Draft Meeting Summary

Representatives of FDOT District 4 engaged in a series of listening sessions with local governments and transit agencies in late September as part of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan.

FDOT met with representatives of the Cities of Wilton Manors and North Lauderdale on September 26. The group discussed the various strategies the Cities' departments are undertaking in pursuit of their land use and transportation goals and the indicators they are currently using (or hope to use in the future) to track success.

# Key Themes and Takeaways

* The City of North Lauderdale has performed a Complete Streets audit to document the current status of Complete Streets in the City and to see how codes could be improved for better implementation.
* The City of Wilton Manors would like to reduce the number of travel lanes on Wilton Drive, their "main street,” to allow the addition of on street parking, bike lanes and to make pedestrian improvements. Wilton Drive is a state road; therefore any changes to the road must meet FDOT standards, which are causing challenges.
* In February of 2012, parts of the City of Wilton Manors were rezoned to Transit-Oriented Corridor (TOC). On a larger scale, the City is considering an entirely new form based code addressing the City's six (6) main corridors and the residential areas between them.
* Wilton Manors representatives described the City’s vision as more reactive to current issues and more closely related to the budget than the Comprehensive Plan. The City views the Comprehensive Plan as an administrative requirement with generic language as opposed to an accurate reflection of the City’s vision. Wilton Manors’ annual budgeting process begins with a workshop on goals and objectives. This near-term focus makes it harder to plan for the big picture and for longer term projects.
* Both cities expressed a desire for greater coordination between their neighboring jurisdictions, particularly concerning corridor and streetscape improvements.
* Both Cities noted that their City Councils pay attention to the amount of public complaints, and consider a lack of complaints as a sign that “things are going generally well.” Wilton Manors noted the active involvement of their citizens in volunteer groups in the City government and neighborhood associations.
* The Cities are experiencing a push for more road improvements and for staff and financial resources to be put towards longer range plans, projects and infrastructure improvements instead of continuing reactionary planning and repairs. "Champions" to push for this type of project funding are needed.

# Participants

* David Archacki, City of Wilton Manors, Director of Emergency Management & Utilities
* Jennifer Barrow, FDOT District 4, Complete Streets Coordinator
* Andrew Disbury, City of North Lauderdale, Community Development Specialist
* Larry Hymowitz, FDOT District 4, Mobility Coordinator
* Karen Kiselewski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Manager
* George Krawczky, City of North Lauderdale, Assistant Public Works Director
* Robert Piatkowski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Planner
* Heidi Shafran, City of Wilton Manors, Community Development Services Director
* Randy Welker, City of Wilton Manors, Economic Development Coordinator

# Discussion

After an initial overview of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project and status update, FDOT representatives and project team members engaged the representatives from the Cities of Wilton Manors and North Lauderdale in a dialogue on the Cities' visions, strategies, and indicators.

## Current Initiatives & Strategies

### Complete Streets

Most of the Cities' transportation and land use initiatives have a multimodal focus, particularly for bicyclists and pedestrians. The City of North Lauderdale has performed a Complete Streets audit to document the current status of Complete Streets in the City and to see how codes could be improved for better implementation. While the key elements have not been completely identified as of yet, several results from the audit are as follows:

* Bring commercial buildings and uses closer to the street along the State Road 7 (SR 7) US 441 corridor
* Provide sidewalks in the Planned Unit Development (PUD)
* Develop better parks and open spaces
* Improve the use of transit and the comfort of transit patrons by providing bus shelters.

Representatives from the City of North Lauderdale stated that the results of the Complete Streets audit need to be added to the Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Element contains a list of actions for the City to pursue (a wish list), but lacks a timeline to guide or catalyze their implementation. In order to develop a better network of Complete Streets, additional items will be added to the Transportation Element related to landscaping and the provision of shade for pedestrians. This list will be shared with the Department of Transportation.

The City of North Lauderdale also would like to create a network of bike lanes which spans the City and connects with neighboring cities' bike networks. Bailey Road currently has a nice bike lane treatment which could be a model for the rest of the City. Another favorable example is the bike path established along the C-14 canal just outside of the City.

### Future Land Use & Zoning

The City of North Lauderdale is looking to update its zoning and ordinances. To this end, the City has performed a review of its ordinances to determine what, if any, changes are needed in order for the City to achieve its goals. One particular area identified as a major concern is the SR 7/US 441 corridor. The existing codes along the corridor require large setbacks and small signs, creating an unwelcoming environment for pedestrians and limiting the potential for multimodal transportation.

In February of 2012, parts of the City of Wilton Manors were rezoned to Transit-Oriented Corridor (TOC), including the City's entire section of Dixie Highway and the segment of 26th Street from NE 15th Avenue to the railroad crossing. Developers have noticed the change in zoning, as demonstrated by a proposed 179 unit residential project. On a larger scale, the City is considering an entirely new form based code addressing the City's six (6) main corridors and the residential areas between them. Wilton Manors representatives described this effort as a “mini version” of Miami 21.

The City of Wilton Manors would also like to encourage small businesses along Powerline Road and Oakland Park Boulevard. A quick zoning study was performed to determine how to make those corridors more small business friendly.

### Lane Reductions

The City of Wilton Manors would like to reduce the number of travel lanes on Wilton Drive from four (4) to two (2) lanes. This would allow the City to add on street parking, bike lanes and make pedestrian improvements along the road that functions as their "main street." Currently, Wilton Drive is a state road. Any changes to the road must be done in coordination with FDOT. Following the examples of lane reductions on state roads in other locations, one possibility may be to transfer ownership of the segment of roadway in question from the State to the local jurisdiction, in this case Broward County or the City of Wilton Manors. This two-lane initiative is driving the demand for Complete Streets treatment along the corridor. The proposal for improving Wilton Drive and Andrews Avenue mirrors the lane elimination initiatives in Fort Lauderdale and Oakland Park. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) will be used to provide the funding for infrastructure improvements. The end goal is to enhance the look, pedestrian environment, and businesses along the corridors.

### Economic Development and BIDs

The City of Wilton Manors plans to use BIDs to raise money for roadway capital improvements to entice business activity because the City cannot have a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The costs created by the BIDs would likely be passed on from property owners to tenants through Common Area Maintenance (CAM) charges. The City has interviewed property owners and tenants who would be impacted by the BIDs and found that the Wilton Drive corridor is receptive to the idea. As Wilton Manor's main street, there are already popular plans in place that the BID could fund. The two-lane initiative is generating interest in the BID, and the City would like to put the BID up for vote in the spring. The economic development BID on Wilton Drive and Andrews Avenue would mirror the Complete Streets efforts along those two corridors.

The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance focuses on issues of economic development, particularly housing and shopping development. While the Alliance is working on securing funds for improvements to Port Everglades, in general, transportation is not a major area of focus for the group; roadways and mobility are not commonly on their agenda.

The North Lauderdale City Commission wants to do more economic development and coordinate it with their Complete Streets initiative. However, there is no one championing the initiatives as they are not yet considered “urgent” enough. The City of North Lauderdale would also like to maintain a strong retail market. The Wal-Mart at the intersection of Rock Island Road and West McNab Road has left the location, which has had a negative impact on the remaining shopping center tenants, many of which have left to follow Wal-Mart.

### Funding

The City of North Lauderdale tends to fund projects on an as needed basis to maintain and repair infrastructure instead of developing longer range plans for coordinated improvements. There has been a push for more road improvements and for staff and financial resources to be put towards longer range plans, projects, and infrastructure improvements. This would allow the City to accommodate future growth while avoiding the problems which may arise from disorganized rapid development. As noted above, the City would benefit from a "champion" to push for this type of project funding. A step in this direction is the road atlas being developed to aid in maintaining the roadways and an associated bond proposal. The infrastructure located under the roads would be improved first, followed by the roads themselves.

### Utilities

Wilton Manors will introduce utility rates that are tied to the cost of maintaining and improving infrastructure on a pay-as-you-go basis. The purpose is to maintain a high level of maintenance and service while avoiding a backlog in needed improvements. To prepare for and help attract future growth, it is important to have in place the necessary infrastructure. To this end, Wilton Manors has completed a new major lift station to increase capacity.

### Comprehensive Planning & Vision

The City of Wilton Manors does not find the comprehensive planning process to be very useful, but instead sees it as more of an administrative requirement. Instead, the City's vision is driven by the budget, which results in a vision that is more responsive to current issues than proactive in preparing for the future. This makes it harder to plan for the big picture and implement longer term projects. Apathy towards the Comprehensive Plan is largely a result of the plan typically being created by a consultant who copies and pastes elements from other Cities' Comprehensive Plans. The overall impression is that Comprehensive Plans are not specific to the municipality, and strategic plans and master plans tend to better represent a city's vision.

### Regional Coordination

Both Cities expressed a desire for greater coordination between their neighboring jurisdictions, particularly concerning corridor and streetscape improvements. The Cities realize the added benefit of corridors with continuity, such as a continuous pedestrian friendly streetscapes and bike lanes. A network of connecting bike lanes between cities would provide a viable mobility option for cyclists.

Wilton Manors would like to mirror Oakland Park's Andrews Avenue project to implement bike lanes continuously along the corridor. Similarly, the City would like to widen sidewalks and improve lighting along Dixie Highway from 5-points south to the City limit; this project could be partially funded through the FDOT Local Agency Program (LAP). Fort Lauderdale is interested in continuing these Dixie Highway improvements into their jurisdiction as well.

Overall, Wilton Manors and North Lauderdale agree that coordination with neighboring municipalities makes sense. Additional examples of coordination include contacting the adjoining municipality when applying for a grant that would affect an area along their border, and maintaining close professional relationships with the staff of other cities.

Wilton Manors has a representative on the Broward MPO’s Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), but does not feel that they get much back from the effort. For example, ann idea that was not pursued was for the MPO to host a roundtable for municipalities expecting a Wal-Mart on how to deal with them.

Broward County and the South Florida Regional Planning Council are coordinating with the City of North Lauderdale on improving Bailey Road. Another major corridor in North Lauderdale, SR 7, has existing charette documents, although the City Commissioners will likely need to be reintroduced to those documents.

### Community Involvement

Wilton Manors’ population is actively involved in community participation. The City has three distinct, healthy neighborhood associations which work together with the Economic Development Task Force and the Planning and Zoning Board. Public engagement also is carried out via a large, voluntary weekly Email list with over 800 members. Volunteer groups in Wilton Manors participate in City government and provide feedback to the City Commission. For both Wilton Manors and North Lauderdale, if the City Council is happy or not getting complaints from the public, things are considered to be going generally well. North Lauderdale finds it more difficult to maintain interest in community involvement and membership on various City boards.

### Setting the Budget

Wilton Manors holds an annual goals and objectives meeting as a predecessor to establishing the annual budget. At this meeting the head of each department presents what their department accomplished over the previous year and what their goals are for the future. Each department also presents its work plan to the City Commission and public, who are then invited to comment. Generally, the next year's work plan is built off of the current year's plan. A Budget Review Committee, constituted of a set of residents, gives comments to the City Commission who usually take them into consideration. The departments then have the opportunity to use this input to revise their work plan before the final budget is approved.

North Lauderdale follows a similar process of reviewing each department's proposed budget. Budget workshops are held where departments present their work plan and receive feedback on it, affording them the opportunity to revise their work plan before a budget is approved. This process offers a preview of the annual budget and leads to an non-contentious budget process. At the same time, each department can hear what the other departments are doing and what their goals are. At these workshops, the Public Works Department presents their Capital Improvements Plan.

### Parking Trust Fund

The City of Wilton Manors will establish a parking trust fund for the purpose of creating more parking. The city will receive payments for the fund in lieu of parking, plus overage in expected revenues for meters. The trust fund would be specifically earmarked for additional parking facilities. Once established, it will become a revolving fund.

# Strategies and Indicators

The following table lists the strategies that the Cities of Wilton Manors and North Lauderdale mentioned throughout the listening session.

|  |
| --- |
| Strategies |
| System-Wide   * Review zoning and land use ordinances in comparison with City vision and Complete Streets goals * Identify list of key projects and elements to focus on * Coordinate with FDOT on City’s vision and projects the City would like to implement * Develop a bike master plan * Keep City Commission up-to-date on the plans and charrettes already completed and remind them of their existence * Coordinate with local and regional economic development organizations * Coordinate planning activities with neighboring cities * Develop and update City strategic plan * Encourage and coordinate with citizen volunteer groups * Involve neighborhood associations and maintain public involvement (e.g., Email lists) in city planning and economic development activities * Improve infrastructure to support more intense future development (e.g. Wilton Manors’ major lift station) * Hold an annual workshop to discuss departmental goals and objectives during budget development * Develop plan to improve utility infrastructure and maintenance * Set rates for utilities to pay for improvements and continuing maintenance * Demonstrate the need for funding to pay for roadway improvement and maintenance projects * Identify local champions to push for funding for projects and economic development * Create a vision for the city's future and incorporate it into strategic plans unique to the city * Coordinate with MPO through technical advisory committees * Coordinate with the County and regional planning councils   Facilities   * Perform a review/inventory of existing Complete Streets * Create an inviting pedestrian atmosphere (i.e. shaded walkways, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting, etc.) * Coordinate with neighboring cities to make connections for bike lanes, streetscaping, and other improvements * Reduce number of travel lanes on main downtown streets * Add on-street parking * Add bike lanes * Transfer roadway ownership from FDOT to County or City to allow for more control over right-of-way and streetscaping * Develop and implement mobility plans for east-west corridors * Add infrastructure improvement projects to capital plan and set aside funding * Develop a road atlas as a plan to “redo” the roads (e.g. North Lauderdale)   Places   * Maintain aesthetically pleasing public spaces * Use Planned Unit Developments * Use Transit Oriented Corridor zoning where appropriate * Establish Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) * Use funding from BIDs to improve roadway infrastructure and streetscaping, including Complete Streets elements * Perform zoning study to encourage small businesses * Implement a Form Based Zoning Code * Develop a parking management plan and trust fund |

The following table lists potential indicators that relate to the strategies voiced during the meeting with the City of Wilton Manors and the City of North Lauderdale.

|  |
| --- |
| Indicators |
| Quantitative   * Number of new businesses * Vacancy rate of commercial space along corridor * Change in commercial tax revenue from corridor * Change in property and rental values along corridor * Parking Trust Fund revenues and expenses * Parking spaces created from parking trust fund * Peak hour travel time along east-west corridor (all modes)   Qualitative or Anecdotal   * Feedback from businesses in potential or existing BID * Public complaints |