



# Meeting Minutes

## Town of Fort Myers Beach Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Project Advisory Committee

January 31, 2017

10:00 – 11:30 am

Fort Myers Beach Town Hall, Council Chambers  
2525 Estero Blvd, Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

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### 1. Welcome

Chelsea O'Riley and Ron Gogoi, AICP

Chelsea O'Riley with the Town of Fort Myers Beach, began the meeting at 10:03 a.m. Ms. O'Riley introduced herself and the role of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). Each member of the PAC and those in attendance introduced themselves. Ned Baier introduced the Jacobs/Alta project team. Mr. Baier stated that the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP) will be the first comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town of Fort Myers Beach (FMB) and was supported by the Lee MPO and that Ron Gogoi is the MPO staff liaison and will be there shortly. Mr. Baier thanked the PAC members for their participation and the public attending the meeting and said that there will be two public workshops planned for the public including the first public workshop on February 15. Mr. Gogoi stated that the PAC is expected to guide the development of the BPMP and provide constructive criticism and recommendations of the plan while it is developed. They would have to own the plan once it is completed and so would the town management who will have to defend it. The planning study funded with MPO allocated federal dollars would create an inventory of bike ped needs and will recommend projects. FMB can then go after state and federal funds, discretionary grants, and other funds that may be available out there. He also reported that the plan will improve safety along Estero Blvd as it is reconstructed, but it is not the focus of the project.

### PAC Members

Fifteen (15) members of the PAC were in attendance, according to the **Sign in Sheet**.

1. Chelsea O'Riley, FMB Public Works
2. David Agacinski, FDOT D1 Bike and Ped coordinator
3. Peter Dolid, Resident
4. Pat McKeown, resident
5. Dan Hendrickson, resident
6. Matt Powell, Sheriff's Office
7. Tim Lalor, Sheriff's Office
8. Paul Yacobelli, Lee County Parks and Recreation
9. Jeff Dobbins, FMB Elementary
10. Lloyd Allen, FMB Fire Dept
11. Ron Fleming appointed by council
12. Rob Phelan, FDOT Project Manager for Estero Boulevard
13. Bruce Butcher, Resident & Chairman of the safety committee, Bike Walk Lee
14. Sean DePalma, FMB Parks and Recreation
15. Simone Bair, Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau

### **Residents/Participants**

Approximately eight people who do not serve on the PAC also participated in the meeting and provided feedback.

- George Brinson
- Richard Brinders
- Bruce Butcher
- Frank Herrick
- Joann Shamp, Member of Town Council
- Gary Mooney, Newspaper
- Levi McCollum, LeeTran
- Hunter Abel, LeeTran

## **2. Introduction**

Ned Baier, AICP

Ned Baier introduced the project consultant team. The project team is Ned Baier, Katie Habgood, Mike DeVore, Robyn Frelich, and Chris Zuppa with Jacobs Engineering. Brad Davis with Alta Planning is also part of the project consultant team. Mr. Baier then explained the Project purpose, schedule, and deliverables. The project purpose includes identifying projects for bicycle and pedestrian safety, getting Town of FMB to adopt the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP), aligning and updating previous plans, and exploring opportunities for funding. This will be a living, evolving plan that will reflect the needs of the community. The project schedule started in November of 2016. This is the first meeting of the PAC as a group. The PAC will meet two more times. The second meeting will be in March. The final meeting will be in April or May. There are also two public workshops scheduled. The first is February 15, 2017. They hope to go before Council in June for adoption. There are also a series of presentations to some of the committees. The proposed plan consists of different elements and there will be a project list and a map. The project was funded through the Lee County MPO with Federal dollars.

Mr. Baier then presented the management and communications side of the project. One of the important items is documenting existing conditions. They have looked at crash data and existing plans. They have communicated with Lee County and proposed suggestions. They have been looking at funding opportunities, needs assessments, and project locations. They will prioritize according to criteria to identify projects. The entire project will include making sure there is ample opportunity for public input. Transparency with people is important for a successful project. Meeting information is on the FMB website as well as the MPO website. The committee consists of people who bike and walk. They are also coordinating with other agencies.

## **3. US, Florida, and Fort Myers Beach trends**

Brad Davis, AICP

Brad Davis with Alta commented on the walking, biking, and transit trends. Nationally there has been a trend with increases in biking and walking. There has also been a shift in terms of design toward building streets to accommodate everyone that uses the road. Locally, FDOT has focused on safety and is implementing a complete streets plan. A strategic safety plan has been implemented over the past five years. There is also an "alert today, alive tomorrow" campaign in Lee County funded in part by FDOT to help improve safety for those walking and biking. The Lee County MPO has also been managing and updating a Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Mr. Davis continued with safety trends. He said that over the past five years Florida's population has increased by 5% but the number of pedestrian crashes have increased by 29% and bicycle crashes have increased by 42%. The recent report "Dangerously by Design" developed by Smart

Growth America ranked the Fort Myers-Cape Coral urbanized area as the most dangerous place to walk and bike in the United States. Over 90% of the bicycle and pedestrian related crashes occur on roadways categorized as arterials. Around 80% of the crashes occur on roadways with posted speeds between 40 and 50 mph. There is a relationship between speed and roadway design and this indicates where the safety need is.

Mr. Davis then explained the demographics of FMB. Population has increased and it is seasonal. About 50% of the population is either at an age where they cannot drive or at an age where they may change their driving behavior. Focusing on walking and biking is an opportunity to help more people get around since there is a much higher share of people walking and biking on FMB. Mr. Baier pointed out that the statistic on the slide regarding public transit shows it to be 0% and they are aware that FMB has the trolley system but it's contribution is negligible since it is not used to commute to work and the use is low. Mr. Davis then explained that a holistic approach must be taken to include drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. There are two programs: Bicycle Friendly Communities and Walk Friendly Communities. They have five components that highlight the comprehensive approach: engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation. Cape Coral is an example of a bronze designated bicycle community. The infrastructure components listed above will be used in developing the plan for the town. Mr. Baier added that part of getting a good score or designation is having a bicycle pedestrian master plan.

#### **4. Project update**

Katie Habgood, AICP and Ned Baier, AICP

Katie Habgood presented the existing conditions and commented that some planning work has already been done. They have examined the prior work and also reviewed future plans. They have also done field review. They have a certified drone pilot on staff and that enables them to gain a new perspective. She then showed a quick video taken by the drone. She explained they are doing mapping work to see where the major attractions are or where people are going, origin and destination studies. They also took an inventory of the existing sidewalks and bikeways and examined the existing infrastructure. She said there is good existing sidewalk coverage. They have looked at bicycle and pedestrian crash data, bicycle and pedestrian fatalities, and walk score and are using these to formulate ways to make the area safer. At this point in the presentation, Mr. Baier took over. He explained the statewide effort to create a network of bicycle and pedestrian trails in Florida called SUN Trail. This program has money and they are proceeding with building segments with a priority of a coast to coast trail. Being part of this trail brings tourism. There is potential for one of the loops to impact FMB and this would be a potential funding source for certain parts on the south end of Estero Island but there isn't enough right of way on the north end to accommodate this. Mr. Gogoi pointed out that there are sidewalks on the north end and they are generous in width. Mr. Baier said these are just examples of what the design could entail. He stated even though it is not the focus of what they are doing, they have looked at the county plans for Estero Island. Mr. Baier said they are impressed with the plans given the right of way restraints. He continued with a discussion on the six segments of Estero Island and the programmed improvements on each. Mr. Phelan gave a more thorough breakdown of some of the projects and clarified that there are seven segments, not six, as Mr. Baier previously stated.

Mr. Baier said there are several background studies' recommendations but they are not set in stone and are still working with the county. The county does provide guidance to FMB on some items, for example signs. There was a brief discussion that followed on the history of some of the signs on FMB. The project team evaluated crosswalks, their locations, and effectiveness. The county asked for assistance with the crossings and evaluating and prioritizing the spots that could use a flashing signal. State safety funds or some other source could be used to fund these signals. They also evaluated using LED in pavement lights particularly near school crossings but after a few years they didn't really work. The county felt the Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) were more effective. Ms. Habgood

noted that drivers are more likely to pay attention to the RRFBs since they only flash when pedestrians are near instead of flashing all the time and possibly desensitizing drivers. The land development code review is completed. The MPO will be proceeding with a lighting study and recommendations. Mr. Gogoi stated the project is a bit delayed and should begin in March. He said this will take care of street lights and possibly lighting at crosswalks. A brief discussion on lighting followed including the comment that conduit has been installed under the sidewalk to allow for future streetlights and pedestrian lighting. There was another brief discussion that followed on the type of striping that could be used over the brick pavers in the crosswalks and that the bricks are only an aesthetic not a safety treatment. The placement of the lighting and its effects on the nesting turtles was discussed. Mr. Baier stated that over the next few weeks they will have more discussion with the county. Mr. Baier then showed a slide of crosswalks in other parts of the state and Mr. Davis explained it. The field review and Estero Blvd crosswalk evaluation are also underway.

## **5. Needs analysis**

Brad Davis, AICP

Brad Davis presented on the needs and opportunities analysis and assessment and design criteria. They want to build on the successes, enhance crossings along Estero Boulevard, complete proposed roadway improvements, and identify project opportunities to enhance connectivity.

## **6. Stakeholder and community outreach**

Ned Baier, AICP

Ned Baier presented information on Public workshop on February 15 with an open house in April, PAC meetings March 27 and final in May, websites, and interactive online mapping. This included the future meetings schedule and explaining the web-based wiki map for the project. Mr. Baier reported that the project information will be on both the Town of Fort Myers Beach website and the Lee MPO website.

## **7. Questions for PAC Members**

Katie Habgood, AICP

Katie Habgood said that the team wants to hear back from the PAC members about the project and to help start the conversation wants feedback to the following three questions.

1. What makes a successful plan? The comments from PAC members were as follows:
  - o Constructability for the projects identified in the plan, ADA Compliant
    - Needs to ensure that everything is in line with utilities in the roadway, especially drainage system
    - Segment 2 of Estero Boulevard has more ROW and enables the section to have five-foot on-road bike lanes and six-foot sidewalks, curbs at edge of pavement, inverted crown segments, and center turn lanes. Segment 2 also contends with over 100 driveways. How can access be managed to increase safety?
  - o Not a "Shelf Plan," need buildable projects immediately
  - o Needs to separate cars, people, and bikes in dedicated lanes
  - o Results in a contiguous path for cyclists, not one that jogs across Estero Boulevard
  - o Educational component (specifically at bike shops)
    - Concern about people walking in the bike lane, biking against vehicle traffic
  - o Accessibility to Recreational facilities and parks, destination parts of the town
    - Add Publix and Santini Plaza to Major Attractions map

- o Safe and comfortable system for bikers, walkers, or those who are using transit, from “tip-to-tip”
  - o Effective and maintainable
  - o North end design is nice, and it makes for great experience, considers utilities and has less traffic. Practical and effective, taking into consideration the crashes that have occurred on the island
  - o Discourage jaywalking, keep cyclists out of center turn lane
  - o Measurable
  - o Improved visibility at intersections, driveways
2. What does it mean to bike and walk in Fort Myers Beach? The comments from PAC members were as follows:
- o Staying out of the car as a user choice
  - o One place to stay and not rent a car, instead bike or walk everywhere
  - o Reduce the number of cars on the road, make the community more livable.
    - Residents can’t leave property without using a car for protection, safety is important
  - o Quality of life! Beach Communities like to be able to walk and bike.
3. Who is our user? The comments from PAC members were as follows:
- o The community, its residents, visitors, guests
    - The more accessible and available this area is, the more residents and guests will be welcomed
  - o The rental community (lodging and bicyclists)
  - o Some students at the elementary school, safe routes are not exactly present
  - o Bicycle Clubs, road cyclists
  - o Drivers that do not obey the 3 Ft. Minimum law from cyclists and park in the bike lane
  - o Freight and deliveries, landscape trucks with trailers

**8. Schedule and Next Steps**

Ned Baier, AICP

Ned Baier said funding will be discussed at the March meeting. They are working with Council on funding sources. Mr. Gogoi said there is funding for Connecticut Avenue through FDOT and they will keep open communication. He continued that they should come up with recommendations for good projects and apply for Federal funding available through the MPO or other state or discretionary funding. Mr. Baier said they would also consider state safety funds Ms. Habgood stated one of the deliverables is on funding sources. Mr. Gogoi pointed out that the Lee County Sheriff’s Office has been involved in providing enforcement and education through a High Visibility Enforcement grant. Mr. Baier said if there were any questions, they could contact Ms. O’Riley or Mr. Gogoi. He thanked everyone for their participation and input. There will be a project list presented and more details at the March 27 meeting followed by a public open house in April. There is also a public meeting February 15, 2017 in the evening. Before adjourning, Mr. Baier asked if anyone was present from the public that had questions. There were no comments recorded but Mr. Baier invited anyone with questions to see him or other project team members after the meeting There will be emails and phone calls reminding of the next meeting. The Town website will be live soon and they will be pushing public participation via the interactive map.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.