

**MARTIN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
JOINT CITIZENS/BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(CAC/BPAC) MEETING**

Martin County Administrative Building Commission Chambers
2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, FL 34996
www.martinmpo.com
(772) 221-1498

Wednesday, May 7, 2025 @ 9:00 am

MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Pinal Gandhi-Savdas.

2. ROLL CALL

Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant called roll.

BPAC Members in Attendance:

Pinal Gandhi-Savdas
Julie Preast
Bonnie Moser
Don Fabricy
Mike Bocchino
Hals Forslund
Bradford Davey

BPAC Excused Members:

Jason Bultman
Michele Barnett Occhino
Michael MacLeod

BPAC Members Not in Attendance:

CAC Members in Attendance:

Saadia Tsafarides
Larry Sofield
Hilary Young
Glen Alexander
Cindy Greenspan
William Stuckey
Howard Lyndon Brown
Matthew Sexton

CAC Members Excused:

Ann Kagdis

CAC Members Absent:

Trent Steele

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:

Luke Lambert, TMC
Ty Monte, Citizen
Jim Jurgaitis, Citizen
Michael Melendez, FDOT-District 4
Vikas Jain, T.Y. Lin
George Dzama, Martin County Public Works

A quorum was present.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Chair Pinal Gandhi-Savdas informed the committee that the first two items on the agenda were designated as action items, while the final item was for discussion. Ms. Gandhi-Savdas noted that older versions of the agenda might reflect a different structure format.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Julie Preast and was seconded by Larry Sofield. The motion passed unanimously.

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Tyrone Monte, a resident of Montego Cove Condominium Association, expressed concerns regarding the planned shared-use bicycle lane along Cove Road. He noted that the proposed 8- to 10-foot-wide lane would run directly in front of the only entrance and exit to the 55-acre, 30-building community. Mr. Monte highlighted potential hazards, including the risk of collisions between vehicles and cyclists, particularly e-bikes that may be traveling at higher speeds. He proposed restricting the cycling lane to the north side of Cove Road instead of allowing the shared use path in front of the development. Ms. Beltran informed Mr. Monte that an MPO Board meeting would be held on Monday, May 12th, at 1:30 PM, inviting residents to attend and discuss their concerns further.

5. AGENDA ITEMS

A. 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP) NEEDS PLAN

Ricardo Vazquez introduced the discussion on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs Plan, outlining the progress made so far. Mr. Vazquez noted that public

involvement efforts and technical analyses had been conducted to identify key transportation needs within the county. To provide further insight into the findings, Vikas Jain was invited to present an overview. Larry Sofield inquired whether the identified needs were listed in a prioritized order or if they appeared arbitrarily. Vikas Jain clarified that the items were not arranged in any particular order and that no ranking was applied to the list.

Julie Preast inquired about the function of bike boxes at intersections. Mr. Jain explained that bike boxes are designated areas—typically marked in green—located ahead of vehicular traffic at intersections. These allow bicyclists to position themselves ahead of vehicles, granting them priority when proceeding straight or making a left turn. Ms. Preast expressed appreciation for the presence of numerous Complete Streets projects, noting that they enhance the character of the neighborhoods included in the plan. She thanked the team for their efforts in developing the list and continuing to explore opportunities for active transportation enhancements.

Mr. Sofield inquired about the status of the Palm City Road project, asking whether there were any updates on its timeline, funding, or implementation. Ms. Beltran noted that FDOT would be presenting on the Palm City Road/US-1 intersection project at the upcoming City Commission meeting on Monday evening. Ms. Beltran clarified that the intersection at US-1 falls under FDOT's jurisdiction, and they are responsible for its improvements. Mr. Sofield also brought up the Jensen Beach trolley project, noting that it has been discussed multiple times over the years. He questioned whether there was renewed interest in moving forward with it. Mr. Jain acknowledged that the trolley had been included in previous planning discussions but was not funded, noting that it had appeared in the 2045 Plan but did not make the final funding allocation. Mr. Sofield emphasized the potential economic benefits of the trolley, particularly during the winter season when seasonal visitors are present. Mr. Vazquez added that since the trolley is included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the opportunity remains open for the county to consider advancing the project.

Matthew Sexton provided information on the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative, which aims to protect land north and south of Bridge Road while improving connectivity between Jonathan Dickinson and Atlantic Ridge State Parks. Historically, water flowed south from Bridge Road into Kitchen Creek and the Loxahatchee River, but current conditions channel water through ditches and culverts under the roadway. He highlighted concerns regarding wildlife movement, citing a study that documented significant mortality rates for various species. Mr. Sexton emphasized Bridge Road's role as both a hydrological barrier and an obstacle to wildlife movement, which also poses safety risks for motorists. Mr. Sexton inquired whether planned improvements for Bridge Road, including potential widening from two to four lanes, would incorporate considerations for wildlife crossings, underpasses, or enhanced hydrological connections. George Dzama, Deputy Director of Martin County Public Works, provided an update on ongoing coordination efforts with environmental groups, including those involved in the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative. He emphasized the complexity of coordinating multiple infrastructure projects within the corridor and noted that efforts are being made to synchronize planning and implementation.

Julie Preast inquired about the name of wildlife crossings that resemble natural landscapes, where animals move over traffic rather than underneath. She expressed concerns regarding high water tables and noted that certain species, such as deer, might benefit from drier crossing options. George Dzama explained that most wildlife in South Florida is adapted to high water tables and that overpasses or raised crossings could serve as potential solutions. Mr. Dzama acknowledged challenges in implementing wildlife crossings, particularly given that most such projects occur on public land, while much of the corridor in question is privately owned. He highlighted ongoing efforts to synchronize infrastructure projects, including an environmental land acquisition program aimed at securing property to facilitate connectivity. Mr. Dzama outlined the county's focus on the Loxa-Lucie area, noting that properties within a designated boundary fall within the corridor's footprint. He identified the eastern flyway as a current priority, adding that the county has already installed facilities for the central flyway and is working toward hydration efforts in the eastern flyway.

Discussion continued with Mr. Sexton explaining that his organization, The Conservation Fund, has acquired several properties to support ecological connectivity and environmental restoration. Mr. Sofield acknowledged the proactive efforts in securing land for future environmental and infrastructure considerations. He inquired whether the proposed wildlife crossings, including land bridges and underpasses, had been included in the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Mr. Sofield asked whether the Citizens Advisory Committee could formally recommend incorporating these crossings into the plan. Ms. Beltran responded that a recommendation could be included in the motion to approve the Needs Plan.

Ms. Bonnie Moser acknowledged the inclusion of extensive bike facilities and shared-use paths in the plan but expressed concerns about the predominance of bicycle lanes rather than separated bike facilities. Ms. Moser referenced best practices from AASHTO and NACTO guidelines, stating that streets with more than 7,000 vehicles per day and speed limits exceeding 30 mph should default to either separated bike facilities or shared-use paths for improved safety. She noted that many streets listed in the plan exceed these thresholds and emphasized the need to prioritize separated infrastructure.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas inquired about the process for prioritizing projects, given the extensive list under consideration. Mr. Jain explained that prioritization follows an objective analysis using multiple criteria, including accessibility, job impact, population density, and environmental equity considerations. These factors are processed through a GIS-based system that assigns points to each project. Funding availability also influences project prioritization. In some cases, a "box fund" approach is used to provide flexibility for the MPO and other agencies, allowing them to adjust project prioritization based on available funding and complementary infrastructure improvements. For example, sidewalk projects are allocated funding as a group rather than individually ranked, enabling efficient coordination with other planned improvements. Ms. Gandhi-Savdas suggested that it would be helpful to see a breakdown of projects specific to the

City of Stuart and Martin County. She noted that such visibility would aid in prioritization and alignment with local planning efforts.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas raised a question regarding whether an addition to the motion was needed. Mr. Sexton proposed wording to prioritize the inclusion of wildlife overpasses or underpasses, hydrological connections, and trail connectivity within the improvement plans for Bridge Road. Ms. Prest asked whether Bridge Road was the only corridor under consideration. Ms. Tsafarides echoed this concern, suggesting that a broader scope be applied. Mr. Sexton agreed, recommending that the motion cover any relevant infrastructure improvements under consideration. Ms. Prest supported this approach, stating that she would feel more comfortable with a general motion.

A motion to approve the 2050 LRTP Needs Plan with the inclusion that wildlife overpasses or underpasses, hydrological connections, and trail connectivity be considered in any relevant infrastructure improvements was made by Saadia Tsafarides and was seconded by Larry Sofield. The motion passed unanimously.

B. DRAFT FY26-FY30 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Margie Tamblin, MPO Senior Planner, introduced herself and presented the Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for fiscal years 2026 through 2030. Following the presentation, she invited questions from the committee. Ms. Prest stated that she had no questions but took a moment to commend the outreach efforts, noting that they continue to improve each year and positively impact the planning process. She expressed appreciation for the progress made.

A motion to approve the Draft FY26-FY30 Transportation Improvement Program was made by Larry Sofield and was seconded by Julie Prest. The motion passed unanimously.

C. FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Michael Menendez provided an update on the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Bicycle Master Plan as a discussion item. He explained that in 2018, FDOT District 4 developed the inaugural Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan to serve as a guiding document for planners and designers within the department. The primary goal was to integrate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure considerations early in project development, ensuring that non-motorized facilities are not overlooked or added as an afterthought in near-completed projects.

Julie Prest asked how the committee would determine which two projects, out of the five under review, would be prioritized for development. Mr. Melendez explained that the ranking process involves input from the committee and a feasibility assessment. The goal is to develop concept plans and cost estimates that help guide prioritization for both FDOT

and the MPO. Ms. Prest advocated for prioritization of two projects within District 1 along the US-1 corridor—from Sunset Blvd. to the mall entrance—citing high traffic volumes as a key concern. She acknowledged that other committee members might wish to highlight projects in their respective areas but stated her position on the importance of focusing on US-1 improvements. Mr. Melendez thanked Ms. Prest for her input and confirmed that projects A and C stood out as key considerations based on her comments.

Ms. Moser expressed a preference for prioritizing US-1, particularly because it is proposed as a shared-use path rather than an on-street bike lane. She raised concerns about Monterey Road, noting that while space constraints could present challenges due to drainage and curb placement, the area has high pedestrian and cyclist activity. She cited observations of middle school students and families biking along the corridor, emphasizing the need for a fully separated facility. If separation proves unfeasible, she suggested exploring alternative, lower-stress routes with lower traffic speeds. Ms. Moser underscored the importance of separation, referencing recent incidents in which cyclists were struck on US-1 and East Ocean Boulevard due to insufficient protection from vehicular traffic. She stressed that most individuals will only bike on such roads out of necessity, and providing safer facilities is critical for ridership and safety. Mr. Melendez expanded on the discussion, outlining the evolving considerations within FDOT District Four regarding bicycle infrastructure. District Four has adopted a case-by-case approach to determine whether existing bike lanes on 50 mph or higher-speed roads should be maintained or reconsidered. Mr. Melendez described the progress in bicycle facility planning, noting that the focus has shifted from squeezing in small, undesignated bike lanes to prioritizing meaningful separation. He expressed optimism that the trend toward better-integrated bicycle infrastructure will continue, with separation becoming the standard.

Ms. Moser acknowledged the progress made in bicycle infrastructure but raised a question about Indian Street, asking whether it qualifies as a roadway for state-level consideration. She noted that if the corridor is not part of the state highway system, it may not be eligible for inclusion in certain transportation plans. Ms. Moser highlighted concerns about bicycle traffic along Indian Street, particularly between US-1 and Dixie Highway, where there is high cyclist activity but no roadway lighting. Ms. Moser cited frequent near-miss incidents, with motorists often applying sudden brakes due to conflicts with cyclists. The discussion turned to characterizing the nature of bicycle use in the corridor. Rather than purely recreational cycling, Ms. Moser observed that most riders in the area are commuters traveling to and from work or stores, making it a critical route for transportation accessibility. Ms. Tsafarides referenced Golden Gate as an example of a location where public feedback has been instrumental in shaping bicycle-related planning efforts.

Discussion continued regarding right-of-way acquisition and motor-assisted bikes, and Ms. Gandhi-Savdas asked whether the committee should focus on selecting two projects or if three could be considered. Ms. Moser raised a question about a gap between Projects A and C, specifically regarding Jensen Beach Blvd. She asked whether the gap was due to feasibility concerns related to the shared-use path. Mr. Melendez indicated that the segmentation and ranking of projects likely resulted from a data-driven approach,

factoring in various considerations that shaped the final project listings. Efforts will be made to clarify the reasoning behind the gap, and an update will be provided once further analysis is completed.

Mr. Sofield raised a question regarding shared-use path specifications in the Cove Road Project and sought clarification on whether it met recommended standards. Mr. Melendez responded that while 10 feet is the standard minimum width for shared-use paths, DOT guidelines typically start with a 12-foot width before scaling down based on available right-of-way. He explained that if ample right-of-way exists, it would be difficult to justify reducing the width below 12 feet.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas asked whether the shared-use path would be constructed on both sides of the road or just one. Mr. Melendez clarified that while DOT guidelines recommend sidewalks on both sides of the road, shared-use paths would initially be built on only one side. However, he noted that future considerations could include expanding the path to both sides if demand and feasibility support the addition.

This item is informational.

6. COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ms. Preast announced that Sadia Tsftarides would be honored as Preservationist of the Year in Martin County on May 15. She encouraged attendees to participate in free activities held throughout Historic Preservation Month and noted that informational flyers are available on the rotating rack outside. Ms. Tsftarides highlighted an event on May 14 at 2:00 PM, which will focus on the history and challenges surrounding the improvement of Golden Gate. She invited attendees to join and learn more about the area's historical development.

Ms. Tamblin shared a reminder that May is National Bike Month and highlighted several events related to cycling awareness and participation.

7. NOTES – None

8. NEXT MEETING

- CAC – June 4, 2025, at 9:00AM
- BPAC – June 9, 2025, at 1:00PM

9. ADJOURN – Pinal Gandhi-Savdas adjourned the meeting at 10:15 A.M.

Prepared by:



Susan Ortiz, Administrative Assistant




Date

Approved by:



Saadia Tsaftarides, CAC Chair



Date

Minutes Approved on June 4, 2025 CAC Meeting and June 9, 2025 BPAC Meeting

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