



Road Improvements Will Transform Look Of Panama City Beach

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Panama City Beach, Fla:

Panama City Beach's famous strip will get a total makeover in the coming years. To see the future, take a look at Richard Jackson Boulevard. Wide lanes, medians, sidewalks and landscaping are some of

the features that will one day enhance Front Beach Road all the way to State Highway 79.

"We have absolutely beautiful beaches and it's going to bring this road to the caliber of our beach," said Mario Gisbert, Assistant City Manager of Panama City Beach.

At a public hearing Tuesday night, project managers unveiled the third phase of a \$300 million project that could take up to three decades to complete and transform the look of the beach's main drag.

"I think the plans are spectacular," said Ward 1 councilman John Reichard. "They have to be tuned up a little it... but I am thrilled at the progress we're making and the new face we're going to have on Front Beach Road."

The third segment – from Highway 79 to Middle Beach Road at Hutchinson Boulevard – is still in the concept and design phase. It includes a four-lane divided roadway, dedicated tram and bike lane, transit pullouts for passenger loading, sidewalks, landscaping and storm water collection/retention facilities. Its cost is estimated at \$144 million.

The future will bring a different look, but Front Beach Road will still be the place to "see and be seen."

“You’re still going to have that component of it, but now you’re going to have a mass transit system that you’re going to be able to run right past those people,” said Gisbert. “And you’re going to be able to ride your bicycle [and] you’re going to be able to walk it.”

Segment one is currently under construction and funded; segment two’s design phase is 95% complete. The public hearing fulfills a requirement for submitting the Segment 3 plan to the Federal Highway Administration – which officials hope will lead to federal funding for the project.

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