



**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, May 12, 2025 @ 1:30 pm

MINUTES

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Commissioner Sarah Heard called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.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 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
Town of Sewall's Point Commission

ABSENT:

Commissioner Christopher Collins City of Stuart Commission
Commissioner Sean Reed City of Stuart 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:

Jim Harp, Stuart Alliance Church James Brown, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
Tony Norat, FDOT District 4

Vikas Jain, TYLin
Larry Sofield, CAC
Herman de Roos, Resident
Warren Newell, Resident

Julie Preast, BPAC
Jim Jurgaits, Resident
Tyrone Monte, Resident

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 Kaija Mayfield. The motion passed unanimously.

6. APPROVE MINUTES

MPO Board Meeting – April 21, 2025

A motion to approve the April 21, 2025, MPO Policy Board minutes was made by Commissioner Kaija Mayfield and seconded by Commissioner Edward Ciampi. The motion passed unanimously.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Tyrone Monte discussed his concerns about the Cove Road Expansion Project. Mr. Monte stated that he opposed the expansion of Cove Road citing concerns over noise, drainage, dust, and the loss of their only entrance. At the April 23rd [FDOT public meeting] presentation, residents felt dismissed rather than heard. The proposed Alternative 2C would force them to share a bike lane alongside traffic on a four-lane expressway. Mr. Monte emphasized that such a design would not be approved today if proposed by a developer.

Warren Newell stated that he was a former Palm Beach County commissioner, a civil engineer, and resident along Cove Road. He voiced concerns about the Cove Road expansion, specifically its widening, elevation changes, and drainage impact. He criticized FDOT's decision to allocate 150 feet of right-of-way, arguing that the project could be accomplished within 80 feet. Mr. Newell highlighted the unintended consequences of a 1920 law that stripped property owners of frontage without compensation. Additionally, he raised concerns over excessively wide bike paths, drastic elevation increases that would place cars above residential rooftops, and blocked drainage systems due to State land purchases. Mr. Newell submitted a letter detailing these issues for Board review.

Commissioner Hetherington inquired whether the Cove Road widening presentation would be addressed at the next MPO meeting. Ms. Beltran confirmed that she had been in discussions with District Four staff regarding community concerns and that the Project Manager plans to present at the June advisory committee and MPO Board meetings. Commissioner Hetherington emphasized the importance of informing residents, particularly given drainage concerns, and encouraged their attendance. Ms. Beltran confirmed that the presentation is scheduled for the next MPO Board meeting on June 16th at 9:00 AM in the Commission Chambers.

8. AGENDA ITEMS

A. TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED (TD) PLANNING GRANT

Beth Beltran introduced the annual Transportation Disadvantaged Planning Grant. The MPO receives this grant for approximately \$26,000 from the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, with no local match required. The funds are used to staff the Local Coordinating Board for Transportation Disadvantaged. Staff recommended approval of the item.

A motion to approve the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Planning Grant was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and was seconded by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington. The motion passed unanimously.

B. APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR (CTC)

Beth Beltran explained that the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) requires the local planning agency, Martin MPO, to advertise every five years for a new Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). The CTC manages transportation services for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and those with limited income. Following the County's advertising process, the Senior Resource Association (SRA), the current CTC, was recommended to continue for the next five years. The Local Coordinating Board supported this recommendation, and if approved by the MPO Board, the Resolution will be sent to the Florida CTD for final approval in early June. Staff recommended approval of SRA as the CTC for Martin County.

A motion to approve the recommended Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and Resolution was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and was seconded by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington. The motion passed unanimously.

C. 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP) – NEEDS PLAN

Ricardo Vazquez introduced Vikas Jain of TYLin, who presented the 2050 LRTP update and draft Needs Plan. Commissioner Heard asked where the new interchange was located. Mr. Jain stated that he believed the project was located at Milepost 125 on I-95. Ms. Beltran confirmed that this was the interchange for the Turnpike's Direct Connection Project with I-95.

Commissioner Capps inquired about the possibility of a water taxi service connecting Sandsprit Park to St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park and whether a shorter route across the river from Cove Road had been considered. Mr. Jain explained that these projects originated from a Regional Waterways Plan conducted a few years ago. Ms. Beltran recalled that during the development of the MPO's Regional Waterways Plan, there were discussions about improving boat access to the State Park. Regarding funding, Commissioner Capps asked if a ferry service would be fully state-funded. Ms. Beltran explained that the Federal Transit Administration offers ferry service funding, and if the State Park incorporated such a service into its Park Management Plan, State funds could

possibly be used. The funding would depend on the specific scenario and environmental considerations.

