



Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting

Marion County – Growth Services Training Room

2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470

2:30 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Steven Cohoon

Noel Cooper (*arrived at 2:47pm*)

Tom Duncan

Casey Griffith (*arrived at 2:34pm*)

Kia Powell

Loretta Shaffer (*arrived at 2:33pm*)

Jeff Shrum

Bob Titterington

Chuck Varadin (*alternate Ken Odom attended*)

Members Not Present:

Chad Ward

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, Ocala Marion TPO

Shakayla Irby, Ocala Marion TPO

Liz Mitchell, Ocala Marion TPO

William Roll, Kimley-Horn and Associates

Aubrey Hale, City of Ocala

Christopher Zeigler, Marion County

Item 1. Call to Order

Chairman Steven Cohoon called the meeting to order at 2:32pm.

Item 2. Roll Call

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

Item 3. Proof of Publication

TPO 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 5, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPO's Facebook and X pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

Mr. Titterington made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Shrum seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5a. 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Updates

Mr. William Roll with Kimley Horn and Associates presented updates on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan, focusing on scenario planning, roadway needs, strategic options, and next steps.

He reviewed three scenarios: Scenario 1, the trend forecast, which was based on existing land use and development patterns; Scenario 2b, targeted growth, which concentrated development in areas such as Liberty Triangle, Marion Oaks, Ocala, the airport area, and the Belleview/Beltway area while reducing growth elsewhere by 30%; and Scenario 3, which emphasized multifamily housing to increase affordability and land efficiency, resulting in fewer single-family units but maintaining similar population levels.

Traffic analysis indicated increased congestion in core Ocala and along State Road 200 under Scenario 2b, while Scenario 3 showed minimal changes except in downtown Ocala. Funding considerations noted a transportation improvement budget of approximately \$600 million in year-of-expenditure dollars, with local funds exceeding state and federal allocations. Key roadway needs included congestion and capacity issues in southwest county, Interstate 75, and State Road 200, with expansion challenges due to right-of-way constraints, environmental sensitivities, and farmland preservation. Strategic opportunities highlighted completing the Beltway around north Ocala, east-west corridor connections, and targeted west-side improvements to address bottlenecks and support regional mobility.

Mr. Roll also outlined potential corridor options to improve access to Interstate 75 in the western county: a southern connection via State Road 200 through Marion Oaks, a corridor along State Road 200 itself, and a Western Beltway corridor west of I-95. He emphasized the need for studies in these areas to develop cost-feasible solutions.

Mr. Roll informed the committee that certain projects had not been cost feasible in the 2045 Plan, and while there was no guarantee they would be under construction by the 2050 Plan, the objective was to provide a pathway for future advancement. It was emphasized that connectivity to I-75 was a regional and statewide issue, which increased competitiveness for funding beyond the county level.

Discussion highlighted the importance of strategic area studies, particularly along SR 200, due to increasing travel demand from the Suncoast Parkway extension toward I-75.

Mr. Odom inquired about the bridge over the Withlacoochee River.

District 7 had programmed PD&E and right-of-way acquisition for the bridge over the Withlacoochee River, as well as partnering on widening SR 491 in Citrus County. The bridge was identified as functionally obsolete, serving as both a hurricane evacuation route and a capacity constraint. A replacement project would likely include provisions for future expansion to six lanes.

Floodplain considerations were reviewed, with the conclusion that while the area floods broadly, water levels did not typically reach overtopping or critical velocity levels. Raising the bridge slightly was considered likely.

Mr. Roll shared an example from Gandy Boulevard in south Tampa to illustrate potential elevated limited-access concepts that could be applied to SR 200 to improve regional traffic flow and provide tolling as a funding mechanism. Cost estimates for elevated facilities ranged from \$100–\$150 million per mile, which was noted as more feasible than some alternative beltway concepts.

The committee was advised that a steering committee meeting was scheduled for the 20th, where a preliminary cost feasible plan would be presented. The intent was to finalize the plan at that meeting in order to move forward with adoption.

Item 5b. Active Transportation Plan Project Updates

TPO Director, Rob Balmes presented an update on the Active Transportation Plan (ATP). He explained that the Ocala-Marion TPO, in coordination with consultant Kittelson & Associates, continued the development of the ATP, which aimed to support growth, mobility, and safety by identifying gaps in the transportation network and advancing bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. He reported that draft project lists had been prepared based on the analysis of needs and gaps, as well as input received from Marion County, the City of Ocala, other jurisdictions, and community stakeholders. He added that comments on the projects would be accepted through August 15, 2025.

Mr. Balmes reviewed the project schedule. He stated that the ATP was kicked off in August 2024 with the first stakeholder meeting, followed by a September 2024 presentation to the TPO Board and committees and an outreach event at the LRTP Public Workshop. A second stakeholder meeting was held in December 2024, and in March 2025 the TPO committees and Board were updated. By May 2025, the third stakeholder meeting took place, focusing on existing conditions, level of traffic stress, and accessibility analysis.

Draft project lists were presented in June 2025, and in August 2025 a fourth stakeholder meeting was held to review the lists and prepare a draft plan for public release. He noted that the plan schedule included a final presentation to the TPO committees and Board in October 2025 for adoption, with an ATP and 2050 LRTP joint Open House scheduled for September 30/October 1, 2025.

He provided an overview of the needs assessment process, which identified roadways that were high stress for pedestrians and bicyclists, areas with low accessibility to destinations that required more low-stress connections, and projects that filled in missing links or connected existing facilities. The assessment included a review of local projects and an overlay of additional needs identified through analysis.

Mr. Balmes explained that projects were identified from multiple sources, including Marion County, the City of Ocala, and previous stakeholder input, as well as newly identified opportunities from the consultant's analysis. The types of project identification included connecting or extending low-stress roadways, linking existing projects, and filling gaps along high-stress corridors.

He presented the draft project lists, which were divided into three main categories:

- **Trail Projects:** Included connections such as SW 27th Avenue/SW 42nd Street, NE 8th Avenue to Silver Springs Boulevard, and Watula/NE 8th Avenue through Tusawilla Park. Major regional projects included the Black Bear Trail segments, the Pruitt Gap, Withlacoochee Bay Trail, Ocala to Silver Springs Trail, Silver Springs Bikeway, Nature Coast Trail connections, Silver Springs to Hawthorne Trail, and the Cross Florida Greenway Land Bridge expansion. Projects were categorized into three tiers for prioritization.
- **Bicycle Projects:** Included new or enhanced bicycle facilities such as bike lanes along NE 35th Street between West Anthony Road and NE 36th Avenue, buffered bike lanes on E Fort King Street, and accommodations on the future SR 200 bridge replacement over the Withlacoochee River.
- **Sidewalk and Shared-Use Path Projects:** Projects were identified to close gaps and improve accessibility. Examples included sidewalks along SR 40/Silver Springs Boulevard, SR 464, US 301/441 under the rail line bridge, NE 7th Street, SW 19th Avenue Road, and Fort King Street. Several shared-use paths were also identified, including facilities along SW 95th Street, NW 110th Avenue, SW 38th Street, SW 49th Avenue, Marion Oaks Manor, and Pine Road. Projects also included connections within neighborhoods in Ocala, such as NE 2nd Street, NW 2nd Avenue, SE 17th Street, SE 8th Street, and SE 22nd Street.

Mr. Balmes reviewed the initial prioritization factors used to score projects, which included user comfort, roadway stress levels (Level of Traffic Stress 3 or 4), safety factors such as whether the project was on the High Injury Network, local priority (whether the project appeared on the List of Priority Projects), and accessibility factors such as serving areas with top 30th percentile population density and destinations within one mile. Projects meeting these criteria were awarded points and categorized into three tiers. He emphasized that the scoring system was designed to provide additional information for prioritization discussions and was not intended to serve as the final ranking criteria.

Mr. Balmes reported that feedback from stakeholders and the community had been incorporated, including considerations for student accessibility and connections to key community destinations. He noted that maps showing existing, committed, and proposed facilities had been prepared to support planning efforts.

Finally, Mr. Balmes discussed the next steps. He stated that on August 26, 2025, the TPO Board would review the project lists. In September, the draft Active Transportation Plan would be released for a 30-day public review period, followed by the ATP and 2050 LRTP Open House on September 30/October 1, 2025. The committees would receive a presentation on October 14, and the final plan would be presented to the TPO Board for adoption on October 28, 2025.

Mr. Cohoon inquired about project #17 – Neighborhood connection to Cross Florida Greenway.

Mr. Balmes explained that the recommendation was intended to connect the neighborhood area to the Cross Florida Greenway. He noted that some recommendations addressed gaps or opportunities, and if any were considered infeasible or inappropriate, they could be removed.

Mr. Odom noted that an apartment complex near the intersection of 484 and 200 had previously been proposed and connectivity to the Heart Trail could be an amenity feature.

Mr. Balmes suggested that project #17 might be kept off of the list for now. He added that comments could still be submitted through the end of the month.

Mr. Shrum said there could be a push from the City of Ocala for the Rail Trail.

Mr. Shrum recommended the addition of a grade separated connection at SR 200 and the Cross Florida Greenway to be included with future roadway expansion.

The committee discussed long-term planning and improvement of greenways, trails, sidewalks, and shared-use paths. It was noted the importance of identifying existing conditions, gaps, and committed projects to better prioritize future improvements.

Item 6. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell with FDOT reported that the latest construction report for July was included in the agenda packet. She said the next TPO Board meeting would include a formal presentation by engineers with updates on US 441 and SR 40.

Ms. Powell highlighted pop up events that took place during National Stop on Red Week in Belleview, Daytona Beach, and Melbourne.

She also announced the near completion of the S.R. 464 resurfacing project from U.S. 301/U.S. 27 to S.R. 35. The project included paving, pedestrian signal upgrades, intersection lighting enhancements, and drainage adjustments.

Item 7. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes reported that the 2025 traffic counts report was available and included in the meeting packets. He said the TPO was also preparing a Commitment to Zero Safety report. This report

highlighted various safety activities conducted by local and state partners, including first responders, over the past few years. He noted the report aimed to inform citizens and elected officials about traffic safety efforts in the community.

Mr. Balmes added that Shakayla Irby had been working on the safety highlights included in the report, which would be released the following Monday and included in next month's packet.

He also highlighted participation in the Stop on Red pop up event in Belleview, noting the involvement of partners, first responders, and media coverage.

Item 8. Comments by TAC Members

There were no comments by TAC members.

Item 9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 10. Adjournment

Chairman Cohoon adjourned the meeting at 3:26pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant