



Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting

Marion County – Library Headquarters
2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
1:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Jim Belonger
Matt Fabian
Suzanne Mangram
Nick Mora
Michelle Shearer (*arrived at 1:20pm*)

Members Not Present:

Travis Magamoll
Richard McGinley
Steve Rudnianyn

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, Ocala Marion TPO
Shakayla Irby, Ocala Marion TPO
Kia Powell, FDOT
William Roll, Kimley-Horn

Item 1. Call to Order

Acting Chairman Nick Mora called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Item 2. Roll Call

Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was not present. A quorum was reached at 1:20pm with the arrival of Michelle Shearer.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Secretary 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 May 6, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPO's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

Mr. Fabian made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Mangram seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5a. Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 to 2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #3

Rob Balmes, TPO Director said the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had requested one project amended to the Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 to 2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

FM# 450948-2: State Road 40, from SE 196 Terrace Road to Lake County Line

- Resurfacing Project
- Preliminary Engineering (PE) and Construction (CST) phases
- Funding in FY 2025, FY 2028
- Total: \$8,801,317
 - SN (Federal): \$98,000 (FY 2025), PE
 - SA (Federal): \$7,612,971 (FY 2028), CST
 - DIOH (State): \$357,217 (FY 2028), CST
 - DIH (State): \$733,129 (FY 2028), CST

Mr. Belonger made a motion to recommend TPO board approval of the FY 2025 to 2029 TIP. Ms. Shearer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 6a. Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Project Updates

William Roll of Kimley Horn presented updates on the "Navigating the Future: 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)" project.

Mr. Roll began by outlining the agenda for the update, which included a review of the completed scenario planning efforts and a discussion on local revenue forecasts, roadway needs, and high-priority capacity improvements.

As part of the scenario planning process, Mr. Roll explained that the project team was tasked with evaluating the existing transportation network using three distinct land use scenarios—described as “alternative futures.” These scenarios were developed in collaboration with the LRTP Steering Committee and were shaped by variations in population and employment forecasts.

The first scenario, referred to as the *trend forecast*, had already been presented to all advisory committees and the TPO Board. This scenario represented the most likely projection of population and employment growth through the year 2050, based on existing land use policies, development trends, and guidance from local jurisdictions. The trend forecast projected an increase of approximately 72,000 dwelling units and 35,000 additional jobs by 2050.

The second scenario, labeled *reduced and targeted growth*, concentrated future development within a few key areas: the triangle area, Marion Oaks, the Ocala Airport area, the Belleview Bypass area, and the city of Ocala. Growth in these targeted locations remained consistent with the trend forecast, while all other areas experienced a 30% reduction in projected population and employment growth. As a result, this scenario projected 11,000 fewer dwelling units—8,000 single-family and 3,000 multi-family—and a reduction of 5,000 jobs compared to the trend scenario. The project team received feedback from the Steering Committee regarding some of the zone-level reductions and planned to revise the forecast to remove or lessen reductions in certain zones that had been identified for high growth.

The third scenario, referred to as *greater concentration of multifamily housing*, assumed a higher share of new growth would be accommodated in multi-family housing rather than traditional single-family units. This scenario held total population and employment constant but redistributed housing types, decreasing single-family homes by approximately 6,800 and increasing multi-family units by around 7,700. Mr. Roll explained that due to smaller average household sizes in multi-family housing (approximately 1.7–1.8 persons per dwelling), more total units would be needed to accommodate the same population compared to single-family homes (2.2–2.3 persons per dwelling). This shift also aligned with trends in delayed homeownership and household formation among younger populations.

Mr. Roll highlighted that the modeling tool used for these scenarios factored in variables such as vacancy rates and land availability to forecast outcomes. He noted that areas along major corridors—particularly State Road 200—and the downtown core were expected to see increases in multi-family development, with further adjustments being made in response to feedback from the City of Ocala. For example, the downtown area’s redevelopment potential was being considered for increased multifamily density.

He emphasized the land use-transportation connection by sharing anecdotes illustrating how compact, higher-density development often reduced the need for long-distance travel by placing daily destinations such as schools, grocery stores, and workplaces closer together. This had the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle hours traveled (VHT), even if traffic volumes increased on specific corridors.

Following the scenario overview, Mr. Roll presented updates on revenue forecasting, with a focus on the local funding outlook. While federal and state revenue forecasts had already been provided by FDOT, he noted that the state had opted out of participating in the Carbon Reduction Program, which affected approximately \$300 million statewide over the next five years. This withdrawal could lead to delays or deferral of some transportation projects due to limited available funding.

Locally, staff continued to work with Marion County to refine projections related to the gas tax, as a significant portion of those revenues is allocated to roadway maintenance and operations rather than capital improvements. Preliminary estimates suggested about \$1.3 billion in total local revenue through 2050, pending final allocation between capital and operating expenses. Additional revenue sources included approximately \$1.6 billion from the infrastructure sales tax and \$123 million from current impact fees, although Mr. Roll noted these impact fees were under review and likely to increase in the near term.

In closing, Mr. Roll presented a map illustrating the region's roadway capacity needs. Areas highlighted in yellow buffers indicated where capacity improvements were potentially needed. He stressed that the map reflected need—not necessarily planned improvements. The number of lanes shown on the map corresponded with projected demand, but no final determinations had been made regarding implementation. He also mentioned that in some cases, improving a parallel roadway may be more effective than expanding a congested corridor.

Mr. Roll concluded by stating that the same roadway network would be applied to all three scenarios in the upcoming traffic modeling phase. He anticipated that Scenario 2 (reduced growth) would result in lower VMT and VHT due to fewer trips overall, while Scenario 3 (multifamily concentration) might increase travel within the urban core but reduce long-distance driving. The team looked forward to analyzing these differences once the model runs were completed.

No further questions were raised, and the presentation concluded with a commitment to incorporating Steering Committee feedback and continuing coordination with local agencies on revenue assumptions and network modeling.

Item 6b. Draft Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Rob Balmes provided an overview of the Draft Fiscal Year 2026–2032 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which had been included in the meeting packets. He began by outlining the schedule for the TIP development process. The current presentation marked the beginning of the public review and comment period. The same presentation would be delivered to the TPO Board on May 27. Following that, staff would return to the committees in June to request formal endorsements. Mr. Balmes noted that all public comments and feedback

from partners—including the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)—would be compiled and shared before final adoption, which was scheduled for June 23.

He reminded members that a notice had already been distributed by TPO staff, directing them to the location of the draft TIP on the TPO's website. Outreach efforts included social media posts, email notifications to stakeholders, and a legal notice published in the Ocala Star Banner to ensure the public had access to the draft document and an opportunity to provide input.

One of the key features of this year's TIP is its emphasis on performance-based planning. Mr. Balmes highlighted the connection between project investments and federally required performance targets, particularly in the area of safety. The TIP outlines how proposed projects are expected to help meet or improve those targets, which are updated annually.

From a financial standpoint, the TIP provides a breakdown of anticipated federal, state, and local revenues over the next five years. Mr. Balmes explained that while these figures offer a comprehensive look at funding sources, the TIP is a dynamic document and will be subject to amendments as funding conditions change. The overall financial picture remained similar to the previous year.

This year's TIP includes a total of 64 projects and programs, which are now grouped into five major categories:

- Highway/Roadway projects (including reconstruction and resurfacing)
- Bicycle and pedestrian projects
- Aviation projects
- Transit projects and grants
- Maintenance and planning programs

The total estimated investment across these categories is \$553.9 million. He noted that an interactive TIP map is available online to help visualize the geographic location of projects and provide background information in a more accessible way than flipping through the document.

Six new projects were introduced in this TIP cycle, including:

- The Belleview Greenway Trail, which was funded by FDOT as part of last year's top trail priority. Construction is expected in FY 2028 with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million.
- State Road 200 widening received funding for preliminary engineering in FY 2028. FDOT will use these funds to assess the corridor's needs.
- Two Marion County safety projects, both receiving federal grants, include:
 - Southeast 100th Avenue paved shoulders (\$1.2 million)
 - County Road 475 paved shoulders to address lane departure safety issues.
- The City of Ocala, in partnership with FDOT, will implement intersection and crosswalk enhancements along SR 40 between Pine Avenue and NE 25th Avenue as part of a broader resurfacing project.
- A major resurfacing project on US 27/US 441, extending from the county line to Belleview, is scheduled for FY 2026 at a cost of \$14.5 million.
- A resurfacing project on SR 40 through the Ocala National Forest was split into two segments:
 - NE 64th Avenue to NE 186th Terrace in FY 2026

- NE 196th Terrace to the county line two years later

Mr. Balmes then highlighted several ongoing and major projects:

- The I-75/49th Street Interchange, which continues to receive funding for right-of-way acquisition. The total investment to date across all TIPs is \$161 million.
- Improvements at I-75 and SR 326, including future interchange work and auxiliary lanes between SR 200 and SR 326.
- The US 41 widening project was deferred from FY 2029 to FY 2030 but remains active in the FDOT work program.
- Intersection improvements at Pine Avenue and SR 464 remain on track, though FDOT is reassessing the project scope due to existing congestion during peak travel times.
- The SR 40 widening project, from four lanes to six lanes between SR 35 and SR 314 and beyond to SR 314A, is back in the TIP with right-of-way fully funded for FY 2030.
- The NE 8th Avenue Roundabout project is still moving forward with the City of Ocala planning construction in FY 2027.
- The Pruitt Trail project, funded for FY 2026, includes safety enhancements to facilitate safer crossings at SR 200 and better connect to the Greenway.
- The Baseline to Santos Trail remains funded for construction in FY 2026.

In terms of modal diversity, the TIP also includes:

- Seven aviation projects—four at Ocala International Airport and three at the Marion County Airport
- Three SunTran transit grants
- Continued funding for various local and regional transit operations

Lastly, Mr. Balmes touched on TPO planning-level funding estimates, which remain steady for the upcoming five-year period.

He concluded the presentation by reiterating that the TIP would be brought back to the committee in June for endorsement, with all public and partner feedback incorporated into the final draft.

Item 6c. Draft 2025 List of Priority Projects (LOPP)

Mr. Rob Balmes presented an overview of the draft 2025 list of priority projects, explaining that the TPO routinely revisited its priorities and submitted seven lists (potentially eight) to FDOT District 5 to assist in developing the next Tentative Work Program. He noted that the goals remained focused on maintaining currently programmed projects, requesting additional phases for ongoing projects, and identifying new project priorities.

Mr. Balmes stated that he had met with the City of Ocala, City of Belleview, City of Dunnellon, and Marion County in February to gather feedback and priority rankings. All jurisdictions submitted their input by the end of March, which informed the development of the draft lists included in the meeting packet.

He explained that the lists would be presented again next month (June) for final review before seeking TPO Board adoption in June. Once adopted, the lists would be submitted to FDOT by the end of June.

Mr. Balmes noted two key items in this year's draft:

1. **Top 20 List Discussion** – Marion County requested the removal of the Top 20 list. Their rationale was to emphasize individual lists based on transportation modes, funding types, and improvement categories. The request aimed to reduce confusion and competition among projects from different funding buckets. This matter would be formally discussed at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting later that afternoon, and a recommendation would be presented to the TPO Board.
2. **New Bridge List** – A new bridge priority list was proposed, based on feedback from the Marion County Engineer. With over 60 federally eligible bridges in the area, the list would help address future opportunities for repairs, replacements, or new pedestrian/rail crossings.

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Balmes clarified that the Top 20 list traditionally included projects from various lists that reflected the TPO's highest overall priorities. However, this practice had led to internal conflicts due to the mixing of projects with different scopes, priorities, and funding eligibility.

Ms. Shearer and Ms. Mangram expressed concern that eliminating the Top 20 list could confuse the public.

Acting Chairman, Nick Mora acknowledged that removing the list might streamline the process and improve clarity, given the distinct funding sources for each project type.

Mr. Balmes confirmed that FDOT reviewed all lists submitted and left it to each MPO/TPO to determine how priorities were organized. He also emphasized that many projects, particularly large-capacity ones, were unlikely to be funded soon due to flat funding levels and state mandates to prioritize preservation and safety.

The committee also briefly discussed the loss of amenities (such as restrooms) at the Santos trailhead and the ongoing challenges of securing funding for trail infrastructure.

Item 7a. 2025 CAC Meetings Update

Mr. Rob Balmes told the committee that due to space issues at past meetings, he looked for a better location. He said the remaining CAC meetings for the year would be held in the Growth Services Training Room, which is larger and more comfortable. The room had been reserved and he noted that the TPO would try to use the same room next year but may need to meet in the current space at the library if it's not available.

Item 7b. Regional TSM&O Strategic Plan

Mr. Rob Balmes informed the committee that in March 2025, MetroPlan Orlando had released the final Regional TSM&O Strategic Plan. The plan had been developed through collaboration with 10 MPOs/TPOs, including the Ocala-Marion TPO. Its main goal had been to create a regional framework for cooperation on transportation projects.

Next steps included developing a work plan, increasing awareness of TSM&O, and identifying funding sources for staff and technical support. Mr. Balmes stated that updates would be provided as progress continued.

Item 8. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell from FDOT provided project updates and resources. She encouraged the committee to visit CFLroads.com for current road closures. She reported that the resurfacing project on SR 326 from NW 12th Avenue to SR 40 had been completed and received final acceptance in early April.

Two public meetings were held in early May—one for safety improvements on US 27 at NW 8th Street and another on SR 200 at SW 62nd Avenue.

Ms. Powell also mentioned a safety summit held in May with good turnout, including Mr. Balmes. FDOT hosted a “Road to Your Future” hiring event on April 30, which drew 601 registered job seekers, 206 walk-ins, and resulted in seven on-site hires.

She noted that Jim Stroz had been appointed as the new Director of Transportation Development, replacing Jack Adkins.

Finally, she mentioned the “Coffee with Construction” program, most recently held in Orlando, and stated that future events would rotate throughout the district, including Ocala.

Item 9. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes stated that the recent Safety Summit was a great event with approximately 250 attendees from across Central Florida. He shared that the Ocala-Marion TPO was honored with a Public Outreach Award by FDOT District 5 for the *Safety Matters* video series, developed in collaboration with the Marion County Public Information Office. He noted that the recognition came as a surprise, especially since the series was only halfway complete, with five more videos still to be released. He expressed appreciation for the team effort on the project.

Item 10. Comments by CAC Members

Mr. Belonger asked how the committee could get involved with signal and intersection issues. He shared concerns about traffic signal timing along SR 200, specifically at intersections near the Wawa across from On Top of the World and another near 101st Street. He noted that both locations often caused confusion and may need signal adjustments.

Ms. Shearer also mentioned improvements at SE 80th and US 441/301 near the sheriff’s station, where previous signal timing changes appeared to have helped pedestrian safety.

Item 11. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 12. Adjournment

Acting Chairman Mora adjourned the meeting at 2:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant