



May 15, 2024
Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee
Meeting

The regular meeting of the Okaloosa County Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee (ISAC) was called to order at 10:00 am in the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 1st Floor Training Room, 1250 N. Eglin Parkway, Shalimar, FL 32579.

Members present were: District 2 representative: Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto; District 1 representative: Larry Ward; District 5 representative: Jim Foreman.

Also present were: Jason Autrey, Public Works Director; Craig Coffey, Okaloosa Deputy County Administrator; JD Peacock II, Okaloosa Clerk of Courts; Faye Douglas, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Director; DeRita Mason, Purchasing Manager; Scott Bitterman, County Engineer; Carisse LeJeune, Surtax Project Manager; Stephen Blalock, Project Engineer; Brad Embry, Okaloosa Clerk of Court Chief of Staff; Nick Tomecek, Public Information Officer; Melissa Wilson, Surtax Project Coordinator.

Opening Remarks and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened by Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto. Mr. Jason Autrey stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.011, Florida Statutes on April 25, 2024.

Vice Chairman Fanto inquired if there were any public speaking cards or comments, but none were noted.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Vice Chairman Fanto called for a vote regarding the approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Larry Ward made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Jim Foreman. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

Public Comments

None.

Presentations

None.

Project Updates

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated the discussion with an agenda item dedicated to project updates.

A. Project List Update –

Ms. LeJeune provided valuable insights into several projects that have made significant progress. We currently have 29 active projects with nine (9) in Design and four (4) in active construction.

The design for the Overbrook Stormwater project is complete and the County has received a fair market value report from Eglin AFB for the 25-year easement for construction maintenance.

Permitting is in progress, as is easement negotiations with Eglin AFB. Discussions ensued with regard to the negotiations.

Ms. LeJeune invited Mr. Craig Coffey to discuss the progress on the Emergency Services Communications Equipment project. Mr. Coffey shared that the project should be operational probably in the next two months with training to begin afterwards. The project is expected to be fully on system by October through January 2025. Further discussions ensued.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions and discussion on the projects. None were raised.

B. SW Crestview Bypass Funding Summary –

Ms. LeJeune noted the project budget is healthy with \$21.8 million budget. The PJ Adams Widening, the East West Connector, and the PJ Adams Turn Lanes project budgets have been broken out to see what budgets are being spent for what phases of the project. Discussions continued.

Ms. LeJeune opened the floor to questions. None were noted.

C. Webpage Dashboard –

Ms. LeJeune shared that the Dashboard has been updated and the public can see real time what is being spent and what is active. The Dashboard is interactive so the public can look at the individual districts and see what is happening in each district.

No questions noted.

D. Annualized Funding Projection –

Ms. LeJeune presented an overview of the Annualized Funding Projections as of March 15, 2024. The Farmer's Market Access Improvements project is currently pending approval. She mentioned that we are getting closer to launching every project on the original needs list and hopes to have all projects from the list active by the end of 2025 through the beginning of 2026. Further discussions ensued.

No questions were posed.

Agenda Items and Discussions

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

A. Staff Report – Echo Circle Stormwater Improvements (ST000015) / District –

Ms. LeJeune summarized that this project has come before this Committee and the Board of County Commissioners back in April and May of 2022 for the funding of a potential grant match. Unfortunately, the grant was not awarded to the County. Staff still continues to look for additional grant opportunities to leverage Surtax dollars for this project. On March 26, 2024, the Board of County Commissioners approved \$300,000 for a 2.67-acre property that has become available and is contiguous with other properties that the county owns in the area. The concept is to create a Wetland/Stormwater Park that would collect stormwater during heavy rain events and be utilized for recreational activities during dry weather. Restore Grant funding may be used for design. Surtax will be utilized after.

No questions were raised.

B. Staff Report – Northwest Crestview Bypass ACER (ST000015) / District 1 –

Mr. LeJeune discussed the completed Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER). Alternative Corridor 7 was approved and the Board directed Staff to adopt an Overlay District for this area of the County for corridor preservation, and to work with the City of Crestview to adopt similar policies. It was noted that FDOT provided a grant for this project.

Further discussions ensued.

C. Staff Report- Farmer’s Market Access Improvements (ST000041) / Districts 1-5 –

Ms. LeJeune discussed the Farmer’s Market Access Improvements project from the original Surtax needs list. The Farmer’s Market is located next to the new County Agricultural Extension project and Staff is requesting moving the \$100,000 earmarked for 2026 to this year for design to take advantage of economy of scale for construction. She requested a recommendation for allocation of \$100,000 in Surtax funding for design, with any leftover funds going towards construction. Additional funding might be needed later based on the cost needs.

Mr. Blalock, Project Engineer for the AG Extension project stated a construction contract for the project is being presented to the Board on June 4, 2024 for approval, with construction starting shortly after. The goal is to integrate the Farmer’s Market Access Improvements construction as a contract modification. Vice Chairman Fanto asked about the turn lane extending past the Farmer’s Market to the Fairgrounds, and Mr. Autrey confirmed it includes a deceleration lane off Lewis Turner Blvd. for access. Mr. Coffey suggested extending the pavement using different funding, which Mr. Autrey agreed they were open to the idea. Discussions continued.

Vice Chairman Fanto called for a motion to approve the request. Mr. Ward made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Foreman. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

D. Staff Report – SR 85 Crestview Evening Relief (ST000039) / Districts 1 & 3 –

Ms. LeJeune introduced the next item regarding the SR 85 Crestview Evening Relief project. Previously discussed in January of this year, Surtax funding was allocated for a third northbound lane between Live Oak Church Rd. and the Southwest Crestview Bypass. Currently, the acquisition of property needed for the required stormwater pond is underway. There is now an opportunity to consider the southbound lane, and additional funds for property acquisition are being requested.

Mr. Autrey discussed using extra funds for two major projects. Initially planned to add northbound right turn lanes, the DOT expanded the project to both directions, costing about \$65-70 million. The County will contribute around \$12 million in cash and property, potentially turning this into \$60 million worth of improvements, including six-lanes, pedestrian facilities, and stormwater upgrades from Shoal River Bridge to PJ Adams Parkway. This will ease the SR 85 choke point and improve Crestview traffic flow. The County is negotiating property acquisitions to expedite the project and reduce costs. Further discussions ensued.

Vice Chairman Fanto called for a motion to approve the request. Mr. Ward made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Foreman. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

E. Staff Report – Traffic Management Center (ST000042) / District 1-5 –

Ms. LeJeune introduced a new Traffic Management Center project, not on the original needs list, but significant for Emergency Management. Eglin AFB also supports this project. Mr. Bitterman presented the details of the project.

The Traffic Management Center project will monitor traffic, adjust signals, and support emergency management. The design is complete, and the proposed Center will be attached to the Emergency Management Center in Niceville for better coordination. Eglin AFB is interested in the project and has potential grant funding of \$1 million. The recommendation for allocation request is for \$1.5 million from Surtax for construction, leveraging funding for a \$3 million project. Discussions continued.

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated a motion to approve, and Mr. Ward motioned, seconded by Mr. Foreman. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

F. Staff Report – Dirt Road Stabilization (ST000021) / District 1& 3 –

Ms. LeJeune presented the 50 and 5 Dirt Road Stabilization Improvement Project. Since inception, 116 miles of dirt roads have been stabilized, with 14 miles remaining. The \$2 million budgeted for 2026 is requested to be moved forward to complete the project by the end of this year. She invited Mr. Autrey to speak further on the project.

Mr. Autrey explained that, due to better-than-expected progress, they aim to use the programmed Surtax funds to finish the remaining 14 miles of dirt roads now rather than waiting until October. This would complete the stabilization of 200 miles of dirt roads in four years, significantly improving the transportation network. Staff might seek additional funds for future asphalt work. Discussions continued.

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated a motion to approve, and Mr. Foreman motioned, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

Office of Management and Budget

Ms. Faye Douglas discussed the current budget process and reported that they will begin department justification meetings with the County Administrator. The estimated Surtax revenue for July-August 2024 is expected to be around \$50 million, similar to last year. Although this year's budget is \$22.7 million and progress has been slightly slower, she believes they will meet the target by summer.

No questions.

Clerk of Court and Comptroller

None.

Public Comments / Open Discussion

Mr. Nick Tomecek provided an update on the Okaloosa County website's Infrastructure Surtax page. Since October 1, 2023, there have been approximately 1,072 visitors and 1,463-page views. He is working to increase these numbers moving forward.

Schedule Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled at 10:00 am on Wednesday, July 24th, 2024 in the North end of the County, location TBD.

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Fanto motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Ward and Mr. Foreman. Motion approved 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator