

# TRANSPORTATION MATTERS

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*Transportation Planning for the Palm Beaches*

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) were mandated by the Federal Highway Act of 1973 to provide a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing transportation planning and decision-making process. The process encompasses all modes and covers both short-range and long-range transportation planning. The Florida Statutes also have language addressing Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The Palm Beach MPO consists of the MPO Board, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Bicycle/Pedestrian/Greenways Advisory Committee. The MPO Board is composed of five County Commissioners, 13 elected officials from 11 cities, and one elected official from the Port of Palm Beach.

## MPO Grant Funds Shared-Use Pathway in North County

Bicyclists, hikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts will have a new opportunity to enjoy the wilds of northern Palm Beach County. The first phase of the Bluegill Trail shared-use pathway is nearing completion and is anticipated to open in early 2011.

The nearly \$800,000 project was funded by the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP). The TEP is an annual funding program that focuses federal transportation dollars primarily on bicycle and pedestrian projects. The MPO is charged with administering the competitive grant application process, and funding is typically provided to municipalities and Palm Beach County (PBC) departments. PBC's Environmental Resources Management (ERM) received TEP funding for construction of the Bluegill Trail.

This first phase - 5.3 miles long - extends from PBC's Riverbend Park west of Jupiter, to the City of Palm Beach Gardens' Sandhill Crane Park on PGA Blvd., west

*Continued on page 2*



## Federal Funds Expand Local Water Taxi Opportunities

Before long, Palm Beach County residents and tourists alike will be able to hop on water taxis to travel between multiple destinations including natural areas and urban entertainment centers. Many more opportunities for this form

of leisurely and scenic transportation are becoming a reality thanks to the federally funded Ferry Grant program. The program has provided funding assistance for a county-wide endeavor to

*Continued on page 2*

## Bluegill Trail *Continued from page 1*

of Florida's Turnpike. The route provides direct access to conservation lands and visitors facilities, running alongside the C-18 Canal and the Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area, and offers excellent views of the surrounding landscape. The ten-foot-wide hardened shell rock pathway will allow for easy hiking and accommodates all skill levels of bi-

cyclists. Equestrians will have the option of using the pathway or the softer areas adjacent to the trail. Additional highlights of the Bluegill Trail include a chickee hut, informational kiosks, native trees for habitat and shade, a



bridge over the canal, and a hand pump well offering non-potable water for equestrian use. The project is the first trail facility to be fully developed as part of the footprint of the Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA). NENA is a collection of 165,000 acres of conservation lands and activity centers in northern Palm Beach County and south-



ern Martin County that provides a wide range of nature-based recreational opportunities.

Phase 2 of the Bluegill Trail is planned to run south of PGA Blvd., providing a linkage to Grassy Waters Preserve at Northlake Blvd.

## Water Taxi *Continued from page 1*

link cities along the Intracoastal Waterway through an integrated water taxi transit system.

Federal funds from a 2005 Ferry Grant program are passed through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The MPO entered into a Joint Participation Agreement with FDOT to distribute Ferry Grant funds locally through a grant application process. Eligible projects included the design and construction of infrastructure components required for water taxi operations including water taxi docks, improvements to existing docks, and related access facilities.

The MPO evaluated applications submitted by local cities and Palm Beach County departments, and awarded Ferry Grant funding for nine local projects. After some state and federal permitting delays, the following applicants have projects that are recently completed or successfully underway:

### Completed Projects: (Service may not yet be available)

**Town of Jupiter** – Construction of a water taxi dock as part of the Riverwalk project was completed in 2010.

**City of West Palm Beach** – Construction of two water taxi docks was completed in 2010. The docks are located at Currie Park on North Flagler Drive and along the Flagler Drive waterfront, adjacent to downtown West Palm Beach.

**Boynton Beach CRA** – Construction of a water taxi dock at Boynton Harbor Marina near Two Georges restaurant was completed in 2010.



### Projects Currently Underway:

**Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management (ERM)** – Construction of a water taxi dock is currently underway at Juno Dunes Park.

**Palm Beach County Parks & Recreation** – Construction of a water taxi dock and a shelter is underway at Dubois Park in Jupiter.

**City of Riviera Beach** – Permits were recently received for construction of a water taxi dock at the City of Riviera Beach Marina, with construction commencing in early 2011.

**Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management (ERM)** – A water taxi dock on Snook Island, located in the Intracoastal Waterway near the City of Lake Worth, is scheduled for construction in early 2011.



## Health Department Vanpool Benefits Riders and the Environment

The Palm Beach County Health Department rolled out their first vanpool at a “Green Carpet” event in early November at their downtown West Palm Beach headquarters. Vanpool riders discussed their decisions to reduce greenhouse emissions and reduce commuting costs, in addition to reducing the stress of daily commutes to their shared workplace. Palm Beach County Commissioner Priscilla Taylor handed off the van keys from Patricia Cox of South Florida Vanpool (SFVP), to Health Department Director Dr. Alina Alonso, who in turn presented them to the primary vanpool driver. The event was sponsored by SFVP, South Florida Commuter Services, Florida Department of Health (FDH) and the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).



per month are shared by the riders. The program requires a minimum of five participants for each vanpool, and VPSI provides the vehicles, including maintenance and insurance. Patricia Cox is the Palm Beach County Marketing Coordinator for SFVP, and promotes the vanpool program along with em-

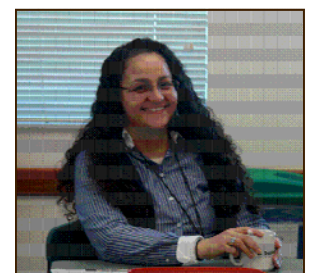
ployers. The program exceeded its projected three-year growth in the initial year of operation. There are currently 43 vanpools with an origin or destination in Palm Beach County, and that number continues to grow.

The program is a much needed and appreciated resource for both residents and employers. The Treasure Coast residents in this new vanpool begin their commute to West Palm Beach at a parking lot near Florida’s Turnpike. Stops include the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Central Zone office of PBC Facilities Development & Operations, and the FDH. This vanpool is the result of a year-long effort by FDH Environmental Manager Selva Selvendran, along with Patricia Cox of SFVP and Ellen Ostrowski of SFCS.

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## MPO Planner Heads State GIS Technical Committee

The Florida Model Task Force has named MPO Senior Planner Nellie Fernandez as incoming Chairperson for its GIS Technical Committee. The Committee supports research and development of GIS data, software, and applications that facilitate and improve the modeling process and the use of GIS in transportation modeling. The committee works cooperatively with national, state, and local organizations to ensure that the latest GIS technology is applied at its best within the Florida modeling community. The Florida Model Task Force also recognized the Palm Beach MPO as one of Florida’s leading pioneers in advanced geographic information systems and advanced modeling using the Southeast Regional Planning Model, making Nellie Fernandez an ideal choice to chair this committee. Regarding their selection, the Task Force Tri-Chairs stated, “Ms. Fernandez’s GIS experience and modeling knowledge enable her to communicate effectively with GIS practitioners and traditional modeling staff. With her leadership, the Model Task Force can work to ensure that newly developing FSUTMS GIS applications merge seamlessly with Florida’s other existing GIS analysis processes.”



## Palm Beach MPO Board Members

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## Palm Beach MPO Staff

**Randy M. Whitfield**, P.E., Director

**Angela Morlok**, Principal Planner

**Bret Baronak**, Senior Planner

**Nellie Fernandez**, Senior Planner

**Vinod Sandanasamy**, Senior Planner

**Vacant**, Planner II

**Malissa S. Booth**, Public Information Officer

**Marilyn Tincher**, Financial Analyst

**Elizabeth Requeny**, Administrative Secretary

**Renee Benezra**, Secretary

*Background image of Bluegill Trail Canal Bridge*



### PALM BEACH METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

2300 North Jog Rd., 4th Floor

West Palm Beach, FL

33411-2749

Tel 561.684.4170

Fax 561.233.5664

*Transportation Planning  
for the Palm Beaches*

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.PBCGOV.COM/MPO](http://WWW.PBCGOV.COM/MPO)