

**Official Minutes of  
MARION COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

March 6, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 6, 2025 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN KATHY BRYANT**

Chairman Bryant advised that the workshop was scheduled this afternoon to discuss the future Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.

**ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, District 2; Vice-Chairman Carl Zalak, III, District 4; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Matthew McClain, District 3; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5. Also present were County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Tracy Straub.

It was noted for the record that the Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 19 page Agenda packet to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

**WORKSHOP PRESENTATION**

1. Workshop to Present 2025-26 to 2029-30 Marion County Transportation Improvement Program

County Engineer Steven Cohoon, Office of the County Engineer (OCE) presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: The Marion County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) lists the anticipated projects throughout Marion County for the next five (5) years. Types of projects are capacity, rehabilitation, intersections, and other miscellaneous maintenance such as guardrail, sidewalks, striping, etc. Activities undertaken on these projects may include survey, design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

The TIP is revised annually prior to the budget. Each year the project cost and timing are updated as appropriate. The five (5) year timeframe is also revised to reflect the addition of the new fiscal year and the new projects for that year.

Recommended Action: Staff is seeking Board discussion and consensus on the proposed TIP.

County Engineer Steven Cohoon, OCE, advised that after receiving the positive Sales Tax information staff reviewed and reprioritized the TIP to allocate funds appropriately. He commented on the priority projects as shown on the overhead screens, noting a lot of these are legacy projects that are coming very close to construction. Mr. Cohoon advised that an important part of the TIP is balancing capacity and capital projects with a lot of the resurfacing throughout the County. There is over 10 miles of roads programed this year

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for resurfacing. The TIP contains over 113 miles of roadway resurfacing, as well 55 miles of chip seal.

Mr. Cohoon stated safety projects are also ongoing such as sidewalks.

Chairman Bryant advised that chip seal roads have lower traffic and are mostly in the rural areas.

Mr. Cohoon stated the chip seal also preserves the rural feel, noting those roads tend to be lower speed corridors and hinders the desire to drive at a faster speed.

Mr. Cohoon commented on the potential need for bonds for future projects. He advised that bidding of major projects will be staggered to ensure competitive bidding and allow successful contractors the opportunity to bid on the next phase of a project. Mr. Cohoon stated property acquisition values appear to be leveling out and decreasing in some instances. He advised that the Department would attempt to bundle resurfacing projects to lower the overall costs.

Mr. Cohoon advised that several projects may need to be shifted if bonding was not available. He stated if everything remains in the TIP as it is today there will be roughly \$170,000,000.00 worth of bonds needed over the next 5 years. Mr. Cohoon provided a breakdown of the annual debt service for \$170,000,000.00 worth of bonds, as well as \$115,000,000.00 worth of bonds.

Mr. Cohoon stated the TIP has been provided along with the timeline for the capacity projects. He requested the Board provide feedback today and allow him to come back before the Board on March 18, 2025 for the final adoption of the TIP.

Chairman Bryant clarified that the reason the Board is considering bonds is to move some of the larger projects forward and have them done for today's cost versus unknown future costs. She stated the cost to bond the projects is most likely less than what it will cost to do these projects in the future.

Mr. Cohoon commented on the ongoing increase in costs over the past 10 years.

Commissioner McClain requested data be provided showing the debt service is justified. It was the general consensus of the Board to agree with the request for data.

Chairman Bryant advised that a financial analysis will need to be done to ensure the best decision is made.

Mr. Cohoon advised that this is a proposed TIP and he is not requesting adoption today, noting this will be brought back before the Board roughly January 2026, once project bids have been received.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS**

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Cohoon advised that project C16, SW 38<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Street picks up 3,000 feet east of SW 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue, noting the reason for this is to incorporate the intersection improvements at those two important intersections. The alignment will come back into a tangent section. Where the tangency occurs is the demarcation point for the SW 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue northern project as it relates to the east. He stated the SW 38<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Street project from 3,000 feet west of SW 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue all the way back to SW 43<sup>rd</sup> Court will be designed and advertised in such a way where it will appear to be an extension of the SW 80<sup>th</sup> segment 1 project, which is SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street, half a mile north of the school. Mr. Cohoon advised that the County can advertise the project in such a way as to require the contractor to finish construction on a certain portion before proceeding to any other portion.

Commissioner Curry advised that his preference would be for the segment from SW 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue to SW 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue to be completed first, followed by the eastern portion from SW 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue to SW 43<sup>rd</sup> Court.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Cohoon stated there will be a significant impact on the traffic once these projects are complete. He expressed support for roundabouts, noting it provides a feeling of continuous movement. During construction it will be difficult, but in the long run once the projects are complete significant capacity will be added to the roadways. Mr. Cohoon advised that the Calibrex road project from On Top of the World (OTOW) to SW 52<sup>nd</sup> is a developer driven project, noting staff is working with the developer.

Commissioner Zalak commented on the importance of 35<sup>th</sup> street as it relates to the new interchange being constructed.

Mr. Cohoon advised that the NE 35<sup>th</sup> Street project was one of the more difficult ones to balance amongst all of the priorities, noting he is attempting to balance everything with the funds from the Sales Tax. He stated the plan is very heavy on the front end with all the projects that are getting ready to hit the street. Mr. Cohoon advised that he is confident at the January update staff will be able to move up the FY for some of the NE 35<sup>th</sup> Street projects.

Commissioner Zalak advised that NW/NE 35<sup>th</sup> street has been on the list for approximately 15 years. He expressed his appreciation to staff for all their hard work.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Cohoon provided a brief update on the progress of project C17 (SW 49<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Avenue Phase 1), as well as the signal at SW 66<sup>th</sup> Street project where SW 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue will connect.

Commissioner Curry expressed concern with there not being a way to get from Silver Springs Shores to the west part of the County without taking Highway 464.

Mr. Cohoon advised that staff are working with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on a study of Highway 464 and Baseline Road intersection.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Cohoon stated 3 of the 4 legs of this intersection belong to the State, noting Highway 464 to the east is the leg owned by the County. He advised that FDOT is studying that intersection and he has been in coordination with them relating to the early out traffic counts and projects. The County is attempting to work with FDOT to fast track some of the projects to enter into the design agreement, with most of the burden on FDOT since it is predominantly their intersection. Mr. Cohoon stated hopefully the Department can work with FDOT once the Interstate 75 (I-75) move Florida Forward project is over to start programing and prioritizing some of these other State facilities.

Mr. Cohoon commented on the intersection projects listed on page 15 of the Agenda Packet. He stated there is a lot of difficulty getting from the north side of Highway 464 in Silver Springs Shores to the east into Ocala. There was an alternate road plan included in the 20 year needs analysis to go through the Greenway.

Commissioner Curry expressed appreciation to staff for how well the TIP has been presented.

Commissioner McClain opined that Marion Oaks Manor extension is a project that will have a big impact on the County.

Chairman Bryant advised that when she was at the groundbreaking for the Move Florida Forward project she was able to speak with FDOT District Secretary John Tyler, who was able to drive the Highway 484 corridor and experienced the current issues.

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Commissioner Stone expressed support for the proposed plan and appreciation to staff for their hard work. She stated she is in favor of the design and build process where it is appropriate to help the County move as quickly as they can on these projects.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

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Kathy Bryant, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk