Draft Meeting Summary

Representatives of FDOT District 4 engaged in a series of listening sessions with local governments and transit agencies in late September as part of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan.

FDOT met with representatives of the City of Dania Beach on September 27, 2013. The group discussed the various strategies the City's departments are undertaking in pursuit of their land use and transportation goals and the indicators they are currently using (or hope to use in the future) to track success.

# Key Themes and Takeaways

* The City of Dania Beach’s Comprehensive Plan includes a 20- and 30-year vision. One goal of this vision is to brand Dania Beach as a destination. The City is aggressively pursuing the land use and transportation vision from the Comprehensive Plan. The main obstacle to achieving this vision is a lack of funding.
* The City has taken major steps in revising their local zoning, land use and development regulations and codes to better reflect the City's vision to support mixed-use and higher densities. The goal is to set the stage for people to stop in Dania Beach and what happens when they do.
* The Federal Highway corridor is a main focus corridor. The City desires to implement Complete Streets elements and reduce the number of travel lanes and travel speed to spur revitalization and economic development. Challenges remain in uniting the City's vision for the corridor with FDOT's.
* Dania Beach created a Mobility Program to exact contributions from developers to provide public improvements. The magnitude of the contributions depends on the size of the development and the peak trips that will be generated.
* Dania Beach is very interested in potential passenger rail along the Florida East Coast (FEC) Corridor and has taken numerous steps toward securing a station along the proposed route. These steps include policy changes and infrastructure improvements, both with the goals of preparing the potential station area for transit-oriented development, as well as demonstrating the City's commitment to transit.
* Regional and interagency coordination and adequate representation were recurring themes. After funding, City staff believe the lack of coordination with agencies is a major barrier to implementation of the City's plans.
* Due to its location near the seaport, airport, and I-95, Dania Beach bears the brunt of regional transportation projects. Yet, the City believes their input into such matters is proportionately small.
* The City of Dania Beach made a decision at the onset of the recent economic crisis to use the downturn in the economy as a chance to get the City's "house in order" to be ready for, and inviting to, private development when the economy eventually picked back up. During this lull, the City has This included infrastructure improvements and revisions to the zoning code and development regulations.

# Participants

* Jennifer Barrow, FDOT District 4, Complete Streets Coordinator
* Jeremy Earle, City of Dania Beach, CRA Executive Director
* Colin Donnelly, City of Dania Beach, Assistant City Manager
* Walter Duke, City of Dania Beach, Mayor
* Larry Hymowitz, FDOT District 4, Mobility Coordinator
* Karen Kiselewski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Manager
* Marc LaFerrier, City of Dania Beach, Director of Community Development
* Dominic Orlando, City of Dania Beach, Director of Public Services
* Robert Piatkowski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Planner

# Discussion

After an initial overview of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project and status update, FDOT representatives and project team members engaged the representatives from the City of Dania Beach in a dialogue on the City's vision, strategies, and indicators.

## Current Initiatives & Strategies

### Complete Streets

There is a desire among City officials to make the City more walkable, supporting transit, complete streets and rail, to accommodate growth in population. US 1/Federal Highway is a key focus corridor, as it is both the City's main street and a heavily used north-south travel route for those making trips within the City and traveling through it. The corridor currently operates at a Level of Service (LOS) E, except during Jai Alai games, in which case it operates at a failing LOS. Adding more Complete Streets elements to the corridor is thus a priority to improve safety and attract business. Landscape improvements, such as the installation of street trees between the sidewalk and roadway, have already been made and are viewed positively by both the City and its neighbors. The Transportation Design for Livable Communities (TDLC) designation for US1/Federal Highway is enabling the City to realize its goals for the corridor. The City would also like to see Dania Beach Boulevard improved and is requiring new developments to contribute to the bike share program and other improvements.

### Lane Reductions

The City of Dania Beach has high expectations for the Federal Highway corridor. Along with the implementation of Complete Streets elements along the corridor, Dania Beach would like to reduce the number of travel lanes and the size of the remaining travel lanes. Reducing both the number of lanes and lane widths is linked to the City's desire to slow traffic speeds in the City, especially along US 1/Federal Highway, as businesses do not find it conducive to locate on such high speed corridors. Meeting participants described traffic on US 1/Federal Highway as traveling at 60 mph while the speed limit is 35 mph. By reducing the number of travel lanes to two (2) in each direction, the excess right-of-way could be used to address safety and multimodal improvements, such as widening narrow sidewalks and adding other Complete Streets elements. The City’s intent is to encourage travelers to visit destinations in Dania Beach instead of traveling through as fast as possible.

