

University of South Florida:
Traffic Infrastructure Proposal

To: President of USF Sarasota-Manatee

From: Brice Hamilton

Date: November 18, 2020

Subject: URGENT SAFETY CONCERN: Appropriate traffic intersection at USFSM needed

The lack of a proper intersection between the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus and the US-41 roadway poses an imminent danger to all students, faculty, and visitors of USFSM. The current junction between USFSM and 6-lanes of oncoming US-41 traffic yields an unprecedented danger to all students and area commuters alike. To avoid potential casualties, it is recommended that the USFSM Executive Committee take direct action to address this situation. This report will propose and evaluate (2) solutions to mitigate this problem:

I. Implementation of a traditional controlled 4-way traffic-light intersection [most long-term impact]

II. A through-campus road to the existing traffic light at New College that allows northbound traffic to turn onto US-41 safely [most cost-effective strategy]

RECOMMENDATION USFSM needs a method to advert the direct threat of students being forced to cross a 6-lane highway road. The most realistic and cost-effective solution to mitigate this problem would be achieved by connecting a through-campus road to the existing traffic light at New College that allows northbound traffic to turn onto US-41 safely. However, long-term gains may be realized through a traditional traffic-light intersection.

**BACKGROUND/
RATIONALE**

An individual only must exit the campus of USFSM and attempt to turn northbound onto US-41 to realize the danger of this situation—particularly during rush hours. The inherent dangers that result from having to turn against 6 lanes of oncoming highway speed traffic are proven from a century’s worth of automobile accident and fatalities records. Such a poor existing traffic infrastructure in the current situation lends itself to having the most severe form of automobile accident occur---a head on collision.

Head on facts – In 2018, 31% of passenger vehicle occupants killed in two-vehicle crashes with a large truck were in vehicles struck head-on by the truck and another 24% were in vehicles that were side-struck by the truck. Twenty-three percent involved the front of the passenger vehicle striking the rear of the large truck (IIHS, 2019).

USFSM must consider that no other public academic institution in the state of Florida has a road where a student must cross 6 lanes of oncoming undivided highway traffic to enter/exit the campus. Additionally, there are very few areas or places of business along the route US-41 that do not have some form of access for a driver to get to a stoplight intersection before attempting to turn against 6 lanes of oncoming traffic. This again makes the USFSM campus an anomaly in its infrastructure when compared to other places of business and schools in Florida. The simple fact is that driving to and from the USF campus should not make the single most dangerous aspect of our lives even more dangerous.

It was a great oversight in the construction of this growing commuter-based campus to not account this critical aspect of safety for students, faculty, and guests who commute to campus regularly. USFSM should act proactively to address this situation before it's too late.

BENEFITS

Benefits of an updated traffic intersection include the following--

Students:

1. Increased safety when travelling to and from campus
2. Less stress with having to worry about simply getting to and from campus
3. Better mental state to do well when not having to worry about their arrival/departure from campus

University:

4. Increased safety when travelling to and from campus
5. Professors will have less worry of students and their safety in commuting to their courses
6. Proves to all students, faculty, and guests alike that there is concern placed on their safety and well-being during their travels

Community:

- 1.) Increased safety when traveling US-41 both Northbound and Southbound (one of the most heavily traveled roads in the region)
- 2.) Less fear of having a car emerge from your blind spot and having a collision
- 3.) Less fear of a head-on collision or other serious collision that may cause a fatality

- 4.) Less worries of using the middle lane and competing for an area to turn
- 5.) Easier access to and from the USFSM campus for potential visits or other activities
- 6.) Easier access to/from the Powel Crosley Estate for the large variety of events that take place there

RISK ANALYSIS

The only risk foreseen is continuing to place all students, faculty, and visitors in harm's way by failing to address this situation.

COST ANALYSIS

An additional road between the USFSM campus and the New College US-41 Stoplight intersection is a very financially feasible proposition. The most logical and cost-effective solution would be to connect a through-campus road between the existing Pinewood Drive and USFSM South Parking Lot 2 as this would give drivers the option to use the existing traffic light at the New College entry/exit way.

The decision to build a traditional traffic-light intersection will involve a larger scope and budget for the project. However, this proposed solution may even include little or even no costs to USFSM due to the following reasons:

-Consideration will have to be made by the local county and government officials involved such as FDOT, this may take a large burden off USFSM's budget and expenditure

-County and FDOT funding may already be available to implement a solution to this problem through a Local Agency Program (LAP).

According to FDOT

The Local Agency Program or "LAP" provides towns, cities and counties funds to develop, design, and construct transportation facilities with federal funds. FDOT is the steward of the federal funds and is responsible for oversight of funded projects on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA, 2019)

-As a matter of public and university safety the situation will be given higher priority in consideration and funding

-Once under the scope and direction of FDOT it should be possible to qualify for one of the many existing Local Programs that are listed at the following link: <https://www.fdot.gov/programmanagement/lp/default.shtm>

TIMELINE

The exact time it would take to implement such a solution and begin construction is dependent on the local, state, and federal authorities

involved. This rate is primarily governed by the contractor hired to build the road but should generally take no longer than one month for the connecting road and/or traffic-light intersection once all the permits and permissions are obtained.

The timeline for obtaining all approvals and permits by USFSM in conjunction with the state is best described as the following:

- Month of January:
 - o Conduct a survey of all USFSM personnel and local commuters
 - o Present proposal to the president, deans and board of directors for approval
 - o Wait for response and continue forward with FDOT

- Month of February:
 - o Impact-study begins
 - o Hear back from FDOT regarding approval of proposal
 - o Finalize budget and begin construction plans

- Month of March:
 - o Complete construction
 - o Launch survey to conduct success metrics

Per this timeline, the project should be completed by the end of April, but also allows for additional time during Summer 2021 Semester if needed. Project should be fully completed upon the start of the 2021 Fall Semester.

NEXT STEPS

Contingent upon approval by all parties involved, the first step would be to conduct a survey as this would spread awareness of the subject and lead to sooner action. After the survey process, the most appropriate next steps are the following would include an impact-study being conducted, then the following:

1. Present the proposal to the USFSM President, Deans, and Board of Staff
2. Gain approvals by all other USFSM parties
3. Come onto contact with the appropriate county authorities to initiate a request from the FDOT
4. Await the response from the FDOT
5. Discover specific regulations, feasibility studies, and all other expenditures
6. USFSM works in conjunction with all authorities involved to develop the most accurate timeline of having the construction completed

Conclusion

On behalf and respect for the safety of all students and local citizens in this community, a proper intersection between the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus and US-41 must be taken into high consideration by USFSM officials. The statistics prove that head-on collisions are much more likely to occur when vehicles are forced to turn against 6-lanes of highway speed oncoming traffic and the current lack of appropriate infrastructure that lends itself to this situation at USFSM is unacceptable.

For these reasons, the imminent safety of USFSM students and the community at large must be addressed in consideration of safer traffic infrastructure such as revealed in this proposal. Rest assured, the solution of building a road or traffic-light intersection will be far easier than ever having to tell the family and loved ones of a victim that such negligence could have been avoided to save their children's life.