Commissioner Mayfield noted that North Sewell's Point Road was listed as a capacity expansion project, increasing from two lanes to four, but questioned its feasibility due to limited right-of-way. Mr. Jain acknowledged the concern, stating that the data was objectively generated by the model and that they would revisit the corridor for further evaluation.

Commissioner Hetherington asked whether the Existing and Committed Network Project list was derived from modeling or human input. Mr. Jain responded that some of the listed projects are included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Regarding Newfield Parkway, Mr. Jain confirmed it is developer funded, with Mr. Vazquez adding that other projects also come from capital improvement plans. Commissioner Hetherington then asked about two traffic signals planned for Kanner Highway at Waterside Way and Gateway Place, inquiring about their funding status and whether traffic analysis had been conducted. Public Works Deputy Director George Dzama provided an update on ongoing roadway projects, confirming that many are currently being implemented. He noted that Waterside Way is nearing completion, with bidding set to begin for a traffic signal and turn lane project on SR-76. Commissioner Hetherington inquired about the warrant process for signals at Gateway Place and Waterside Way, with Mr. Dzama confirming that the warrants were based on projected traffic, including anticipated operations facility and warehouse traffic. Regarding 84th Avenue and Newfield Parkway, Mr. Dzama explained that the developer is handling construction. An extension of 84th Avenue will connect to Newfield Parkway near the sheriff's gun range, and widening efforts on Newfield Parkway are already underway.

Commissioner Capps asked about intersection improvements at Dixie and Crossrip in Hobe Sound, noting that it was not listed. Mr. Dzama confirmed that the project is included in the County's Capital Improvement Plan and is already part of the planned improvements within the five-year work plan, eliminating the need for its inclusion on the current map.

Commissioner Heard questioned the timeline for the PD&E study on Cove Road, asking whether completion was expected by 2030. Mr. Jain clarified that the study should be finalized either this year or next, despite being listed within the five-year timeframe. Commissioner Heard then inquired about right-of-way acquisition along Willoughby Boulevard between Monterey and US1. Mr. Jain noted that cost evaluations for the project had not yet been conducted but would be reviewed in the coming months.

Commissioner Heard inquired about the Village Parkway Extension, noting its proposed four-lane expansion. Mr. Vazquez explained that Village Parkway is in St. Lucie County, and while the 2040 Plan suggested extending it south into Martin County, it currently does not exist there. The project is included in the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Commissioner Heard questioned whether Martin County was planning to fund an extension for St. Lucie County's development. Ms. Beltran clarified that the connection discussed in the prior LRTP would be developer funded. Commissioner Hetherington added that Village Parkway now dead ends at Becker due to neighborhood development, preventing an extension. Mr. Vazquez confirmed that a potential alignment for the extension would need further discussions between Martin County, St. Lucie TPO, and Port St. Lucie.

Regarding Cove Road congestion, Commissioner Heard pointed out that current 2023 data does not show congestion and asked why a five-lane segment is planned. Mr. Vazquez explained that future projections indicate congestion by 2050. The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Model, which integrates population and employment projections, identified certain corridors likely to be congested, influencing the need for expansion.

Commissioner Hetherington noted the inconsistency in traffic signal warrants, emphasizing her long-standing effort to secure a signal at South River on Kanner Highway. She pointed out that despite multiple warrant studies, a new Costco had recently opened nearby, further increasing traffic demands, and requested an updated warrant study. Ms. Beltran stated that she would ask FDOT about the warranty study.

Commissioner Heard then asked how St. Lucie's TPO needs analysis is balanced with Martin County's. Mr. Vazquez explained that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Model incorporates St. Lucie's data. Commissioner Heard questioned whether the Village Parkway Extension was a result of this integration, and Mr. Vazquez confirmed that the project had been considered since the 2035 LRTP. He noted that projected traffic increases along Allapattah Road and Martin Highway are likely due to St. Lucie's population growth. Commissioner Heard further reported on discussions at the TCTC meeting regarding 2050 needs assessments, highlighting that St. Lucie County is expected to double in population, particularly in its southwestern portion, which borders northern Martin County. She warned that this growth will significantly impact Martin County due to overdevelopment in St. Lucie County and Port St. Lucie.

A motion to approve the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs Plan was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and was seconded by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington. The motion passed unanimously.

D. CORRESPONDENCE FROM ST. LUCIE TPO – FEDERAL FUNDING SPLIT

Ms. Beltran provided an overview of the funding environment for transportation projects, explaining the role of urbanized areas, transportation management areas (TMA), and federal funding allocations. She clarified that TMA funds are directly allocated to urbanized areas exceeding 200,000 people. Historically, Martin County has received a portion of these funds alongside St. Lucie County, with the split adjusted over time to reflect population changes. Initially, Martin received 38%, but as St. Lucie County's population grew, the percentage decreased to 35% in 2015 and later to 32% in 2020. At that time, the MPO Board agreed to this split while acknowledging that significant commuter traffic from St. Lucie County was impacting Martin County. St. Lucie TPO's latest proposal seeks to adjust the split again, shifting St. Lucie's portion to 71% and reducing Martin County's to 29%. Ms. Beltran referenced a study conducted by St. Lucie TPO that revised land use data, using high population growth projections for southwest St. Lucie County. This study highlighted increased traffic impacts on Allapattah Road and Martin Highway, which supports findings from Martin County's 2050 Needs Plan that confirmed expected congestion along these corridors. Ms. Beltran also noted that St. Lucie TPO and Martin MPO have differing approaches to TMA fund allocation, with each Board prioritizing funds differently.

Ms. Beltran provided an overview of transportation funding priorities, explaining the split between Martin and St. Lucie Counties and the implications of the latest funding proposal. She emphasized that this split applies not only to TMA funds but to other federal funding allocated to the urbanized area. Additionally, she pointed out that the proposed funding split does not account for Indiantown, a growing urban area in Martin County. If Indiantown were included, the revised split would be 69.8% St. Lucie and 30.2% Martin. Ms. Beltran reminded the Board that the federal transportation legislation—the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—will expire in September 2026, and future policies could reshape funding structures and MPO operations. She requested direction from the MPO Board on how staff should respond to St. Lucie TPO's funding proposal.

Commissioner Ciampi expressed strong opposition to the proposed funding redistribution, emphasizing that while St. Lucie County benefits from large-scale residential and industrial development, Martin County bears the consequences of increased traffic without receiving proportional financial support. He argued that Martin's infrastructure growth has been more measured, aligning with its existing road capacity, whereas St. Lucie's rapid expansion generates additional strain on Martin's roadways. Commissioner Ciampi pointed out that the influx of commuters traveling through Martin County, along with increased retail traffic, has placed an undue burden on local roads never designed for such heavy use. He asserted that instead of reducing Martin County's share of funds, the allocation should increase to reflect the County's role in absorbing traffic impacts. Referring to past funding distributions, he suggested reverting to the 2014 percentage rather than lowering Martin's allocation. Acknowledging the relationships between Board members from both counties, he recognized St. Lucie's request as an effort to advocate for its residents but ultimately maintained that Martin County should firmly reject the proposal.

Commissioner Hetherington strongly supported maintaining Martin County's funding allocation and opposed the proposed reduction, emphasizing the need to plan for increased funding in the future rather than accepting a lower percentage. She recalled a past TCTC meeting with representatives from St. Lucie, Martin, and Indian River counties, where a slide illustrating population projection made a lasting impression on her. The projections showed Martin County reaching 181,000 residents by 2045, while St. Lucie County's estimates jumped from 525,000 to 581,000, reflecting dramatic growth. Ms. Beltran confirmed that the slide referenced was part of the 2045 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Commissioner Hetherington noted that the substantial population increase in surrounding counties directly impacts Martin County, contributing to congestion and infrastructure strain. She commended the MPO for its strong planning approach and fiscal responsibility. Commissioner Hetherington proposed authorizing the Chair to formally respond to St. Lucie TPO's request, advocating not only for maintaining the current funding split but also ensuring Martin County secures a larger share moving forward to address future needs.

Commissioner Vargas expressed concern over losing transportation funding to St. Lucie County, emphasizing that Martin County must retain as much funding as possible given its approved developments. She inquired about reinstating the previous 62/38% funding split. Ms. Beltran advised that maintaining the current 68/32% distribution would be the simplest approach given existing agreements, federal deadlines, and the Long Range Transportation Plan process. She suggested revisiting the allocation in the future based on traffic projections and growing infrastructure needs. Adjusting the percentage now could

complicate federal funding eligibility if required documents are not approved in time. Commissioner Vargas questioned whether a 65/35% split would be feasible, given Martin County's ongoing development and increasing traffic impacts. Ms. Beltran explained that any adjustment would require an amendment process but reiterated that keeping the existing distribution while preparing for future reassessment would be the most strategic option. Commissioner Vargas concluded by stressing that every funding increment is valuable for improving transportation accessibility and encouraged efforts to secure a higher percentage in future amendments.

Commissioner Capps asked whether the funding split request from St. Lucie TPO was simply a proposal and if the MPO had the authority to reject it, which was confirmed. He then inquired about the long-term resolution process for disputes over the split and who would make the final decision if adjustments were needed in the future. Ms. Beltran provided historical context, explaining that in 2015, St. Lucie proposed using a population-based split of 68% St. Lucie / 32% Martin without prior discussion. Concerned about the unilateral nature of the change, the MPO Board reached out to FDOT, prompting a public meeting with the District Secretary, the MPO Chair, and the TPO Chair. The result was a compromise, adjusting the split to 65% St. Lucie / 35% Martin.

In the 2045 plan, St. Lucie again proposed 68% / 32%. The MPO Board agreed to this split but insisted that the funding allocation in the future should consider more than population data, given the increasing traffic flow into Martin County. Now, St. Lucie is requesting 71% / 29% based on population. Commissioner Capps acknowledged that previous funding split disputes were resolved by involving the FDOT District Secretary as an intermediary, which would likely be the approach again if an impasse occurred.

Commissioner Hetherington made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ciampi, to maintain the existing funding split established in 2020, acknowledging anticipated significant future impacts to northern Martin County and conveying the Board's intention to reassess the percentage split in the future with a more generous allocation being warranted moving forward.

Commissioner Vargas questioned how Martin County could counter St. Lucie TPO's continued reliance on population-based allocations in the future. Ms. Beltran emphasized that the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan deadline is in October and recommended moving forward with the current split for now. She noted that if St. Lucie TPO challenges the decision post-adoption, the Board could follow past precedent by arranging a negotiation with the FDOT District Secretary, the St. Lucie TPO Chair, and Martin MPO's Chair to reach a compromise, as was done in the 2040 LRTP when the split was adjusted to 65/35.

Mayor Dipaolo expressed agreement with keeping the existing split but warned that if negotiations were necessary, Martin County should not settle for 32% but instead advocate for a more favorable allocation. Commissioner Heard reminded the Board that their Needs Plan deadline is approaching and advised avoiding a prolonged dispute over percentages now, suggesting a more strategic reassessment in the future.

Commissioner Mayfield sought clarification on whether maintaining the 68/32 funding split would likely be accepted over time or at least ensure necessary funding. Ms. Beltran

responded that while St. Lucie TPO could either agree or oppose the decision, she believes sticking with the 68/32 split is the most practical approach because it aligns with the existing adopted percentage, which FDOT has followed for the past five to six years, including for CARES Act funding. Ms. Beltran acknowledged that St. Lucie TPO might object but noted the urgency of the LRTP adoption deadline, advising the Board to proceed without delay. To avoid that level of disruption, she recommended finalizing the 2050 LRTP under the current split, with the possibility of future amendments if needed.

Commissioner Vargas expressed concerns over the proposed 71% to 29% funding split. While this distribution is being promoted, Commissioner Vargas emphasized that, given the rapid growth in the County—along with transit demands from St. Lucie County—a 68% to 32% division may not be sufficient. She cautioned that once funding levels are reduced, it becomes difficult to advocate for increases later, reinforcing the need to secure adequate resources now rather than risk future limitations.

Chair Heard stated a motion was on the floor:

A motion was restated and included a letter to the St. Lucie TPO affirming the MPO Board's decision to maintain the existing funding split established in 2020, acknowledging anticipated significant impacts to northern Martin County and conveying the Board's intention to reassess the percentage split in the future with a more generous allocation being warranted moving forward was made by Commissioner Stacey Hetherington and was seconded by Commissioner Edward Ciampi. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Vargas opposed.

E. DRAFT FY26-FY30 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Beth Beltran introduced Margie Tamblyn, MPO Senior Planner, who presented the Draft FY26–FY30 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A motion to approve the Draft FY26-FY30 Transportation Improvement Program was made by Commissioner Kaija Mayfield and was seconded by Commissioner J Blake Capps. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Hetherington and Major Dipaolo were absent for the motion.

F. GENERAL PLANNING CONSULTANT (GPC) CONTRACTS

Beth Beltran explained that every three years, the MPO advertises for general planning consultants (GPCs) to assist with planning studies and projects. Using GPCs on retainer allows the MPO to streamline work efforts without going through a competitive selection process for each individual study. The Board of County Commissioners recently approved this approach, and the current agenda item seeks formal approval to use the standard Martin County consultant contract for the four firms selected in this cycle: Kimley Horn and Associates, TY Lin International, Marlin Engineering, and WSP.

A motion to approve the General Planning Consultant (GPC) Contracts was made by Commissioner Edward Ciampi and was seconded by Commissioner Kaija Mayfield. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Hetherington and Major Dipaolo were absent for the motion.

G. SR-710 PROJECTS UPDATE

Beth Beltran introduced Tony Norat from FDOT District Four to provide an update on the SR-710 projects. Norat noted that there have been few updates since last month's presentation. Regarding the widening project from Okeechobee to Allapattah, Norat stated that it remains the top unfunded priority, and efforts to secure funding are ongoing. He also mentioned that the signal warrant analysis on SR-710 at Allapattah is still in progress and is expected to be finalized by the end of June.

Commissioner Hetherington reported a traffic incident on SR-710, where a box truck attempted to brake but collided with a Martin County school bus, narrowly avoiding a more serious accident. A semi-truck nearly rear-ended the bus as well. While no serious injuries occurred, a student was boarding at the time, highlighting the ongoing safety risks at this location. Hetherington stressed the need to document the incident and notify FDOT, emphasizing that a similar situation in the future could result in fatalities. She described the hazard as unacceptable, reinforcing the urgency for safety improvements.

Commissioner Capps sought clarification on the traffic signal at Allapattah and SR-710, noting conflicting references in project priorities. Ms. Beltran explained that due to the high priority status of the signal, it appears in two different listings: one within the widening project from Van Beuren to Allapattah, which includes a warrant study, and another as a standalone priority, even if FDOT's study finds it unwarranted. Commissioner Capps asked about the timeline for the warrant study, and Ms. Beltran confirmed results are expected by the end of June. If the study supports the signal installation, it is likely to be implemented within a few years, but final timing depends on funding and approvals. Tony Norat reiterated that FDOT understands the urgency and is pushing for quick action.

Mayor suggested aligning Allapattah Road with Martin Luther King Boulevard to create a four-way intersection, expressing concerns that without this adjustment, a signal at Allapattah and 710 could worsen traffic problems. He highlighted challenges getting onto Martin Luther King, especially during rush hour, and pointed to ongoing development in the area, suggesting a developer partnership for improved roadway connections. Ms. Beltran asked whether the Indiantown Council had submitted a formal request to the County Commission, noting that FDOT and the MPO focus on existing infrastructure, while decisions about a roadway realignment of a County road would fall under County jurisdiction. The mayor confirmed he would send a letter.

Commissioner Capps then asked whether aligning Allapattah Road with Martin Luther King would significantly delay improvements, emphasizing that such a project could take five to ten years, whereas a traffic signal could be installed much sooner, within two to three years. He stressed the immediate safety concerns at the intersection, agreeing that while alignment may be a long-term goal, the signal is needed sooner.

9. COMMENTS FROM FDOT – None

10. COMMENTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Julie Preast emphasized the importance of remaining vigilant in defending Martin County’s transportation funding, recalling past discussions about a potential merger between Martin MPO and St. Lucie TPO. She reflected on the efforts to resist the merger, noting that Martin prevailed, though she couldn’t recall the specifics. Ms. Preast emphasized that keeping Martin’s independent MPO ensured continued control over funding allocations. She also pointed out that Ms. Beltran has consultant studies detailing trip volumes into Martin County from both the north and south for employment, retail, and entertainment purposes. She recommended using these studies to strengthen the argument in the upcoming letter defending Martin County’s funding needs against St. Lucie’s proposed allocation shift.

11. COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS – None

12. NOTES


13. NEXT MEETING - MPO Policy Board Meeting – June 16, 2025

ADJOURNMENT: 10:42 AM

Approved by:



Sarah Heard, Vice Chair
Martin County Commissioner



Date

Prepared by:



Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant



Date

Minutes Approved on June 16, 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.