



August 13, 2025
Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee
Meeting

The regular meeting of the Okaloosa County Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee was called to order at 10:14 A.M. in the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 2nd Floor Training Room, located at 1250 Eglin Parkway N, Shalimar, FL 32579.

Members present: District 4 representative: Chairman Matthew Turpin; District 1 representative: Larry Ward; District 3 representative: Hannah Wilburn.

Also present were: 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, Director of Public Works / County Engineer; Roy Petrey, Engineering Manager; Carisse LeJeune, Surtax Project Manager; Stephen Blalock, Design Engineer; Michelle Gartman, Design Engineer; Dylan Schroeder, Surtax Engineer-in-Training; Melissa Wilson, Surtax Project Coordinator.

Opening Remarks and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Matthew Turpin at 10:14 a.m. Mr. Jason Autrey stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.001, Florida Statutes, on June 10, 2025. Chairman Turpin noted for the record that Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto was unable to attend due to a last-minute emergency. It was further noted that three of the five members were present, which constitutes a quorum.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chairman Turpin then entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Ms. Hannah Wilburn moved to approve, and the motion was seconded. No objections were raised, and the motion was approved 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 & Surtax Revenue / Expense Summary –

Ms. LeJeune provided valuable insights into several projects that have made significant progress since the last report as of July 31, 2025.

a. County Road 2 Widening and Resurfacing (ST0000014) / Districts 1 & 3 –

The project is in the final stages of close-out, with the last invoices received today. Completion of administrative and financial closure is expected by the end of the month.

- b. West Highway 98 Stormwater Improvements - County Pond 314 (ST000025) / District 4 –
The project is currently under construction and progressing within the West 98 Stormwater Area.
- c. Willow Bend/Greenacres Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000029) / Districts 3 & 4 –
Significant progress is being made on acquiring permanent and temporary construction easements, with recognition of Dylan’s diligent efforts in advancing these acquisitions.
- d. College Blvd/Forest Road Multi-Use Path and Safety Improvements (ST000030) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 –
The project’s construction contract is nearing completion of the bidding process. The intent to award is scheduled, with the contract expected to be presented at the September 2nd Board meeting.
- e. Old River Road Improvements (ST000033) / District 3 -
Stormwater work is complete, paving is currently underway, and bridge construction is scheduled to begin soon.
- f. Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Data Management System (ST000034) / Districts 1-5 –
Both the main system and the jail component are completing Milestone 5, which includes testing and training, with project completion expected soon.
- g. Union Avenue Stormwater Improvements (ST000035) / District 5 –
The project will be advertised for a construction contract in September, with construction anticipated to begin thereafter.
- h. West 98 Collector Transportation Improvements (ST000036) / District 4 –
A public information meeting was held on July 31st with strong community turnout. HDR Engineering is accepting comments by the end of the week and will provide a report to the County by early September, after which the project will be presented to the Board.
- i. Okaloosa Lane Realignment and Improvements (ST000038) / District 1 –
The project has reached 60% design, with 90–100% design anticipated soon. Board members discussed the potential to include sidewalks near two new subdivisions. Staff noted that while sidewalks were not planned within the subdivisions, the project could explore adding sidewalks within the road improvement limits where feasible.
- j. Traffic Management Center (ST000042) / Districts 1-5 –
The Traffic Management Center next to the EOC in Niceville has been updated to current building codes. Final plans are expected within the next week, after which the invitation to bid for construction will be issued. County leadership also noted upcoming coordination with the college president regarding the project.
- k. Indian Lakes Area Stormwater Improvements (ST000043) / District 5 –
Located off Commons Drive in Destin, design work for the Indian Lakes stormwater project is pending. A proposal has been requested from a consultant under a master services agreement, expected within the next week.

- I. Lancaster Drive Area Stormwater (ST000047) / District 5 –
Located in Blue Water Bay near the bridge to Niceville, the final plans are under engineering review. An invitation to bid (ITB) will be developed and issued shortly.
- m. Valparaiso Blvd Sidewalk Improvements (ST000052) / Districts 3 & 5 –
Final construction plans were incomplete, so the City of Niceville agreed to fund the additional plans. Once received, the approved invitation to bid will be issued immediately
- n. Communications Services (ST000018) / Districts 1-5 –
Chairman Turpin inquired about the status of the countywide communications system. Ms. LeJeune reported that all public safety agencies are connected, and non-public safety departments are currently being added. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Mr. Autrey noted that coordination with departments acquiring radio systems is ongoing to ensure readiness for emergency response.

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

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

B. SW Crestview Bypass Funding Summary –

Chairman Turpin asked for questions on the Southwest Crestview Bypass funding summary; none were raised.

Ms. LeJeune introduced the item and invited Mr. Roy Petrey to provide a project update.

Mr. Petrey reported that work continues the bypass, including the PJ Adams portion and widening at Highway 85 with an additional turn lane. Two contractor claims are being reviewed, one for PJ Adams Pond 1 and another with Anderson Columbia for delays and changed conditions at Top Island, but these are expected to be covered within the existing budget. Approximately twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) remains uncommitted, and Triumph funding covers about seventy percent (70%) of costs.

Mr. Autrey noted that such claims are normal in construction projects and represent a small percentage of the overall forty-million-dollar (\$40,000,000) bypass budget. The contractor anticipates completing the bypass by year-end, though labor challenges due to weather and workforce availability exist.

Chairman Turpin inquired about any budget concerns.

Ms. LeJeune confirmed budgets are stable, and revenues remain steady. She noted the annualized funding report will provide more detailed forecasts.

No further questions were raised.

C. Surtax Webpage Dashboard –

Chairman Turpin introduced the web page dashboard.

Ms. LeJeune explained that the Infrastructure Surtax dashboard on the Okaloosa County website provides real-time updates for the public. She noted that the information is updated with each

periodic report, managed by the Surtax Project Coordinator, and approved by the Finance Department before publication.

Chairman Turpin and Ms. Wilburn praised the dashboard and the team's efforts.

No further questions were raised.

D. Annualized Funding Projection –

Chairman Turpin introduced the discussion on the annualized funding projection.

Ms. LeJeune explained that the spreadsheet highlights allocated projects in yellow and includes a running total of estimated future expenditures, currently about fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000). Total future allocations from the start of the program are approximately one hundred forty-two million dollars (\$142,000,000), with projected future revenue estimated at one hundred ninety-six million dollars (\$196,000,000) based on twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) per year, noting this is a conservative estimate.

Chairman Turpin and Mr. Autrey clarified cumulative totals: the bottom-right of the spreadsheet shows one hundred sixty-one million dollars (\$161,000,000) in allocated Surtax funds. The difference between allocations and projected revenue—thirty-five to forty million dollars (\$35–\$40 million) provides flexibility for additional projects, cost overruns, or new initiatives. Ms. LeJeune emphasized the program remains financially healthy and has consistently delivered more than originally promised.

Chairman Turpin confirmed the projection does not include interest on unused funds, which is correct.

Mr. Bitterman highlighted that uninitiated projects (peach-colored) are in planning or design stages, mainly stormwater projects funded through RESTORE Act grants, which require sequential design approvals. Some projects, like Stallman and US 98, leverage additional grants and are pending award decisions.

Chairman Turpin thanked the team for their work and noted that the projection helps make meetings more efficient. There were no further questions from the board.

Agenda Items and Discussions

Chairman Turpin initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

A. Santa Rosa Blvd Improvements (ST000024) / District 2 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the funding request for the Santa Rosa Boulevard Improvements project.

Ms. LeJeune requested a recommendation to allocate four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to complete design for the project. The original task order covered design to ninety percent (90%), and the additional funding will allow the team to bring the plans to one hundred percent (100%) to address project phasing, permitting, survey work, and utility coordination.

Mr. Bitterman added that the total project cost is estimated between twenty million and twenty-five million dollars (\$20–\$25 million), depending on whether utilities are undergrounded. The State Legislature awarded one million dollars (\$1,000,000) toward construction of Phase 1, estimated at seven million dollars (\$7,000,000), which includes the widest section with full lanes and curbing. The requested funds will allow completion of final design for this phase.

Construction for Phase 1 is anticipated to begin within one year, with no material design changes and no public objections reported. Coordination with the Okaloosa Island Fire District and nearby property owners has been positive. The multi-use path will be fourteen feet (14 ft) wide, located on the south side for Phase 1 and transitioning north to tie into the Brooks Bridge path.

Chairman Turpin then asked if there were any questions from the committee. No additional questions were raised. Ms. Wilburn moved with approval of the funding request, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion was approved unanimously (3–0).

Chairman Turpin proceeded to the funding request for the County Courthouse Annex Security Upgrades.

B. County Courthouse Annex Security Upgrades (ST000057) / Districts 1-5 –

Ms. LeJeune explained that the request originated from utility maintenance following concerns from judges regarding the need for enhanced security at the courthouse annex. The proposed improvements include constructing a perimeter wall around the northwest parking lot (sally port), adding security cameras, and installing locking sliding gates to control access. These upgrades will allow staff to monitor entry points via a control panel inside the courthouse.

The project is estimated at five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) based on prior cost assessments for similar work. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office will coordinate with County IT Department on the security camera installation, with costs processed through established agreements like ST000018 Communication Services and Data Management System.

Chairman Turpin confirmed the project's compliance with public safety funding criteria. Mr. Autrey affirmed that such use aligns with prior security-related allocations.

Mr. Ward moved with approval of the request, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion was approved unanimously (3–0).

C. FDOT LAP Sidewalk Projects (ST000055) / Districts 1, 2, & 4 –

Ms. LeJeune reported that the County has received FDOT Local Agency Program (LAP) Grants to build sidewalks, but the grants do not cover the construction engineering inspection (CEI) or contingency costs. She requested that the Surtax Committee recommend an allocation of three hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$330,000) to fund two sidewalks in unincorporated areas: one on South Avenue and one on Stillwell Boulevard. The funding would also include a bridge repair on Stillwell Boulevard leading to Walker Elementary School, which is currently barricaded due to disrepair.

Mr. Bitterman added that these grants were applied for in 2018 and 2019, and while FDOT has increased funding to align with updated construction costs, the CEI and contingency are not included. He further noted that the County is assisting the cities of Crestview and Laurel Hill with similar sidewalk projects, administering federal funds and covering shortfalls with Surtax allocations.

Chairman Turpin inquired if there had been any opposition from residents, and Mr. Bitterman reported none, noting that the sidewalks address a community need, particularly along Stillwell Boulevard.

With no questions from the board, Chairman Turpin entertained a motion to approve the LAP sidewalk funding request. Ms. Wilburn moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 3–0 vote.

D. Gap Creek Channel Inventory and Planning Study (ST000056) / District 4 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the Gap Creek Channel Planning Study funding request.

Ms. LeJeune reported that the Governor approved state appropriations to support a comprehensive study of the Gap Creek watershed, which had been included on the County's 2025 legislative priorities list. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) in Surtax funds are being requested to serve as the County's match to the state grant. The study will evaluate the watershed from Jonquil Avenue NW to Beal Parkway N, assessing hydrologic conditions, stormwater infrastructure, and restoration opportunities to enhance coastal resilience, water quality, and stormwater management throughout the basin.

Mr. Bitterman explained that legislative appropriations are structured as matching grants, allowing the County to leverage surtax funds to maximize state support. Mr. Autrey added that resiliency remains a top statewide priority, and the project aligns with ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure durability against hurricanes and flooding. Mr. Blalock noted that because Gap Creek is a navigable waterway, coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will occur early in the planning process.

Mr. Ward motioned to approve the two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) allocation recommendation, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion was approved unanimously (3–0).

E. Public Safety Driving Pad (ST000040) / Districts 1-5 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the Public Safety Driving Pad funding request.

Ms. LeJeune reported that the Committee had previously recommended allocation of eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$850,000.00) for this project which was subsequently approved by the Board. Work already performed includes geotechnical exploration for gopher tortoise survey and relocation, which was not anticipated, and clearing and grubbing on the site. The Northwest Florida Water Management district deemed a retention pond was necessary to offset the impervious surface being created by the driving pad. Substantial earthwork is now required that was not considered in the original conceptual budget for the clearing and lime rock base, asphalt surface, pole barn, and the concrete pad, labor and equipment. The new estimate has increased the budget by four-hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000.00).

Mr. Autrey stated that the initial assumption was that the project site contained sandy soil, which is relatively easy to work with. However, once the digging commenced, it was discovered that there was a confining layer six feet (6') below the surface which presented challenges to designing a stormwater system and required extensive earthwork beyond what was anticipated.

Mr. Bitterman added that there is no design cost charge to Surtax for this project. It was designed in-house by non-Surtax funded staff members Roy Petrey, Michelle Gartman and Simona Stransky, and they all spent a lot of time on this project, going above and beyond to complete the design.

With no questions from the committee, Chairman Turpin entertained a motion to approve the Public Safety Driving Pad funding request. Mr. Ward moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

F. Northwest Crestview Bypass Corridor Preservation Project / Corridor Preservation (ST000015) / Districts 1 & 3 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the Northwest Crestview Bypass Corridor Preservation funding request.

Ms. LeJeune explained that the County continues corridor preservation in accordance with the Board's March 2024 directive. A property on Bethel Road became available and purchasing it now prevents future eminent domain costs and aligns with the planned roadway widening. The current owners are willing to sell voluntarily.

Mr. Bitterman noted that if the property were sold to a private buyer, eventual acquisition for the bypass would cost over one million dollars (\$1,000,000), including relocation, making a voluntary purchase more cost-effective. He added that the County has not yet decided the future use of the existing house, which could be used for storage, rental income, or eventual demolition.

Chairman Turpin confirmed the property includes a structure, not just raw land, and no committee questions were raised.

Ms. Wilburn motioned to approve the funding request, seconded by Mr. Ward. The motion was approved unanimously (3-0).

G. Reimbursement of In-House Labor & Equipment / Districts 1-5 –

Chairman Turpin introduced the discussion on reimbursing in-house labor and equipment for Surtax projects.

Mr. Autrey suggested involving County Attorney Lynn Hoshihara to confirm legal permissibility. Ms. LeJeune coordinated her participation via Zoom.

Ms. LeJeune explained that Surtax funds have leveraged outside funding for transportation and stormwater projects. Currently, thirty-six (36) active projects are in various phases: eight (8) in construction, ten (10) soon to start, fourteen (14) in design/right-of-way, and four (4) pending allocation or grant pre-award.

General fund engineering staff spend significant time on these projects:

- Engineering Manager: seventy-five percent (75%)
- Engineering Coordinator: fifty percent (50%)
- Public Works Director/County Engineer: twenty-five percent (25%)

Additional support includes CADD, GIS, surveying, and administrative functions. We have adopted an aggressive timeline to have all existing identified projects in some phase of design, pre-design, or construction by the end of this calendar year. To address this acceleration of projects without hiring new staff, staff is recommending reimbursing the general fund for employees from Surtax reserves, estimated at four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) per year.

Mr. Autrey clarified that reimbursement is tracked by project via the work order system, not as a flat salary percentage. Only engineering labor is included; in-house construction labor and equipment are considered per project. Mr. Bitterman noted this is more efficient than hiring additional staff for short-term needs.

County Attorney Hoshihara confirmed this is a permissible use of Surtax revenues under Section 212.055, Florida Statutes, which allows funds for design, engineering, and related costs on public infrastructure with a life expectancy of five or more years, and complies with County Ordinance 18-09 which governs Surtax use, provided time is properly documented.

Chairman Turpin emphasized accurate project tracking, and Ms. LeJeune noted the automated OMS system ensures proper allocation of salaries.

With no further questions, Ms. Wilburn motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Ward, and the motion passed unanimously, 3-0.

Office of Management and Budget

Chairman Turpin introduced the next agenda item and recognized Ms. Faye Douglas.

Ms. Douglas reported that revenue is performing very well, with over thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) in reserves. She noted that the state's estimate for next year's revenue is nearly one million dollars (\$1,000,000) above this year's budget, indicating that the county is on track to meet or slightly exceed the current fiscal year's budget. Chairman Turpin thanked her for the update.

Clerk of Court and Comptroller

None.

Schedule Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at the North end location in Crestview (address TBD).

Open Discussion

Mr. Autrey informed the Committee that the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, and the County Administrator, have attended a few civic organization meetings where a voter referendum in

2026 to renew the Surtax program for another 10 years has been discussed. Staff is currently developing a preliminary draft of potential projects for future discussion with this Committee. Mr. Tomecek brought forward his observations on the need to educate the public on the different types of taxes used as project funding sources within the County. He stated that he currently has a communications survey out in the public, and the top two (2) improvements most residents are interested in are traffic and infrastructure (road) projects. Ms. Wilburn suggested a series of Q&A that can be shared with the voters.

Adjournment

Chairman Turpin motioned to adjourn, seconded by another member. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator