

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was held at 10:00 AM on Friday, June 2, 2023, conducted and hosted in County Administration Building "B", Room B1-501, 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

Note: Audio and video recordings of the meeting can be found at
https://indianriver.gov/services/metropolitan_planning_organization/meeting.php

TAC Members in Attendance:

Chairman, Jason Jeffries, City of Vero Beach
Vice Chairman, Rich Szpyrka, IRC Public Works
Andy Sobczak, IRC Interim Director of Community Development
Ruth Bommarito, IRC Budget Department (alternate)
Erik Ferguson, IRC Traffic Engineering
Mark Mathes, City of Fellsmere
Sgt. Doug MacKenzie, IRC Sheriff's Office (alternate)
Matthew Mitts, City of Vero Beach
Jennifer Idlette, IRC School Board
Deputy Mark Shaw, Indian River Shores (alternate)
Chris Stephenson, Senior Resource Association (alternate)
Lisa Frazier, City of Sebastian Engineering
Karen Miller, City of Sebastian Engineering
Brandon Dambeck, City of Vero Beach Airport

TAC Members Absent:

Jeff Sabo, City of Sebastian Airport
Cherry Stowe, Town of Orchid

Staff in Attendance:

Brian Freeman, MPO Staff Director
Jim Mann, MPO Senior Planner
Mark Vietze, MPO GIS Planner
Patti Johnson, MPO Staff Assistant III & Recording Secretary
Kirstin Leiendecker, IRC Public Works

Others Absent:

Maria Jaimes, FDOT (non-voting advisor) (excused)

Others in Attendance:

Senior Resource Association (SRA): Joe Storey
FDOT: James Brown & Tony Norat

CUTR: Jonathan Roberson

Call to Order

Chairman Jason Jeffries called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. It was noted that an in-person quorum was present.

Election of Vice Chairman.

Action Required

Mr. Freeman stated with the retirement of Mr. Phil Matson it is necessary to elect a new Vice Chairman.

ON MOTION by Ms. Bommarito, SECONDED by Mr. Stephenson, the members voted (14-0) to elect Rich Szpyrka as Vice Chairman for the Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee for the remainder of 2023.

Approval of Minutes of the March 31, 2023 Meeting.

Action Required

Chairman Jeffries asked if there were any additions or corrections to the TAC Meeting minutes of March 31, 2023.

ON MOTION by Vice Chairman Szpyrka and SECONDED by Ms. Bommarito, the members voted (14-0) to approve the March 31, 2023 Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee meeting minutes, as presented.

Consideration of FY 2023/24 - 2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Action Required

Mr. Freeman opened this item stating that the two most important functions MPO's are required to perform include the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), (which must be updated every five years), and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Jim Mann conducted this presentation A copy of this presentation is on file in the MPO office.

Mr. Mann explained the steps involved in this process and highlighted the various categories. This year's funding is the second highest in the MPO's history. Mr. Freeman added that some of this funding is covered under the SIS (Strategic Intermodal System).

Chair Jeffries opened the floor for any questions or comments.

Mr. Mathes had a question regarding the Rail Trail funding. Mr. Freeman stated this has been discussed with FDOT and once the TIP is approved, an amendment will be done to correct this.

Mr. Mitts had three questions/comments, the first one regarding page A-19, Capital Improvements, there are projected revenues for the next five fiscal years out, but there shows a drop in revenue for FY 25/26. Ms. Bommarito explained the budgeting process involved in this area, basically stating the gas tax revenues are decreasing.

Secondly, with Brightline wrapping up their project, the City of Vero is going to move forward with requesting a quiet zone. After speaking with FRA and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, the City would ideally like to see, at a regional scale, if there is interest in a quiet zone that it comes from the largest group possible, (Vero, Sebastian, and the County), if possible. If this is something the MPO could help with it would be greatly appreciated. Vice Chair Szpyrka replied from a County standpoint, the MPO would be the place to start, but it would take direction from the MPO Board. This process can take up to six months. Ms. Miller commented she has heard from other sources this process could take up to a year.

Third, the City of Vero Beach proposed a resolution for an at-grade intersection for Aviation Blvd and US 1. With that being said, the City of Vero would like to have the last line on page 13 stricken in the comment section for US 1 and Aviation Blvd. intersection improvements. Chair Jeffries acknowledged that the Council does not support the overpass, and is concerned that we aren't caught up on what the at-grade impacts will be to one of the property owners. The City held a public meeting with the property owners and it's clear they are all opposed to the overpass. City Council is opposed to the overpass and would prefer, if an overpass is to be considered that you follow the recommendations of the 1999 report do a new one. Mr. Freeman commented that particular sentence is more for the public, to explain what the project includes. Chair Jeffries stated they wanted the language removed. Mr. Freeman stated he wouldn't recommend removing it completely, because they are looking at the feasibility of an overpass. It could be reworded to say "at-grade and grade separated alternatives are being evaluated".

Mr. Mitts would like to offer a motion to strike the last line of the comment section on Page 13 for the US 1 and Aviation Blvd. intersection improvements.

Ms. Frazier stated she would like to discuss. Ms. Frazier does agree with Mr. Freeman and she understands where the City stands. It is just a consideration and if we modify it to say the overpass, because of the at-grade, that kind of additional thing, I don't think it hurts and at least it you have even more standing when they do the PD&E and they show the possible impacts and their opportunities for some type of modifications, as needed. It might give you more standing if the PD&E comes back and showing how egregious in comparison it is to at-grade.

Mr. Freeman commented Page A-12 is the project page and the wording there could replace the wording on Page 13, to have consistency. Chairman Jeffries stated

they would prefer to have similar language; any alternatives need to be considered. Mr. Mathes stated the language is not needed, you're taking it out but, in my mind, it doesn't tell FDOT they can't investigate it. Why is that in there and not the other alternatives? Mr. Freeman stated the wording would be changed.

Chair Jeffries asked if there were any other questions or comments regarding this item. There were none, so the motion passed with the following amendment:

ON MOTION by Mr. Mitts and SECONDED by Mr. Mathes the members voted (14-0) that the language in the comment section on Page 13 to be consistent with the project description sheet on Page A-12 stating: "A feasibility study of multiple alternatives for the intersection" replace FEC railroad overpass, in the FY 2023/24 - 2026/27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), subject to this amendment.

Mr. Mathes had a quick question, it may not be appropriate to discuss until the next item, but I would like to follow up on your position to have the MPO do a new study. Do we need to have a conversation on whether to have the MPO do a new/update to the overpass study? This was done in the 1990's, and we need to go ahead; do we need to have a conversation going forward and see if the MPO wants to recommend FDOT proceed with a new overpass study. Chair Jeffries stated he thought that has been the suggestion, we have talked about it before. I don't know if we've taken an official position from this body to either stick to that study; Vero Beach's position is either you stick to that survey or have a new one made. Chair Jeffries remarked, I believe if we look back at that 1999 study there were two locations proposed, one was at CR 510, I think they are planning on going forward with that. Mr. Freeman stated that any project FDOT does along the railroad corridor they are going to look at "at-grade" and "grade separated" options, especially when there's a road widening. FEC wants FDOT to negotiate over how many lanes of the road crossing are at grade, FDOT will consider whether or not it makes more sense to go over the railroad instead of being "at-grade". Mr. Freeman continued, saying an overpass is one of the considerations for the CR 510 project, but I don't think it's from the 1999 study.

Mr. Mathes stated we could do individual PD&E studies for each one or we could take a global approach, whichever makes the most sense.

Mr. Freeman commented that in reviewing the MPO minutes from the meeting in 1999 there wasn't much support shown from the Board. They voted 7-2 to acknowledge they received the study, but did not take any further action. Chair Jeffries asked if those minutes could be sent out to the Board and Mr. Freeman replied yes.

Mr. Mathes asked what would be the right steps to take and when would that right step need to be taken if this body wanted to recommend FDOT to do an update of that study. Mr. Freeman stated this is something the MPO has asked for information on and we are investigating other options. These options will be presented to the MPO Board at the June meeting. Some of the options include: doing this on a project to project basis, a

study like that could be included in the next UPWP, or because a lot of these roads are state roads, this could be entered into the Priority Project List and request FDOT to undertake that study.

Chair Jeffries is concerned this would not be brought to the TAC first for discussion before taking it to the MPO. Mr. Freeman remarked this is something the MPO Board asked us to present to them.

Vice Chair Szpyrka interjected, it was his understanding the MPO asked FDOT to bring back options as to which way to go. It would make sense once they decide on the way they want to go, it is brought back the TAC for our technical input. The TAC would look at it and adhere to what the MPO wants us to do and then it would go back to the MPO for final approval.

Ms. Frazier asked if it would be appropriate for the TAC, knowing the MPO has requested this report, to submit our concerns or thoughts about that old study being supportive of a new, overall study at this point. Vice Chair Szpyrka said if we are going to do that, I am not prepared to do that at this meeting, or open the discussion.

Mr. Mathes thinks it's a simple decision worth looking at either project by project planning priority or redo the study. Mr. Mathes further expounded he felt it was worthy of a motion from this body prior to that meeting; saying this is our stance.

Mr. Freeman commented there seems to be support towards updating the study, it appears we have a couple different options. Staff will do more investigation to see which is the best route to go forward either with the UPWP or the Priority Projects.

Mr. Freeman stated he would relay the consensus of the TAC to the MPO at their next meeting.

Consideration of the MPO's 2023 Priority Projects Report.

Action Required

Mr. Freeman conducted the presentation on the 2023 Priority Projects Report, which included a power point presentation. A copy of this presentation is on file in the MPO office.

For 2023 , the MPO's priority projects list is essentially unchanged from the previous year. The top two projects are the Oslo Road widening and the two phases of the CR 510 widening.

Chair Jeffries opened the floor for any additional comments from the board.

There was a meaningful discussion consisting of how projects are placed on the list, and how do projects move up on the list,

Mr. Dambeck commented since the language on the TIP was revised, could the

language in the Priority Projects Report reflect the same wording. Mr. Freeman stated the language could be consistent with the TIP.

Ms. Idlette spoke to the need for the 45th Street project to proceed as listed. There is a school near by that the School Board has to provide transportation for the students (within the 2 mile walk radius) since there is no safe walking path and she would like to see the 45th Street Project remain in the #4 ranking.

Mr. Mathes feels Mr. Freeman's comment regarding the ease of implementing and ease of funding; I don't think dropping it two spots will make that much of an impact.

Vice Chair Szpyrka stated he does not support moving the 45th Street project down due to pedestrian issues. 82nd Avenue only serves about three people whereas 45th Street is a "here and now" and supports a larger community.

Sgt. MacKenzie commented they don't receive too many complaints for 45th Street and there are more speeding tickets recorded on 82nd Avenue. Due to the work on 66th Avenue, more people are using 82nd Avenue as a short cut. The majority of tickets written in that area for speed limits in excess of 25 miles over the posted speed limit.

Mr. Freeman expounded with the 82nd Avenue south side project, there will have to be right-of-way acquisition which could take several years. Mr. Mathes stated if you keep something high on the priority list you continue to draw attention to the project.

There being no further comments, the item was open for motion.

ON MOTION by Mr. Mathes and SECONDED by Ms. Frazier, the members voted (1-13) to recommend approval of the MPO's 2023 Priority Projects Report, with the following changes: (1) - Striking or amending the language so it would be consistent with the TIP and (2) Move 45th Street below 82nd Avenue, but above the US 1 and Aviation project on the rankings, as stated.

After further discussion and a failed vote on the first motion, a new motion was presented:

ON MOTION by Mr. Mathes and SECONDED by Ms. Frazier, the members voted (14-0) to recommend approval of the MPO's 2023 Priority Projects Report, with the following changes: (1) - Striking or amending the language so it would be consistent with the TIP, as stated.

Consideration of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment
Action Required

Mr. Freeman stated this is for some additional funding that FDOT has for the US 1 project and does require action from the Board.

Chair Jeffries opened the floor for any additional comments from the board.

There being none the item was open for motion.

ON MOTION by Mr. Mathes and SECONDED by Vice Chairman Szpyrka, the members voted (14-0) to recommend approval of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment, as presented.

Consideration of the 2023 Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update

No Action Required

Mr. Freeman explained this is a project we undertake every five years to look at the public transportation system, GoLine/Community Coach, do an evaluation on how it's performing, how it compares to systems in similar communities and if any enhancements may be added. Mr. Freeman introduced Mr. Jonathan Roberson, Project Manager from CUTR, who conducted the presentation. An extensive outreach was conducted and the results of this effort is included in the presentation.

Ms. Frazier asked if the survey could be emailed to the Board and Mr. Freeman replied yes, we will send it out. Mr. Freeman stated there is a link and also a QR code that can be followed that takes you to the survey. So far over 1250 individuals have completed the survey. There will be an additional survey which will incorporate some of the responses from the first round and help fine tune the system improvements and preferences. Chair Jeffries stated when the link is sent out, the various municipalities can place it on their websites for additional responses.

Mr. Roberson further expounded they will be looking for other funding options to help cover the costs of any system improvements, where applicable.

Chair Jeffries wanted to clarify this is being done in addition to the bicycle/pedestrian master plan, correct? Mr. Freeman stated correct. The MPO recently approved the scope of services for the bike/ped master plan. Once a plan is put together it will come back to the TAC for approval.

This is an information item only and no motion is required.

Status Report of MPO Advisory Committees.

No Action Required

Mr. Freeman reviewed his memorandum, dated May 25, 2023, included in the agenda packet and on file in the MPO office. He also noted the next meeting dates for the MPO and its advisory committees.

Mr. Freeman noted that FDOT District 4 Secretary Gerry O'Reilly will be retiring after 35 years of service. Mr. Steve Braun who has been the Director of Transportation Development for the last several years will be his replacement.

Other Business

There was none.

Comments from the Public

There was none.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.