

COTI – COMMITTEE OF THE ISLANDS INC.

**Preliminary Comments on the J.N. Ding Darling
Alternative Transportation in Parks & Public Lands Study**

Committee of the Islands Inc. – COTI – was formed as an outgrowth of two organizations which successfully advocated for the incorporation of the City of Sanibel in 1974. COTI's mission is to perpetuate their goal of preserving the sanctuary nature of the Island. It does so by developing and promoting policies and positions designed to protect the natural environment and maintain and enhance the quality of life of its residents. COTI currently has 561 members.

COTI operates principally through its committees, under the direction of the Board of Directors. One of its committees focuses on congestion issues affecting the Island, helping to shape opinions and actions that affect congestion on Sanibel. This background paper is a product of that committee. It is a working document of the Committee on Island Congestion. We anticipate that we may revise or extend it as this process goes forward.

The purpose of this paper is to provide background for COTI's contribution to the discussion of the Alternative Transportation Project. Our responses to the Stakeholders' Questions are attached.

SANIBEL VISION STATEMENT

A guiding principle of COTI's activities is our commitment to the Sanibel Vision Statement. That statement is part of Sanibel's City Charter, and we recommend that the consultant study it closely. We draw on a particularly pertinent part of it here.

The statement explicitly covers the Sanctuary, Community and Attraction appeals of Sanibel. It closes with a Hierarchy of Values, which we quote in full:

This three-part statement of the community's vision of its future is hierarchy; one in which the dominant principle is Sanibel's sanctuary quality. Sanibel shall be developed as a community only to the extent to which it retains and embraces this quality of sanctuary. Sanibel will serve as an attraction only to the extent to which it retains its desired qualities as sanctuary and community.

A copy of the full Sanibel Vision Statement, which is embedded in the City's Charter is attached.

COTI INVOLVEMENT IN TRAFFIC ISSUES

Vehicular traffic congestion during the peak season has long been an important issue for Sanibel and for COTI. We have participated in all of the major studies of this problem since the incorporation of the city. We started reaching out to the members of the Steering Committee for the current study last January. Below is an extract from our Winter 2008 Newsletter indicating our involvement and position:

“City Council's December 18 meeting marked an important new development on the traffic front. Council approved in principle the contract for a \$750,000 study funded by the U. S. Department of Transportation. The application for the grant stated its objective

as seeking, "alternative transportation options to reduce the number of vehicles entering environmentally sensitive property within the City of Sanibel and at the J. N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge." The study includes money for an analysis of island and refuge carrying capacity thresholds.

“Sanibel, the Refuge and Lee County, through Lee Tran, have established a joint Steering Committee to oversee the study. Lee Tran will serve as the project manager and funding conduit. The work will include data collection, probably during the March, 2008 peak season. The plan provides for substantial public involvement. The first task is a review of available information and the design of studies to produce additional data needed. The public engagement program, the data collection and the carrying capacity assessment will feed the generation of alternative options. The final stage of this grant is the evaluation of the options. If that process produces an action plan, there may also be grants available for implementation.

“COTI sees potential benefit for Sanibel in this grant. The data collection should help us understand the traffic situation better. We find the focus on carrying capacity encouraging. At the same time, we are concerned over the risk that inadequately considered changes focused on the Refuge might have unintended adverse effects on Island traffic overall. We plan to work with other interested groups to help channel the process constructively. We hope that the results of this effort can assist with the search for answers to our traffic congestion challenge.”

OBSERVATIONS

One of the points made in our Newsletter warrants emphasis. The data collection portion of the study is a major component. We are glad to see that the origin and destination study is still part of the plan. We believe that this information will be useful only if it is collected during the mid-January to mid-April period which is the peak traffic period. We had hoped that the work might be done this past March. With that opportunity behind us, it is important that the survey await this year's peak. We also hope that the study will be done by roadside interviews and that it will follow the pattern of the Kittelson study in March of 2002, to permit the identification of trends.

On a related note, we also urge that any proposed changes recognize the seasonality of the problems we are trying to mitigate. Sanibel traffic is an issue for only three months of the year. We do not need twelve month solutions.

COTI appreciates the opportunity to participate in this important study. We look forward to adding value to the process, and welcome any questions or requests for amplification the consultant or the Steering Committee may have. We trust that data relevant to the study will be made available to stakeholders as it is materializes. If several realistic solutions emerge, we hope the community will have an opportunity to discuss them before a final decision are made.

COTI Committee on Island Congestion
September 10, 2008

Chapter 1 - Section 3.18. Code of the City of Sanibel - The Sanibel Vision Statement.

The Sanibel Vision Statement is a confirmation of the community's shared values and goals, to guide future decisions.

SANCTUARY

Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary, one in which a diverse population lives in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats. The Sanibel community must be vigilant in the protection and enhancement of its sanctuary characteristics.

The City of Sanibel will resist pressures to accommodate increased development and redevelopment that is inconsistent with the Sanibel Plan, including the Vision Statement.

The City of Sanibel will guard against and, where advisable, oppose human activities in other jurisdictions that might harm the island's sensitive habitats, including the island's surrounding aquatic ecosystems.

COMMUNITY

Sanibel is and shall remain a small town community whose members choose to live in harmony with one another and with nature; creating a human settlement distinguished by its diversity, and will endeavor to maintain it.

Diversity.: The City of Sanibel cherishes its culture, social, ecological, and economic diversity, and will endeavor to maintain it.

Beauty.: The City of Sanibel will foster quality, harmony and beauty in all forms of human alteration of the environment. The community aesthetic is defined as a casual style; one which is adapted to a relaxed island quality of life and respectful of local history, weather, culture and natural systems.

Uniqueness.: The City of Sanibel chooses to remain unique through a development pattern which reflects the predominance of natural conditions and characteristics over human intrusions. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the community's unique small town identity.

Character.: The City of Sanibel chooses to preserve its rural character in its setting within and [an] urbanizing county. "Auto-urban" development influences will be avoided. The commercialization of natural resources will be limited and strictly controlled.

Stewardship.: In keeping with the foregoing principles, the City of Sanibel affirms a land ethic that recognizes landholding--both public and private--as a form of stewardship, involving responsibilities to the human and natural communities of the island and its surroundings, and to future generations.

ATTRACTION. The Sanibel community recognizes that its [its] attractiveness to visitors is due to the island's quality as sanctuary and as community. The City of Sanibel will welcome visitors who are drawn by, and are respectful of, these qualities; it will resist pressures to accommodate visitor attractions and activities that compromise these qualities.

HIERARCHY OF VALUES. This three-part statement of the community's vision of its future is a hierarchy; one in which the dominant principle of Sanibel's sanctuary quality. Sanibel shall be developed as a community only to the extent in which it retains and embraces this quality of

sanctuary. Sanibel will service as attraction only to the extent to which it retains its desired qualities as sanctuary and community.

(Ord. No. 06-010, § 1, 8-1-2006/3-6-2007; Res. No. 07-038, § 3, 3-20-2007/3-6-2007)