



**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

Monday, April 21, 2025 @ 9:00 am

MINUTES

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Commissioner Sarah Heard called the meeting to order at 9:04 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 Eileen Vargas
Commissioner Sarah Heard
Commissioner Stacey Hetherington
Commissioner J. 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
Martin County Board of County Commission
Village of Indian Town Council Member
City of Stuart Commission
City of Stuart Commission
Town of Sewall's Point Commission

ABSENT:

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:

Jim Harp, Stuart Alliance Church
Lisa Stone, Kimley-Horn
James Brown, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
Larry Sofield, CAC

Robert Lopes, FDOT
Godfrey Lamptey, GOAL Associates
Kelly Budhu, FDOT District 4
Damaris Williams, FDOT
Tara Swann, Kimley-Horn
Jeff Deziel, Resident

Paul Carballo, Metric
Ron Kareiva, FDOT
Tony Norat, FDOT District 4
Gin Ng, Kimley-Horn
Cyndy Kendrick, Stanley Consultants

A quorum was present for the meeting.

5. APPROVE AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington and was seconded by Commissioner Christopher Collins. The motion passed unanimously.

6. APPROVE MINUTES

MPO Board Meeting – February 24, 2025

A motion to approve the February 24, 2025, MPO Policy Board minutes was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and seconded by Commissioner Christopher Collins. The motion passed unanimously.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

8. AGENDA ITEMS

A. FLORIDA TURNPIKE ENTERPRISE (FTE) – TURNPIKE PROJECTS PRESENTATION

Beth Beltran explained that in December, the Board requested a presentation from the Turnpike staff outlining the projects planned for the Turnpike in Martin County. Ms. Beltran introduced James Brown, who delivered the presentation to the Board.

Commissioner Ciampi addressed the discussion on the Move Over Law, emphasizing that it applies not only to police and fire vehicles but also to tow trucks, disabled vehicles, and any other obstructions in the lane. He noted the need for increased public education on the law, as some mistakenly believe it only applies to emergency responders.

Commissioner Hetherington inquired about the criteria for determining the installation of sound walls, particularly in the northern section of the Turnpike up to Becker, where some Palm City neighborhoods had been requesting sound barriers for years. Mr. Brown explained that the original PD&E study for the corridor from Jupiter assessed qualifying residential areas for potential noise walls. The study identified several neighborhoods. Mr. Brown noted that, while these areas were initially deemed likely to qualify, the project is now in the design phase. Community outreach efforts will help refine decisions, and in cases where sound walls cannot be installed due to non-qualification, alternative mitigation strategies will be considered to improve aesthetics. Commissioner Hetherington asked

whether residents would have additional opportunities to participate in the process, to which Mr. Brown confirmed they would.

Commissioner Mayfield asked whether the decision to expand the Turnpike to eight lanes at the Palm Beach County line was based on the most strategic location, as opposed to widening all of Martin County to eight lanes. Mr. Brown explained that the corridor had been studied, and while Palm Beach County's population density justified the expansion to eight lanes, widening the entire length was reassessed based on need.

Commissioner Capps inquired about the direct connection options in the Hobe Sound area, noting that previous presentations had proposed alternatives both north and south of Bridge Road. He requested further explanation and an updated timetable for the project. Mr. Brown explained that the ongoing (PD&E) study is expected to conclude early next year. A public hearing is scheduled for the fall, at which time the preferred alternative will be presented. He noted that one configuration involves a crossover, which consolidates elements into a single area. From a cost perspective, this option requires fewer infrastructure changes along I-95, particularly in terms of entrance and exit arrangements. Mr. Brown confirmed that the project will be formally presented to the (MPO) in the fall. Efforts are ongoing to secure design funding for future implementation. Commissioner Capps asked whether similar flyovers or direct connections exist elsewhere in the state and if they are widely utilized. Mr. Brown cited examples, including a flyover on I-75 in Miami-Dade and other facilities managed by FDOT District 4, particularly along I-95 express lanes. He noted that such designs prioritize safety and efficiency for highway connectivity.

Commissioner Heard emphasized the importance of all ongoing projects and asked whether any are prioritized over the others. Mr. Brown explained that prioritization is determined through annual traffic analysis, which assesses system-wide trends and facility needs. Funding allocation follows essential maintenance and upkeep, after which the most critical interchanges are addressed. Currently, in Martin County, the Martin Highway interchange and the segment from Martin Highway up to Becker are the farthest along in the design process and are considered high-priority areas for improvement. Commissioner Heard shared her personal observations, noting that I-95 at Indiantown Road consistently experiences severe congestion. Mr. Brown confirmed that this area falls within the planned widening segment from PGA Boulevard to Indiantown Road, which includes targeted interchange improvements. He reiterated that the goal is to incorporate the next phase of the direct connection into the Work Program as funding becomes available. Commissioner Heard then inquired about specific improvements planned for the Indiantown Road interchange. Mr. Brown responded that enhancements would focus on increasing turning capacity, including the introduction of dual lanes for improved traffic flow. Commissioner Heard suggested that commissioners consider scheduling regular presentations from the Turnpike Enterprise, emphasizing the value of staying informed on long-range projects to ensure they remain on track. Ms. Beltran noted they are scheduled to return in the fall.

B. SHARED-USE NON-MOTORIZED (SUN) TRAIL-HOBE SOUND NATATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TO BRIDGE ROAD PRESENTATION.

Ms. Beltran provided the Board with background information before introducing Dameris Williams from FDOT District 4, Ms. Williams explained that while there was a previously approved MPO plan, a revision was made to the northern segment to integrate it with a

recently added project north of SE Bridge Road. Ms. Williams then introduced Cyndy Kendrick, the consultant project manager overseeing the study, who proceeded to present on the segment between the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge and SE Bridge Road.

Commissioner Heard noted that the proposed trail is a 2.2-mile segment rather than a 40-mile corridor and asked how many roadway crossings are involved. Ms. Beltran confirmed that, for this segment, the trail crosses only once. Initially, the northern segment was planned to connect via Gomez Avenue before turning west on Bridge Road to US-1. However, a feasibility study determined that the preferred alignment should shift to the west side of US-1, necessitating a crossing. Commissioner Heard inquired about the trail's path north of Bridge Road. Ms. Beltran clarified that the trail follows the west side of US-1 up to Osprey, where it crosses over to connect with Gomez Avenue then north to Seabranck State Park. Once completed, this will allow cyclists to park at Seabranck and ride along a continuous trail to JD State Park.

Commissioner Capps inquired about the trail's expected route and raised concerns about the feasibility of crossing the railroad tracks, asking whether cyclists would use existing pavement along the overpass or if new infrastructure would be required to accommodate a shared-use path. Ms. Kendrick explained that the existing bridge is not wide enough to accommodate trail users. As part of the project scope, a bridge development report is being conducted to evaluate two options: widening the bridge or constructing a standalone crossing. The report is expected to be completed in a few weeks. Discussion ensued, and Ms. Beltran shared insights from the advisory committee's discussion, including recommendations to place the crossing on this segment south of Olympus Street to minimize conflicts with fire station operations in the area. She clarified that, while the crossing would remain within the same intersection, adjustments to its placement could improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Commissioner Capps acknowledged previous discussions regarding Dixie Highway and asked for further explanation of the challenges associated with its alignment. He noted that, while Dixie Highway might be a preferred route, right-of-way limitations pose a significant obstacle, as the corridor is extremely narrow. Expanding the roadway would require acquiring numerous parcels along the corridor. Ms. Beltran highlighted concerns about the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, which runs adjacent to certain sections of Dixie Highway, further complicating the feasibility of utilizing that corridor for the project.

Commissioner Ciampi supported the advisory committee's recommendation to shift the crossing south of the Olympus Street intersection to reduce interactions with fire truck movements near the station's entrance and exit. He acknowledged that keeping the trail entirely on one side of US-1 would be preferable but emphasized that users will need access to both JD State Park on the west side and the Refuge on the east side, necessitating crossings. He expressed confidence in the detailed study work conducted by FDOT and consultants. Commissioner Heard raised concerns that shifting the crossing south may actually increase interactions with fire trucks traveling southbound. She noted potential visibility and turning challenges near the fire station entrance and acknowledged that either approach presents trade-offs in terms of safety and access. The discussion concluded with general agreement on the need for careful placement of crossings to balance safety considerations and connectivity for trail users.

C. FEDERAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2 AND 3-UPDATED 2025 PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Ms. Beltran introduced the item on Federal Performance Measures, explaining that FDOT is requesting updates to the 2025 performance targets. Ms. Beltran stated that safety performance measures, including the state's Vision Zero initiative, are reviewed annually, while bridge, pavement, and system performance targets are updated every four years by MPOs and every two years by FDOT. At the midpoint of FDOT's review, data has shown that previously approved targets have been exceeded, prompting a request to update them to reflect improved performance.

A motion to approve the Federal Performance Measures 2 and 3 – Updated 2025 Performance Targets was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and was seconded by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington. The motion passed unanimously.

D. STATEMENTS AND ASSURANCES

Ms. Beltran provided an overview of the annual Statements and Assurances process, which is presented to the MPO each year. Ms. Beltran noted that the MPO received a draft State audit report last week containing no corrective actions. Ms. Beltran introduced Mr. Tony Nora, representing District 4, to provide additional comments. Mr. Nora praised the MPO and thanked them for their hard work and dedication.

A motion to approve the Statements and Assurances was made by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington and was seconded by Commissioner Christopher Collins. The motion passed unanimously.

E. CR-713/SW HIGH MEADOW AVENUE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (PD&E) STUDY UPDATE

Damaris Williams introduced Paul Carballo with Metric Engineering, who presented a study update. Commissioner Ciampi briefly interrupted to request a correction on the presentation materials. He noted that the community's name should be Hammock Creek, not Hammond, and emphasized the importance of ensuring accuracy before presenting to the public. Ms. Beltran provided an update on discussions from the Joint Advisory committee meeting held on April 7th. The committee expressed support for the project and concurred with its direction. They requested FDOT to evaluate whether the drainage ponds could also provide habitat value for wildlife and native plants. Ms. Beltran shared this feedback with the Board for consideration.

Commissioner Capps inquired about the construction timeline, confirming that the project is not yet funded in the five-year plan. Mr. Carballo estimated that construction could be eight to ten years away or longer. Discussion then shifted to the justification for the project, with Commissioner Capps noting that the corridor does not seem heavily congested at present. Mr. Carballo clarified that planning efforts focus on long-term projections, assessing future capacity needs through 2050. He emphasized that development trends and operational movements are factored into the project's planning.

Commissioner Mayfield expressed support for the joint advisory committee's recommendation regarding habitat enhancements in pond areas.

Commissioner Ciampi emphasized that all constructed lakes and ponds should incorporate wildlife habitat enhancements rather than remain barren, citing Martin County's success in such efforts. He also noted the significance of High Meadows Avenue as a key access route into northern Martin County. He reminded attendees that MPO projects are long-term efforts, often spanning 10 to 15 years. He stressed the importance of forward-thinking planning, given that future developments—such as High Meadows Medical Offices—will influence transportation needs. He also highlighted ongoing changes along key corridors like Martin Highway and Bridge Road, noting that increasing traffic from Port St. Lucie further underscores the importance of these improvements.

Commissioner Hetherington expressed support for incorporating habitat enhancements in pond areas and asked whether the three identified ponds are private property and if they have been acquired. Mr. Carballo explained that the parcel selection process has been completed, and coordination with the county and the South Florida Water Management District is ongoing. He noted that older permits from the 1990s required further clarification, and title searches are being submitted for the parcels as the next phase of the project moves forward.

Commissioner Hetherington also inquired about speed limits in different segments of the corridor. Mr. Carballo clarified that Segment 1 remains at 55 mph, while Segment 2—from Hammock Creek to SR-714—has been reduced to 45 mph. Commissioner Ciampi remarked that the southern portion of the corridor has historically been 55 mph but noted that speed adjustments were necessary given past traffic fatalities in the area. Commissioner Hetherington recommended adding a clearer transition for drivers as they move between speed zones.

Commissioner Capps asked about the effectiveness of noise barrier walls and how close they can be placed to a property line. Mr. Carballo explained that noise walls are most beneficial when positioned close to the source of traffic, providing the greatest relief to the first row of houses. Beyond that, noise disperses and has diminished impact. While the exact distance from a property line varies, current noise walls require at least 15 feet for annual maintenance and structural footings, which is factored into the project's analysis. Commissioner Capps noted that many pine trees are located close to the roadway and inquired about potential impacts on the tree line. Mr. Carballo responded that utility lines would likely be the primary affected infrastructure if a noise wall were deemed necessary. He added that environmental impacts and associated costs are incorporated into design evaluations to determine feasibility.

F. SR-710 PROJECTS UPDATE

Ms. Beltran introduced the next agenda item, providing an update on the State Road 710 widening project. She noted that the project manager overseeing the widening efforts was present to deliver a PowerPoint presentation. Commissioner Capps requested a refresher on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). Mr. Robert Lopes of FDOT District Four explained that SIS was established between 2000 and 2005 as a state-controlled transportation framework designed to prioritize key infrastructure. He noted that one of its

primary objectives is to support statewide connectivity rather than focusing on regional networks. The system ensures the efficient movement of vehicles, freight, and air traffic, preserving critical transportation links across Florida.

Commissioner Ciampi asked how long construction will take, the response was 4 to 5 years. Commissioner Hetherington asked about the signal warranty study for Allapattah/CR-609 and SR-710, expressing concern that it might apply to the entire project. Ms. Beltran clarified that the warranty study is part of the Allapattah to Van Buren segment but is also a separate MPO priority. Commissioner Hetherington further inquired about the status of the warranty analysis. Mr. Kareiva confirmed that the study is underway but not yet complete, with anticipated completion by summer.

Mayor Dipaolo asked whether consideration has been given to realigning Allapattah Road to intersect directly with Martin Luther King Boulevard, noting that a traffic signal is planned at that location. FDOT's consultant responded that this idea had not been formally studied. He noted that the distance between Allapattah Road and MLK Boulevard is approximately a quarter mile, and integrating the two would require further evaluation. Ms. Beltran clarified that the discussion regarding realigning Allapattah Road to intersect with Martin Luther King Boulevard is ultimately a matter for the Village of Indiantown and the County to address.

Commissioner Collins emphasized the urgency of advancing the previously discussed roadway project, citing ongoing safety concerns and fatal accidents. He asked whether there are internal mechanisms to accelerate the timeline. Commissioner Collins inquired whether the Board could leverage advocacy efforts, such as writing letters to state officials, to expedite the process.

Commissioner Hetherington highlighted the corridor's rural status and inquired about funding opportunities available specifically for rural-designated areas. She noted that during the last Census, Indiantown had been grouped with St. Lucie County, potentially affecting its rural classification and funding eligibility. Commissioner Hetherington requested further investigation into whether the corridor can be designated as rural, particularly within the Village of Indiantown and unincorporated areas of Martin County, to ensure access to all possible funding sources.

Commissioner Reed asked whether FDOT has ever encountered situations where a signalized light was installed without an easement agreement from property owners, preventing access for maintenance. He inquired about the procedures FDOT follows in such cases. Mr. Lopes explained that if a signal was installed through a developer-led process, FDOT may claim ownership through a mechanism known as a maintenance transfer. This process allows the department to assume responsibility for infrastructure maintenance if no public objections are raised within a specified timeframe. If the signal has been in place as passive infrastructure for an extended period, FDOT follows an established process to formally claim and continue maintaining it, provided there are no disputes.

Jeff Zell, a member of the public, inquired about the process for objecting to a traffic signal installed by a developer on private property without an easement, specifically referencing the Costco light. Mr. Lopes noted that he has not encountered a situation where a traffic signal was strongly opposed by residents, as most people tend to support signal

installations near their vicinity. Mr. Lopes was unsure of the exact objection process but indicated that if a signal is formally challenged, the department must prove its necessity through an evaluation. Ms. Williams added that the Traffic Engineering Manual outlines signal warrant criteria, including factors such as trip generation rates from nearby developments and proximity to other signals. Mr. Lopes clarified that if a signal is already installed, objections would need to demonstrate that it fails to serve the public interest. If the signal is deemed necessary, the process of formal acquisition would involve compensating the property owner to maintain public access. Mr. Zell reiterated his question about the process for objecting to a traffic signal installed by a developer on private property, asking where such information is officially posted. FDOT representative Rob Lopes responded that this matter falls outside their direct purview, advising that inquiries should be directed to the relevant FDOT personnel for further clarification.

Commissioner Reed inquired about obtaining a copy of the developer's application for the signalized light and asked whether it was accessible. Ms. Beltran responded that the city staff would have the application.

Commissioner Ciampi closed the meeting by acknowledging the dedication of FDOT representatives and consultants, many of whom travel long distances from Fort Lauderdale and beyond to engage with the Board. He expressed appreciation for their deep understanding of local transportation issues, noting their familiarity with the roads and commitment to finding solutions without relying on notes. He commended their professionalism and passion, thanking them for their efforts in addressing critical infrastructure concerns.

9. COMMENTS FROM FDOT - None

10. COMMENTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS – None

11. COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS – None

12. NOTES

Ms. Beltran provided a brief update on the Development Review Map, noting that it is now updated on a quarterly basis. Ricardo Vazquez presented the most recent updates, incorporating new development information within the county and Indiantown. Vazquez invited board members to contact him directly for further details and confirmed that the link to the updated map can be found on the MPO's homepage.

Commissioner Reed revisited previous discussions on sidewalks and right-of-way regulations in the land development code, specifically referencing Fisherman's Cove on Kanner Highway. He questioned how the county's ongoing sidewalk expansion efforts align with development regulations, particularly in cases where homeowners cannot park two vehicles in their driveway without obstructing the right-of-way or sidewalk. Commissioner Heard responded that this concern may be more appropriate for the Board of County Commissioners.

13. NEXT MEETING - MPO Policy Board Meeting – May 12, 2025

ADJOURNMENT: 10:59 AM

Approved by:



**Sarah Heard, Vice Chair
Martin County Commissioner**

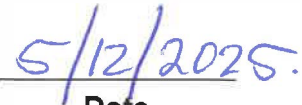


Date

Prepared by:



Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant



Date

Minutes Approved on May 12, 2025

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