

# FLORIDA KEYS TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

Friday, September 3, 2021 (Virtual)

Meeting convened at 1:03PM

## **Voting members in attendance:**

David Rice, Monroe County BOCC, Chair  
Mary Lou Hoover, Commissioner, City of Key West  
Brian Shea, Planner Director, City of Marathon (Alternate)  
Kimmeron Lisle, Representative for City of KCB  
Bruce Halle, Mayor, City of Layton

## **Board members absent:**

Pete Bacheler, Vice-Mayor, Village of Islamorada  
Dan Zieg, Councilman, City of Marathon

## **Resource Group/Public in attendance:**

Emily Schemper, Sr. Director, Planning & Environmental Resources, Monroe County  
Cheryl Cioffari, Asst. Director of Planning, Monroe County  
Mayte Santamaria, Sr. Planning Policy Advisor, Monroe County  
Janene Sclafani, Transportation Planner, Monroe County  
Kimberly Matthews, Sr. Director Strategic Planning, Monroe County  
Rita Irwin, Chairperson, Monroe County Tourist Development Council  
Rod Delostrinos, Director, City of Key West Transit  
Raymond Freeman, Public Transportation Manager, FDOT, District VI  
Nilia Cartaya, Model Development Administrator, FDOT  
Tom Harding, Councilman, Key Colony Beach  
Norman Wartman, Transportation Specialist  
Joel Perez, Gen, Superintendent Bus Ops, Miami-Dade Transportation  
Steve Noble, General Public  
Ilze Aguila, Planning Commission Supervisor, Monroe County  
D.A. Aldridge, General Public  
Simon Gutierrez de Pineres, General Public  
Jill Zima, Reporter, Key West Citizen

## **Presenters:**

Carlos Castro, District Freight Coordinator, FDOT  
Jack Schnettler, Atkins Global, FDOT Consultant  
Paul Henjes, Flixbus  
Jeremy Mullins, South FL Commuter Services, FDOT Consultant (Absent)

- I. Commissioner Rice convened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

- II. Roll call was completed.
- III. The agenda was approved, with addition of Item #5 Report from Roman Gastesi, County Administrator. Motion to approve, Brian Shea, seconded by Bruce Halle. Motion approved with no objections.
- IV. The minutes of June 4, 2021 meeting were approved. Motion to approve, Bruce Halle, seconded by Brian Shea. Motion approved with no objections.
- V. Roman Gastesi reported on bus service improvements project. He suggested we look at what Aspen, Colorado has done. Very similar issues of transportation of workers to Aspen from surrounding cities. They created the Roaring Forks Transportation Authority, and fund it with a half (1/2) penny sales tax dedicated to the transportation authority. This would take legislative approval by our Florida Legislature to put in place as well as authorize the halfpenny sales tax. We have another option as well to creating our own transportation authority, the South Florida Transportation Authority (Tri-Rail mostly), has a space in their authorizing documents to allow Monroe County to join. We are researching the benefits as well as any negatives to this option. He has reached out the Keys Chambers of Commerce and received an "interested" consensus from them. Stacy Miller, District VI Secretary, FDOT, will be attending the September 15, 2021 Regular BOCC meeting in Key Largo. We are looking forward to meeting her and establishing a more formalized system for communicating Monroe County needs on US1. We have a support Resolution on the September agenda to request FDOT initiate focus studies and projects to relieve traffic congestion issues, particularly in Upper Keys and Islamorada.
- VI. Carlos Castro, District Freight Coordinator, FDOT and Jack Schnettler from Atkins Global, consultant to FDOT presented the Monroe County Freight Improvement Plan. This study is being initiated now and will extend through March 2022, with recommendations and report scheduled for April-May 2022. Similar studies are being initiated all through District VI and Districts through the state. Goals are to improve safety, enhance mobility, and inspire innovation. Outlined were the scope and schedule, coordination, the transportation network analysis, data from 2018 streetlight "O-D data" of daily truck trips from Miami and back up from the Lower Keys (including Key West), from two designated districts for Upper and Lower Keys. Possible improvement actions will be studied, access and circulation enhancements, freight staging/consolidation, review of US1 Master Plan strategies, and other infrastructure improvements. Next steps will be to initiate agency contacts (Sept. 2021), complete traffic counts/data collection (Sept. 2021), freight focused contacts

(Sept.-Oct. 2021), complete existing and future conditions. Will report again to FKTCC at December 4, 2021 meeting.

- VII. Paul Henjes, Flixbus Government Relations Associate, presented the new Flixbus service in Monroe County. Flixbus is a Germany-based company in 35 countries with recent expansion to US in 2018, Florida 2019. Largest inter-city connection bus network.

They are offering a unique bus experience in a quality coach that can take you from Key West to Miami and Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville at a reasonable cost. 3-6 round trips daily to Key West from Miami. Numerous stops are already step up throughout the Keys, and more coming in the near future. The service to Key West began May 6, 2021. Key West stops are at the Tour Bus lot, 908 Caroline Street, and the Key West Bight/Duval. At Marathon, stop is at IHOP restaurant, and a temporary stop at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street/BB&T Bank. Islamorada, a temporary stop is at the Trading Post market. Six days week, except Tuesdays.

Prices:

Within Monroe: \$7.99 - \$9.99, calculated by ahead or on demand booking, distance.

Miami/Ft. Laud: \$9.99 - \$14.99

To Orlando: \$24.99, all Monroe locations.

For other locations, go to website at [www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)

Bruce Halle asked about the ridership in Monroe so far; and what is their breakeven point? Paul responded that ridership is still low, but getting better in Monroe, as people hear about the service, and the buses are much fuller between Miami and Orlando, balancing the South Florida service. Key West to Miami is currently at 37 riders daily, moving upward. Marathon is low, but improving.

Flixbus is looking to add stop locations, Florida City/Homestead, Key Largo, additional tourist destinations, Key West Airport.

Lisle asked about a stop at Ft. Lauderdale airport. (Currently has a stop at Miami International Airport.) Paul responded not adding that to Monroe route yet, they can look at adding that in near future. He explained that their hub is at MIA, passengers could transfer to the Flixbus headed north. There is a stop, a Broward Park and Ride just outside the Ft. Lauderdale airport, with shuttle service.

Paul Henjes can be reached at 267-712-9052 if anyone has any questions about the Flixbus service.

- VIII. Jeremy Mullins, SFSC was absent from the meeting, his update report on mobility issues for mainland workers to and from the Keys will be rescheduled for the next meeting. He did send through an informational document that has been forwarded to the committee.
- IX. Comm. Rice reported on recent County activities. Emily Schemper provided an update on the Draft US1 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and recently approved 2021 US1 Time Delay Study. The draft plan will be sent to the FKTCC members soon for their review and information. Planning will arrange meetings with the cities to discuss and review the TMP.

The TMP will be on the October BOCC agenda for approval. They will adopt a Resolution of Support for the plan.

Comm. Rice has an item on the September 15, 2021 agenda, a Resolution of Support to FDOT to engage studies and traffic flow projects to ease various issues of traffic congestion, which will include a list of recommendations from the FKTCC. The Resolution will request FDOT to put the studies and small projects they conclude are viable into the 5-year work plan.

He stated that our next step is getting all our ideas, general and specific, forwarded to the FDOT for their review and study. Many of the recommendations from the committee and from the TMP will be compiled and submitted for FDOT focus study.

We will be calling for a special meeting of the FKTCC for the voting members to vote to recommend the project recommendations list. (Update: September 24, 2021 meeting date.)

The FKTCC will hear an FDOT presentation of their Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Policy Plan, by ZOOM on October 6, 2021 at 1:30PM – 3:00PM, if you are able to attend. We agreed to let them use our committee contacts list for broadcast to interested persons.

- X. Joel Perez, General Superintendent Bus Operations, Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), gave a brief update on the added buses to the AM schedule for Route 301 Monroe-Dade Express.

Comm. Rice asked him that we were getting reports that riders could not get a seat on the bus due to the pandemic spacing restrictions reducing passenger seats available by half. Mr. Perez reported that those spacing restrictions have been removed, restoring full capacity of the buses.

Comm. Rice stated that the Monroe-Express is very important now and in coming years to Monroe County, as many of our employees are coming from Miami-Dade County to fill jobs.

Comm. Hoover asked if there was any promotion by MDT that the additional buses were on-line. Mr. Perez responded no, they do not generally advertise their service adjustments, only new service. He added that if the additional buses were to be cut back, it would not be due to low ridership, numbers are high. Funding issues are critical going forward.

- XI. There were no additional questions or comments.
- XII. Meeting adjourned at 2:15PM

Upcoming meetings:

Special meeting called for Friday, September 24, 2021 at 1:00PM  
Discussion of a draft list of US1 Improvement Projects and approval of a FKTCC Resolution providing recommendations to the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners on traffic flow improvement projects that could alleviate congestion on U.S. 1 and assist in improving the Level Of Service on US 1.

FDOT presentation of their Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Policy Plan to the FKTCC on Wed., October 6, 2021 at 1:30PM by Microsoft Teams. Calendar meeting invite previously sent out to all on the FKTCC contact group.

Next regular meeting of the FKTCC will be Friday, December 3, 2021 at 1:00PM