

**MEETING MINUTES  
BROWARD METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
BOARD ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

**Thursday, January 13, 2022, 9:30 a.m.  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Board Members in Attendance**

**District 1:** Joshua Simmons, City of Coral Springs; Antonio Arserio, City of Margate; Rich Walker, City of Parkland; Ana Ziade, City of North Lauderdale

**District 2:** Sandy Johnson, City of Lighthouse Point; Andrea McGee, City of Pompano Beach; Sandra Welch, City of Coconut Creek; Irene Kirdahy, Town of Hillsboro Beach

**District 3:** Dean Trantalis, City of Fort Lauderdale; Robert McKinzie, City of Fort Lauderdale; Lynn Stoner, City of Plantation; Lawrence Martin, City of Lauderhill; Joseph Scutto, City of Sunrise; Beverly Williams, City of Lauderdale Lakes

**District 4:** Caryl Shuham, City of Hollywood; Lori Lewellen, City of Dania Beach

**District 5:** Frank Ortis, City of Pembroke Pines; Yvette Colbourne, City of Miramar; Felicia Brunson, City of West Park; Bob Hartmann, Town of Southwest Ranches; Howard Meltzer, City of Cooper City; William Hodgkins, Town of Pembroke Park

**School Board of Broward County:** Patricia Good, Broward County School Board Member

**Broward County Board of County Commissioners:** Lamar Fisher, Beam Furr, and Michael Udine

**Broward MPO Staff**

Greg Stuart, Executive Director

Alan Gabriel, General Counsel

Bryan Caletka, Director of Transportation

Christopher Bross, Mark Brown, Derek Brown, Charlene Burke, Paul Calvaresi, Juan Canez, Jihong Chen, Amanda Christon, James Cromar, William Cross, Renee Cross, Khyra Everette, Karen Friedman, Stephanie Garcia, Carmella George, Peter Gies, Ricardo Gutierrez, Carol Henderson, Vilma Hurtado, Adrian Liburd, Kerrie MacNeil, Darci Mayer, Fazal Qureshi, Benjamin Restrepo, Christopher Restrepo, Andrew Riddle, Jad Salloum, Levi Stewart, Jose Vera, Lydia Waring, Veleta Williams

**Also Present**

Steve Braun, Maria Jaimes, Cesar Martinez, and Juliette Valencia; Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

Victoria Williams, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE)

Lisa Barkovic and Lauri Hettinger, Holland & Knight

Mike Ciscar and Lukas Simons, Corradino Group

Jaime Lopez and Phil Schwab, RS&H

Todd Brauer, Whitehouse Group

**1. Welcome**

Bryan Caletka of MPO Staff welcomed all present to the 2021 Board Engagement Forum at 9:30 a.m.

## **2. Meet Our Staff**

Mr. Caletka showed a video introducing Broward MPO Staff.

## **3. Meet Our Board**

Mr. Caletka showed a video introducing the Broward MPO Board

## **4. Securing Federal Grants**

Paul Calvaresi of MPO Staff introduced the MPO's federal advocacy team, Lisa Barkovic and Lauri Hettinger of Holland & Knight, who provided an update on activity at the federal level. Ms. Barkovic reported that Congressional action has been focused on the Build Back Better plan, which remains in negotiation. It is possible that this infrastructure bill may be broken into components for passage.

Ms. Barkovic continued that the country is operating on a Continuing Resolution (CR) through February 18, 2022. Discussions between Appropriations and Congressional leadership are ongoing to complete action on a year-end omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2022, which will be followed by the appropriations process for FY 2023. There is a possibility that the CR may continue throughout the year.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has indicated that the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant, formerly known as the BUILD or TIGER grant, will open on January 14, 2022. In February, USDOT will focus on other grant opportunities, including Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awards for pending FY 2021 bus facilities.

Ms. Hettinger added that as USDOT has creating new programs for inclusion in the infrastructure bill, Holland & Knight will share this information with the MPO's Intergovernmental Affairs team so they may provide input.

Mr. Calvaresi showed a PowerPoint presentation on the fundamentals and strategies of how to apply for federal grant funds. There are several federal programs that apply to a variety of potential projects. There are also MPO competitive programs, such as the Complete Streets and other Localized Initiatives Program (CSLIP), the Planning Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), and others. Much of the same data and resources required to successfully apply for federal grants also apply to these MPO application processes.

The new transportation bill, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), includes funding for transit, large-scale infrastructure, climate change, and resiliency, among other components. The intent is to focus on a goal-oriented planning approach: rather than receiving a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and seeking a project that fits the specification, the MPO works in the opposite direction by looking at the member entities' goals, working through their plans toward these goals, and then finding a grant that fits them.

When seeking grant funding, an organization should ask itself:

- Does the project align with the criteria of the grant(s)?
- Do public benefits exceed the cost?
- Is there strong support for the project?
- Are there adequate matching funds?
- Are there time and resources to apply?

Before applying for a grant, the necessary documentation should be reviewed to ensure the environmental risk approvals have been met, there is a project schedule, the benefits are quantifiable, and there is support from local and regional stakeholders. Another important consideration is whether or not the project can afford to wait for federal funding.

The general framework of a grant application includes:

- Narrative
- Data supporting the narrative
- Benefit cost analysis
- Eight- to twelve-week application process
- Time of submitting the application itself

Once the application has been submitted, the application must be promoted through engagement with the local Congressional delegation, including education of their staff so they are familiar with the project. It is also necessary to work with both USDOT and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff to gain their support.

The Broward MPO develops long-range planning documents in which projects for which grant funds are sought must appear. The MPO can also facilitate coordination between state, county, and local agencies. Mr. Calvaresi cautioned against multiple entities applying for the same grant, as USDOT prefers to spread out grant funding across different geographic areas. The best local application is the one that will be submitted.

Because federal grants use federal dollars, and the MPO is federally funded, they are not permitted to use MPO funds as matching funds for projects. These must come from other state and local dollars.

The MPO hopes to submit a single RAISE grant application during the coming cycle, with the full support of the entire county behind it. Collaboration between regional partners is a key aspect of this process, as Broward will be competing with other agencies throughout the nation.

The MPO's core products include the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is a 25-year cost-feasible plan divided into six funding programs and including regionally significant projects. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a five-year program that contains MTP projects and can include non-regionally significant projects. Any grant application project must be included in one of these two documents.

If a project is not already in one of these plans, it may be added by amendment; however, the amendment process for both documents is very long. Steps include meeting with MPO Staff, submitting a formal written request for amendment, demonstrating project readiness and financial feasibility, identifying funding, submission of the amendment by project sponsors, and MPO Staff evaluation.

Mayor Ziade advised that when two cities wish to undertake a joint project, this is seen as more favorable when applying for federal grant funds.

#### **5. Report from Partner Agencies – Florida Department of Transportation – Broward Commuter Rail (BCR) Project Development & Environmental (PD&E) Study**

Steve Braun of FDOT and Phil Schwab, consultant manager representing RS&H, showed a PowerPoint presentation on the Broward Commuter Rail (BCR) project, which presents an opportunity to increase transit ridership throughout the region.

Mr. Schwab briefly reviewed the history of the project, which has been an unfunded need for some time. The original Tri-Rail Coastal Link project originally included Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, but was paused because there were no local matching funds at the time. Miami-Dade then began advancing their Northeast Corridor project from Aventura to Downtown Miami, which is currently in the project development phase with the FTA. The Broward portion of this project extends from Aventura to Deerfield Beach along the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor.

This project is intended to support the growing population as well as address traffic congestion resulting from that population increase. It will also complement and incentivize transit-oriented development (TOD) in metropolitan areas. Significant analysis and coordination have already taken place, particularly regarding the potential New River crossing and stations. Studies began last year when Broward County and FDOT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that helped outline the prospective roles and responsibilities for these two agencies.

According to the MOU, FDOT's job is to manage the project development and environmental (PD&E) studies as well as making recommendations for station locations. This includes screening of potential stations as well as coordination with local entities. They are also developing an alternatives analysis for the New River crossing, considering east-west traffic analysis, and analyzing potential effects, mitigation, and track work such as signalization, safety, and station amenities. The overall goal is to maintain eligibility for federal funding.

Broward County is a funding partner on this project, which means they also have a stake in its completion. They are responsible for stakeholder outreach, particularly at station locations, and building consensus on choices for the project. They will also be responsible for negotiating track access agreements, design and construction, and operations and maintenance (O&M) for the corridor. They are working in conjunction with FDOT to develop the finance plan, including identification of local funds for capital costs as well as O&M. The project itself is intended to help reduce congestion and make transit more viable for prospective riders by offering mobility options and improving travel times.

A public workshop is scheduled for January 27, 2022 in two virtual sessions, as well as one in-person session on January 31, 2022 at the Broward Center. The meeting format will include a formal presentation, a question-and-answer session, and exhibits. There are six technical recommendations for stations at general locations, as well as New River crossing alternatives and potential capital and O&M cost projections. Broward County will present the source of funds as well as their expectations for the project.

Much of the work done over the past year will move the project forward for recommendation of a locally preferred alternative (LPA). This is critical in order to move the project into FTA's project development process, which includes the formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process with FTA.

The LPA has several components, many of which have already identified through previous planning studies. These include:

- Mode: commuter rail transit
- Technology: heavy rail
- Station locations: six prospective general locations
- Alignment: FEC railway corridor using the Brightline passenger rail easement

There are four alternatives for crossing the New River:

- Low-level bascule bridge
- Mid-level bascule bridge
- High-level fixed bridge
- Tunnel

Each of these alternatives has different impacts, costs, and benefits involving both vehicular and marine traffic. After hearing more feedback at the upcoming workshop, FDOT will make a recommendation that considers both technical aspects and funding. The recommendation will be presented to the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, which will select and approve an LPA. The MPO will also be asked to approve and endorse the LPA so the project may enter the FTA's project development phase. The FTA will be the lead federal agency for the project.

Once the project has entered the project development phase, the LPA will be further refined and there will be more federal agency coordination. Stakeholder engagement will continue throughout the project development and NEPA processes. Outreach will culminate with a public hearing at which all environmental and engineering analyses will be presented on the refined LPA, which will be compared to the "no-build" alternative. The MPO and Broward County will determine whether or not the project moves forward with a build alternative.

The project development phase will assign project manager oversight and financial manager oversight, which focuses on how risks are addressed. This is important for the Capital Improvement Grant (CIG) program, known as New Starts. The project development phase will complete the environmental review, and financial review will need to move forward as well so the project can be put into the fiscally constrained Transportation Plan. This is necessary for NEPA approval and completion of the environmental engineering analysis and allows the project to compete for the CIG program under New Starts.

Mr. Schwab reviewed the project's current timeline:

- January: virtual and in-person meetings
- February: recommendation of an LPA to the Broward County Board of County Commissioners
- Early spring: vote by the County to select the LPA
- Spring: approval of an amendment to the MTP to fund the next phase of the project
- Spring: begin project development phase
- Summer: complete environmental and engineering analyses
- Summer: continue development of a finance plan with public engagement
- Early 2023: public hearing following the NEPA process and the securing of federal funding commitments by next spring in order to compete in the next grant funding cycle

Commissioner Hodgkins requested more information regarding the selection process for stations. Mr. Schwab replied that the team has done an extensive preliminary station report, which is available on the project website. This review included consideration of cities, as well as coordination with these cities to identify planned densities, development, and connectivity in the prospective areas. The target distance between

stations is approximately 2.5 miles. The final decision on stations will be left to the County Commissioners, and infill stations may be added in the future.

Mayor Trantalis asserted that he has fully embraced the concept of commuter rail between Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties; however, it is important to determine if the project is economically feasible. He noted that cost projections for the project must be consistent with ridership expectations in order to justify federal and state funding. He was not aware of these expectations and how they translate into appropriate costs.

Mayor Trantalis continued that the New River crossing is of particular concern to Fort Lauderdale, primarily due to the marine industry located upriver. He emphasized that the city did not wish to make any decisions that would interfere with this enterprise. He pointed out that the cost projections for a tunnel included in the backup materials are approaching \$3 billion, while the project's fall newsletter projects this cost at \$1.8 billion. He requested clarification of how this new figure was determined. Mr. Schwab confirmed that the \$1.8 billion number is more recent and more accurate.

Commissioner Scuotto asked if the movement of the soccer arena in Fort Lauderdale from west to east was taken into consideration when estimating ridership and station locations. Mr. Schwab replied that this did not play a role in calculations.

## **6. Meet the New FDOT Point of Contact for Broward MPO**

Mr. Braun introduced Maria Jaimes of FDOT, who will serve as the Broward MPO's new liaison.

## **7. Municipal Capital Projects (MCPs) Update**

Todd Brauer of the Whitehouse Group provided an update on municipal capital projects (MCPs), including new tools that have been developed to assist in the ranking and recommendation of MCPs.

Mr. Brauer clarified that Cycle 1 MCPs include the original 110 projects ranked for recommendation in the Five-Year Plan. Newer MCPs include new projects and ideas that could come from the next 111 through 510 ranked projects. Any newly submitted MCP must meet eligibility requirements before they are ranked.

Applications may be submitted beginning the second Friday in March, with the intent of providing Broward County with a list of ranked projects and any other recommendations by June 1. At present, the team is focusing on robust communication infrastructure as well as Cycle 1 MCP support.

The team has created a new website, My-MCPS.org, which serves as an access portal to the new MCP application process and includes updates on news and events as well

as templates and educational resources. Mr. Brauer provided a demonstration of how to use the website.

### **8. Demonstration of the MPO's Interactive Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Tool**

Christopher Restrepo of Broward MPO Staff provided a demonstration of the MPO's interactive Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) tool, which allows users to search all projects programmed within their municipalities. The TIP shows all transportation projects for which there are funding commitments for the next five fiscal years in Broward. These may include sidewalks, bike lanes, overpasses, transit, seaport, and other types of transportation projects.

Commissioner Martin noted that some FDOT projects cross multiple municipalities and will show up in all of these cities' reports. Mr. Restrepo confirmed this, explaining that the "omit" function of the interactive tool is designed specifically for these projects.

### **9. Strategic Business Plan Update**

Peter Gies of Broward MPO Staff provided a brief update on the MPO's Strategic Business Plan, which was adopted in 2020. This Plan guides the MPO's planning and policy efforts. It was developed with input from the MPO Board, which was gathered by Staff and incorporated into the document. Its intent is to ensure that the MPO is not only meeting its federal requirements, but is also advancing the goals and objectives of the Board.

Staff establishes two- and five-year success markers and an achievement framework to implement the goals of the Strategic Business Plan. The two-year markers established in 2020 are currently on track for completion in 2022, and all five-year markers are underway as well.

The two-year success markers include the following:

- Establishing a reasonable progress policy
- Establishing the Metropolitan Transportation Engineering Construction Collaborative (MTECC)
- Establishing a process to conduct research and development strategies with respect to climate change and resiliency
- Developing a process for identifying safety improvements through the MTP

The reasonable progress policy requires four components of a project: a Resolution of support, a cost estimate, a scope of work, and proof of collaboration among partners. Once these are established, the reasonable progress policy ensures that the MPO maintains these four program-ready criteria throughout the project's life cycle, from the planning phase through to the design and construction phases. If one of these

components is lost, specific action can be taken to bring the project back on track or establish an alternate plan for the use of its funds on a different ranked priority project.

MTECC is a new independent organization with administrative and professional capabilities which assists the MPO's member governments in delivering locally administered program projects. As FDOT District 4 no longer delivers off-system projects, these were required to be delivered via Local Agency Program (LAP). Based on feedback from the MPO Board, the MPO has made significant strides in establishing MTECC, which is on track to be operational by summer 2022.

The MPO has been working through the 2045 MTP to identify locations that will require mitigation or management of climate change and resiliency stressors. The framework established for this uses a process for identifying specific improvements that must be constructed to mitigate these stressors, which can include drainage improvements, roadway flooding, 100-year rain events, hurricanes, and other concerns. It is hoped that this framework can be finalized in mid-2022. It will become a foundation for the upcoming 2050 MTP.

The safety program addresses both pedestrian/bicycle fatalities or injuries and vehicular crashes. It has become a major priority at both the state and federal levels. The MPO has taken a list of high-priority safety locations, which are identified in the MTP, and developed a framework for identifying projects that will specifically address the issues experienced at each location. This framework relies heavily on interaction with member agencies, including Broward County, FDOT, and local governments.

The five-year success markers include:

- Establishing a system to identify and respond to emergent issues that affect the MPO's work
- Establish a succession plan to mitigate the impact of Staff changes
- Continue to collaborate with partners on new transportation trends and technologies

A process has been established for bringing emerging issues to the MPO Board and its Executive Committee, which provide direction to the organization. When a new problem or stressor arises, the leadership of the Executive Committee and Board help make decisions in response to these issues.

The MPO also makes purchases of "big data" to look at the impacts of changes, such as trends and technology, on transportation. The South Florida region has purchased an anonymized data set which shows travel patterns and trends throughout the Broward region. This helps the MPO to make planning decisions. Other efforts include smart corridor projects and implementation strategies in preparation for automated, connected, and shared vehicle technology. This work will create a foundation for the

emerging technologies task in the 2050 MTP. A preview of this scope of work will be presented at the March 2022 MPO Board meeting.

MPO Executive Director Greg Stuart stated that one of the Broward MPO's most important efforts is to ensure team members have a path forward for succession, which in turn helps the implementation of projects to be seamless over time. This goal has helped consider how Staff is improved throughout the Strategic Business Planning effort, including preparation for turnover.

Mr. Stuart noted that the first major MPO Staff retirement is set to take place at the end of the month. New members are asked to learn some of the skills of different positions to mitigate this loss. A series of successions are expected over the next five to six years. He pointed out that there is also succession among MPO Board members: those members who no longer serve on the Board after some time may wish to leave a legacy as well to ensure consistency in the projects to be developed and improvements to be made in Broward County.

Mr. Caletka also addressed the future of the MPO, pointing out that even when valuable team members are lost, a number of qualified individuals may have the opportunity to move into that position. This in turn creates other openings for highly qualified individuals. He emphasized that there are no instances in the organizational structure in which an outside individual must be hired: there is always someone who can do the job or is in the process of being trained for it.

#### **10. Safe Streets Summit 2022 – Registration is Open! – February 17-18, 2022**

Mr. Stuart advised that 2022 is the ninth year of the Safe Streets Summit, which has grown and added partners over time, including the Palm Beach TPA and the Miami-Dade TPO. This year's event will be held in Miami-Dade with limited attendance due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Interested members are encouraged to register for the event as soon as possible.

There being no further business at this time, the Board Engagement Forum was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 10, 2022**