

MINUTES



October 24, 2024



8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.



Participants

Committee Voting Members

Kandase Lee | Emerald Coast Regional Council
Greg Stuart | Broward MPO
Greg Slay | Capital Region TPA
Johnny Wong | Hillsborough TPO
Alex Trauger | MetroPlan Orlando
Valerie Neilson | Palm Beach TPA
David Hutchinson | Sarasota/Manatee MPO
Peter Buchwald | St. Lucie TPO

Committee Alternate Members

Sean Kingston | Collier MPO
Elizabeth Watkins | Hillsborough TPO
Ricardo Vazquez | Martin MPO
Kevin Walford | Miami-Dade TPO
Andrew Uhler | Palm Beach TPA
Ryan Brown | Sarasota/Manatee MPO

Friends of the Committee

Ron Gogoi | Lee County MPO
Laura Carter | Space Coast TPO

MPOAC Staff

Mark Reichert | MPOAC
Lisa Stone | MPOAC

Other MPO Participants

Paul Flavien | Broward MPO
Dusty Hansen | Collier MPO
Gary Kramer | Emerald Coast Regional Council
Jill Nobles | Emerald Coast Regional Council
Jill Strickler | Emerald Coast Regional Council
Mary Beth Washnock | Emerald Coast Regional Council
Tiffany Bates | Emerald Coast Regional Council

Kyle Simpson | Forward Pinellas
Eric Hill | MetroPlan Orlando
Christopher Rosenberg | Miami-Dade TPO
Mary Tery Vilches-Landa | Miami-Dade TPO
Matthew Masa | Palm Beach TPA

FDOT Participants

Allison McCuddy | FDOT
Amy Beckmann | FDOT
Charlene Ross | FDOT
Diana Elsner | FDOT
Jennifer Fortunas | FDOT
Justin Stroh | FDOT
Kelly Budhu | FDOT
Kia Powell | FDOT
Sarah Van Gundy | FDOT
Stephano Miranda | FDOT
Victoria Peters | FDOT
Victoria Williams | FDOT

FHWA Participants

Curlene Thomas | FHWA
Joseph Sullivan | FHWA
Ronique Bishop | FHWA

Other Participants

Jeff Kramer | CUTR/UCF
Ralph Yoder | Florida Transportation Commission
Rosemary Culhane | InNovo Partners
Brandie Miklus | Pritchett Steinbeck Group
Nicole Estevez | Renaissance Planning
Bob O'Malley | Right Track Public Affairs
Ishan Keskar | Whitehouse Group
Todd Brauer | Whitehouse Group
Tom Brandenstein | Whitehouse Group

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **Johnny Wong (Committee Vice-Chair)** opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present. All attendees were asked to introduce themselves.
2. **The Committee Vice-Chair** requested a motion to approve virtual voting for the committee's voting members. **Greg Slay** made the motion, **Alex Trauger** seconded it, and all were in favor.
3. **The Committee Vice-Chair** requested a motion to approve the April 2024 Meeting Minutes. **Alex Trauger** made the motion, **Christopher Rosenberg** seconded the motion, and all were in favor.
4. **Bob O'Malley** gave the Strategies to Support Passenger Rail presentation. The presentation stressed three main points:
 - a. Working with the Freight Railroads
 - i. Relationships should be built early
 - ii. Clear objectives should be set
 - iii. Agreements should be mutually beneficial
 - b. Cultivating Passenger Rail Champions
 - i. Think beyond jurisdictional boundaries
 - ii. Ensure layered federal, state, and local support
 - iii. Involve the private sector
 - c. Building Public Support
 - i. Develop a comprehensive communications plan
 - ii. Emphasize messaging around jobs, housing, and tourism
 - iii. Promote existing systems
 - iv. Maintain persistence
 - d. Questions and suggestions following the presentation included:
 - i. **The Committee Vice-Chair** inquired how MPO staff could establish relationships and identify funding opportunities. **Bob O'Malley** suggested safety as an effective entry point. He also noted that industrial development is a key opportunity, as freight and rail partners seek rail-served sites and new customers, often requiring local government support for approvals. He advised that emphasizing public benefit would strengthen federal funding and grant competitiveness.
 - ii. **Greg Stuart (Committee Chair)** noted that multiple agreements exist for funding and operations with agencies such as the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and counties. He suggested this committee could help streamline these agreements, facilitate better coordination, educate local leaders on passenger rail, and empower them to become champions.
5. **Nicholas Torres** gave the Passenger Rail Priorities Program (PRPP) Fall 2024 Application Cycle presentation.
 - a. The Passenger Rail Priorities Program (PRPP) is an initiative to provide the Florida MPOs with the opportunity to identify their highest priority passenger rail projects

- and use the MPOAC as a united voice to promote and position these projects for future funding opportunities.
- b. The annual application cycle and project submission requirements of the Program were detailed, and the screening process for eligibility was outlined.
 - c. In addition, the PRPP Pilot results were reviewed. Five applications were received; three projects focused on developing new services, and two on restoring services.
 - d. The presentation highlighted the new PRPP Web Portal, which assigns each application a unique project ID and implements a two-step review process. Each MPO receives its login credentials, enabling it to submit project applications directly through the portal.
 - e. Key dates for the 2024 application cycle were shared:
 - i. October 24, 2024: Application Cycle Opens
 - ii. November 14, 2024: Web Portal Training Session
 - iii. December 12, 2024: Application Window Closes; Review Period Begins
 - iv. January 23, 2025: MPOAC Adopts the Priority List and Submits the List to FDOT
 - f. The presentation concluded with the suggested actions for the January 2025 meeting. These include presenting the 2024 Application Cycle results, voting to adopt the 2024 Cycle Priorities List, and preparing a letter to transmit to FDOT summarizing the key priorities for the year.
 - g. Questions and suggestions following the presentation included:
 - i. **David Hutchinson** asked if Fall 2023 applications are still considered submitted. **Nicholas Torres** confirmed they were and noted that applicants should review their previously submitted applications and confirm them for resubmission in the 2024 Application Cycle. He added that he would work with MPOs to address missing information as needed.
 - ii. **Peter Buchwald** asked if this list would be separate from the freight priority list and which department would receive it. He also inquired about a passenger rail office at the FDOT Central Office and the method of project organization for submission—whether alphabetically or by project. **Nicholas Torres** confirmed that the PRPP list would be separate from the Freight Priority Program list but would likely be submitted through the office’s Freight & Rail Office. He added that he would follow up on identifying a single point of contact and emphasized the importance of establishing connections with district-specific rail contacts. He also explained that the projects are currently organized alphabetically to avoid implying priority.
 - iii. **Dusty Hansen** virtually asked whether local match requirements for grant awards would exist. **Nicholas Torres** suggested that most grant programs typically require a local match but would follow up with the Committee.
 - iv. **The Committee Vice-Chair** asked if there were specific parameters or criteria that USDOT would use to prioritize PRPP projects. **Nicholas Torres** responded that he is developing guidance on the eligibility criteria for DOT’s various passenger rail programs and a methodology to secure funding under various programs.

6. **Mark Reichert (MPOAC Executive Director)** reviewed the Administrative Items.
 - a. Various options for the Freight & Rail Committee meeting time slot were discussed, including holding it the evening before or the morning after the MPOAC meeting.
 - b. The attending Committee members agreed that the current format and time be maintained.
 7. **The Committee Vice-Chair** opened the floor for Public Comments. No public comments were received.
 8. **The Committee Vice-Chair** thanked everyone for attending and concluded the meeting.
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MOTIONS

1. Approval of Virtual Voting for Members of the Committee – **Passed**
 2. Approval of April 2024 Meeting Minutes – **Passed**
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ACTION ITEMS

- Conduct a PRPP Web Portal application creation training session on November 14, 2024.
- Run the 2024 PRPP Cycle with project applications due in December 2024.
- Create the 2024 PRPP Project List and present it to the Committee at the January 2025 FRC meeting.