



**MARTIN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING**
Martin County Administrative Building Commission Chambers
2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, FL 34996
www.martinmpo.com
(772) 221-1498

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 @ 9:00 am

MINUTES

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Commissioner Sarah Heard called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- 2. PRAYER** – Pastor Jim Harp, Stuart Alliance Church, led the Invocation.
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Commissioner Sarah Heard led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 4. ROLL CALL** – Susan Ortiz, Administration Assistant, called roll.

PRESENT:

Commissioner Sarah Heard
Commissioner Stacey Hetherington
Commissioner Blake Capps
Mayor Carmine Dipaolo
Commissioner Sean Reed

REPRESENTING:

Martin County Board of County Commission
Martin County Board of County Commission
Martin County Board of County Commission
Village of Indiantown Council
City of Stuart Commission

ABSENT:

Commissioner Eileen Vargas
Commissioner Edward Ciampi
Commissioner Christopher Collins
Commissioner Kaija Mayfield

Martin County Board of County Commission
Martin County Board of County Commission
City of Stuart Commission
Town of Sewall's Point Commission

Staff in Attendance:

Beth Beltran, MPO Administrator
Ricardo Vazquez, Principal Planner
Lucine Martens, Planner
Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant

Others in Attendance:

James Brown, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
Kris Kehres, FDOT
Kathy White, FDOT

Vikas Jain, TYLin

A quorum was present for the meeting.

5. APPROVE AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mayor Dipaolo and was seconded by Commissioner Hetherington. The motion passed unanimously.

6. APPROVE MINUTES

MPO Board Meeting – September 15, 2025

A motion to approve the September 15, 2025, MPO Policy Board minutes was made by Commissioner Capps and seconded by Mayor Dipaolo. The motion passed unanimously.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

8. AGENDA ITEMS

A. FINAL DRAFT 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Ms. Beltran opened the special meeting by expressing her appreciation to Commissioners, acknowledging nearly two years of sustained effort on the development of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan. She noted that the plan had been a recurring topic at nearly every meeting during that time and emphasized the significance of reaching this final stage. Ms. Beltran then introduced Ricardo Vazquez, MPO Principal Planner.

Mr. Vazquez began by requesting that the Chair formally open a public hearing for the agenda item, clarifying that while the original agenda notice had omitted this designation, the materials provided indicated the need for a public hearing. Commissioner Heard confirmed the item as a public hearing. Echoing Ms. Beltran's gratitude, Mr. Vazquez thanked everyone for their presence and engagement throughout the planning process. He recounted the project's launch in April 2024 and highlighted the various milestones documented on the agenda. With the plan now at the adoption stage, he introduced Vikas Jain, project manager with TY Lin, to present the final component for consideration.

Commissioner Hetherington inquired about the definition of Mobility as a Service. Mr. Jain responded by describing it as a technology-driven concept that integrates various transportation options into a single user platform. He explained that similar to services like Uber, Mobility as a Service allows users to plan and pay for trips across multiple modes—such as ride-hailing, public transit (Marty), shared bikes, and on-demand microtransit—within one app. This unified system enables users to view available options, calculate total costs, and seamlessly travel from point A to point B. Commissioner Hetherington thanked Mr. Jain for the clarification. Commissioner Capps referenced page eight of the agenda. He sought clarification on how the proposed extension differs from existing rail services, noting the presence of FEC freight trains and Brightline's high-speed passenger service. Commissioner Capps described Tri-Rail as the commuter system currently operating in

South Florida and asked whether the extension would bring service north from West Palm Beach to Fort Pierce. Mr. Jain clarified that the proposed Tri-Rail extension would reach as far north as downtown Stuart, not Fort Pierce.

Commissioner Capps inquired about a projected timetable for the extension. Ms. Beltran responded that the concept has been under discussion for decades. She explained that legislative changes several years ago now require Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) support for such an expansion. A major challenge has been the transition from the state-owned corridor (Mangonia Park to Miami) to the privately owned Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, which operates under different regulatory standards and can impose stricter conditions. Despite these hurdles, Tri-Rail has conducted multiple studies to explore the feasibility of extending service northward, and the idea remains in long-range planning documents. However, no definitive timetable exists. Commissioner Capps noted that Tri-Rail fares are generally lower than Brightline's, which could be a benefit to riders. Ms. Beltran elaborated on the differences between the two systems. Commissioner Capps concluded that the Tri-Rail extension remains conceptual and likely far off. Ms. Beltran agreed, noting that Tri-Rail is currently facing funding challenges and is focused on maintaining existing operations. She added that future consideration of the extension remains possible, depending on how those challenges evolve.

Commissioner Reed raised questions regarding the Innovation Hub, referencing his prior experience on the Business Development Board. He asked whether the Innovation Hub Study played a role in the current planning document under review. Ms. Beltran confirmed that the Innovation Hub is consistent with the document's framework. She explained that the Innovation Hub was developed by the County and was among the studies reviewed during the preparation of the current planning document. Ms. Beltran emphasized that the document aligns with locally adopted plans, including the comprehensive plan, which is a key requirement for compliance.

Commissioner Reed asked how he could get up to speed on the Innovation Hub, noting that while the Board votes on related items, oversight largely falls under the Board of County Commissioners. Ms. Beltran suggested that the Innovation Hub report is available on the County website and reiterated that while the document is consistent with local plans, it is not necessarily required to incorporate every local initiative unless specified in the scope.

Commissioner Reed sought clarification on whether capital improvement projects such as those in Golden Gate related to flooding and multimodal transportation efforts in downtown Stuart are connected to the Innovation Hub. Ms. Beltran responded that the Innovation Hub is a distinct report from other planning documents. She noted that while local governments strive to maintain consistency across plans, not all documents are formally required to align unless dictated by specific adoption criteria. She added that the planning team reviewed various city studies, including the Downtown Master Plan and Triangle District plans, to ensure regional cohesion. Commissioner Reed asked whether these various plans interconnect. Ms. Beltran affirmed that interconnectivity is essential to the integrity of the planning document. She highlighted the importance of regional coordination, noting that the Board's multi-jurisdictional structure is designed to promote cohesive transportation planning. Commissioner Reed asked how he could obtain a formal update on the Innovation Hub, given the involvement of multiple boards. Ms. Beltran recommended

contacting George Stokus, Assistant County Administrator, who served as the project manager for the Innovation Hub and would be best positioned to provide detailed information.

Commissioner Heard asked whether there were driverless freight trucks in service. Mr. Jain explained that there are varying levels of vehicle autonomy, typically ranging from Level 0 to Level 4. He noted that, as of now, fully autonomous vehicles, those requiring no human oversight do not exist in active deployment. Current systems still require a human driver to remain behind the wheel at all times.

Commissioner Reed raised concerns regarding the funding and governance of the proposed Brightline station project. He noted that the project was originally intended to be privately funded, as reflected in the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and expressed concern that the funding model had shifted to include public grant money, local, state, or federal which he emphasized is still taxpayer funded. Commissioner Reed questioned how such changes are reflected in the LRTP and sought clarification on whether the MPO or the City Commission initiates updates when local support is conditional. Ms. Beltran explained that while the LRTP is updated every five years, it also includes an amendment process that allows for changes in between cycles. She emphasized that the LRTP must remain consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans to remain eligible for state and federal funding. Using a visual aid from the MPOAC Institute, she illustrated how the LRTP aligns with local government comp plans, which in turn influence project prioritization and funding eligibility through the FDOT Work Program and the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Beltran cited the City of Stuart's comprehensive plan, which encourages multimodal transportation and the development of downtown as a transportation hub, as the basis for the LRTP's current consistency with the Brightline station. She noted that if the City Commission wished to revise its comp plan or express concerns, it could do so by submitting a formal letter to the MPO chair or staff, which could then be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Reed acknowledged the process but pointed out a conflict with Martin County's comprehensive plan. He referenced Section 1.2.2, which calls for fiscally conservative management and requires that development be financially self-sustaining rather than subsidized by taxpayers. He argued that the current funding approach for the Brightline station does not align with that principle. Ms. Beltran responded that the grant application for the Brightline station was submitted by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), indicating a shift in policy direction. She added that the project remains consistent with other elements of the county's comp plan, particularly Goal 5.5, which supports establishing transit corridors and neighborhood centers to connect Martin County with regional hubs.

The Final Draft 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan was adopted by a 4–1 roll call vote.

Member	Vote
Commissioner Heard	Yes
Commissioner Hetherington	Yes
Commissioner J. Blake Capps	Yes
Mayor Dipaolo	Yes
Commissioner Reed	No

9. COMMENTS FROM FDOT - None

10. COMMENTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS – None

11. COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS – None

NOTES

NEXT MEETING

- MPO Policy Board Meeting – October 27, 2025, at 9:00am

ADJOURNMENT: 9:43 AM

Approved by:



Sarah Heard, Chair
Martin County Commissioner



Date

Prepared by:



Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant



Date

Minutes Approved on November 5, 2025

The Martin MPO solicits public participation without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require language translation services (free of charge) should contact Ricardo Vazquez, Principal Planner (Title VI/Non-discrimination Contact) at (772) 223-7983 or rvazquez@martin.fl.us in advance of the meeting. Hearing-impaired individuals are requested to telephone the Florida Relay System at #711.