



**TPO Board Meeting**

Marion County Commission Auditorium

601 SE 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471

June 25, 2024

3:00 PM

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Councilman Ire Bethea  
Commissioner Craig Curry  
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer  
Councilman James Hilty  
Councilman Tim Inskeep  
Councilmember Barry Mansfield  
Mayor Ben Marciano  
Commissioner Matt McClain  
Commissioner Michelle Stone

**Members Not Present:**

Commissioner Kathy Bryant  
Commissioner Ray Dwyer  
Commissioner Carl Zalak

**Others Present:**

Rob Balmes, TPO  
Shakayla Irby, TPO  
Liz Mitchell, TPO  
Sara Brown, TPO  
Kia Powell, FDOT  
Melissa McKinney, FDOT  
Tom Duncan, City of Ocala  
Darren Park, City of Ocala  
Sean Lanier, City of Ocala  
Oscar Tovar, City of Ocala  
Eric Smith, City of Ocala  
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala  
Peter Lee, City of Ocala  
Tracy Straub, Marion County  
Steven Cohoon, Marion County  
Barb Girtman

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 3:06pm and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Item 2. Roll Call**

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

### **Item 3. Proof of Publication**

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant, stated that the meeting was published online on the TPO website and the City of Ocala, Belleview, Dunnellon, and Marion County websites on June 18, 2024 and shared on the TPO's Facebook and Twitter pages.

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

*Mr. Mansfield made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Curry seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.*

### **Item 5A. Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 to 2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Sara Brown, Transportation Planner, presented the Fiscal Years 2025 to 2029 Transportation Improvement Program which was made available for public and partner agency review from May 7, 2024 to June 14, 2024. As a follow-up to the draft presentation at the board meeting on May 28, 2024, comments that were received from partner agencies and the public at the meeting were presented. To date, the TPO had received feedback from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) which was included in the meeting packet.

There was also one comment received from the public.

- **Public Comment:** “In the draft TIP map online, project FM 436756-1 does not include further detail about the project. I own a few properties along that route and would like to know more about the project and if any designs have been made.”
  - **TPO Response:** Noted for public record. The citizen was thanked for the comment and was told that the project in the TIP is funded for preliminary engineering in FY 25. The TPO also gave the citizen contact information for the city to ask if they have any further design information for the project.

On June 11, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommended approval of the FY 25 to 29 TIP.

*Mr. Hilty made a motion to approve the FY 2025 to 2029 TIP. Ms. Stone seconded, a-roll call vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.*

## **Item 5B. Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 List of Priority Projects (LOPP)**

Rob Balmes, Director, presented and said on an annual basis, the development of the List of Priority Projects (LOPP) was undertaken to identify projects to receive consideration for federal and state funding through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). As outlined at the Board meeting in May, the cycle covered a timeframe for the Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 FDOT Tentative Work Program and the TPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The LOPP project lists were presented to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings on May 14 and the TPO Board on May 28. A review of the LOPP again took place at the joint TAC-CAC meeting on June 11th.

The following summary provided proposed changes to the draft Fiscal Years 2026 to 2030 List of Priority Projects (LOPP) by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on June 11, 2024. The proposed changes involve the **Top 20 Priorities List**. Pending TPO Board approval, the changes would also result in ranking updates to the **Non-SIS Capacity List**. Staff comments were provided for general guidance.

### **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Recommendations**

#### **\*Ranking Changes** (to current order)

#6 US 41 from SW 110th to North of SR 40 move to #11 ranking

#9 SR 40 at SR 35 intersection move to #18 ranking

#11 SR 200 from Citrus County to CR 484 move to #6 ranking

#17 SR 35 at SR 464 intersection move to #9 ranking

#20 Belleview to Greenway Trail move to #17 ranking

#### **Project Deletion**

#16 SW 80th from north of 38th to SR 40 (redundant project with #2)

#### **Project Additions**

I-75 at CR 484 – Bridge Replacement to support 6 lanes on CR 484 – add to #1 of Top 20 List  
Marion Oaks Extension and Flyover, Marion Oaks Lane to CR 475 – add to bottom of Top 20 List

CR 475A from SW 66th to SW 42nd Capacity Project – add to bottom of Top 20 List

### **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Recommendations**

#### **\*Ranking Changes** (to current order)

#20 Belleview to Greenway Trail move to #17 ranking

#### **Project Additions**

I-75 at CR 484 – Bridge Replacement to support 6 lanes on CR 484 – add to #1 of Top 20 List  
CR 475A from SW 66th to SW 42nd Capacity Project – add to bottom of Top 20 List

\*Rankings are based on current order. Addition of new CR 484 project off-sets revised rankings by 1.

### **TPO Staff Comments**

Ranking Changes (Top 20)

Project additions: The TPO has a Top 20 Priorities List. Additional projects that fall outside of the top 20 ranking should not be listed on the Top 20 Priorities List.

## Project Deletion

None

## Project Additions (Top 20)

I-75 at CR 484 Interchange – Bridge Replacement Project

Comment: Currently not listed in the 2045 LRTP. Requires an amendment for the pursuit of federal and state funding. Project would also require an FDOT application for funding consideration.

CR 475A from SW 66th to SW 42nd Capacity Project

Comment: Currently identified in the 2045 LRTP. Pursuit of federal funding requires following the NEPA/PD&E process. Project would also require an FDOT application.

Mr. Balmes shared some procedural comments regarding the agreed-upon process for maintaining a top 20 project list, where 20 projects serve as the cutoff. He emphasized that adding more projects beyond this limit, such as expanding to 22, 23, or 24 projects, would go against the collective agreement. He recommended that two additional projects remain in their Non-SIS capacity list positions. Additionally, he mentioned that the bridge replacement project would need to be added to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as an amendment.

Chairwoman Dreyer inquired about how the proposed changes to the LOPP came about.

Mr. Balmes responded saying that on June 11th, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) met jointly for the second time to facilitate collaboration between both groups. The meeting provided an opportunity to receive final feedback and recommendations regarding a specific set of lists. During the meeting, the Office of County Engineer presented a series of recommendations and modifications to the list, which were then reviewed and processed through the committee's procedures. A copy of the recommendations made by the TAC and the CAC were provided to the board, along with the original formatted documents, including track changes.

Mr. Balmes emphasized the importance of receiving all comments by May, with the goal of closing the LOPP (List of Priority Projects) period in May, similar to the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) process. This would allow the board to review proposed changes in May and approve and adopt them in June, creating a smoother transition from draft to final. Mr. Balmes also recommended better alignment with FDOT's process for the LOPP. He highlighted that out of 45 local projects on the list, only 13 had applications, making the remaining 32 projects ineligible. He suggested working with local partners to increase the number of applications and removing projects without applications from the list to ensure that eligible projects received appropriate attention and funding opportunities.

Mr. Mansfield asked why specific recommendations or changes to the rankings, which were not presented on May 28th, 2024, were being seen now. He also inquired whether the TAC and CAC had the opportunity to fully review and consider the extent and impact of these changes.

Mr. Balmes responded that, as he mentioned at the June 11th meeting, the recommendations had been presented to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) by the Office of the County Engineer, represented on the TAC. He clarified

that they had not had prior knowledge of what these recommendations would be.

The process involved two steps for gathering feedback, and the goal of the June meeting was to seek final recommendations for the TPO board regarding the lists.

When the recommendations were presented, the TAC Chair, Jeff Shrum, facilitated a process with TAC members to review and finalize the specifics, including ranking changes, additions, and deletions, as outlined in the slides.

Mr. Mansfield also asked about the County Road 484 six-lane underpass at I-75, and inquired if it had been originally included 2045 LRTP or if it would require an amendment.

Mr. Balmes responded that the CR 484 bridge replacement was introduced for the first time through the LOPP process.

Ms. Stone explained that the urgency of some projects was driven by the "Moving Florida Forward" initiative from the governor. This initiative prompted Marion County to expedite certain projects to align with the four-laning of I-75. The goal was to ensure that local road construction projects could occur simultaneously with the I-75 expansion, minimizing disruptions to citizens and securing better pricing by using the same contractors. This, she noted, helped explain why some projects needed to be quickly integrated into the plan.

Mr. Mansfield asked how the changes to long-standing priority projects would affect FDOT funding. He sought to understand whether these changes might slow down the progress of existing projects and impact the overall process, given how FDOT typically operates.

Ms. Stone stated that she had met with the Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding these projects. She reported that DOT was appreciative of the opportunity to coordinate with them, as it would facilitate the simultaneous progress of both state and local projects. She assured that these changes would not slow down DOT's efforts but would instead help accelerate local projects' safety and expansion. She also noted that she had discussed these matters face-to-face with Secretary Tyler, who agreed with the approach, provided that ongoing collaboration continued.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Ms. Stone when the meeting with the DOT had taken place.

Ms. Stone recalled the meeting taking place in January of 2024.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked if the recent discussion about the projects was related to a conversation from the last board meeting.

Ms. Stone confirmed that the recent discussion was related to the conversation from the last meeting. She explained that Marion County staff needed to conduct one-on-one meetings with the county team and Marion County commissioners before announcing details.

Chairwoman Dreyer noted that according to the process, when Mr. Balmes began reaching out to each municipality, Belleview responded on March 1st, Dunnellon on March 5th, and the City of Ocala by April 15th. She pointed out that Mr. Balmes had initiated contact on March 1st and

provided a timeline of subsequent communications and meetings. Despite these discussions, she emphasized that issues were never brought up in the meetings where staff was present.

Steven Cohoon, the Marion County Engineer, addressed the board and explained that when he started in January, he found that many applications had not been completed by Marion County, including those for Department of Transportation projects. He indicated that one of his primary tasks had been to address the issue by ensuring that all applications are properly filled out and submitted. The effort aimed to align Marion County's applications with those of other entities and improve their concurrent processing.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked how many outstanding applications were on the list.

Mr. Cohoon responded that he did not have the exact number of outstanding applications off the top of his head but estimated it to be around ten. He noted that not all 20 projects were county-driven; some were Department of Transportation projects, for which the county typically would not prepare applications.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked how many applications Mr. Cohoon had been able to complete for the projects on the list.

Mr. Cohoon responded one application had been completed and explained that he had worked extensively with the Lake Sumter MPO and followed a detailed, labor-intensive process similar to theirs. This process involved determining project locations, assessing their eligibility for various federal funding sources, and researching right-of-way documentation. He noted that historical checks for deed status and other related tasks were time-consuming and not as straightforward as merely checking a box. He acknowledged that this process was labor-intensive and required significant effort.

Chairwoman Dreyer inquired how long it would take for project applications to be completed.

Mr. Cohoon said that, given the other tasks he was juggling, it would take a few months to complete the applications for ten projects.

Mr. Cohoon also mentioned that there was no application for the project the county wanted to make #1 on the Top 20 list (I-75 at CR 484 – Bridge Replacement to support 6 lanes on CR 484), and that no right-of-way needed to be acquired for the project.

Ms. Stone clarified that the state was acquiring the right-of-way for the project, which is where the partnership between the County and State would come into play.

Ms. Stone also explained that the urgency of the task was due to the rapid expansion of I-75. She noted that the state, with the governor's support, was prioritizing the project and had secured funding to address the most problematic section of the interstate, from Wildwood up to 316. The fast-paced nature of the project was the reason for the quick turnaround on related tasks.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Mr. Cohoon if there was a preliminary engineering report available for the project.

Mr. Cohoon responded that, during discussions with the department, there had been consideration of adding a modification to the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to facilitate the design-build process.

If the modification was not feasible, it could be funded separately by Marion County outside of the PER, within the current right-of-way constraints. The project anticipated adding auxiliary lanes both before and after the bridge widening to manage roadway capacity.

He acknowledged the timing issues and apologized to the board and Mr. Balmes for the delays. He explained that the List of Priority Projects (LOPP) had not been closed, and the decision to proceed after the March 5th meeting was based on funding capacity and capital needs identified by the Board of County Commissioners. The bridge widening had been prioritized as the top unfunded capital need, followed by the interchange at 40th and 35th. Mr. Cohoon noted that DOT was moving quickly, and they were trying to keep up with that pace.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Mr. Cohoon if he understood the predicament caused by the timing of the issue. She pointed out that the matter could have been raised earlier. She reiterated that bringing it up at the current meeting was highly inappropriate.

Mr. Curry asked if there would be any jeopardy in funding if the project were not listed as number one, considering that the project was currently funded.

Mr. Cohoon responded that the project was currently funded and listed in the top 20. He mentioned that, although he wasn't the State Secretary, he was under the impression that there would be no adverse impacts if the project were moved to number two. He added that they had received \$2.5 million in funding from the department through legislative estimates and were still pursuing those avenues. However, based on the June 18th TIP adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, the project was fully funded.

Mr. Balmes stated that the TPO had generally maintained an approach and policy of keeping projects prioritized until they move to construction. He mentioned that this was something he had heard from Secretary Tyler in the past, emphasizing the importance of keeping these projects on track. He noted that with the interchange project and other projects, there had been periods of shortfalls, deferrals, and deletions. Therefore, the TPO recommended to keep the projects on the list until they moved to the construction phase. He added that by this time next year, the interchange project would no longer need to be on the list.

Mr. Mansfield expressed concern, saying that one of the things that bothered him was that it seemed like the process was going through the back door. He mentioned that he always thought everything had to come through the board and that it sounded like the county was having meetings with the D.O.T. without involving the board. He emphasized that this was how he felt.

Ms. Stone responded that Marion County had numerous road projects, roadways, and safety concerns to address. She emphasized that while the City of Ocala was important, the county held transportation meetings and workshops where they discussed roadways, including those for Marion County. She mentioned that earlier in the year, her board had given her specific direction to meet with Secretary Tyler regarding some issues where they felt it was necessary to advance certain projects.

Ms. Stone clarified that while they knew the discussion would eventually come back to the TPO board, it didn't mean they had to bring every project to the board before moving forward, just as others didn't necessarily bring their projects to the board beforehand. She asserted that it was appropriate for them to bring this forward now and ask the board to consider making it a top priority. She added that this action was driven by the rapid pace of the "Moving Florida Forward" initiative.

Ms. Stone reminded the board that the state of Florida was looking to expand roadways on I-75 for the reasons she had mentioned earlier and urged the board not to place obstacles in the way of progress, especially when they could be part of that progress.

Mr. Bethea said he didn't believe they were trying to put up a roadblock. He noted that, as Mr. Balmes had mentioned, projects on the LOPP typically remain in their position until they actually move into construction. He questioned what would be wrong with the 484 project being listed as number two, adding that he didn't think it would hinder the project.

Chairwoman Dreyer expressed concern, stating that the issue was the last-minute change that rearranged the entire document. She pointed out that they were left to discuss the changes on the day it needed to be approved. She said she wanted to hear from the FDOT to confirm that this was exactly what they had requested. She clarified that it wasn't a matter of disbelief but rather that it was hard to believe they could suddenly introduce a project and expect FDOT to fund it and add it to their project list without going through the usual proper channels.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Mr. Balmes if he could confirm whether the priority list adopted by the board that day could be amended at any time throughout the year.

Mr. Balmes responded that the priority list could indeed be amended. He noted that they had done so the previous year when Sun Trail grant opportunities arose and added a few projects to the list. They had successfully pursued those projects and received positive feedback about their potential. He emphasized that while they could amend the LOPP as needed, it was crucial to approve the list that day because the DOT required the applications, as he had mentioned earlier. The portal had been closing that Friday, and FDOT also needed the project list from them by July 1st.

Tracy Straub, Assistant Marion County Administrator, addressed the board and said that she had just finished speaking with Secretary Tyler. Although he was unable to attend the meeting, he had spoken with her and the Marion County Administrator, Mounir Bouyounes, and the 484 project was a specific topic of their conversation. With the Moving Florida Forward project, it was necessary to rebuild the bridge for 484.

When the Moving Forward project became a reality, they discussed how to leverage their projects. They had known from their conversations with the DOT over the past ten years that the 484 bridge needed to be rebuilt. The DOT had done what widening they could, but with the high volume of truck traffic in that area, further steps were required.

When the I-75 Moving Forward project became imminent, they inquired if the 484 bridge could be included. Although it wasn't initially funded, the DOT indicated that if Marion County could fund the project, it could be added to the Moving Forward list. The bridge project was proposed, along with the flyover, but the flyover faced complications due to NEPA requirements and other



processes. However, the bridge was within the existing I-75 footprint, and the DOT said that if Marion County could align themselves properly, making it a reality was feasible.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked for clarification on whether Marion County was paying for a bridge on a federal highway.

Ms. Straub responded that yes, Marion County was paying for the bridge because 484 was a county road. The widening was necessary because the bridge components and the bridge stanchions for I-75 restricted the number of lanes that could be placed underneath I-75. The county needed more lanes on 484, but the state did not need additional lanes. Therefore, it was a county project. However, this did not preclude them from pursuing additional funding. It was important to have the project on the list to explore all possible funding avenues, but technically, it was a project for the widening of county road 484.

Mayor Marciano said that, while the bridge expansion for 484 made sense, there were several other projects on the list that had been changed. He suggested adopting the 484 expansion and keeping the existing list in place, with the option to adopt additional changes at a later time. He expressed concern about the rushed decision-making process and the potential implications of making changes without fully understanding them. He felt that the situation was too hurried to make a well-informed decision on the remaining projects.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked for clarification if the Mayor meant adopting the list as presented in May and then making amendments to it at any point during the year if possible. She stated that if that was indeed the case, she would support it.

Mayor Marciano confirmed that was indeed what he meant.

Ms. Stone stated that she would not be in support of that approach.

Mr. Inskeep asked if he had misunderstood something. He recalled that the question had been about whether the application for the bridge project was complete and thought the engineer had said no. He also remembered that Mr. Balmes had indicated the effort was due by July 1 and that the applications needed to be complete to submit them to FDOT.

Mr. Cohoon said that if the board adopted that change, the application would be completed.

Chairwoman Dreyer expressed concern, asking if the application for the project would be completed by Friday, noting that Mr. Cohoon had previously said the application process typically took months to complete.

Mr. Cohoon said he would dedicate all staff to ensure that the application would be completed and submitted to Mr. Balmes within two days.

Chairwoman Dreyer reiterated her agreement with Mayor Marciano, stating that their staff had not had the opportunity to review any of the changes, and she did not have a clear answer on how the changes would affect the other projects on the list that did have applications in.

Peter Lee, City Manager of the City of Ocala, addressed the board and said that Jeff Shrum, his staff member, had sent him a memo after the June TAC meeting. Jeff Shrum had been surprised by the order and felt that it was not typical procedural behavior for the process. Peter Lee noted

that although their staff might have supported the changes during the meeting, Jeff Shrum had expressed concerns afterward. He had stated that it was an atypical practice to change the information during that period of time.

Ms. Stone asked if this situation posed a problem for the City of Ocala and whether it impacted their projects in any way. She added that if it had a negative impact on the City of Ocala, then they should be open to discussing it. However, if there was no negative impact on their projects, she did not understand the issue.

Ms. Straub said that DOT met with the contractor the previous week and would hold their final public hearing on Wednesday. After going through a 30-day comment period, and Marion County would need to merge their project shortly afterward.

Chairwoman Dreyer said that her question was whether, if the application was submitted by Friday as Mr. Cohoon had stated would happen with dedicated staff, and they came back in August to approve it, it would still not hinder the project.

Ms. Stone asked why the board would slow down the process when the DOT was looking for them to join in on the project.

Chairwoman Dreyer said that the situation caused chaos and confusion.

Ms. Stone said that the board had not yet heard how the proposed changes negatively impacted any other projects that the city had.

Mr. Inskeep asked if Mr. Balmes, himself, or anyone else had evaluated the domino effect of adding this project to the top of the list. He wanted to know which projects might have been dropped off and what the real impact would be on Ocala, Belleview, or the county itself.

Mr. Balmes said that he did not foresee any negative impacts if they cut off the list at 20. He explained that they had already deleted one project, specifically project 16, which was recommended by Marion County. This would free up one space to add the 484 project and exclude projects 21 and 22, which were already included in the Non-SIS capacity and planning lists.

Mr. Balmes said that he wanted to address the issue of applications and the timeline. He explained that the DOT work program receives applications when the portal closes and begins reviewing them in July. They then start cross-referencing the applications with the LOPP. If they have an application for 484 but do not see the project listed in their LOPP, it would create an inconsistency issue.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked how they could add the project to the LRTP, noting that it needed to be publicly noticed. She inquired whether the DOT also cross-referenced projects with the LRTP.

Mr. Balmes said that yes, cross-referencing with the LRTP was part of the application process. He explained that there was a question in the application about when the project would be updated or amended if it was not in the LRTP.

Ms. Stone said that they received updates periodically throughout the year and adjusted the necessary lists as needed.

Mr. Inskeep asked for clarification, understanding that the only project affected above the line of 20 was project 16 on the original list. He inquired if everything else remained the same, with the only change being in the ranking, and no other projects being affected. He was trying to determine if there was any downside to this adjustment.

Ms. Stone said that there appeared to be no downside, as they replaced the original number one project with a new number one, without impacting the overall list. She did not believe it had a significant effect on anything.

Mr. Inskeep acknowledged the confusion and the discomfort of receiving information at the last minute, which limited the time for review. However, he also recognized that Florida was moving forward with the project, and it was important to keep pace with that progress. He noted the potential negative impact of not addressing the issue, especially given the problematic area under the bridge.

He expressed that he did not see a downside to the change and would prefer to process the adjustment rather than oppose it without clear evidence of a negative impact. He admitted that while he was uncomfortable relying solely on others' assessments rather than his own research, he was not hearing anything that would cause him to oppose the change. He would be reluctant to halt something important due to timing issues if there was no apparent downside on paper.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Peter and Jeff for confirmation that the change would not affect their city projects.

Mr. Lee reevaluated the projects on the modified list. He mentioned that DOT typically funded phases of the projects. He noted that while moving Florida Forward may not have been discussed in the committee meetings, there was a discussion about how all proposed stages or phases of the 484 project would proceed up to construction.

Mr. Lee said that the new number 15 project, State Road 40 from 441 to Northeast 8<sup>th</sup>, would likely be affected. He expressed his opinion but deferred to Mr. Balmes or Mr. Shrum to corroborate it.

Jeff Shrum, Growth Management Director for the City of Ocala, said that Mr. Balmes might have a better answer regarding the impact. He explained that historically, DOT had a pool of money they reviewed when assessing project lists from each group and that it was uncommon to see a project funded from start to finish all in one cycle. Typically, projects were funded in phases.

He expressed concern that modifying the list could potentially result in a phase of a project being moved down the list if funds were concentrated on one project. He noted that this issue had come up in committee meetings, but definitive answers were difficult to obtain without a detailed review of the list and available funds. He suggested that Mr. Balmes might be able to provide a more precise answer.

Mr. Shrum also said that, for the City projects, one of the projects that might be impacted was State Road 40. He explained that all projects could be affected to some extent as they get moved down the list.

Specifically, he mentioned that the city's project for State Road 40, which involved improvements and safety enhancements through the downtown area, could be impacted by these changes.

Mr. Balmes reviewed the projects that currently had applications, noting that state projects did not require a submitted application.

Mr. Balmes said that, as mentioned earlier, there were thirteen applications in total, with seven currently on file, including several trail projects. He pointed out that some of these projects were already funded. He emphasized the need to submit more applications to DOT to better position themselves for funding opportunities and leverage local investments and partnerships. He noted that Steven was well-informed about this, and they had discussed the importance of securing more applications from the county, the City of Ocala, and Belleview. He praised Belleview for submitting an excellent application for their trail project last year. Mr. Balmes underscored that without an application, it was difficult to secure funding, particularly from local sources, though not necessarily from the state.

The board continued to review the ranking of projects, examining which projects had applications submitted and which did not.

Ms. Straub expressed that the partnership with DOT had been greatly appreciated. She acknowledged the strong relationships that Mr. Balmes had built with MPOs and the local office, which maintained good connections with both city and county staff. She mentioned that the I-75 Moving Florida Forward project was an unexpected funding initiative from the governor, with a requirement to be put into construction by the following year.

Ms. Straub clarified that the goal was not to disrupt any local projects or partnerships but to include the 484 project on the list. She emphasized that the inclusion of the 484 project was not intended to derail other projects but to ensure its place on the list, even if it meant adjusting its position.

Mr. Balmes chimed in that this cycle was for the fiscal year 2026 to 2030, the next tentative work program. He explained that some projects on the list were already funded, and they had been kept on the list to ensure they remained funded through construction. Regarding potential negative impacts, he stated that he did not foresee any issues with the top 20 projects by adding the additional project.

Mike McCammon from the Florida Department of Transportation addressed the board, noting that while his expertise was in operations rather than funding, he had been involved in meetings with both the City of Ocala and Secretary Tyler, as well as with the county. He emphasized that these meetings were typical for understanding local priorities and determining how to assist.

Mr. McCammon acknowledged that funding was complex and that he did not fully understand all details, despite his 28 years of experience. He had not been involved in recent conversations about the project between the county and Secretary Tyler. However, he noted that the initial

discussions suggested that the county would be providing the funding for the project. From his perspective, he did not foresee a negative impact on other projects on the list, as the funding for this project would likely come from the county rather than federal or state funds controlled by DOT.

Chairwoman Dreyer asked Mr. McCammon to elaborate on whether, in his experience, it was normal for a county to fund a federal highway project.

Mr. McCammon explained that the sole beneficiary of this project was the county. The project involved rebuilding the bridge over I-75 to accommodate current traffic needs, which required longer beams to provide sufficient room underneath. He noted that this type of bridge upgrade was necessary to match the longer beams used in other parts of State Road 200. He emphasized that if the county funded this project, it would not take away from other projects on the list, as the funding for this bridge would come from the county rather than federal or state sources.

Chairwoman Dreyer acknowledged Mr. McCammon's response as the most helpful so far and thanked him. She then asked if the county was funding the project on its own and if the request was simply to add it to the list, regardless of its position. She proposed that if the county was willing to accept a lower spot on the list, they could place the project at the bottom and proceed with the rest of the agenda.

Ms. Stone said that as long as the project remained in the top 20, the main concern was having given up the number one slot. She suggested moving the project into the number one slot since the county would be funding it.

Chairwoman Dreyer said that the majority of the revision was due to adding the project to number one. She asked if they could leave the original list as it was, remove number 16, and either place the new project at number 16 or move projects 17 through 20 up and position the new project at number 20.

Mayor Marciano made a motion to move the amended project (I-75 at CR 484 – Bridge Replacement to support 6 lanes on CR 484), from number 1 to number 16 and approve the LOPP. Ms. Stone seconded the motion.

Ms. Stone then withdrew her motion as further clarification on Mayor Marciano's motion was needed.

The board discussed the ranking of the projects once more.

Mr. Lee reviewed the City of Ocala projects again to ensure there would be no significant impacts to the City's projects with the proposed changes.

Mayor Marciano amended his motion to go with the proposed changes listed in red except taking number 1 and putting it into the number 16 slot which would be removed. Ms. Stone seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Item 5C. 2024 Regional Priority Projects**

Mr. Balmes presented and said in collaboration with the Central Florida MPO Alliance

(CFMPOA), the TPO annually developed a list of regionally significant transportation priority projects.

TPO staff presented in May and June a draft List of Regional Priority Projects to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and both committees recommended approval.

A summary of the proposed 2024 List of Regional Priority Projects, and for reference, the approved 2023 Regional Priority projects were provided to the board.

Mr. Bethea made a motion to approve the 2024 Regional Priority Projects. Ms. Stone seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Item 6. Comments by FDOT**

Ms. Kia Powell gave the following updates:

- The Construction Report was provided in the committee packet and there was at the time 7 intermittent lane closures. She shared with the board that more detailed information could be found on [cflroads.com](http://cflroads.com).
- Update on C.R. 484 and I-75 Interchange Roadway Improvements – drainage and widening work was ongoing and the contractor was milling and paving the remaining lanes along northbound and southbound I-75. Median crossovers are being widened and resurfaced. Ramp closures at C.R. 484 are expected in June for resurfacing.
- Update on the S.R. 464 Resurfacing from U.S. 301 to U.S. 27 – Contractor performing mostly daytime activities related to ditch grading, sidewalk, and drainage.
- The development of the 2055 Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) update had begun. The 2055 FTP update would develop statewide goals and regional objectives, empowering communities to adopt unique local strategies that align with the FTP. The plan would be developed through Steering Committee guidance, Focus Group support, and comprehensive community engagement (both public and partner engagement). The Five Focus Groups would provide an opportunity for more targeted discussions and would report input and feedback to the Steering Committee as the development process evolves. Community Engagement activities would be structured to provide feedback to both the Steering Committee and Focus Groups at key decision points. Multiple opportunities exist for collaboration, including statewide events, MPO technical and citizen advisory committee collaboration, regional workshops, and partner coordination.
- There would be a Public Hearing for I-75 Improvements from South of S.R. 44 to S.R. 200 on June 26, 2024 from 5:30 – 7:30pm at the Wildwood Community Center.

Mr. Inskeep inquired about updates on the Toll Road Extension.

Mr. McCammon stated that the most recent update was that the Toll Road Extension was on hold while efforts were focused on I-75, and to the best of his knowledge, it was not under consideration at that time.

### **Item 7. Comments by TPO Staff**

Mr. Balmes shared with the board the following comments:

- The 2050 LRTP Public Survey was open through July 8 and at the time the TPO had received around 300 responses.
- There would be a 2050 LRTP Community Workshop and the TPO were looking at a date of either Sept 18 or 19. Confirmation of the date and location would be sent within two weeks.
- Member Appropriation Projects – The number of vetoes by Governor DeSantis had reduced the impact on the FDOT Work Program for FY 25 from \$250 million to \$112 million, according to Mark Reichert of MPOAC.
- Safety – The TPO collaborated with Bobbi from the Marion County Public Relations Office on a series of educational videos, 45 seconds to 1 minute long, covering various topics such as leadership, elected leaders, first responders (OPD, Sheriff, Schools), and victims, with a focus on the emotional element and partnership effort.
- Tri-MPO Meeting on June 20 – Lake-Sumter and at Hernando Citrus – topics on LRTP coordination, finance/budgeting, LOPP process, best practices. Next meeting in fall in Lake-Sumter.
- Central Fl MPO Alliance/Suncoast Meeting in Bartow on June 14. Well attended by 10 MPO's, staff, elected officials, FDOT 3 districts. Safety Focus, MFF Focus, Major Project Updates.
- There would be an FDOT Stop on Red event on August 8. Further details would be provided.

### **Item 8. Comments by TPO Board Members**

Ms. Stone complimented Mayor Marciano's video on drunk driving and applauded all partners for their efforts in improving safety.

Mayor Marciano noted that there had been a couple of crashes with lives lost due to impaired driving. The video was a response to those incidents, and the Ocala Police Department had re-implemented the traffic unit to address some of the concerns on the roadways.

Mr. McClain mentioned that there were 69 days left in the 100 deadliest days for teen drivers and encouraged everyone to continue having safety conversations with teens.

### **Item 9. Public Comment**

*There was no public comment.*

### **Item 10. Adjournment**

TPO Board Meeting Minutes – June 25, 2024  
Approved – August 27, 2024

Chairwoman Dreyer reminded the board that there would be no meeting in July and that the board would resume meeting on August 27, 2024. She then adjourned the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant