Centerville Publix to Riverside Café, St Marks, FL

Route Notes: June 24, 2017

Destination

Riverside Café (850-925-5668): Good food, especially seafood, and nice staff. Might have a table for the whole group if you call ahead. Smoking section available in their Tiki hut part of the restaurant.

The Journey

Leave Publix parking towards Centerville Rd. Turn right and immediately position yourself to turn left onto Welaunee Blvd. After your turn onto Welaunee, stay right in order to turn right when Welaunee ends at Fleischmann Rd. Turn right and proceed to the ‘round-a-bout at Miccosukee Rd. There were no unusual hazards or dangers noted up to this point. The ‘round-a-bout, however, presents the first motoring concern. Visibility to the left is noticeably restricted. Therefore, traffic entering the circle (traffic you should yield to) will not be visible until the last moment as you approach. Be slow and give a good look to your left. Take the second exit and proceed North on Miccosukee. From here on, until reaching FL Hwy 59 later, there is no shoulder area along the road. When the pavement ends left and right, it’s either grass or a ditch.

Miccosukee Rd is a wonderful canopy road offering a welcome, cool respite from the omnipresent, and at times, intense sun. The secondary effect of the canopy is shade that will mask or hide any road hazards, especially if you are wearing sun glasses or using a dark visor. I’ll be a little slower to allow more reaction time in this situation.

Shortly after passing under I-10, turn right on a difficult-to-see Miles Johnson Road. Still, no shoulder on this canopy road. In fact, it is sooo canopy that some of the branches were reaching the rode way. The road edges had accumulated debris that had fallen during this week’s rain and wind. Some of that extended all across the road. Also, there are numerous blind driveways lurking, which will spit out local residents upon unaware motorcyclists. They are not expecting us on “their” road, use caution. I’ll be signaling for single file here, slow down and increase your spacing. This is only 2.5 miles long before ending at Crump Rd.

Turn right onto Crump. Cross US Hwy 90 and continue on Chaires Cross Rd (same pavement, different name) towards Buck Lake Rd. Turn left onto Buck Lake Rd, then right onto Baum Rd heading into Capitola. The railroad crossing approaching Capitola is not smooth, but not terrible. Slowing down is required anyway, since you’re entering a residential area. Passing through Capitola look for Whitehouse Road and turn right. Still no shoulder along this roadway, and debris present from the recent rain. Also, there are numerous blind driveways on this road as well.

Whitehouse Rd dead ends at FL Hwy 59. Turn right and experience a well-maintained road with shoulder areas available if a “pullover” is required. The only dangerous event was trying to cross US Hwy 27. It is four lane, busy and has limited sight distance in both directions. You are on top of a hill and crossing traffic is difficult to see since they are hidden by their uphill approach to the intersection. They have the right of way. And they are speeding. Be careful, choose your crossing wisely, maybe going only halfway at first. (Just how good were you at playing that video game “Frogger?”) See you on the other side.

To stay on FL Hwy 59, there is a right turn at the 8.1 mile point from Whitehouse Rd. It will sneak up on you (and me). Use Pinhook Rd as a marker to warn you the turn is approaching. Turn right. FL Hwy 59 has a lot of commercial truck traffic, including logging trucks (which tend to drop wood pieces as they travel). Some road debris hazards were present.

FL Hwy 59 will dead end into US Hwy 98. Turn right and travel the (somewhat boring) 13 miles toward the St Marks turn off. It is a very busy highway, especially in tourist season and weekends. Today, we encompass both of those. Be Vigilant.

Turn left onto FL Hwy (County?) 363 and proceed the short 2.5 miles to St Marks. I will most likely use their alternate parking area. It is paved and is just a half block short of the restaurant itself. If that area is full, other alternate parking is available closer to the building but it is generally NOT paved. Use caution, slow down, increase spacing when entering St Marks and the parking areas.

To recap, I want to re-emphasize the hazards to be aware of during the entire route: no shoulder from Miccosukee Rd until reaching FL Hwy 59, rain washout (sand/gravel) on road edges, Miles Johnson Rd canopy reaches the rode way in some spots, debris and/or roadkill, road edges have poor conditions on some roads, livestock, wildlife, and possible feces from either. Finally, canopy shadows will hide all of this from us. Parking is not perfect and could be paved or not. Ride smart and this will be a fun ride. Just be mindful of the concerns listed here. Enjoy!