

Design Work Slowing Busch Boulevard Project

By LAURA KINSLER The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA - Design work for the new and improved Busch Boulevard is taking longer than anticipated and construction probably won't start until mid-2008.

Project manager John Novak, a consulting engineer with Grimail Crawford, said the design team had passed the 60 percent mark when elements were added.

For example, the city of Tampa and Florida Department of Transportation are continuing to negotiate with CSX Transportation for a sidewalk easement on the south side of the boulevard. The repaving project stops just west of Florida Avenue, but the FDOT recently decided to extend the new sidewalk farther west, to North Boulevard.

The Florida Department of Transportation, city of Tampa and Hillsborough County have budgeted \$18 million for the project, the bulk of which will go to repave the six-lane boulevard. A significant portion will go for safety improvements and beautification along the 4-mile stretch from Florida Avenue to 56th Street.

The designers also are working in details for the Temple Terrace segment of the project. The city is planning a \$6.5 million overhaul of the Busch Boulevard-56th Street intersection to complement its redevelopment district.

The project is part of an overall effort to make 56th Street more attractive and safer for pedestrians, cyclists and even golf carts. It includes about \$800,000 to move utility lines underground, as well as landscaping, decorative lighting, signals and checkerboard-style crosswalks.

Landscape architect Karla Price said the city of Tampa also hopes to partner with Busch Gardens for more elaborate landscaping between 30th and 40th streets.

"We'd like to make it match what they did on 40th Street," Price said.

Novak said the design should be completed in the fall and a contract awarded by January.