

Osceola County hosts Transportation Summit

By Terry Lloyd on Wednesday, May 10, 2023



Osceola County hosted a Transportation Summit on Tuesday, in partnership with the Central Florida Expressway Authority, FDOT, Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise, and MetroPlan Orlando at the Kissimmee Civic Center.

Agency representatives at the summit discussed billions of dollars of ongoing and planned road projects aimed at reducing travel times, improving safety, and providing access to essential services. Upwards of 500 people attended.

Osceola County Commission Chair Viviana Janer opened the discussion with the state of transportation in the County. Gary Huttman, Executive Director of the tri-county MetroPlan Orlando informed audience members of MetroPlan’s role in obtaining Federal transportation dollars for Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. Osceola County Deputy County Manager Tawny Olore provided an update on improvements to county roads.

“Over \$5 billion in widening projects on county roads will take place over the next five years,” Olore said. “Work has started on part of Simpson Road, Neptune Road, between Partin Settlement Road and Kissimmee Park Road will be out for construction bids in June 2023, and construction on Partin Settlement and Boggy Creek Roads will begin this year as well.”

Florida Department of Transportation Secretary for District 5, John Tyler, announced that funding for additional lanes on I-4 from Champions Gate to U.S. Highway 27 is receiving some immediate funding from the Florida Legislature as part of the state's Moving Florida Forward initiative. In addition, long anticipated improvements to John Young Parkway, including at the usually-congested Pleasant Hill Road intersection will soon be in the design stage, but it will be sometime in 2027 before the construction is completed.

Nicola Liquori, Executive Director of Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, described her agency as moving forward with adding additional lanes to the Turnpike through Osceola County, with a full turnpike interchange in St. Cloud at New Nolte Road, with a construction period for 2024-2029.

Michelle Maikisch, Executive Director of the Central Florida Expressway Authority, which combined with the former Osceola Expressway Authority in 2014, provided details on improvements and the Southport and Northeast Connector projects, which will swoop south of Lake Toho and up through portions of the county south and east of St. Cloud and connect with State Road 417 in Orange County.

While the summit did not reveal any significant new information, it provided a concise summary of road and other transportations improvement planned in Osceola County through 2045 and all of the interlocking agencies involved. There was no opportunity given for questions from the audience.

The summit comes on the heels of the County's Southeast Area Transportation Study (SEATS) presentation in April. SEATS is examining the roadway improvements needed in the St. Cloud vicinity, in five-year increments, through 2045, in anticipation of the planned developments occurring to the south and east of St. Cloud, support the planned developments occurring to the south and east of Lake Tohopekaliga, and within the Alligator Chains of Lakes Conceptual Master Plan.

More information on Osceola County road projects can be found at <https://bit.ly/3nFwS6e>.

Some 500 people attended Osceola County's Transportation summit Tuesday at Kissimmee Civic Center.