The City expressed a desire for greater cooperation with FDOT and the County, particularly for them to “think a little bit bigger.” For example, the City would like to see FDOT develop a solution for pedestrian friendly major arterials such that FDOT could develop procedures for multimodal roadway improvements that local governments can act on instead of local governments having to ask FDOT for approval. Dania Beach would like to see FDOT change its standards in the lane reduction process to perhaps include the establishment of a bypass. Roads with commerce and great potential in Dania Beach are County or State facilities (i.e. Federal Highway/US 1) which makes it difficult for the City to implement their vision on those facilities because it requires the cooperation and coordination of multiple agencies. Furthermore, the City feels that FDOT standards are counter to the City's vision. An example of this was the difference in desired US1/Federal Highway right-of-way, which is currently 82 feet. FDOT requested an expanded 120 foot right-of-way, which the City opposed. Eventually, a 92 foot right-of-way was agreed upon.

### Future Land Use & Zoning

The City of Dania Beach has taken major steps in revising their local zoning, land use and development regulations and codes to better reflect the City's vision. The City rewrote its Land Development Code (LDC) to support mixed-use and higher densities, and recently up-zoned and changed its Regional Activity Center (RAC) to entice visitors and brand itself as a destination. The City also has a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) with its own strategic plan and initiatives. Together with the RAC, these are major land use tools for the City.

The City wanted to change the future land use on West Griffin Road to Local Activity Center (LAC) but was concerned about gaining acceptance from FDOT and other review agencies. FDOT staff suggested the City revisit the designation if still desired. Circumstances have changed and there is more acceptance of these types of land uses to support mobility.

### Transit

Officials acknowledge that widening roads is no longer an option for increasing capacity, and multimodal mobility is the option for accommodating more trips. The City is very interested in potential passenger rail along the Florida East Coast (FEC) Corridor and has taken numerous steps toward securing a station along the proposed system's route. These steps demonstrate the City’s commitment to transit and include policy changes and infrastructure improvements, with the goals of preparing the potential station area for transit-oriented development (TOD). An example of such preparation is the recent construction of a City parking garage that was intentionally overbuilt to supply future parking for a potential commuter rail station. The City also is setting aside money for transit to further demonstrate its interest and commitment. An additional transit opportunity in Dania Beach which officials are supportive of is the Central Broward East-West transit project along Griffin Road.

### Economic Development

It was made clear that Dania Beach wants to become a destination and to capture those who now just drive through it, capitalizing on the City's location near Port Everglades and the Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport. This goal was viewed by officials as having two related challenges. The first challenge is how to get folks to stop and the second is what happens once they stop.

The City currently leads by example on the type of development they envision, with recent municipal buildings in the community redevelopment area. There is an interest in using County-owned land for development as a catalyst for further development on a 25 acre parcel located at US 1 and Griffin Road.

After a period of little activity, new development is once again occurring in the City. There are many hotels and new multifamily buildings being built. When private development occurs, the City strongly suggests that certain elements, such as bike share and development improvements, are included in the project. Some developments will be incorporated into the mobility program, which is further described below.

### Funding

The City has suggested that FDOT and MPO reconsider the funding formulas to weigh more heavily on the impacts to a jurisdiction rather than being based only on population. As a City with a relatively small population, but with a location adjacent to the seaport, airport and I-95, the City believes that they are greatly impacted by regional concerns and projects but do not receive adequate funding to manage the impacts from those regional facilities and large-scale infrastructure investments

### Comprehensive Planning & Vision

The City of Dania Beach has both 20 and 30 year visions with one of the goals being to make Dania Beach into a destination. The Dania Beach Comprehensive Plan contains the City's land use and transportation vision and the City is aggressively pursuing progressive land use and transportation concepts. The main obstacle to meeting the visions is lack of funding. The City stated that they have the necessary plans and enthusiastic staff needed to bring their vision into being but lacked the financial resources to fully do so.

### Traffic

The City is based on a grid pattern and is built out. With increasing traffic volumes, the City is looking to protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) studies were performed and by closing some streets, cut-through traffic could be prevented or reduced. There are also issues with truck traffic and local delivery issues in the City.

### Mobility Program

The City of Dania Beach has a mobility program for new developments. Depending on the type of development, those generating greater than 25 pm peak period trips are required to do a full traffic study or contribute to the mobility program. Smaller developments are required to provide improvements instead, such as trash cans, benches, sidewalks, or landscaping. There is still some uncertainty whether mobility program improvements can be made off site.

### Regional Coordination

Regional and interagency coordination were the focus of much discussion. Overall, the City would like more regional consideration, input and coordination. Due to its location near both the seaport, airport and I-95, Dania Beach bears the brunt of regional transportation projects. Yet, the City believes their input into such matters is proportionately small and projects are “dictated” to them. To represent the City’s interest, the City invests considerable effort into havingstaff attend various agency and government meetings to stay informed and "protect," the City. Officials from Dania Beach described having minimal impact at the MPO, which seems to ignore the City and focus on the Fort Lauderdale area. (Dania Beach is not a voting member of the Broward MPO.)Meeting participants expressed similar feelings towards the County.

The expressed lack of coordination with agencies was given as a main factor limiting the implementation of the City's plans. Dania Beach is not able to leverage everything itself and will need assistance from other agencies and levels of government to achieve its goals and get to where it would like to be, particularly regarding the transportation system.

With their plans in place, enthusiastic staff, and recent infrastructure improvements, the City feels that it is well prepared for future growth and development. But, it is waiting for other agencies to follow through and assist in the process. Generally speaking, the cities have been doing their part by intensifying land uses in preparation for transit, and now the other agencies need to push forward transit initiatives.

Coordination with adjacent Cities is important to Dania Beach and is something the City tries to do, especially with Hollywood. The City has also been planning with the MPO and Broward County Transit (BCT), and is working with the MPO on securing a train station downtown.

### Preparing for Future Growth

The City of Dania Beach made a decision in the recent economic crisis to use the downturn in the economy as a chance to get the City's "house in order" to be ready for, and inviting to, private development when the economy eventually picked back up. Due to the slow economy, the City was able to hire top firms for a series studies and plans. The City focused on infrastructure improvements and planning, such as developing an urban code, area wide plans, and a capital facilities plan. As the economy improved, the private market has been responding well to the City's initiatives.

When asked how the City is able to achieve its vision. City officials commended City staff for their competent, capable, forward-thinking initiatives. The City has implemented many of its plans, but much of what needs to happen is dependent on the responsibilities, plans, and projects of other agencies over which the City has little control.

### Infrastructure and Utilities

Consistent with the City's other efforts at preparing for future growth and development, the utilities have been upgraded to be able to achieve higher densities. The City suggested the I-95 interchanges be better maintained to improve their appearance.

# Strategies and Indicators

The following table lists the strategies that the City of Dania Beach mentioned throughout the listening session.

|  |
| --- |
| Strategies |
| System-Wide   * Develop a long range vision for the City to guide in developing plans and projects * Take advantage and build off of locational advantages and geographic attributes (i.e. proximity to seaport or airport) * Demonstrate commitment for transit by setting aside funding to invest in transit projects when they arise * Enhance coordination with MPO to better influence MPO decisions * Enhance coordination with FDOT on multimodal initiatives * Incorporate elements of the City’s vision into State/FDOT projects * Develop plans and revisit policies and regulations during economic downturns to prepare for resurgence * Maintain a list of projects that are “ready to go” that are compiled from various planning documents * Participate in meetings led by other agencies * Allocate funds to implement plans * Create a Mobility Program Fund and require developers to contribute * Encourage a forward-thinking mindset in staff and elected officials * Incorporate high intensity land use into zoning code and development regulations * Conduct audit of development and planning related laws at municipal, county, and state level * Use the tools available to CRAs to spur redevelopment * Develop a branding style unique to the City that identifies it as a destination * Utilize RAC and LAC designations * Hire competent, capable staff willing to try innovative techniques   Facilities   * Invest *in* transit improvements, and simultaneously invest *for* transit through non-transit infrastructure to show commitment to transit (e.g. overbuilt parking garage) * Implement Complete Streets and transit improvements to create a more walkable city * Reduce travel speed on retail streets (e.g. Federal Highway) to create a more pedestrian friendly environment and vibrant streetscape * Reduce travel lane widths (esp. on Federal Hwy) * Provide alternative routes or bypass roads to congested corridors * Weigh priorities for traffic flow and livable streets * Expand bus service * Apply for TDLC designation * Create an expanded network of bicycle routes * Maintain interchanges and landscaping along I-95   Places   * Upgrade utilities to support higher densities * Develop area plans * Update development regulations to allow for more urban style higher density development * Increase allowable densities in Regional Activity Centers * Encourage developers to include development improvement elements (e.g. bike-share) * Encourage more hotel and residential development as redevelopment Use publicly-owned land as catalysts for redevelopment (e.g. county parcel at US 1 & Griffin Rd) |

The following table lists potential indicators that relate to the strategies voiced during the meeting with the City of Dania Beach.

|  |
| --- |
| Indicators |
| Quantitative   * Traffic Counts * Average travel speed * Average travel time * Number of new businesses * Access to transit * Commercial space vacancy rates * Change in commercial tax revenue * Commercial and rental property values * Revenues * Transit passengers * Length of bike route network   Qualitative or Anecdotal   * Funding dedicated to transit * Streets classified as a Complete Street * Developers participating in development improvement elements * Type of development being built * Complaints and positive feedback |