



TPO Board Meeting

Marion County Commission Auditorium
601 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471
April 28, 2020
4:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Commissioner Kathy Bryant
Commissioner Jeff Gold
Mayor Kent Guinn
Councilwoman Valerie Hanchar
Councilman Brent Malever
Commissioner David Moore
Councilman Jay Musleh
Commissioner Michelle Stone
Commissioner Carl Zalak

Members Not Present:

Commissioner Ronald Livsey
Councilman Justin Grabelle

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Derrick Harris, TPO
Elizabeth Mitchell, TPO
Shakayla Irby, TPO
Anton Schauerte, TPO
Vickie Wyche, FDOT
Mike McCammon, FDOT
Mary McGehee, FDOT

Teresa Donaldson, HDR
Ralph Bove, Volkert
Steve Schnell, HDR
Tracy Straub, Marion County
Ken Odom, Marion County
Jon Barber
Katie Habgood
Stephanie Moss
Amber Gartner, Kimley-Horn

Item 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Gold called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Gold led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Secretary Shakayla Irby stated that the meeting had been published online on the TPO website, the City of Ocala, Belleview, and Dunnellon websites on April 21, 2020. The meeting was also published to the TPO's Facebook and Twitter page.

Item 4a. I-75 Forward Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study Presentation

Mr. Steve Schnell gave a presentation to the board on the I-75 Forward PD&E Study.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had been conducting two PD&E studies to evaluate transportation improvements and upgrades to I-75 in Sumter, Marion and Alachua Counties. Both studies were to take place simultaneously. The outcomes for both studies could result in different recommendations to address transportation corridor issues for each specific area.

The two PD&E study segments include:

- Southern Segment: Florida Turnpike (SR 91) to SR 200
 - Approx. 22.5 miles
 - 4 interchanges
- Northern Segment: SR 200 to CR 234
 - Approx. 25.3 miles
 - 6 interchanges

The PD&E studies were scheduled to be conducted from 2020 to 2023.

The study overview consisted of three elements: Engineering, Environmental, and Public Involvement.

The purpose and need of the study was to evaluate corridor and interchange improvements to increase the capacity of I-75 within the study areas to accommodate area growth, freight activity, traffic and safety, and hurricane evacuation.

Mr. Schnell shared some graphs with the board that showed historic and projected area growth.

The scheduled next steps for the study were data collection, in the year 2021 the department would start to develop alternatives, toward quarter 4 of the year 2021 and the year of 2022 evaluation of alternatives and by the year 2023 the department had plans of preparing final reports.

Item 4b. 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Status Update

Mr. Harris presented and said the TPO was currently working on an update to our Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). At the board meeting earlier in the year the board had passed the Goals and Objectives for the plan, along with the associated weights to those Goals and Objectives.

TPO staff coordinated the Goals and Objectives and their weights with our LRTP consultant. A final document, known as the Goals and Objectives Technical Memo had been given to the board for informational purposes.

Also, the TPO was anticipating having a great deal of public outreach where staff would go out to various locations in the community and discuss any transportation needs the public had. However, with the sudden global pandemic, staff found that it would not be wise to have public meetings. Therefore, staff was planning on setting up virtual meetings and an interactive map. Those tools would replace what would had been in person public meetings. The virtual meetings would include short presentations, documents, and an overall explanation on how to submit comments and transportation needs to staff directly. The interactive map would be a visual representation of the needs that had been demonstrated in other local plans, including the current LRTP. Staff hoped to have the meetings take place around the last week or two of May.

Item 5a. Fiscal Years 2018/19 to 2019/20 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment

Mr. Balmes presented the Fiscal Years 2018/19 to 2019/20 UPWP Amendment.

Mr. Balmes explained that the UPWP was a federally required two-year document that served as the TPO's working budget. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018/19 to 2019/20 UPWP was authorized to June 30, 2020.

Based on an analysis of the current FY 2019/20 and remaining tasks to be completed through

June 30, 2020, the TPO had proposed an amendment to move funds among tasks to ensure no negative balances. The changes in particular reflected an emphasis on completing tasks related to administrative and long-range planning.

Mr. Balmes provided a summary of the funding changes proposed by task for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Planning (PL) funds in FY 19/20. There was no net change to the current PL balance. A summary of the changes included:

	<u>Prior to Revision</u>	<u>After Revision</u>
• Task 1 Administration:	\$340,909	\$362,608 (+)
• Task 2 Data Collection:	\$36,120	\$14,120 (-)
• Task 3 Long Range Planning:	\$89,079	\$110,700 (+)
• Task 4 Short Range Planning:	\$47,005	\$39,005 (-)
• Task 5 Public Transportation:	\$2,806	\$1,106 (-)
• Task 6 Public Involvement:	\$48,320	\$41,300 (-)
• Task 7 Special Projects:	\$6,066	\$1,466 (-)
<hr/> Total PL Balance FY 19/20	<hr/> \$570,305	<hr/> \$570,305

TPO staff requested the TPO Board to approve a UPWP amendment the FY 2018/19 to 2019/20 UPWP for funding of tasks in FY 2019/20.

TPO staff also proposed to include a new task to update the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Plan. Staff had plans to update the DBE Plan by June to coincide with the Public Participation Plan update.

Mr. Moore made a motion to approve the Fiscal Years 2018/19 to 2019/20 UPWP Amendment. Mr. Malever seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5b. Draft Fiscal Years 2020/21 to 2021/22 UPWP

Mr. Balmes presented the Draft Fiscal Years 2020/21 to 2021/22 UPWP.

The Ocala Marion Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) was required by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to produce a budgetary document that outlined all tasks, activities, and responsibilities TPO staff would conduct over a two-year period. In addition, the document had to be cost feasible based on appropriated funds set by FHWA, FTA and FDOT.

The TPO's fiscal year ran from July 1st through June 30th. Therefore, the document covered activities and expenditures beginning July 1st, 2020 through June 30th, 2022.

Based on a 30-day public comment period from March 24 to April 24, the TPO received direct feedback and comments from the FHWA, FTA, FDOT and SunTran. Comments, along with TPO responses and how the document was edited/modified had been included in the TPO meeting packet for public and board review.

Based off of the comments and feedback received a revised draft UPWP document was included with the meeting packet for further review.

The draft document had been presented to the TPO Board on March 24, and two financial updates were made.

1. FDOT Transit Administration notified the TPO on 4/15 the 5305(d) funding allocation for FY 20/21 would change from \$87,028 to \$108,382 (including state, local match).
2. Marion County Health Benefit costs would increase from \$10,032 to \$11,306 per staff member, effective October 1, 2020. The changes were incorporated into the UPWP for staff salaries/benefits and consulting services (Task 7), and were highlighted during the board meeting.

Ms. Stone made a motion to approve the Draft Fiscal Years 2020/21 to 2021/22 UPWP as presented. Ms. Hanchar seconded, a roll-call vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5c. Title VI Non-Discrimination Plan Update

Ms. Mitchell gave a brief overview of the Title VI Non-Discrimination Plan Update.

Ms. Mitchell stated the Ocala Marion TPO had been committed to ensuring that no person was excluded from the transportation planning process, regardless of background, income level or cultural identity. The TPO complied with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other Non-Discrimination statutes, regulations and authorities.

The document was presented to the TPO board for review.

Ms. Hanchar made a motion to accept the Title VI Non-Discrimination Plan Update as presented. Mr. Guinn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5d. Public Involvement Resolution

Mr. Harris presented and said that in an effort to provide reasonable opportunities for citizens, partners and stakeholders to participate in TPO planning activities, staff were proposing a formal resolution to outline alternative public participation procedures during emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 health crisis.

The procedures were meant to be used temporarily as the primary methods of public participation; however, they could also be used in the future to compliment or supplement in-person public meetings and workshops.

Chairman Gold suggested that the Marion County Board of County Commissioners Auditorium could also be used for public meetings and was still accessible for safe meetings.

A roll-call vote was called and the Public Involvement Resolution passed.

Item 6. Consent Agenda

Mr. Moore made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Malever seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Wyche said that FDOT had no comments at the time and the construction report had been provided in the TPO meeting packet.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff

Ms. Irby gave a brief overview of the TPO's Social Media and TPO Website Plan Layout.

A few highlighted areas were:

- Plan Layout
- Steps for the up keeping of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- Associated Hours per Week
- Local Community Partners to follow
- Archiving
- TPO Website Administration

Mr. Balmes made comments that FDOT District Five had reached out to him regarding a list being put together called the "Routes of Significance". FDOT would support the routes that were on the list. For Marion County, SR 200 from SW 66th to 301 was selected for the Routes of Significance list as a corridor of information and would be monitored in real-time to collect traffic data that would be compiled over a matter of time.

Mr. Balmes also informed the board that the TPO had not heard any new information on the FDOT audit since the last board meeting.

Item 9. Comments by TPO Members

Councilwoman Hanchar informed the board that City of Dunnellon Councilmember Linda Fernandez had passed away the morning of April 28, 2020.

Item 10. Public Comment

Jon Barber, 1908 SE 5th Street, Ocala, FL addressed the board with typed comments he provided and are attached to this set of minutes for the record.

Mr. Balmes along with City of Ocala staff would follow up on Mr. Barber's comments.

Item 11. Adjournment

Chairman Gold adjourned the meeting at 5:13pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant

Presentation Notes - 04/28/2020 FNOR/CSX Rail Spur

Thank you for allowing me to spend a couple of minutes to present an idea that is gaining growing support in our community.

Of course, first and foremost on our minds right now is the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on all of our lives. Local and state governments as well as our federal government are all consumed with its social and economic consequences.

With that said, we must look forward for opportunities to improve our economy and promote a better quality of life for our community and our visitors. I'm here today to suggest a means for improving our local economy and producing a tremendous return on our investment by converting the downtown rail corridor to a multi-use trail corridor. This would benefit all of our citizens, and draw even more visitors to Marion County which would benefit local businesses as well as create new businesses.

With an ever growing trail network and major trailheads at Baseline, Santos and Dunnellon, Marion County is already on the national map for its amazing trail system. The FNOR rail spur running through downtown Ocala is the only corridor that can feasibly connect these three trailheads and Ocala to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. Connecting Ocala with this existing system would provide tremendous economic and recreational opportunities for our citizens and our visitors.

It would truly be a game-changer for our community.

According to data from the Florida Office of Greenways & Trails:

- The Cross Florida Greenway had the greatest local economic impact of all the FLorida State Parks in 2019. The CFG generated nearly \$264 million in local economic impact. (ADDING MORE TRAIL CONNECTIONS TO THE CFG, ESPECIALLY FROM DOWNTOWN, WOULD ENHANCE THIS ECONOMIC IMPACT EVEN MORE BENEFITTING LOCAL HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, SHOPS, ETC.)
- Florida tourists spend \$70 billion on outdoor recreation annually;
- Paved bicycle trails brings in more than \$6 billion in FLorida annually;
- Every \$1 million spent on trails yields 9.6 jobs
- Trails add value to new homes and are among the top 4 community amenities sought by prospective homeowners of ALL ages
- Every dollar spent on walking paths saves \$3 in medical expenses (American Heart Association).
- People who live near safe, high quality biking and walking infrastructure tend to get more exercise than people who don't (American Journal of Public Health).
- Fitness walking/jogging is the most popular outdoor activity among Florida residents.

I recently shared with you a feasibility study done by Kimley Horn in 2007± that contemplated utilizing this rail line as a rails with trails corridor shared by humans and trains. The study revealed problems with that concept and the effort went no further.

Representing a rapidly growing group of Ocala/Marion County residents, I am asking this board to commission a new study to determine the feasibility of the conversion of the spur rail line running through downtown Ocala to a pedestrian / bicycle / alternative transportation trail. The study should identify the major stakeholders, trail connections and potential economic impacts. There could be a variety of funding sources for the trails and alternative transportation projects. I strongly encourage the inclusion of this on the new long range plan.

The conversion of rail corridors to trails is such a powerful economic engine that a national organization, The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, has been established to help support these causes.

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