Draft Meeting Summary

Representatives of FDOT District 4 engaged in a series of listening sessions with various planning partners in Fall 2013 as part of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan.

FDOT met with representatives of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) on October 31. The group discussed the various roles and goals of SFRTA, the strategies SFRTA is undertaking, the indicators that would measure success of their goals and strategies, and coordination efforts with other planning partners.

# Key Themes and Takeaways

* SFRTA’s two main functions are to (1) allocate federal funds and (2) implement and run regional rail service. Coordination with regional planning councils and MPOs is a large part of SFRTA’s role to increase transit ridership for the region. SFRTA also provides support to local transit providers through feeder bus and grant programs.
* SFRTA’s mission for the future is to implement a regional transit system, which broadens the authority’s perspective beyond operations to be more of a regional entity.
* Coordination with local governments on planning for station areas for the Tri-Rail Coastal Link passenger service is a main initiative, and SFRTA just completed a major update to its transit development plan.
* Collaboration with the business community has helped SFRTA keep a broader perspective on the regional vision, while simultaneously helping to implement specific projects like the Wave.
* SFRTA’s limited role makes it challenging to implement bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects. Consistent communication with local governments is needed.
* SFRTA staff provided potential indicators to reflect progress towards a balanced multimodal transportation system, including mode split, ridership, bicycle and pedestrian mode share, construction within multimodal nodes, and funding allocations.

# Action Items

* FDOT will consider extending the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan study area south to Golden Glades Drive or Ives Dairy Road to demonstrate the connections and travel patterns beyond Broward County into Miami-Dade County.

# Participants

* Lois Bush, FDOT District 4, Policy Planning Section Leader
* Loraine Cargill, SFRTA
* Jessica Dimmick, Renaissance Planning Group, I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan Project Team
* Karen Kiselewski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Manager
* Lynda Westin, SFRTA
* Natalie Yesbeck Pustizzi, SFRTA

# Discussion

After an initial overview of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project and status update, FDOT representatives and project team members answered questions related to the project progress thus far, and engaged the representatives from SFRTA in a dialogue on the authority’s vision, goals, and indicators.

## SFRTA Role and Functions

SFRTA performs two main functions, which SFRTA staff described as their two main goals: (1) allocate federal funds and (2) run and implement a regional rail service. SFRTA staff explained that they have other secondary goals that are all tied to these two main goals. One of the most important secondary goals is leading coordination for the regional transportation system and implementing regional transit service (beyond just the operations of regional rail).

To support these efforts, another related goal for SFRTA is to increase transit ridership, and the authority supports transit-oriented development (TOD) around its station areas, particularly the future station areas of the Tri-Rail Coastal Link passenger service on the Florida East Coast (FEC) railway. SFRTA conducted a study to identify jobs and population within the future station areas for this service.

Additionally, SFRTA provides supplemental services to support local transit through feeder buses and grant programs to expand use of the service.

### Coordination

Coordination amongst the various local governments, counties, MPOs, and regional planning councils is one of SFRTA’s biggest roles. With hundreds of local governments in SFRTA’s planning area, SFRTA relies heavily on coordination with the MPOs and regional planning councils, and is an active regular member of the SEFTC’s Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (RTTAC).

The Southeast Florida region is very decentralized, making strong regional collaboration necessary to making progress on initiatives.

## SFRTA Initiatives

### Transit Development Plan Updates

SFRTA just completed a major update to their transit development plan (TDP). SFRTA composed new goals and objectives that reflect a shift in the authority’s vision. Five years ago, the focus of SFRTA was solely to operate Tri-Rail. Now the authority’s mission is to implement a regional transit system, which broadens the authority’s perspective beyond operations to be more of a regional entity.

Annual updates to the TDP will track the progression of the TDP’s goals and objectives. These annual updates report what has been achieved and what has not, and include actions on how to move forward.

### Shuttle Bus Program

SFRTA formalized the process of coordination with local transit providers for its feeder bus program, and ridership on the SFRTA feeder buses has since almost doubled. This service provides an extra connection to the local transit service. SFRTA representatives noted the possibility of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan tool to raise visibility of how the SFRTA services function together with the other local transit services.

### Tri-Rail Coastal Link Passenger Service Coordination

SFRTA staff highlighted the need to coordinate with the individual cities on the development potential and future land uses in Tri-Rail Coastal Link station areas. SFRTA staff explained coordination efforts have included talking with municipalities and CRAs on the development and planning for the service, what the land uses could be, and what zoning changes need to happen to accommodate the growth. SFRTA is trying to help the cities think more about their station plans and connections to these communities’ “Main Streets,” and provide access to the transit service for their residents.

### Collaboration with Business Community

SFRTA staff reflected on their successes in moving projects forward with the help of the local business community. One example is the implementation of the Wave Streetcar, where the business community through the Downtown Development Authority of Fort Lauderdale helped drive the project into reality.

Another example of successful collaboration with the business community is the participation of community business members on SFRTA’s board. The 2003 legislation that transformed the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority into the SFRTA broadened the mission of the authority, and SFRTA staff cited the inclusion of the regional business alliance through representation on the SFRTA board helps to provide different perspectives. A mix of elected officials and other representatives makes it possible to focus on the broader vision, “easier to get the private sector on board,” and easier to implement policy changes, such as policy for mode split changes. SFRTA staff explained the business community helps provide a “more neutral view of what needs to happen.”

## Challenges

### Established Auto Networks

FDOT clarified that this project is meant to align the efforts of the various agencies to understand the various multimodal strategies each agency can undertake (or may already be undertaking) to address mobility on I-95, which requires a balanced transportation system. FDOT mentioned the Seven50 Southeast Florida Prosperity Plan, which is taking a broad long-range holistic view for the future.

SFRTA noted that the challenge in achieving this balanced transportation system is that the auto networks are already established, but the multimodal networks are not. The question becomes how to prioritize improvements to retrofit corridors for multimodal transportation.

### Limited Role for Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

SFRTA developed a bicycle and pedestrian access plan in Palm Beach County, which is available of SFRTA’s website, to identify improvements for access to Tri-Rail stations. However, SFRTA is a small agency, and it is not SFRTA’s role to take the lead on implementing these bicycle and pedestrian improvements. SFRTA asks whether FDOT, the Counties, the MPOs, and the localities can help to implement trail connections and other improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians.

### Limits to Policy Strength

SFRTA staff noted that a strong policy framework is needed to “enforce” the vision for TOD. SFRTA staff gave the example of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor in Arlington, VA as a place that has seen success in TOD, and explained then need for legislation to set growth boundaries and clearly identify where the areas for new development.

# Indicators of Success

SFRTA representatives brainstormed a list of potential indicators that could reflect progress towards a more balanced multimodal transportation system. Potential indicators include:

* Mode split
* Number of transit passengers
* Bicycle/pedestrian coverage (e.g. bike lane miles and miles of sidewalk constructed)
* Revenue miles for transit
* Construction within Multimodal Nodes
* Targets for how transportation funds are allocated (e.g. percentage of funds towards road projects vs. percentage of roads towards transit projects), which is more of a policy framework

SFRTA acknowledged that distinguishing between road projects and transit projects could become controversial. For example, reconstructing a road segment to add a bus pullout would clearly be a transit project, while adding a lane would be a road project that could arguably benefit transit, but it is not directly a transit project.

SFRTA staff mentioned examples of Seattle, WA and Minneapolis, MN who have set up funds for regional TOD, and track the investment of these funds.

The annual updates to the TDP contain measures to track the achievement of the goals, objectives, and policies.

SFRTA conducts surveys of Tri-Rail passengers every two years. In 2009, the authority conducted a big survey effort that included focus groups and statistically valid online and phone surveys to the general public. This 2009 survey showed that the public knew about Tri-Rail, but they did not know about SFRTA. In response, SFRTA is trying to elevate its visibility.

SFRTA also tracks ridership of their shuttle bus program. SFRTA staff indicated they track this information in detail and have good quality data on origins and destinations that could be shared with other transportation planning agencies or local governments.

SFRTA staff suggested a measure of percentage of jobs within the region with access to transit, with the intent of seeing this number grow.

# Strategies and Indicators

The following tables list the strategies and indicators that representatives from SFRTA mentioned throughout the listening session.

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| Strategies |
| System-Wide* Lead coordination amongst MPOs, RPCs, transit agencies, and local governments for a regional transportation system
* Participate in MPOs’ regional transit advisory committees
* Elevate visibility of SFRTA beyond just Tri-Rail operations
* Track progress on measures in the Transit Development Plan through annual updates
* Collaborate with the local business community to garner private sector support for transit projects and TOD

Facilities* Prepare for transit service on the FEC corridor.

Places * Support TOD in future passenger rail station areas through coordination with local governments on future land use policies and zoning codes
* Develop a bicycle and pedestrian access plan to identify improvements for access to Tri-Rail stations.
* Coordinate with local governments to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements in station areas
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| Indicators |
| Quantitative* Mode split
* Number of transit passengers
* Bicycle/pedestrian coverage (e.g. bike lane miles and miles of sidewalk constructed)
* Revenue miles for transit
* Construction within Multimodal Nodes
* Targets for how transportation funds are allocated (e.g. percentage of funds towards road projects vs. percentage of roads towards transit projects)
* Shuttle bus ridership
* Percentage of jobs within the region with access to transit

Qualitative or Anecdotal* Track investment of funds for TOD (future)
* Visibility and awareness of SFRTA to general public
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