Longboat Key

Historical Speed Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Longboat Key is an island off the west coast of Florida that measures roughly 10 miles long and one mile wide. Sandwiched in between two counties, Sarasota and Manatee, the island has only two points of ingress/egress — the island's northern and southern sides.

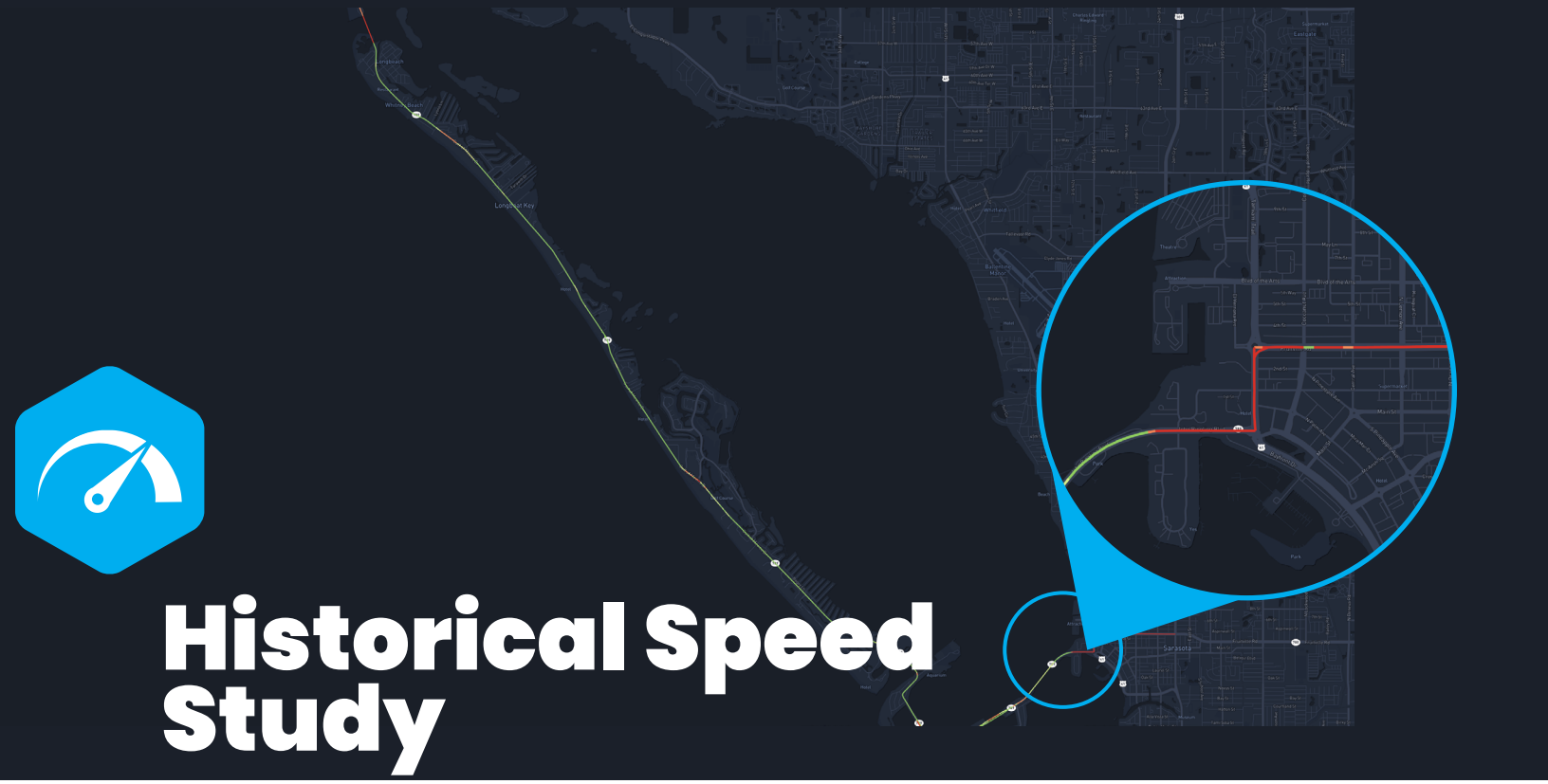
A prototypical seasonal Florida community, the population in Longboat Key hovers around 8,000 year-round before ballooning to 20,000 during the winter season.

Long and narrow, neighborhoods on the island are usually distinguished as either bayside or beachside. This also results in the majority of traffic flowing out onto Gulf of Mexico Drive, the island's main throughway.

With one artery and only two points of entry/exit, gridlock is always a primary point of emphasis — especially during the winter months. While they had good tribal knowledge of peak times and days, public works officials with the city sought a more defined way of understanding when and where congestion was at its worst.

Given Urban SDK's nationwide presence, including in the aforementioned counties, stakeholders saw a unique opportunity to illustrate travel patterns in one of the state's more beautiful seasonal retreats.

After working with Urban SDK, Longboat officials were able to understand peak-season travel delays, along with patterns during anomalous disruptions (festivals, farmers markets, etc.). As a result, after working with Urban SDK's Planning Team, Longboat officials received a well-defined speed report, along with dashboards and visualizations, of all the Key's prime times of congestion..



Historical Speed Study

Methodology:

Due to its geographic and demographic make-up, Longboat Key had a unique opportunity in front of itself when deciding to uncover congestion issues. The island only has two points of ingress and egress, one main throughway, and a well-defined peak season that sees its population balloon to more than double. As such, officials knew the roadway and the dates they wanted to explore.

Longboat officials sought to understand the city's congestion issues using: Historical travel time data; peak seasonal travel time delays by most congested weeks of the year, days of the week, and hours of day; and any outliers pertaining to festivals or community events.

Not only did Urban SDK have all the data they needed to make a comprehensive speed study, but the platform's reporting dashboards and map configurations were very good at explaining the findings with little added explanation.

Findings:

The corridor saw an average increase of 4% in a.m. peak hour travel time delay between 2018-2022, whereas the corridor experienced a -1.6% decrease in p.m. peak hour travel time delay during the same period.

The greatest increases in delay were observed in Downtown Sarasota leading into the John Ringling Causeway, but there were also more localized increases in delay at the various pass bridges throughout the island. Comparing the northern and southern portions of the corridor revealed that the southern portion experiences more delays than the northern portion — an increase of 5.6% compared to 1.5%, respectively.

A review of the relative congestion across a typical day revealed that Wednesdays and Fridays were typically the most congested between the hours of 8am - 6pm, with a longer shoulder period on Saturdays until 9pm. The worst months for traffic congestion proved to be between February and April, the time of year when all snowbirds are in town to roost. Conversely, August and September typically experienced the least congestion.