



# FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**DRAFT MINUTES - pending board approval and subject to revision.**

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## Minutes of Meeting

Date: August 22, 2024

Time: 9:00 am

Location: FDOT Burns Auditorium, Tallahassee

## Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Howse called the meeting to order at 9:09 am.

## In Attendance

Chairman Ron Howse, Vice-Chairman David Genson, Commissioners John Browning, Alex Lastra, and Rusty Roberts.

## Consent Agenda Items

- On a motion by Commissioner John Browning and seconded by Vice-Chairman David Genson the consent agenda was unanimously approved, which included the minutes from June 20, 2024.

## FDOT Agency Update, Leda Kelly, FDOT Chief of Staff

- Chief of Staff Leda Kelly announced her two-year work anniversary with FDOT and introduced Assistant Secretary Will Watts for a personnel update.
  - Assistant Secretary Will Watts shared the Department's creation of a new division called Forecasting & Performance, the announcement of the Department's first production wing in Central Office and the appointment of a second chief engineer, Rudy Powell.
    - Dan Hurtado will transition from the singular statewide Chief Engineer to the role as the Chief Engineer of Production, State Highway Division. Chief Hurtado will handle production from preliminary design and environmental phase through construction.
    - Chief Powell will serve as Chief Engineer of Operations, State Infrastructure & Innovation Division and will be responsible for maintenance, traffic operations, emergency management, forecasting and performance, and research and innovation.
  - Chairman Howse asked for an updated org chart with a breakdown of the new positions.
- Chief of Staff Kelly discussed a few Legislative session wins in workforce development.
  - Replication of the PE Training program to other projects and programs through statute supporting additional categories for workforce development within the Department.

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- The Legislative budget supported replenishing heavy equipment within the districts.
- Chief of Staff Kelly discussed the Infrastructure Summer Series which began by asking each district for what should be highlighted from their district. Legislators, committee members, staff from the Governor's office and legislative staff were invited to tour those facilities.
  - Tour sites included: JAXPORT, North FL RTMC, Howard Frankland Bridge, Skyway Bridge, SunRail, Kennedy Space Center - NASA Causeway Bridge, Miami Signature Bridge project, SunGuide RTMC
- Chief of Staff Kelly apprised the Commission of the recent events attended by FDOT Secretary Perdue.
  - ITS America Board selection to Board
  - FTBA Convention
  - SunRail Deland Station Grand Opening
  - Florida Airports Council Meeting
  - SASHTO Conference in Arkansas which included all Assistant Secretaries and other Department leadership staff.
    - FDOT received awards for District Five's Orange Blossom Trail and Wekiva Parkway.
  - Farnborough International Airshow outside of London was attended in partnership with Florida Commerce and Lt. Governor Jeanette Nunez who hosted a trade mission including military partners, private sector and public sector entities.
- Chief of Staff Kelly informed the Commission on the FDOT Hurricane Debby prep and response.
- Chief of Staff Kelly shared that the latest Florida in Motion podcast topic discusses innovation within the Department.
- Other discussion and questions by Commissioners included:
  - Commissioner Lastra commented the Infrastructure Summer Series program is wonderful but suggested expanding to invite local elected officials so they can see what FDOT does.
  - Chairman Howse reviewed the SunRail discussion from the transit workshop and notified Chief of Staff Kelly that the Commission is asking the Department to make a presentation on SunRail to inform the Commission, from inception to current status.
  - Chairman Howse discussed an issue and concern related to the average age of surveyors and the current requirement for a 4 year degree. He suggested the Department's Legislative package may need to consider including surveyors as a workforce development component.
    - Chief Kelly stated the Department will definitely have additional discussions about this.
    - Vice-Chairman Genson emphasized the University of Florida program for surveyors recently had fewer than 10 graduates.

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**Impact of federal court ruling: re delegation of the EPA's 404 program to the State of Florida, Jennifer Marshall, P.E., FDOT Office of Environmental Management**

- Ms. Marshall provided context to her presentation by explaining that 404 permitting is the federal method of administering the Clean Water Act so the responsibility lies within EPA and the program is administered by the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE).
- She further stated FDEP was granted authority in December of 2020 by the EPA to administer the federal wetlands permitting process for the State of Florida. In February 2024 a federal judge unexpectedly vacated the State of Florida's 404 permitting program after a lawsuit was brought by multiple environmental agencies.
  - FDOT had 3 permits scheduled to be issued on Friday prior to the program being vacated on Thursday. The Department had to begin the permitting process all over again.
  - Chairman Howse offered the challenges related to this federal judge ruling is not just an FDOT issue, it's also private developers.
- Ms. Marshall stated that in addition to the changes in the 404 permitting process, the rules related to environmental permitting are also in flux.
  - Ms. Marshall explained current efforts include quarterly meetings with the ACOE and enhanced agency coordination to address the Department's needs.
- Further discussion related to permitting was held by the Commissioners including water management districts, state appeals process, economic impact of delays on communities and continued state growth as well as the new storm water quality criteria.

**Moving Florida Forward Update (I-75), Will Watts, P.E., FDOT Assistant Secretary**

- Assistant Secretary Will Watts revisited the surveyor discussion. The FDOT is looking at how to tailor university curriculum to include drones, LIDAR and other devices to potentially attract a different group of people.
  - Commissioner Browning inquired about surveying requiring a 4-year degree.
    - Chairman Howse explained the rules used to be a college degree + 4 years of apprenticeship before the University of Florida created a 4-year degree program. Now you can have a college degree in another field with some additional coursework to become a licensed surveyor.
- Assistant Secretary Watts gave a comprehensive report of the Moving Florida Forward (MFF) including a recap of all 20 projects.
- The Assistant Secretary stated the timing of the I-75 capacity project may compete with the I-4 project but that it is creating a lot of competition.
- Assistant Secretary Watts provided an update on the Moving I-4 Forward project including staffing.
  - Discussion was held by the Commissioners including questions related to length (time) of the project and future employment opportunities withing the Department for the trainees.

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- The Assistant Secretary invited the Commissioners to the Open House in Celebration on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Assistant Secretary Watts described the new Modified Phased Design Build method for contracting being used and the Accelerated Innovation and Collaboration Phase (AIC Phase) where the Department will pay contract teams to innovate.
  - Discussion was held by the Commissioners including questions related to:
    - Confidentiality of team ideas
    - Communication flow
    - Types of incentives
- Chairman Howse requested a MFF update on all future FTC meeting agendas.

**Executive Director Update, Ralph Yoder, Executive Director**

- Executive Director Yoder reviewed upcoming FTC meetings.
  - Chairman Howse stated the November Performance & Production Review meeting may be a need for a 3-day event. Travel on Wednesday, meet all day Thursday and half day on Friday. Chairman House discussed the possibility of a September call to discuss the staffing for the transit review.
- Executive Director Yoder outlined upcoming industry events.
  - FAV Summit –Tampa, September 4-6, 2024
  - TEAMFL – Fort Myers, October 17-18, 2024
  - CUTR – Tampa, October 29, 2024
- Executive Director Yoder briefed the Commission on the Executive Agency Adjunct Advisory Body Report which was submitted to the FDOT and then sent to the Governor's office.
  - Chairman Howse requested Assistant Secretary Watts' presentation.
  - Commissioner Lastra congratulated the Lake Mary Little League team representing Florida at the world series.

**Public Comment**

The Chairman opened the meeting to public comment. There were no public comments.

**Adjourn**

With no other business to address, Chairman Howse adjourned the meeting at 11:19 am.