



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 on the first floor, Board of County Commissioner Chambers, located in the Okaloosa County Courthouse at 101 James Lee Blvd. E., Crestview, FL 32536.

Members present were: District 4 representative: Chairman Matthew Turpin; District 1 representative: Larry Ward; District 2 representative: Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto; District 3 representative: Hannah Wilburn.

Also present were: Brad E. Embry, Okaloosa Clerk of Courts; Craig Coffey, Deputy County Administrator; Ron Adamov, Chief Financial Officer, Okaloosa Clerk of Courts; Joshua Allen, Okaloosa Clerk of Court, Board Services Director; DeRita Mason, Purchasing Manager; Nick Tomecek, Public Information Officer; Scott Bitterman, County Engineer; Carisse LeJeune, Surtax Project Manager; Roy Petrey, Engineering Manager; Stephen Blalock, Project Engineer; Dylan Schroeder, Engineer-in-Training; Melissa Wilson, Surtax Project Coordinator.

**Opening Remarks and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was opened by Chairman Matthew Turpin. Mr. Jason Autrey stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.011, Florida Statutes on October 21, 2024.

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

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

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

**Public Comments**

None.

**Presentations**

None.

**Project Updates**

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

A. Project List Update –

Ms. Carisse LeJeune provided the project status as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Key project updates include:

- **County Road 2:** Staff will meet with the contractor within the next week to negotiate the final change order and close out the project. Residents in the area have expressed satisfaction with the completion of this roadway improvement.
- **Northwest Crestview Bypass:** Property acquisition for corridor preservation is ongoing. Preparations continue in anticipation of moving into the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase and design.
- **College Blvd. / Forest Road Multi-Use Path:** Minor delays in the bidding process have occurred due to adjustments related to FPL relocations. Easement finalization is underway, and the project is expected to go out to bid by the end of January 2025, pending resolution of outstanding matters.
- **Echo Circle Stormwater Improvements:** The consultant has been issued a task order for design, with the kickoff meeting scheduled for January.
- **Okaloosa Lane Realignment & Improvements:** Preparations are advancing, with a demolition quote recently accepted. Coordination with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office is ongoing to integrate training efforts, and demolition is anticipated by April 2025.
- **Traffic Management Center:** The task order for updating construction plans has been issued, and the project is now underway.
- **Lancaster Drive Area Stormwater:** RESTORE funding was allocated. A task order is under purchasing review, and notice to proceed for design will be issued upon approval.

Ms. LeJeune welcomed any questions from the Surtax Committee.

Chairman Turpin asked if there were any further questions from the Surtax Committee. No additional questions were raised.

#### B. Revenue/Expense Summary –

Ms. LeJeune provided an overview of the revenue and expense summary as of November 30, 2024. She noted that the figures reflect updates through the current phases of each project, consistent with the details shared earlier in the project status review.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions from the Surtax Committee regarding the information presented in the summary spreadsheets.

Chairman Turpin inquired if any members of the Surtax Committee had questions regarding the summary. No further questions were raised.

#### C. SW Crestview Bypass Funding Summary –

Ms. LeJeune introduced the funding and expense report for the Southwest Crestview Bypass and deferred to Mr. Jason Autrey for further discussion.

Mr. Autrey provided a financial and project update, noting that the PJ Adams widening project remains within budget. He acknowledged that while the contract's original completion date is set for April 2025, the bridge construction timeline may extend beyond that. The project team is actively coordinating with the contractor, Anderson Columbia, to determine a revised completion date, which is expected to be before the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2025.

Mr. Autrey highlighted that the ongoing construction has not impacted access in the area and that the current situation has been beneficial due to reduced traffic during the construction of a nearby school. He shared that significant progress has been made, with much of the roadway paved and bridge foundations complete.

A video showcasing project progress was played during the meeting, and Mr. Autrey emphasized the transformative impact the bypass will have on the Crestview area once completed. He invited members to reach out if they wish to visit the site.

Chairman Turpin asked if there were any questions from the Surtax Committee. No further questions were raised.

#### D. Webpage Dashboard –

Ms. LeJeune presented static images of the live Surtax Infrastructure webpage, highlighting its role as a valuable resource for residents to track project updates and budgetary information. She commended the staff for their efforts in keeping the webpage updated monthly as projects progress through different phases.

Ms. LeJeune emphasized the importance of public outreach, encouraging the Surtax Committee to direct residents to the Surtax webpage, accessible from the Okaloosa County homepage, for detailed information about the \$216 million total project budget. She noted that only \$62 million of this funding comes from Surtax Revenues Budget, demonstrating strong fiscal management and leveraging of grants and partnerships.

Ms. LeJeune requested an opportunity to discuss additional public outreach items after the public comment period later in the meeting, to which Chairman Turpin agreed.

Chairman Turpin asked if there were any questions regarding the webpage dashboard. No questions were raised, and the discussion moved to the annualized funding projection.

#### E. Annualized Funding Projection –

Ms. LeJeune provided updates to the living document, noting adjustments that shifted previously earmarked but unallocated funds into future fiscal years. She highlighted the progress on completed projects and outlined upcoming transportation and stormwater projects. Ms. LeJeune explained that design costs for the remaining stormwater projects would be covered by RESTORE Act funding, with construction funding requests to follow.

Ms. LeJeune emphasized the program's financial health, with revenue projections for FY 2025 and beyond based on \$14 million annually. A \$23 million surplus is anticipated by the end of FY 2024. Ms. LeJeune expressed confidence that all projects on the original needs list will be completed before the program's sunset.

Chairman Turpin invited questions from the Surtax Committee. No questions were raised. He thanked Ms. LeJeune for the report, praised the positive financial outlook, and proceeded to the next agenda item.

### **Agenda Items and Discussions**

Chairman Turpin initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

A. Staff Report – Review and approval of the FY24 Surtax Annual Report –

Chairman Turpin introduced the review and approval of the FY24 Surtax Annual Report.

Ms. Carisse LeJeune stated that, pursuant to Resolution No. 21-212, the Surtax Committee must present the annual report to the Board of County Commissioners by January 31. She noted that the report is scheduled for review by the Board on January 21 and requires the Surtax Committee's approval prior to submission.

Ms. LeJeune explained that the report highlights key actions from FY24 Surtax Committee meetings, provides updates on specific projects, and includes budgetary information. She welcomed questions or concerns regarding its contents.

Mr. Autrey emphasized the overall health of the fund, pointing out that \$113 million of the projected \$120 million in Surtax revenue over 10 years had already been collected in the first 6.5 years. He highlighted that interest earnings had reached \$4 million, with nearly \$2 million earned in FY24 alone, demonstrating strong financial management.

Chairman Turpin confirmed the accuracy of the financial figures and praised the Surtax Committee's fiscal stewardship.

No objections were raised. Chairman Turpin called for a motion to approve the FY24 Surtax Annual Report. The motion was made by Ms. Hannah Wilburn and seconded by Mr. Larry Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

The approved report will be presented at the January 21 Board of County Commissioners meeting.

B. Staff Report – Union Avenue Stormwater Allocation Request (ST000035) / District 5 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the Union Avenue stormwater project funding request.

Ms. LeJeune explained that additional permitting work, including a wetland delineation report and site inspections with FDEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, requires \$13,000 in additional funds to finalize the design.

Chairman Turpin invited questions. Hearing none, Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, the College Boulevard/Forest Road MU P allocation.

C. Staff Report – College Blvd/Forest Rd MUP Allocation Request (ST000030) / Districts 1, 3, 5 –

Ms. LeJeune presented the request for the multi-use path project on College Blvd./Forest Rd., noting a slight delay due to FPL pole installations. The estimated construction cost is \$4.4 million, including a 15% contingency, and an additional \$615,000 for Construction Engineering Inspection (CEI) services.

She requested a recommendation for allocating Fiscal Year 25 Surtax funds in the amount of \$2.1 million.

Chairman Turpin asked for questions. Hearing none, Ms. Hannah Wilburn moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Jeff Fanto. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

Next, the board moved to discuss the County Pond 314 construction allocation.

D. Staff Report – County Pond 314 Construction Allocation Request (ST000025) / District 4 –

Ms. LeJeune presented the County Pond 314 project, which is part of the larger West 98 stormwater project. The expansion includes two new ponds and improvements to Pond 314, along with necessary fencing replacements and construction work. The design was completed using Surtax funds, and the estimated construction cost is \$481,515 with a 10% contingency and \$40,000 for CEI services.

Ms. LeJeune requested an allocation of \$540,000 from Fiscal Year 25 Surtax reserves to proceed with the project.

Chairman Turpin opened the floor for questions. Hearing none, Mr. Ward moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

E. Staff Report – Millside Road ROW/Easement Allocation Request (ST000013) / District 1 –

Ms. LeJeune provided an update on the Millside Road project, noting progress in acquiring right-of-way (ROW) and easements. One major property owner is now willing to negotiate, and once agreements are reached, other property owners are expected to follow suit. Ms. LeJeune requested \$200,000 from Fiscal Year 25 Surtax reserves to negotiate and acquire the necessary parcels for ROW.

Chairman Turpin clarified that the \$200,000 would cover all ROW acquisitions based on fair market value.

Mr. Ward moved to approve the request, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

F. Staff Report – Dirt Road Stabilization Allocation Request (ST000021) / Districts 1, 3 –

Ms. LeJeune presented an update on the Dirt Road Stabilization project, also known as the "50 and 5." The initiative, initially aimed at stabilizing 50 miles of dirt roads, has successfully stabilized over 130 miles, with 60 miles capped with asphaltic applications. The County Road division continues to monitor these roads for weaknesses and stormwater concerns. The total budget for the project is \$15.9 million, and approximately 70 miles of roads remain to be stabilized and capped.

Ms. LeJeune requested an allocation of \$4 million from the Fiscal Year 25 Surtax reserves, with the remaining \$3 million planned for Fiscal Year 2026, to complete the stabilization and capping of the remaining roads.

Mr. Autrey emphasized the importance of the project for public safety, noting the ongoing success and significant improvements to county roads. He clarified that while the project may cost more in the future due to price escalations, a three-year asphalt contract limits the increase.

Chairman Turpin confirmed that the vote was for \$4 million this year, with \$3 million expected next year.

Ms. Wilburn moved to approve the request, and Mr. Ward seconded. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

G. Staff Report – Northwest Crestview Corridor Preservation Allocation Request (ST000015) / District 1-

Ms. LeJeune updated the Surtax Committee on the Northwest Crestview Corridor, highlighting the recent approval of alternate corridor #7 for the Northwest Crestview Bypass. Two adjacent parcels, totaling 1.88 acres each, are available for purchase to preserve the bypass route. The

appraisal values are \$97,000 and \$75,000, with a total Surtax request of \$250,000 to cover the purchase and closing costs.

Ms. Wilburn motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

H. Staff Report – Around-the-Mound Allocation Request (ST000048) / District 2 –

Ms. LeJeune invited Mr. Scott Bitterman to present on the roundabout project, which is currently undergoing a PD&E study expected to finish by the end of the year. Mr. Bitterman explained that FDOT's TRIP program offers a grant requiring a 50% match, and this project is in the City of Fort Walton Beach. An interlocal agreement with the city ensures a 50% match, split between the County and the City. The request is for Surtax funds to apply for this grant, ensuring progress on the design.

He also mentioned another funding opportunity, Safe Streets and Roads for All, which may provide up to \$20 million for safety improvements on Fort Walton Beach Hwy. 98. Okaloosa County scored highest in safety needs on a Panhandle safety study, making this a strong grant contender. They will pursue both funding opportunities, and the Surtax funds requested today are for the initial application process.

Ms. LeJeune requested \$50,000 for the Safe Streets grant application, with the matching funds for the TRIP grant to be requested later, depending on the outcome. The project will remain on the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) list, ensuring it stays a high priority.

Vice Chairman Fanto motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

I. Staff Report – College Blvd Roundabouts Allocation Request (ST000049) / Districts 1, 3, 5 –

Ms. LeJeune presented a request for a \$450,000 allocation from Fiscal Year 25 Surtax Reserves to design roundabouts at the intersections of Palm and College and Cedar. The roundabouts are necessary to accommodate future traffic and improve safety near Northwest Florida College. While the project wasn't originally on the Surtax needs list, it aligns with the goals for College Blvd. improvements.

Mr. Autrey confirmed the Northwest Florida State College and City of Niceville support the project, and no property will be taken. The roundabouts are designed to fit potential future road expansions.

Discussions continued, and the motion to approve was made by Ms. Wilburn, seconded by Mr. Ward, and passed unanimously.

**Office of Management and Budget**

Mr. Ron Adamov, representing the Clerk's office, provided an update on the budget. Fiscal Year 24 receipts slightly missed the \$22.7 million target, reaching \$22 million, which resulted in a state reduction. However, the Fiscal Year 25 estimate is \$21.4 million, and based on the first two months of collections (October and November), it appears that the budget will be met or exceeded. The fund balance is healthy, and the reconciliation process with Surtax staff is running smoothly.

No additional questions were raised.

### **Clerk of Court and Comptroller**

None.

### **Public Comments / Open Discussion**

Mr. Autrey opened the discussion for Public Outreach, noting the 2028 anticipated Surtax sunset, which will require a public referendum and ordinance for continuation. He suggested the 2026 election cycle for outreach, allowing a year and a half for preparation. He encouraged brainstorming on project ideas and public engagement, also mentioning the potential for expanding eligible projects to include road maintenance and equipment purchases.

Vice Chairman Fanto proposed that fire departments, particularly in rural areas, could benefit from Surtax funding for equipment and infrastructure. Chairman Turpin agreed on expanding the scope and emphasized the need for a clear, transparent project list. Mr. Autrey stressed the importance of this list for voter approval and highlighted outreach with the Okaloosa County School Board and local stakeholders. He also suggested collaboration with community groups, like Chambers of Commerce, to gain support.

Mr. Autrey concluded by requesting Surtax Committee feedback, to be reviewed in the planning process. Feedback could be shared individually or in future meetings.

Chairman Turpin thanked Mr. Autrey and opened the floor for further input.

### **Schedule Next Meeting**

The meeting is tentatively set for March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Shalimar.

Ms. LeJeune will send out "save the dates" for the meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Turpin motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Wilburn.

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator