Miami-Dade addresses Zika concerns

By Susan Davtyan

During a special county commission meeting Tuesday, Mayor Carlos Gimenez told residents and officials that Miami-Dade sends aquito control team out the moment there’s a case suspected to be related to the Zika virus, and has been doing “whatever it takes” to protect residents’ health.

That’s the administration’s first concern, he said, and then it’s to lift a travel ban to Wynwood, the first travel ban ever in the U.S.

Meantime, the mayor is putting together a list of reimbursables as Gov. Rick Scott requested so the county can be paid back for what has come out of the budget to address public education campaigns, spraying the small area in Wynwood during early-morning hours and cleaning 150,000 storm drains every month through mosquito season to ensure they won’t be breeding grounds for the bugs.

In addition, Depute Mayor Alina Hucks said abandoned tires have been identified as a key issue for mosquito breeding so the county is doing a sweep of bulky waste pick-ups daily.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sent a Zika Virus Emergency Response Team here to conduct tests and advise county staff on spraying.

David Daigle, director of communication for the CDC’s office of public health preparedness and response, said the team leader is looking at a plan and so far is seeing a “knock-down rate” from spraying with a chemical called Naled.

“When we see a number of cases in Wynwood, our plan is to stay transmission right away,” he said. “We understand there are concerns about Naled in Wynwood, but we’re comfortable with it.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency and the CDC, Naled does not pose a health risk to people when sprayed in low concentrations.

The spraying takes place at dawn, Mr. Daigle said, when there are few people out and coinciding with the time mosquitoes are out in force. The CDC is also offering a clinic for pregnant women, free of charge, where they can be tested for the Zika virus.

Mr. Gimenez said we can use help from our municipal partners in cleaning the drains as well as state and federal support.

County Commissioner Danielle Levine Cava said she was gratified to hear how closely the state and the CDC are working together, although not yet Congress.

Commission Chairman Jeanette Moreu said since the governor declared a state of emergency, Wynwood businesses cannot receive FEMA funding and, when Mr. Gimenez agreed the county should look into getting some sort of relief from state or federal government, he will come up with legislation toward that end.

I-395 signature bridge project advances

By Susan Davtyan

The Florida Department of Transportation is currently seeking design proposals after setting the minimum requirements for the signature I-395 bridge project, and for the open spaces underneath the elevated roadway, which are due back in late 2016.

At this time, six firms have been short-listed, according to I-395 media outreach specialist for the department’s District Six.

Included in the request for proposals are architectural designers with an aesthetic design, with the minimum requirement for the bridge and plaza, Ms. Ruiz-Paz told Miami Today on Tuesday.

The minimum requirements for the bridge include a minimum suspension span length of 500 feet and a minimum safety space for pedestrians while they wait for help to walk on a way for future designers of a safe and secure place where everyone can be a part of a future.

James Berrett, chair of the committee, said that anyone with offices is concerned about “curing something new” while other needs are still unmet, due to lack of resources.

This is just one of several design proposals considered for I-395.

The total project consists of four separate components: I-395 reconnection, roadway and pedestrian improvement construction, Miami-Dade Expressway Authority’s (MDEA) widening of State Road 836 111th and the Westbound Connector, the maximum construction funding for each component is $535 million for I-395, $136 million for MDEA’s SR 836 111th, $25 million for I-95 Pavement Reconstruction and $35 million for the westbound connector.

This project addresses operational deficiencies, increases capacity, and improves safety, Ms. Ruiz-Paz said. “It builds a landmark in our community that will change the skyline of Miami with the signature bridge, while providing gathering areas under the bridge that will enhance the communities. The project also reconnects West Miami to Brickell.”

The Artec Review Committee, involved in the evaluation of the aesthetics for the entire project, is expected to make its final decision in late 2017, Ms. Ruiz-Paz said, and will take about five years to complete.