



May 27, 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 Courthouse, First Floor, Board of County Commissioners Chambers, located at 101 James Lee Blvd. E., Crestview, FL 32536.

Members present: 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 Deputy County Administrator of Development Services; Faye Douglas, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Director; Brad E. Embry, Okaloosa County Clerk of Court and Comptroller; Joshua Allen, Okaloosa Clerk of Court, Board Services Director; Nick Tomecek, Public Information Officer; Scott Bitterman, Interim Director of Public Works / 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 Vice Chairman Mr. Jeff Fanto. Mr. Jason Autrey stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.011, Florida Statutes on March 24, 2025. He further noted the meeting is being recorded. He further stated for the record, Chairman Matt Turpin and Mr. Jim Foreman will not be in attendance, noting Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto will lead the meeting. It was further noted that three of the five members were present, which constitutes a quorum.

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Vice Chairman Fanto called for a vote regarding the approval of the meeting minutes. Ms. Hannah Wilburn made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Larry Ward. 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 since the last report as of January 31, 2025.

a. Beachview Drive Drainage Improvements (ST000002) / District 2 –

Pending review of RESTORE funding by the U.S. Treasury. The County has also applied for a County Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) grant to support construction.

- b. John King Road Widening (ST000004) / District 1 –  
The order of taking for necessary right-of-way (ROW) under eminent domain is scheduled for July 30.
- c. Carmel and Beal Intersection Improvements (ST000010) / District 4 –  
The consultant is advancing final design to 90–100%. Right-of-way (ROW) acquisition is currently underway.
- d. Overbrook Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000011) / District 4 –  
The project is seeing gradual progress. An environmental assessment is underway following a redesign requested by Eglin AFB to reduce wetland impact. Due to recent 404 rule changes, Army Corps of Engineers approval is now required. Discussion followed regarding prior assessments, delays from AFMC headquarters, and the lack of a categorical exclusion.
- e. Lloyd Street Stormwater Improvements (ST000012) / District 4 –  
Design is funded through RESTORE. A construction grant has also been awarded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. A task order was recently issued for supplemental survey work to advance the project to 90% design.
- f. Millside Roadway Improvements (ST000013) / District 1 –  
One of the necessary right-of-way parcels has been acquired. Two remain outstanding, including one where the property owner has declined to sell. Staff working with the design consultant to explore a minor road realignment to bypass the parcel.
- g. Emergency Communications Tower System (ST000018) / Districts 1-5 –  
The 12-tower system has been constructed, fully equipped, and is operational. All public safety agencies have been added to the system. Vehicle equipment installations are currently underway, and non-public safety County departments are scheduled to be added to the system in June 2025. The project is nearing completion.
- h. Santa Rosa Boulevard Improvements (ST000024) / Districts 2 –  
Permanent easement request letters for the multi-use path are being sent to property owners this week. The consultant is coordinating with FP&L regarding potential utility undergrounding. FP&L has recommended hiring a third-party consultant for utility coordination, which is common practice. A proposal for this service has been submitted and is under review.
- i. West 98 Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000025) / District 4 –  
Multiple subprojects are underway under this umbrella effort.  
  
County Pond 314 –  
Bid opening has been held and a contractor selected through the CCNA process. Staff anticipate bringing the construction contract to the Board in July.
- j. Willow Bend/Greenacres Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000029) / District 4 –  
Several subprojects are underway under this overall effort.  
  
Brittany Woods Ditch Repair –

Staff coordinating temporary construction easements. CEI is in place and assisting with preliminary efforts ahead of preparing the Invitation to Bid.

- k. College Boulevard / Forest Rd Multi-Use Path (ST000030) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 – Invitation to Bid is under Purchasing review. Anticipated to be released by the end of month. Project includes \$1.5M state appropriations match via FDOT.
- l. Echo Circle Stormwater Improvements (ST000031) / District 4 – Design is underway with initial concepts received. A public outreach meeting with the Echo Circle / Sylvania Heights neighborhoods is planned to gather input on the proposed wetland park.
- m. Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Data Management System (ST000034) / Districts 1-5 – Both the Sheriff's Office and Department of Corrections are under contract and currently working towards Milestone 5. Project completion is anticipated before the end of the year.
- n. Union Avenue Stormwater Improvements (ST000035) / District 5 – Invitation to Bid (ITB) is currently in development for construction.
- o. EOC Technology Upgrades (ST000037) / Districts 1-5 – Project is complete.
- p. Okaloosa Lane Realignment (ST000038) / District 1 – Demolition of the property is complete. The design consultant is currently developing 30% design plans.
- q. Lancaster Drive Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000047) / District 5 – Currently at the 30% design phase. Project is funded through RESTORE.
- r. College Blvd Roundabouts (ST000049) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 – Consultant has submitted conceptual plans, and coordination with the college is underway to review concepts and discuss right-of-way needs. The City of Niceville has expressed strong support for this project. Conceptual design is currently under review.
- s. South Avenue Drainage Improvements (ST000050) / Districts 2 & 4 – RESTORE funded design task order is under review by Engineering. Consultant site visit and scope discussions recently took place.
- t. Valparaiso Boulevard Sidewalk Improvements (ST000052) / Districts 3 & 5 – An interlocal agreement has been signed by the City of Niceville. The item will be presented to the Board for approval. This project is a partnership, like Redwood Sidewalk Improvements.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions and discussions on the projects, and the following were raised.

Vice Chairman Fanto asked whether the City of Niceville receives Surtax dollars. Staff confirmed the Surtax is split 60/40, with 40% distributed among municipalities.

He also inquired about funding for the Sheriff's Office Driving Pad. Staff clarified that it is eligible because the Sheriff's Office is County-funded, unlike independent taxing districts such as fire departments, which are not currently eligible.

The committee agreed this limitation should be revisited. Vice Chairman Fanto supported discussing future recommendations to expand eligibility for critical services like fire protection and emphasized the importance of having space in these meetings for such conversations.

Vice Chairman Fanto then inquired if there were any further questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised.

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

Ms. LeJeune reviewed the project reconciliation spreadsheets, highlighting that \$83.4 million is allocated from surtax funds, supplemented by \$96.7 million in grant funding. She emphasized ongoing efforts to leverage surtax dollars with external funding sources.

Ms. LeJeune also noted the debt service payments for the Southwest Crestview Bypass and Communication Services projects are paid from surtax but accounted for separately from project budgets.

She invited questions from the committee.

Vice Chairman Fanto gave the committee time to review and asked if there were any questions. No further questions were offered.

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

Ms. LeJeune reported the project is on schedule and within budget, with a remaining total budget of \$19.4 million. Mr. Autrey noted ongoing contractor discussions regarding a \$4 million difference in expense claims but affirmed confidence in the contractor's performance and project completion. A recent site tour highlighted notable progress, including bridge deck pours. No work stoppage is anticipated despite the financial discussions. Mr. Autrey encouraged committee members to view recent project videos available online to appreciate the progress.

Ms. Wilburn praised the communication team for their excellent work in capturing and sharing project updates, encouraging the committee to share these materials publicly.

Vice Chairman Fanto asked for clarification on potential delays or slowdowns. Mr. Autrey confirmed there are no anticipated work stoppages or slowdowns related to the current issues.

Vice Chairman Fanto then inquired if there were any further questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised.

**D. Surtax Webpage Dashboard –**

Ms. LeJeune then presented static dashboard pages from the infrastructure website, highlighting 40 active projects, budget comparisons between surtax and grant funds, and project locations. She expressed optimism that the number of completed projects will increase by year-end. The dashboard includes detailed project scrolling features and various graphical budget and revenue displays. She acknowledged Melissa for managing the web content.

Vice Chairman Fanto invited questions; hearing none, the meeting proceeded to the annualized funding projection.

**E. Annualized Funding Projection –**

Ms. LeJeune reviewed updated project budgets and future expenditure estimates through 2029, noting \$46.1 million in projected costs and total allocations around \$138 million. She emphasized grant leveraging to reduce surtax use.

Mr. Autrey noted actual revenues exceed initial estimates, helping maintain the budget despite rising costs. Approximately \$50 million remains available for new projects like the Crestview relief and West 98 collector.

Vice Chairman Fanto asked about adding new projects. Mr. Autrey explained additions are recommended by commissioners or departments, reviewed by this committee, and approved by the Board.

Vice Chairman Fanto asked if there were any questions from the committee. Hearing none, the meeting moved on to the Carmel Drive and Beal Parkway report.

### **Agenda Items and Discussions**

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

#### **A. Carmel Drive & Beal Parkway Intersection Improvements (ST000010) / District 4 –**

Vice Chairman Fanto introduced funding request for the Carmel Drive & Beal Parkway Intersection project.

Ms. LeJeune explained that staff is requesting \$300,000 in FY25 surtax reserve funds to support final design needs and construction. The project is between 90% and 100% design complete, with only a few right-of-way acquisitions remaining. She noted that additional geotechnical testing and analysis is required to finalize design, and that the County's Incentive Grant Program match with FDOT will not fully cover the anticipated construction costs. The requested funds will supplement those grant dollars and cover CEI and post-design services.

Vice Chairman Fanto called for committee action. Mr. Ward made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion was approved unanimously with a 3-0 vote.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, the Lloyd Street / Mayflower Area Stormwater project.

#### **B. Lloyd Street / Mayflower Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000012) / District 4 –**

Ms. LeJeune requested \$140,000 to complete a topographic and subsurface survey, additional design services, and contingency needed to finalize design. She noted that this historic area of Fort Walton Beach experiences significant flooding and that initial investigations revealed failing pipes, deteriorating structures, and new flow paths. Although the original estimate was \$3.1 million, project costs are now expected to increase significantly. The design phase was funded through RESTORE Act funds, and the County has secured a \$1.5 million grant from DEP.

Mr. Autrey clarified that the updated \$6 million estimate already reflects the increased costs noted by staff. Vice Chairman Fanto confirmed there are no anticipated delays or slowdowns related to current issues.

Vice Chairman Fanto 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 3-0 vote.

The board proceeded to the next agenda item, Stahlman Avenue Intersection Improvements.

C. Stahlman Avenue Intersection Improvements (ST000054) / District 5 –

Ms. LeJeune requested increasing the surtax allocation to \$3.6 million to fund the County's 90% share of a \$20 million SS4A grant application being submitted by the City of Destin. The project, originally allocated \$3 million, now includes a pedestrian underpass instead of at-grade improvements.

Mr. Autrey stated the project would improve safety and traffic flow by reducing pedestrian surface crossings and noted Destin will fund the remaining 10% match. An interlocal agreement with claw-back provisions will ensure accountability.

Vice Chairman Fanto inquired about remaining surface crossings. Mr. Autrey confirmed some may remain, but usage will decrease. Ms. LeJeune noted that in a similar Walton County installation, pedestrians consistently used the underpass.

Vice Chairman Fanto opened the floor for a motion. Ms. Wilburn motioned, and Mr. Ward seconded. The motion was approved unanimously with a 3–0 vote.

The board proceeded to Reports.

**Office of Management and Budget**

Ms. Faye Douglas reported that surtax reserves remain in a strong position. Revenues are slightly lower than the same period last year, but the County had projected a more conservative estimate for FY2025. She confirmed the County continues to average approximately \$21 million annually, with May revenues reaching \$1.6 million—the highest monthly distribution received this year. Ms. Douglas expressed optimism for a rebound over the summer months.

**Clerk of Court and Comptroller**

None.

**Schedule Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at the South End location in Shalimar (address TBD). An alternative date of August 20th was also proposed to accommodate potential scheduling conflicts for members unable to attend.

**Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Fanto motioned to adjourn, seconded by another member. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator