

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)
BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC)

A meeting of the MPO BAC was held at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 13, 2007 in First Floor Conference Room "A", County Administration Building, 1840 25th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

MPOBAC member present were: Lieutenant Scott Melanson, City of Fellsmere Representative.

Absent was Chairman Libby Harrow, IRC Representative; Barbara Tilney, Town of Indian River Shores Representative; George Sipp, Town of Orchid Representative (all excused); Terry Goff, City of Vero Beach Representative; and Rich Wetherald, City of Sebastian Representative (both excused).

Also present were IRC staff: Phil Matson, Staff Director; Sutapa Chatterjee, MPO Planning, and Terri-Collins Lister, Staff Assistant IV; Others Present: Jeff Olson, Alta Planning and Design; Stewart Robertson, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.; Dariush Safikhani, Ron Julien, John Wheats, Susan Jones and David Jones, Interested Citizen.

Call to Order

Lieutenant Scott Melanson called the meeting to order, at which time it was determined a quorum was not present.

Election of Officers

Without a quorum, Election of Officers was waived.

Approval of Minutes

Without a quorum, approval of minutes was waived.

Consideration of Central Indian River County Greenways Plan – Final Report

Mr. Phil Matson, IRC Staff Director, for information purposes only, repeated the background of the Greenways Plan, previously provided. Mr. Matson reiterated without a quorum there would not be a motion to approve the plan; however the committee had the opportunity to provide Jeff Olson, consultant with Alta Planning and Design (Alta) with comments. Mr. Matson

requested any comments be returned to him as soon as possible. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson stated over the course of the last year, Alta had addressed comments and questions in the process of formulating the Central Indian River Greenways Plan, which he handed out, and a copy is on file in the Commission Office.

Mr. Olson mentioned opportunities to capitalize upon included the presence of a representative from Florida Trail Association and the advisory board for the East Coast Greenway, which runs up the coast of Florida and new funding opportunities with anticipated growth on the federal level was available.

Mr. Olson interjected with creative thinking and viewing challenges as much as opportunities, a system had been revised after looking at three different scenarios, utilizing the public outreach such as public workshops, steering committees and meetings.

Mr. Olson related the initial effort was to identify selection criteria to include corridors in the systems and prioritize the results. He declared it became obvious the constraints could not be overcome; however, what could be done was help some of the corridor being developed along Indian River Boulevard by upgrading some of the connections across the bridges and creating a simple loop using existing roadway facilities, with the end result of providing limited benefits and access for most of the community.

Mr. Olson outlined the second option as a broader concept to include some of Indian River Farms criteria, which was listed in the plan document, and included attempts to create an off-road core loop in the middle of the County. He mentioned the airport authority had been most cooperative in offering the concept of a greenway on airport-owned land, as well as potential use of the flatwoods area for a mountain bike park. He said there was also potential for a rail-with-trail corridor with the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railroad and possibly a trail on one of the Indian River Farm canals.

Mr. Olson described some of the very strict conditions for trails on canals and the trail would only be considered if the owner of the property had their conditions met, with no other alternatives. He provided examples of some conditions such as the owners having the right of maintenance access whereas in the event of a major storm or event, the trail would be closed to the public until clean up work would be completed. He also mentioned a possible condition was the owners would be indemnified from liability, as the State legislature had already granted owners sovereign immunity.

Mr. Olson related another possible condition was if trails were along a canal corridor, the owners could insist on having a maintenance facility on one side of the canal and the trail on the opposite side of the canal, which to some extent would limit the right-of-ways.

Mr. Stewart Robertson, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. pointed out on the second option the County was currently designing the widening of Aviation Boulevard and the widening would include an off road shared use trail on the south side of Aviation Boulevard, between 27th Avenue and U.S. Highway 1. He remarked this could serve as a first test case or implementation attempt for what would ultimately be an entire loop around the airport.

Mr. Olson presented another more broader, more visionary perspective involving alternatives such as extending the core system with the FEC right-of-way extended further north and south, or if the north relief canal became part of the system, with the main canal farther west, and the south relief canal, or possibly the extension of the north coast greenway farther north and south of the trail along Highway A1A. He relayed after multiple presentations at public meetings, the response was this was what the people wanted to see; the bigger vision, knowing it could be done in phases, like bike lanes on bridges, or the core loop in or around the airport.

Mr. Olson related these phases had been analyzed into individual project descriptions and went through a prioritization process with the steering committee to identify which of these would be phase one projects to happen in the near term, and phase two projects taking a longer period of time.

Mr. Olson reminded the committee these projects were not without challenges, and every one of the projects would take effort, advocacy, community support, and partnerships to make them happen. He suggested committee discussions to include Friends of the Trail organization, something like the Florida Trail Association local chapter to ensure letters were written, fund raising and the organization of events were accomplished to advance the system.

Discussion ensued with illustrations of possible options and potential of extended access and connected network north and south of the coast.

Mr. Olson outlined three projects prioritized by the project steering committee for development within the first five years: upgrading 17th and Barber Bridges, which was referred to as “the two bridges’ loop”, to include bike lanes; the airport greenway and the mountain bike trails; and the A1A East Coast Greenway Corridor.

Mr. Olson provided suggestions of implementing steps to make these projects happen which included publishing a guide to show existing destinations, to utilize the transportation enhancement funding program the MPO administers, which included some of the corridors for designations with the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails to ensure enrollment into the State system, which provides eligibility for other funding sources.

Mr. Olson posed questions to the Committee of who ultimately would take ownership of the plan, what was the process of advocating for the plan, what were methods to assist the MPO's efforts in advising the elected officials of the Committee's needs in order to ensure letters to the editor were written, obtain support for funding applications, and to engage the Chambers of Commerce to involve the business community.

Mr. Matson confirmed his views for the next steps coincided with the prioritization Mr. Olson had provided which included a recommendation to approve the Greenway Plan, subject to comments, move forward with the next phase of the design of the airport loop project, the central County trail and the re-striping or placement of a jersey barrier at the 17th Street Bridge to protect bicyclists.

Discussion ensued regarding the construction and development of sidewalks and bike trails along the roadways. Mr. Matson confirmed the importance to have a lead construction representative from the Department of Transportation attend a meeting to answer questions concerning same. He agreed to make arrangements for such attendance at a Committee meeting in the future.

Mr. David Jones, an interested citizen, mentioned the City had a 50 foot right-of-way, adjacent to the main canal from 43rd Street for approximately a half mile to the east, into the Dodgertown property. He suggested if the approval of Indian River Farms were obtained for all the way to the power lines, which were in the north end of the strip, there would not be maintenance issues; hence, a future incentive.

Mr. Olson reiterated because it made sense, do not assume it would be easy and he suggested now was the time to organize the community in preparation for possible conflicts going forward with the Greenway Plan. He provided the example of a Palm Beach County lawsuit involving Highway A1A, and a State-owned 100 foot right-of-way, along side a two lane road with a very narrow shoulder, having been a part of the East Coast Greenway, wherein no bike lanes were currently in place as the road was under reconstruction. He outlined Palm Beach County's attempt to build bike lanes as a part of the road

reconstruction, however, landowners had built gate houses and shrubbery in the public right-of-way and launched a massive media campaign, "Save Our Beaches", which conflict had made its way to the State Supreme Court.

Mr. Matson directed a question to Chief Scott Melanson, City of Fellsmere, if the North County Greenway phase was the type of detailed plan envisioned.

Chief Melanson responded affirmatively and commented per area, North County probably had more bicycle riders than anywhere else in the County. He stated this was due to a large amount of public were migrant workers without automobiles.

A discussion ensued regarding obtaining resources in the Spanish language to include information on "Share the Road" safety regulations.

Mr. Matson opened a discussion with regard to including a chapter in the plan on recommended safety improvements in regards to biking and traffic.

Extensive brainstorming ensued concerning marketing opportunities, fund raising, potential sponsorships, partnerships and ownerships of some of the design projects including landscaping.

Mr. Matson commented he would incorporate some of the discussed ideas into the presentation to the Board of County Commissioners.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding working with the water control districts to gain their participation in the Greenway Plan.

Mr. Jones inquired about what needed to be done on a volunteer basis to immediately improve the mountain bike trails discussed at the airport loop.

Mr. Olson responded the access points needed to be defined, the trails needed volunteer maintenance and redesign to ensure sustainability, issues worked out with law enforcement regarding ATV debates and to set up trail head locations.

Mr. Matson added either the City recreation or airport department would submit a site plan for the area to the City Community Development department.

Mr. Matson announced the Greenway Plan design was to be discussed in open roundtable type discussions with the Parks and Recreation Committee and the Garden Club, with final approval coming before the MPO.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.