



**TPO Board Meeting**

Marion County Commission Auditorium  
601 SE 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471  
September 23, 2025  
3:00 PM

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Councilmember Ire Bethea, Sr.  
Commissioner Craig Curry  
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer  
Councilman Tim Inskeep  
Mayor Ben Marciano  
Commissioner Matt McClain  
Commissioner Michelle Stone  
Commissioner Carl Zalak

**Members Not Present:**

Commissioner Kathy Bryant  
Commissioner Ray Dwyer  
Councilmember James Hilty  
Councilmember Barry Mansfield

**Others Present:**

Rob Balmes, TPO  
Shakayla Irby, TPO  
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala  
Aubrey Hale, City of Ocala  
Darren Park, City of Ocala  
Sean Lanier, City of Ocala  
Mike McCammon, FDOT  
Loreen Bobo, FDOT  
Jim Stroz, FDOT  
Jon Scarfe, FDOT  
Matthew Richardson, FDOT  
William Roll, Kimley-Horn and Associates

Hugh Lochrane  
James Wilson  
Ernie Carcas  
Ed Krebs  
Ric Wattier  
Matt Peltz  
Leo Daigle  
Doug Conklin  
Charlotte Conklin  
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 September 16, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPOs Facebook and X pages.

### **Item 4. Consent Agenda**

*Mr. Marciano made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dreyer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.*

### **Item 5A. Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1 with Roll Forward**

Mr. Balmes presented the Amendment #1 to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026–2030 TIP for the roll-forward report. He explained that each year, the TPO works with FDOT District Five to review projects in the work program that typically carry over from year to year, particularly those that are not fully authorized. The roll-forward ensures consistency between the newly adopted TIP and the previous TIP by carrying forward projects and associated funding into the new fiscal year.

He noted that for this year, the roll-forward amendment totaled \$123.2 million, covering 43 projects and programs, including grant programs. With \$25.3 million already programmed to projects included in the roll-forward, the revised TIP amounted to \$148.5 million.

Key projects included:

- I-75 at NW 49th Street Interchange
- I-75 Auxiliary Lanes from SR 200 to SR 326
- *SR 40 from US 441/Pine to 25th Avenue – Mr. Balmes noted that FDOT had notified that the crosswalk improvement project was removed from the roll-forward.*
- NW 49th Street from NW 70th to NW 44th
- Baseline to Santos Paved Trail
- SunTran FTA 5307 Fixed Route
- SunTran Section 5339 Small Urban Capital
- SunTran Section 5307 ARP Small Urban
- SunTran Low-No Award

Mr. Balmes stated that the Technical Advisory Committee recommended approval, the Citizens Advisory Committee supported the amendment by consensus due to a lack of quorum, and staff recommended board approval of the amendment.

Mr. Bethea asked for clarification of the SR 40 from US 441/Pine to 25th Avenue project.

Mr. Balmes stated that the programmed project included \$728,000 in City of Ocala local funding per intersection, covering intersection improvements as well as crosswalk enhancements the city planned to implement. He noted that, due to directives from the Governor and the state, these types of projects, including certain paint work, would not be moving forward at this time.

Mr. McClain made a motion to approve the FY 2026–2030 TIP Amendment #1 with Roll Forward. Ms. Dreyer seconded the motion, a roll-call vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Item 6A. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Office of Safety Presentation**

Loreen Bobo, Safety Administrator for FDOT District Five, provided an update on safety initiatives, infrastructure projects, and outreach efforts across the nine counties in Central Florida. She reported that the previous year, District Five recorded 650 fatalities, down from approximately 740 the year before, and emphasized FDOT's goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries. Nearly 30% of these fatalities involved pedestrians and bicyclists. In the Ocala Marion TPO area, there were 115 fatalities and 316 serious injuries. The primary contributing factors were lane departures, impaired driving, intersection crashes, aging road users, and occupant protection issues. The most affected age groups were drivers and pedestrians aged 25–34 and 65 and older.

Ms. Bobo highlighted infrastructure projects aimed at improving safety, explaining FDOT's use of lane narrowing, raised crosswalks, roundabouts, and deflection techniques to reduce vehicle speeds and minimize conflicts. She cited examples from Brevard County and State Road 200, where lane reductions and other safety features had led to fewer crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities. She also provided statistics on roundabouts in District Five, noting that 11 had been completed and one was under construction.

Prior to these projects, there had been 13 fatalities and 17 serious injuries at these intersections. Since their implementation, there had been only one fatality, involving a driver traveling at 120 mph an incident unlikely to have been prevented by any intersection control.

Ms. Bobo also discussed behavioral and outreach initiatives. She highlighted the significant growth of Vision Zero adoption across Central Florida, with nearly all counties and communities now committed to the zero-fatality goal. She described ongoing partnerships, including Stop on Red events and digital campaigns using geofencing, which reached over 3.5 million people in Osceola County. FDOT collaborated with local law enforcement on high-visibility enforcement programs and traffic safety grants addressing speeding, aggressive driving, and occupant protection, with participation from both the Marion County Sheriff's Office and the Ocala Police Department. She also discussed educational initiatives, including middle school poster contests, college smart driving challenges, and public outreach through minor league baseball events.

Ms. Bobo recognized the Ocala Marion TPO for winning the outreach award at the Central Florida Safety Summit for its Safety Matters video series, highlighting the impact of their public safety messaging. She provided an update on the Central Florida Safety Strategic Plan, now in its second year, with a steering committee and monthly focus groups implementing action steps such as school zone speed management and community safety education. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of individual responsibility, noting Child Passenger Safety Week and the proper use of age- and size-appropriate car seats and booster seats.

Mr. Marciano asked Ms. Bobo for updates regarding State Road 200, specifically requesting information on infrastructure improvements along that corridor.

Ms. Bobo explained that hearing directly from constituents was valuable. She noted that one issue involved U-turns at traffic signals, where previously drivers could turn freely. FDOT was working with the engineer to remove some planters at key locations to improve turning movements, and she said she would follow up with specifics. She also addressed concerns about mid-block median access points, noting that implementing those would take longer and would be considered after the current construction project, with opportunities identified at optimal locations.

Chairman Zalak acknowledged the concern, noting that drivers in larger vehicles, such as pickup trucks or trucks with horse trailers, often cannot make the turns safely. He observed visible tire tracks over the curb from these maneuvers and thanked Ms. Bobo for addressing the issue, expressing hope that the planned adjustments would reduce these challenges.

#### **Item 6B. Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Draft Cost Feasible**

William Roll with Kimley Horn and Associates presented the draft Cost Feasible Plan, emphasizing its importance in enabling project implementation. He reviewed multimodal priorities and explained the revenue forecast, noting that while the plan identifies approximately \$2.4 billion in projects through 2050, funding will be received over time, reducing the present value of later expenditures.

Mr. Roll reported that there was a significant number of projects committed for improvements within the next five years, including two I-75 projects: the 49th Street interchange and the Moving Florida Forward initiative supported by the Governor.

He explained that the cost feasible plan began with these committed improvements already in place. Fully funded state highway projects included widening portions of SR 40 to SR 314, an area near Levy Hammock Road, and SR 464 (Maricamp Road). The remaining projects were identified in collaboration with county staff, the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Steering Committee, focusing on non-state projects funded primarily through local sales tax commitments.

Mr. Roll noted that some projects were only partially funded or under study, while others—such as sections of I-75 north of Ocala, SR 40 west, SR 326, US 41, SR 200, CR 484, and portions of US 301—remained unfunded due to limited resources. He also highlighted four key study areas: the East-West Corridor (I-75 to US 441 north of Belleview), SR 200, the West Beltway (SR 200 to I-75), and the Southeast Connector (SR 200 across I-75), emphasizing that the west-side studies should be coordinated for feasible solutions.

He added that partially funded projects were structured to ensure progress by identifying funds for the next project phases. The plan also assumed continuation of current public transportation services, recognized future transit needs from the Transit Development Plan, and reserved funding for bicycle, pedestrian, and trail improvements prioritized annually. Additionally, funds were set aside for intersection and operational improvements where widening was not feasible.

Mr. Roll stated that the cost feasible plan tables and maps were included in the agenda packet and would be combined with prior materials—such as goals, objectives, performance measures, forecasts, and needs assessments—into a complete report. The public comment period was scheduled to open on September 29, followed by a public open house on September 30, CAC and TAC meetings on October 14, and Board adoption on November 13, which was the required deadline for plan approval.

Mr. Curry asked if material availability and costs appeared to be stabilizing and inquired about the current status of those factors.

Mr. Roll responded that he was not an expert on materials but noted that labor shortages were becoming particularly challenging. He explained that approximately 20 Moving Florida Forward projects, including I-4 in District 5, were multi-billion-dollar efforts, and FDOT had been hosting job fairs to attract enough workers. He added that steel prices had increased by about 40% over the past six months, creating uncertainty and variability in costs. Mr. Roll emphasized that the combination of material fluctuations and labor shortages had resulted in a cost-challenging environment for contractors.

#### **Item 6C. Draft Active Transportation Plan**

Mr. Balmes provided a brief update on the draft Active Transportation Plan, noting that the document was on track to be released that week for a 30-day public review period.

He shared that an open house for both the Active Transportation Plan and the Long Range Transportation Plan was scheduled for Tuesday, the 30th, at the Mary Sue Rich Center from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m., allowing the public to review the plans and project maps and provide in-person comments and feedback.

Mr. Balmes added that the document would be distributed soon, and that the consultant team from Kittelson and Associates would present the full plan to the TPO board the following month, after which board approval of the plan would be sought.

### **Item 7. Comments by FDOT**

Jon Scarfe, MPO Liaison Administrator for District Five, attended on behalf of Ms. Kia Powell. He commended the TPO on their work on the Long Range Transportation Plan, noting that his group reviewed the draft and that the documents posted so far had been well-prepared. He expressed anticipation for reviewing the full draft once it was uploaded.

Mr. Scarfe distributed flyers containing newly released information and provided an update on upcoming public hearings and program activities. He noted that on November 13th, a member of FDOT's Program Management team would present the final tentative work program.

He also detailed the virtual public hearing, which ran from October 20th at midnight through November 7th, allowing the public to view presentations and projects in the tentative work program and submit comments for the official record. Additionally, an in-person meeting was scheduled on Tuesday, October 21st, from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. at the District Headquarters in DeLand, located at 719 South Woodland Boulevard.

Mr. Scarfe acknowledged that his familiarity with the Ocala-Marion region was limited, as he primarily worked in Orlando, and introduced Mike McCammon to address any region-specific questions.

Mr. McCammon provided updates on several FDOT projects. He reported that last month, the intersection improvement project at U.S. 441 and SR 40 was sent out to bid but did not receive a qualifying bid. Discussions with contractors revealed that some were unavailable within the original timeframe.

FDOT planned to adjust the bid period and modify certain project elements before reissuing the bid in October. He noted that the project, originally expected to be completed by year-end, might now finish in February or March, depending on the bid outcome.

He stated that the U.S. 441 resurfacing project near the Alachua County line and the resurfacing on U.S. 41 in Dunnellon were progressing well. The CR 464 project, under construction for nearly two years, was nearing completion, and for the CR 484 project, weekly meetings with the design team were ongoing, with plans expected within two weeks, after which contractor pricing and implementation would begin.

Regarding the 66th Street Bridge, FDOT planned to maintain it as one lane temporarily while working on the design for a new bridge, part of the Moving Florida Forward I-75 project. They were coordinating with the county on the 49th Street extension and detour routes to minimize disruption, as the bridge demolition and rebuild would take approximately eight months.

Mr. McCammon also noted that crews had been sent to clean up areas not included in the contractor’s responsibilities, such as sweeping, hedging, and removing built-up sand along sidewalks, to maintain the site until new construction could add capacity.

Chairman Zalak thanked Mr. McCammon and acknowledged that while progress was being made, traffic issues were still ongoing, emphasizing the importance of continued oversight and coordination.

#### **Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff**

Mr. Balmes provided a brief update on transportation funding and reauthorization. He reported attending the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) National Conference in Providence, Rhode Island, which was attended by over 700 MPO representatives from across the country. A major topic of discussion was the future of transportation funding, as the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is set to expire on September 30 of next year.

He highlighted the work of the LOT (Local Officials in Transportation) Coalition—a collaboration of the National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, regional councils, National Association of Development Organizations, and AMPO—working with lobbyists and members of Congress to emphasize federal funding for local governments and MPO involvement.

Mr. Balmes noted that AMPO published a “101 on Reauthorization” document, which he would share via email to the Board, outlining the process, next steps, and anticipated draft bills expected by the end of the year. He emphasized that, while extensions are sometimes used in reauthorization, the sense of urgency in Congress may reduce the need for them. He concluded by assuring that the TPO, as a member of AMPO, will remain closely engaged and will provide updates as new information becomes available.

#### **Item 9. Comments by TPO Board Members**

*There were no comments by TPO board members.*

#### **Item 10. Public Comment**

Mr. Hugh Lochrane of Dunnellon addressed the Board regarding the delayed expansion of US 41 from Dunnellon to the intersection of SR 40. He discussed the impact of increased traffic in the area and noted that he had previously been informed the widening project would begin in 2018, then in 2024, and was now being told it would start in 2030. He emphasized that the project should be placed higher on the priority list.

Mr. Ernie Carcas of Dunnellon addressed the Board regarding the delayed U.S. 41 widening project. He stated that he and his wife have lived in the area for ten years and that the project affects eight of the nine subdivisions in Rainbow Springs. He noted that the project had been discussed since 2014, with start dates repeatedly delayed. Mr. Carcas expressed concerns about dangerous intersections, outdated project plans, heavy traffic volumes, and proposed U-turn traffic patterns, urging that the project move forward to improve safety and access.

Mr. James Wilson of Dunnellon addressed the Board on behalf of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. He stated that the church serves 700–800 families each weekend and operates a food pantry assisting over 950 families monthly. Mr. Wilson expressed concern about the difficulty and danger of entering and exiting the church due to heavy traffic and limited visibility on U.S. 41, noting that numerous crashes have occurred in the area. He urged that the widening project be prioritized to improve safety for the growing community.

Chairman Zalak inquired whether, given the large number of attendees at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, the church was required to have a law enforcement officer present for traffic control.

Mr. Wilson responded that the church hires law enforcement officers for traffic control; however, they are not always available due to emergencies or other duties. He noted that large events, such as the church's fish fry, draw additional traffic, and many attendees are older and fearful of navigating the busy roadway. He added that the officers are very helpful when present.

Ms. Charlotte Conklin of Dunnellon addressed the Board regarding traffic and access issues related to the delayed U.S. 41 widening project. She stated that she lives in a subdivision with only one entrance and exit, and during certain times of the day it can take 15 to 20 minutes to leave due to congestion backed up from Walmart. Ms. Conklin expressed concern over reported fatalities in the area and requested safety improvements such as a stoplight or roundabout. She emphasized that residents in her area, many of whom are older, struggle to access doctors, groceries, and other necessities, and she urged that the community not be overlooked in transportation planning and safety improvements.

Chairman Zalak stated that there were multiple traffic improvements planned and noted that the work on SR 40 was already on the books. He then asked Mr. McCammon with FDOT to confirm whether the project currently underway was the only one scheduled for completion this year.

Mr. McCammon stated that the only project expected to begin within the next month was a right-turn lane extension for northbound U.S. 41 onto SR 40, which should help alleviate traffic somewhat. He noted that while this improvement would not address all of the issues mentioned, it was the only project currently scheduled. He added that a resurfacing project was underway but ended near the Walmart area. Additionally, he mentioned that the widening project remained in the transportation plan, projected for approximately fiscal year 2030 or 2031, meaning it was not expected to begin anytime soon.

Chairman Zalak commented that the main issue with the widening project was the existing traffic funnel identified in previous studies. He explained that even if the road were widened further north, traffic would still narrow as it entered downtown Dunnellon, creating a bottleneck. He noted that acquiring properties in that area would be difficult and suggested that perhaps the Dunnellon City Council might explore an alternative route to address the issue. Chairman Zalak emphasized that until a solution was found for that section, it would remain a challenge to move traffic efficiently through the area.

Ms. Conklin shared that when she inquired about traffic congestion on SR 40 after moving to the area, she was told that a narrow bridge in the area limited potential improvements.



She noted being told that any expansion would require rerouting out to Lake Tropicana to connect to U.S. 41, which she suggested should be considered to improve safety, though she was told it was not possible.

Chairman Zalak responded that FDOT could be asked to conduct a study of the specific intersection, as they have done in his district many times, to determine whether improvements are warranted.

Mr. McCammon stated that Mike Sanders with FDOT is the appropriate contact for studying intersections and assessing potential improvements.

Mr. McCammon acknowledged awareness of the concerns and stated that FDOT would review them. He also noted that the project is included on the TPO priority list.

Mr. Inskeep clarified that the traffic funnel is not in Dunnellon. He explained that the issue occurs north of the area, while south of the Walmart, the road is four lanes. The actual funnel is at the bridge over the Withlacoochee River.

#### **Item 11. Adjournment**

Chairman Zalak adjourned the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant