



Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting

Marion County – Library Headquarters
2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
3:30 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Steven Cohoon
Noel Cooper
Tom Duncan
Kia Powell
Loretta Shaffer (*alternate Candace Shelton*)
Jeff Shrum
Bob Titterington
Chuck Varadin
Chad Ward

Members Not Present:

Casey Griffith

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, Ocala Marion TPO
Shakayla Irby, Ocala Marion TPO
Ken Odom, Marion County
Aubrey Hale, City of Ocala
William Roll, Kimley-Horn

Item 1. Call to Order

Chairman Steven Cohoon called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

Item 2. Roll Call

Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

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. Titterington made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Varadin 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. Shrum made a motion to recommend TPO board approval of the FY 2025 to 2029 TIP. Mr. Titterington seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5b. List of Priority Projects (LOPP) Policies and Procedures Update

At the March 25th TPO board meeting, Mr. Balmes discussed an agenda item concerning a request from the Marion County Office of the County Engineer to remove the top 20 list of priority projects. During the meeting, TPO board members deliberated on the issue. Ultimately, the board decided to seek a formal recommendation from the TAC regarding whether to retain or remove the top 20 list.

Mr. Balmes indicated that he would bring this matter back to the TAC for recommendation, which would be presented at the upcoming May 27th meeting. Additionally, Mr. Balmes proposed an update to the policy procedures, suggesting the addition of a bridge list to complement existing project lists. This recommendation stemmed from discussions in previous TAC meetings, highlighting the importance of bridge preservation under state statute. The proposal aims to prioritize federally eligible bridges for repair or replacement as needed, including rail bridges, within a dedicated list.

These updates and recommendations were part of the ongoing efforts to refine and enhance project prioritization within the TPO's framework.

During the meeting, the committee discussed the inclusion of bridge projects in the project prioritization process. In the past, there was no specific list for bridge projects, but Marion County had submitted two bridge projects for consideration. For the sake of the draft list, those projects were included to highlight them. It was noted that the county owns about 22 structures classified as bridges, but larger culverts could also qualify for bridge funding even if they do not meet the DOT's definition.

There was consensus that a separate prioritized bridge list should be developed, especially since there is federal and state funding available specifically for bridges, including both on- and off-system projects. Committee members agreed to begin compiling this list with the aim of bringing it back in June. FDOT's funding allocation was also discussed, with the current forecast showing a majority of funding directed toward on-system projects.

In addition to bridges, Mr. Shrum raised discussion about creating a transit priority list. While such a list had not been actively maintained in recent years due to a lack of submitted projects, the committee agreed to revisit the idea, especially with a transit facility project potentially moving forward.

Mr. Titterington made a motion to create a separate list for bridge priorities, apart from the TPO's Top 20 list. Mr. Cooper seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The conversation then shifted to the methodology behind the current Top 20 list. A letter provided by Chairman Cohoon included in the meeting packet raised concerns about the lack of a defined methodology and the need to prepare for future TMA (Transportation Management Area) designation. With TMA designation, which occurs when an urbanized area surpasses a population of 200,000, the TPO would receive direct federal funding allocations and would need clearly defined and prioritized project lists supported by a transparent and performance-based methodology.

Although it was noted that no rule prohibits a TMA from maintaining a Top 20 list, other TMA-designated MPOs do not typically use one. The committee discussed the need to revisit and strengthen the existing scoring system to ensure projects are prioritized based on performance metrics and system-wide benefits. There was agreement that the current process could be improved and that efforts to refine it could be incorporated into the 2050 plan updates, especially as new federal funds become available and as the area moves toward TMA status.

The committee acknowledged that the planning process must evolve to meet future requirements and opportunities.

Mr. Shrum stated that he would not make a motion himself but would support a motion to remove the Top 20 list, provided that there would be a weekly review of how projects were ranked moving forward.

Mr. Balmes stated that the process would likely begin in the fall, as the end of the year approaches and a cost-feasible plan is in place. He noted the goal of forming a working group to collaboratively review the LOPP policies and procedures document, evaluate how projects are being scored across various lists, and ultimately develop a system that could be presented to the TPO Board by January for use in the next cycle.

Mr. Titterington made a motion to remove the LOPP Top 20 list. Mr. Cohoon seconded the motion, with an amendment requesting that the TAC revisit the grading criteria for the other lists and reach a consensus in a future meeting. The motion passed, with Mr. Cooper opposed.

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.

Mr. Balmes noted that, for the sake of the County Road 484 widening project and the community of Dunnellon, it would be important to clearly specify the project limits. Acknowledging that widening CR 484 within the Dunnellon area could be an issue.

Mr. Ward said that not widening CR 484 would pose a major issue for the area and noted that the project had been divided into phases, with the second phase covering the area experiencing the worst traffic congestion.

Clarification was made that the discussion focused on County Road 484 and that the problematic segment is east of the bridge entering Dunnellon. It was noted that the project should extend to a logical termination point near, but not within, the Farmland Preservation Area. The committee agreed that widening would not be expected within the Farmland Preservation Area itself but should occur to the east of it, where future development could justify increased roadway capacity.

Further discussion pinpointed that just west of SR 200, near the location of a school, would be an appropriate terminus for the widening. Committee members acknowledged this as solid guidance and agreed that a clear specification of the project limits especially relative to the Farmland Preservation Area was essential.

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. Balmes explained that the renewal process forms the basis for developing the priority list of projects. He stated that the goals remain tied to the policies and procedures documented in the current program, and projects stay in the program until construction begins. He noted that funding should be requested for all program phases and that new projects would need to be repriced.

He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to coordinate with the committee in February and March and felt the process worked well this year. He thanked everyone for their time and effort and introduced the draft set-aside list, requesting any feedback or recommendations before the list is presented to the TPO Board in two weeks.

He added that staff would return to the committee with the revised list including any changes made by the TPO Board and that final TPO Board adoption is anticipated for June 23rd, with submission to FDOT by July 1st.

Regarding eligibility, Mr. Balmes reiterated that much of it is tied to local priorities and the pending TPO Board action. He said that while the committee's recommendation to remove the Top 20 list would be taken to the Board, the final decision rests with them. He also mentioned the inclusion of a bridge list and the future potential to include a transit list.

Discussing this year's rankings, he explained that the emphasis was on prior-year rankings as adopted annually by the TPO Board. Local partner priorities played a significant role, with both the City of Ocala and Marion County providing detailed lists in order of preference. He explained that a scoring methodology was used, with roadway projects receiving a maximum of 80 points based on factors such as prior-year rank, project cycle, local funding, regional partnerships, safety, congestion management, evacuation routes, and economic development.

He acknowledged being generous in awarding local funding points, recognizing that exact investment levels are often unclear at this stage.

For bike and pedestrian projects, the maximum score was 50 points, based on prior-year rank, project cycle, local funding, partnerships, and multimodal connectivity.

Mr. Balmes concluded by referencing a slide from the FDOT work program to illustrate how funding constraints—particularly with the relatively flat State Transportation Trust Fund—shift the emphasis toward system preservation and safety projects. He cited the \$150 million investment in resurfacing jobs included in the TIP as an example and reminded the committee that funding new capacity projects remains a challenge.

The committee engaged in discussion, providing input on each individual list, and developed the following recommendations:

Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) List

- #3: I-75 at County Road (CR) 484 Interchange, Bridge Replacement
 - Move to the Proposed Bridge List and rank as #1.

Non-SIS Capacity List

- #1: SR 200 from Citrus County to CR 484, Widening to Four Lanes
 - Move from #1 to #4.
- #8: US 41 from SW 99th Place to CR 40, Widening to Four Lanes
 - Move from #8 to #3.
- #9: SW 20th Street from I-75 to SR 200, Widening to Four Lanes
 - Move from #9 to #1.

Safety and Operations List

- #14: SW 31st Street to SW 7th Avenue, Operational/Installation of Traffic Signal
 - Move from #14 to #7.

Proposed Bridge List

- Add I-75 at CR 484 Interchange, Bridge Replacement
 - Rank as #1.
 - Update the funding request amount to \$55 million.

Item 7a. 2025 TAC 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 TAC 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 TAC Members

There were no comments by TAC members.

Item 11. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

TAC Meeting Minutes – May 13, 2025
Approved – June 10, 2025

Item 12. Adjournment

Chairman Cohoon adjourned the meeting at 5:23pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant