

# **Waterways Plan for Martin & St. Lucie Counties**

## **Waterways Forum 2: Land Use & Upland Transportation**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2014

2:00 P.M.

*Historic City Hall \* 315 Avenue A \* Fort Pierce, FL 34950*

Forum arranged by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC)  
as part of the Waterways Plan for Martin & St. Lucie Counties.

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*NOTE TO READERS: This document reflects general meeting notes and key questions and points of discussion raised during the Forum on Land Use & Upland Transportation that occurred on Wednesday, January 8, 2014. General meeting notes were prepared by TCRPC.*

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### **General Meeting Notes**

The meeting was opened at 2:10 p.m. by Dr. Kim DeLaney, TCRPC. Meeting participants introduced themselves (copies of the forum sign-in sheet are included with these notes). The members of the Steering Committee identified themselves. It was noted that the Towns of Sewall's Point and Jupiter Island were not able to attend due to a shortage of staff but they will keep informed of the process. Tom Lavash and Tom Moriarity, both of WTL & Associates which is an economic consultant for the Waterways Plan Project Team, participated by phone. It was noted that Mr. Lavash and Mr. Moriarity would attend the final forum scheduled in April on Economic Development.

*(NOTE: Each speaker utilized power point slides, and a copy of the power point presentation is included with these meeting notes as a separate document due to the size of the presentation.)*

### **Project Overview:**

Dr. DeLaney provided a brief introduction on the Waterways Plan project. The project covers the waterways in both Martin and St. Lucie counties (about 120 miles of waterways, including roughly 44 miles of Intracoastal Waterway, 25 miles of St. Lucie River, and 25 miles of canals). The plan is funded by the Martin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), and Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND). Each organization is responsible for guiding long-term transportation and capital investments with a goal of maintaining high quality of life, high level of mobility, strong economic development, and sustainability.

This is the second forum in a six-forum series. The forums are intended to broaden the general knowledge of waterways-related issues – for the project team, the steering committee, and the general public – and help inform the development of the Waterways Plan.

Dr. DeLaney reviewed the upcoming series of educational forums that will take place over the next couple of months, and she provided an overview of the pending charrette public workshops,

additional opportunities for public input, and the project schedule. Information on the project is posted on the TCRPC website at [http://tcrpc.org/special\\_projects/Waterways/waterways.html](http://tcrpc.org/special_projects/Waterways/waterways.html)

The four remaining forums are scheduled as follows (editor’s note: dates, times and locations have been updated to reflect most current schedule as of 1/29/2014):

<i>FORUM 3</i>	<b>Regulation &amp; Management of Waterways</b>	<b>January 29, 2014</b> Wednesday (2 PM)	<b>Stuart City Hall (City Commission Chambers)</b> 121 SW Flagler Avenue; Stuart, FL 34994
<i>FORUM 4</i>	<b>Natural Resources</b>	<b>February 27, 2014</b> Thursday (2 PM)	<b>Port St. Lucie Community Center</b> 2195 S.E. Airoso Boulevard; Port St. Lucie, FL 34984
<i>FORUM 5</i>	<b>Recreation/Cultural/Educational Activities</b>	<b>March 12, 2014</b> Wednesday (2 PM)	<b>Port Salerno Community Center</b> 4950 SE Anchor Avenue; Stuart, FL 34997
<i>FORUM 6</i>	<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>April 2014 TBD*</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<i>Table reflects most current schedule as of 1/29/2014</i>			

Dr. DeLaney noted that a panel of eight experts on Land Use and Transportation were in attendance and each would give a brief presentation.

### **Land Use & Upland Transportation Panel**

*Beth Beltran, MPO Administrator, Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization*

Ms. Beltran provided an overview of the Martin MPO, which is governed by a board of elected officials. The MPO is responsible for guiding long-term transportation investments and working with FHWA, FDOT, and local governments. MPOs are established by federal legislation, and their decision-making follows a “3-C” process, which is continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative. The MPO addresses all modes of transportation, including automobile, pedestrian, transit, and trains as well as airports. The long-range planning document that guides MPO decisions is the 2035 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan that was developed collaboratively with the St. Lucie TPO. Short-term guidance is provided by the Transportation Improvement Program, which has a five-year horizon.

Martin County is the host agency for the Martin MPO, and the concept for the Waterways Plan was born in the engineering department, as the County was evaluating means to improve the waterways and their broader economic benefit. The County learned that Palm Beach County had developed an Intracoastal Plan, and the Martin MPO utilized that model to frame the Waterways Plan as a way to include the waterways in the MPO planning process.

The MPO planning process begins with the long-range transportation plan and the review of priorities, which are adopted by the MPO Board annually. MPO priorities must be consistent with the State’s work program as well as the MPO’s federally required documents. The MPO’s long-range transportation plan must be consistent with local comprehensive plans as well. Although FDOT tends to allocate significant funding for deepwater ports, the state has included the Intracoastal Waterway as part of Florida’s Strategic Intermodal System, which creates the opportunity to access FDOT funding for Intracoastal improvements.

*Darryl Deleeuw, Environmental Administrator, Martin County*

Mr. Deleeuw provided an overview of Martin County's land use regulatory approach, describing the Growth Management Department and its responsibilities regarding development review and zoning, comprehensive planning, and the environmental division, which is Mr. Deleeuw's primary focus. The County's environmental division conducts reviews of site plans, issues certain permits, and provides compliance staff for field reviews during construction to confirm compliance with permit approvals. The County's comprehensive plan focuses on protection of natural resources and planning for water-related and water potential uses among its key foundations. Key areas of regulation include wetland protection, shoreline protection along estuaries, and upland protection, which were first adopted into the County's comprehensive plan in 1982, and additional upland habitat protections were added in 1990. County staff is also responsible for regulating the vessel removal program.

Mr. Deleeuw provided an overview of the impact of Martin County's regulatory approach on protected lands throughout the County. For the past three-plus decades, development has been required to set aside wetland buffers as well as native upland habitat for larger developments, yielding considerable area in preserve. The County has more than 650 "Preserve Area Management Plans" (PAMPs), which require perpetual maintenance of these conservation areas that now total nearly fifteen square miles. Mr. Deleeuw noted for perspective the City of Stuart is nine square miles.

More recently the County conducted a shoreline inventory analysis of the estuarine areas regulated under the County's shoreline protection rules, and new rules are being considered. In Martin County, estuarine water bodies regulated under the shoreline protection zone regulations are primarily this area east of the Florida Turnpike. Martin County has three Florida designated aquatic preserves (North Fork of the St. Lucie River, the Indian River, and the Loxahatchee River). Not only are those areas regulated but all the estuarine waters that are connected and navigable to these systems are regulated with shoreline protection zone regulations, including manmade canals which are also protected. The County recently inventoried properties regulated under the shoreline protection rules. Conservation and recreational lands were excluded in the analysis, yielding 4,820 waterfront parcels – mostly residential (95 percent of the total) – and mostly developed residential (88% of the total).

*Kevin Freeman, Community Development Director, Martin County Community Redevelopment Agency*

Mr. Freeman indicated Martin County has seven community redevelopment areas, regulated under the County's community redevelopment agency (CRA). They are spread throughout the County and include the County's main urban areas. Martin County's comprehensive plan supports the CRAs and targeted investments to those areas. All seven CRAs are connected to the waterways, and the agency maintains a focus on the transition between the waterways and the upland. Mr. Freeman noted several key questions regarding types and form of access, activity, and protection and their influences upon the type of development and redevelopment in these areas.

A core conflict within the implementation of the CRA is the balance between individuals promoting redevelopment or development and wanting to enhance the waterway, and on the other point of view, residents and citizens and keepers of the waterways focused on protection exclusively. Focusing on transportation, Mr. Freeman noted there is a significant opportunity to link the County's CRAs together, which will expand their modes of access and potentially influence the types and form of development and redevelopment. This balance underscores a tension between access and protection and development and protection, which is a central component of regulation in Martin County.

*Terry O'Neil, Development Director, City of Stuart (and Stuart Community Redevelopment Agency)*

Mr. O'Neil described the characteristics of the City of Stuart, with a focus on the City's community redevelopment agency (CRA). He indicated the City's population is roughly 15,000; however, the daytime population climbs to approximately 30,000. The CRA has been in place for about 25 years and has been very successful. An urban code governs development within the district and permits a wide variety of uses. Stuart's elected officials have acknowledged that access to the waterfront is key to the CRA's success. Stuart has maintained a long-standing partnership with FIND, which has funded numerous projects in the City (e.g., Sheppard Park Fish Walk, Riverwalk). The City also operates an anchorage and marina facility at the base of the Roosevelt Bridge.

Over time, Mr. O'Neil described the City's utilization of zoning and land use incentives to expand public access along the waterfront. He noted the Harborage development, which is a mixed-use condominium with restaurants and other commercial uses on the north side of the CRA. Utilizing incentives, the City allowed increased density of 22 du/ac, and in exchange for the increased density, the developers provided the City with a public easement that provided more than 2000 feet of public promenade. More recently, Stuart has worked with property owners on Seminole Street to secure an eastern extension of the riverwalk. In exchange, property owners were provided parking credits, grandfathered status for select older buildings to enhance their ability to be developed.

Mr. O'Neil emphasized the City's strong interest in the Waterways Plan, noting the extensive relationship between the City and the waterways. He noted the City's interest in water taxis among key points in the CRA, both north and south of the bridge. Among the City's unique opportunities is the FEC corridor and pending "All Aboard Florida" passenger rail project. Due to track curvature and single-tracked bridge over the St. Lucie River, the All Aboard Florida trains will nearly stop in downtown Stuart, creating a strong opportunity for a station in downtown Stuart. Mr. O'Neil also suggested the potential for sea plane landings and berths in downtown Stuart, noting the City's existing floating dock which could potentially accommodate sea planes.

*Marceia Lathou, Transit Program Manager/Title VI-ADA Coordinator, St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization*

Ms. Lathou described the structure, purpose and mission of the St. Lucie TPO, with strong emphasis on multi-modal transportation and public outreach. She described her role regarding

public participation, coordination, and securing public input. The TPO board includes elected officials, school board representation, and a representative of community transit, and the agency also receives input from its three advisory committees (TAC, CAC, and BPAC).

The three main functions of the TPO are planning, project selections, and coordination. These are illustrated by the Long-Range Transportation Plan, which includes a forecast of needed transportation improvements and revenues over a twenty-five year planning horizon.

Ms. Lathou described the major components of the TPO's transportation network, including major roadways (e.g., Florida Turnpike, I-95, US1, east/west corridors), transit routes, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and noted the long-range plan also takes the waterways into consideration. She emphasized the need for expanded transportation options and transit to facilitate access to the waterways.

*Leslie Olson, Planning Manager, St. Lucie County*

Ms. Olson described the geography of St. Lucie County, which covers an area of 570 square miles with a population of approximately 277,000. The County's coastal planning area includes approximately 13,000 square acres, with frontage along the Indian River Lagoon, North Fork of the St. Lucie River, Atlantic Ocean, Taylor Creek, and Ten-Mile Creek. Ms. Olsen indicated the County's coastal planning area includes mostly public lands (35%) and conservation lands (26%), with 33% residential lands, and 6% commercial. St. Lucie County has acquired extensive environmental lands and placed them in conservation. The net result yields approximately 15% vacant undeveloped land in the area.

Ms. Olson described the County's different general planning areas along the waterways. In the north Hutchinson area (including the inlet, Indian River Lagoon, Taylor Creek, Port planning area, and spoil islands); South Hutchinson Island, which includes the Indian River Lagoon with mostly public and residential land uses; the North Fork section, which includes the City of Port St. Lucie and efforts to reconnect oxbows and establish a blueways/greenways system; and The Savannahs, which include a water body but have limited external access.

Ms. Olson emphasized the County's high priority on economic recovery from the recession, with motivation to find ways and projects that will help leverage the County's greatest asset, which is the waterway system. Water quality is of primary importance as well, and the County has prioritized projects and funding to assist in water quality improvements as well.

*Daniel Holbrook, Director of Planning & Zoning, City of Port St. Lucie*

Mr. Holbrook described the City of Port St. Lucie as the largest city in the Treasure Coast, consisting of 120 square miles. It is a predominately low density residential community, with additional emphasis on conservation and recreational uses. Mr. Holbrook indicated the City has maintained a strong history on environmental responsibility regarding the waterways, with water and utility expansions in the 1990s that significantly improved water quality.

Mr. Holbrook indicated the waterways issues for the City as water quality, public access, and mechanisms to improve both. He described a City-owned commercial planned unit development

site that designed by City staff with emphasis on public water access. The site remains undeveloped, owned by the City, and is an opportunity to explore in the Waterways Plan.

Mr. Holbrook also described the canal park, boardwalk extension, and Westmoreland Tract as opportunities to expand public access. Additional sites to be considered should include the Botanical Garden, which is publicly owned and could include additional trails as well as the potential for multi-purpose paths along the C23 and C24 canals. These provide opportunities for waterside access without significant roadway and driveway conflicts, which creates a safer and more enjoyable facility. He also noted the opportunity to connect sidewalks along Port St. Lucie Boulevard ultimately to the boardwalk to facilitate bicycle/pedestrian access and reduce the need for driving.

*Rebecca Grohall, Planning Manager, City of Fort Pierce (and Fort Pierce Community Redevelopment Agency)*

Ms. Grohall described the City of Fort Pierce's transition from 1888 to the current condition utilizing a variety of slide images. The City has always maintained a strong waterfront focus, with its core downtown along the water's edge. The City is actively engaged in and pursuing redevelopment opportunities, which include the community redevelopment area, port property, and other key parcels in the downtown area. She described the City's potential interest in a maritime academy which could be located at the port and complement the range of industrial uses currently in the vicinity.

### ***Panel Discussion***

Dr. DeLaney posed an initial question to the panelists: Is there a specific capital improvement or project that could be included in – or prioritized in - the Waterways Plan that would best help your agency achieve its mission?

Ms. Beltran (Martin MPO) indicated improved access of varied forms would be the priority, including access to uplands and interior destinations from marinas as well as transit facilities at marinas. Additionally, ferry boat access to the St. Lucie Inlet Park, which is accessible only by boat, would be a benefit, with potential launching at the end of Cove Road. Ms. Beltran also noted the drawbridge over the St. Lucie River, which is old and very low, could use significant improvement, especially with the advent of the All Aboard Florida passenger rail project and the potentially adverse effects on marine transportation in that area.

Mr. Deleeuw (Martin County) indicated the restoration of the Indian River Lagoon and maintenance of the St. Lucie Inlet for ocean access would be the key improvements, both for unincorporated Martin County as well as the City of Stuart.

Mr. Freeman (Martin County CRA) indicated a coordinated waterways-oriented transportation plan highlighting complementary projects that could be achieved at various benchmarks (five years, ten years, etc.) would be a desired outcome.

Ms. Lathou (St. Lucie TPO) identified the Crosstown Parkway, potential recreational opportunities below the pending bridge, expanded transit service to the waterfront and ocean, and the establishment of the East Coast Greenway would be the most desired outcomes.

Mr. O'Neil (City of Stuart) identified access to and on the waterway, with boating activities, potential water taxis – and a feasibility study for their success, and the ability to bring more people to the downtown by water as the key outcomes.

Ms. Olson (St. Lucie County) indicated improved water quality with a regionally-based plan to address water releases from Lake Okeechobee along with the establishment of a maritime academy as the most desired outcomes.

Mr. Holbrook (City of Port St. Lucie) indicated improved water quality as the primary goal for the City, followed by public access – for those with and without boats, expanded transportation opportunities, and the extension of the City's Boardwalk as the most desired outcomes.

Ms. Grohall (City of Fort Pierce) indicated water quality and access, restarting the economy, unlocking key waterfront redevelopment parcels such as the Port of Fort Pierce as the key outcomes.

Additional questions raised by participants included the need for additional boat ramps with additional parking and the redevelopment of the Port of Fort Pierce. Mr. Holbrook indicated the boat ramp facilities at Canal Park and the Westmoreland concept provided potential expansions. Mr. Freeman indicated the Martin County CRA is evaluating ways in which properties by the boat ramps can be utilized for greater economic return. Dr. DeLaney indicated the plan will include an inventory, evaluation, and recommendations regarding boat ramps as a focal issue. Questions about All Aboard Florida and the potential impact on the St. Lucie River bridge and coastal transportation patterns were raised and discussed.

The canal system was discussed, including the potential for additional public access through locks instead of water control structures, and it was noted the water levels within canals are maintained at certain depths to maintain proper salinity, thereby requiring water control structures. Only the C-44 canal is connected to Lake Okeechobee, which includes a lock system.

Transportation access to and from marinas was discussed, with a focus on the need to allow boaters (who come by boat and do not have access to cars) to access upland destinations. Accordingly, there is a need for increased transit, bicycle/pedestrian access, and alternative modes such as zip cars to enable access for these individuals. It was suggested the Plan could identify a variety of marina locations among the two counties to evaluate the potential for a private sector provider to provide upland access modes (e.g., bike-share, car-share, zip car), if sufficient economies can be identified and established.

It was noted the next forum will focus on Regulation and Management of Waterways, scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2014 (2 p.m.) at Stuart City Hall (City Commission Chambers); 121 SW Flagler Avenue; Stuart, Florida.

The meeting forum adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Waterways Plan for Martin & St. Lucie Counties**

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**General Meeting Notes**

The meeting was opened at 4:00 p.m. by Dr. Kim DeLaney, TCRPC. Materials distributed to committee members included agendas, meeting notes from Forum 1 and the steering committee meeting held on December 19, 2013, along with copies of the power point presentation from that forum. Self-introductions were provided by attendees.

**Waterways Forums – Review & Discussion**

Dr. DeLaney noted the format for the forums was modified slightly at the recommendation of the MPO and TPO, with a panel format that reduced the length of presentations to enable greater steering committee and public Q&A. Following the panel, after a formal adjournment, the steering committee was convened to provide a focused discussion by the committee, debrief the information from the panel discussion, and provide direction to the project accordingly. Committee members concurred with the modified format and requested it be utilized for the remaining forums.

Committee members discussed the first two forums – Forum 1 (Marine Transportation) and Forum 2 (Land Use & Upland Transportation). Each forum attracted forty individuals in attendance, which committee members felt was a successful turnout. The Committee discussed the balance between existing plans that presume a certain balance of land use (e.g., quantity of lands to be held in preservation versus lands for development) and the opportunity for the Waterways Plan to evaluate existing conditions, future land use and zoning plans, and provide recommendations where appropriate about potential modifications in approach. The differences in approach between Martin and St. Lucie Counties were discussed and noted.

Mr. Donaldson noted the Waterways Plan provides an opportunity to take advantage of existing local government plans and the existing opportunities. While some communities have substantial capacity for development, access to those lands is limited. Mr. Freeman noted the land use forum provided substantial insight about the variety of approaches and priorities among the different jurisdictions. Dr. DeLaney noted the purpose of the forums – at this stage of the

project – is to help inform the project team, the steering committee, and the public – to raise issues for discussion and begin to identify opportunities.

Committee members discussed the concept of barge traffic on the waterways and the potential for small barge terminals, sea plane opportunities in Stuart and Fort Pierce, and the need to evaluate marina conditions, needs, and trends to expand their economic benefits. There was additional discussion about the potential for water taxis and expanded mobility utilizing the waterways, with a focus on the capital costs to establish the necessary infrastructure. Ms. Beltran noted those questions – and the opportunity to access state funding – are among the key reasons the plan is being developed. The inclusion of the waterways on the FDOT Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) opens the door for potential funding beyond deepwater ports. Mr. Hymowitz of FDOT noted the Department also administers obscure funding sources, such as the ferry boat grant program, that are less apparent.

The Committee discussed the benchmarks and measures for economic conditions, both current and forecast, to determine the success of the plan. Dr. DeLaney indicated the economics section of the Plan will include a variety of measures, such as jobs, local government revenues, wages, property value increases, sales tax revenues, and other revenue sources and measures to help evaluate current waterways-related industries and inform the Plan’s recommendations. Committee members also discussed the balance – or “tension” – between quality of life considerations and economic development potentials, and the strong desire and expectation that a careful balance be maintained.

Committee members discussed the concept of guiding principles in the Plan, and it was noted the three funding entities (MPO, TPO, and FIND) each maintains a mission statement and guiding principles for their individual planning efforts.

The issue of discharges into the waterways was raised along with bilge pumps and pollutants entering the waterways. Mr. Donaldson noted the nutrient analysis of pollutants in the waterways has indicated urban runoff (from neighborhoods and roadways) and agriculture to be the primary sources, not bilge discharges. Pump-out facilities are available in marinas to contain bilge effluent, with several pump-outs noted as free to residents. Dr. DeLaney indicated the issue of pollution, including pump-out facilities, will be evaluated in the Plan. Location mapping and needs assessments for additional facilities, based on population growth, will be included as well. Mr. Kubitschek noted the emphasis on enforcement provided by marina operators, including free pump-outs for boaters.

### Updated Project Schedule – Review & Discussion

Dr. DeLaney distributed an updated project schedule and detailed schedule of the remaining four forums. Members of the Committee reviewed the schedules, and the need to adjust the schedule to avoid certain public meetings was noted. Dr. DeLaney indicated new dates would be determined, avoiding those conflicts, and circulated to the Committee.

The charrette schedule was discussed, with interviews targeted in April, following the Economic Development Forum. Public workshops are scheduled late April or early May, with a charrette studio to follow in May. Dr. DeLaney noted the MPO and TPO staff suggestions for public

workshops to be held weekday afternoons (2-6 PM) where possible for greater public participation, and Committee members concurred with this approach. The Committee discussed potential venues for the public workshops, including downtown Stuart's Flagler Center, Fort Pierce's Historic City Hall, Morningside Library, Port St. Lucie's Civic Center, and Fort Pierce's Riverwalk Center with trolley access.

#### Other Discussion & Comments

Mr. Pollard suggested the Committee's benefit of touring the waterways by boat to look at waterways opportunities first-hand and better inform ideas for the Plan. Dr. DeLaney concurred, noting the Committee had discussed the potential for several tours – such as Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie along the North Fork, Jensen Beach to Stuart, Port Salerno, and Palm City. Caution regarding public notice was noted, acknowledging the Steering Committee is not subject to the Florida Sunshine Law; however, notice requirements to enable multiple FIND Board members were being maintained. Dr. DeLaney suggested tours be scheduled in April, after the forums but before the public workshops/charrette, and the Committee concurred.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 p.m.