



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

**Monday, September 15, 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 James Brocious, 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 Eileen Vargas  
Commissioner Sarah Heard  
Commissioner Blake Capps  
Commissioner Edward Ciampi  
Mayor Carmine Dipaolo  
Commissioner Christopher Collins  
Commissioner Sean Reed  
Commissioner Kaija Mayfield

**REPRESENTING:**

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

**ABSENT:**

Commissioner Stacey Hetherington      Martin County Board of County Commission

**Staff in Attendance:**

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

**Others in Attendance:**

Pastor James Brocious, Stuart Alliance Church  
James Brown, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise

Kris Kehers, FDOT  
Tony Norat, FDOT  
Kathleen White, FDOT  
Maria Formoso, FDOT  
Geysa Sosa, FDOT  
Rana Keel, FDOT  
Kelly Budha, FDOT  
Chris Rizzolo, AECOM  
Vikas Jain, TY Lin  
Ronald Sanchez, HDR  
Juan Calderon, Caltran Engineering Group  
Luke Latham, Resident  
Barbara Despinos, Resident

**A quorum was present for the meeting.**

#### **5. APPROVE AGENDA**

**A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Capps and was seconded by Commissioner Collins. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **6. APPROVE MINUTES**

MPO Board Meeting – June 16, 2025

**A motion to approve the June 16, 2025, MPO Policy Board minutes was made by Mayor Dipaolo and seconded by Commissioner Ciampi. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **7. PUBLIC COMMENTS – The public requested to speak during the Willoughby Boulevard Extension discussion.**

Barbara Despinos addressed the Board, speaking as both a grieving parent and an advocate for suicide prevention. She shared that on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, her 19-year-old son, Samuel Despinos, died by suicide after jumping from the Roosevelt Bridge. She emphasized that her family is not alone in this tragedy, noting that multiple individuals have died by suicide at the same location in recent years. Ms. Despinos urged the Board to consider implementing prevention measures, such as physical barriers, fencing, netting, signage with crisis information, and emergency call boxes. She cited research and real-world data demonstrating that such interventions significantly reduce suicide rates at known jumping sites. She stressed that suicidal crises are often impulsive, and delaying access to lethal means can save lives. Ms. Despinos called for a safety audit of the bridge, consultation with mental health and suicide prevention experts, and the integration of protective infrastructure and signage. She concluded by offering to share additional information with the Board and thanked members for allowing her to speak, for her son, for those already lost, and for those who may still be saved.

Commissioner Ciampi expressed his condolences to Ms. Despinos for the loss of her son and commended the thoughtful and actionable suggestions she presented. While noting that physical barriers may present engineering challenges at the Roosevelt Bridge, Commissioner Ciampi affirmed that many of Ms. Despinos's recommendations are feasible and worth exploring. He emphasized the potential for collaboration with state-level staff and expressed a willingness to assist in any effort that could prevent future tragedies.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **A. FY25-FY29 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENTS**

Margie Tamblyn presented an overview of the TIP. She began by explaining that the first amendment each year is a roll forward report, which accounts for funding not utilized in the previous TIP cycle. These funds are carried forward into the current cycle (FY 2026-2030), totaling approximately \$16.7 million. The second amendment addressed the removal of the Alice Street sidewalk project. Based on feedback from the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), the proposed sidewalks at the crossing were deemed infeasible. Lastly, Ms. Tamblyn outlined a modification involving a non-budgeted federal lands project at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge. The project includes replacing the south end boardwalk, repairing the headquarters, and improving the visitor center parking area. While no MPO funds are allocated, the modification ensures consistency across planning documents.

**A motion to approve the FY25-FY29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments was made by Commissioner Ciampi and seconded by Commissioner Capps. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **B. 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP) DRAFT COST FEASIBLE PLAN**

Ricardo Vazquez introduced the draft Cost Feasible Plan agenda item. He reminded Board members that the 2050 LRTP project was initiated in April 2024 and is now approaching its final phase, with adoption scheduled for October. Mr. Vazquez noted that the Cost Feasible Plan represents the final component of the MPO's LRTP cycle. He welcomed Vikas Jain, the consultant project manager for the plan, to present the draft and provide further details.

Commissioner Capps referenced page 10 of the plan, noting that the CFP is described as financially constrained. Mr. Jain confirmed and explained that while the total cost of projects in the CFP amounts to \$746 million, available funding is \$701 million. The \$45 million gap is attributed to several projects classified as "illustrative", meaning they are not yet fully funded but are anticipated to receive discretionary support.

Commissioner Collins inquired about the envisioned design and function of the proposed intermodal hub adjacent to the downtown Brightline station. Mr. Jain described the hub as a multimodal facility designed to accommodate various forms of transportation. This could include transportation network companies for example, rideshare services, buses, and potentially a tram system, depending on the final location and infrastructure. Mr. Jain

emphasized that the hub may also incorporate land use elements, allowing for amenities such as ticketing services, concessions, and retail options like coffee shops. While project details are still under development, the hub could serve either as a fully integrated transit and commercial center or as a streamlined, functional transportation node depending on community needs and planning outcomes.

Ms. Beltran provided a comprehensive overview of the LRTP noting that the LRTP is built on a scientific transportation model that incorporates land use, population, and employment data to identify community needs. Public involvement is a critical component of the process, with input gathered through open houses, surveys, and advisory committee engagement. This feedback is documented within the plan. Commissioner Collins asked whether the LRTP serves as the guiding framework for projects brought forward by the MPO. Ms. Beltran explained that the LRTP is a guide for the MPO's project prioritization process. Commissioner Collins noted that it would be unusual for a project to advance outside the LRTP. Ms. Beltran agreed, explaining that while the plan can be amended during its five-year cycle, Martin County due to its smaller size and more stable conditions typically sees fewer changes than larger counties. Commissioner Collins then asked whether the intermodal hub is a new addition to the LRTP or has been included in previous versions. Ms. Beltran responded that the concept has been discussed locally for years. She offered to verify its historical inclusion.

Discussion continued, and Commissioner Collins expressed concern about the proposed intermodal hub's proximity to East Stuart, a single-family residential neighborhood. He also noted that previous plans had indicated the passenger rail station would be privately funded. Ms. Beltran explained that the 2050 LRTP reflects a county-submitted grant application.

The conversation shifted to planning authority, and Ms. Beltran stated that the MPO's planning documents must be consistent with the local governments' comprehensive plans. Land use decisions made at the city and county levels guide the MPO's planning framework. If a municipality were to formally oppose a project—such as through a resolution or official correspondence—the MPO would bring the matter before its Board for discussion and potential amendment.

Mr. Jain stated that the intermodal hub is reflected in the Transit Development Plan (TDP) adopted in May 2024, reinforcing its consistency across planning documents.

Discussion ensued and Commissioner Collins posed a hypothetical scenario in which a city adopts a policy that conflicts with a proposed intermodal hub, emphasizing that the MPO would need to adapt accordingly to maintain consistency across jurisdictions. Ms. Beltran responded that if a county or municipality has concerns—whether related to an intermodal hub or another issue—it can formally adopt policy and submit correspondence to the MPO. Such actions would prompt the item to be placed on the MPO meeting agenda for discussion and consideration by the MPO Board.

**A motion to approve 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Draft Cost Feasible Plan was made by Commissioner Ciampi and seconded by Commissioner Mayfield. The motion passed with Commissioners Collins and Commissioner Vargas dissenting.**

### C. US-1 AND PALM CITY ROAD INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Ms. Beltran introduced the next agenda item regarding proposed improvements at the intersection of US-1 and Palm City Road. She explained that an MPO Feasibility Study had been conducted several years ago, which led to the City of Stuart Commission recommending the project as a priority. The MPO Board subsequently endorsed the recommendation, prompting FDOT to advance the project for further evaluation.

Geysa Sosa, FDOT Project Development Manager, confirmed that the intersection had been included on the priority list for the past two years. FDOT undertook a renewed feasibility review based on the original proposal and was present to share the results. Ms. Sosa introduced Juan Calderon, who delivered a presentation outlining FDOT's findings and proposed next steps.

Commissioner Capps emphasized the importance of early public engagement to avoid spending funds on design work that might later be rejected by the community. This echoed the City of Stuart Commission's request for a public meeting before advancing to design. Ms. Beltran explained that FDOT typically proceeds directly from feasibility to design but cautioned that skipping early public involvement could jeopardize the project if residents oppose the concept later. She recommended that the Board formally support the City's request by directing staff to draft a letter to FDOT District Four, authorizing the Chair to sign it, and requesting that FDOT coordinate with MPO staff to organize a public open house.

**Commissioner Capps moved to direct staff to draft a letter to FDOT District Four requesting that a public meeting be conducted to discuss the new proposed alternative with the community, which will be signed by the MPO Chair. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Ciampi.**

Commissioner Collins supported the motion and added context from prior public engagement efforts. He recalled highly attended and engaged meetings where residents helped narrow down alternatives to a preferred option, only to see that option later replaced. He warned that without renewed public input, the shift could be perceived as a "bait and switch," undermining trust. He expressed confidence in the current alternative but stressed the need for transparency and community buy-in. Mr. Calderon acknowledged the unusual nature of revisiting early-stage planning but emphasized that safety concerns along US-1 warranted the reconsideration. He cited internal discussions with FDOT's design and safety offices, all of which agreed that the corridor's braking and merging patterns posed significant risks. The redesign aims to calm traffic and improve safety, which remains the project's primary objective.

Commissioner Mayfield raised a question about pedestrian accommodations in the new concept. Mr. Calderon clarified that while the design is still conceptual, it would include ramps and crossings at roundabouts, connecting to existing sidewalks. He noted a problematic crossing at the triangle near US-1 and suggested relocating it to a safer midpoint.

**Commissioner Heard confirmed the motion to send a letter of support for a public meeting. With no opposition, the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **D. WILLOUGHBY BOULEVARD EXTENSION PD&E STUDY PRESENTATION**

Ms. Beltran introduced Chris Rizzo, consultant project manager for the Willoughby Boulevard Extension PD&E Study, who presented to the Board.

Commissioner Heard opened the discussion with an assessment of afternoon congestion along Kanner Highway, attributing it primarily to Port St. Lucie traffic attempting to access US-1. She noted that drivers are unlikely to divert east to Willoughby or west from US-1 to use Willoughby as an alternative, questioning the practical purpose of the proposed linkage. Mr. Rizzo responded by clarifying that the concept aims to capture northbound traffic traveling up Willoughby and redirect it before it merges onto US1 or Kanner. With only two river crossings in the area, any diversion from Kanner could help alleviate peak-hour congestion. He emphasized that the goal is to reduce pressure on existing corridors by offering a new north-south connection. Commissioner Heard countered that the congestion on Indian Street is more a result of east-west limitations, specifically the Indian Street Bridge than north-south traffic flow. Mr. Rizzo acknowledged the point but noted that preliminary traffic analysis (pending public release) indicates up to a 15% reduction in overall delay, suggesting the linkage could still offer meaningful relief.

Commissioner Capps highlighted two options: Corridor 1 (SE Alhambra Avenue), which primarily affects residential properties, and Corridor 2 (SE Ray's Way), which impacts commercial, retail, and industrial parcels. He asked whether the team had quantified the number of affected homes versus businesses and whether outreach had been conducted with those groups. Mr. Rizzo confirmed that right-of-way acquisition would be necessary if the project advances to construction, but the exact impact is still being analyzed. He assured the Board that extensive community outreach had already taken place, including door hangers, mailers, pop-up events, and public kickoff meetings. The team has received a range of feedback, some supportive, some opposed, and remains committed to ongoing engagement to ensure all voices are heard. Commissioner Capps raised a critical question regarding the potential need for eminent domain. He asked whether right-of-way constraints might be severe enough to require the removal of homes or businesses, and whether any such considerations had been explored. Mr. Rizzo responded that while those determinations had not yet been finalized, they would be addressed during this process.

Commissioner Collins voiced strong reservations about the proposed corridor extension, aligning with Chair Heard's earlier concerns. He acknowledged the long-standing nature of the plan but questioned whether its potential benefits justified the social and environmental costs. Specifically, he highlighted the risk of displacing a low-income Hispanic neighborhood and disrupting the single-family character of the area. He also expressed concern about the ecological impact on Poppleton Creek and the cumulative burden placed on Central Parkway residents, who have already endured overdevelopment. Commissioner Collins asked whether the board had any authority to prevent the project from moving forward, or if the discussion was limited to choosing between two alignment alternatives. Ms. Beltran responded by providing historical context: the extension has been part of the MPO's long-range transportation plans since the 2020 LRTP adopted in 1994. She clarified that the current phase the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study is designed

to evaluate environmental, social, and physical impacts and includes a federally required “no build” alternative.

Mr. Rizzo confirmed that the “no build” option would be presented during the public hearing process, as mandated by NEPA. He emphasized that public involvement is not limited to residents but includes elected officials and agency partners. Commissioner Collins urged the team to take special care in communicating with the affected Hispanic neighborhood, ensuring they understand the implications of the project. Mr. Rizzo assured the Board that outreach has been extensive and will continue throughout the PD&E phase.

Commissioner Mayfield acknowledged both the traffic relief potential and the community impact. Speaking as a resident of the east side, she noted that the new connection could improve mobility by reducing reliance on Kanner Highway, especially for local errands and travel. However, she expressed clear reservations about Corridor 1, which would cut through a residential neighborhood. Commissioner Mayfield emphasized that such an alignment would likely transform the character of the area, disrupting the existing fabric of single-family homes. She described this outcome as unattractive and voiced support for exploring alternatives that minimize neighborhood disruption.

Commissioner Heard introduced resident Mr. Lucas Latham who addressed the MPO Board with an appeal opposing the proposed corridor extension, particularly Corridor 1. Representing residents from Seaside Townhomes and neighboring communities along Central Parkway in Stuart, he cited multiple emails submitted by HOA leaders and residents calling for a “no build” alternative. He reminded the Board of its mission to “preserve the environment and enhance quality of life,” questioning whom that promise truly serves. Mr. Latham framed the issue as one of minority rights and environmental justice, warning that Corridor 1 would displace 17 families from Seaside and disproportionately impact low-income ethnic minorities in the Alhambra neighborhood. He contrasted this with the improbability of eminent domain being applied to affluent areas like Jupiter Island or Sailfish Point, highlighting perceived inequities in the planning process. He also criticized the environmental implications of both corridor options, particularly the intrusion into the Poppleton Creek watershed and park. Mr. Latham described the area as one of the last remaining green spaces in Stuart, arguing that the proposed extension would degrade wildlife habitat, ruin scenic vistas, and introduce noise pollution. He challenged FDOT’s claim that the project would not impact the park, citing proximity to key pedestrian bridges and natural features. In closing, Latham urged the Board to question the absence of a “no build” option in FDOT’s presentation, raise concerns about truck traffic and pedestrian safety, and consider the broader consequences of the project. He invited Board members to visit Poppleton Creek Park firsthand to witness what stands to be lost.

#### **E. CR-708/BRIDGE ROAD-HOBE SOUND BRIDGE FEASIBILITY STUDY PRESENTATION**

Ms. Beltran introduced the next agenda item, which was the feasibility study for the Hope Sound Bridge replacement along County Road 708. She noted that the project has remained a high priority for the MPO over the past several years, reflecting longstanding concerns about the bridge’s operational reliability and regional connectivity. Mr. Ronald Sanchez, consultant project manager, presented to the Board.

Commissioner Heard expressed strong opposition to the high-level fixed bridge alternative, stating it should be rejected outright due to its significant land impact. She inquired whether Jupiter Island had been consulted. Mr. Sanchez responded that while direct outreach to Jupiter Island had not occurred, input from a local historian was incorporated into the feasibility study. He acknowledged the cultural and environmental significance of the "tunnel of trees" and noted that, despite his background in movable bridge engineering, the high-level fixed bridge would not be a preferred option. He recommended removing it from consideration, citing its excessive land use and lack of practicality.

Commissioner Mayfield asked for clarification on the term "scour." Mr. Sanchez explained that scour refers to the erosion or removal of ground material by moving water. He likened it to standing on the beach, where waves gradually cause your feet to sink into the sand. This same process can affect bridge foundations. To mitigate scour, engineers design foundations deep enough to remain stable even when surrounding soil is displaced by water flow.

