



2024 State Legislative Program

ST. LUCIE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Inmate Medical Cap Local Bill

As a measure to contain the high cost of inmate medical care, this proposed bill will reduce expenses by setting a reimbursement amount paid by St. Lucie County to medical providers for health care services for inmates and arrestees. Compensation is limited to 110% of the Medicare allowable rate, or 125% of the Medicare allowable rate if the health care provider reported a negative operating margin for the previous year. The proposed local bill would place the same limits on providers of emergency medical transportation services and provide St. Lucie County with similar protections to those currently in place for the Florida Department of Corrections (F.S. 945.6041).

Home Rule Authority Over Florida PACE Loan Providers

St. Lucie County proposes an amendment to FS 163.08 to clarify that "Any local government, including a separate legal entity created pursuant to s. 163.01(7), must have the written consent of each other county or municipality within which it intends to operate through an interlocal agreement before providing and financing qualifying improvements within that county or municipality." Since 2010, the Florida Statutes have allowed for Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans in Florida. Specifically, the Florida legislature allows property owners to voluntarily finance improvements with local government assistance, and FS 163.08 (2)(a) defines local government as follows: "Local government" means a county, a municipality, a dependent special district as defined in s. 189.012, or a separate legal entity created pursuant to s. 163.01(7).

There are several PACE providers originating PACE loans across Florida operating as "a separate legal entity created pursuant to FS 163.01(7)." It is St. Lucie County's position that PACE loan providers do not have the legal authority to provide loans without an executed interlocal agreement with the local government in whose jurisdiction they intend to provide loans, and that State law should be clarified so that the PACE loan provider needs specific authorization from a local government to operate within that local government's jurisdiction.

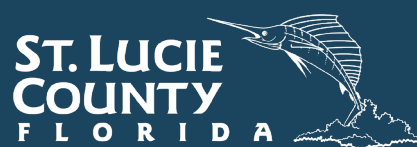
Ten Mile Creek - Indian River Lagoon South

A critical component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) is the Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) suite of projects. This includes the C23/C24 STA and Reservoir system, located in the western part of St. Lucie County. This new system will include a northern diversion canal which will provide a resource for excess stormwater to be discharged when the system calls for it. The outfall for the excess water is a natural tidally influenced waterway known as Ten Mile Creek. Ten Mile Creek is one of St. Lucie County's main drainage conveyances and runs straight down the middle of the county, impacting many larger residential communities, and eventually draining to the St. Lucie River and Estuary.

St. Lucie County supports coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, South Florida Water Management District, US Army Corp of Engineers, the 298s, and the public to address the critical system impact of Ten Mile Creek and its influence on drainage and water quality for County residents. The ongoing studies, assessments, modeling, and data collection efforts are vital to the outcome of the project. The County acknowledges that funding must be identified and secured to implement solutions to Ten Mile Creek-Indian River Lagoon South.

Streamlined Permitting for Railroad Crossings

The County supports increased cooperation between Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) and local governments to facilitate streamlined permitting to ensure secure railway crossings.





APPROPRIATIONS

St. Lucie County Appropriation Request: Secondary Data Center for Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government

Total Project Cost: \$10,000,000

Requested Amount: \$5,000,000 | County Match: \$5,000,000

The St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners has one Information Technology data center that supports the County, Constitutionals, and law enforcement. This single point of failure puts these organizations at risk. The proposed secondary data center is designed to support large-scale applications to ensure the essential functions continue during a critical event or situation. The proposed data center will have built-in security and scalability features as well as onsite and internet-based accessibility. Housed in a controlled environment, the secondary data center will have computing resources including applications servers, file and printer servers, communication servers, application software and operating systems to run them. The project will also include storage subsystems and the network infrastructure.

St. Lucie County Local Government Funding Request (LGFR): Fort Pierce Shore Protection

Total Project Cost: \$3,481,474

Requested Amount: \$1,740,737 | County Match: \$1,740,737

The Fort Pierce Shore Protection project is a federally authorized project and consists of the restoration and maintenance of 2.3 miles of Atlantic shoreline in Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County. Initial restoration of the project area began in 1971 with the construction of a 1.3-mile segment of beach immediately south of the Fort Pierce Inlet. The present long-term management plan for restoration of the entire 2.3-mile shoreline consists of sand placement in the original northern 1.3-mile segment, creating a natural feeder beach for the southern portion of the project. The next scheduled nourishment event is proposed in Spring 2025.

St. Lucie County Local Government Funding Request (LGFR): Fort Pierce Inlet Sand Trap Phase 1 Excavation

Total Project Cost: \$5,410,000

Requested Amount: \$2,705,000 | County Match: \$2,705,000

The Fort Pierce Shore Protection Project is a federally authorized project and consists of the restoration and maintenance of 2.3 miles of Atlantic shoreline immediately south of the Fort Pierce Inlet. A sand trap was constructed and sited just inside the Fort Pierce Inlet, near the north jetty, to capture sand migration from adjacent beaches. This sand is available for placement onto the down-drift beach. As of February 2023, the Fort Pierce Sand Trap (Phase I) had surpassed design capacity and was ready for excavation. The state may cost share at 50% for future maintenance dredging.

St. Lucie County Florida Seaports Priority Project List: Property Acquisition

Requested Amount: \$10,000,000

The Port of Fort Pierce has identified property acquisition as its unfunded priority. St. Lucie County is developing a regional stormwater solution for the undeveloped portions of the port. The preliminary identified land is located within the Port Planning Area, but the County is not the primary landowner. Additionally, there are strategic parcels that are adjacent to the port's terminal that, if acquired, could assist in the expansion of the current Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) operations. Property acquisition will be critical in the future development of the Port of Fort Pierce.



2024 Guiding Principles

ST. LUCIE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

St. Lucie County supports Home Rule, opposes Unfunded Mandates, and opposes efforts to reduce local government revenue sources or limit flexibility in how they are spent.

This guiding principle includes the County's opposition to legislation that would create cost shifts from traditionally state responsibilities, circumvent local oversight of development or tax issues, limit local control of critical services, or impact our ability to provide a responsive and reflective local government to our constituents. We also support legislation that creates additional financial flexibility for local budgets, enhances local control of policies and procedures impacting our residents and allows our County to – with the utmost responsiveness – meet the needs of the community.



St. Lucie County supports efforts and investment in Economic Development initiatives that both contribute to the further diversification of our state and local economies and supports tourism and cultural foundations upon which so much of our regional impact depends on.

This guiding principle includes the County's support for things such as full funding for Visit Florida, the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, and the Department of State's Arts and Cultural Grants.

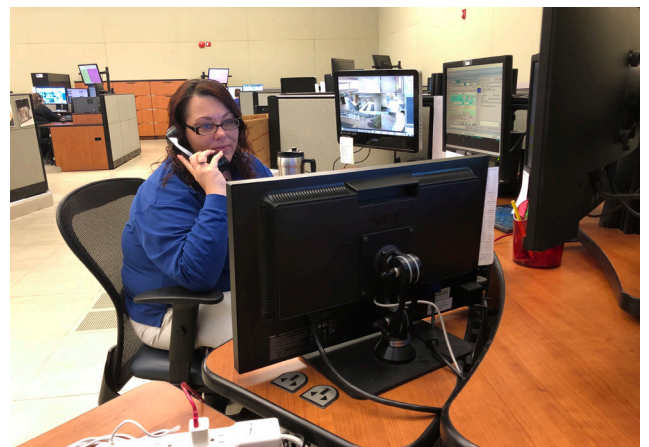


St. Lucie County supports key investments into Environmental and Natural Resources that protect Florida's fragile environment, strengthens our resilience against the impacts of climate change, addresses the stresses and impacts of continued growth on our Lagoon, lakes, rivers, streams, beaches, and ocean.

This guiding principle includes water and environmental projects critical to the county and region, comprehensive Everglades restoration, beach and inlet management and restoration, hurricane supplemental funding, and investments into the health and sustainability of the Indian River Lagoon.

St. Lucie County supports robust investment in public infrastructure that supports both planned and potential growth, strengthens transportation and communication networks, and provides greater mobility and accessibility for our residents.

This guiding principle includes full funding of Florida's Transportation Five-Year Work Plan through State Transportation Trust Fund including appropriate funding for road construction, public transit, deep water seaports such as the Port of Fort Pierce, airports such as the Treasure Coast International Airport, and the Strategic Intermodal System. It also includes expansion of state-supported broadband, public access trail networks, funding for septic to sewer conversion and waste to energy projects, and other investments that enhance the quality of life for all of St. Lucie County's residents.





St. Lucie County supports funding equity in critical public safety investments.

This guiding principle includes appropriate state funding for required school safety and resource officers, fair cost share of inmate medical costs and juvenile justice per diem rates, increased investment into the county Emergency Operations Center, and proper recurring funding of Mental Health Court.

St. Lucie County supports better partnership and cost share of critical public health and human services.

This guiding principle includes advocating for a cap on county Medicaid cost growth, more robust funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment and opposing efforts to modify or underfund the public health system and the role of county health departments. It also includes appropriate statewide funding for homelessness, county-specific appropriations projects, and funding for Healthy Families and Community Healthcare Clinics.

St. Lucie County supports affordable housing initiatives.

This guiding principle includes full funding of the state's affordable housing trust fund, addressing the home insurance crisis, expanding local discretion for the local option property tax exemption, designating a state entity responsible for enforcing and monitoring certain aspects of the Live Local Act, providing clear criteria for local governments to utilize when identifying parcels in compliance with affordable housing per ss. 125.379 and 166.0451 and consider including an enforcement

mechanism, expand infrastructure surtax statute to clearly include construction costs for affordable housing development, modernize the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) reporting requirement, and create a grant program to support local land use reform for affordable housing.

St. Lucie County supports increased funding for public education and wrap around services that promote lifelong learning and personal advancement.

This guiding principle includes not only adequate state funding for K12 and early learning, but higher education investments at Indian River State College with capital (PECO) and operating dollars that enhance the quality of education and skill development opportunities available to our residents. It also includes funding for education wrap around services such as career and college counseling.

St. Lucie County supports financial investment and public policy optimization that leads to the continued transformation of Florida's critically important agriculture industry and prepares it for a sustainable future.

This guiding principle includes investments into UF/IFAS St. Lucie County-based research and development projects, aquaculture research, and Florida's 4-H programs including others.

911 Public Safety Telecommunicators.

St. Lucie County supports legislation that would help the recruitment and retention of 911 Public Safety Telecommunicators.