



TPO Board Meeting

Marion County Commission Auditorium
601 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471
August 27, 2024
3:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Councilman Ire Bethea
Commissioner Kathy Bryant (*arrived at 3:02pm*)
Commissioner Craig Curry
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer
Councilman Tim Inskeep
Mayor Ben Marciano
Commissioner Matt McClain
Commissioner Carl Zalak (*arrived at 3:30pm*)

Members Not Present:

Commissioner Ray Dwyer
Councilmember James Hilty
Councilmember Barry Mansfield
Commissioner Michelle Stone

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Liz Mitchell, TPO
Sara Brown, TPO
Kia Powell, FDOT
Melissa McKinney, FDOT
Jon Scarfe, FDOT
Eric Smith, City of Ocala
Tom Duncan, City of Ocala
Darren Park, City of Ocala
Sean Lanier, City of Ocala
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala
Chris Zeigler, Marion County
Mike Lemke
Greg Vaughn
Barb Girtman
Matt Robertson

Other members of the public not signed in.

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Kristen Dreyer called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 2. Roll Call

Liz Mitchell, Grants Coordinator for the Ocala Marion TPO called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Liz Mitchell stated that the meeting was published online on the TPO website and the City of Ocala, Belleview, Dunnellon, and Marion County websites on August 20, 2024 and shared on the TPO's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

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

Item 5A. Secretary John Tyler, Florida Department of Transportation District Five

Secretary John Tyler from FDOT District Five presented several updates, focusing on key FDOT priorities such as safety, workforce development, technology, community impact, resiliency, and supply chain improvements (FDOT Compass).

Moving Florida Forward (MFF) Initiative: Secretary Tyler discussed two major I-75 projects spanning 30 miles between S.R. 44 and S.R. 326:

- **I-75 North Segment:** 8 miles, including new auxiliary lanes, interchange enhancements at S.R. 40 and S.R. 326, and a Diverging Diamond Interchange at 49th Street. The project, valued at \$128.5 million, is funded by FDOT and Marion County.
- **I-75 South Segment:** 22 miles, focusing on widening, bridge replacements, resurfacing, and minor local road adjustments. A phased design-build approach will be used.

Public hearings in June 2024 addressed community concerns, including noise, detours, and wildlife crossings, which FDOT has committed to resolving.

Rest Area Renovation: The northbound I-75 rest area between C.R. 484 and S.R. 200 is undergoing a \$31 million renovation, with completion expected in early 2025.

Central Florida Safety Strategic Plan: Secretary Tyler introduced the plan to collaborate with TPOs, MPOs, governments, law enforcement, educators, and nonprofits to improve transportation safety. A summit held in May included input from Commissioner Curry, and

Ocala received recognition for its efforts. Secretary Tyler also noted the community's continued support for the annual Stop on Red event.

Florida Transportation Plan: The 30-year Florida Transportation Plan update is in progress, with public engagement opportunities available via focus groups and QR codes.

Federal Funding: Secretary Tyler emphasized the importance of federal funding, which accounts for 25% of FDOT's budget. He highlighted the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), noting that while it introduced a discretionary grant program, funding has been slow. Florida has received nine awards totaling \$264 million, with FDOT advocating for more formula-based transportation programs.

Commissioner Curry praised the strong working relationship with Secretary Tyler and Secretary Perdue, highlighting the value and impact of their collaboration on transportation projects. He mentioned the quick response of FDOT staff in addressing the damage to the Williams Bridge on I-75, which he appreciated and publicly acknowledged by buying lunch for the FDOT team. Curry also noted an increase in material costs and asked how FDOT prepares for large-scale projects given these changes.

Secretary Tyler discussed FDOT's strategies for managing materials and controlling costs, especially in light of potential increases of 5 to 10%. He highlighted the importance of supply chain management, noting that many road building materials are imported via rail and seaports, while lime rock is sourced locally. Strategic relationships with the industry help ensure a steady supply of aggregates. For the southern job with Anderson Columbia, the procurement process required demonstrating their capability to secure materials. Anderson Columbia's experience with major interstate projects like I-75 and I-10 was emphasized as a key reason for their involvement, as they are well-equipped to manage material supply and project continuity.

Chairwoman Dreyer expressed her gratitude for the Maricamp Road resurfacing project, particularly the installation of sidewalks leading to Forest High School. She noted the significant impact this project has had on student safety, as many children previously walked along the roadside or in wet grass. Seeing the students now using safe sidewalks has made a meaningful difference, and she thanked the team for their important work on this necessary project.

Item 5B. Loreen Bobo, Florida Department of Transportation District Five Office of Safety

Ms. Loreen Bobo, the Safety Administrator for FDOT District Five, introduced the newly established Office of Safety, created about three years ago to focus specifically on safety initiatives. The office's goal is to achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries on the roads, a significant challenge given the current statistics. In District Five alone, 730 fatalities occurred last year across nine counties, a number she emphasized as unacceptable despite having one of the best rates for fatalities compared to miles traveled.

To address this issue, Ms. Bobo discussed the development of the Central Florida Safety Strategic Plan. This plan, created with input from various stakeholders including MPOs, TPOs, law enforcement, and community members, focuses on safer street designs, changing driver behaviors, and increasing collaboration. The plan is designed to build upon existing Vision Zero efforts and is structured with one-year, three-year, and five-year action steps.

Ms. Bobo highlighted the importance of collaboration and the role of a steering committee, which will include representatives from MPOs, TPOs, and counties. The committee will review progress and set future goals. A safety summit will be held annually to celebrate successes and foster collaboration.

She also shared the success of a recent safety summit that gathered nearly 230 participants from various sectors, including law enforcement, public safety, and advocacy groups. Ms. Bobo concluded by emphasizing the need for continued personal and community commitment to safety, encouraging everyone to consider their role in making a positive impact.

Ms. Bobo's presentation underscored the importance of collective effort in achieving safety goals and highlighted the need for ongoing engagement and action to improve road safety.

Item 5C. SunTran Annual Report

Tom Duncan, the new Transit Administrator for the City of Ocala, presented an overview of the transit system's annual report and key projects.

Key Points:

1. TDP Goals and Implementation Plan:

- Focus on environment, equity, accessibility, usability, and efficiency.
- Projects include:
 - Downtown circulator with an electric trolley.
 - Low-emission grant project.
 - Building renovation and triennial review.
 - Downtown transfer station and bus stop shelter improvements.
 - Enhancements to route efficiency and service extension to Marion Oaks.
 - Micro transit implementation, akin to Uber/Lyft but with shared rides.

2. Low-Emission Project:

- Secured \$16.2 million for 26 electric vans and 5 electric buses.
- Infrastructure and maintenance facility upgrades to support new vehicles.
- Initial focus on Sunday micro transit as a pilot program.

3. Facility and Maintenance Improvements:

- Rehabilitation of existing maintenance facility.
- Added bays for electric vehicle maintenance.
- FTA and FDOT reviews completed with recommendations addressed.

4. Downtown Transfer Station Improvements:

- Addition of restroom facilities and a ticketing kiosk.
- Construction expected to start late this year or early next year.
- Installation of 23 new bus stop shelters at high-volume stops.

5. Performance Indicators:

- Noted past ridership declines and recent improvements following route realignment.
- Ongoing efforts to improve headways and service frequency.

6. Next Steps:

- Continued work on downtown circulator, bus shelter projects, and federal and state funding grants.

Tom Duncan's presentation highlighted ongoing and upcoming projects aimed at improving public transit in Ocala, focusing on sustainability, efficiency, and user experience.

Item 5D. 2024 Traffic Counts Report and Commitment to Zero Dashboard and Annual Report

Sara Brown, Transportation Planner, presented updates on two key reports:

1. **2024 Traffic Counts Report:**
 - Updated with 2024 data.
 - Includes an interactive map and a dashboard showing traffic volumes from 2019 to 2023.
 - New features allow users to view 2023 traffic counts and identify locations with no data for this year.

2. **Commitment to Zero Dashboard and Report:**
 - Focuses on fatalities and serious injuries in Marion County.
 - Updated with a new heat map and refined data to ensure accuracy.
 - The dashboard now includes only fatal and serious injury crashes.
 - The executive summary report has been updated with new safety performance measures and a high-level overview of safety statistics.

Both reports are available on the Transportation Statistics page of the website.

Chairwoman Dreyer praised Sara for the impressive work, expressing appreciation for the report she sent via email. She noted that she explored it and found it beautifully done, thanking Sara for her efforts.

Item 5E. Safety Matters Education and Awareness Video Series

Bobbi Perez, Marion County Public Relations Director, discussed the "Safety Matters" education and awareness video series. She explained that the series, developed in collaboration with the TPO and partner agencies, features testimonial-style videos highlighting the impacts of distracted driving. The goal is to create multiple videos on various topics, with each one including contributions from the audience, as shown at the end of the video. A video specifically addressing fatalities and serious injuries was played for the board and would be shared on the Marion County Facebook page. Ms. Perez told the board to be on the lookout for more videos to follow.

Item 6. List of Priority Projects (LOPP) Policies and Procedures Updates

Rob Balmes, Director provided an update on the annual List of Priority Projects (LOPP) process, following Chairwoman Dreyer's request for TPO staff to review the schedule. The goal was to ensure the TPO board has enough time each year to review the projects and the schedules within the List of Priority Projects Policy and Procedures document, which the board approved in April 2022.

Mr. Balmes included proposed changes to the document in the packet, presented in track changes mode, and walked the board through the revisions using a PowerPoint presentation. Key updates

included formalizing the LOPP process to begin in January, followed by project reviews in February and continued coordination with FDOT in March and April.

The finalized draft LOPP would be presented to committees in May, with board review in June, ending in LOPP adoption before the June 30th FDOT submission deadline.

Other updates to the document included clarifying TPO's role in developing and submitting applications to FDOT on behalf of local jurisdictions, and formalizing the use of a Top 20 priority list, a practice followed over the past five years. Additionally, the board was advised that only local projects with a committed or previously submitted application would be placed on the Top 20 list to improve competitiveness.

Feedback from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) emphasized closing the comment period after review and ensuring local projects are consistent with comprehensive plans, as required by FDOT. Mr. Balmes also noted a proposal to revisit the scoring criteria next year to help the board better understand project rankings.

The changes had been presented to the committees on the 13th, with unanimous support. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), although lacking a quorum, also expressed support by consent. Mr. Balmes then sought the board's approval of the recommended changes.

Mr. Zalak inquired whether all projects on the current list had applications submitted, expressing concern about potentially being locked into something without necessity. He questioned whether there was flexibility in the process.

Mr. Balmes responded by explaining that for the FDOT work program process, local jurisdictions must have an up-to-date application submitted for the funding cycle if they wish to be considered for federal or state funding. However, for the TPO's lists, an application is not required to be included on all of the lists. His focus on the Top 20 list was due to the fact that those are the highest priority projects, which the TPO aims to advance over the next five years, making them more critical in terms of priority ranking.

Mr. Zalak expressed further concerns, asking for clarification on the importance of the application process. He pointed out that since the application is required and must follow the process regardless, he questioned the need for additional emphasis.

Mr. Balmes explained that a significant number of projects on the LOPP do not have any applications submitted. As a result, these projects remain on the list without receiving consideration from FDOT. He emphasized that it's the applications that trigger FDOT's review each year through the work program process, determining which local projects could potentially receive funding.

Mr. Zalak responded, indicating that he still didn't fully understand the explanation.

Chairwoman Dreyer clarified that for projects on the Top 20 list, an application must be submitted to be considered by FDOT. She emphasized that if a project is important enough to be on the Top 20 list, having the application is crucial, as FDOT will not review projects without it.

Mr. Bethea made a motion to approve the LOPP Policies and Procedures Updates.

Mr. McClain seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell addressed the board, expressing gratitude for the FDOT presence and thanking Secretary Tyler and Loreen Bobo for their presentations. She reminded everyone that the latest construction report for July was included in the agenda packet, with hyperlinked projects for additional information. Ms. Powell offered to answer any questions and encouraged the board to contact her if needed. She concluded by noting that she would return with the regular construction report and updates next month.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes provided several updates. He informed the board that the apportionment plan adopted last October had received concurrence from Governor DeSantis. This plan, which focused on governing board membership and the planning area served, was detailed in the packet.

He also shared progress on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), noting that a community workshop had been scheduled for September 18th at the C.F. Weber Center. The workshop, held from 5:00 to 7:30 PM, was open to the public and featured an open house format with brief presentations. Feedback from citizens and partners was deemed crucial at this stage, and individual meetings with stakeholders were conducted. Input on additional groups to engage was welcomed.

Regarding the 49th Street interchange at I-75, Mr. Balmes mentioned that a memo in the packet detailed a modification involving the reallocation of \$9.8 million in additional funding, and mainly shifting funds to fiscal years 2025 and 2026. This change did not trigger an amendment but was noted for the board's attention.

In response to requests from Chairwoman Dreyer and Commissioner Curry, a one-page summary of various safety programs and activities had been included in the packet. The summary aimed to capture all ongoing safety efforts, despite being detailed.

Lastly, Mr. Balmes provided a link to the FDOT Cost Feasible Strategic Intermodal System Plan for 2035 to 2050. This recently released plan included projects impacting Marion County and would be reflected in the TPO's planning efforts.

Item 9. Comments by TPO Members

Chairwoman Dreyer acknowledged that it was Mr. Balmes' fifth year with the TPO and congratulated him. She mentioned that she had a service pin to present to him after the meeting. She praised Mr. Balmes for being a great addition to the TPO, noting that the staff frequently praised his contributions. She expressed her appreciation for his hard work in keeping everything organized.

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Mr. Bethea commented that he wanted to acknowledge Mr. Balmes' work. He mentioned that when visiting the Central Florida MPO Alliance, everyone there spoke very highly of Mr. Balmes and his contributions. He expressed his personal appreciation for Mr. Balmes' excellent work and thanked him for patiently educating him on various matters whenever he reached out.

Item 10. Adjournment

Chairwoman Dreyer adjourned the meeting at 4:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant