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## Study urges bigger bridge, Del Prado flyover

### Downtown traffic woes addressed

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Cape Coral Bridge should be widened from four to eight lanes to handle future traffic, which will exceed the bridge's capacity in 2010 and will hold nearly 100,000 vehicles per day in 2030, according to a transportation engineering firm based in Tampa.

Vanus Inc. also recommends a flyover to carry drivers on Del Prado Boulevard who want to go east on Cape Coral Parkway to the bridge. For more immediate relief, the study also suggests a left turn toward the bridge from three lanes of southbound Del Prado instead of the current two. Lee County, which maintains Del Prado Boulevard, already is working on the turn lane recommendation.

The bridge-widening recommendation is part of a study up for discussion at a 3 p.m. City Council workshop Monday. The study deals with the issues of traffic and development. The goal is to collect council opinions before the staff issues a final report, probably sometime in early August, said city traffic engineer Rashad Hanbali.

Vanus also suggests eliminating turn lanes and parking spaces on Cape Coral Parkway to create a third through lane in each direction.

"I'd like to see them six-lane the parkway for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. That's an instant test and an instant fix. If it doesn't work they can always paint it back," said John Jacobsen, a downtown businessman and chairman of the Community Redevelopment Agency's board of directors. The CRA is working with developers to turn the 432-acre downtown district into a place people can live, work, shop and enjoy life.

#### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Other recommendations from the downtown Cape Coral traffic study include:

- Upgrade crosswalks, signal heads and signal timing and add midblock crosswalks for pedestrians
- Widen Southeast 46th Lane from two to four lanes and extend it to Santa Barbara Boulevard
- Use roundabouts at several intersections to reduce crashes, make crossing streets safer for pedestrians and to help beautify the area
- Increase the level of public transportation service

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There are many questions to consider before adding lanes to the bridge, said Dave Loveland, engineering services director for the Lee County Department of Transportation.

"Any bridge over the river will have significant permit issues to deal with," he said.

Funding will be another issue.

Traffic buildup is a major problem on Cape Coral Parkway and Del Prado Boulevard.

The Cape Coral Bridge plays a critical role in downtown traffic flow.

About 35,100 cars per day crossed the bridge in 1997 after the Midpoint Memorial Bridge opened. Now, about 50,400 cross each day, according to the study.

The traffic projections could be in error, Loveland said. The bridge serves areas of Cape Coral and Fort Myers that are heavily developed; a new bridge may be needed elsewhere, Loveland said.

Hanbali expressed confidence in the traffic projections. The supply of cars from a two-lane flyover merging with two lanes of cars on Cape Coral Parkway will create the demand for a wider bridge, Hanbali said.

"You can't dump four lanes into a two-lane bridge," Hanbali said.

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