

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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PUBLIC MEETING INPUT

Public Meeting No. 1

Wednesday, March 29, 2017: Alachua County TRS

On Wednesday, March 29th, the i3 Steering Committee presented a process overview at the first i3 Public Input Meeting, held at the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Brian Scarborough, i3 Steering Committee Chair, advised the gathered audience of citizens and public officials that—based on the research done to that point—the community’s schools and roads infrastructure needs serious rehabilitation, and the public safety radio system (TRS) connecting emergency responders, hospitals, the school board and other organizations is seriously outdated, sometimes forcing responders to use their personal cellphones to communicate.

Alachua County Sheriff Sadie Darnell and her staff followed, with a presentation highlighting just how critical the public safety need is—during recent incidents at a local high school and a big-box retailer, deputies at the scenes were unable to connect with dispatchers for several critical minutes.

Following a Q&A session, audience members broke into small groups to share their views on community infrastructure needs and how to fund those.

Breakout Session Notes

Question 1: What do you think are the infrastructure needs in our community (Alachua County) and why?

- Group 1: Schools (buildings, recreation equipment and technology); public safety; internet access in rural areas; roads (maintenance and capacity)
- Group 2: Police radio, school improvements, roads/sidewalks
- Group 3: Roads maintenance, traffic management, radio system, schools (cafeterias, labs)

Question 2: What are the infrastructure needs (if any) where you live or where you work?

- Group 1: Lack of communication during crisis situations (Duval Elementary, lock-down situation)
- Group 2: Achievement gap between white and black students, using too much technology that isn’t helping students, budget for roads in Waldo
- Group 3: Roads

Question 3: If you could prioritize the top 3 infrastructure needs, what would they be—in rank order—and why?

- Group 1: 1) schools, 2) public safety, 3) internet access in rural areas, 4) roads
- Group 2: 1) communication system, 2) roads, 3) schools
- Group 3: 1) roads, 2) radio system, 3) mass transportation for the general population

Question 4: If you had \$100 to allocate toward addressing any infrastructure needs (such as repairing public schools, fixing roads, enhancing parks, upgrading the 911 communications system), how would you allocate it?

- Group 1: 40% on schools, 10% on public safety, 10% on internet, 40% on roads
- Group 2: did not allocate, discussed need for educational funding, not cosmetic fixes
- Group 3: 60% on roads, 20% on radio system, 20% on schools

Question 5: Generally speaking, would you support an increase in the sales tax to pay for any infrastructure needs? Why?

- Group 1: Majority say yes, would like to see public/private partnerships
- Group 2: Yes for sales tax, no to another millage tax
- Group 3: Yes with time limit

Public Meeting No. 2

Tuesday, May 23, 2017: Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS)

Infrastructure

On Tuesday, May 23, 2017, the i3 Steering Committee hosted the second Public Input Meeting, with co-hosts UF Health, at the Shands Auxiliary Conference Center, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. i3 Chair Brian Scarborough provided an overview of the i3 process to that point and advised the gathered audience of citizens and public officials that—based on the research done to that point—the community’s schools and roads infrastructure needs serious rehabilitation, and the public safety radio system (TRS) connecting emergency responders, hospitals, the school board and other organizations is seriously outdated, sometimes forcing responders to use their personal cellphones to communicate.

Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) Director of Community Planning Vicki McGrath and Public Information Officer Jackie Johnson then presented an overview of the schools’ infrastructure needs, highlighting that it would take an estimated \$18.5 million for the school board to catch up on deferred maintenance needs to roofs, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, painting and flooring. The ACPS team then reviewed current and potential funding sources to meet this great need.

Following a Q&A session, audience members broke into small groups to share their views on community infrastructure needs and how to fund those.

Breakout Session Notes

Question 1: Are you concerned about the state of infrastructure (such as school facilities, roads, public safety equipment, internet connectivity, parks and recreation facilities)?

- **If yes, what particularly concerns you?**
- **If no, why?**

- Group 1: Facilities may not be most critical, quality of teaching may be, but teachers must have proper assets to teach; portables are a concern; politics of busing, east v west; marketing and message matter
- Group 2: Yes, roads and schools; state of schools affects the ability to bring potential employers/employees to area—economic development
- Group 3: Roads (access and conditions), schools, public safety, public spaces/culture, public transportation

- Group 4: Road maintenance and early education need to be the priorities; charter schools vs. public schools is misreported; schools don't appear to be in the community development discussion
- Group 5: Schools, roads, public safety, internet connectivity, parks and recreation
- Group 6: Achievement gap in the schools, income disparity, early learning, school infrastructure—facilities do matter
- Group 7: Infrastructure is not adequately supported, constant state of decline, don't need new schools, but updated of existing is needed, role of business community?
- Group 8: Lack of state priority for school needs
- Group 9: Roads, schools, public safety communications, water/drainage issues, public spaces
- Group 10: School infrastructure most concerning; restrooms, heat, lack of space, drainage, public safety communications system

Question 2: What are the top 5 infrastructure issues in the County, with 1 being the top priority?

- Group 1: 1) Schools, 2) roads, 3) public safety communications, 4) internet speed, 5) GRU rates
- Group 2: 1) Transportation, 2) public safety communications, 3) schools, 4) parks and recreation
- Group 3: 1) Schools, 2) roads, 3) public spaces, 4) public safety, 5) public transportation
- Group 4: 1) Schools, 2) roads, 3) internet, 4) safety equipment, 5) parks and recreation
- Group 5: 1) Schools, 2) public safety, 3) roads, 4) internet connectivity, 5) parks and recreation
- Group 6: 1) Schools, 2) parks and recreation, 3) roads and internet connectivity, 4) public safety
- Group 7: 1) Public safety, 2) schools parks and recreation, 3) internet connectivity 4) roads
- Group 8: 1) Schools, 2) public safety, 3) roads
- Group 9: 1) Roads, 2) schools, 3) public safety communications, 4) water, 5) prevention
- Group 10: 1) Public safety communications, 2) roads, 3) schools, 4) water

Question 3: Local government has several funding mechanisms at their disposal to pay for infrastructure needs, such as impact fees, property taxes and sales surtaxes. Do you feel any of these are more effective than others?

- Group 1: sales tax, because impact fees are limited to expansion; must have oversight
- Group 2: sales tax; restore 2 mill for schools
- Group 3: explore impact fees for education; legislative fees
- Group 4: sales tax
- Group 5: sales tax, because 30% of the dollars come from outside Alachua County
- Group 6: sales tax, in light of our transient community
- Group 7: whichever provides most flexibility—ability to sunset sales tax
- Group 8: sales tax more progressive than property taxes
- Group 9: sales tax ensures everyone who uses, pays; must have accountability
- Group 10: sales tax, because that affects everyone (fix communications tax)

Question 4: Given \$100 to spend on infrastructure, how would you spend it?

- Group 1: \$40 on schools; \$40 on roads; \$20 on public safety communications
- Group 2: \$60/\$40 schools and roads; extra \$10 on communications
- Group 3: \$40 on schools; \$25 on roads; \$15 on public spaces; \$10 on public safety
- Group 4: \$60 on schools, \$40 on roads
- Group 5: \$50 on schools, \$30 on roads, \$20 on public safety
- Group 6: \$50 on schools, \$50 on roads
- Group 7: focus on one issue, public safety communications
- Group 8: split between schools, public safety and roads
- Group 9: split between priorities
- Group 10: split between public safety communications, roads, schools and water

Question 5: Are there other unfunded/underfunded needs in the community?

- Group 1: body cameras for law enforcement; beautification; scooter lanes; elevated crosswalks; east/west corridor; loop around Gainesville
- Group 2: need funding for economic development and for early education
- Group 3: zoning with equity, fill empty seats to get more state dollars, culture before infrastructure
- Group 4: mental health programs, early childhood development, year-round/summer programs
- Group 5: transportation
- Group 6: early childhood programs, affordable housing
- Group 7: hunger, early childhood programs, mental health, homelessness, public safety, teacher salaries, community healthcare center
- Group 8: affordable healthcare and affordable housing
- Group 9: roads and schools
- Group 10: public transportation

Public Meeting No. 3

Wednesday, July 12, 2017: Alachua County Roads Infrastructure

On Wednesday, July 12th, the i3 Steering Committee hosted the third Public Input Meeting, with co-hosts North Florida Regional Medical Center (NFRMC), from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at NFRMC's South Tower Conference Center. Brian Scarborough, i3 Steering Committee Chair, provided an overview of the i3 effort so far, advising the gathered audience of citizens and public officials that—based on the research done to that point—the community's schools and roads infrastructure needs serious rehabilitation, and the public safety radio system (TRS) connecting emergency responders, hospitals, the school board and other organizations is seriously outdated, sometimes forcing responders to use their personal cellphones to communicate.

Alachua County Deputy Manager for Public Works James Harriott and County Engineer Ramon Gavarrete then reviewed our roadway repair and maintenance needs and the currently available funding sources. They advised the audience that funding for road resurfacing needs to be increased five-fold for timely maintenance and avoidance of increased costs. The price of delay eventually removes resurfacing as an option and the cost to reconstruct a failed road is three times that of resurfacing.

Following a Q&A session, audience members broke into small groups to share their views on community infrastructure needs and how to fund those.

Breakout Session Notes

Question 1: Are you concerned about the state of infrastructure (such as school facilities, roads, public safety equipment, internet connectivity, parks and recreation facilities)?

- **If yes, what particularly concerns you?**
- **If no, why?**
- Group 1: Yes, roads, used every day, we see drainage with pedestrians and bikes. Roads and schools
- Group 2: 100% yes, there is a concern
- Group 3: What it takes to maintain roads, structure win/win creative solutions, need to educate, need bike trails

- Group 4: Larger percentage is spent on staffing programs instead of infrastructure (ie, GPD too slow, tremendous waste of funds, too much vacillating); the system is holding us back, use funds or lose them, instead we need to be able to save funds to be able to fund projects, we need to prioritize
- Group 5: Schools the top priority, then public safety, internet connectivity, parks and recreation and roads. Roads are important to the community, to move vehicles efficiently, but concerns about loss of public trust for maintaining our roads and infrastructure, concerns that money will not be secure

Question 2: What are the top 5 Infrastructure issues in the County, with 1 being the top priority?

- Group 1: roads and schools, internet connectivity/infrastructure and emerging technology priority (competition)
- Group 2: public safety equipment, then schools before roads
- Group 3: first responder equipment, roads, schools, use matrix to determine the most pressing issue with priorities/hierarchy, then approach business community
- Group 4: schools, roads, fire rescue, public engagement
- Group 5: roads, schools, internet connectivity, parks and recreation, safety

Question 3: Local government has several funding mechanisms at their disposal to pay for infrastructure needs, such as impact taxes, property taxes and sales surtaxes. Do you feel any of these are more effective than others?

- Group 1: sales tax, proven, fair, “outside” revenue user over property tax
- Group 2: more likely to pass a sales tax, and most profitable
- Group 3: sales tax, property taxes, consideration of the impact a gas tax has on lower income population, capture money of visitors going through, crowdfunding
- Group 4: property tax is hard; with sales tax, non-residents pay their share; gas taxes are tapped, can’t make it higher; impact fees are high
- Group 5: advocate without money to get us out of the hole

Question 4: Given \$100 to spend on infrastructure, how would you spend it?

- Group 1: communicators hope for another funding source, but would allocate \$45 on school, \$45 on roads, \$10 on internet connectivity, look for buy-in success and referendum
- Group 2: \$40 schools, \$15 public safety, \$30 roads, \$15 internet, 0 parks
- Group 3: explore public/private partnerships for the selection
- Group 4: \$50 roads, \$50 schools
- Group 5: identify miniature transitions to succeed

Question 5: Are there other unfunded/underfunded needs in the community?

- Group 1: sales tax, proven, fair, “outside” revenue user over property tax
- Group 1: education of issues, however, focus on roads and schools
- Group 2: internet is a great need, but not enough financial information
- Group 3: mental health, cost of electricity, internet availability, education campaign about the issues, volunteer group getting attention through grassroots engagement
- Group 4: early childhood education, Eastside mentorship program, tangible skills for working, fracture, dilute, gentrify, create areas of fusion, internet
- Group 5: UF has different opinions as to which was top priority

LGI SURTAX REFERENCES

Follow these embedded links to access source material.

- Alachua County Charter Initiative Process
- 2017 Local Discretionary Surtax Rates by County
- The Florida Statutes for Discretionary Sales Surtaxes
- 2016 Report Card for Florida's Infrastructure
- Florida Policy Institute 2016-2017 Budget Review
- Local Option Taxes Authorized by the State Legislature

CASE STUDIES REFERENCES

Follow these embedded links to access source material.

Lake County

- Lake County Penny Sales Tax - Why to Vote No
- Lake County Florida Infrastructure Sales Tax Renewal

Marion County

- Gainesville Sun: April Warren, Staff Writer: Marion Applies Road Tax: Why Not Alachua? (March 20, 2016)
- Ocala Star Banner: Fred Hiers, Staff Writer: Marion County voters approve a sales tax hike for roads, public safety needs. (March 15, 2016)
- MarionSalesTax.org

Manatee County

- Bradenton Herald: Editorial: Herald recommends yes vote on county's half-cent infrastructure sales tax request. (Oct. 8, 2016)
- Manatee HS News: Jack Lyons, Editorial Editor: The two half-cent tax hikes on the November ballot. (Sept. 27, 2016)
- Bradenton Herald: Claire Aronson & Meghin Delaney, Herald staff writers: Voters approve school, county sales tax measures. (Nov. 8, 2016)

MEDIA LINKS

These links refer to media coverage of the i3 effort, as well as of previous sales tax initiatives. Follow these embedded links to access source material.

- Gainesville Sun: Ron Cunningham: Solution to Road Repair Problems won't be Local (July 14, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Jonathan Mills and Jay Nordqvist: Infrastructure Issues Won't Go Away (July 7, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Not Bright and Shiny, but Basic School Repairs Top Group's List (May 23, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Editorial: Involve Community in Improving Schools (May 21, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Diyonne McGraw and Clay Sweger: Community has Pressing Infrastructure Needs (May 19, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Council of PTAs Wraps Up First Year Re-chartered (May 7, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Chamber Weighs Needs of Schools, Roads, Emergency Communications (March 29, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Editorial: Consider Impact Fees for Schools (January 15, 2017)
- Gainesville Sun: Editorial: Finding Fix for School Facilities (November 27, 2016)
- Gainesville Sun: Chamber Committee to Explore Future Ballot Initiative (October 5, 2016)
- Gainesville Sun: Editorial: Chamber making Compromise Harder (September 25, 2016)
- Gainesville Sun: Chamber Opposes Wild Spaces Public Places Tax (September 22, 2016)
- Ocala Star-Banner: For Florida Schools, the Lost Years (August 7, 2016)
- Gainesville Sun: Marion Okays Road Tax, Why Not Alachua? (March 20, 2016)

- Gainesville Sun: Surtax Vote Showed that with Density Comes Community (November 9, 2014)
- Gainesville Sun: With Transportation Surtax Defeated, What Now? (November 6, 2014)
- Gainesville Sun: Transportation Tax Soundly Defeated in Alachua County (November 4, 2014)
- Gainesville Sun: In 3-2 Vote, County puts Roads Tax on Ballot (July 10, 2012)

PRESENTATIONS

These links refer to presentations received by the i3 steering committee on various infrastructure issues throughout the course of the initiative. Follow embedded links to access source material.

- City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
- Alachua County Sheriff Public Safety Radio System
- Alachua County Public Schools
- Alachua County Roads Infrastructure
- Alachua County Children’s Services Council (CSC)
 - Part 1 (slides 1-17)
 - Part 2 (slides 18-37)
- Gainesville Citizens for Active Transportation (GCAT)
- Connected Gainesville



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