Commissioner Capps noted that engineering evaluations suggest the bridge is structurally sound and asked for further detail. Mr. Sanchez explained that feasibility studies begin by identifying user concerns that justify the cost and complexity of bridge replacement. Feedback indicated operational issues specifically, the bridge failing to close properly for traffic. He focused on mechanical systems, noting that the live load shoes (which help align the bridge leaves when closed) were poorly shimmed. This misalignment caused inconsistent seating, leading to span lock failures and preventing the bridge from safely reopening to traffic. As part of recent rehabilitation, the live load shoes were reset, and span locks adjusted. Mr. Sanchez stated that improved performance is expected, and no further operational failures have been reported by the county or FDOT. He also addressed structural concerns, clarifying that while the bridge span was relocated from another site and may be older than assumed, steel components, if well-maintained and painted can exceed the typical 75-year design life. Commissioner Capps expressed reassurance that operational improvements had been made and raised a procedural question: if the Board opts for a "no build" scenario, would that require removing the project from the current priority list? Ms. Beltran responded that the decision would rest with the Board. Projects can remain on the priority list but be moved down based on changing circumstances.

Ms. Beltran recommended that the MPO Board formally request FDOT and the consultant team to present the bridge project to the Jupiter Island Commission, given the community's likely impact. Commissioner Capps confirmed this recommendation as a motion, which Ms. Beltran affirmed. Commissioner Ciampi strongly supported the recommendation to engage Jupiter Island, emphasizing that it is the most directly impacted government entity not represented on the MPO.

**A motion directing the MPO staff to draft a letter to FDOT requesting that the CR-708/Bridge Road-Hobe Sound Bridge Feasibility Study Presentation be shared with Jupiter Island was made by Commissioner Capps and seconded by Commissioner Ciampi. The motion passed unanimously.**

## **F. SR-710 PROJECTS UPDATE**

Geysa Sosa, District Four staff, provided a comprehensive update on the State Road (SR) 710 projects, highlighting recent developments in funding, scheduling, and construction. Coordination with FDOT's central office is ongoing, particularly around the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) funding. Due to significant cost increases several items were shifted into the second five-year program. However, this reallocation created openings in the earlier timeframe, allowing a portion of SR-710 to be considered for advancement. A decision from central office is expected within the next two weeks, and staff remains hopeful for additional funding allocations. When asked by Ms. Beltran which segment of SR-710 was under consideration Ms. Sosa indicated she would need to consult the project table and would follow up with that detail. Another key item discussed was the traffic signal warrant analysis at SR-710 and Allapatah Road. Current traffic volumes are too low to justify a signal, but alternatives are being explored. One possibility is a realignment with MLK Boulevard, which could meet signal warrants due to its proximity to the railroad. The consultant team is revisiting the analysis to identify viable options, including projections for traffic volumes in fiscal year 2035, when construction is expected to be completed.

Ms. Beltran then inquired about the dedicated right turn lane at SR-710 and Tommy Clements. Kris Kehers from FDOT Operations in Fort Pierce confirmed that construction will begin next week, with completion scheduled for January 2026. He noted that the project faced delays and complications arose due to an FPL pole obstructing the site. The relocation of that pole required a permit from CSX, as the new location fell within CSX right-of-way. Despite these setbacks, the project is now ready to proceed, with a contractor secured and mobilization underway.

During the discussion of potential realignment options for Allapattah Road and Martin Luther King Boulevard, Mayor Dipaolo emphasized the urgency of engaging with local landowners. He noted that significant development plans are underway for the affected properties and that stakeholders had met the previous week to discuss a major project in the area. He stressed that any realignment proposal should be coordinated promptly to avoid conflicts with these plans. Ms. Beltran acknowledged the mayor's concern but clarified that such coordination is not yet within the MPO's purview. She explained that the first step would be for the Village of Indiantown to formally notify the county of its interest through a letter.

**9. COMMENTS FROM FDOT - None**

**10. COMMENTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS – None**

**11. COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS – None**

### **NOTES**

- Unified Planning Work Program Modification
- Martin County Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Map

### **NEXT MEETING**

- Special MPO Policy Board Meeting – October 8, 2025, at 9:00am
- MPO Policy Board Meeting – October 27, 2025, at 9:00am

**ADJOURNMENT: 11:01 AM**

Approved by:



**Sarah Heard, Chair  
Martin County Commissioner**



**Date**

Prepared by:



**Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant**



**Date**

**Minutes Approved on October 8, 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](mailto:rvazquez@martin.fl.us) in advance of the meeting. Hearing-impaired individuals are requested to telephone the Florida Relay System at #711.