



Greater Pine Island Civic Association

**Protecting Pine Island Since 1957**

P.O. Box 3044  
Pineland, FL 33945  
GPICA.org

Hon. Kevin Ruane, Chairman, Lee County Commission  
Director Dave M. Loveland, Community Development  
Director Randy Cerchie, Transportation  
P.O. Box 2469  
Fort Myers, Florida 33902

May 13, 2021

Dear Mr. Ruane, Mr. Loveland and Mr. Cerchie,

Thank you for taking an interest in one of the main issues currently affecting residents of Pine Island and Matlacha: traffic and road conditions.

As the only organization representing residents and property owners throughout Pine Island and all of its enclaves — Matlacha Isles, Matlacha, Pine Island Center, St. James City, Pineland and Bokeelia — the Greater Pine Island Civic Association would like to take this opportunity to outline some of our main concerns and make a formal request that the County and County staff work with us to address the problems raised by our residents as part of a Community Survey the GPICA undertook in December 2020/January 2021.

- In this letter, we've outlined some of the main traffic issues identified by the community, along with potential solutions for some of them.
- We're also making a formal request for a meeting with Lee County staff to discuss these problems and learn how we can move forward together to address these important community needs.
- We'd prefer to schedule the meeting for the week of May 24, so that we may report back to our community about our progress during our June 1 GPICA meeting.

Please let us know your availability. You can reach me Nadine Slimak, at [Nadine@VettedCommunications.com](mailto:Nadine@VettedCommunications.com) or 239-339-7914. You may also reach our President, Helen Fox at [HFox@UMich.edu](mailto:HFox@UMich.edu) or 734-834-2346.

Best regards,

Nadine Slimak  
Vice President, Greater Pine Island Civic Association  
GPICA.org

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## **Issue 1: Matlacha Congestion**

As you're aware, one of the leading road/traffic complaints voiced by residents is the traffic congestion through Matlacha on a near-daily basis, especially when visitors and snowbirds are in town from about November through Easter and our population doubles. It endangers public safety and costs visitors and residents money and time.

### **Issue 1: How You Can Help**

We're asking that the County work with us to develop a plan to ease congestion and improve public safety on Pine Island Road through Matlacha. Possible solutions could include:

- The installation of real-time cameras and an email alert system to let residents and visitors know the status of traffic conditions so they can plan accordingly.
- We envision dedicated parking areas or other improvements that would be safer for the pedestrians/cars/bikes sharing this roadway. As space is limited, we welcome ideas from county traffic engineers on ways we can find unique solutions to solve this problem.
- Timed openings and closings of the Matlacha drawbridge vs. an on-demand schedule.
- Support for a dedicated multi-use path from Burnt Store Road to Pine Island Center.

## **Issue 2: Congestion at Pine Island Center**

With one main intersection on the Island, seasonal traffic bottlenecks are also an issue at the four-way-stop at Pine Island and Stringfellow roads. Previous discussions of creating a traffic circle at this intersection have been met with community skepticism and, to our knowledge, that plan was abandoned.

However, the problem has not eased and is only going to increase because of:

- The addition of a new 7-11 near this intersection
- The ongoing construction of a new 45,000 sq.ft. Publix on the north side of Pine Island Road, across the street from the 7-11.
- The adjacent retail space planned for the Publix plaza — an additional 33,500 sq.ft. of retail)
- The addition of 96 townhouse units and an amenities building to be located behind the Publix plaza.

We do not believe that the current road configurations will be able to accommodate the increased traffic caused by this development.

- Our single hurricane evacuation route — Pine Island Road — reached capacity years ago, yet these new developments are located in the heart of it.

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## Issue 2: How You Can Help

State and federal forecasters predict a longer tropical storm and hurricane season, more frequent storms and more severe storms, making the need for a safe evacuation route even more important.

- We ask that the Lee County Commission and Lee County staff work with the community to develop solutions to this problem.
- While a traffic circle at the intersection doesn't seem feasible — costs alone would likely make this alternative too expensive of a proposition — the need for traffic relief is paramount. What alternatives can county traffic planners develop?

## Issue 3: Pineland Road

There are 3 main issues on Pineland Road:

- It is falling apart and has not been repaved/comprehensively repaired in 21+ years. The road is rutted with high 'curbs' falling off onto sugar sand.
- It is the main access road for boaters to reach the popular Pineland Marina and boat launch, handling a heavy stream of trucks/trailers, including 30-foot boats, *on a road that is frequently used by walkers, bicyclists and golf carts. It includes dangerous blind curves.* A 'right turn only' sign was installed at the exit of Pineland Marina, forcing boaters to take this route even more frequently when there are other, safer options available.
- With rising sea levels and annual king high tides, the road is frequently under water in the summer months.

## Issue 3: How You Can Help

- Widen and repave the road; include room for bikes and walkers
- Remove the 'right turn only' sign at Pineland Marina and create new signage that helps direct boaters about other ways to enter/exit the marina (from Caloosa Drive/Robert Road and Caloosa Drive/Bokeelia Road)
- Develop ways to address the road's flood-prone area.