

## **COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT PREPARES FOR SUMMER CONGESTION ISSUES**

Cars and Trucks shuttling south toward the Mid-Bay Bridge became quite a hassle to the residents of White Point Road in Bluewater Bay over the last several years. Travelers to Destin and the rest of the Emerald Coast have taken to driving down White Point as a way of trying to bypass traffic that builds up on Spence Parkway leading to the bridge.

The county recently announced a program which will discourage traffic on White Point Road on Saturdays from noon to six during the tourism season. At the point of highest congestion motorists are often tempted to try and sneak around the bridge traffic, but end up effectively sealing residents in their homes.

“We are putting this program into place in response to citizen calls from a number of neighborhoods along White Point Road,” said Commissioner Kelly Windes, who represents the district. “We are teaming up with the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority, the Sheriff’s office and others to make this a safer and easier time for the residents in the area.

The changes are scheduled to be in place from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend.

The Public Works Department plans on keeping to about a four-month period, but Autrey says the schedule is flexible.

“Observations of traffic flow and congestion on the area roads will be observed by deputies and county staff. Should modifications be warranted, the County, Sheriff’s Department, and Mid-Bay Bridge Authority will work together to make adjustments,” Autrey said.

Barricades will be placed at the beginning of the exit and entrance ramps for south bound traffic on Spence Parkway where it meets Lakeshore drive. This will effectively block traffic from using White Point Road to get around traffic on Spence Parkway leading up to the Mid-Bay Bridge.

In addition, four deputies will patrol the area, writing tickets for people who choose to disobey the warning signs and violate traffic laws.

The blockade won’t stop residents from getting in and out of their homes.

“Access to Lakeshore Drive from White Point Road will not be restricted. Should residents wish to access Lakeshore Drive during the period of closure they will be required to gain access via White Point Road. It will not be possible to head south on Spence Parkway from Lakeshore Drive,” Autrey said.

The county public works team will put out message boards along John Sims Parkway (SR 20) to tell people there is no access from White Point Road to the Mid-Bay Bridge.

But, getting people to stay off the road could be a little tricky with GPS devices in cars and on phones. Autrey believes it will take a couple of weeks for the devices to pick up that no one is allowed to use the road.

“GPS Devices are not controlled by the County, Mid-Bay Bridge Authority, or FDOT. Efforts are being made to provide the information regarding the closures and should a vehicle travel down White Point Road to get on the connector they will have to enter the northbound ramp to head back to SR 20, then exit and re-enter southbound at the Single Point Urban Interchange. Information will be provided to potential route guiding applications, however we cannot guarantee what directions they will provide,” Autrey said.