

major services. The satellite's 130 beds will be deducted from Manatee Memorial's bed census.

Ancillary services such as X-ray and central supply will take up the space left vacant in Manatee Memorial by the reduction of those beds, officials said.

new cases of the disease every year per one million children.

"He has not been doing well in the last two months," said Dr. Jelks. "But it was nothing you could put your finger on." The symptoms, vague discomforts and loss of appetite, are often hard to

"To know this little guy is to love him," she said.

Ms. Auberson said that "neighbors, friends — everybody" have agreed to help.

"We stopped in a Shop & Go to put up a sign, and the clerk volunteered to make us a cake."

Cortez Road improvements eyed

NICK MASON
Herald Staff Writer

Major improvements are planned for Cortez Road to eliminate traffic snarls between Bradenton and Bradenton Beach.

A two-year study started this summer, but a Tampa engineer said Tuesday that the main recommendation may be widening Cortez Road from 26th Street West in Bradenton to Gulf Drive in Bradenton Beach.

"We'll want to six-lane a portion of the road, maybe the whole thing," Roy Chapman, senior transportation engineer for Environmental Science and Engineering Inc., told Manatee County commissioners Tuesday.

Chapman said his firm was hired three months ago by the Florida Department of Transportation to plan improvements through the year 2010 for Cortez Road from 26th Street West to Gulf Drive. The study will determine whether Cortez Road can qualify for federal highway-construction funds.

Once the study is completed, the

state will decide what work, if any, will be done and will budget state and any federal funds to pay for the improvements, Chapman said.

The study will determine anticipated traffic counts for the next 25 years based on projections of future development, identify needed rights of way to widen or move the road, suggest ways of getting more traffic across Cortez Bridge spanning Sarasota Bay and process environmental permits, he said.

Cortez Road is now a divided highway with six through lanes and turning lanes east of 26th Street West. Just west of that intersection, the pavement narrows to four through lanes with turning lanes.

It stays a four-lane divided highway until just west of 66th Street West, where the median ends and the road narrows to two lanes the remaining distance to Bradenton Beach.

A major problem, Chapman told commissioners, is an order from Gov. Bob Graham that requires 1981 traffic counts to be used to

determine if bridges crossing coastal waterways should be improved. That could pose a problem for widening Cortez Bridge or building a second span, he said.

But, after meeting with commissioners, Chapman said traffic counts from 1981 seem to justify bridge improvements from an engineer's view and, therefore, could meet the legal restriction.

"Right now that study isn't quite finalized, but, from an engineering view, there was enough traffic to warrant increasing the capacity of the structure," he said. "But there could be some problems with the bridge. I doubt it would be six lanes at the bridge. It could be, but I doubt it."

Chapman said his firm's study does not obstruct the state's plans to widen Cortez Road to four lanes with turning lanes from 67th Street West to 75th Street West or to make intersection improvements at 71st Street West and 75th Street West. That work could start next year.

Man pleads no contest in abduction

JOANNE FISKE
Herald Staff Writer

A man accused of choking and abducting a 25-year-old Bradenton woman was sentenced to 2½ years in prison Tuesday.

Lawrence S. Franklin, 41, pleaded no contest to battery and false imprisonment before Circuit Judge Paul Logan. The maximum sentence allowed by state guidelines was 3½ years.

The plea cut short Franklin's

jury trial, which began Monday with the testimony of his victim. The case never went to the jury.

Earlier in the day, Logan granted a defense motion to reduce a charge of kidnapping with the intent to commit sexual battery to the lesser offense of false imprisonment. Assistant Public Defender Richard Seymour argued successfully that the state had failed to prove that Franklin intended to rape his victim.

The woman testified Monday that she believed Franklin intended to rape her when he dragged her across a street, threw her to the ground and choked her until she thought she would die before forcing her into his car.

Franklin never used the word "rape," she conceded during cross-examination. He did indicate that he wanted to have sex with her, she

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