



FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting

Date: July 20, 2023

Time: 10:00 am

Location: The Don CeSar, 3400 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach, FL 33706

In Attendance

Chairman Ron Howse, Vice-Chairman David Genson, Commissioners John Browning, Julius Davis, Alex Lastra, Rusty Roberts and Richard Burke.

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Howse called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Approval of Consent Agenda

On a motion by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Lastra, the consent agenda was unanimously approved, which included the meeting minutes from June 22, 2023.

FDOT Agency Update presented by FDOT Chief of Staff Leda Kelly

- Chief of Staff Kelly announced Secretary Perdue serving on the selection committee for the new Space Florida President & CEO.
- Chief Kelly reported on new leadership appointments including Lauren Rand serving as the Interim Chief of Modal Development and Steve Braun as the District 4 Secretary.
- The Chief then reported on Operation Southern Slow Down which began the week of July 17th in coordination with all southern states and to coincide with the “100 deadliest days” for teen drivers between Memorial Day and Labor Day.
- Chief of Staff Kelly gave a robust report of recent events attended by Secretary Perdue and other FDOT leadership.

Moving Florida Forward (MFF) Regional Approach presented by Jennifer Marshall, Director of Office of Environmental Management

- Keith Slater, D1 Director of Operations assisted Director Marshall with the presentation via TEAMS.
- Director Marshall reviewed the 20 MFF projects initiated by Governor DeSantis.
- The Director highlighted the projects which overlap multiple FDOT districts in Central Florida and the collaboration between districts to improve communication, enhance community engagement and inform the traveling public while delivering the projects.

Chairman Howse then opened the meeting to questions.

- The Chairman asked who will be responsible for the various projects and Director Marshall responded that Central Office would assist with coordination of regional projects, while the I-4 project has a dedicated team from the local FDOT districts.

Florida Transportation Commission
Minutes of Meeting, July 20, 2023

- Commissioner Davis inquired as to the allocation of the \$4 billion budget. While these details are not readily available, Chairman Howse indicated it would likely follow historic FDOT allocations of approximately 25% consulting and 75% construction.
- Commissioner Davis asked what is next for I-4 now that the express lanes have been completed. Director Marshall reported Districts 1 and 7 have developed future plans to extend the lanes towards Tampa.
- Commissioner Roberts referenced the responsibility of FDOT to meet the deadlines and knows it is a challenge to accelerate the projects. The Commission will continue to look at the performance measures and goals.

FDOT Road Ranger Safety Initiative presented by John Easterling, P.E. Florida Turnpike Traffic Operations Engineer

- Engineer Easterling reported on the project which began in 1999 with the primary function to improve safety through reducing secondary crashes and incident duration while assisting stranded motorists.
- Currently the program has 185 service vehicles covering 1,953 centerline interstate miles and 500 miles on the turnpike.
- There have been 8.3 million assists since 2000, with 460,602 last fiscal year.
- The program's current focus is on enhancing safety and utilization of new technology.
- There have been 52 road ranger related incidents with injury crashes since 2014 and 6 road ranger deaths since 1999.
- An in depth safety analysis identified contributing factors and patterns of crashes. FDOT leadership and program staff met with industry leaders to collaborate.
- Engineer Easterling gave a highlight of improvements which included new hands-on trainings to minimize time outside the vehicle, Move Over messages on overhead signs through DMS, automated advanced warning alerts via Waze, Google and Apple maps as well as automatic messaging on overhead message system when the truck board lifts.
- Implementation recommendations include updating lights on trucks to red to be more noticeable, battery powered LED electronic flares for night-time usage, truck mounted devices to grab and sweep debris to the shoulder and truck mounted attenuators for larger trucks for longer-term closures.

Chairman Howse then opened the meeting to questions.

- Commissioner Burke agreed the Road Rangers are essential and emphasized the Department should do anything possible to keep the rangers in the cab of their truck for safety reasons. He was pleased there is a plan to look at different colored lighting to differentiate between signs and vehicles.
- Vice-Chairman Genson agreed with the recommendation of alternative lighting for the rangers and even construction vehicles. Vice-Chairman Genson stated that Texas uses blue.
- Commissioner Browning suggested that the Department consider collapsible beds to absorb the impact of rear collisions with the ranger trucks such as those on wreckers.
- Commissioner Roberts inquired if there should be more road rangers and Easterling reported there have been targeted increases and the Department will be deploying additional service vehicles where warranted.

Florida Transportation Commission
Minutes of Meeting, July 20, 2023

- Commissioner Roberts inquired of the annual budget which Easterling reported the program has recently experienced budgetary improvements.
- Easterling indicated the average response time on the Turnpike is 20 minutes with rangers having a 15–30-mile range when questioned by Commissioner Roberts.
- The Turnpike’s rangers make up a quarter of the program.
- Chairman Howse asked the Department to consider increasing road ranger service based on area population.

Executive Director Update

- Executive Director Ralph Yoder presented the proposed FTC Meeting schedule through March 2025, which included five (5) in person meetings in 2024.
- Executive Director Yoder provided the draft planning itinerary for the September meeting at SunTrax which will focus on transportation technology and will include a tour of the facility, along with a workshop and meeting.

Chairman Howse then opened the meeting to questions.

- Commissioners requested scheduled updates for the Moving Florida Forward projects.

General FTC Issues/Business

- Commissioners discussed policy considerations for the Department including:
 - Road ranger safety as the priority, as well as budgetary increases
 - Salary increases for employees who received advanced certification or degrees
 - Pedestrians located at or near exit ramps should be a focus due to the risk of impacting a driver’s ability to make a safe maneuvering decision
 - High speed motorists and motorcyclists
 - Increased per diem reimbursements for FDOT employees
 - Density development bonuses for constructing affordable and workforce housing near new interchanges
 - Eventual decline of fuel tax revenue collections
 - FDEP water quality standards impact to FDOT
 - Roadworthiness of vehicles on Florida’s roadways
 - Alternatives to existing landscaping requirements
 - Wheelchair parking vs handicapped spaces

Commissioner Updates

- There were no updates.

Public Comment

The Chairman opened the meeting to public comment. There were no public comments.

New Business

- Commissioner Genson would like an update of the I-75 resurfacing from D1 staff, as well as a sign replacement plan following the impact from Hurricane Ian.

Adjourn

With no other business to address, Chairman Howse adjourned the meeting at 12:23 pm.