Draft Meeting Summary

Representatives of FDOT District 4 engaged in a series of listening sessions with various planning partners in Fall2013 as part of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan.

FDOT met with representatives of the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on November 12. The group discussed the various strategies the Palm Beach MPO is undertaking, the indicators they are currently using to track success, ways in which they coordinate with other agencies, and challenges in implementing these strategies.

# Key Themes and Takeaways

* The Palm Beach MPO is using the development of the 2040 LRTP as a turning point to better balance traditional road capacity projects with multimodal projects to enhance quality of life and economic vitality.
* They are requesting collaboration with municipalities to identify bicycle and pedestrian projects, and are considering a new points-based project prioritization methodology.
* The proposed Tri-Rail station at Glades Road and commuter rail service along the FEC corridor are Palm Beach MPO’s two top priorities for the I-95 mobility plan study area.
* The Palm Beach MPO has prepared a list of preliminary goals, objectives, and measures of effectiveness for their 2040 LRTP.
* Palm Beach MPO staff are interested in coordinating with FDOT on programs to collect bicycle and pedestrian counts.
* Political opposition to projects is the MPO’s biggest challenge. MPO staff conclude this problem stems from deficiencies in communication between project design teams and stakeholders. MPO staff suggest that collaboration amongst stakeholders at critical decision points throughout the project development and design processes will help achieve consensus and avoid opposition later.

# Action Items

* FDOT to review the generalized future land use designations and facility type designation along Palmetto Park Road.
* FDOT to provide Palm Beach MPO with the contact information for the FDOT Complete Streets Coordinator to discuss bicycle and pedestrian count locations.
* FDOT to provide the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project materials to Mr. Uhren and Mr. Sandanasamy.
* FDOT to investigate funding available in the Five-Year TIP for projects near Glades Road and Military Trail.

# Participants

* Lois Bush, FDOT District 4, Policy Planning Section Leader
* Jessica Dimmick, Renaissance Planning Group, I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan Project Team – by phone
* Karen Kiselewski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Manager
* Vinod Sandanasamy, Palm Beach MPO, Senior Planner
* Nick Uhren, Palm Beach MPO, Executive Director

# Discussion

After an initial overview of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project and status update, the participants engaged in a dialogue about the Palm Beach MPO’s vision, strategies, and measures of success.

## Vision, Goals, and Strategies

### Rethinking a Vision for Multimodal Transportation

Palm Beach MPO staff explained that the MPO is “at a relative turning point.” The current Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) includes 45 road projects, two bus route expansions, and one rail project. The MPO’s current documents include very few multimodal projects, and there is no vision for multimodal transportation identified. The Palm Beach MPO is trying to modify how the MPO plans for the future by broadening its perspective from widening roads to thinking about multimodal projects that will enhance the lifestyle of Palm Beach County residents and increase economic value.

### Tri-Rail Station at Glades Road

The Palm Beach MPO’s 2035 LRTP includes a proposed new Tri-Rail station at the nexus of Glades Road and Military Trail. Mr. Uhren mentioned there may be some funding in the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), but he is unsure of what projects in this area will be funded. This future Tri-Rail station is an important and high priority goal for the Palm Beach MPO.

### FEC Commuter Rail Service

Another high priority goal for the Palm Beach MPO is the commuter rail service along the FEC corridor. Only one of the two potential FEC rail stations in Boca Raton on the Aspirational Future Scenario will be selected for service. MPO staff debated which of the two potential stations will be most successful. Staff believe the location at Palmetto Park Road would be more successful, but the 20th Street location has connections to the Florida Atlantic University campus.

### Long Range Transportation Plan Update

The Palm Beach MPO is in the process of updating their LRTP for the 2040 horizon year. The MPO has already acquired the population and employment data for 2010 and 2040, which it will use in a new activity based model to generate the highway and transit capacity projects for the needs plan. Palm Beach MPO staff are currently validating the model, and expect that the model will produce outputs for the needs plan sometime in December 2013.

The model is one of three sources from which the MPO is acquiring potential projects for inclusion in their LRTP. The other two sources are the municipalities and the public. The MPO is relying heavily on the municipalities to tell them what bicycle and pedestrian projects they would like to have funded because the model does not provide adequate information on these non-motorized modes. As part of this effort, the MPO is reviewing all of the master plans for the area including those for the Port, Airport, Palm Tran, and Tri-Rail, as well as Palm Beach County’s Bicycle Master Plan. Because the transit agencies’ Transit Development Plans (TDPs) are only fiscally constrained for the first five years, the MPO is “on the hook” to address funding for transit agencies’ longer-term needs.

The 2040 LRTP will include multimodal project categories, including transit enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and roadway corridor projects (e.g. Complete Streets rebuilds, capacity additions, and TSM&O projects).

### Complete Streets

When asked about Complete Streets, Palm Beach MPO staff explained that this is an area in planning that is emerging in Palm Beach County, but “the culture is not there at this time.” It is not as prominent of a theme as in Broward County.

One strategy Palm Beach County is pursuing is to reach out to the municipalities to talk about what types of Complete Streets projects they might want, with the intent of building consensus early. The Palm Beach MPO is doing this through the development of the LRTP, by asking the cities to give the MPO suggestions for projects to support alternative transportation modes. The challenge with these types of projects is to think regionally.

MPO staff explained that this is not the first time the MPO has asked the municipalities for suggestions on funding priorities, and in the past the cities have responded with a lot of interest and creativity. Because South Florida has so many different local and regional agency partners in a complicated governance structure, these creative funding partnerships and projects will take time to be implemented.

### Project Ranking Process for LRTP

The MPO is rethinking how they prioritize projects in their LRTP, and is considering a new strategy whereby municipalities “compete” for funding by through a project ranking system. Mr. Uhren explained this is only “pie in the sky thinking” right now, but the idea is that a project can earn points for various characteristics, such as:

* ability to offset federal funding needs with a local match
* location has lower average income and property values compared to median – to address the equity issue for communities who do not have the ability to provide a local match
* population who benefit from proposed project
* completion of a link in the bicycle and pedestrian trail network in the Bicycle Master Plan

This project ranking system would apply to all project types, and would not prohibit local governments from requesting lane-widening projects to add more capacity. Palm Beach MPO staff noted that MetroPlan Orlando is a good example of an MPO who has implemented project ranking criteria and who collaborates with local partners, yet even MetroPlan Orlando experiences difficulties in implementing this system, such as deciding who sits on the committees to score the projects.

While this concept is still in the beginning stages, Palm Beach MPO staff said their governing Board appears to be receptive to the idea. Palm Beach MPO’s Congestion Management System already includes performance measures for congestion and mobility, which makes it easy to prioritize road construction projects. The challenge will be to create a prioritization process for other types of projects.

### Shuttle Services to Rail Transit Stations

The Palm Beach MPO would like to see an expansion of the shuttle service from the Tri-Rail stations to the major employment locations in Boca Raton, West Palm Beach, and Palm Beach Gardens. Mr. Sandanasamy explained the desire to have the shuttle service “connect the bubbles” of these activity centers.

### Boca Raton’s Planned Mobility Districts

Participants mentioned the City of Boca Raton’s Planned Mobility districts, and the Palm Beach MPO said these districts are part of their overall strategy for improving transportation and land use.

### Glades Road PD&E Study

MPO staff mentioned the FDOT PD&E Study for improvements along Glades Road is almost finished. Instead of adding more lanes to Glades Road, the MPO is looking to identify smaller scale projects that could make this corridor more transit friendly.

## Measures of Success

The Palm Beach MPO prepared a list of preliminary goals, objectives, and measures of effectiveness for the 2040 LRTP, available on the Palm Beach MPO’s [website](http://www.palmbeach2040plan.org/) for the 2040 LRTP. These measures include bicycle level of service and other non-auto measures, such as the percentage of land within a quarter-mile of fixed route transit service and access to priority transit or fixed guideway passenger service.

When asked about measures for economic vitality or quality of life or other measures that the MPO Board of Directors are interested in, MPO staff replied that they were not aware of any measures of the sort.

MPO staff said they would like to know how many bicyclists and pedestrians use the investments in infrastructure. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee for Portland, OR conducts bicycle counts voluntarily, which can be very powerful data if you can show that a lot of people are using these facilities. FDOT representatives mentioned that the FDOT Complete Street Coordinator is trying to identify locations for permanent bicycle and pedestrian counts, and Palm Beach MPO staff expressed interest in coordinating on the selection of locations.

## Challenges

### Political Opposition

Many of the western communities desire more roads and wider roads, but there are others that oppose new construction projects, as evidenced by the resistance from residential communities to the project to construct a new interchange for the Florida Turnpike at Palmetto Park Road. MPO staff said there will be a “balancing act between road capacity and multimodal” projects for the future.

The MPO also experiences opposition to road projects that are already adopted in the LRTP. The SR 710 PD&E project is an example. The PD&E consultant presented plans for grade separation at Northlake Boulevard to the MPO in October, and the MPO members said that they did not want grade separation at this location. MPO staff explained that this is an example of where the MPO members were not fully aware of what the project would look like until they saw the plans. In this example, MPO staff said, “This is an opportunity to do something in the future. If you don’t like this project, then take it out of your long range plan or figure out another way to do it, like depressing the road instead of raising it.”

### Lack of Communication and Collaboration

The SR 710 example shows that MPO, FDOT, and other stakeholders need to enhance communication on these types of projects. There needs to be more discussion throughout development of the project. The community needs to better understand “what is happening, why it is happening, and how it will affect change.” FDOT and the MPO need to do a better job of coming back to the community and asking them if these projects are “what they really want.”

Another example is the lack of coordination with CSX. The SR 710 project is located adjacent to the CSX-owned railroad tracks, and the SR 710 project team has assumed that the tracks cannot be touched. The project team designed an $80 million bridge across the tracks because of this assumption, yet no one has spoken with a CSX representative. CSX needs to be involved in the process.

Mr. Uhren articulated this problem as needing to understand what the “critical decisions” are, and collaborating with stakeholders and neighboring jurisdictions in these critical decisions. Often the stakeholders and MPO Board of Directors are brought in too early such that the critical decision has not yet emerged, and too late when the critical decision cannot be changed. While the stakeholder involvement process consists of checking boxes to show that the project team conducted outreach, these critical decisions still slip through the cracks. This can help overcome the stigma that these types of decisions are “made in the back room.”

## Other Items of Discussion

### Palmetto Park Road Facility Type Designation

Palm Beach County staff inquired about the primary commercial designation of Palmetto Park Road. Mr. Uhren asked the project team to review the future land use designations along this corridor, and explained that there are a lot of residential neighborhoods along this corridor. The residential communities do not want a wider road; they desire a multipurpose path along this corridor. The City of Boca Raton requested that no additional lanes be considered for Palmetto Park Road,. The project team explained the notion of a hybrid corridor as a way to reflect the transition to a vision of multimodal use.

# Strategies and Measures

The following tables list the strategies and indicators that the Palm Beach MPO mentioned throughout the listening session.

|  |
| --- |
| Strategies |
| System-Wide   * Articulate a vision for multimodal transportation that includes quality of life and economic vitality in the LRTP. * Implement a project prioritization methodology that rewards creative funding strategies and supports equitable decision-making. * Include multimodal project categories within the LRTP. * Coordinate with municipalities on local bicycle and pedestrian projects (e.g. through soliciting projects for inclusion in the LRTP). * Identify critical decision points and collaborate with stakeholders and adjacent localities.   Facilities   * Construct a new Tri-Rail station at Glades Road and Military Trail. * Implement commuter rail service along the FEC corridor. * Identify small-scale projects along major corridors to improve transit-friendliness (e.g. Glades Road PD&E). * Implement a points-based system to determine prioritization and selection for funding improvements (e.g. in the bike plan)   Places   * Enhance shuttle service between Tri-Rail stations and major employment areas. * Support Boca Raton’s Planned Mobility districts. |

| Indicators[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| --- |
| Quantitative   1. Level of Service on designated truck routes (percent of truck/freight route miles with V/C ratio greater than 1.1) 2. Level of Service on designated access roads serving Intermodal Terminals (percent of intermodal access route miles with V/C ratio greater than 1.1) 3. Number of Park-and-Ride Facilities 4. Level of Service on designated priority local bus routes (percent of bus route miles with road V/C ratio greater than 1.1) 5. Number of bus routes serving Tri-Rail and other rail station 6. Funding for Maintenance and Rehabilitation 7. Transit ridership occupancy rates 8. Percent of person-trips by transit from FSUTMS model 9. Percent of County land area and population within 0.25 miles of any fixed route transit service 10. Percent of County land area and population within 0.25 miles of priority transit (headway of 30 minutes or less) or fixed-guideway passenger service 11. Percent of routes with farebox ratios greater than 0.25 12. Level of Service of the major road system, including saturation level (percent of the total system route miles with V/C ratio greater than 1.1) 13. Percent change in traffic on facilities with TSM/TDM strategies 14. Level of Service on designated access roads serving key freight load centers and along key freight corridors (percent of truck/freight route miles with V/C ratio greater than 1.1) 15. Increase in mileage of bicycle and pedestrian pathways 16. Average Trip Length 17. Average Vehicle Occupancy Rate 18. Daily mode splits for auto (drive alone and carpool) and transit 19. Comparison of Projected Costs and Revenues 20. Total VMT 21. Percent VMT at V/C ratio > 1.1 22. Total VHT 23. Percent VHT at V/C ratio > 1.1 24. Total fuel use (gallons) 25. Daily NOx and VOC 26. Percent of major road system with bicycle facilities 27. Percent of major road system with sidewalks 28. Percent of County Land area and population within 0.25 mile of any fixed route transit service 29. Comparison of Plan emissions to EPA standards 30. Percentage of regional route miles with V/C ratio greater than 1.1   Qualitative or Anecdotal   1. List of SIS Connectors 2. Description of TSM/TDM Strategy 3. Yes/No – Does the Plan provide inclusion and implementation of ITS on major highways, including managed lanes? 4. Yes/No – Does the Plan take into consideration the real time travel information (e.g. travel time reliability) provided by ITS information systems? 5. Maps of future bicycle and pedestrian facilities 6. Maps illustrating regional system of greenways and trails indicating connectivity from Palm Beach County into neighboring counties 7. Description of Alternative Funding Sources and Strategies 8. Yes/No – Does the Plan coordinate with area plans to support freight transportation needs of private industry? 9. Description of SIS and TRIP Funds which promote multimodal freight and passenger transportation improvements 10. Yes/No – Does the Plan conform to Palm Beach County’s ROW Thoroughfare Identification Map? 11. Yes/No – Does the MPO consider advanced right-of-way acquisition where feasible? 12. Yes/No – Does the Plan support sustainable development patterns? 13. Yes/No – Do transit providers coordinate future transit routes with new major residential and non-residential developments and redevelopment? 14. Yes/No – Do transit providers extend service to the west as development in western Palm Beach County occurs? 15. Yes/No - Does the Plan support Transit Oriented Development (TOD), which encourages transit usage though concentrated development, appropriate for its context, near transit stations and along transit corridors? 16. Yes/No - Does the Plan encourage local governments to include transit ridership amenities (e.g. shelters, route information)? 17. Yes/No - Does the Plan support designation and protection of key regional freight generators, including the Port of Palm Beach and the Inland Port? 18. Comparison of multimodal access to areas with low income and/or traditionally underserved with Community Profiles 19. Compliance Statement from Palm Beach County on available Transportation Disadvantaged services with ADA 20. Description of existing and planned transportation disadvantaged services between adjacent counties 21. Description of funding sources, existing and future, for the transportation disadvantaged 22. Yes/No - Does the Plan take into consideration the needs of residents in rural communities within the MPO’s planning area? 23. Yes/No - Are the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact and the Seven50 Southeast Florida Prosperity Plan efforts and results incorporated into the Plan? 24. Certification Statement - Palm Tran and Tri-Rail address security as part of the operations of its systems 25. Certification and Responsible Agency - Palm Tran and Tri-Rail meet required standards 26. Description of hurricane evacuation plan for Palm Beach County 27. Description of hurricane evacuation standards 28. Description of plans to address natural and man-made disasters maintained by Palm Beach County 29. Certification Statement - Port of Palm Beach and all FAA regulated airports address safety and security as part of the operations of its systems 30. Certification and Responsible Agency - The required Port of Palm Beach and all FAA regulated airports standards are met 31. Map & List – The Cost Feasible Highway projects will be compared against the top crash locations from the Palm Beach County Crash Report 32. Map & List – Identify the ITS Projects throughout Palm Beach County and the associated funding 33. Map & List - The annual number of pedestrian and bicycle crashes will be reviewed with ‘hot spots’ identified. These ‘hot spots’ will be compared to the 2035 Cost Feasible Bicycle and Pedestrian improvement projects. 34. Yes/No – The Plan will take into consideration potential transit station locations where bus riders cross roads outside of crosswalks (e.g. as pedestrians and as bicyclists). 35. Yes/No – Does the Plan coordinate with FDOT and local agencies to include security measures in design and construction of highway facilities? 36. Yes/No – Does the Plan ensure that appropriate security and public safety provisions will be implemented by the various agencies, to the maximum extent feasible, as key components in the development of all bicycle and pedestrian facilities? 37. Yes/No - Does the Plan ensure that appropriate emergency and evacuation provisions will be implemented by the various agencies, to the maximum extent feasible, as key components in the development of highway facilities? 38. Description of connections with the three seaports and three airports in the region 39. Transit Plans maps of Palm Beach County Transit and Southeast Florida Regional Transportation Authority 40. Comparison of service characteristics of county transit systems 41. Regional Transit Plans 42. Review of Adjacent County/Urban Area Projects 43. Yes/No - The Plan will consider regional transportation improvements and interconnectivity as identified in the SEFTC Regional Transportation Plan |

1. Measures are listed in the Preliminary Goals, Objectives, and MOEs from the Palm Beach 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, available online at <http://www.palmbeach2040plan.org/DataRepository>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)