



TPO Board Public Hearing

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 (*arrived at 3:03pm*)
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer
Councilman James Hilty (*arrived at 3:09pm*)
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
Ernie Carcas
Mike Archdeacon
Steve Beverly
Rebecca Beverly
Matthew Peltz
Karen Haught

Sam Sansom

Donnie and Pam Craig

RJ and Mary Jo Smith

Allan Holunberg

Barb Girtman

Other members of the public not signed in.

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Carl Zalak called the hearing to order at 3:01pm 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 in the September 29, 2025 edition of the Star-Banner. Additionally, the meeting was shared on the TPO's Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) pages.

Item 4a. Draft Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Mr. Balmes reported that on September 29, the TPO released the *Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan* for a 30-day public review and comment period. Public notice was provided through the following channels:

- Star Banner (government public notice section)
- TPO website
- Email notifications to TPO board committees and partner agencies (federal, state, and local)
- Social media posts
- Distribution to Public Information Officers (PIOs)

A public open house was held on September 30 at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM.

Additionally, the LRTP received local media coverage:

- 352 Today (October 2)
- The Gazette (October 3)
- WCJB TV 20 (October 8)

Mr. Balmes then introduced Amber Gartner with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Project Director for the LRTP.

Ms. Amber Gartner, Project Director with Kimley-Horn and Associates, addressed the board and introduced a short video summarizing the *Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)*. The video highlighted the plan's focus on addressing growth, congestion, and safety, and emphasized that community input played a key role in shaping the plan.

Ms. Gartner explained that the purpose of the meeting was to close the 30-day public comment period, seek board approval of the adoption package, and prepare for the formal adoption scheduled for November 13. She outlined that the LRTP was developed using population and traffic forecasts, balanced with anticipated revenues from federal, state, and local sources, including the recently renewed local sales tax. The plan includes a cost feasible list of projects that can be funded through 2050, such as roadway improvements, intersection upgrades, trails, sidewalks, and shared-use paths.

Projects are categorized as fully funded or partially funded, with several corridor studies identified for long-term planning. Transit improvements from the SunTran Transit Development Plan were also incorporated, including route extensions, new routes, and microtransit options. Multimodal elements from the Active Transportation Plan were included as well, such as trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks, particularly in urban areas. Ms. Gartner also reviewed the public outreach efforts, which included two surveys, two public workshops, an open house, and participation in community events, resulting in nearly 680 survey comments, 270 attendees, and approximately 1,900 people reached.

She noted that public comments received during the review period, particularly those concerning US 41, were included in the board's meeting materials. She concluded by inviting questions and reiterating that the formal adoption of the LRTP would take place on November 13.

Mr. Inskeep referred to page five of the plan and pointed out that US 41 and SR 40 appeared to be shown as a single project.

Ms. Gartner confirmed that US 41 and SR 40 were listed as separate projects on the partially funded list. She explained that certain phases of these projects would be funded, but not the entirety through to construction.

Mr. Inskeep referred to page 58 of the plan, specifically Table 4-3, which appeared on page four of four. He noted that the table showed US 41 from 110th Street to just north of SR 40 as being fully funded. He recalled a previous meeting with FDOT representatives, including Assistant County Administrator Tracy Straub, where it was discussed that US 41 would be split into two phases: the first from 110th Street to SR 40, and the second from SR 40 to near the county line. He stated that he did not see the second phase listed in the plan and assumed the segment from 110th to SR 40 represented the first phase, which was now marked as fully funded.

Ms. Gartner responded that the project Mr. Inskeep referenced was listed in Table 4-7 of the report. She clarified that the segment of US 41 from 110th Street to SR 40 was included and would be funded through the right-of-way phase.

Mr. Balmes explained that in the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the US 41 project was shown as fully funded in the fifth year of the TIP. He noted that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had recently released its tentative work program for fiscal years 2027 to 2031, and the TPO was still waiting to receive detailed information. FDOT is expected to present those details at the next month's meeting. At the time of the discussion, the TPO was relying on the committed list from the previous TIP cycle.

Ms. Gartner added that when state funding allocations change, the TPO updates the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) accordingly during regular board meetings.

Mr. Inskeep noted that when reviewing the tables later in the plan, the US 41 project appeared as only partially funded, despite also being listed in the fully funded table. He reiterated that he did not see the second phase of the project included. Additionally, he raised a concern about the intersection at State Road 40 and US 41, stating that the last update indicated the project would occur this year. However, the table now showed the project scheduled sometime between 2031 and 2050. He asked whether the intersection improvement was no longer planned for the current year.

Ms. Gartner responded that the intersection project at State Road 40 and US 41 likely aligned with the outer edge of the five-year plan, which corresponds to the year 2031.

Mr. McClain made a motion to approve the draft Navigating the Future 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Adoption Package. Ms. Dreyer seconded the motion, and it was approved, with Mr. Inskeep opposed.

Item 5. Public Comment

Mr. Ernie Carcas, a resident of 9726 SW 192 Court Road, voiced concern about the long-delayed widening of US 41 from Walmart to SR 40, which he referred to as "The Forgotten Project." He stated the project had been discussed in 2013–2014, with work expected to begin in 2018, but no progress had been made. He cited increased traffic, safety concerns, and impacts on nearby neighborhoods. Mr. Carcas asked why the project had stalled, who was responsible, and what the next steps and timeline would be.

Mr. RJ Smith, a resident of 19400 SW 77th Loop in Rainbow Springs, spoke about traffic and safety concerns near St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. He noted that the church serves 625 families and pays the Marion County Sheriff's Office \$1,500 per month for traffic control during services and events. The church also operates a food pantry serving 1,000 people monthly, making it a vital community hub. Mr. Smith emphasized the need for immediate traffic solutions not long-term plans specifically requesting a traffic signal between the state park, Grand Park North, and the church to improve safety for left-turning vehicles. He referenced frequent accidents in the area and urged action now, rather than waiting until 2050.

Mr. Hugh Lochrane, a 25-year resident of 9184 SW 193rd Circle Rainbow Springs, expressed frustration over the lack of progress on the US 41 widening project. He noted that while the road had been expanded through Dunnellon, it remained two lanes north to Williston, worsening traffic.

He recalled that the state had purchased land, relocated utilities, and held public meetings promising the project would be completed by 2025. With traffic now exceeding 24,000 vehicles daily and only six entrances/exits for Rainbow Springs, he emphasized the growing danger for residents, particularly seniors. Mr. Hugh urged immediate action, stating the project had already been partially completed and should not be delayed until 2030 or 2050.

Mr. Mike Archdeacon, a resident of 21645 SW 84th Loop the Woodlands section of Rainbow Springs, discussed projected traffic growth along US 41. He noted that current traffic volumes were around 24,000 vehicles per day and projected that, based on a 7% annual growth rate, traffic could exceed 31,000 vehicles per day by 2029. He attributed this growth to ongoing residential and business development, particularly from out-of-state migration. Mr. Archdeacon emphasized that delays in addressing the widening of US 41 would only increase project costs and worsen congestion and safety concerns.

Mr. Steve Beverly, a resident of 8217 SW 196 Court Road in Dunnellon, emphasized the traffic and safety concerns already raised by others. He noted that three active churches—and a potential fourth—along US 41 contribute to frequent congestion, especially during community events. He shared a personal experience where it took 11 minutes to travel 0.4 miles to a traffic light due to heavy traffic. Mr. Beverly also raised safety concerns about drivers misusing the right lane to make left turns, creating near-collision situations when residents attempt to turn into their subdivisions.

Ms. Charlotte Conklin, a resident of 19454 SW 79th Street in Grand Park North, shared her frustration with traffic congestion and safety issues in her neighborhood. Having lived there for only six months, she described waiting 15 minutes just to exit her community and experiencing a 20-minute delay traveling from downtown Dunnellon to her home. She emphasized that Grand Park North has only one way in and out and reported two fatalities at the intersection. Ms. Conklin expressed anger over the lack of progress and urged officials to take immediate action, stating that residents feel ignored and are not even included in the 2030–2050 planning timeline.

Ms. Bryant, the representative for the affected portion of the county, acknowledged the long history of the US 41 widening project and confirmed her awareness of the ongoing concerns. She stated that she had personally asked staff to follow up on the intersection at US 41 and SR 40, which she described as “atrocious.” She also requested a review of the intersection at High School Road and SR 40 for a potential traffic signal. Ms. Bryant recalled that the project had previously been moving forward, including right-of-way acquisition and the purchase of part of the Rainbow Springs Golf Course. She requested that the FDOT representative present at the meeting provide an update on the project’s status.

Mr. Inskeep stated that he did not see any construction timeline listed for US 41 itself in the plan tables. He noted that the only construction date shown was for the intersection at US 41 and SR 40, which was projected as far out as 2050.

Mr. Mike McCammon with FDOT clarified that he was not responsible for funding decisions but focused on maintaining and constructing roads once funding was secured. He noted that a right-turn lane at US 41 onto SR 40 was currently under construction through FDOT’s push-button program, which may help alleviate some congestion at the intersection.

Mr. McCammon explained that funding decisions are influenced by several factors, including the TPO's priority list, though he was unsure of this project's current ranking. He emphasized that FDOT aims to balance funding priorities and considers community input in its planning.

Ms. Bryant stated that she had asked staff months ago to look into safety concerns at the intersection of US 41 and SR 40 due to multiple accidents. She noted that the addition of a new gas station had worsened traffic conditions at the intersection. She expressed appreciation for the right-turn lane currently under construction and asked FDOT for clarification on the project listed for 2041–2050 at that intersection.

Mr. McCammon clarified that he was not involved in long-term planning at FDOT. However, he explained that historically there had been a project planned to realign a portion of SR 40 north of its current intersection with US 41, near the railroad tracks. Additionally, there had been planning-level discussions to widen US 41 northward toward the four-lane section at CR 328, though that project was never included in the official work program.

Ms. Bryant acknowledged that shifting priorities and population changes over the years had affected the status of the US 41 project. She noted that while other projects took precedence in the past, the population boom since 2020 had significantly increased traffic in the area. She stated that the project had been discussed repeatedly during long-range transportation planning sessions and urged FDOT to re-evaluate its priority. She requested that this message be communicated up the chain within the department.

Chairman Zalak acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed that the board could revisit the discussion during the upcoming TIP prioritization process. He noted that while Ms. Bryant was correct in highlighting the need, the board faces similar challenges in other areas, such as CR 484 and Maricamp Road. He emphasized that there are limits to how many priorities can be addressed at once due to funding constraints. He added that while the broader discussion is focused on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan, the US 41 project should already be in progress. He suggested that FDOT consider short-term improvements—such as adding turn lanes, traffic signals, or other measures—to address immediate safety and congestion issues.

Mr. McCammon noted that a resident had raised similar concerns at the previous month's meeting and mentioned that Mike Sanders, a leader in FDOT's traffic operations group, had been involved. He explained that Mr. Sanders would be a key contact for addressing short-term improvements, as he has access to funding through programs like the push-button initiative. This program is designed to implement traffic signals and turn lanes more quickly than standard project timelines.

Chairman Zalak agreed with Mr. McCammon's remarks and noted that Mike Sanders had been identified at the previous meeting as the appropriate FDOT contact for addressing short-term improvements. He emphasized that many of the issues raised by residents—such as congestion and safety—stemmed not only from the two-lane configuration of US 41 but also from the lack of turn lanes in key areas. He expressed hope that some of these short-term fixes, like turn lanes and crossings, could be implemented more quickly and thanked Mr. McCammon for his input.

Item 6. Close of Public Hearing

Chairman Zalak closed the public hearing at 3:41pm.

TPO Public Hearing Minutes – October 28, 2025
Approved – November 13, 2025

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant