

NRA: Road 'gazetted' before Trust bought land

By **The Press** - March 20, 2014

National Roads Authority officials made a rare public appearance Tuesday to explain why the proposed extension of the East-West Arterial highway from Newlands to Frank Sound Road was mapped out in its current location.

A public uproar over the road's path arose partly because of plans to route a portion of the highway extension through lands owned by the Cayman Islands National Trust, held as part of an undeveloped area in the center of Grand Cayman known as the Mastic Reserve.

However, authority managing director Edward Howard said Tuesday that the road's path was gazetted – made public – in early May 2005, well before the National Trust purchased tracts of land around it.

“Since we gazetted the road in 2005, the Trust has continued to purchase properties,” Mr. Howard said.

According to NRA maps reviewed by the Caymanian Compass, a parcel of land now bisected by the proposed East-West Arterial extension, just west of Frank Sound Road, was purchased in 2006. Another large parcel on either side of the road's path was purchased by the Trust in 2011, authority records show.

The path of the road still goes through small areas of land along the southern edge of the Mastic Reserve that the Trust owned prior to 2004, but Mr. Howard said those land grabs were far less intrusive than what is now proposed for the road.

“The NRA moved the highway away from the National Trust land as far as possible,” Mr. Howard said.

The need for what was then referred to as the “central highway” through Grand Cayman was identified in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. Ivan left the main eastern road between George Town, Bodden Town and East End in shambles, with entire sections wiped out or impassable.

Then-Infrastructure Minister Gilbert McLean asked the NRA at the time to look at a “hurricane resilient type of highway,” but doing so was trickier than it seemed, Mr. Howard said.

“Any major highway [to the eastern districts] had to avoid the two freshwater lenses in East End and North Side,” he said. “We’ve done our best to stay away from that.”

An alternate proposal for an eastern highway was made in the late 1990s, but Mr. Howard said an NRA analysis indicated that route would have been significantly more expensive for a couple of reasons.

“There really wasn’t any way to bring a major corridor through ... other than how we actually have it now,” he said.

Mr. Howard said the authority and Works Minister Kurt Tibbetts met with Trust officials last week about potential alternate routes for the eastern road. Three plans were discussed and have been mapped out by the NRA. Mr. Howard said the authority had no idea at this point whether any of the options were feasible, either from the standpoint of cost or engineering.

The National Trust may have more say in the taking of its lands than the average property owner under the Roads Law. The National Trust Law gives the organization the power to declare its properties “inalienable” – meaning they cannot be bought, sold or transferred.

Trust bosses believe the law creates a “legal impasse” that could prevent government from using its statutory powers under the Roads Law to take Trust land for the road extension project.

Government has the right under the Roads Law to seize private property for public interest roads projects. Land owners are usually offered financial compensation, though when the parties have not been able to agree to a payment, the arbitration process has dragged on, in some cases, for more than seven years.

A request for comment from the National Trust was not returned by press time Wednesday.

Are our roads driving us nuts?

By **Staff** - March 7, 2014

More often than not, an automobile is the first major purchase of a person on the path of upward mobility.

And, therefore, in a country as upwardly mobile as the Cayman Islands since the mid-1960s, it is not surprising that 50,000 registered motor vehicles now clog our streets — hood to trunk — during our daily rush-hour traffic scum. It is an astonishing number for a country with a population of fewer than 58,000.

In fact, 80 percent of households in Cayman have at least one car, and more than one-third have more than one. Over a five-year period, from 2008 to 2012, residents imported \$200 million worth of motor vehicles into the country.

That's driven many millions of dollars into the public treasury, considering that government duties on imported cars can rise to 42 percent, depending on the automobile's value. Then there are additional taxes on freight, fees on fuel, registration and licensing fees and, of course, duties on imported parts.

Much of that revenue should have been isolated and targeted toward road construction and maintenance for the obvious reason that if government isn't going to limit the importation of vehicles (as does Bermuda, for instance), then it has to build more, higher-capacity roadways.

But, of course, it hasn't done that. Instead, it has simply adopted the "landfill model": add more to more, and the result is daily automotive congestion that, no doubt, leads to an increase in our national blood pressure and a decrease in our quality of life.

There's more: Unfortunately, vehicles come complete with a number of problematic parts, such as tires and acid-filled batteries, which must be disposed of in great volumes. Every day, we just add them to the top of Mount Trashmore, which, of course, is also the national cemetery for all of our vehicles that come to the end of their road.

Enter the Ironwood developers and their offer to build the second phase of the East-West Arterial, from Hirst Road to Frank Sound Road, in exchange for tax concessions.

On its face, the proposal sounds attractive to us but may not be looked upon so favorably by landowners forced to sacrifice their property to make way for the highway.

Among those is the National Trust, as the road corridor cuts through the Trust-owned Mastic Trail Reserve. It remains to be seen how the Trust's situation may be dealt with under the new National Conservation Law.

The leading proponent of the law, Environment Minister Wayne Panton has stated the Trail could be maintained in its pristine state, while Premier Alden McLaughlin has endorsed the plan that would have the road running through part of the natural habitat. Notably, Mr. Panton was absent from the stage during the promotional event at which the premier signed an MOU to that effect with the developer.

In any case, this newspaper is not taking a position on the route of the road. We are only observing that an additional road to the outer districts must be built post haste. With the opening of Health City Cayman Islands, the proposed Ironwood resort and Arnold Palmer–designed golf course, the ever-expanding Morritt's and Reef resorts, not to mention that Bodden Town is the fastest-growing district in the country, a single single-lane road will no longer do.

The popular quote, of course, is that “If you build it, they will come.”

Well, Cayman did build it, and they came. In droves and in cars.

Road compromise reached

archive.caymannewsservice.com/2014/04/28/road-compromise-reached/

Cayman News

(CNS): Government and the National Trust have reached an agreement on the route of the east-west arterial extension to Frank Sound which limits the encroachment on the Trust's land. The extension, if it happens, will be financed by developers proposing a \$360 million resort in the area, including a golf course, which they say is not viable without the road. Investors behind Ironwood will raise the \$40 million for the road, which, according to the revised route, now avoids most of the Trust's critical habitat and will recoup the cash via duty and other concessions over the life of the project. The whole plan is still contingent, however, on the approval of the UK as a result of the financing element and the need for CIG to comply with the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility agreement..



Premier Alden McLaughlin announced the new route at a press briefing on Monday alongside representatives from the Trust, the minister responsible for roads, Kurt Tibbetts, and NRA Director Ed Howard.

“There have been concerns about route but we have managed to reach an agreement that everyone is happy with,” the premier said, adding that the developer was also comfortable with the proposed redirection south in order to preserve important wetlands.

The Mastic Trail itself will now also be diverted at the southern head, and although the Trust will lose around three acres, government has agreed to hand over a similar amount of crown land in the area as compensation. Members of the Trust described the negotiations over the re-routing of the road as historic as it was the first time that government has sat down with the local conservation charity and listened to its concerns and recognized the importance of doing what it can to conserve important land and eco-systems.

McLaughlin said government had talked to the Trust about reviewing the planned route on to East End to avoid the wilderness reserve and the Salinas — critical habitat for the blue iguanas being released in the area from the Trust's contained breeding programme in an effort to save the iconic, endemic species.

Although there are no plans for government to continue with the road east past Frank Sound anytime soon, the negotiations with the Trust included proposals to reroute that part of the road as well to allay concerns that the clock was ticking on the blue iguana release programme.

Any kind of major development, particularly so close to the Botanic Park and in what remains of Cayman's dwindling natural habitat supporting the islands' endangered endemic flora and fauna, is an on-going battle for the Trust and other conservationist.

However, on this occasion the Trust was pleased and relieved that it was able to persuade government of the importance of the habitat the road would have threatened without the redirection.

“We are pleased government has listened to our concerns and we have noted that this administration has been supportive of the Trust,” Christina Pineda, the Trust’s Executive Director, said. “We were concerned that the road would cut through wetlands which feed dry forest in the area but we have been able to avoid it.”

She said the talks between government and the trust had proved to be a real success.

“It will protect integrity of the Mastic Reserve and it minimizes the losses in Trust land,” Pineda added. “It is heartening to know that government sees the value of the National Trust preserving land and the developer has also made commitments to us to help develop a proper trail head,” she said as she thanked government for working with the NGO so closely and including it in the negotiations, which she said was an important step forward.

She explained that the land that the Trust is giving up was not inalienable and is part of the trail which leads into the Mastic Reserve and not such sensitive habitat.

Patricia Bradley from the National Trust Council pointed out the historical significance of the negotiations as this simply has not happened before. She described it as a very important move, not just because the discussions had resulted in the preservation of important habitat regarding the immediate plans but also any future, further extension. Bradley said it was “marvelous that we can now talk and explain why things are important instead of just being presented with what is happening.”

Explaining the importance of the land that has now been preserved, the Trust representatives said the wetlands and mangrove “acts like a blanket around the dry forest”, feeding it with water and creating the sensitively balanced eco-system in the actual reserve. Without the wetlands there would be no dry forest and had the road not been re-routed it “could have been devastating to that habitat”.

Kurt Tibbetts said his ministry and the NRA understood the difficulties with the original gazetted road so it was “a matter of sitting down and determining the best way and usually there is a way if we are willing to listen.” He said the NRA had worked closely with the Trust and several maps were drawn up until the one which appears to have the best result all round emerged.

The road has now been dropped well south of the wetland area, and although it is close to a subdivision, the road director said the right engineering can take care of any issues arising from that.

Now that the last part of the road route has been sorted out with the Trust, government is not anticipating many problems regarding the land along the rest of the route. Most owners will not need to be compensated as the road will enhance the value of their land

in most cases. However, both the premier and Tibbetts explained that there was still some way to go before the road project begins.

The developers of the proposed Ironwood project are the ones who will be raising the cash and hoping to recoup around \$25 million from duty and the rest from other possible concessions from government over the next twenty years.

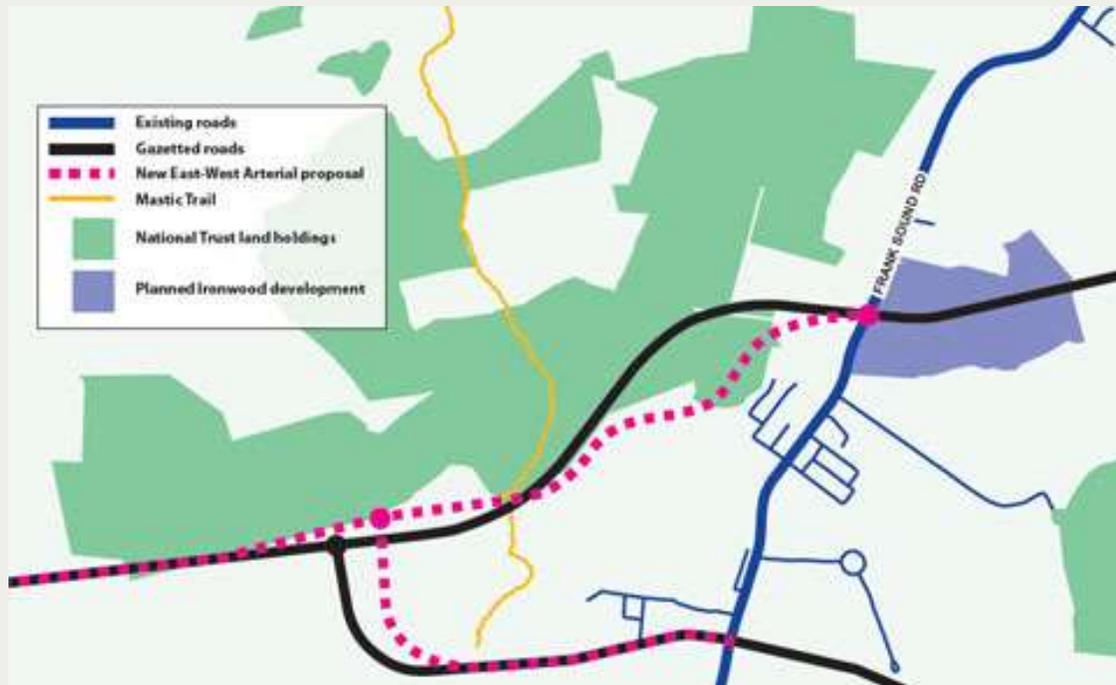
While this loan will not be guaranteed by government, the money which would have gone to the public purse via duty will now be used to finance the loan. Any partnership the government enters into with the developer over the construction of the public road will need to fit within the parameters of the FFR and get the UK's approval. With the route decided, Tibbetts said government could now begin to shape a plan to present to the UK to get that approval.

If the Foreign Office offers its support, it will then depend on the viability of and the investment that the proposed project, including the Arnold Palmer 18-hole golf course, can attract as to whether or not the developer will take on and complete the road project.

See the new route (blue) for the east-west arterial and the letter to the Trust from the government confirming its commitment to the changes.

Road compromise reached

By **James Whittaker** - April 29, 2014



A controversial plan to build a \$40 million highway extension through part of the Mastic Trail nature reserve has been revised following negotiations between government and the National Trust.

The planned route for the road was moved to the south of the reserve in a compromise deal that Trust officials described as “historic” and said would save swathes of environmentally significant wetlands.

Premier Alden McLaughlin hailed the deal as a “happy medium” that addresses environmental concerns while ensuring the \$360 million Ironwood golf resort project will still go ahead. Ironwood has secured financing to pay for the road, which is seen as crucial to the success of the resort. It will be refunded through money raised from duties on the development, expected to be at least \$25 million, as well as on other projects that result from the building of the road.

Government said as many as 20 alternative routes had been discussed during weeks of negotiation with the Trust and the National Roads Authority before the final route was settled.

“We have managed to reach an agreement which everyone is happy with. The project will go ahead and everyone is satisfied,” added Mr. McLaughlin.

The Trust will still lose a small part of the Mastic trail, meaning the walking route will start slightly to the north of its current location from a new parking and information area bordering the new highway.

Ironwood, which hopes to build a \$360 million golf and leisure resort in the Frank Sound area, has agreed to finance the road extension.

Christina Pineda, the Trust's executive director, said the land lost in the reserve is not significant and praised the government for its willingness to compromise.

"We were concerned about the road cutting through a vital portion of wetlands contained in the Mastic Reserve. These wetlands essentially feed the rest of the dry forest. The fact that we have been able to avoid that is a big success story. We have been able to find a way forward that is more acceptable than the previous proposal and minimizes habitat loss in the Mastic Reserve," Ms. Pineda said.

The compromise over the 10-mile extension to the East-West Arterial road, from where it currently ends in Newlands to Frank Sound, paves the way for further discussions on the equally controversial third segment of that road.

A suggested route has been outlined by the National Roads Authority, but the development of that section of highway, from Frank Sound to Morritt's resort on the eastern shore of Grand Cayman, is not planned as part of the Ironwood deal and could still be some way off.

The route, as outlined, would go through the Salinas Reserve and Colliers Wilderness Reserve – important habitat for the critically endangered blue iguana.

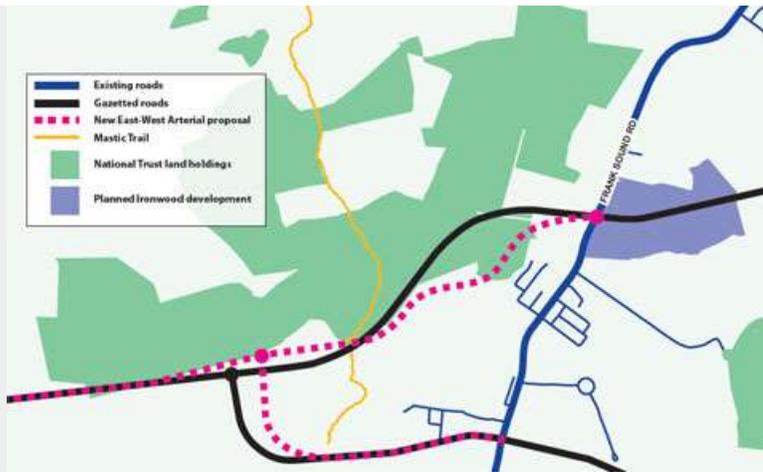
Kurt Tibbetts, minister for infrastructure, said the administration and the roads authority would be willing to work with the Trust on an alternate route for that portion of the highway as well – assuming they are still in power when the project reaches that phase.

National Trust board member Patricia Bradley described the negotiations with government as "historic."

"I have been with the Trust since its foundation, and it is the first time we have sat down with government and negotiated over something that really affects the Trust," she said.

Edward Howard of the National Roads Authority said the changes would not add to the cost of building the road nor affect the design or number of lanes possible.

Denise Gower, a spokesperson for Ironwood, said the developer was happy that a compromise had been reached and hopeful that construction could begin soon.



The amended road alignment takes the East-West Arterial south of the Mastic Reserve. –

GRAPHIC: CHRIS COURT



JAMES WHITTAKER
jwhittaker@compassmedia.ky

With rush-hour gridlock paralyzing Grand Cayman's roads, government is taking the first steps towards creating a comprehensive public transport system on the island.

The Ministry of Tourism and Transport is seeking consultants to provide technical advice on the project.

Minister Kenneth Bryan said government is prepared to subsidise a public bus system in an effort to help get cars off the roads.

He said the consultants would come up with a comprehensive long-term strategy for transport. And he believes that will inevitably involve a public-private partnership, to create a bus system that runs on time and on schedule, regardless of how many passengers want to use it.

"Right now, we don't have a reliable system," he said.

"You can't account for exactly when the bus is going to be there, where it's going to pick you up. You can't say I'm going to get to work on time and not lose my job because the bus is going to come."

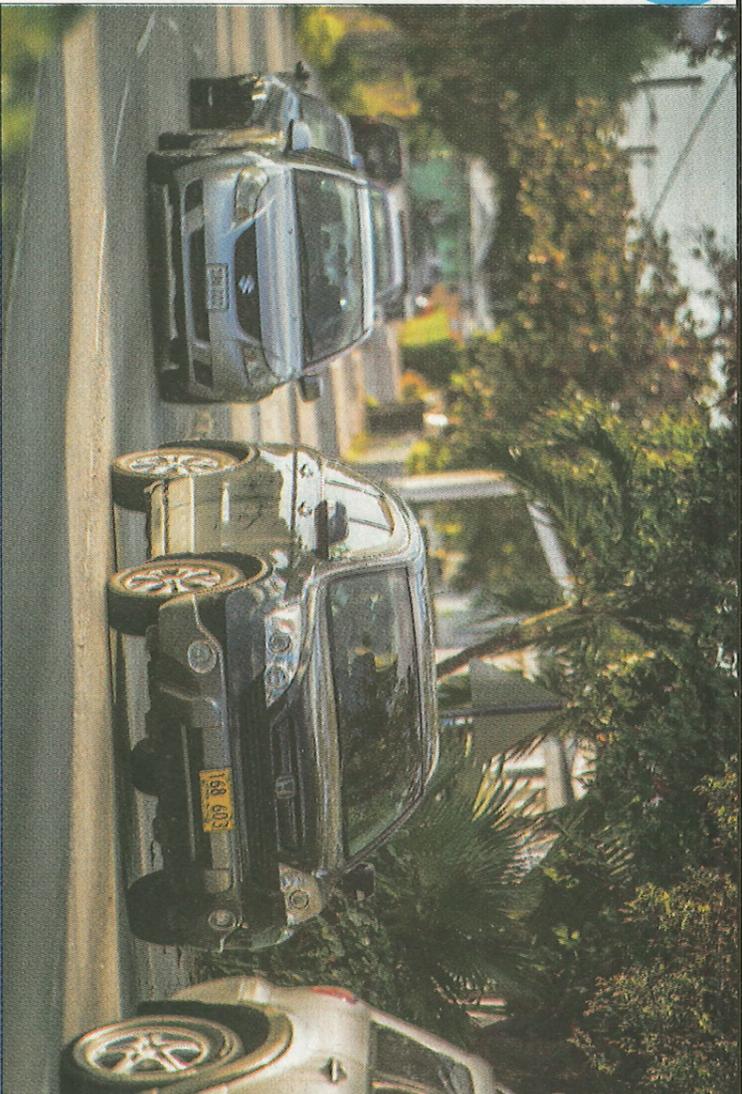
Speaking on the *Compass* and Rooster 101's 'Beyond The Headlines' news review show on Friday, 4 March, he said the solution would likely involve government partnering with the private sector or taking over responsibility for bus routes themselves.

He acknowledged this would come at a cost, but said it was also an investment in solving traffic issues without relying on continuously building new roads.

Public transport essential first step

Bryan added that public transport was the first key step to bringing in further regulations to control traffic.

He said regulations – such as congestion charges or a Bermuda-style policy restricting



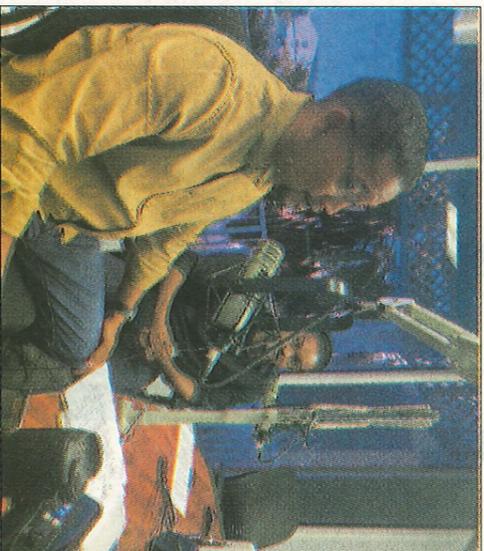
Public transport reform planned as traffic woes mount

car ownership to one vehicle per household – could not be realistically considered until there was a viable alternative to ensure people could get to work.

He also cited locating offices in the eastern districts or encouraging work-from-home policies as more innovative ways of reducing cars on the road at key times.

Rush-hour traffic in Cayman has been a growing problem for years. A journey from Bodden Town to George Town can take an hour in the morning or evening – more than three times what it would take in free-flowing traffic.

Bryan said previous governments had made poor decisions on this issue, leaving it



Transport Minister Kenneth Bryan speaking on 'Beyond the Headlines' news review show on 4 March.

to linger unresolved for too long. He cautioned there would be no quick fix, but characterised the request for proposals on a public transport plan as the beginning of efforts to find the solutions

promise that this government is going to try to fix this long-term problem that has been created by previous administrations, so that we can get the long-term benefits in the future."

Cayman needs. Even with a functioning public transport system, he said it would take time to build the user confidence needed to persuade people to ditch their cars.

"Until people feel comfortable enough to say, 'I can do what I have to do every single day and I don't need a car', they will continue to buy a car and continue to drive a car," he said.

"I can't promise the people that [this is] going to have an immediate effect on traffic. But I can

I can't promise the people that [this is] going to have an immediate effect on traffic. But I can promise that this government is going to try to fix this long-term problem that has been created by previous administrations, so that we can get the long-term benefits in the future.

- Kenneth Bryan, transport minister

Cruise study

At the same time, Bryan's ministry is putting out a tender for consultants to help devise a long-term strategy for cruise tourism.

According to a request for proposals also published by the ministry, the winning bidder will be required to help government shape the future of the sector.

"The cruise industry is an economic driver for specific Caymanian-owned businesses in water sports, retail, transport, and attractions. It is imperative to reshape the current approach to focus on quality [and] sustainably manage capacity, traveller traffic flow, and impact, as well as design new and innovative destination experiences," the document states. Bryan said the aim was to find the right balance that allowed Caymanian businesses and workers to get the maximum benefit from cruise tourism while ensuring the sector does not have a negative impact on the more lucrative stayover trade.



Traffic has been a long-term challenge in Cayman. - Photo: Janes Ramsay

Special report: Rethinking Rush Hour

Sustainable solutions needed for traffic challenge

By **James Whittaker** - March 24, 2022



Traffic piles up as commuters make their way to George Town last week. Photo: Taneos Ramsay

In the meagre shade outside a Subway store, a middle-aged woman with conspicuous sunscreen was struggling to access Wi-Fi on her smart phone.

She had attempted to travel by bicycle from the Botanic Park to George Town and found the traffic and the weather too hot to handle.

After waiting by the side of the road for a while, a bus had stopped en-route to the capital, but the driver couldn't accommodate her bike.

So, she was now sheltering in the Countryside Shopping Village, trying to connect to the Internet to look up a number for a taxi. I lent her my cell phone, which has data access, and after three attempts we found a cab that would collect her, with a surcharge added for the bike.

The woman, a visitor from the US, ultimately got where she needed to go, but she was unlikely to try travelling in Cayman again without a rental car.

One simple Saturday journey had aptly illustrated the absence of key supporting infrastructure that makes journeys by foot, bike or bus possible in many other places around the world.

No bike lanes, no shaded sidewalks, only small minibuses operating inconsistent routes, a lack of Wi-Fi hotspots or low-cost data plans to summon a cab and affordability challenges when the taxi does arrive. In the space of a few hours, she seemed to have encountered almost every major obstacle Cayman commuters have been facing for decades. As the island's population and traffic problems have grown, the absence of reliable alternatives has become glaring.

Traffic a key culprit in carbon emissions

The previous morning, I was part of a radio show, discussing possible solutions and adaptations to the climate threats facing Cayman in the coming decade – the subject of the project that the *Compass* Issues section is currently engaged in.

My namesake, James Whittaker, the chairman of the Energy Council, made the point that Cayman, on a per-capita basis is one of the worst polluters in the world.

Our rush hour traffic is one of the key reasons for that.



Cycling is a rare way to commute in Cayman.

We tried to end the show on a positive note, talking about small things we could change as individuals that might help alter the depressing portrait that the United Nations and others are painting of the world and the island's future.

But the discussion quickly circled back to the fact that so much of the enabling infrastructure that allows people to make good choices – such as leave their cars at home – does not yet exist in the Cayman Islands.

Related stories

- *Opinion: Congestion charges could change commuter habits*
- *Sustainable Cayman seeks rethink of road building plans*

While pollution from cars is an obvious connection between traffic and climate change, we hadn't immediately thought of a transport discussion as something that automatically fits in as part of this series.

Cayman's ability to impact global emissions targets is negligible and our aim here is to examine solutions that can make the island more resilient in the face of threats like sea-level rise and super storms, which **the UN warns are practically inevitable**.

Because it intersects with so many other issues, from quality of life and mental health to housing affordability and work opportunities, the impact of a proper public transport system in 'climate-proofing' Cayman can sometimes get lost in the mix.

A new perspective

Cruising through the calm waters of the mangrove fringed canal system on the **first commuter ferry** from Newlands to Camana Bay last week, those impacts started to come into focus.



The first commuter ferry travelled from Newlands to Camana Bay on Monday morning. – Photos: Alvaro Serey

Claire Pettinati and her husband Daniel Petts started Cayman Ferries primarily as a means to allow those who commute from anywhere east of Grand Harbour to take a more refreshing route to work.

Pettinati first wrote about her **vision of a sustainable national transport** system as part of our Cayman 2.0 series in 2020, when we challenged readers, during the pause in normal life caused by COVID-19, to present big ideas that could help the country come back a stronger, better place.

She wasn't content just to dream.

The couple bought a boat, established a ticketing app and the first commuters began using the service last week.

“We wanted to make a difference and change things up, rather than just talking about it,” she said.

The business is in the process of registering as a “non-profit” meaning all proceeds will be reinvested in expanding and developing a transport system based around the North Sound. On a longer time scale, with more investment, she believes stops could be added at other docks and links established with buses and other providers.

“We would like the ferry to be a transport hub that helps people get around the island in a sustainable way,” she said.



Daniel Petts and Claire Pettinati. Photo: Alvaro Serey

“Cayman is such a beautiful place to live and it is such a shame that so many people sit in traffic for three hours every day,” she said.

There are challenges to making the ferry system, in its current form, accessible to everyone. But those on board its inaugural trip, appreciated the sun on their face and the wind in their hair as a contrast to the normal morning commute.

“Just being able to take in this view and knowing that there are no cars in front of me causing traffic is really exciting,” Ariel Thompson, who lives in Newlands and works in Camana Bay, told us.

Roads and development threaten mangroves

One enthusiastic passenger who joined the ride was Martin Keeley, founder of the Mangrove Rangers. He explained, animatedly, why he believes transport solutions like the new ferry are an important climate resilience tool.

He said the idea of an integrated public transport system had been discussed for nearly 50 years without any concerted action.

Meanwhile, he has seen roads go up, new subdivisions go in, landlocked parcels open up for development and Cayman's mangroves continue to disappear.

The islands' first set of 'natural capital accounts' finalised last month puts the partial **value of mangroves at over \$1 billion** because of the 'services' they provide, including capturing carbon from the atmosphere and providing natural defences against storm surge and flooding.

Yet those habitats remain vulnerable to infrastructure development.



A dirt road winds through the mangroves at Barkers. Elsewhere on the island, large highways threaten habitat. Photo: Taneos Ramsay

The latest plan – to push ahead with an extension to the East-West Arterial – has been touted by government as part of its solution to traffic challenges.

And while an Environmental Impact Assessment has been promised, the current route of the proposed road intersects the Central Mangrove Wetlands.

Keeley is unconvinced the highway will make much difference to journey times from the eastern districts to George Town and is concerned that it will only open up more land for development. The impact will spiral outwards from the road, he warns, with previously landlocked parcels now ripe for businesses and homes.

The National Roads Authority wasn't available for comment.

The National Trust and the Department of Environment have highlighted serious concerns about the potential ecological impact of routing a highway through the wetlands, cautioning it could act as a dam that exacerbates storm surge and other climate related impacts.

What happened to Cayman 2.0?

Keeley argues that Cayman needs to find more innovative solutions than new highways and lane extensions.

“As the old saying goes, if you build it, they will come and if you build it, they will drive on it. This approach is destroying the island, not just through emissions from traffic, but you’re destroying the habitat.”

He believes COVID showed how quickly society can change in the face of an imminent threat. But climate change, by contrast, is a slow moving disaster that he believes people are complacent about.



Traffic free roads were one of the few upsides of life in lockdown. Photo: Alvaro Serey

It concerns him, how quickly the positive aspects of life in lockdown – the work from home movement, the appreciation of nature and traffic free roads – appear to have been abandoned in the rush to get back to business.

“We need to reboot, reset and rethink what we’re doing,” he said.

“That’s what happened in COVID. And then what did we do? We went right back to square one. So the lessons that we learned, we toss those out the window, and the so called new normal is just like the old normal.”

Beyond road building

Almost everyone who has looked at Cayman’s traffic issues has made the same point.

As former infrastructure minister, Joey Hew cautioned in 2017, “We can only build so many roads”.

Hew helped bring in the ‘complete streets’ initiative – which involves an attempt to create more cycle lanes – and was instrumental in assembling the Strategic Economic Advisory Council – a think-tank of

public and private sector leaders that looked at ways to reboot Cayman post-COVID.



Alternative means of transport involve electric scooters and skateboards.

Cayman Islands Tourism Association president Marc Langevin, was one of the leaders of a tourism sector team on that initiative, that also involved Pilar Bush, formerly of Dart and now chief of strategy in the Office of the Premier, Bill Edwards, of Red Sail watersports and Kenrick Webster of Webster's Tours, among others.

Their number one recommendation was the creation of a Cayman Transit Company that would operate a new and improved public transport system.

Langevin told the *Compass* that the absence of reliable transport was one of the key obstacles for workers living anywhere east of George Town to take jobs at hotels in the Seven Mile Beach area.

He said it was impossible to work in tourism and not own a car – an expense many employees would prefer to avoid if there were alternatives.

“We keep adding one more lane, one more lane, but we are not addressing the problem,” he said.

Webster suggests new lanes should be dedicated as ‘bus only’ to provide the incentive needed to get people out of their cars.

Despite the apparent consensus, the only concrete policies on traffic to have materialised so far, involve more roads and more concrete.

Kenneth Bryan, who took over the transport brief after the general election last May, has indicated he would like to see a better bus system. His ministry has gone out to tender for consultants to assist with a plan for the island. But he cautioned it would be a long-term process and other policy interventions may be needed for people to ditch their cars.

‘Test and learn’

Paul Henry understands that challenge better than most. As head of business innovation at Dart Labs, he has organised numerous alternative transport systems and polices for Camana Bay workers with a

“test and learn” philosophy.

Easy-to-rent bikes and motorised scooters for short journeys, a **partnership with Audi to introduce ‘Zun’ cars** that rent by the minute and a ride-share app were all trialled with varying degrees of success.



Zun cars rent by the minute.

“There is no silver bullet. Any solution is going to have to have multiple elements to it,” he said.

The new ferry may be a case in point. While it was smooth sailing for commuters heading to Camana Bay. Those who work further afield faced challenges with the onward journey.

Pettinati says Cayman Ferries is working on partnerships to change that dynamic.

And she hopes to add features to the app that will allow commuters to link to other initiatives, like the Zun car rental system or the Bird electric scooters.

Henry highlights the UK’s ‘Citymapper’ system as an example of a transit app that functions as a booking, timetable and information hub for multiple different modes of transport.

The carrot and the stick

While he believes there is promise in many of these emerging ideas, he cautions there are challenges around scalability and integration.

The Zun car system suffers because it has a limited number of vehicles and a limited number of collection and drop-off points. The ferry suffers because it only gets you as far as the water’s edge. Bike rental falls down because of lack of cycle-ways to make riding safe.



Dart's business innovations manager Paul Henry is leading the company's efforts to find better ways of commuting.

Again, the enabling infrastructure is lacking.

Any solution that moves Cayman beyond building roads will need to be a well-managed and innovative mix of new ideas, bringing together multiple operators and modes of travel, Henry believes.

Even then, he warns, there may be a cultural challenge with persuading people to leave their cars at home.

One of the least successful initiatives tested by Dart Labs was an incentivised carpooling scheme, where Camana Bay workers were offered generous discount points at town centre stores if they shared rides to and from the office.

“It just didn’t work,” Henry acknowledged, noting that people were reluctant to give up the flexibility of having their vehicle on standby throughout the day.

Given the reluctance to adopt incentive-based systems to date, he wonders if the “stick” of pay-and-display parking across Grand Cayman or congestion zoning may be more powerful than the “carrot” of rewards for sharing rides. The income could then be redirected towards environmental initiatives.

Abundant free parking and the lack of restrictions on vehicle use in Cayman already incentivise car travel to a level that is not common in other countries.

“It is a complex problem and we don’t have great precedents in similar environments to look at,” he said.

“The introduction of parking restrictions and fees have been effective elsewhere in encouraging vehicle sharing and the use of alternative transport, but it is difficult to burden road users with that when there is no accessible alternatives.”
