A meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee (MPO TAC) was held at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, January 27, 2006, First Floor Conference Room “A”, County Administration Building, 1840 25th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

Present were Chairman Robert Keating, Community Development Director; James Davis, Public Works Director; Chris Mora, Traffic Engineer; Jason Brown, Office of Management and Budget Director (10:25 a.m.); Sgt. James Stewart, Sheriff's Department; Karen Wood, Community Transportation Coordinator, Council on Aging; Kathleen Geyer, Transportation Director, School Board, IRC; Maria Aguilar, Town Manager, Town of Orchid; William Schauman, Public Safety Director, Town of Indian River Shores; Monte Falls, Public Works and Engineering Director; Tim McGarry, Planning Director, and Eric Menger, Airport Director, City of Vero Beach; Jason Nunemaker, City Manager, City of Fellsmere; Brian Grzesiak, Engineering Department, City of Sebastian, and Larry Hymowitz, Office of Modal Development, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 4 Office.

Also present were IRC staff: Phil Matson, MPO Staff Director; Abigail Knight, MPO Staff Assistant III, and Victoria Phillips, Staff Assistant IV.

Absent were Terry Hill, Public Works Director; Rebecca Grohall, Growth Management Director, Jason Milewski, Airport Director, City of Sebastian, and Thomas Mulligan, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (excused).

Call to Order

Chairman Keating called the meeting to order, at which time it was determined a quorum was present.

Annual Election of Officers

ON MOTION by Mr. Davis, SECONDED by Mr. Menger, the members voted unanimously (14-0) to reelect Bob Keating Chairman of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee for 2006.
ON MOTION by Sgt. Stewart, SECONDED by Ms. Aguilar, the members voted unanimously (14-0) to reelect Chris Mora Vice Chairman of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee for 2006.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Keating asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the joint meeting of the MPO Citizens Advisory Committee and the MPOTAC of December 6, 2005. There were none.

ON MOTION by Mr. Falls, SECONDED by Mr. Menger, the members voted unanimously (14-0) to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2005 joint meeting of the MPO Citizens Advisory Committee and the MPO Technical Advisory Committee as presented.

Review of Scope of Services for Central Indian River County/Vero Beach Greenways Plan

Mr. Matson came forward with a PowerPoint presentation of the Central County Greenways Plan, a copy of which is on file in the County Commission Office. He explained a greenway was a corridor of linear open space protected or regulated for public interest purposes, and value was added by putting in a trail or paved bicycle path.

Mr. Hymowitz wondered if the consultant was going to define the difference between greenbelts versus greenways as part of the Scope and come up with typical sections. He felt it was important so that everyone could see the type of facilities which could fit in according to the location. Mr. Matson said he would like to have a certain level of specificity from the consultant, such as a map showing the amount of right-of-way, to determine whether a bicycle path could be put in.

Mr. Nunemaker remarked it was a very good project, and wondered what was going to be done to coordinate existing improvements into the system, and if there was going to be a greenbelt along State Road (S.R.) 60. Mr. Matson explained the Bicycle Pedestrian (Bikeped) Plan limited itself to existing roadways, but if a developer wanted to build, the Bikeped Plan would indicate a sidewalk or bicycle lane needed to be added.

Mr. Keating interjected one of the opportunities identified was the 82nd Avenue project, from County Road 510 down to S.R. 60, because the existing
travel way was going to be abandoned and an attractive greenway could go along the canal.

Mr. Hymowitz inquired if the project was going to be issued under one of the General Planning Consultants (GPCs). Mr. Matson responded he thought it would be going out to bid because he was not sure any of the GPCs had that type of expertise. He remarked after doing some research, it seemed the cost would be around $80,000.

Mr. Hymowitz asked when the project was going to be advertised. Mr. Matson informed him it would be within a couple of days after the February 8th MPO meeting.

Mr. Nunemaker wondered if the County’s recreation impact fees could be used to pay for the consultant. Mr. Keating remarked this would have to be looked into because it was an excellent suggestion. Mr. Matson stated funding sources were a big part of it, and he would specifically add recreational impact fees to the Scope.

Mr. Davis inquired if Florida Power & Light’s easement corridors would be checked into. Mr. Matson responded affirmatively, and remarked he had a list of interested parties which he believed included public utilities; however, he would double check to make sure.

Mr. Davis asked about the Mosquito Control District impoundment dikes. Mr. Keating stated staff had been looking into it with respect to many of the conservation areas the County owned to the south of the City; however, most were located outside of the geographic area of this particular project.

ON MOTION by Mr. Falls, SECONDED by Mr. Nunemaker, the members voted unanimously (14-0) to recommend the MPO approve the Scope of Services for Central Indian River County/Vero Beach Greenways Plan as presented.

Status Report of Other MPO Advisory Committees

Included in the backup on file in the County Commission Office. He indicated the next MPO Citizens Advisory Committee meeting was going to be a joint meeting with the MPO Bicycle Advisory Committee (MPOBAC).
Other Business

Mr. Nunemaker wondered if any discussions had taken place about passenger rail service. Mr. Matson related five years ago, Amtrak had proposed a very ambitious growth plan, but part of the funding had been taken away by the federal government. He explained Amtrak had never operated at a profit and always required a very large public subsidy.

Mr. Matson commented since Amtrak now was going to consolidate its resources into the more profitable routes, the prospects of Amtrak’s growth were very dim.

Mr. Matson explained the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) had been looking into passenger rail service. He noted for years they did not want to consider it because it had presented an obstacle to their logistics of running their freight, there were liability issues, and it was not profitable. Mr. Matson commented the southeast Florida FEC authority had been established by the legislature to run Tri-Rail and study FEC utilization in South Florida.

Mr. Matson indicated Tri-Rail was in negotiation stages with Martin County, but it would not occur before 2010 at the very earliest, and eventually, there was the possibility of Tri-Rail becoming an FEC-type regional rail service.

Mr. Matson continued a couple of the MPOCAC members had raised the prospect of FEC playing a small role in running a passenger line to downtown Sebastian, Vero Beach and Ft. Pierce. He felt it was a very innovative idea, and even if it had a lot of logistical obstacles, it could be studied at some point in time.

A discussion followed.

Mr. Matson believed FEC wanted a few sections of double tracking somewhere between Vero Beach and Sebastian in order to keep operating, and he understood FDOT had been setting aside money for station improvements on the FEC. Mr. Hymowitz remarked to the best of his knowledge the funds were still there, but if something was going to be done, FDOT would have acknowledged that to the MPO. Mr. Matson indicated it was about $500,000 which FDOT had set aside for Indian River County, Stuart, Ft. Pierce and a couple of other communities to make station improvements, and keeping it aside for Tri-Rail extension might not be a bad idea.

Mr. Hymowitz recommended if the counties and cities were serious about developing plans for stations around those areas, it should be identified as a potential strategy to capture the rails, because it would be unlikely funds would be obtained without some type of strategy.
Comments from the Public

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.