



TPO Board Meeting

Southeastern Livestock Pavilion Auditorium
2232 NE Jacksonville Road, Ocala, FL 34470

October 24, 2023

4:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Councilman Ire Bethea
Commissioner Kathy Bryant
Commissioner Craig Curry
Councilmember Kristen Dreyer
Commissioner Ray Dwyer
Councilmember James Hilty
Councilman Tim Inskeep
Councilmember Barry Mansfield
Mayor Kent Guinn
Commissioner Matt McClain
Commissioner Michelle Stone
Commissioner Carl Zalak

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Shakayla Irby, TPO
Liz Mitchell, TPO
Sara Brown, TPO
Kia Powell, FDOT
Jonathan Scarfe, FDOT
Mike McCammon, FDOT
Oscar Tovar, City of Ocala
Chris Ziegler, Marion County
Noel Cooper, City of Ocala
Darren Park, City of Ocala
Steven Neal, City of Ocala
Ji Li, City of Ocala
Tracey Straub, Marion County
Addie Javed, Marion County
Sara Shepherd
Valerie Hanchar

Item 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Craig Curry called the meeting to order at 4:00pm 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 the meeting was published online at the TPO website and the City of Ocala, Belleview, Dunnellon, and Marion County meeting calendars on October 17, 2023. The meeting was also published to the TPO's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Item 4. Presentation of Awards

A. Mayor Kent Guinn

Chairman Curry presented Mayor Kent Guinn with a Leadership Service Award Plaque. Mayor Kent Guinn had been a great leader of the TPO, serving on the TPO board for 24 years -- as Mayor for 12 years and as a City Council Member for 12 years. Including serving as Chairman of the TPO twice -- first as a City Councilman in 1999 and then as Mayor in 2011.

Mayor Guinn had provided great leadership and support to TPO staff, and had been highly accessible, offering insights and guidance. He had always been a strong voice and leader for public safety.

B. SunTran

Mr. Steven Neal of SunTran shared with the Board two recent transit awards received from the Florida Public Transportation Association in Orlando earlier in the month.

One award was for Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement and the other award was for Bus Safety and Security Excellence.

Item 5. Consent Agenda

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

Item 6a. 2023 TPO Apportionment Plan

Mr. Balmes presented the 2023 Apportionment Plan for the Ocala/Marion County TPO.

The Plan was reviewed by the TPO Board at the September 26 meeting, and by the Citizens Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee on September 12 and October 10.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) approved/endorsed the adoption of the 2023 Apportionment Plan on October 10, 2023.

- TPO Board Membership remaining at 12 Voting, 1 Non-Voting. 13 members.
- City of Ocala (5); Marion County (5), City of Belleview (1); City of Dunnellon (1) – Voting
- FDOT Secretary (1) – Non-Voting

Submission of an Apportionment Plan, with a resolution of support by the Board Chair, must be transmitted to the Florida Department of Transportation by November 14, 2023.

TPO staff was seeking board approval for the Apportionment Plan. Next steps would include submission to FDOT by November 14 for Governor approval.

Chairman Curry mentioned that at the September 26 board meeting the Apportionment Plan was discussed and although no action was taken at that time, there was consensus with the board for the plan to remain as it was presented.

Mr. Hilty made a motion to approve the 2023 Apportionment Plan.

Mr. Bethea seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 6b. 2023 List of Priority Projects (LOPP) Amendment

Mr. Balmes presented and said that staff was proposing to update the 2023 List of Priority Projects (LOPP) Trail Priorities list to include two additional projects. Based on the recent enactment of Senate Bill 106, which revitalized and increased funding for the SUN Trail network, the TPO with state and local partners, are identifying future project opportunities in Marion County.

Cross Florida Greenway-Pruitt Gap connection, across State Road (SR) 200.

A connection across SR 200 would provide a vital link to the Cross Florida Greenway and Heart of Florida Loop, while ensuring safety for all users, especially as the Pruitt Trail project (5.5 miles) is funded for construction in fiscal year 2026.

Cross Florida Greenway Land Bridge Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.

A PD&E Study for the future expansion of the Land Bridge would be a complimentary component to FDOT's ongoing master planning of I-75 improvements in Marion County, beyond the current Moving Florida Forward initiative. Upon approval, the amended Trail Priorities List of the 2023 LOPP will support SUN Trail applications for both facilities. The projects would be administered by the Florida Department of Transportation and maintained by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Florida State Park Service.

Commissioner Zalak inquired about the inclusion of the Santos to Baseline Trail and Downtown to Silver Springs Trail in the five-year plan.

Mr. Balmes responded, confirming that funding had been awarded for the Santos to Baseline Trail—\$1 million for design and \$5.6 million for construction.

Mr. Zalak made a motion to approve the 2023 LOPP Amendment. Mr. Mansfield seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7. Comments by FDOT

Mr. Johnathan Scarfe introduced new Liaison, Kia Powell.

Mr. Scarfe informed the board that FDOT was ready to receive the Apportionment Plan upon approval and would coordinate with the Central Office. The TPO was well ahead of the Apportionment deadlines.

The construction report was provided with the following highlights that began October 2023:
S.R. 326 Resurfacing from Northwest 12th Avenue to S.R. 40 – estimated completion Fall 2024
S.R. 492 Bridge Improvements Over the C.S.X. Railroad – estimated completion early 2024
Silver Springs State Park Pedestrian Bridge – estimated completion Summer 2024

Mr. Scarfe responded to a question from the prior board meeting regarding S.R. 464, stating that current plans involve the contractor finishing the sidewalk and commencing paving in February. FDOT will continue to monitor the asphalt and address any potholes until the road is repaved. The project was initially scheduled to be completed by 2024.

Mr. Curry inquired about the specific section of the road where the project would commence.

Mr. McCammon addressed the board and mentioned that the contractor had not yet provided the schedule. FDOT has encouraged them to prioritize the section from 25th, where the pavement is worse. However, it was emphasized that FDOT does not have full control over their schedule.

Mr. Curry inquired whether it would be beneficial for the TPO to send a letter.

Mr. McCammon mentioned that the TPO board could encourage them through whatever process they chose, but it was noted that the contractor also has contracts with tighter deadlines.

Mr. Scarfe continued his comments, noting that the Tentative Five-Year Work Program, spanning from Fiscal Year 2024/25 to Fiscal Year 2028/29, had been included in the agenda packet for the board's review. A virtual public hearing was conducted from October 16 to October 20, accompanied by an open house on October 17 from 3 pm to 5:30 pm at the FDOT District 5 Office in Deland, FL. All public comments were required to be submitted by November 3, 2023. The FDOT Work Program group was scheduled to present to the committees on November 14, followed by a presentation to the governing board on November 28.

The "Moving Florida Forward" project, centered on Interstate 75 (I-75) from State Road (S.R.) 44 to S.R. 326, had been budgeted at \$479 million, with construction set to commence in 2025. Within the MPO liaison units, ongoing efforts have been directed towards drafting letters for the Long-Range Transportation Planning Amendment required for the project.

Ms. Stone examined a photo in the meeting packet, specifically addressing the upcoming auxiliary lanes, and asked about the purpose of the smaller dotted lines in the fourth lane.

Mr. Scarfe mentioned that there was nothing specific regarding the lines.

Ms. Stone inquired whether the shoulders would still be able to accommodate cars on both sides for those needing to pull over.

Mr. Scarfe mentioned they were likely designed to do so.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff

Mobility Week 2023

Ms. Irby shared with the board that Mobility Week was approaching October 27 to November 4 and shared the following local events with the committee:

- November 1 from 4:30pm to 6:00pm – Helmet Giveaway at the Mary Sue Rich at Reed Place Community Center
- November 2 – Try Transit Thursday, offering fare-free rides for the day, and take a look at the new electric cutaway vehicle
- November 3 from 9:00am to 10:30am – Walk and Talk Tour beginning at the Downtown Ocala Gazebo

Mr. Neal also shared that the SunTran would have an electric Microtransit vehicle at the Downtown Transfer Station for Try Transit Thursday.

Mr. Zalak asked if the buses were automated.

Mr. Neal stated that the buses would be all-electric with wheelchair capability, and they would have human drivers. He explained that the technology for fully autonomous SunTran vehicles wasn't currently available, and automated vehicles were considerably slower. While autonomous vehicles might be incorporated in the future, it was not the optimal choice for SunTran at the moment.

Congestion Management Online Resources

Ms. Brown presented and said that at the August 22 TPO board meeting, Kimley-Horn presented the Congestion Management Plan (CMP), 2023 State of the System Update. The presentation included the most recent information on congested roadways.

As a result, the TPO updated the Congestion Management Plan interactive map on the Congested Roadway Locations in Marion County.

From the TPO website, www.ocalamariontpo.org, Ms. Brown provided the board with a walkthrough on how to view and operate the story map. She also gave a brief introduction to the Congestion Management Plan and discussed the CMP network, Level of Service, and the interactive map on the Congested Roadway Locations.

CTST/TPO Safety Summit

Mr. Balmes announced a 2023 Transportation Safety Summit in collaboration with the Marion County Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST). The Summit, scheduled for November 9, 2023, from 9:00 am to 10:30 am at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center, aims to promote transportation safety within Marion County as part of our Commitment to Zero vision. It will include speakers and opportunities for public input.

Mr. Balmes also expressed gratitude, taking a moment to thank Councilmember Ire Bethea for his willingness to be one of the speakers at the Summit. He extended an invitation to all board members, noting that the meeting would be sunshine noticed.

There would be more details to come as the agenda was finalized.

Central Florida MPO Alliance Update

Mr. Balmes shared that at the October 13, 2023 meeting of the Central Florida MPO Alliance, the 2023 Central Florida Regional Priority Projects lists were adopted.

The lists include Transportation Regional Incentive (TRIP), Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), Regional Trails and Regional Transportation System Management and Operations (TSM&O) projects. The meeting agenda packet included the adopted lists with Ocala/Marion County projects highlighted in yellow. The specific projects and lists were approved by the TPO Board in May.

Based on the announcement by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 5 Secretary Tyler at the TPO Board meeting on September 26, 2023, regarding the current funding shortfall for the I-75 at NW49th Street interchange, the project was requested to be moved from the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Highway Projects Fully Funded List to the SIS Highway Projects Needs List. A footnote was also requested to be added to reference the project is being tied to the Moving Florida Forward I-75 Auxiliary Lanes project. These changes were being made prior to submission of the lists to the FDOT District 5.

Chairman Curry inquired about a good estimate for the shortage at the I-75 and NW 49th Street interchange.

Mr. Scarfe stated that he didn't have the information on hand and would provide the board with an answer later.

Chairman Curry sought clarification on the S.R. 44 to S.R. 326 project.

Mr. Balmes explained that the operational improvements for the S.R. 326 interchange were part of the Moving Florida Forward initiative and would also be included in the Long-Range Transportation Planning (LRTP) amendment. The public announcement for this would be made on October 30th, ensuring the required 30-day notice period.

Adjusted Urban Area Process

Mr. Balmes mentioned that every 10 years following the Census, the MPO/TPO's work with state and local government partners to review the urban area boundaries within each respective planning area. The process commenced earlier this year in August, as facilitated by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), with a timeframe for completion this calendar year.

A proposed Adjusted Urban Boundary map for the TPO Planning Area (Marion County) will be circulated for approval through the TPO's Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and TPO Board at the November meetings.

The adjustment of urban area boundaries would be completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), through a state and local authorized process, to ensure a more comprehensive depiction of urban vs. rural areas is reflected for each MPO/TPO planning area [23 U.S.C. 101(a)(35)]. The "adjusted urban area boundary" process includes important considerations beyond the Census, such as the incorporation of local knowledge, roadway functional classifications, major activity centers, jurisdictional boundaries and irregularities in boundary shapes. Any roadway located within or on an adjusted urban area boundary is considered urban. Final approval of all adjusted urban area boundaries is made by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The TPO would be coordinating with FDOT and local governments to ensure the completion of the proposed 2023 Adjusted Urban Boundary map for the TPO Planning Area is presented to the Board for approval at the November 28, 2023 meeting.

SUN Trail Grant Award

Mr. Balmes mentioned that the enactment of Senate Bill 106 revitalized and increased funding for the SUN Trail network. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is administering the SUN Trail program, including the coordination and project grant awards process.

Mickey Thomason, Park Manager of the Cross Florida Greenway of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), in coordination with the Marion County Office of the County Engineer, submitted an application for the initial round of the program. The application was for the critical gap of the Cross Florida Greenway from the Santos Trailhead to the Baseline Trailhead. This trail gap has been a long-term identified need dating back to the TPO's 2035 Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, and more recently in the Regional Trails Facilities Plan and current List of Priority Projects (Trails List).

On October 9, 2023, FDOT notified Mr. Thomason the project was awarded \$1,000,000 in Design funding in fiscal year 2024, and \$5,600,000 for Construction in fiscal year 2026. This funding award reflected hard work and dedication of current and past staff and partners in Marion County and at FDOT District 5.

2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment

Mr. Balmes said based on the public announcement by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the Moving Florida Forward I-75 Auxiliary Lanes project, the TPO will conduct a 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Amendment public hearing on

November 28, 2023. The public hearing will be prior to the regularly scheduled TPO Board meeting.

On October 16, the TPO sent a call for amendments to the four local government partners regarding the addition of new projects to the 2045 LRTP Needs Element. Due to the time constraints, local partners were provided a notice to submit any new projects to the TPO by October 20.

Per the Public Participation Plan (PPP), the TPO must provide a 30-day public notice for any amendment to the LRTP. The public notice is scheduled to be posted to the community no later than October 30, 2023.

The current summary document for the 2045 LRTP Cost Feasible and Unfunded project lists could be found on the TPO website www.ocalamariontpo.org.

Item 9. Comments by TPO Members

Mr. Zalak expressed his enthusiasm for the trail, emphasizing the significance of connecting Downtown to Silver Springs. He highlighted the ongoing efforts to improve pedestrian access in Silver Springs, extending the initiative all the way up to Hawthorne.

Ms. Stone extended a warm welcome to the new Transportation Planner, Sara Brown, expressing her delight in having her as part of the TPO. Additionally, she requested the inclusion of page numbers on the meeting agenda packet, as she found that detail to be helpful.

Mr. McClain expressed his happiness at being on the TPO board. It was his first meeting, and he conveyed his excitement about working with everyone.

Mayor Guinn made a comment about the upcoming project on S.R. 200 to add medians. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that businesses could still access and operate effectively during the project, preventing any need for them to shut down.

Item 10. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 11. Adjournment

Chairman Craig Curry adjourned the meeting at 4:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, Administrative Assistant