



Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting
Marion County – Library Headquarters, Meeting Room B
2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
3:30 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Noel Cooper
Tom Duncan
Kia Powell
Loretta Shaffer (*arrived at 3:31pm*)
Jeff Shrum
Tracy Straub (*Chris Zeigler attended as an alternate*)
Chuck Varadin

Members Not Present:

Chris Carlisle
Bob Titterington
Chad Ward

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, Ocala Marion TPO
Sara Brown, Ocala Marion TPO
Shakayla Irby, Ocala Marion TPO
Liz Mitchell, Ocala Marion TPO
Kenneth Odom, Marion County

Item 1. Call to Order

Chairman Jeff Shrum called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

Item 2. Roll Call

Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Secretary 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 September 3, 2024. The meeting had also been published to the TPOs Facebook and Twitter pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

Mr. Zeigler made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Varadin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5a. Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 to 2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1 and Roll Forward

Ms. Sara Brown, Transportation Planner, presented two projects proposed for the amendment to the FY 2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The annual Roll Forward TIP Amendment Report was also included in the amendment request. Additionally, the Transit Asset Management Performance Targets were updated.

FM# 435209-2: NW 49th St from NW 70th (CR 225) to NW 44th Ave

- Add lanes and reconstruct
- Construction (CST) phase
- Funds to be added to FY 2025
- Total: \$3,424,000
 - EM25: \$1,500,000 – State Funds
 - LF: \$1,924,000 – Local Funds

FM# 439331-5: Ocala/Marion Urban Area FY 2024-2025 UPWP

- TPO Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) (carry-forward, adjustment)
- Funds to be added to FY 2025
- Total: \$1,128,631 – Federal Funds

TIP Roll Forward Report

- 37 total projects with carry-forward funding, prior year(s) to FY 2025
- \$332,301,269 total Roll Forward amount for FY 2025

Mr. Kenneth Odom, with Marion County Growth Services mentioned that the NW 49th St project, from NW 70th (CR 225) to NW 44th Ave, did not have the proper alignment, and Marion County would provide the correct alignment.

Mr. Balmes inquired if Marion County would manage the NW 49th St project, from NW 70th (CR 225) to NW 44th Ave, and Mr. Odom responded that was the plan.

Ms. Shaffer made a motion to approve FY 2025 to 2029 TIP Amendment #1 and Roll Forward.
Mr. Cooper seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 6a. Active Transportation Plan

Ms. Sara Brown, Transportation Planner, explained the concept of active transportation, which included non-motorized forms such as walking, biking, and rolling. In Marion County, equestrian access was also considered due to the large horse population. The goal of the plan was to identify objectives and strategies to improve active transportation, building on the existing bike and pedestrian plan.

She provided an overview of the plan, which included an introduction, vision, goals, objectives, and an analysis of existing conditions, such as roadway characteristics, sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. Data was collected on traffic speeds and road conditions, followed by proposed improvements based on public input. A survey and a public comment map were made available at upcoming meetings, with opportunities for in-person and online participation.

The stakeholder group gathered feedback and identified potential improvements, such as addressing sidewalk gaps or trail needs, and ranked projects based on evaluation criteria. Active transportation strategies included lowering speed limits or adding bike lanes. The plan also outlined potential funding sources and performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies over time.

A consultant was scheduled to assist with public engagement starting in October. A public survey, comment map, social media postings, and a dedicated website were planned to be launched at the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) community workshop. The timeline included stakeholder meetings from August through May, with final presentations and public outreach in June. The plan was expected to be presented to committees and the board by August. Data collection was underway, and public outreach was set to begin the following week, followed by the consultant's involvement in October.

Chairman Shrum inquired whether it was too early to determine how the prioritization process would be handled beyond simple voting and whether any alternative methods, such as a scoring system, were being considered.

Ms. Brown responded that a scoring system would be created in partnership with the consultant, but it had not yet been developed.

Mr. Odom inquired about how equestrian interests would be incorporated into the project.

Ms. Brown responded that during the stakeholder meeting, two representatives from Horse Farms Forever attended and expressed their interest in improving equestrian access. They emphasized the need for safe horse crossings and additional parking for horses within the existing greenway system. While their primary focus was on the greenway, they provided a list

of contacts from other regions to explore different approaches. They also suggested researching Wellington as a potential model for equestrian facilities.

Mr. Odom expressed his concerns regarding the implementation of the trail system on the greenway, noting that there were significant challenges in reaching consensus among stakeholders in the past. He highlighted the importance of designated car sites along the greenway, which improved safety and reduced the number of accidents involving emergency rescues.

He shared that the equestrian community faced issues with injuries among riders, leading to the establishment of an emergency response initiative. Mr. Odom emphasized the need for safe crossings and the addition of trail facilities, pointing out the existence of an equestrian park that is separate from bicycle trails.

He cautioned that equestrian communities should contribute financially to the maintenance of greenways rather than relying solely on state funding. He remarked on the challenges experienced in equestrian trail maintenance and encouraged the need for more input from equestrian users to ensure their needs are addressed, similar to those of bicycle users.

Chairman Shrum noted that he had asked similar questions regarding the desire for equestrian facilities. He mentioned the proposal of creating trails along roadways, which he found interesting. He expressed the hope that the focus would shift toward enhancing parks with designated horse areas and increasing access to greenways. He acknowledged the challenges of establishing road connections to the greenways, highlighting that developing two facility connections would be a significant undertaking.

Mr. Varadin asked how the Active Transportation Plan interacted with the overall vision of the TPO and whether the timing of the project would align or overlap with other initiatives.

Mr. Balmes stated that the Active Transportation Plan would be a separate plan but would serve as a supplement to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as it has a multimodal list. He explained that both documents would essentially contain the same list, allowing them to complement each other in a very integrated manner and help feed into the LRTP.

Mr. Varadin mentioned that at a recent planning conference, transportation was heavily emphasized in relation to Complete Streets, which is included in the county's comprehensive plan. He expressed interest in finding ways to engage more with planning efforts and looked forward to seeing more developments on this topic.

Mr. Odom stated that while the initiative was focused on human-powered transportation, it was not necessarily predominant throughout the entire county. He referenced a study conducted by Dunnellon, which included their vision framework. He noted that two facilities would be eco-focused, incorporating blueways along the Silver River, Rainbow River, and Withlacoochee. Mr. Odom emphasized the need to reference these elements, highlighting their significance to the eco-community and tourism.

Ms. Brown mentioned that in the survey, she included three different types of active transportation. She also added an option “other” for respondents to indicate if they used other modes of transportation such as scooters or skateboards.

Chairman Shrum expressed the hope that a key component of the initiative would focus on usability for visitors, specifically identifying which roads are suitable for biking and ensuring connectivity for tourism. He emphasized that this aspect would be a significant component of the project.

Mr. Odom mentioned that he was unsure if the topic of wayfinding had been addressed. He noted that there was a standardized wayfinding system previously discussed, which included collaborations on the Greenway and customization for families to enhance their connections. He suggested that this might be something worth revisiting and possibly updating, as it could be beneficial for implementation.

Item 7. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell, FDOT MPO Liaison, mentioned that the usual construction report was included in the agenda. She highlighted that clicking online would allow access to each project, with hyperlinks available for detailed information. For those not using the hyperlinks, she suggested visiting cflroads.com. As of that morning, there were eight intermittent lane closures, and she offered to answer any questions but did not go into detail.

Ms. Powell noted that a resurfacing project on State Road 200, from east of I-75 to US 301, was beginning that month. Message boards had been placed, and preparations were underway.

Chairman Shrum inquired if medians were included in the project.

Ms. Powell stated that the project was designed to enhance safety by incorporating raised concrete medians throughout the corridor.

She provided updates on the 2055 Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) which was an 18-month initiative seeking volunteers, with many virtual meeting options available. Flyers were provided for those interested in participating.

Ms. Powell also announced Mobility Week, scheduled for October 25th through November 2nd, aimed at promoting safe and multimodal transportation. Flyers with QR codes and website links were available for those interested in getting involved.

Lastly, she mentioned the third edition of the FDOT newsletter, which highlighted various district activities and events beyond Ocala and Marion County. She invited attendees to reach out for additional information or resources. Concluding her report, she offered to answer any remaining questions.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Rob Balmes, TPO Director, provided updates on the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Safety Matters outreach series. He mentioned the upcoming community workshop for the 2050 Long-Range Plan, which would be held at the CF Webber Center from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. The purpose of this workshop was to gather public feedback on areas of concern, needs, issues, and projects for the community to consider for the plan.

The plan covered projects in five-year increments through 2050. Mr. Balmes emphasized the importance of public engagement to identify specific areas of concern and needs. The workshop featured interactive walls for comments, sticky notes, and a large map for identifying specific locations. It focused on critical community issues such as growth, development, safety, and congestion.

He highlighted the positive public response so far, noting over 300 comments on an online map and more than 250 survey responses. Mr. Balmes encouraged members to direct anyone with transportation concerns to the workshop to provide their feedback.

Additionally, the Marion County Public Information Office, following direction from the board members, initiated efforts to focus more on safety education and awareness in the community. Mr. Balmes reminded the group of the one-pager shared last month, outlining various safety activities aimed at increasing community engagement.

The vision for the Safety Matters outreach series included around ten videos for social media, addressing specific topics such as red-light running, aggressive driving, speeding, and unfortunate collisions involving bicycles and pedestrians. These videos were intended to feature testimonials from elected officials, leadership, and first responders, and to raise awareness about the importance of safe travel within the community.

Mr. Balmes, TPO Director, introduced the first video of the Safety Matters outreach series, which featured a testimonial from crash survivor Ms. Lindsee Kirby, along with messages from Chair Stone and Chair Dreyer. He noted that while this video was longer than anticipated, future videos would be shorter and more focused. The video was played during the meeting and shared with committee members.

Item 9. Comments by TAC Members

Mr. Zeigler announced that Marion County had received a \$19 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All program. The project was for the safety improvements of Maricamp Road in Silver Springs Shores, extending from Baseline Road to 108th Terrace near Ocklawaha. He emphasized that the grant would not have been possible without the help of the TPO staff in developing the Safety Action Plan, as the project would not qualify otherwise. Additionally, he noted the importance of support from the TAC in prioritizing the project as number one on the safety priority projects list.

Item 11. Public Comment

Mr. Ken Odom, with Marion County Growth Services, informed the board that discussions had started on the redesign process of US 41, which was now underway after 25 years. Staff members of Marion County Growth Services had spoken with FDOT regarding potential commercial locations. He mentioned a possible realignment near a property owned by FDOT across from a park entrance, which they brought to their attention. Mr. Odom noted that Dunnellon was turning into a trail hub, with six-foot sidewalks planned on both sides of the roads, which would convert to a 12-foot multiuse path on the west side of the corridor. He also advised FDOT to contact the Office of County Engineering for any concerns they might have.

Item 12. Adjournment

Chairman Shrum adjourned the meeting at 4:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant