

**MINUTES
MID-BAY BRIDGE AUTHORITY
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

**CITY OF DESTIN BOARD ROOM
4200 INDIAN BAYOU TRAIL
DESTIN, FLORIDA**

I. OPENING

Members present: James D. Neilson, Jr.
Gordon E. Fornell
Parker Destin
Kim Wintner
James T. Wood, Jr.

Also present: Van Fuller Executive Director
Michelle Anchors Legal Counsel
Bryant Paulk FDOT Ex officio, non-voting
Cathy Demoreski Administrative Assistant

II. INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS & PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Neilson welcomed visitors, David Vardaman, Courtney Engle, Tom Engle, and Emily Probst, Residents of Niceville and Jennifer Adams, Okaloosa County, Tourist Development Department (TDD). He then invited Ms. Adams to address the Board.

Ms. Adams thanked the Authority for the opportunity to update them on her work as the TDD Director over the past 4 ½ years. She explained the TDD does more than just focus on advertising, it is responsible for budgeting and staffing six teams relating to marketing and operations; visitor information services; coastal resources; convention center services; destination stewardship; and film commission.

Ms. Adams explained that bed tax is the only source of income, and no local tax money is provided in support of the TDD. She reported that in 2018 and 2019 the bed tax growth increased 8% and 10% respectively then dropped 18% in 2020 due to the Pandemic. She was pleased to report that 2021 bed tax increased by 73%, setting a record, which translates to a spend growth of \$736M. Bed tax revenues are used to fund public safety; beach restoration; capital projects; and beach and parks maintenance. All revenues collected prior to the approval of the 2021 bed tax referendum can only be used in the southern end of the County. In accordance with the referendum's interlocal agreement, Okaloosa County cities will determine the percentage of disbursement of the \$0.05 of every dollar collected going forward. These funds can be used for tourism related projects (i.e., crossover projects, way-finder signage, ditches and roads, and infrastructure as it relates to mobility and water access) but not capital projects. As a point of interest local sales & gas tax revenues increased 49% from 2018 to 2019. The Pandemic caused an 8% decline between 2019 and 2020, but was up 64.9% in 2021. Ms. Adams further explained that it is not yet clear whether this same performance is expected to continue.

Ms. Adams noted since many visitors return year after year, they are aware of traffic congestion entering Destin on Saturdays, so many travel to the north end of the county on Friday, spend the night at rates as high as \$695, and complete their trip to Destin early on Saturday. Since the southern end rates are as high or higher, it is important to ensure the southern end provides a higher level of service.

The Little Adventures program, which provide pop-up activities, advertised at the kiosks at the convention center and Crystal Beach locations are geared toward outdoor adventures and Adventure Packs. The TDD partners with local businesses to offer free and discounted activities that offer ideas for things to do and have been very successful. These experiences are intended to create memories of a lifetime that will keep visitor coming back.

Ms. Adams expressed an interest in partnering with the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority on outdoor billboard advertising and will coordinate with the Authority's Public Relations Consultant, EW Bullock. Additionally, Ms. Adams indicated that the TDD is very interested in advertising on the booths at the Toll Plaza.

The Authority thanked Ms. Adams for her presentation and for partnering with the Authority annually in support of the seasonal North Lakeshore Drive ramp closures.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting – December 9, 2021 (January 20, 2022, Meeting Cancelled)

A motion to approve the December 9, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes was made by Mr. Fornell with a second by Mr. Wood and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval.

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Destin presented the Treasurer's Reports for December 2021 and January 2022. Account balances were:

<u>DECEMBER 2021</u>		<u>JANUARY 2022</u>	
FNBTBank	\$ 164,802.21	FNBTBank	\$ 190,554.52
Regions	\$48,719,253.19	Regions	\$50,243,928.89

Mr. Destin made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Reports for December 2021 and January 2022 with a second by Mr. Wood and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval of both.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A. Operations. Mr. Fuller reported that traffic and revenue for the month of December 2021 on the Bridge was as projected, and the Parkway exceeded projections.

Year over year revenues on the Parkway were down likely due to the backlog in license plate recognition/collections because of insufficient staffing during the Pandemic.

Mr. Fuller reported that he has contacted Ferrovial, FDOT's Okaloosa County asset maintenance contractor, and requested they prepare a proposal for the annual seasonal closure of the North Lakeshore Drive ramps. As in previous years the TDD funds law enforcement during these closure weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day and the Authority funds the costs associated with signage, barricades, and related labor.

The Authority's accounting consultant, Warren Averett, has nearly completed their work on the FY2021 financial statement and the audit is underway by Carr, Riggs, Ingram. The final document should be ready for presentation at the March 2022 meeting.

Mr. Fuller updated on current data calls in support of annual bond ratings by Fitch and Standard & Poor's rating agencies.

Finally, Mr. Fuller reported that he has had discussions with a representative from Precision Contracting Services (PSC) the contractor representing Florida Power and Light (FPL) on a request to use the inside of the Mid-Bay Bridge for additional fiberoptic conduits to support their needs. Mr. Fuller has also been in contact with Mr. Bernard Johnson with FPL regarding a possible financial consideration as part of a binding agreement between FPL and the Authority.

B. Proposed FDOT SR293 Safety Study. Mr. Fuller presented the proposed FDOT SR293 Safety Study Scope of Work for consideration. The Study was requested by the Authority as a result of community concerns related to recent accidents on the Mid-Bay Bridge. The original request was for the entire length of the System, end to end, specifically the Mid-Bay Bridge; however, that request was scaled back to cover the bridge and other specific areas on SR293, e.g., Kelly Plantation entrance, Middle School Road, North Lakeshore Drive, Town Center Blvd., and Forest Road. The primary focus will be on the Bridge.

Discussion included public comment made by Mr. David Vardaman who along with Ms. Emily Probst originally requested the Authority address this issue at the October 2021 meeting. Mr. Vardaman expressed concern that the Study would include more than the Bridge and would take too long to complete however he understands the reasoning and is satisfied with the Authority's decision provided the Bridge the primary focus. Mr. Fuller noted that the data obtained as a result of the Study will provide the information necessary for the FDOT to make any recommendations that may be required for motorist safety.

A motion was made by Mr. Destin with a second by Mr. Wintner to accept the FDOT SR293 Safety Study Scope of Work in the amount of \$119,282.61 and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval.

Further discussion included the recent plantings on the median on Danny Wuerffel Way. Mr. Fuller explained the County obtained grant funding from FDOT and executed the improvements. The County will maintain the area for a five-year period. Mr. Fuller mentioned that the TDD expressed an interest in the advertising space at the lanes on the Mid-Bay Bridge Toll Plaza and he will work with the TDD once they provide a better understanding of the requirement. Mr. Fuller also explained that in 2015, in coordination with the then Tourist Development Council (TDC), the Authority's billboard artwork was changed to incorporate the beach as the destination rather than the Bridge as the route. Ms. Adams has previously expressed an interest in partnering with the Authority to incorporate the Little Adventure's program into an update to our outdoor advertising. Mr. Fuller recommended Ms. Adams contact the Authority's Public Relations firm EW Bullock.

VI. LEGAL COUNSEL

Executive Director Authorization for Mid-Bay Bridge Authority Projects. Ms. Anchors recommended the Authority renew this authorization to avoid delays awaiting review and approval by the Authority or the need for special meetings at short notice, allowing the Executive Director specific authority within the already approved Budget to act to approve actions to keep the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority projects moving forward. The Sunshine Law requires that the Board members not discuss issues among themselves that could at any time require a vote, so use of e-mail to approve proposed actions is not appropriate. Acknowledging such authority formally would permit the Executive Director the latitude to address matters immediately, although such action would be subject to review and ratification at the next meeting of the Authority. This would allow the projects to advance in a timely manner. Both Mr. Fuller and Ms. Anchors confer regularly about the projects, and this suggestion is made only to continue to meet the objective of the Authority in moving the projects forward.

A motion was made by Mr. Destin with a second by Mr. Fornell to grant the Executive Director, within the approved Budget and in consult with Legal Counsel, the authority to take specific actions prior to the next duly Noticed Meeting, where any action will be ratified, to move the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority projects forward during 2022, in lieu of a Special Meeting while continuing to keep the members informed appropriately, as may be necessary to advance the forward progress of the projects. A 5-0 vote was taken for approval.

VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Discussion included the Bridge cleaning schedule. Mr. Fuller explained that the FDOT asset maintenance contractor schedules sweeping twice a month, which is consistent with the Three-Mile bridge and the Pensacola Bay bridge in Escambia County. The contract requires specific response times to customer reported (e.g., at toll plaza, by phone, etc.) trash complaints. Also discussed was replacing the faded signage on SR293 with new interoperability signs. Mr. Fuller explained that only one sign remains to be updated.

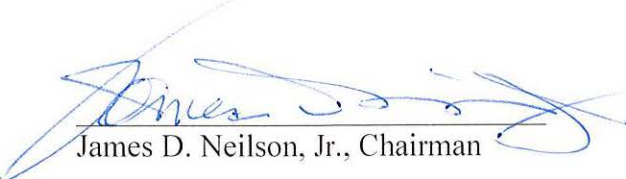
VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The next regular meeting of the Authority will be held on **Thursday, March 17, 2022**, at 9:00 a.m. in the Niceville City Hall Council Chambers, Niceville, Florida.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Approved this 17th day of March 2022.



James D. Neilson, Jr., Chairman