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SATURDAY January 11, 2014

PCB \$14M road project advances

City eyes next phase of Front Beach Road improvements

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PANAMA CITY BEACH — The Panama City Beach Community Redevelopment Agency hopes to break ground on a major road improvement project on Front Beach Road by late 2015.

To keep the project on track, the Panama City Beach Council approved a resolution Thursday to update the project design, which initially was completed in 2010. The improvements are the second phase of a long-term

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mission to redevelop 8 miles of Front Beach Road.

Segment two will take place on a 1-mile stretch from the intersection of South Thomas Drive to Richard Jackson Boulevard. The project will add

sidewalks and crosswalks, move utility poles underground and improve the overall infrastructure of the road.

Segment one of the project, which includes improvements on South Thomas Drive and Front Beach Road from South Thomas to Hutchison Boulevard, was completed about a year ago.

"We learned a lot of lessons from segment one and South Thomas," said CRA Director John Alaghemand. "This time as a part of design we're doing a lot more detail."



FILE | Special to The News Herald

This rendering from fall 2009 shows Front Beach Road, looking east from the Long Beach Resort in Panama City Beach, after the completion of a project to widen, improve and beautify the road.

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Alaghemand said because the initial design for segment two was approved four years ago, the agency is required to update the plans according to the latest design standards from the Florida Department of Transportation.

While it will cost about \$118,000 for a design update, Alaghemand said staff was able to reduce the total project cost from \$17 million to \$14.2 million by eliminating certain design elements,

including an intelligent transportation system on the stretch of road and a traffic signal at Front Beach Road and Churchwell Drive.

"With the traffic pattern and flow that we have, we feel that can wait until later," Alaghemand said.

The Front Beach Road segment two project is the first priority on the CRA's near-term work plan, which was approved by the council in August.

In addition to completing the final

design for the project, the CRA also will continue land acquisition efforts along Front Beach Road to have the project ready for construction by fiscal year 2015.

"Almost everybody is receptive," Alaghemand said. "Even one where we have to take parking [space] realized this is going to be a benefit to them."

Alaghemand estimates the project will take about two years to complete once construction begins.