



March 13, 2025  
Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee  
Meeting

The regular meeting of the Okaloosa County Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee was called to order at 10:00 A.M. in the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Training Room, located in the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 1250 Eglin Parkway N, Shalimar, FL 32579.

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

Also present were: Craig Coffey, Okaloosa Deputy County Administrator; Jason Autrey, Director of Public Works; Faye Douglas, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Director; Brad E. Embry, Okaloosa Clerk of Court Chief of Staff; Joshua Allen, Okaloosa Clerk of Court, Board Services Director; Nick Tomecek, Public Information Officer; Scott Bitterman, County Engineer; Roy Petrey, Engineering Manager; Carisse LeJeune, Surtax Project Manager; Stephen Blalock, Project Engineer; Dylan Schroeder, Surtax Engineer-in-Training; Melissa Wilson, Surtax Project Coordinator.

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

The meeting was opened by Chairman Mr. Matthew Turpin. Mr. Scott Bitterman stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.011, Florida Statutes on January 24, 2025.

Chairman Turpin shared that he presented the Board's Annual Report at the January BCC meeting. He conveyed the Board of County Commissioners' appreciation for the committee's volunteer service, noting that while there was no formal commendation, the Commissioners were thankful for the Board's time and efforts.

Chairman Turpin opened the floor for presentations.

**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 4-0 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. LeJeune provided valuable insights into several projects that have made significant progress since the last report as of January 31, 2025.

- a. Beachview Drive Drainage Improvements (ST000002) / District 2 –  
A design task order is in process, funded by RESTORE. The agreement is circulating for signatures and will be presented to the BCC for approval.
- b. John King Road Widening (ST000004) / District 1 –  
Included as an agenda item for the meeting.
- c. Carmel and Beal Intersection Improvements (ST0000010) / District 4 –  
Awaiting preliminary FDOT variance approval. Upon receipt, the project will proceed to 100% design.
- d. Millside Roadway Improvements (ST000013) / District 1 –  
One signed right-of-way agreement will be presented to the BCC on April 1. One donation agreement has been secured, and only two parcels remain before preparing for bid.
- e. Northwest Crestview Bypass (ST000015) / District 1 –  
Ongoing property acquisition for corridor preservation.
- f. Emergency Communications Tower System (ST000018) / Districts 1-5 –  
The 12-tower system is fully operational. Law enforcement, EMS, and Emergency Management are online, with fire departments expected to be added by early May. Mr. Coffey noted system warranty begins April 1. Fire departments are eager to join. Vice Chairman Fanto inquired whether radios were included. Mr. Coffey clarified initial radios were covered under the contract, but departments are responsible for upgrades and maintenance.

Mr. Coffey added that while the first year of O&M is free, general fund coverage is being explored, though future Surtax requests are possible. Long-term savings are anticipated, especially as the system may generate revenue through leases (e.g., Verizon, state use).

- g. Santa Rosa Boulevard Improvements (ST000024) / Districts 2 –  
Florida Power & Light (FPL) has received payment and is working on a cost estimate for undergrounding utilities. Discussion on how to proceed will follow once figures are received.
- h. West 98 Stormwater (ST000025) / District 4 –  
Multiple small projects are underway under this umbrella effort.  
  
County Pond 314 –  
Project is preparing to go out to bid, likely next week.  
  
Kathleen Drive –  
Design task order issued. Funded by RESTORE
- i. College Boulevard / Forest Rd Multi-Use Path (ST000030) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 –  
Ready to go to bid. Ms. LeJeune noted high community interest in this project.
- j. Union Avenue Stormwater Improvements (ST000035) / District 5 –  
Included as an agenda item.
- k. Newly Identified Stormwater Projects –

Indian Lakes Area, Hill and Lovejoy, Ellis Road, West Dodson have been added for tracking and early planning.

- l. Lancaster Drive Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000047) / District 5 –  
In design phase; funded by RESTORE.
- m. Around the Mound (ST000048) / District 2 - College Blvd Roundabouts (ST000049) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 –  
Under review.
- n. South Avenue Drainage Improvements (ST000050) / Districts 2 & 4 –  
Consultant site visit and scope discussions recently occurred. A RESTORE-funded design task order is expected next week.
- o. Mooney Road Stormwater (ST000051) / Districts 2 –  
Early phase.
- p. Valparaiso Boulevard Sidewalk Improvements (ST000052) / Districts 3 & 5 –  
Partnering with the City of Niceville, similar to Redwood sidewalks.
- q. Poquito Road and Lewis Turner Intersection (ST000053) / District 2 –  
Identified for future tracking.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions and discussion on the projects, but none were raised.

Mr. Bitterman noted that many of the stormwater projects are funded through RESTORE for design. The committee will be approached again once construction estimates are available for funding consideration.

Chairman Turpin then asked if there were any further questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised.

**B. Surtax Revenue / Expense Summary –**

Ms. LeJeune provided an overview of the revenue and expense summary accompanying the project update list. She noted that the surtax revenues and reserves remain healthy and emphasized that projects are progressing steadily. The County continues to leverage surtax dollars by combining them with other funding sources, including developer contributions.

The second page of the summary includes a breakdown of completed surtax-funded projects.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions from the committee regarding the summary.

Chairman Turpin allowed time for review and inquired if there were any questions. No additional questions were raised.

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

Chairman Turpin introduced the item, and Ms. LeJeune deferred the update to Mr. Bitterman, who requested Mr. Roy Petrey to provide the latest project status.

Mr. Petrey reported that PJ Adams is now open to the public, with only two driveway improvements remaining. Phase 5 and the East-West Connector are progressing, though bridge construction is delayed due to unforeseen soil conditions. The roadway portion is on schedule, and coordination is ongoing with the contractor to finalize a revised completion timeline.

The project remains under budget, utilizing Triumph and bond funds, with Surtax covering interest payments.

Vice Chairman Fanto inquired about the delay, and Mr. Petrey explained that varying soil conditions impacted the pile-driving schedule.

Chairman Turpin then asked if there were any further questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised.

**D. Surtax Webpage Dashboard –**

Ms. LeJeune presented the interactive webpage Dashboard for review and advised the members on the overview of the dashboard pointing to active & completed projects.

Mr. Coffey inquired if the Dashboard was accessible on the webpage. Ms. Carisse stated yes. Chairman Turpin thanked the presenters and noted the information was well received.

He then asked if there were any questions from the board. Hearing none, he moved the meeting forward to the next agenda item, Annualized Funding.

**E. Annualized Funding Projection –**

Ms. LeJeune reviewed the updated Surtax Needs List, highlighting that all original projects are now active or pending. She noted that remaining stormwater designs will be funded by RESTORE dollars, with the goal of initiating all projects by early 2026.

Mr. Bitterman added the US 98 and Stallman Drive intersection is the only pending item without a defined scope, but coordination with the City of Destin is underway.

Chairman Turpin asked if there were any questions from the committee. Hearing none, he thanked the speakers and moved on to the next agenda item.

**Agenda Items and Discussions**

Chairman Turpin initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

**A. Willow Grove Lane Stormwater Improvements Project (ST000029) / District 3 & 4 –**

Chairman Turpin introduced the Willow Grove Lane stormwater funding request.

Ms. LeJeune explained the request includes a \$30,000 task order revision for additional surveying and pipe infrastructure design. The full \$1.5 million allocation will fund remaining design, construction, CEI, and contingency. She noted the project addresses nuisance flooding in the Green Acres area and includes improvements to a ditch along Eglin property.

Mr. Bitterman confirmed no objections from residents, and Mr. Blalock added that while similar to Overbrook, this project addresses runoff issues from County property as well as Eglin.

Vice Chairman Fanto shared that a related stormwater concern may have been identified in a recent military installation report and offered to coordinate further.

Chairman Turpin entertained a motion to approve the request. Vice Chairman Fanto moved to approve; Mr. Ward seconded. The motion was approved unanimously with a 4-0 vote, demonstrating the committee's strong support for the initiative.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, the Union Avenue stormwater project.

**B. Union Ave Stormwater Improvements Project (ST000035) / District 5 –**

Ms. LeJeune reported that the project, located in unincorporated Niceville, has completed design and is under engineering review. She requested \$1 million to fund construction, CEI, contingency, and post-design services. She noted that any unused funds will be returned to Surtax reserves.

Chairman Turpin opened the floor for a motion to approve the request. Ms. Hannah Wilburn motioned, and Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, Brittany Woods Ditch stormwater.

**C. Brittany Woods Ditch Repair Project (ST000029) / District 3 & 4 –**

Ms. LeJeune requested \$2.5 million for construction and contingency, noting that the project is fully designed and ready to proceed. She invited Mr. Steve Blalock to describe the innovative approach being used.

Mr. Blalock explained that the existing 60-year-old concrete ditch, overgrown with trees and structurally compromised, will be repaired using a product called concrete canvas—a flexible material that hardens into 6,000 psi concrete when hydrated. This durable, low-maintenance solution features a protective base layer to prevent root intrusion and extend the ditch's service life. He noted this will be the first major use of the technology in the Panhandle.

Chairman Turpin thanked Mr. Blalock for the detailed explanation and commented on the uniqueness of the method. He opened the floor for a motion to approve the request. Mr. Ward motioned, and Ms. Wilburn seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, Valparaiso Boulevard Sidewalk Construction.

**D. Valparaiso Boulevard Sidewalk Project (ST000052) / District 3 & 5 –**

Ms. LeJeune presented a request for \$450,000 in Surtax funds to extend the sidewalk along Valparaiso Boulevard, similar to the previous Redwood Avenue project. The City of Niceville has completed design and would reimburse construction costs under an interlocal agreement.

Mr. Bitterman noted the new city manager requested full County funding, but recommended a 50/50 cost share due to the project not being on the original Surtax needs list. Mr. Coffey shared prior discussions where the County agreed to fund construction if the City handled design. Mr. Autrey confirmed the road is unincorporated and County-maintained, limiting exposure risk to \$225,000.

Chairman Turpin then asked if there were any further questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised. Chairman Turpin opened the floor for a motion to approve the request. Mr. Fanto motioned, and Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, John King Road Improvements.

E. John King Road Improvements Project (ST000004) / District 1 –

Ms. LeJeune presented a request for an additional \$4.2 million in Surtax funds to cover construction, CEI services, and right-of-way acquisition for the John King Road project. The project is at 100% design, with utility coordination ongoing and right-of-way in the eminent domain process. An FDOT grant of \$1.1 million with a 50/50 match has been previously approved, but updated cost estimates require additional funding to complete the project.

Mr. Bitterman noted that the original 2016–2017 estimate was \$2.2 million, but permitting requirements from the design phase significantly raised costs due to the need to purchase property and construct a stormwater pond.

Chairman Turpin opened the floor for a motion to approve. Mr. Ward moved for approval, which was seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion was unanimously approved with a vote of 4-0.

The board proceeded to reports.

**Office of Management and Budget**

Ms. Faye Douglas reported that Surtax revenues for the year are currently at \$7.2 million—slightly below the same period last year, but she anticipates a rebound over the summer due to increased traffic in Destin and Okaloosa Island. Since 2019, total revenues have surpassed \$120 million, averaging approximately \$20 million annually. She confirmed the County is in a strong reserve position.

**Clerk of Court and Comptroller**

None.

**Schedule Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled at 10:00 am on Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at in the North at the Chambers in Crestview address TBD.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Turpin motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Fanto and Mr. Ward. Motion approved 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator