

## FDOT District 4/ACEC FL Liaison Committee Meeting Summary

Friday, January 23, 2026, 1:30 PM

- 1) **Relevant topics from most recent statewide and local meetings:** Transportation Committee (11/18), Henry Fuller Task Team - HFTT (11/20-21), Legislative Committee Weeks (Nov/Dec), Legislative updates (session commenced 1/13)
  - **Legislative updates:**
    - FTBA has indicated they will not have a large package. They will be working to include language to extend sovereign immunity on FDOT projects to the Contractors.
    - FDOT has noted they will have 2 packages with 4 priorities. We know there will be a P3 package. *More information continues to be distributed as received.*
    - PE Days 1/20-21 Outcome – **200 engineers visited 80-100 legislators to promote issues - see attached talking points. Additional info at [Advocacy – ACEC Florida](#)**
    - FHWA Foreign Drone Ban – **clear direction provided to industry.**
    - Other items: ***Discussed Palm Beach Days, Broward Days, good interaction with local leadership. Focus by FDOT remains on support of the 5 pillars of the compass, presentation of Work Program to Florida Transportation Commission reflected this focus, with Community Engagement at the center of those efforts. FDOT focus areas for 2026 Legislative Session: Talent, Tools, Technology.***
  - **Legislative Committee Weeks** – FDOT presentations throughout shared with ACEC members to ensure alignment with priorities.
    - ***D4 attended Palm Beach Days and will attend Broward Days in Tallahassee***
    - ***This week - Steve presented in front of the Transportation Commission about D4 Work Program and major initiatives – safety and workforce development***
    - ***Tri-Rail funding will be a local leadership priority this session***
    - ***Industry should continue to keep the District apprised of project issues before the Legislators hear about the topics***
    - ***A lot of interest in AAM – technology. Florida at the forefront.***
  - **ACEC Transportation Committee:**
    - **Leadership Changes** - Deirdre Finn, is the new Executive Director for FES and ACEC-FL. ***Bio Attached.***
    - **PD&E** - FDOT has developed a policy for streamlining to meet the 18-month timeline.
      - Some of the work will be shifted to planning and some will be shifted to design. Work is not going away, just shifting into different phases.
      - Hundreds on the shelf that won't be built - ***those funds can be better utilized and spent on designing and building projects. Priorities to be determined accordingly.***
      - Planning will be moving over to E&O - production mode, not just study mode.
      - ***Challenge to industry to come to the District during PD&E development if they see opportunities for savings even if it doesn't cover the entire scope of the project but meets the intent.***
    - **Design** - FDOT developing a cost savings concept for a value engineering/cost savings type of review beginning at the 60% plan reviews. Trying to develop ways to encourage

prime consultants to innovate more with potential bonuses based on cost savings. FDOT is developing pilots for this.

- **Structures** - Ongoing deliverables: structures plans review white paper (pending central office comments), temporary wall policy (awaiting CEI feedback and coordination with FTBA), and staff hour estimating guidelines (to resume now that leadership is in place)
- **Quality** – Continued discussion on high quality deliverables, and to obtain data for analysis on any perceived reductions in quality.
- **CEI** - FDOT is developing framework for performance based/budget constrained CEI - based on type of work, size of work, etc., and will set a budget to go along with LS CEI
- **HFTT** – General theme, how can we continue to simplify processes, make them more efficient to expedite work program delivery. CSI, VA, Schedule Requirements, Materials Acceptance, CPAM generally noted. ***Additional discussion elements included training for all three entities (FDOT, CEI, Contractor) - with workforce development a priority, how do we get these new additions up to speed asap.*** Third party issues discussed every year, topics including utility coordination, permit coordination, damages, project acceptance. ***ACEC group to remain focused on how we can enhance the E in CEI, through training, empowerment and highlighting engineering judgement/issue resolution at the project level. Presentations for FTBA Symposium geared towards addressing some of these elements.***

## 2) Standing Item Updates:

***Liaison committee agreed to retain a grouping of standing items deemed long-term critical. Committee champions from FDOT and ACEC were determined, as elements within the championed area arise, progress on addressing the element, pulling in additional resources, etc. will occur between quarterly meetings. Goal being to provide the full committee with positive progress updates, working towards best practices, completed work doctrine. Committee champions are empowered to establish sub-committees or working groups to develop/implement recommendations between quarterly liaison meetings.***

### AREAS AND CHAMPIONS:

- **EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES - TYLER FURREY AND TONY PIEDRA**
  - *Use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) Applications that meet current guidance. Guidance update recommendations, etc.*
  - *Advanced Air Mobility (AAM)*
- **QUALITY – BRAD SALISBURY AND CORIANN SALAS**
  - *Final plans*
  - *Pay item issue on the software*
  - *AI use in Quality control*
- **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – KEREISHA OTTEY AND LISA DYKSTRA**
  - *Focused on STEM box outreach, Construction Career Days, and the Florida Bridge Competition (next event in January, District 4), “Adopt a School” approach.*
  - *Plans to expand the bridge competition regionally in future years.*
  - *Joint meetings with DOT counterparts are ongoing to coordinate efforts and identify collaboration opportunities.*
- **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING/INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT – ANSON SONNETT AND JANETTE LACHOWSKI**
  - *Review best practices from other Districts and recommend/plan an event for D4.*

- **PROJECT DELIVERY AND COST EFFICIENCIES – CESAR MARTINEZ, SCOTT PETERSON, AND JAVIER MANSO**
  - *D/B Mentality. Best practices for streamlining project delivery, what stages appropriate to refine scope, maximize value per project within work program.*
- **SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE – KATIE KEHRES AND JAMES SPINKS**

*Preparing for the D4 Safety Team Monthly Steering Meeting on 2/19, finalized the ACEC D4 Highway Safety Subcommittee Charter.*

  - *One item they are developing for sharing with the committee is idea of a Target Zero Champion Program. Working on draft document.*
  - *Likely will invite subcommittee chair (James Spinks) to next liaison meeting to share progress.*

### 3) **Conference and Symposium Announcements**

- FDOT District 4/ACEC/FES Florida Bridge Competition – 1/24/26, D4HQ
- FAU ASCE Student Southeast Symposium - April 16-18 (March 12-14)
- FDOT District 6/ACEC/FES Engineering Career Fair – 2/5/26, 9am-12pm FIU Engineering Campus
- FTBA/FDOT Construction Symposium – 2/10-11/26, Orlando Bonnet Creek, theme: Deliver.
- Transportation Conference set for May at Hilton Disney Springs, theme: Partnership.
- Project Management Symposium scheduled for May at SeaWorld Renaissance Hotel, theme: Driving Progress and Connecting People.
- SASHTO – 8/21-25, Greenville, South Carolina

### 4) **Local Topics:**

- Introduction of new member – Janette Lachowski, Stantec.
- BDI Contracts – promote more competition; discuss the approach for allowable amount of sub-consultant services by non-BDI consultants
- PD&E Study policy direction - ***Challenge to industry to come to the District during PD&E or Design if they see opportunities for savings, even if it doesn't cover the entire scope of the project, but meets the intent.***
- Cost controls on projects with a focus on scopes, fees, and engineering decisions – evaluate short term improvements, streamline the development of plans, and focus on the ROI of a project when considering trying to address needs vs. limited resources.

### 5) **General Discussion:**

- Next Meeting date/time: April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm (4<sup>th</sup> Friday – every three months)
- ***Discussed continuing to bring “guest” attendees, focus on rising leaders, FELI, leadership academy graduates, etc. to observe meeting format and engage in current issues.***

### **Participants (Invitees shown, attendees will be noted in Bold for meeting summary):**

- FDOT – **Steve Braun, Paul Lampley**, John Krane, **John Olson**, Matt Carlock, **Kereisha Ottey**, Anson Sonnett, **Cesar Martinez, Scott Peterson, Jessica Rubio, Kadian McLean, Chris Rojas, Tyler Furrey**
- ACEC – **Mel Pollock (Chair), Coriann Salas**, Lisa Dykstra, **Javier Manso, Tony Piedra, Janette Lachowski**

# SUPPORT FLORIDA'S PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS



The **Florida Engineering Society (FES)** and the **American Council of Engineering Companies of Florida (ACEC Florida)** represent professional engineers and engineering firms across the state of Florida. Our members design, maintain, and improve the public and private facilities that support Florida's communities and economy.

## FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES FOR FLORIDA ENGINEERS



### SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**CHALLENGE:** Underfunding critical infrastructure increases costs in the long term.

*Insufficient funding for critical infrastructure threatens public safety and human health. Without sustained funding, communities could face unsafe roads, unreliable transit, poor-quality drinking water, and increased pollution, which impede economic growth and prosperity.*

**SOLUTION:** Sufficient, sustained funding will strengthen our economy.

*Robust funding to repair, maintain, and modernize critical infrastructure provides the foundation for a strong economy, which attracts investment and creates high-wage jobs. Maintaining the financial integrity of the Transportation Trust Fund is essential to preserving Florida's ability to invest in safe, reliable, and future-ready transportation infrastructure. Safeguarding the fund ensures long term stability for projects that support mobility, economic growth, and community resilience for Floridians.*



### LONG TERM COST SAVINGS FOR QUALITY ENGINEERING

**CHALLENGE:** Pressure to prioritize cost savings over quality engineering in publicly funded infrastructure projects results in higher costs down the road.

*Safety risks, project delays, and expensive cost overruns are often the result of selecting underqualified engineering firms that offer below market bids to undercut the more qualified competitors.*

**SOLUTION:** Safeguard the Consultants' Competitive Negotiation Act (CCNA).

*Florida's CCNA requires governments to select engineering professionals based on qualifications first, with the cost of services introduced in subsequent negotiations. Prioritizing qualifications in the procurement process protects taxpayers' investment in public infrastructure by ensuring projects are designed to industry standards, which saves money in the long term.*



### QUALIFIED OVERSIGHT OF THE ENGINEERING PROFESSION

**CHALLENGE:** Spending taxpayer funds on public infrastructure designed by unqualified engineers will erode public trust.

*Weakening licensure or defunding oversight of the engineering profession creates preventable threats to public safety and public health. Unqualified individuals could enter the field, leading to unsafe designs that cost additional time and money to repair and replace.*

**SOLUTION:** Preserve the role of Florida's Professional Engineering Regulatory Board.

*Florida's Professional Engineering Regulatory Board plays a critical role in protecting public safety and public health by setting high standards and accountability for the profession, which ensures qualified engineers are designing critical infrastructure.*



## RECRUITING PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS TO PUBLIC SERVICE

**SB 800 Senator Debbie Mayfield | HB 839 Representative Lauren Melo**

This bill establishes a workforce initiative to recruit professional engineers to public service and modernizes the penalties for unlicensed engineering activity.

- The bill creates the Engineering Student Loan Assistance Program, funded by existing fees, to provide up to four years of financial assistance for student loan repayments to newly licensed engineers who work for state government or water management districts. Reducing educational debt for recent engineering graduates provides a powerful incentive to enter public service and creates an effective tool for state agencies to attract and retain qualified engineers who would earn higher salaries in the private sector.
- This bill increases penalties for unlicensed engineering activity, escalating fines with each additional violation. Ensuring engineering activity is licensed protects public safety.



## CREATING CONSISTENCY FOR PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY PROTECTION

**SB 888 Senator Jonathan Martin | HB 699 Representative Bill Conerly**

Under Florida law, the requirements for professional liability insurance for engineers are different for publicly funded infrastructure and private projects. This bill makes the requirements the same for all design projects across the state, limiting requirements for coverage to what's insurable and ensuring taxpayers and property owners are protected against errors, omissions, negligence and recklessness.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS IN FLORIDA\*

- The engineering and design industry directly employs 1.65 million full-time and part-time people nationwide, with 122,000 in Florida alone.
- The engineering and design industry's total contribution to GDP in 2024 was \$656 billion.
- The engineering and design industry generated over \$135 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues.
- Every \$1.00 spent on engineering and design services generated \$1.50 in GDP.

\*2024 Economic Assessment of the Engineering and Design Services Industry. ACEC Research Institute

Read more about FES and ACEC Florida's policy priorities.



[fleng.org](http://fleng.org) | [acecfl.org](http://acecfl.org)



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**Mel Pollock**

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**From:** ACEC Florida <acecfl@fleng.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 5, 2026 2:46 PM  
**To:** coriann.salas@wginc.com  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Welcome Deirdre Finn, New Executive Director



It's our pleasure to introduce you to **Deirdre Finn**, the new Executive Director of the Florida Engineering Society and American Council of Engineering Companies of Florida. Deirdre brings nearly two decades of experience advocating for sound public policy at the state and federal levels, plus nearly seven years of public service in Florida state government.



Most recently, Deirdre served as Executive Director for the Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities (CIFA), a national not-for-profit organization of state programs that offer affordable financing for clean water and drinking water infrastructure. Previously, she served as Interim Director for the WateReuse Association and Deputy Director for the Foundation for Excellence in Education and Foundation for Florida's Future.

Prior to entering the private sector, Deirdre served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Jeb Bush, overseeing a portfolio of issues including transportation, environmental protection and emergency management. She also served in senior leadership roles at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, including as Chief of Staff and Communications Director.

Deirdre's overall portfolio of leadership skills, understanding of Florida's complex political and regulatory climate, and her state and federal non-profit leadership experience are exactly what our organizations were looking for in a leader. The board is pleased to have Deirdre step into this role and lead our two organizations into the future.

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