



TPO Board Meeting

Marion County Commission Auditorium
601 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471
August 26, 2025
3:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Councilmember Ire Bethea, Sr.
Commissioner Craig Curry
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer
Councilmember James Hilty
Councilman Tim Inskeep
Councilmember Barry Mansfield
Commissioner Carl Zalak

Members Not Present:

Commissioner Kathy Bryant
Commissioner Ray Dwyer
Mayor Ben Marciano
Commissioner Matt McClain
Commissioner Michelle Stone

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Shakayla Irby, TPO
Kia Powell, FDOT
Matthew Richardson, FDOT
Michael McCammon, FDOT
Kevin Marquez, FDOT
Jim Stroz, FDOT
Nathan Gallops, OPD
Ben Baugh, 352Today
Sean Lanier, City of Ocala
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala
Darren Park, City of Ocala
Aubrey Hale, City of Ocala

Jeff Shrum, City of Ocala
Steven Cohoon, Marion County
William Roll, Kimley-Horn and Associates
Barb Girtman
Other members of the public not signed in.

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Carl Zalak called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 2. Roll Call

Administrative Assistant Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Administrative Assistant Shakayla Irby stated the meeting had been published online to the TPO's website, as well as the City of Ocala, Belleview, Marion County, and Dunnellon's websites on August 19, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPOs Facebook and X pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

Mr. Bethea made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Curry seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5A. US 441/301 at SR 40 Intersection Project

Mr. Michael McCammon with FDOT began the presentation for the U.S. 441/S.R. 40 intersection improvement project, noting that traffic congestion had remained a significant issue with through lanes frequently queuing past both the left and right turn lanes. To address this, the project included modifying the large concrete median so that drivers could access the left turn lane earlier and extending the right turn lane beginning south of 14th Street.

It was highlighted that recent traffic counts had shown northbound right turn volumes at peak hours often exceeded left turns, making this a priority for capacity improvements. The left turn lane remained a single lane that fed into the dual left turn lanes established in a prior project, while the right turn lane began earlier at Fort King, providing several hundred additional feet of queuing space.

The pedestrian crosswalk at Broadway was removed for safety, since it required pedestrians to cross up to five lanes of queued traffic. Pedestrian crossings remained available at S.R. 40 and at Second Street. The lane geometry at the intersection consisted of dual northbound left turn lanes, two through lanes, and a right turn lane. The existing overhead cantilever sign at Broadway was removed due to curb adjustments and replaced with post-mounted guide signs.

During discussion, Chairman Zalak raised concerns about the removal of the Broadway crosswalk, the adequacy of left turn lane queuing space, and whether the median could be extended further to allow more capacity.

Mr. Jim Stroz with FDOT explained that while the median could have been extended, doing so would have triggered access management regulations requiring additional public hearings and delayed the project by approximately six months. For this reason, the current design was selected to keep the project on schedule. The improvements provided roughly 700 feet of left turn queuing space, accommodating about 35 vehicles, and the right turn lane gained significant additional capacity.

Mr. Kevin Marquez with FDOT acknowledged that while peak hour queuing would still occur, the changes were expected to reduce congestion delays by as much as 50%. He added that the Regional Transportation Management Center had the ability to monitor the intersection live and make future adjustments if safety or operational issues arose.

Mr. Stroz stated that the project was ready to move forward into construction pending concurrence from partner agencies, with final design nearing completion. Construction was anticipated to begin promptly and be completed by the end of 2025. He also noted that FDOT was committed to keeping the TPO, local governments, and the public informed through traffic advisories, updates on the Central Florida Roads website, and routine updates at TPO meetings.

Several board members expressed appreciation for FDOT's responsiveness to prior concerns and for the corrective actions taken to improve the intersection. Chairwoman Dreyer added that the City of Ocala was thankful FDOT had heard their concerns and acted to correct the issue.

A handout of the project description was provided to the TPO Board and is attached to pages 10-11 of this set of minutes for reference.

Item 5B. Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Mr. William Roll with Kimley Horn provided an update on the scenario planning process, roadway needs, strategic options, and the next steps for the development of the 2050 LRTP. Three scenarios were reviewed:

1. **Scenario 1:** Reflects adopted land use policies, county staff review, and approved developments; growth is distributed across the county consistent with these policies.
2. **Scenario 2:** Originally proposed a 30% reduction in growth in non-targeted areas, reallocating the reduced growth to six targeted growth areas (Liberty Triangle (SR 200), Marion Oaks + Industrial Area, City of Ocala, Equestrian Center Area, Airport Area, and the Belleview By-Pass Area).
3. **Scenario 2B:** Ensures total county population/employment remains similar to the trend scenario.
4. **Scenario 3:** Focused on increasing multifamily development in areas where land use policies already support it, with a corresponding reduction in single-family units.

- Maps were presented showing the relative allocation of dwelling units and traffic changes; changes in travel demand were generally less than 1,000 daily trips, with minimal impact on improvement needs. Scenario 2 was recommended as most indicative for evaluation purposes.
- Discussion highlighted recent developments in Dunnellon, emphasizing that actual approvals may differ from prior trend assumptions; long-range plans allow for adjustments over time.

Financial Overview

- Total state and federal funds (2031–2050) were estimated at \$616 million, with \$32 million allocated to multimodal improvements.
- Local revenues (gas tax, sales tax, impact fees) totaled approximately \$2.1 billion for capital improvements.

High-Level Transportation Issues

- Key constraints included I-75, downtown Ocala congestion, environmental and farmland preservation areas, and limited right-of-way for corridor expansions.
- Priority corridors and cost-feasible improvements were reviewed; the draft cost-feasible plan will be presented at the next meeting.

Strategic Considerations

- Recommendations include leveraging limited resources to position the plan for additional funding and addressing regional mobility needs.
- Potential West County improvements discussed:
 - Completing a beltway connection.
 - Establishing an east-west connection from SR 200 to CR 42/75.
 - Elevated SR 200 corridor option to alleviate congestion, potentially as a toll facility.
- Economic impacts, feasibility, and community compatibility would be considered in future studies.

Next Steps

- Complete draft cost-feasible plan.
- Begin the plan adoption process and finalize required documentation.

Chairman Zalak inquired about Scenarios 1 and 2B.

Mr. Roll explained that in Scenario 1, growth units were spread across the county based on current land use policies and areas likely to see development. Scenario 2B adjusts this by reducing growth in certain areas and reallocating it to targeted locations that can accommodate more development.

Mr. Roll explained that these scenarios were important for forecasting traffic and infrastructure needs through 2050. The goal was to identify where congestion would occur and where road improvements should be prioritized.

Mr. Roll said Scenario 2 was considered most useful because it focused on growth in areas where improvements or infrastructure investments were expected, allowing better planning for both county and city mobility improvements.

Mr. Inskeep noted that Dunnellon was reviewing a proposal from a developer planning up to 1,000 homes near the airport over five years. He wanted to ensure that the proposed development was reflected in the Scenario 2B data.

Mr. Roll noted the proposed development and explained that the long-range plan is updated every five years, providing time to adjust as new projects, such as the proposed 1,000 dwelling units, come online.

Chairman Zalak said that Scenario 2B appeared to be more reflective of his observations when traveling, noting that the traffic issues he encounters are primarily on parallel routes or offshoots near State Road 200, while acknowledging that downtown congestion is inevitable.

Chairman Zalak stated that traveling from the west side to employment centers on the east side was challenging, as each I-75 crossing creates a funnel that concentrates traffic. He expressed interest in studying the plan to improve State Road 200's accessibility, ideally within the existing right-of-way, and to enhance north-south travel to help drivers avoid the congested funnels leading into downtown Ocala.

Chairman Zalak stated that the issue in Dunnellon was that even if U.S. 41 had been significantly expanded, traffic problems would have persisted unless solutions were found to improve travel through the city or provide an alternate route around it.

Mr. Roll responded that the areas with the most constraints, such as traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, and schools, had limited the number of lanes that could be added. Because funding was limited, a choice had to be made to focus on one corridor rather than multiple. He noted that the S.R. 200 corridor had fewer constraints, making it a better candidate for improvements. He also mentioned that planning and design efforts for the widening of S.R. 200 and S.R. 491, including a bridge project, had already begun.

Chairman Zalak asked about the feasibility of using elevated, single-lane roads and whether they could be anchored in the median.

Mr. Roll explained that the Gandy project had used single-column signal supports in the median to cantilever lanes, noting that limited-access lanes had a higher capacity—around 2,000–2,300 vehicles per hour per lane—compared to arterial lanes with signals, which had lower capacity due to interruptions and safety conflicts. He emphasized that beyond capacity, safety had been a major consideration.

Chairman Zalak asked, based on a high-level perspective, whether the costs of improving SR 200 from 484 to I-75 could have been comparable to creating an alternate route around that area, acknowledging that a more in-depth study would have been needed.

Mr. Roll explained that constructing an elevated roadway had advantages, such as lower right-of-way acquisition costs especially if existing infrastructure was already in place and reduced need for pond sites, since impervious surfaces were already accounted for. He cited the Crosstown Expressway in Tampa Bay as an example, where three reversible elevated lanes had been built because it was cheaper than acquiring new right-of-way. He noted that a study would have been needed to determine the best mix of alternatives.

Mr. Roll discussed potential routes, noting that the 200 corridor was a straight shot, which could have allowed for quicker implementation compared with the Western Beltway concept. He said a study should be initiated to evaluate alternatives and strategies. He also mentioned that a Beltway project parallel to I-75 could have provided additional utility, but long corridors were costly estimating \$100 million per mile for standard elevated construction and \$150 million per mile for six-lane elevated segments.

Chairman Zalak added that investing in areas where expansion was feasible, such as 40th to 60th Avenue, would have been a more effective long-term use of funds.

Ms. Dreyer shared her experience traveling the Gandy elevated road, noting that exits were infrequent and ramps were long, making it difficult to access nearby businesses. She expressed interest in evaluating the economic impact of such a design on existing businesses.

Mr. Roll added that areas along the 200 corridor already had significant economic activity and ongoing growth, so any analysis should have balanced access and development, making economic impact an important measure of effectiveness.

Item 5C. Active Transportation Plan

Mr. Rob Balmes provided an update on the Active Transportation Plan. He noted that the consultant team, Kittelson and Associates, had completed the technical analysis identifying gaps in the transportation network for trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes, including a level of traffic stress assessment. The analysis had informed the development of project lists, which were shared for board feedback.

The plan was nearing completion, with adoption anticipated in October. A community open house would be scheduled for September 30 at the Mary Sue Rich Center to allow public review and comment on the draft plan and LRTP.

Projects were identified using feedback from local staff, stakeholders, and technical analysis. These were grouped into three tiers for prioritization:

- **Tier 1:** Major priorities for the next 5–10 years
- **Tier 2:** Follow-on projects once Tier 1 is funded and implemented
- **Tier 3:** Long-term or conceptual projects

Highlighted projects include:

- **Trails:** Pruitt Trail gap, connections to downtown Ocala, Silver Springs State Park, potential downtown rail trail, Black Bear Scenic Trail across State Road 40

- **Sidewalks/Shared-use Paths:** Filling gaps to connect parks, schools, trails, and activity centers
- **Bike Lanes:** Limited, focused on key corridors; emphasis remained on multi-use paths and sidewalks

Mr. Balmes emphasized that the project lists would be incorporated into the LRTP to help local governments leverage future federal and state grant opportunities. The draft plan would be presented for formal adoption in October.

Chairman Zalak mentioned potential for standardizing trail/sidewalk designs to create seamless connections across city and county roads, with consideration of future enhancements.

Item 5D. Commitment to Zero 2025 Safety Report

Mr. Rob Balmes presented the annual safety report, a commitment from the TPO's Safety Action Plan. The report highlighted the most recent five-year period of fatal and serious injury crash statistics on public roads and included new sections recognizing safety-related initiatives by local, state, and community partners. Highlights included:

- Safety Matters initiative in collaboration with Marion County and the Ocala Marion TPO.
- Community events such as Stop on Red, CarFit and Bike Walk Central Florida activities.
- Marion Fire Rescue's education and awareness programs.
- Marion County Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) monthly collaboration meetings.
- Local government planning efforts by the City of Ocala, the City of Belleview, the City of Dunnellon, and Marion County.
- FDOT's "Target Zero" and corridor safety improvements on SR 200.
- High-visibility enforcement partnerships between the Marion County Sheriff's Office and the Ocala Police Department.

The report also emphasized the TPO's five priority safety areas: promoting a culture of safety, speed management, protecting vulnerable road users, reducing roadway departure crashes, and addressing intersection operations (noting that 36% of fatal and serious injury crashes occurred at intersections).

There was board discussion on driver behavior being one of the leading factors in serious crashes.

Mr. Curry raised the possibility of using red light and speed enforcement cameras.

Chairman Zalak noted that cameras were used at intersections to track traffic but were not for traffic violations.

Mr. Hilty recalled past challenges with red light cameras, explaining that private companies received most of the revenue and that installation was costly.

Ms. Dreyer stated that many cities and counties had decommissioned cameras because they proved more of a hassle than a benefit.

Chairman Zalak suggested identifying problematic intersections and directing the Sheriff's Office and the Ocala Police Department (OPD) to increase patrols instead.

Mr. Inskeep reported that Dunnellon installed red light zone cameras at their middle school and the Baptist church school. The cameras had become active during the last two weeks of school prior to summer, with an initial two-week education period during which violations were only notices. Following that period, actual violations began. He noted that the cameras did not cost the city and were installed to improve safety. Mr. Inskeep added that the number of violations had drastically decreased from the initial period.

Mr. Bethea said that OPD had officers located at all of the schools and had been cracking down on traffic violations.

Item 6. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell with FDOT reported that the construction report for July was included in the agenda packet, with the next report expected at the beginning of the following month. She provided updates on recent events, including the National Stop on Red Week held August 3–9, in which the district participated with three events in Belleview, Daytona Beach, and Melbourne, and she thanked the TPO for their involvement.

She noted upcoming dates for the tentative work program public hearings, scheduled online for October 20–24, with an in-person open house on October 21 from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Ms. Powell also mentioned that Lauren Bobo from FDOT's safety office would present on Target Zero at the September meeting.

Project updates included the 464 resurfacing, which was nearly complete, with friction course paving finished on July 10 and the contractor currently working on striping and punch list items. The SR 200 project from east of I-75 to U.S. 301 had paving completed, and the Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHBs) were expected to go live in September.

Regarding the CR 484 project, Mr. McCammon explained challenges with building a planned wall due to redesign, cost, and a potential future project to rebuild I-75 over CR 484.

FDOT was reviewing options to delay or modify the wall construction while maintaining traffic flow and working with county feedback.

Chairman Zalak asked how CR 484 could be more tolerable in the meantime and acknowledged community frustration with ongoing delays.

Mr. McCammon discussed potential interim measures to improve traffic flow, including adding additional lanes on off-ramps for Marion Oaks commuters and said FDOT was working to make the improvements.

Mr. McCammon also said he would be open to a meeting with County to discuss further.

Updates were also provided on the 464/441 (Maricamp) intersection improvements, with final plans under city review and minor feedback incorporated.

Mr. McCammon noted that recent asphalt corrections caused temporary traffic delays, but issues with signal timing and loop detectors had been addressed by the contractor.

Item 7. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes informed the board that the quarterly budget status update through the end of the fiscal year was included in the meeting packet. The packet also included the 2025 traffic counts report.

Mr. Balmes noted the 2025 Stop on Red event was highly successful, with appreciation given to FDOT, the National Coalition for Safer Roads, Commissioner Dwyer, Belleview PD, and Marion County Fire Rescue for their collaboration and support.

Ms. Irby gave an update on the Safety Matters series, a ten-episode partnership with Marion County aimed at promoting road safety. She acknowledged the contributions of board members, law enforcement, first responders, and local community members. Nine episodes were available on YouTube at youtube.com/safetymattersmarioncounty, covering topics such as serious injuries, bike/pedestrian safety, school bus safety, DUI, speeding and aggressive driving, distracted driving, motorcycle safety, seatbelt safety, and the Move Over Law.

Ms. Irby highlighted that filming for the Move Over Law episode included extensive participation from OPD, the Sheriff's Office, FDOT Road Rangers, Marion County Fire Rescue, Ocala Fire Rescue, and Belleview PD. Marion County Public Relations was working on the draft video, which would be shared with the board upon release.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Board Members

There were no comments by TPO board members.

Item 9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 10. Adjournment

Chairman Zalak adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant