



Citizens (CAC) and Technical (TAC) Advisory Committee Joint Meeting

Marion County Growth Services Training Room
2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
1:00 PM

MINUTES

CAC Members Present:

Jim Belonger
Matt Fabian
Travis Magamoll (*arrived at 1:24pm*)
Richard McGinley
Nick Mora
Steve Rudnianyn

CAC Members Not Present:

Suzanne Mangram
Michelle Shearer

TAC Members Present:

Steven Cohoon
Noel Cooper
Tom Duncan
Kia Powell
Loretta Shaffer (*arrived at 1:11pm*)
Jeff Shrum
Bob Titterington
Chuck Varadin (*arrived at 1:06pm*)
Chad Ward (*arrived at 1:12pm*)

TAC Members Not Present:

Casey Griffith

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO

Shakayla Irby, TPO

Daniel DaGraca, Kimley-Horn and Associates

Leyi Zhang, Kittelson and Associates

Ken Odom, Marion County

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Steve Rudnianyn called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Item 2. CAC Roll Call

Chairman Rudnianyn asked for a roll call. Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 3. TAC Roll Call

Chairman Steven Cohoon asked for a roll call. Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 4. 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

June 3, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPOs Facebook and Twitter pages.

Item 5. CAC Consent Agenda

Mr. McGinley made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Belonger seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 6. TAC Consent Agenda

Mr. Titterington made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Duncan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7a. Draft Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Rob Balmes, TPO Director, summarized that last month he presented a detailed draft of the Fiscal Year 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to both committees. The draft was made available to the public on May 6th, with a presentation also provided to the TPO Board on May 27th. He stated that he was seeking recommendations from the committees for the TPO Board to adopt the TIP.

The public comment period would be closing on Friday, with final adoption scheduled for the June 23rd TPO Board meeting. Mr. Balmes noted that feedback received included comments related to the US 41 corridor and general traffic conditions. He also acknowledged valuable feedback from the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, which suggested improvements to project descriptions, particularly for safety-related projects.

Mr. Cohoon inquired about the status of the last Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) request made during the previous meeting regarding the revision of the TIP. He specifically asked if the request to include a portion of SR 40 back into the forest area was included in the current draft of the TIP.

Mr. Balmes confirmed that the project was amended into the FY 2025–2029 TIP and was also included in the current FY 2026–2030 TIP.

CAC Action:

Mr. McGinley made a motion to recommend TPO Board adoption the Draft FY 2026 to 2030 TIP. Mr. Belonger seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

TAC Action:

Mr. Shrum made a motion to recommend TPO Board adoption the Draft FY 2026 to 2030 TIP. Mr. Titterington seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7b. Draft Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 List of Priority Projects (LOPP)

Mr. Balmes reported that during the last meeting, two items related to the List of Priority Projects (LOPP) were addressed.

The first was a recommendation to remove the Top 20 list of parking projects, which was approved by the TAC and subsequently by the TPO Board. Additionally, the TAC recommended adding a bridge project list to include high-priority bridges for the four jurisdictions or state roadways, which the TPO Board also approved.

There was further discussion from the City of Ocala about reinstating the transit list for future consideration, which had previously been removed due to lack of use. The TPO Board approved all recommendations, and the updated LOPP included Strategic Intermodal System, Capacity/Safety/Operations, Trails, Bicycle/Pedestrian, Planning, Bridge, and Transit categories.

Mr. Balmes briefly went through each of the lists and projects.

Mr. Rudniansky stated that the intersection at SW 31st Street and SW 7th Avenue, which was on the Safety and Operations list, had a development agreement in place. The developer was responsible for installing the signalization at that intersection.

Mr. Cooper stated that there was not an executed agreement in place. While the developer had provided design plans for the intersection, there was no schedule from the developer. He noted that it was an important location for safety reasons, which is why it remained on the Safety and Operations list.

He also stated that the City of Ocala planned to submit an application for the project.

TAC Action:

Mr. Titterington made a motion to recommend TPO Board adoption of the proposed recommendations and rankings by the TAC for the FY 2026 to 2030 LOPP. Mr. Cooper seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

CAC Action:

Mr. Belonger made a motion to recommend TPO Board adoption of the proposed recommendations and rankings by the TAC for the FY 2026 to 2030 LOPP. Mr. Mora seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Item 7c. Draft 2025 List of Regional Priority Projects

Mr. Balmes explained that the regionally significant is submitted annually to the Central Florida MPO Alliance. Typically, the Alliance approves the list in October before submission to the state. He noted that there were four key lists related to the comprehensive regional priorities: the TRIP (Transportation Regional Incentive Program) list, the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) list, Tier 3 SUN Trail projects, and the Regional Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) list.

For the TRIP list, the same two projects from the previous year were carried forward, with no comments or recommendations for additional projects. The SIS list included projects primarily focused on the I-75 and SR 40 corridors, including the SR 40 widening, which was added to the fifth year (2030) of the TIP. Some of the SR 40 segments had right-of-way funding secured, and portions also had environmental funding in place, allowing them to move forward. Additionally, a PD&E study was added for SR 326 from SR 40 to US 301.

Regarding the Tier 3 SUN Trail, the Santos to Baseline project remained fully funded, while the three previously unfunded projects continued to be the top priorities with no changes from last year.

Under Regional TSMO, a new project was added for the US 27/I-75 interchange area, including operational improvements at NW 44th Avenue, NW 35th Street, and interchange ramps. Two other projects from last year remained: a potential future roundabout at Baseline Road and SR 40, and intersection/ rail improvements in the Belleview area.

Mr. Cohoon commented that the Baseline Road and Maricamp Road intersection was included in the county's five-year TIP. He asked how difficult it would be to add the project to the TRIP list, noting that it appeared to be a more likely build-out scenario before the corridor would be widened to six lanes. He expressed that committing to certain improvements at the intersection could be beneficial and suggested that adding it to the TRIP list might help gain traction. He also noted that three of the four legs of the intersection were under FDOT jurisdiction.

Mr. McGinley asked if the widening of CR 484 was entirely dependent on the bridge replacement, noting that it would not be possible to accommodate six lanes under the existing bridge.

Mr. Cohoon noted that a PD&E (Project Development and Environment) study for the CR 484 widening project was currently advertised and complied with all federal requirements. The widening was dependent on the replacement of the I-75 bridge, which FDOT was actively working on. Once the bridge was widened, the corridor could accommodate six lanes.

Discussion continued regarding the importance of the CR 484 corridor, the I-75 interchange, and the need for improvements to accommodate regional traffic, particularly freight traffic from the industrial park and Marion Oaks. It was explained that the existing weigh station posed spacing challenges for a new interchange, but potential design alternatives could help overcome those limitations in the future.

Mr. Balmes emphasized that for a project to be added to the TRIP list, it needed to demonstrate regional significance and have formal support from at least two contiguous MPOs. The 49th Street interchange project was given as an example, which received support from the Lake-Sumter MPO. Discussions with neighboring MPOs regarding the new projects had not yet occurred but were anticipated.

TAC Action:

Mr. Titterington made a motion to add the Maricamp to Baseline interchange as a TRIP project. Mr. Cooper seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

CAC Action:

Mr. McGinley made a motion to add the Maricamp to Baseline interchange as a TRIP project. Mr. Mora seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Item 8a. Active Transportation Plan Project Updates

Mr. Balmes stated that the TPO and its consultant, Kittelson & Associates, had continued work on the Active Transportation Plan. A stakeholder meeting was held on May 29 to gather feedback. He noted that the team had finalized existing conditions and analysis and was moving into developing draft project lists, which were planned to be presented in August.

Ms. Leyi Zhang, with Kittelson & Associates, provided an update on the Active Transportation Plan. She reviewed the existing conditions and analysis completed so far, which included evaluating demographics, commuter modes, existing facilities, safety, and land use. The team assessed sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails across the county, noting areas with good connectivity and identifying gaps, particularly along major roadways.

Ms. Zhang described the Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis, which measured the comfort and safety of walking and biking facilities, and highlighted where conditions were low or high stress. She also explained the accessibility analysis, which evaluated how well key destinations—such as schools, hospitals, parks, and community centers—were accessible by walking and biking on low-stress roadways.

Findings indicated that urban areas, like downtown Ocala and Belleview, had higher accessibility, while destinations along major high-speed roads had lower accessibility.

The team identified gaps in low-stress connections to destinations and planned to develop strategies to address them.

Next steps included finalizing the gap analysis, incorporating feedback, identifying additional projects, and reviewing local projects already in progress. Ms. Zhan noted that an online interactive map and printed maps were available for stakeholders to review and mark up with additional comments or project ideas.

Mr. Balmes requested that comments be submitted by the end of the following week so draft project lists and maps could be prepared and presented in August.

Mr. McGinley inquired whether speed limits were considered in relation to bike paths, noting his concern that roads with speed limits over 35 mph are not ideal for bicycles. He added that at 45 mph and above, drivers often travel even faster, making conditions more dangerous for cyclists.

Ms. Zhang explained that the FDOT handbook classifies high-speed roads as higher stress for cyclists, even if bicycle facilities are present, and these gaps were being identified in the analysis. She noted that solutions to address these gaps might not involve simply adding bike lanes on high-speed roads but could include setting lower speed targets, considering development and land use patterns, or exploring alternative solutions.

Mr. Balmes noted that on SR 200, buffered bike lanes exist but the 50 mph speed limit results in a high-stress (level 4) condition. In contrast, on 80th Avenue, despite a 45 mph speed limit, the presence of a separated shared-use path creates a low-stress (level 1) condition. He highlighted how the type of facility significantly affects user accessibility.

Item 9a. Local Government Transportation/ Capital Improvement Program Updates

Mr. Balmes stated that at the last TPO Board meeting, Board Chairman Zalak initiated a discussion about presentations on local government programs to identify opportunities for coordination among the City of Ocala, Marion County, Belleview, and Dunnellon. He noted that local governments were asked to return at the next meeting to present their projects so the Board could stay informed about major initiatives and activities.

TAC Chairman Cohoon stated that the discussion was fruitful, describing the exercise as an overlay of various plans from different municipalities and jurisdictions to identify commonalities and opportunities for collaboration, aligned with the county's vision. He inquired whether the June deadline could be extended to allow more time for coordination with municipalities and jurisdictions, ensuring a meaningful presentation to the TPO.

Mr. Balmes mentioned that he had a meeting scheduled with Commissioner Zalak the following day and invited any recommendations from the TAC that he could share with the Commissioner.

Mr. Cooper share thoughts that list could be provided to the Board, and if additional information was needed, presentations could be arranged.

Chairman Cohoon asked Mr. Balmes to check with Commissioner Zalak on whether he preferred a presentation at the meeting or just to review the various lists from the agencies. He stated he would begin coordinating for the June 23rd meeting but expressed a preference for a later presentation date, possibly in August, if a presentation was needed.

Mr. Balmes said he would keep the TAC updated on Commissioner Zalak's response.

Item 9b. 2050 TPO Commitment to Zero Safety Report

Mr. Balmes said that for the past two years, the TPO had published an annual report tied to the commitment to the action plan, and they planned to do so again. He noted that feedback from the TAC earlier in the year suggested making the report more detailed by highlighting projects, studies, plans, and other activities, possibly including law enforcement involvement and success stories. He added that he would follow up via email to request high-level content from members, such as photos and brief descriptions, and encouraged participation from Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) members, especially law enforcement, with submissions due by August 5.

Item 10. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell provided updates on the sixth edition of the District Compass Points newsletter, which highlighted district-wide activities, upcoming events, and included a message from the secretary. She noted that summer had begun and emphasized safe summer travel due to increased risks during this season. She directed members to the most recent construction report in the meeting packet and advised them to visit cflroads.com for current project information or to contact her with questions.

Ms. Powell mentioned that in August, Loreen Bobo from the Safety Office was scheduled to present on the Target Zero initiative, which focuses on reducing crashes through increased awareness. She also announced that the FDOT Safety Office would participate in the Marion County PTSD awareness event on June 27 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Park, providing safety information and support. Additionally, she offered extra copies of the newsletter and welcomed questions from members.

Item 11. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes provided a brief update on ongoing projects. He noted that last month, the team shared forecast scenarios for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and continued working on finalizing model runs tied to those scenarios and the revenue picture, including federal, state, and local funds. He said the goal was to share finalized work and cost-feasible project lists at the August meeting. Steering committee members would soon be asked to provide feedback.

He stated that a draft of the LRTP was expected in late September, with adoption targeted by November 13, noting the tight schedule.

Mr. Balmes also reported that the annual traffic counts report would be published by July 1, and the safety report was planned for release in early August. He said he would follow up via email to request input for the safety report.

Chairman Cohoon had questions regarding amendments to the LRTP. Mr. Balmes explained that amendments could be made as needed—such as changes to the budget or project funding—and would involve a public notice and hearing as part of the public participation process.

Item 12. Comments by CAC Members

Mr. Rudnianyn said there should be an effort to determine how much truck traffic from the industrial park contributes to congestion on I-75 northbound at exit 326. He suggested it may be feasible to construct a road northwest, around the future fire station planned for 2026, so that truck traffic could avoid I-75 and use a shorter, more efficient route to 326 and on toward Jacksonville, rather than re-entering the interstate at the new interchange.

Mr. McGinley asked about the status of the bicycle path east of Dunnellon, noting an unfinished segment near the solar farm.

Mr. Ken Odom with Marion County clarified that the solar project was not a Duke project but an independent project selling to Duke. He explained that the trail project was on hold due to contractual agreements, though easements for construction and operation had been secured. Construction was still planned, pending a go-ahead from the responsible parties.

Item 13. Comments by TAC Members

There were no comments by TAC Members.

Item 14. Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Item 15. Adjournment

Chairman Cohoon adjourned the meeting at 2:04pm and reminded both committees that they would resume meeting on August 12 at regular times.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant