



TPO Board Meeting

Marion County Commission Auditorium
601 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471
October 28, 2025
3:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Councilman Ire Bethea, Sr.
Commissioner Kathy Bryant
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer
Councilman James Hilty
Councilman Tim Inskeep
Mayor Ben Marciano
Commissioner Matt McClain
Commissioner Michelle Stone
Commissioner Carl Zalak

Members Not Present:

Commissioner Craig Curry
Commissioner Ray Dwyer
Councilmember Barry Mansfield

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Shakayla Irby, TPO
Kia Powell, FDOT
Mike McCammon, FDOT
Aubrey Hale, City of Ocala
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala
Darren Park, City of Ocala
Sean Lanier, City of Ocala
Amber Gartner, Kimley-Horn and Associates
Jen Musselman, Kittelson and Associates
Barb Girtman
Other members of the public not signed in.

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Carl Zalak called the meeting to order at 3:42pm and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 2. Roll Call

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

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Administrative Assistant Shakayla Irby stated that the meeting was published online on the TPO's website, as well as on the websites of the City of Ocala, Belleview, Marion County, and Dunnellon on October 21, 2025. It was also published to the TPO's Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

Mr. Bethea made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dreyer seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Item 5A. Draft Active Transportation Plan

Rob Balmes, TPO Director, introduced Jen Musselman, who served as one of the Co-Project Managers with Kittelson & Associates during the development of the Active Transportation Plan. Ms. Musselman delivered a presentation on the plan and its development process. The TPO sought adoption of the plan.

Ms. Musselman stated that she was excited to share the results of approximately a year's worth of work completed in partnership with TPO staff to develop the Active Transportation Plan. She explained that the purpose of the presentation was to provide an overview of the plan's structure, review key findings, highlight available resources, and gather feedback from committee members.

She noted that the plan was organized into three main sections. The first section served as an introduction and included the plan's vision, goals, and a summary of existing conditions. It also defined active transportation as human-powered mobility and emphasized the unique qualities of Marion County that support this initiative, including its equestrian heritage, natural resources, and established trail network. Ms. Musselman discussed how expanding the active transportation network offered significant safety, health, and economic benefits to the community.

The second section of the plan focused on the technical analysis. This included a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis that evaluated the comfort and safety of walking and biking environments throughout the county. The analysis considered factors such as roadway speed, traffic volume, and the presence of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails. She explained that the LTS ranged from Level 1 (low stress, comfortable for most users) to Level 4 (high stress, suitable only for highly experienced users). This analysis helped determine where improvements were needed to create a more comfortable and accessible environment for all users.

Ms. Mussleman also described the Accessibility Analysis, which examined how easily residents could reach key destinations, including bus stops, schools, hospitals, parks, and community centers. She explained that areas shown in green on the analysis maps represented low-stress routes, while red areas indicated high-stress barriers where pedestrians or cyclists faced limited or unsafe access.

The third section of the plan identified potential projects and outlined a framework for prioritization. Using data from the technical analysis, feedback from stakeholders and local partners, and input from the public, the team identified three main categories of projects: trails, bicycle lanes, and sidewalk/shared-use path improvements. Ms. Mussleman explained that an initial prioritization process was conducted, taking into account user comfort levels, safety data, local priorities, and accessibility needs. The resulting prioritization served as a guide for the cities and county to determine which projects should advance first into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or other local funding programs.

She further noted that the plan had already begun to inform regional efforts, including integration into the LOPP Trail projects, marking an important step forward in advancing active transportation initiatives. Ms. Mussleman emphasized that the TPO would continue to assist with identifying funding opportunities and monitoring progress toward achieving the plan's goals.

Additionally, Ms. Mussleman highlighted two supporting resources included in the plan: a Community and Economic Benefit Summary and a Toolkit of Active Transportation Strategies. The benefit summary compiled research on the safety, economic, and health advantages of investing in active transportation infrastructure. The toolkit provided examples of facility types, appropriate applications, cost estimates, benefits, and implementation challenges to help local agencies make informed decisions when planning future projects.

She concluded by reiterating that the Active Transportation Plan would serve as a living document to guide future projects, with continued stakeholder and public engagement as well as periodic updates to track progress toward the county's long-term vision of a safe, connected, and accessible active transportation network.

Mr. McClain made a motion to approve the Draft Active Transportation Plan. Mr. Bethea seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Item 5B. Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #2

Mr. Balmes presented an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2026–2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), requesting approval. The amendment included three key changes:

1. **I-75/49th Street Interchange:** FDOT requested an update to reflect revised right-of-way funding for FY 2026–2030. The programmed amount increased from approximately \$21.3 million to \$59.4 million, incorporating prior TIP year funds to align with the current five-year period.

2. **New Project – SR 464 at SE 25th Avenue:** A new intersection improvement project was introduced, including a westbound right-turn lane, with state funding and a local contribution.
3. **TPO Funding Adjustment:** A funding change previously approved by the TPO Board in September was incorporated, adding approximately \$479,000 in federal funds to the TPO.

Due to the urgency of the amendment, it was not reviewed by the advisory committees prior to the meeting. However, it was scheduled to be shared with them at the November 4th meeting for informational purposes. Approval was requested at the meeting to allow the projects to proceed.

Mr. Marciano made a motion to approve the Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 TIP Amendment #2. Ms. Dreyer seconded the motion, a roll-call vote was called and it was approved unanimously.

Item 6. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell, FDOT Liaison, began with a few highlights before providing project updates. She noted that the construction report was included in the agenda packet. She mentioned that improvements to I-75 and SR 200 to SR 326 for traffic capacity and operational efficiency were scheduled to begin soon. Two projects were recently completed and accepted: the Silver Springs State Park pedestrian bridge operations and safety improvements were accepted on August 6, and the SR 464/Maricamp resurfacing project was accepted on October 14. She also reported that FDOT held its Work Program Public Hearing from October 20–24, which included both virtual and in-person sessions. Public comments remained open through November 7. FDOT planned to present the Work Program at the next meeting and address any questions from the board. Ms. Powell also shared that the latest FDOT District 5 newsletter was available in print and had been distributed electronically. She concluded by recognizing October as Pedestrian Safety Month, noting that between 2020 and 2024, there were 3,789 pedestrian fatalities in Florida, accounting for 23% of all traffic-related deaths.

Chairman Zalak inquired about the status of follow-up items related to CR 484 that were discussed at the previous meeting. He asked whether the cleanup and tightening efforts had been completed or if they were still in progress.

Ms. Powell provided an update on the CR 484 project near I-75. She stated that the project had been temporarily paused for redesign but was expected to resume within the next two weeks. The work focused on reducing congestion at the interchange. FDOT anticipated opening new exit lanes from I-75 to CR 484 within six months. The southbound exit ramp would include two left-turn lanes and two right-turn lanes, while the northbound exit ramp would be modified to include two left-turn lanes instead of one. Additionally, the eastbound turn lane on northbound I-75 would be extended to increase capacity. She noted that the planned widening of CR 484 remained on hold as FDOT continued coordination with local governments to finalize future plans.

Chairman Zalak asked whether the other portions of the CR 484 project were now open.

Mr. McCammon stated that the contractor had started work earlier in the week and had begun implementing some of the planned improvements, including enhancements to the U-turn area near SummerGlen.

Ms. Bryant asked whether U-turns were being allowed at the location near SummerGlen, as they should not be occurring there. She identified two main concerns: first, the turning radius was too small, causing vehicles to block an entire lane of traffic when attempting a U-turn; second, the road markings made it difficult for drivers to determine when to merge, leading to confusion. She also noted that vehicles waiting to turn toward the interstate were blocking the intersection, preventing others from turning left into the area. Ms. Bryant expressed her belief that the location should be designated as a no U-turn zone and mentioned she had already discussed the issue with staff. She suggested directing drivers further west to make U-turns and stated that the situation created significant traffic congestion.

Mr. McCammon agreed that, since the road in question is a county road, FDOT could coordinate with the county engineer and staff to explore possible solutions.

Ms. Bryant expressed appreciation for the collaboration and noted that during previous discussions, they had been waiting on additional developments in order to move forward with other related items.

Mr. McCammon stated that work was expected to begin as early as that evening to implement interim improvements. He explained that, currently, the southbound I-75 exit at CR 484 includes one right-turn lane and one left-turn lane. The plan was to add dual left-turn lanes immediately, as a utility pole was preventing the addition of dual right-turn lanes at this time. He noted that a design and plan were being developed to add the two right-turn lanes in the coming months. These efforts were part of an interim solution, with the long-term goal of partnering with the county to fully reconstruct the interchange and expand CR 484 under the interstate.

Ms. Bryant asked for clarification on why the improvements at CR 475A and CR 484 could not be completed at this time. She acknowledged that the intent was for the projects to work in coordination but questioned what aspects of the proposed new plan would prevent the completion of those improvements now.

Mr. McCammon responded that the improvements at CR 475A should be able to move forward as originally designed three to four years ago. While he did not recall all the specific design details, he noted that in the coming weeks, FDOT planned to extend the left-turn queue length, which should provide some relief. He added that all improvements originally planned as part of the project were expected to be completed within the next six months, and he was pushing to implement the operational improvements as early as possible.

Mr. McCammon concluded with clarification that, aside from the operational improvements currently underway, the remaining work near and under the interstate would need to wait for the full reconstruction of the interchange. It was noted that additional through lanes could not be added under the interstate at this time without significant structural changes, such as removing and rebuilding the existing wall. Until the full rebuild occurs, the focus will be on cleaning up the area to ensure safe traffic flow. Once the interchange is fully reconstructed, additional capacity and lanes will be added.

Ms. Powell provided an additional update on the SR 200 project, stating that all pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs) had been activated. She noted that the project was nearing completion, with final punch list items and permanent sign installations underway.

Mr. Inskeep addressed concerns regarding the resurfacing project on US 41 in Dunnellon. He noted that while the project appeared to be turning out well overall, there was a safety issue at the intersection of US 41 and CR 484. Specifically, trucks turning right from northbound US 41 onto eastbound CR 484 were unable to make the turn without encroaching into the westbound traffic lane. Additionally, due to the sharpness of the turn, truck tires were frequently mounting the curb, posing a risk to pedestrians. He mentioned that a representative had brought these concerns to the city council and asked whether anything could be done to address the issue.

Mr. McCammon responded that the issue may already be under review. He noted that any permanent right-turn lane at that location should be designed to accommodate truck traffic. He stated that he would follow up on the matter and report back with more information.

Mr. Marciano recalled that during the previous meeting, there was an update indicating that FDOT was planning to review the U-turn radius on SR 200. The intent was to adjust the speed reduction islands to allow for a wider turning radius, as trucks were having difficulty navigating the area. He asked if there were any updates on that effort and suggested it could be revisited at a future meeting if information was not yet available.

Mr. McCammon reported that the U-turn islands at the Hobby Lobby and at SW 3rd Street near Texas Roadhouse had been removed. He noted that these changes should improve traffic flow and make turning movements easier in those areas.

Mr. Marciano thanked Mr. McCammon for addressing the U-turn island removals and asked for an update on a previous discussion regarding the possibility of creating additional median access points along SR 200. He noted that some of the busier businesses had been affected by limited access, requiring drivers to travel significantly farther to reach them. He inquired whether there had been any progress or if the matter was still under review.

Mr. McCammon stated that he did not yet have an update regarding the potential for creating additional median access points along SR 200.

Chairman Zalak noted that construction was underway on US 441 near Heagy-Burry Boat Ramp in Orange Lake. He expressed concern about recent changes to the median configuration, which would prevent boats from making a left turn when exiting the ramp. He explained that drivers would instead have to travel farther to make a U-turn in a constrained area, which could be problematic given the expected popularity of the facility. He requested that FDOT explore the possibility of modifying the U-turn area to better accommodate vehicles towing boats.

Mr. McCammon noted that medium modifications are underway on the project, which is progressing rapidly. He emphasized the need to act quickly to ensure the work is completed within the current project timeline.

Mr. Marciano inquired whether any bids had been received for the US 441 project.

Mr. McCammon responded that the bid packages are currently with contractors and he believes the bids are due on Friday.

Item 7. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes provided the following updates:

Upcoming TPO Meeting: A reminder that the next TPO meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 13th at 3:00 p.m. This meeting is significant as the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is expected to be adopted.

Central Florida MPO Alliance Meeting: Held on October 10th, attended by Commissioner Curry and Mr. Balmes. The regional priority list—which includes priorities approved in June—was adopted. Commissioner Stone was elected as Secretary of the Alliance, having been nominated by Commissioner Curry.

MPOAC Meeting: Mr. Balmes and Councilman Hilty attended the October 25th MPOAC meeting. They expressed confidence in the new Executive Director, Amanda Carpenter, noting her strong organizational skills and leadership potential.

Future Agenda Items: At the next meeting, Mr. Balmes will include materials from Amanda Carpenter, such as one-page fact sheets offering guidance on MPOs and related processes.

Ms. Irby provided an update on the “Safety Matters” video series:

The series concluded on October 3rd with the release of the final episode on the Move Over Law, featuring Council Member Ire Bethea Sr. and representatives from multiple emergency response agencies, including:

- City of Ocala
- Ocala Police Department (OPD)
- Marion County Sheriff’s Office
- Marion County Fire Rescue
- Ocala Fire Rescue
- FDOT Road Rangers
- Belleview Police Department
- Florida Highway Patrol (FHP)

The full series included 10 episodes covering key safety topics:

- Serious injuries
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety
- School bus safety
- Speeding and aggressive driving
- Distracted driving
- Driving under the influence
- Seat belt safety

- Stopping on red
- Motorcycle safety
- Move Over Law

Videos were published on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and shared by the Marion County Public Information Office, City of Ocala, Belleview, and Dunnellon. They are also available on YouTube at Safety Matters, Marion County.

A press release will be forthcoming to further promote the series.

Ms. Irby expressed gratitude to Bobbi Perez and the Marion County Public Information Office for their production support and thanked all partners and the TPO board for their collaboration and dedication to community safety.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Board Members

There were no comments by TPO Board members.

Item 9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 10. Adjournment

Chairman Zalak adjourned the meeting at 4:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant