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Decades-Old Road Issues in Williams Delight Fuel Calls for Immediate Action

Residents push for long-overdue repairs, questioning delays in federal funding and urging officials to provide transparency and concrete solutions

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Residents of First Avenue in Williams Delight say the road has been in disrepair for over two decades. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

On Monday, residents of Williams Delight took to the streets in their community to plead with officials to prioritize road repairs in their area.

Disgruntled residents say that they have been waiting for a fix for First Avenue since at least 2018. Some longtime members of the community say that the road has been poor for at least two

decades or more. Following the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, there was hope that federal funds would be available to effect repairs. However, six years later, after multiple attempts at correspondence with both local and federal officials, they feel no closer to a resolution.

Maudry Benjamin, secretary of the Williams Delight homeowner's association, told the Consortium that there had been an allocation of approximately \$5 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 2022, and work was expected to have begun by the end of the year. "Unfortunately, that was not the case," she lamented, saying that she suspected the funding had been reallocated for other projects. A new request for federal funding is currently in progress, but Ms. Benjamin says residents have not yet received any firm timeline for when those monies may be made available. Follow up letters to FEMA, the Department of Public Works, and Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett have all gone unanswered, Ms. Benjamin complained.

"When they need votes, they know where we live. They don't mind driving it to find us when they need [our] vote," the HOA representative said, gesturing to the water-filled potholes that stretched the length of the un-asphalted roadway. Residents, she said, have resorted to cutting across private property in one area in an effort to protect their vehicles from a particularly bad section of the roadway.

The mounds of soil piled up at intervals along the road, one resident says, are evidence of community efforts to smooth over the worst of the potholes. Leon Amedee, owner of Amedee's Trucking, says that he has spent his own money purchasing material and using his equipment to attempt repairs, "because my wife, my family, and everybody – all of these people – are driving here."

While some protesters acknowledged the significant efforts of local officials to address poor road conditions across St. Croix, several Williams Delight residents say they feel forgotten.

Yvette Ali, whose elderly mother lives in the area, says that more needs to be done to help residents understand the process by which federal dollars turn into observable results. On the website for the Office of Disaster Recovery, Ms. Ali says, "we saw there was a project for Williams Delight, but...we can only guess that's the project." The status of the project – listed as "in design" – is, in her opinion, not clear enough for the average citizen. "I know that takes a long time because I work in project management, but the average person going to that website...what does this mean? What's the timeline, when can we expect?" She suggests that more community outreach and public education could go a long way in settling the anxieties of residents in the area.

Aside from the optics and increased wear and tear on vehicles, the poor condition of the roads has other negative impacts on the community. According to Lonmus Baptiste, getting to the main road from his house takes approximately 10 minutes, "because you cannot drive no more than a couple miles an hour." Public services are also affected. "When something happens in there, even with the police officers coming in, ambulance coming in, it's trouble for them," he noted.

Last month, [a report](#) on the condition of one of the main roadways in downtown Christiansted drew complaints from Governor Albert Bryan Jr. that people were overly focused on the negative while ignoring the significant progress being made in addressing roads across the island. Since then major rehabilitation projects have been announced for the roads leading to the airport, as well as other major roads on St. Croix.

Williams Delight residents say they understand that it may take some time before their needs are addressed, but insist that local officials need to better communicate their plans. "Some concrete timelines would be nice," said Ms. Ali. "If it's gonna be a while, then what can be done in a

timely manner without compromising anything,” she continued.

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