

Kimley-Horn engages public in long-range transportation plan

By Kathy Oristaglio
For Progress & Innovation

The Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization (Martin MPO) is in the process of developing the county's 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan. In order to qualify for federal transportation funds, every metropolitan area with a population of 50,000 or more is required to have an MPO to coordinate transportation improvements.

Data collection, public involvement

One of the MPO projects is the development of a long-range transportation plan. The transportation plan addresses all available modes of transportation with the goal of improving transportation infrastructure while protecting the environment and enhancing the quality of life for residents. The plan will be used as a guide for future development and will be updated every five years in response to changing needs.

The Martin MPO hired engineering firm Kimley-Horn for the year-long project that involves data collection and public involvement, the development of a Needs Plan and Cost Feasible Plan and finally, adoption of the plan in December 2015.

Kimley-Horn has good reputation

With offices across the country, Kimley-Horn was ranked No. 33 in the top 500 design firms by Engineering News Record in 2014. The company works with local governments and private entities on capital improvement projects such as roads, bridges and parks, providing a full range of services including planning, design, engineering, traffic studies and landscape architecture.

Nationwide, Kimley-Horn employs 2,300. On the Treasure Coast, Kimley-Horn has 50 employees with offices in St. Lucie County and Vero Beach. The



Indiantown residents worked with Kimley-Horn and Martin MPO staff at their public meeting to identify transportation opportunities in the community.

company has four South Florida offices, from Palm Beach to Miami-Dade with approximately 280 employees.

"On the Treasure Coast, we primarily serve local government projects, design-phase and all types of infrastructure improvements," said Stewart Robertson, vice president of Kimley-Horn, St. Lucie. "We also assist private clients with planning and development."

Plenty of work available

Robertson said the firm has been involved with the Martin County MPO long-range transportation plan since October. The project will continue through December of this year.

According to Robertson, they have between 12 and 15 staff working on the transportation plan and he estimates they will spend 3,000 man-hours on the project in total. Five years ago, the firm worked with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council for the development of the 2035 Long-Range Plan. This time, they are working directly with the Martin MPO.

Public engagement is important

Public input is a big component of the plan's development. In January and February, Kimley-Horn conducted a series of public workshops and set-up web-based and social media tools to



Indiantown residents filled the room to participate in the planning process for the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

capture the public's ideas including an online transportation survey and Facebook page.

Kimley-Horn hired the public relations and marketing firm, Firefly Group, to help with public outreach, including organizing the public meetings, arranging for speaking engagements and designing the project website, Moving Martin Forward (<http://www.movingmartin2040.com>).

During the workshops, Kimley-Horn employed innovative exercises to encourage public input, such as automated polling and interactive maps. During one workshop, participants were each given \$100 in play money called Martin Mobility Bucks and were asked to distribute the funds between a variety of transportation projects.

Spending transportation money

"I take a lot of pride in have a strong public engagement component in our projects. We're really trying to make it innovative and engage the public. We're getting a broader range of thoughts. It's not oriented or steered towards any particular outcome but it really is a measure of what the public thinks of the transportation process," said Robertson.

"We're discovering a wide range of ideas from the public of where they would like to have transportation dollars focused."

During the Mobility Bucks exercise, a

top priority was for better, safer bicycle facilities. At another meeting, maintenance of existing roads took precedence over building new roads.

Robertson said that while they would have liked even better turnouts, overall they were pleased with the interest the public has shown so far and they are very happy with the quality of comments and ideas they had received.



Stewart Robertson, Vice President Kimley-Horn, St. Lucie

He said that Kimley-Horn would be incorporating many of the public's ideas into the plan.

The next phase of the project, the development of the Needs Plan is underway to be followed by the development of the Cost Feasible Plan. There will be a public comment period in the fall, prior to the plan's adoption in December.

As part of the plan, Kimley-Horn performs a cost analysis that includes a forecast of funding from federal, state and local dollars.

Focusing on top priorities

Robertson said that the Long-Range Transportation Plan 2040 will build off of the plan developed in 2010.

"There will be new things. There are things that will be explored in more detail. We're focusing on goals and objectives," he said.

Additional details about the plan can be found at <http://www.movingmartin2040.com>. Information about the Martin MPO can be found at <http://www.martinmpo.com>.