

**MINUTES  
MID-BAY BRIDGE AUTHORITY  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021**

**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**

**A. David Vardaman – Bridge Safety**

Mr. Neilson welcomed Emily Probst and David Vardaman, Niceville Residents, and Robin Spencer, City of Destin. He then invited Mr. Vardaman to address the Board.

Mr. Vardaman thanked the Board for the opportunity to be heard and introduced his neighbor, Emily Probst. He explained that he and Ms. Probst along with her husband and her mother had met last week with Mr. Fuller to discuss their concerns about the increase in head-on crashes on the Mid-Bay Bridge and to request a Traffic Study be conducted to address possible solutions. Mr. Vardaman went on to explain that in late September Emily could have been killed in a head-on collision that occurred one vehicle in front of her. He referenced the handout (being made part of the minutes) he provided today detailing recent accidents and explained the photos were taken by Ms. Probst. Mr. Vardaman further explained that Ms. Probst is the second of his neighbors to experience a close call because of an accident on the Bridge and felt it was time to investigate possible solutions (e.g., delineators, rumble strips, etc.) to alert drivers when their vehicle crosses the centerline.

Ms. Probst thanked the Board and explained that she and her husband, a Lt. Col. stationed at Eglin AFB, have three daughters in school in Niceville and are very embedded in the community. She explained that on the day of the accident she and her mother, who was visiting from South Carolina, had been to lunch in Destin and were travelling home to meet the school bus. As she crested the hump, she observed a vehicle about 100-200 yards ahead travelling south very erratically and aggressively. Thinking the car may be trying to pass she immediately took notice of the spacing of the car in front of her, which was normal and then realized that there was no car in front of the erratic driver to even pass. The car then crossed the centerline at which time Ms. Probst, having no other option to avoid a possible collision, pulled onto the shoulder and stopped her vehicle. The driver in front of her took a defensive action by crossing the centerline into the southbound lane to miss being hit while at the same time the erratic driver realized her position and overcorrected directly

into the other driver head-on. The only way she could describe the situation was to compare it to a pinball machine, not know where the erratic car was going to go or what it was going to hit. She said that the screeching tires, bending metal and screaming was probably over in a split second but felt like an eternity with no means of escape....it was terrifying. Mr. Wintner suggested that this type of accident could have happened anywhere and asked what makes the Bridge significant. Ms. Probst, using the Spence Parkway as an example, explained that there are medians and shoulders for a motorist to drive onto to avoid being hit. Further discussion indicated that there are eleven bridges along the Spence Parkway with only a shoulder, just like on the Mid-Bay Bridge, and in fact just last week there was a fatality on the Spence Parkway where a vehicle travelling south crossed the centerline and hit the front drivers' corner of the vehicle which then rolled over onto the shoulder. Mr. Destin expressed his understanding of how terrifying it must have been to witness and the desire to find the best route going forward in terms of alerting drivers by installing rumble strips to prevent or mitigate future crashes. Mr. Wood recently travelled on the Pensacola bridge and suggested the possibility of using delineators. He explained that they made him feel as though the lane was very narrow which in turn caused him to decrease his speed. Mr. Fornell asked Mr. Paulk what steps should be taken by the Authority to initiate a Safety Study. Mr. Paulk suggested either a Resolution from the Authority or a letter to Secretary Gainer would be the most efficient route and to include the photo hand-out provided by Mr. Vardaman today. Mr. Vardaman pointed out that without a constant police presence on the Mid-Bay Bridge to enforce the no passing and speed limit rules this process seems to be the natural progression to safety and thanked the Authority. Mr. Neilson explained that the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority has always prided itself on safety first and foremost and that no precaution should be overlooked. Mr. Fuller explained that he has been in contact with the Florida Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Safety Engineer in Chipley, and they are willing to undertake such a study.

**Mr. Wood made a motion to engage the Florida Department of Transportation in a Traffic Safety Study on SR293, specifically the Mid-Bay Bridge, with a second by Mr. Destin and a 5-0 take for approval.**

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **A. Regular Meeting – September 16, 2021**

**A motion to approve the September 16, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes was made by Mr. Wood with a second by Mr. Fornell and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval.**

### **IV. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Mr. Destin presented the Treasurer's Report for September 2021. Account balances were:

FNBT	\$ 163,803.49
Regions	\$58,572,505.84

**Mr. Destin made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for September 2021 with a second by Mr. Fornell and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval.**

## V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. Fuller wished Mr. Neilson and Happy Birthday and, in his honor, shared donuts with everyone present.

Mr. Fuller provided a summary of the Treasurers Report by explaining that the Authority's Debt Service is driven by its indenture and is a set amount with interest. Each year on October 1 the Debt Service Fund zeros out to pay the required Principal and Interest and any remaining balance in the Revenue Fund will be distributed 50/50 between the FDOT to pay off the Authority's current Short-Term Debt and the Authority's General Fund; however, the Authority's funds remain in the Revenue Fund through the low season as insurance to provide debt service coverage for the semi-annual payments in April.

**A. Operations.** Mr. Fuller reported that FY2021 has been a rebound year and we anticipate somewhat of a leveling of transactions in FY2022. Mr. Wood pointed out that the Bridge traffic does not match the Parkway because not everyone that uses the Parkway uses the Bridge. Mr. Neilson noted that it had been brought to his attention that during the summer months of June through August visitors leaving early experienced back-ups going northbound because only one cash lane and the dedicated SunPass lane were open. Mr. Fuller explained all lanes are open on the Bridge beginning at 5:00 a.m. during the tourist season. Back-up going north can occur at times due to demand since there is only a small que space unlike in the southbound lanes.

Mr. Fuller provided an update to the Pier 104 repair status and explained the FDOT materials lab has been very busy, so the District Structures Maintenance office modified a contract to test for chloride infusion in Pier 104 and a small number of additional piers. They have also directed the asset maintenance contractor to remove spalling and apply a coating in advance of final repairs. The estimated completion date for final repair is the end of the calendar year.

Mr. Fuller reported that he hosted a meeting at the Authority office with the Florida Turnpike Enterprise Director, Ms. Nicola Liquori and the Toll Operations Director, Nacho Gomez-Lobo. Some of the topics discussed were interoperability and tolling. Mr. Wintner questioned the lane closure scheduled on a Holiday Monday to which Mr. Fuller responded that the District Structures Office had it on their schedule and the notice went out via the FDOT Press Release process. The maintenance contractor put out messaging boards, which in hindsight could have gone up earlier, lesson learned. There were flagmen directing the one-lane traffic around the snooper truck which can cause a back-up depending on the time of day. Mr. Paulk pointed out that the Department runs into that in other tourist areas often. The Marler Bridge experienced the same situation recently.

**B. Memberships Review/Approval (TEAMFL, EDC, NVCC, DCC, CBA).** Mr. Fuller recommended continued support of our memberships in the following professional and community organizations: the Transportation Expressway Authority Membership of Florida (TEAMFL), Okaloosa County Economic Development Council (EDC), Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce (NVCC) and its Military Affairs Committee (MAC), Destin Chamber of Commerce (DCC), and the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) all of which are included in the FY2022 Budget. Mr. Wintner pointed out that the Destin Chamber of Commerce included a Military Affairs Committee membership at no additional cost.

**A motion was made by Mr. Destin with a second by Mr. Wintner to approve the Authority's continued memberships with TEAMFL, EDC, NVCC including the MAC, DCC, and CBA for 2022 in accordance with the approved FY2022 Budget with a 5-0 was vote taken for approval.**

## **VI. LEGAL COUNSEL**

**A. Annual Policy Review/Renewal.** Ms. Anchors reported that she has reviewed the existing and current policies and procedures of the Authority. There were no statutory or required changes to the current policies and therefore recommended renewal.

**A motion was made by Mr. Fornell with a second by Mr. Wintner to renew the Authority's Capitalization, Code of Ethics, Recognition and Hospitality, Procurement, Public Participation, and Revenue Recognitions Policies for FY2022 and a 5-0 vote was taken for approval.**

**B. Annual Ethics Training.** Ms. Anchors reminded the Board that as Public Servants the Florida Code of Ethics must be followed however no formal training is required. She will however provide materials at the November meeting for everyone's review and reference. Ms. Anchors did remind all Members that although it is not listed in the Code of Ethics the Florida Sunshine Law must be followed. It is recommended that you listen, take no action, and don't speak. Everything you say, no matter the device used, is public record. Any questions or concerns regarding communication should be brought to Ms. Anchors to find a clear and legal path.

## **VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

None

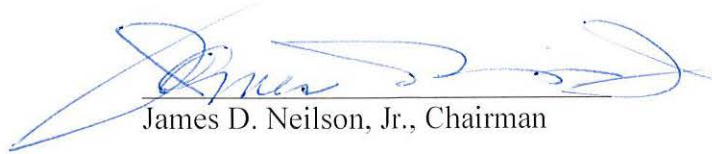
## **VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The next regular meeting of the Authority will be held on **Thursday, November 18, 2021**, at 9:00 a.m. in the Niceville City Hall Council Chambers, Niceville, Florida.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:38 a.m.

**Approved this 18th day of November 2021.**



James D. Neilson, Jr., Chairman