

MEMBERS ONLY

T4A member spotlight on Gregory Stuart of the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization

In this seventh edition of our regular series spotlighting a T4America member, we talk to Gregory Stuart, Director of the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization. This transcript is edited for style and brevity.

Q: Can you tell us about your work with The Broward MPO? (Please give us a short overview of your organizations work at the local and or state level as it relates to transportation, advocacy and or related subject matter.)

As the Executive Director of the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization, it is my job to provide our board members with data and technical information to help them make informed decisions about the future of Broward's transportation system. We strive to create an efficient and equitable transportation system that meets the needs of all users, regardless of their mode of transportation. Recent highlights include our \$120 million dollar investment in Complete Streets, award-winning public involvement efforts, and the \$11.4 million dollar TIGER grant we were awarded by USDOT in 2016 to build five new Complete Streets projects in traditionally underserved communities in Broward County.

Q: What notable projects are in the works at The Broward MPO? (Please provide a short description of project/s and or work you think our constituents would benefit from and would be interesting to share with our audiences. This can include partnership project/s, opportunities for the public and or policy related work to our subject matter.)

One of our signature projects is the Wave Streetcar, a 2.7-mile streetcar running through downtown Fort Lauderdale. This project is a partnership between four local government agencies, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and USDOT, and will really be a game changer not just for our urban core, but also for public transit in the whole region. The Wave has evolved from a downtown circulator to a system with multiple extensions in the planning stages.

Another of the Broward MPO's key initiatives is our Complete Streets program (<http://t4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Broward-Case-Study.pdf>). Over the next five years, we are investing over \$120 million dollars into building Complete Streets in all areas of Broward County. But this initiative encompasses more than just projects. Broward MPO staff also provides technical assistance to our municipal governments and other partners so that they can plan, design, and implement these concepts in their own communities. The centerpiece of our Complete Streets technical assistance is the annual Safe Streets Summit, which brings together local planners, community advocates, business leaders, and elected officials for an all-day training on Complete Streets. Last year, we teamed up with Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties to make this a truly regional event.

Finally, our Strategic Transportation and Regional Transit Economic Development (STARTED) Plan is charting our path forward on strategic investments in transportation. By combining our different programs and initiatives (transit planning, livability studies, Complete Streets, etc.), STARTED is helping to integrate community-driven solutions to Broward's complex and evolving transportation challenges.

Q: Why do you care about smart homegrown solutions? What personally got you involved in your community and work in your region? Where do you see the conversation going in regards to transportation investments in Florida?



(http://t4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Greg_Stuart_Case_Study_2-2-1.jpg)

Gregory Stuart, Director of the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization

I grew up here in South Florida, and I have seen the region transform from a sleepy vacation area to a thriving metropolis with almost 6 million residents. When I was a kid there was almost no development west of I-95. Now, Broward has become an urbanized area that stretches 20 miles east to west, creating enormous transportation challenges.

South Florida really developed around the automobile, and part of our mission now is to expand options for people who travel by other modes of transportation, whether its transit, walking, or biking. Car travel will always be a part of the equation, but we have to develop a robust transit system, as well as providing safe and accessible streets for pedestrians and cyclists in a region that ranks near the top in pedestrian and cyclist crashes. Our Complete Streets program is really changing the narrative on safety in the region, and I believe our investments will have a measurable impact on improving safety for all modes of transportation.

We are also having important conversations about the future of transportation, with automated/connected vehicles and ridesharing, and how those fit into the broader transportation context. FDOT has been a great partner on showcasing automated vehicle (AV) technology, and we have some big things planned for the region.

Q: How has your region benefited from TIGER or the Transit Capital Investment Grants Program (New Starts, Small Starts, etc.)? How have these programs spurred economic development in the region?

This region has benefited immensely from these programs. In 2016 we received an \$11.4 million dollar TIGER grant to build five new Complete Streets projects, the only organization to receive a TIGER grant in the state of Florida during that year. These investments will be made in a historically underserved community, and will help connect residents with jobs, health care, and recreational opportunities. These projects couldn't have been built without help from the TIGER program, and we are extremely grateful to our partners and the members of our congressional delegation who helped make our application successful. In addition, the Wave Streetcar received a TIGER grant in 2012 for \$18 million dollars, which was instrumental in moving that project forward.

Our region has benefited immensely from transit capital grants. In addition to receiving a TIGER Grant, the Wave Streetcar received \$60 million dollars from the Capital Investment Grants program, which covered 30 percent of the overall project's costs. Construction on the Wave is scheduled to start next year, but we are already seeing tremendous private investment and economic development in the areas surrounding the route. New hotels, apartments, small businesses, and office buildings are sprouting up in downtown Fort Lauderdale, and developers are telling us they are building there as a direct result of the coming Wave Streetcar.

Q: Can you tell us of the changes in your community based on your work with existing and new projects? (Give examples of project/s that have helped the community and also examples in which you may have encountered obstacles.)

There has been a sea change in the region with regards to Complete Streets. Our partners have gotten on board with planning and implementing Complete Streets, and the concept has been gaining momentum as a result of the Broward MPO's technical assistance to municipal governments. We have also partnered with the health community and partners like the Broward Regional Health Planning Council have been instrumental in helping promote Complete Streets not just as a transportation concept, but also as a larger movement that looks at health, equity, access to jobs, etc.

One of our signature Complete Streets projects will transform a section of Hollywood Boulevard from a car-oriented roadway into a livable, walkable street that is safer for all road users. The project will also extend Hollywood's downtown core, and promote economic development and job creation as well.

One of the most difficult challenges we face is planning for climate change and sea level rise. No region in the country is more at risk to the impacts of climate change than Southeast Florida, and our community leaders have been very proactive in dealing with the issue. When a section of A1A on Fort Lauderdale Beach washed away due to Superstorm Sandy in 2012, it wasn't just an isolated event, but a signal of things to come. Through groups like the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact, we are aggressively working to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and climate resiliency is being factored into future plans of our transportation system.

Q: Why did you join T4America membership program?

T4America has been a great partner in helping us understand and strategize around the uncertainty in Washington. Their outreach and lobbying efforts have resulted in greater funding for programs that directly benefit the Broward MPO, and the technical resources they provide help keep us up to date with what is happening across the country.

Q: What makes you get up in the morning and want to continue to work on these issues?

There is so much happening in Broward County and South Florida, and I wake up every day excited to be a part of the transportation transformation happening in the region. Our award-winning Complete Streets program is transforming Broward's streets into walkable, livable corridors that are safe and accessible for all modes of transportation. The relationships we have built with our partners, including the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), have allowed us to be a part the process from planning to construction. The Broward MPO is also implementing new programs to better serve our member governments and deliver projects more efficiently. The Broward MPO is a leader not just in Florida, but for the nation. I'm so proud of the work that our team has accomplished, and am excited about the challenges and opportunities each day brings.

[← Older](http://t4america.org/spotlight/welcome-t4a-members/)

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