

The Urban Environment League

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*Dedicated to Community Connections through Public Participation and
Accessible Information for All of Our People*

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Urban Environment League of Greater Miami Press Statement

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New public opinion poll by Mason Dixon Polling and Research shows Dade suburbs fed up with traffic and response of local government to quality of life issues

Urban Development Boundary decisions must take into account public attitudes and real costs to economy and families from too much traffic

South Florida traffic congestion is truly horrible. That is not a subjective opinion: it was recently reinforced by results of the annual survey by the Texas Transportation Institute noting delays in south Florida last year as the sixth worst in the nation. (Charles Rabin, the Miami Herald, 9/8/2004: S. Fl Motorists Paying a Heavy Toll in Traffic).

Everyone in Miami has a story, if not a lifetime of stories, about mind-numbing traffic delays and commutes to work.

Recently, the Urban Environment League of Greater Miami decided to see just how deeply Dade residents feel about traffic and their quality of life and the public officials whose decisions add up to countless hours spent on clogged roadways.

From January 17-20th, Mason Dixon Polling and Research, Inc. gauged public attitudes toward traffic and quality of life in areas already heavily impacted by traffic: in Kendall, Hialeah, and south Miami. The poll was conducted in English and Spanish.

Nancy Liebman, president of the UEL, said, "With powerful developers wooing local county commissioners in Miami Dade county to approve new cities in outlying suburbs—beyond the Urban Development Boundary—the Urban Environment League of Greater Miami sought to find out exactly what residents think about local government and traffic."

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Four out of five respondents commute to work. One percent of respondents use mass transit. **An astounding 77% of respondents said that traffic was much worse than when they moved to the area. For 63%, traffic was a “major factor” in choices how to spend time during the day.**

63% of respondents said that elected officials were not doing enough to solve traffic issues. By the same number, respondents said that traffic congestion is **“harmful to efforts to attract new jobs and businesses to the area.”**

76% said that the increasing amount of time spent in traffic harmful to family life.

The Urban Environment League of Greater Miami concurs that the cumulative effect of badly planned communities, the result of permitting decisions by county commissioners that fail to account for all the costs of development, is harming both the region’s economic potential and our families—as employers seek areas with less traffic congestion and as the social fabric is weakened because two-wage earner families lose irreplaceable time in crucial hours of the day when parents should be with their children at home but they are stuck in traffic.

What people feel about traffic in Miami Dade county reinforces the challenges described in the 2003 Brookings Institute report, “Miami in Focus: A Profile of the 2000 Census” (brookings.edu/es/urban/livingcities/Miami.htm)

Public anger about traffic in Miami Dade reflects the failure of transportation infrastructure to keep up with demand. The Miami Herald recently disclosed that the county is not collecting impact fees from some developers (“Money trouble bubbling up from sewer”, Defede, Sunday, January 23, 2005) and that a controversial half penny sales tax, promoted by county commissioners in 2002, has failed to deliver all but a small fraction of the promised transportation improvements (“Transit taxes can’t meet pledge”, Miami Herald, 1/2/2005)

Respondents in predominantly Republican areas believe that State government should **“over-rule local county government and do more to manage growth and protect communities from development decisions that increase traffic.”** A similar number, 56%, believe that existing regulations do not adequately protect quality of life and the environment.

UEL board member, Nancy Lee, said, “Miami Dade county commissioners need a wake-up call from residents and voters. Lives are being crushed by traffic and it is just not fair.”

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