



Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
Marion County – Growth Services Training Room
2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
1:00 PM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Jim Belonger
Richard McGinley
Nick Mora
Steve Rudnianyn

Members Not Present:

Matt Fabian
Travis Magamoll
Suzanne Mangram
Michelle Shearer

Others Present:

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

Item 1. Call to Order

Chairman Steve Rudnianyn called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Item 2. Roll Call

Administrative Assistant Shakayla Irby called the roll, and a quorum was not present.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Administrative Assistant 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 September 2, 2025. The meeting had also been published to the TPO's Facebook and X pages.

Item 4. Consent Agenda

No action was taken because a quorum was not present.

Item 5a. Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1 with Roll Forward

Mr. Balmes reported that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had requested that two projects be amended into the Fiscal Years (FY) 2026–2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, the annual Roll Forward TIP report was also part of the amendment request. He explained that the details of the proposed changes were included in the memo attachments provided to the members.

The first project, **FM# 435209-1: I-75 at NW 49th Street**, extended from the end of NW 49th Street to the end of NW 35th Street. This project involved the development of a new interchange. The amendment included the Right-of-Way (ROW) phase, with funding allocated across FY 2026, FY 2027, and FY 2028. Mr. Balmes noted that the amendment reflected revised project funding for the ROW phase. The total project funding was \$49,739,654, which represented an increase of \$28,421,444.

The second project, **FM# 457015-1: Marion Oaks Manor Extension and Widening**, covered the area from SW 47th Avenue Road to CR 475. This project included a roadway extension and widening component. The amendment introduced the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase with funding programmed in FY 2026. Mr. Balmes stated that this was a new project in the TIP with a total funding amount of \$5,000.

In addition to the two projects, Mr. Balmes presented the Roll Forward TIP Report, which identified 43 projects that had been rolled forward into the FY 2026–2030 TIP. The total roll forward funding amounted to \$123,198,667 in FY 2026.

The CAC supported the FY 2026–2030 TIP Amendment #1 with Roll Forward by consensus; however, no action was taken due to the lack of a quorum.

Item 6a. 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Cost Feasible Element

Mr. William Roll with Kimley-Horn and Associates provided an update on the Long Range Transportation Plan, focusing on the final major component, the cost-feasible plan. He emphasized that inclusion in the cost-feasible plan is critical, as it allows projects to move forward, from planning through construction, and ensures eligibility for state and federal funding by establishing planning consistency. He noted that while funding is constrained, projects shown in the plan for later years, such as 2041–2050, could still be implemented sooner if necessary, potentially requiring plan modifications or amendments.

Mr. Roll explained that the plan accounts for projected federal and state revenues, totaling approximately \$616.5 million, and local revenues, including sales tax, impact fees, and fuel taxes, amounting to about \$2.4 billion. However, after adjusting for purchasing power in today's dollars, the effective funding for projects is closer to \$390 million. He stressed the importance of documenting both existing and committed projects as a foundation for identifying cost-feasible projects beyond 2030.

A map presented illustrated the scope of existing and planned projects, with state highway projects highlighted. Mr. Roll described ongoing collaboration with county and municipal staff through steering committee meetings to align local funding decisions with the long-range plan. He highlighted studies for potential new connections, including completing the SR 326 Beltway and evaluating a contiguous East-West connector from US 441 to I-75, emphasizing the need for a detailed alignment study rather than predefining corridors.

On the west side of the county, Mr. Roll noted increasing regional traffic into Ocala along US 41 and SR 200, as well as constraints on SR 40 and SR 200, pointing out that limited funding prevents full construction of all corridors. He described bottlenecks along US 41 at the river and capacity challenges on SR 200, suggesting three options for addressing transportation needs: an East-West connector on the south side through Marion Oaks, a western beltway connector, or more substantial improvements to SR 200 extending toward I-75. He framed these as initial considerations for further study to determine the most effective solutions for traffic flow and long-term regional planning.

Mr. Roll continued his presentation, emphasizing that some potential improvements, including options within medians or other unconventional locations, remain conceptual and have not been widely studied for this area of the county. He noted that delaying the identification of appropriate facilities or improvements could make implementation more difficult and costly. He addressed concerns about regional traffic, highlighting that high volumes from southwestern areas feed onto constrained four-lane corridors such as SR 40 and US 41, with low-speed local streets and traffic signals creating additional congestion.

He explained that while options such as elevating parts of SR 200 in the median have been discussed, these remain conceptual and financially challenging, potentially requiring tolling to support construction costs. Mr. Roll pointed out that existing right-of-way and prior plans, including connections through 80th Avenue to CR 484, provide opportunities to improve traffic flow locally but would not fully resolve the magnitude of long-term regional needs along SR 200. He emphasized that these studies are intended to position the plan to move forward strategically.

Mr. Roll then discussed the documentation of transportation needs within the plan, including identifying unfunded segments, multimodal elements, public transportation services, bicycle infrastructure, and sidewalks. He clarified that prioritization and funding decisions are informed by annual lists of projects but acknowledged the difficulty in projecting precise implementation timing for specific elements, noting that some needs may not be constructed for decades.

He described updates to the plan, including the integration of the cost-feasible plan, goals, objectives, performance targets, planning assumptions, demographic forecasts, scenario planning, and revenue forecasts. Mr. Roll outlined the upcoming adoption schedule, noting that the draft plan would be released to the public on September 29th, followed by a public open house on September 30th at the Mary Sue Rich Center. The adoption package would be presented at the board meeting on October 28th, concluding a 30-day public comment period. He emphasized that the board's action at the adoption meeting is critical for finalizing the cost-feasible plan and guiding any potential adjustments before implementation.

Mr. Roll clarified that following the board meeting on September 23rd, there would be a short window of a few days before the public release of the plan to make any necessary adjustments. He stressed that the board's adoption on October 28th is mandatory and cannot be delayed, and that only minor, non-substantive changes could be made at that stage. Major modifications would not be allowed unless prompted by significant public input. Mr. Roll emphasized the importance of preserving the public's opportunity to comment before final adoption.

Mr. Roll addressed questions from Chairman Rudnianyn about specific locations and infrastructure needs, highlighting access requirements for a future fire station on West 63rd Street and potential corridor connections, including a discussion of interchanges on CR 42 and SR 44 to accommodate industrial traffic. Mr. Roll noted the long timelines and financial challenges associated with major infrastructure projects, including reliance on local sales tax and gas tax revenues, and highlighted the effects of construction cost escalations, noting, for example, a 55% increase in resurfacing costs over two years and a 40% increase in steel costs in the past year.

Mr. Roll explained that the cost-feasible plan reflects current project revenue and cost estimates and identifies projects anticipated to be constructed by 2050, focusing primarily on projects already committed or under construction. He noted that local revenues may allow acceleration of some projects within a seven-year timeframe and emphasized that constructing projects sooner is generally more cost-effective than delaying due to inflation in labor and materials costs. He concluded by acknowledging the complexity of multibillion-dollar transportation projects and expressed appreciation for the feedback provided, affirming that the plan will incorporate relevant considerations and local input as it moves toward adoption.

Mr. McGinley inquired about alternative corridors. Mr. Roll noted CR 42, CR 484, and 95th Street/80th Avenue could serve as connections but faced right-of-way, funding, and public acceptance challenges.

Mr. Roll explained that transit projects would follow the Transit Development Plan, and bicycle/pedestrian projects would continue to be prioritized annually through the List of Priority Projects.

Mr. McGinley noted that a planned bypass along 80th Avenue, which had stopped at 95th Street, still had the right-of-way to connect to 484. Mr. Roll stated that while this connection would have helped manage local traffic and alleviated some congestion on 200, it likely would not have fully addressed the overall traffic demand.

Chairman Rudnianyn commented that directing industrial truck traffic to the industrial park on CR 42, where an overpass exists, would be more effective than routing it to 44. He acknowledged the higher cost of an interchange at CR 42 but emphasized the long-term traffic benefits.

Adoption Schedule

- Draft LRTP release: **September 29, 2025**
- Public Open House: **September 30, 2025** (Mary Sue Rich Community Center)
- Public comment period closes: **October 28, 2025**
- TPO Board adoption: **November 13, 2025**

Item 6b. 2025 Commitment to Zero Safety Report

TPO Director Rob Balmes provided a comprehensive overview of the annual Safety Report, which has been prepared by staff over the past three years as part of the Commitment to Zero action plan adopted in 2022. The report presents data from the past five years on fatal and serious injury crashes to help officials and the public understand trends and identify priority areas for safety improvements. This year, a new highlights section was added, showcasing notable safety initiatives and community engagement efforts. Mr. Balmes explained that these highlights were developed in collaboration with local staff, FDOT, first responders, and other partners to illustrate practical safety activities over the past year. Among the programs featured were the Safety Matters series, the bike lane design contest for elementary schools coordinated with FDOT, Stop on Red, the Community Traffic Safety Team, and Target Zero initiatives, including efforts along SR 200 and projects within the City of Ocala.

Mr. Balmes also noted infrastructure projects, including paved shoulders on CR 475, a recently kicked-off local road safety plan in Ocala, Belleview to Greenway connection providing a safe connection to the new sidewalk shared-use path along US 441 to the Santos Trailhead, and the City of Dunnellon improvements to the Rainbow River Bridge and shared-use path connection on the south side to Blue Run Park. Law enforcement efforts were highlighted as well, including the STEER enforcement campaign led by the Marion County Sheriff's office and Ocala Police Department, emphasizing the role of leadership from the Mayor and Chief Balken in supporting community safety. The report emphasized crash trends, noting that while serious injuries spiked in 2022, the past two years have shown a decline. The High Injury Network was highlighted as a key focus area, with nearly 30% of fatal and serious injury crashes occurring within this network. Intersection-related crashes were identified as another significant contributor, comprising 36% of serious injury crashes. Run-off-the-road incidents were noted as a leading cause of fatal and serious crashes, reinforcing the importance of ongoing shoulder and infrastructure improvements.

Mr. McGinley inquired about electric bicycles, and whether they are considered motorized, the applicable speed limits, and whether a DUI impacts their use.

Mr. Roll explained that under state law, electric bicycles exceeding 28 mph are not classified as electric bikes and may be subject to registration and enforcement in some jurisdictions, though local regulations vary.

Mr. Mora inquired about efforts to promote a culture of safety within the community.

Mr. Balmes noted that FDOT has resources on traffic safety culture, and Loreen Bobo with the FDOT Safety Office would be attending the October meeting to present on Target Zero initiatives and discuss community safety programs in more detail.

Mr. Balmes concluded emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration between transportation staff, law enforcement, local governments, and the community to reduce fatalities and serious injuries and to maintain a focus on vulnerable users, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Item 7. Comments by FDOT

Ms. Kia Powell introduced Matthew Richardson, Deputy Communications Administrator, as a new team member attending meetings to support communications and share information with the group. She provided an update on recent events, noting that in August, community meetings were held where residents met with construction teams and contractors to ask questions about specific projects, including the US 41 resurfacing project in Dunnellon. Ms. Powell reported a good turnout and indicated that future community events would be announced as projects progress.

She highlighted upcoming events, including Rail Safety Week from September 15–19, emphasizing the “See Tracks? Think Train!” safety campaign to raise awareness of railroad safety. She also noted that Loreen Bobo from the FDOT Safety Office will provide a presentation at the October meeting focused on zero-injury goals and current safety initiatives.

Regarding the Work Program, she explained that online hearings are scheduled from October 20–24, with an in-person hearing on October 21 at the district office in Deland from 3–5 PM, followed by the Work Program presentation at the November meeting.

Mr. Mora inquired about how the meeting with the Mayor and FDOT went regarding SR 200.

Ms. Powell responded that the meeting went well. She explained that coordination with the Mayor’s office is ongoing to move the plan forward, and that FDOT and operations staff are continuing to work together to implement changes.

Item 8. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes noted that the Active Transportation Plan will be made available for public review on September 22nd, beginning a 30-day comment period. He explained that the plan would be highlighted at a public open house on September 30th, which would also feature the Long Range Transportation Plan, allowing the public to provide input on both initiatives. He encouraged anyone interested in submitting comments to do so and mentioned that the consulting team would present the full plan for review and discussion at the October meeting.

The open house would run from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. in an open-house style format at the Mary Sue Rich Center.

Item 9. Comments by CAC Members

Chairman Rudnianyn asked if the staff was aware of the city's plans for the southeast area near the shores.

Mr. Balmes clarified that city staff asked the TPO to include the area in the Active Transportation Plan as a potential Tier 2 or Tier 3 future rail trail. He emphasized that the rail line was still active, and the inclusion in the plan was conceptual for the future.

Mr. McGinley asked about the status of the rail line extension.

Chairman Rudnianyn noted that the rail would extend to the pipe plant using the existing tracks.

Mr. McGinley noted that with trains running frequently heavy traffic during morning hours, could intersect with rush-hour traffic.

Mr. McGinley noted that frequent train operations could intersect with rush-hour traffic, contributing to heavy congestion in the morning.

Item 10. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 11. Adjournment

Chairman Rudnianyn adjourned the meeting at 2:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant