

Moving Martin forward

County MPO adds waterways to Long Range Transportation Plan

Patrick McCallister

STAFF WRITER

pmccallister@YourVoiceWeekly.com

MARTIN COUNTY — The Martin County

Metropolitan Planning Organization, MPO, is looking for help deciding how folks will get around for the next few decades.

"This is their opportunity to share what they want the transportation network to look like in 25 years," Beth Beltran, administrator, said.

The MPO is forming its long range transportation plan, which federal laws require every five years. The plan includes a wide array of

transportation, from roads and light rail to pedestrian walkways and bicycle lanes.

"For the first time waterways will be a component to our long range transportation plan," Beltran said. "We wanted to look at the waterways as a mode of transportation. At one time, it was the primary mode of trans-

See MPO page 2

MPO from page 1

portation here."

Indeed, Stuart is the eastern end of the Okeechobee Waterway, which stretches from Fort Myers to Martin. Every population center in the county is connected by water.

"We're at a unique crossroads here." Darrell Brand, Palm City boater, said.

Brand said that many boats can travel the St. Lucie as far north as White City, the southern side of Fort Pierce. He said the Indian River Lagoon stretches to Daytona Beach. Brand said adding waterways to the county's long-range transportation plan makes a lot of sense.

"It's a great boating area," Brand said. "That's why you're seeing the boating industry growing and growing."

Beltran said that the MPO is doing public workshops to tell people about the transportation planning, and to gather their transportation priorities with "Martin Mobility Bucks." That is, workshop attendees get five "\$20 bills" to put into boxes representing 10 transportation priorities. Waterways, by the way, rank fifth place in the workshop attendees' priorities so far. New roads was below that, sixth place. The top

spot is a little surprising.

"More bicycle facilities would definitely be number 1," Beltran said.

Of the 905 \$20 mobility bucks the MPO collected at workshops, 157 were placed in boxes for bike lanes and pathways. Maintenance of existing roadways took the silver spot with 140. Improvements to pedestrian facilities is in the bronze place with 132. That's followed by more public transit, which has 115. Park-and-ride facilities is at the bottom of the list with nine Martin Mobility Bucks.

Beltran said the MPO is eager to get out to speak to more groups about the Long Range Transportation Plan. Additionally, folks can learn more and give their thoughts at www.martin1040.com. Additionally, the MPO has public-participation kiosks at the county's libraries, including the Peter & Julie Library, 2551 S.W. Matheson Ave., Palm City.

"They need to let us know," Beltran said.

For more, call (772) 223-7983.

Editor's note: Patrick McCallister is a member of the Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding appointed him to the position in April.

