

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

A meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 10, 2011, in the County Administration Building, 1800 27th Street, Building B, Room B1-501, Vero Beach, Florida.

Present were: Chairman **Bob Solari, Wesley Davis, Peter O'Bryan** and **Joe Flescher**, Commissioners, IRC; **Richard Gillmor** and **Andrea Coy**, Council Members, City of Sebastian; **Craig Fletcher**, Councilmember, City of Vero Beach; **Susan Adams** (arrived at 10:05 a.m.), Mayor, City of Fellsmere; **Al Davis**, IRC School District (arrived at 10:10 a.m.); **Richard Dunlop**, Councilmember, Non-voting member, Town of Orchid; and **Marjorie Hilaire**, FDOT District 4 Representative.

Absent were: **Gary Wheeler**, Commissioner, IRC; **Brian Heady**, Councilmember, City of Vero Beach; **Eugene Wolff**, Council Member, City of Sebastian; **Dick Haverland**, Councilman, Town of Indian River Shores; and **Jeff Pegler**, IRC School Board (all excused).

Also present were IRC staff: Phil Matson, IRC MPO Director; Chris Mora, Public Works Director; Bob Keating, Community Development Director; Jeanne Bresett, Traffic Analyst; Brian Freeman, MPO Senior Planner; Sharon Schalm, MPO Staff Assistant III; Darcy Vasilas, Commissioner Assistant, District 3 and Laura Vasquez, Commissioner Assistant, District 2.

Others present: Julianne Price, Florida Department of Health; Lisa Frazier, Kimley-Horn and Associates; Henry Stephens, Scripps News/Press Journal; Eric Menger, City of Vero Beach Municipal Airport; Walter Geiger, Roberto Martin, Julia San Miguel, Renee Renzi, Fred Mensing, Honey Minuse, Charles Fernandez, Brian Carman, Ken Daige, John Marr, Paul Tanner, Rich Votapka, Bob Inhoff, Don N. Henry, Haynes McDaniel, Carl Rantz, Herb Whittall, David Ederer, Bob Webster, Chuck Mechling, Tom McCarthy, Jr., Hildie Tripson, Barbara Drndak, Stephen J. Sczurek, Billy and Doris Murphy, Interested Citizens.

Call to Order

Chairman Solari called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes of the June 8, 2011 MPO Meeting – *Action Required*

ON MOTION BY Commissioner Flescher, SECONDED BY Commissioner Davis, the members voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the minutes from the June 8, 2011 Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting as presented.

Status Report of MPO Advisory Committees – *No Action Required*

Mr. Matson referred to his memorandum dated August 3, 2011, included in the agenda packet and on file in the Commission Office.

Approval of Resolution Authorizing the Execution of the 2011/2012 Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund Planning Grant Agreement – *Action Required*

Mr. Matson summarized on January 1, 2000, the Indian River County MPO officially became the county's Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA). In its capacity as the DOPA, the MPO was responsible for executing grant agreements for administering the transportation disadvantaged program. For FY 2011/2012, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) allocated \$19,875 for transportation disadvantaged planning-related services. In order to receive these funds, the MPO must approve the proposed resolution authorizing the execution of the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund Planning Grant Agreement.

ON MOTION BY Commissioner Flescher, SECONDED BY Council Member Gillmor, the members voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the Resolution authorizing the execution of the 2011/2012 Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund Planning Grant Agreement as submitted.

Status Report of MPO Staff Activities – *No Action Needed*

Mr. Matson reviewed his memorandum dated August 3, 2011, contained in the agenda packet and on file in the Commission Office.

Mayor Adams arrived at 10:05 a.m.

Consideration of Consultant Rankings for General Planning Consultants for the Indian River County MPO - Action Required

Mr. Matson related at its February 9, 2011 meeting, the MPO authorized staff to begin the consultant selection process for obtaining General Planning Consultant (GPC) services for the Indian River County MPO. Subsequently, staff developed and advertised a Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) for General Planning Consultant services. The RLI included both highway planning tasks and transit planning tasks. Seven consultant firms had responded to the RLI.

Because of the large number of responses, the Indian River County MPO consultant selection committee met and developed two "shortlists", one for the Highways GPC and one for the Transit GPC. The same three firms appear as the top ranked firms on both shortlists. Those firms were requested to make brief presentations to the consultant selection committee on July 25, 2011.

After considering the presentations, the selection committee ranked the consultants. The committee chose Kimley-Horn and Associates as the top ranked Highway and Systems GPC and Stanley Consultants as the top ranked Transit, Intermodal and Special Studies GPC. Staff recommended that the MPO approve the Consultant Selection Committee's rankings; authorize staff to negotiate contracts with the top ranked consultants; authorize the MPO Chairman to execute the contracts with the top ranked firms; and authorize the MPO Staff Director to issue Work Orders to the GPC's up to the amount of \$10,000.

ON MOTION BY Council Member Gillmor, SECONDED BY Commissioner Davis, the members voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the Consultant Selection Committee's rankings; authorize staff to negotiate contracts with the top ranked consultants; authorize the Metropolitan Planning Organization Chairman to execute the contracts with the top ranked firms; and authorize the Metropolitan Planning Organization Staff Director to issue Work Orders to the General Planning Consultants up to the amount of \$10,000.

Mr. Al Davis, IRC School District Representative, arrived at 10:10 a.m.

Consideration of the MPO's 2011 Priority Projects Report

Mr. Matson summarized the MPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan included an adopted cost feasible list of improvements that will meet the projected needs of the county through the year 2035. To implement these improvements, the MPO each year must rank and place projects in an annual Priority Projects Report and submit this report to FDOT. FDOT then uses the MPO's lists of unfunded priorities in developing the next five year work program. He proceeded to give a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office.

ON MOTION BY Commissioner Flescher, SECONDED BY Commissioner Davis, the members voted unanimously (9-0) to approve the Metropolitan Planning Organization's 2011 Priority Projects Report as presented.

Request to Approve Maintenance Agreement for Automated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Software – Action Required

Mr. Matson presented Task 3.3 of the current FY 2010/11 – 2011/12 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) indicates that the MPO will explore automation options for making the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) more user-friendly and accessible. In so doing, the MPO will reduce the time it takes to produce and update the annual TIP by establishing a direct, real-time link to FDOT's work program.

Recently, the five MPO's of FDOT District IV undertook an analysis of the available automated TIP software products. That analysis resulted in the endorsement of one product, *Interactive TIP* produced by Data Transfer Solutions of Orlando, as the district-wide standard. In conjunction with the five MPO's in the District, FDOT was able to negotiate an annual software license fee of \$7,200 per MPO for the product. To assist in the implementation of the product, FDOT has offered to pay for initial startup costs.

ON MOTION BY Commissioner Davis, SECONDED BY Commissioner Flescher, the members voted unanimously (9-0) to approve the maintenance agreement with Data Transfer Solutions in the amount of \$7,200 as presented.

Reconsideration of MPO Resolution Supporting Passenger Rail Service on the FEC Rail Corridor – *Action Required*

Chairman Solari explained the idea of Amtrak coming down the east coast of Florida was initially pushed by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council about two years ago. At that meeting he asked for some financial information and there was none available. The project was approved and resolutions of support were obtained from as many counties and municipalities as possible. As the project moved along, he continued to try to get financial information, but to no avail.

Chairman Solari pointed out this project was not high-speed rail. It was also not a commuter train as there would only be one opportunity per day to go in either direction. He questioned how an elected official would fulfill his fiduciary duty to his constituents if he voted to commit nearly \$300 million of taxpayer dollars before financial information was provided to the public at large.

The information Chairman Solari included in the agenda was reviewed, which is on file in the Commission Office, explaining his opposition to moving forward with the Amtrak project. One of the concerns he mentioned was the subsidized money provided for the GoLine public bus transportation system may be partially directed toward Amtrak and he felt the ridership of the GoLine, approximately 840,000 last year, were people who needed public transportation as the majority were elderly, students, or people that did not have a car and were going to work. He did not want to jeopardize the GoLine money for Amtrak money.

Commissioner Davis questioned the statement in Chairman Solari's presentation he received from FDOT:

“The related subsidy cost defined by Amtrak to correlate with a 23% cost recovery percentage is similar to the farebox return for most major transit systems in Florida.”

Chairman Solari clarified the 23% was the revenues coming in from the sales of food, beverages, and ticket revenue and there was a 77% subsidy. That would total 23% of the dollars necessary to keep Amtrak operating. His interpretation was that 23% did not include any pay back of the \$250 million in capital costs.

Council Member Coy asked to hear from the public first before sharing her comments.

Chairman Solari opened the public discussion and the following people spoke:

Bob Webster was in favor of supporting Amtrak. He felt it was important for the future development of Vero Beach.

Walter Geiger was against supporting Amtrak. He did not feel Indian River County could financially support the service.

Duane Reynolds related he was a former Amtrak conductor. He explained the Amtrak system being proposed was single rail and to make a train service successful, a system must be double rail. Therefore, he did not support the Amtrak system being proposed.

Carl Rantz was in favor of supporting Amtrak.

Fred Mensing distributed information to the committee, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office. He reviewed train schedules from current Amtrak service locations as well as train history. He was in favor of supporting Amtrak.

Haynes McDaniel thanked Chairman Solari for all the work he had done on this issue. He felt inner city train service was needed in Indian River County and he knew the financial returns on passenger train service was low and in most cases operated at a loss. Another point he made was as taxpayers, we all were paying for Interstate 95 which was one of the deadliest highways where more people were killed per mile driving that road to Miami than any other road in the United States. Having the Amtrak service would hopefully improve the safety in travel to Miami.

David Ederer expressed his support of Amtrak and opined it would help revitalize the downtown of Vero Beach.

Ken Daige agreed with Chairman Solari that more definite financial figures needed to be provided but pointed out Amtrak service had been in the works for a long time and the local business owners were in favor of having the service and we needed to keep moving forward.

Renee Renzi stated she was in favor of having Amtrak service in Indian River County and opined it would add to our tourist attractions.

Paul Tanner related he had spent many hours reviewing the data and had also had great difficulty in obtaining concrete financial information. He continued

the projected versus the actual cost to build, operate and maintain; and projected versus actual ridership, job creation, and revenue generation was shocking in the disparity between the actual figures and the pie-in-the sky projections by those who avoid reality in favor of fantasy. He opined the responsibility of the MPO was to accurately assess and model legitimate travel demand, analyze intersection capacity, and plan for the future well-being of the community which requires factual data. He could see no justification whatsoever for moving forward with this project.

Richard Votapka related he was a registered professional engineer and rides Amtrak frequently. He addressed the issues Chairman Solari mentioned opposing the Amtrak project, in particular, the financial aspects. He pointed out we still needed to invest in our infrastructure, transportation, railroads and passenger service.

Richard Bialoski did not feel this was the appropriate forum for objecting to the Amtrak project. He opined if the station was rejected for Vero Beach, the same tax dollars would be spent for another location. It would be more advantageous to have the station here, bringing in more business to the area.

Greg Burke agreed to the comments made by Mr. Bialoski and expressed his desire to keep the project on the table to continue the process.

Kathleen Prouty, representing Mainstreet Vero Beach, stated on behalf of the business and property owners within the Mainstreet Organization downtown, they fully supported the Amtrak project and using the old, historic train station already in place.

Hilde Tripson, president of the Indian River County Historical Society, and as a private citizen, expressed her support of the Amtrak project. She pointed out all the reasons Amtrak was needed in Vero Beach, as stated in Resolution 2009-05 in support of the project. This document is included in the agenda packet and on file in the Commission Office.

Eleanor McAdams explained she was a proponent of railroads and supported the Amtrak project.

Chuck Mechling reviewed the financial aspect of proceeding with the Amtrak project. To move forward, he questioned if there were any solid numbers as to the cost to the taxpayers and municipalities. He hoped the project could be completed without having to be supported primarily with tax subsidies.

Barbara Drndak related a trip she had taken where Amtrak was considered for transportation but it was cost prohibitive and took several days as opposed to an airline flight in a few hours. She did not feel the project was necessary.

Chairman Solari then turned the meeting back to the MPO for their comments.

Commissioner Davis felt the project should move forward.

Commissioner Flescher also continued with his original support of the project.

Council Member Coy presented facts concerning the Amtrak ridership in Okeechobee, Florida (population 5,300) of 3,297 in 2008. She felt it was premature to make any decision right now about withdrawing support for something that we don't have the facts on how much it was going to cost. We're not committing to spending any money; we were just committing our interest.

Commissioner O'Bryan addressed those present who were concerned about the financial impacts of the Amtrak project stating he wished they were as concerned about the financial costs of the current road projects being done. He pointed out in the MPO meeting minutes just approved from the June 8, 2011 meeting, the MPO unanimously approved the FY 2011-2016 Transportation Improvement Program in the amount of \$220.5 million. An additional \$89.5 million went in from an advancement for Interstate 95; so a total of \$310 million was committed to about 18.7 miles of asphalt. That was done with no investment grade plan; it was voted upon unanimously; and nobody asked what the cost was for the project.

Commissioner O'Bryan continued we did look at if the project was financially feasible and according to staff, in our Five Year Plan, we will have to borrow \$55 million and increase our gas tax to pay for that plan. If there was an investment grade business plan done on our Five Year Transportation Improvement Plan, it would show no return of capital and no revenue. If it were a really good plan, it would factor in the cost of increased admissions by adding all the capacity; it would include the cost of the death and disability that occurs on Interstate 95; it would include the cost of our continuing battle to get foreign oil. He felt those costs should be factored into the model. Alternative forms of transportation needed to be looked at instead of the federal government driving the one person per one vehicle which has caused the continued expansion of roads.

Commissioner O'Bryan stated that current zoning existed in the City of Vero Beach that would allow for some relatively good re-development. He pointed out both the South Regional Planning Council and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council were awarded a \$4 million HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) grant to create a super region by combining the two regional areas and coming up with a sustainable blue print for the community. This has occurred because HUD, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Highway Administration all have collaborated and are willing to direct money and fund the super regional areas. Because of this funding, he opined it would make it more favorable to continue receiving the funding for GoLine because we were part of an additional transit connection within a seven county region.

Council Member Gillmor thanked Chairman Solari for all the work he put into this matter but could not support his viewpoint. He pointed out oil would not be getting any cheaper as it continues to be harder to obtain. Therefore, there will come a point where we will be forced to look at alternative transportation. This Amtrak project was just one more cog in the wheel of our intermodal transportation this committee really needed to look at.

Mayor Adams related she rode the Amtrak passenger rail from Palatka to Wilson, North Carolina, two years ago. She agreed it may not be the ideal mode of transportation for everyone, but those people who want or need to use the system, would do so. The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council would be making recommendations and it was up to us as a local government to take into consideration what they suggest and then implement the rules that we want. If Vero Beach does not want high density around the train station, they would not get it. She also mentioned there had been no discussion of taking money from the GoLine to go toward Amtrak and felt that argument was fear mongering at this time.

Councilmember Fletcher stated the City of Vero Beach does want to have the Amtrak station. He did agree with Chairman Solari although on the lack of firm financial information available.

Chairman Solari stated since he would not receive the support from the committee, he would not make the second part of his presentation. He thanked everyone present for their comments and the open communication.

Review of MPO Certification Statement – *No Action Required*

Mr. Matson summarized as required by federal regulations, FDOT and the Indian River County MPO annually conduct a joint certification review of the MPO's transportation planning process to ensure that the MPO is adhering to all applicable laws and regulations. Recently, MPO and FDOT staff met to conduct the 2011 certification review. Subsequently, FDOT approved the MPO certification statement and checklist. To finalize the MPO certification process, the certification statement was approved administratively by MPO staff. This action requires the MPO Staff Director to provide a status report of this action to the MPO as an informational item and no action was required.

Quarterly Status Report of MPO Staff Activities – *No Action Required*

Mr. Matson related his Quarterly Status Report was included in the agenda packet and was informational only. This report is on file in the Commission Office.

Other Business

Mr. Matson related Mr. Herb Whittall, member of the MPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), wished to address this board. Mr. Whittall submitted photographs of dead palm trees on State Road 60 and related the CAC passed a motion to authorize the MPO to take some action on contacting FDOT to remedy this situation and to request before doing any landscaping, to obtain approval from MPOCAC and/or the MPO. The photographs were added to the agenda packet and are on file in the Commission Office.

Chairman Solari asked that Mr. Matson meet with him prior to the next MPO meeting to determine what ways the MPO could have some input into the landscaping prior to it being done.

Mr. Whittall interjected that Mr. Matson had contacted FDOT and they had indicated they would replace the 110 dead palms by mid-September. He would like a different type of tree to be used instead of what he felt was unsightly curved palms.

Comments from the Public

There were none.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.