



Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name: 17th Street Working Group

Date/Time: 7/27/20 1:00 pm (via Zoom)

Attendees:

Commissioner Sorensen, City of Fort Lauderdale
Bob Ledoux, East Coast Railways
Alan Cohen, Assistant County Administrator, Broward County
Natacha Yacinthe, Port Everglades, Broward County
Robert Lochrie, Lochrie & Chakas
Bill Cole, Harbour Inlet Civic Association
Karen Warfel – City of Fort Lauderdale Transportation Planning Program Manager
Alex Heathcock, Community Outreach Coordinator for Commissioner Sorensen
Alex Saiz – Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority
Anthony Fajardo – Fort Lauderdale Sustainable Development
Christina Currie – Rio Vista Civic Association
Marilyn Mammano – Harbordale Civic Association
Jason Kruszka, Chief of Staff Commissioner Ryan
Juan Saavedra, Chief of Staff Commissioner Sorensen
Greg Stuart, Executive Director of the Broward MPO
Andrew Riddle, Broward MPO City Services
Darci Mayer – Broward MPO City Services

Overview of Meeting:

Karen Warfel went through the original top 10 priorities that were established about 3 years ago by the working group and then asked the group “what’s next” in preparation for the Transportation Master Plan that will be kicked-off at the next Commission meeting on August 18.

#1 – Eller Drive Truck Routing – This group worked with the Port to force the Port truck traffic to use Eller Drive instead of US 1. This project resulted in less noticeable truck traffic on US 1. Other Port related projects are included in the Master Plan.

#2 – Event Management – This group worked with FDOT, Port, County, and Convention Center on identifying when events will be taking place, the traffic impacts from the event, and providing communication to the residents and users of the area. The large event list also gets posted by the Commissioner’s office.

#3 – Southern by-pass Road – This group worked on several options: north, south, and 20th Street options, however there was really no traction or support from the residents / property owners for these options. There has also been development occurring within this area that has prohibited it from moving forward. But the by-pass project that will be discussed later will address some of those concerns.

#4 – Shared Use Path Option – This group looked at using the intra-district corridor (IDC) to “flip it” to use it in a different way. Because the [ordinance] language today does not allow public use of the IDC but there would need more ordinance work and working with private property owners to allow the public use of the IDC. Another option is east of Cordova Road to put a shared use path within the existing ROW.

A lot of the strategies were related to the Wave so we will need to look at things differently as we progress into the next strategies.

#5 – I-595 On-Ramp – This project was an early success of the working group. FDOT completed its feasibility study and has started the design; there is ROW that needs to be purchased, which is a lengthy process, which has delayed the schedule but construction is programmed for FY 24.

#6 – Convention Center By-Pass Road – Design is this summer and construction is anticipated for 2023.

#7 – Forming of the Working Group, which has been done and moving forward.

#8a – Wayfinding Signage. Due to budget constraints this project was eliminated from the CIP and would need to be revisited and identified as a priority for the next round.

#8b – Eisenhower and Grande Drive – This group had recent discussion on this project and looked for opportunity for funding, and identify what needs to be done and the feasibility of the improvement.

#9 – Development review to change thresholds of Traffic Study and to make development impact fee more localized. An additional impact fee was not found to be favorable. Advocating to changing the County’s concurrency fee was unsuccessful. Traffic Study thresholds has not changed.

Anthony Fajardo stated that we have been directed to look into changing the threshold for traffic study with input from the Transportation Division.

There were others that were not in the top 10 but are successes of working group:

- FDOT added a traffic signal added at SE 15 Ave and SE 17 St.
- O/D study was completed by Kittelson & Associates.
- FDOT made signal timing improvements helping westbound traffic.
- Broward County and FDOT added LPI (leading pedestrian interval) at Eisenhower Blvd., Cordova, and 10th allowing additional 3 seconds of walk time before green light for vehicles.
- FDOT installed signs on the bridge openings on its schedules (this happened citywide).
- Issues with Academy buses and the Hilton. Karen had no recent updates but believes the issue is resolved.

Christina Currie asked for the timeline for TAM to provide the group with recommendations for #4 Shared Use Paths.

Karen stated that this project is funded by the MPO and it will be 4 years from now before the project is implemented (confirmed by Greg Stuart).

Christina Currie asked for clarification on the location east of Cordova. She stated Ben Rogers provided a presentation on a shared use path on the other side of the bridge and asked if this is a different project. Karen stated that it is a different project, Cordova to the west to SW 4th Ave on the south side of the street (preliminary concept). The first phase of the MPO funding would be for feasibility of the concept (shifting the road). The hope is to connect it to the Flagler Greenway to the FEC.

Christina questioned the wayfinding project and asked if the city has identified any locations where wayfinding would be of value.

Karen stated the city has not looked at specific locations but it is to assist port traffic.

Christina asked what the O/D study conclusions were and did it identify any needs.

Karen stated that it reinforced the need for the by-pass road.

Bill Cole asked about a project he read in the newspaper regarding I-595 and entrance to the port. He asked if that project will help the oil tankers through the area.

Karen stated that Natacha with Port Everglades provided a presentation on its improvements at the gate to the Port as well as through the gate where they do the transfer.

Alan Cohen stated that this project is referred to as the "Fly Over" to connect McIntosh Road with the beginning of I-595 to go over the signalized intersection. They found that there is a lot of truck traffic backing up in this area. It is not going to address traffic going into Mid-Port, but it will alleviate flow going into South-Port. Traffic coming off of I-595 onto McIntosh will have its own dedicated lane circumventing the signalized intersection which will be surface-level. The traffic heading north will be a fly-over.

Bill Cole asked that will not help the oil tankers on the north side. Al Cohen stated that this project would not.

Bill Cole asked about the shared use path, he stated that there is a lot of north-south pedestrian traffic with Starbucks. He stated he came up with a concept of an elevated park like plaza over the roadway to connect hotels and convention center (continuing from the bridge elevation) that this is a possibility especially if the businesses are interested.

Alan Cohen stated that the County is working on initial design of the Airport-Seaport light rail connector and that would go from the airport into Mid-Port and up through the Port and terminate at the Convention Center that would also serve cruise terminals 2 and 4. In the future, the County is also interested in connecting downtown to the airport and there are two ways to do that (1) Federal and then cut over into 3rd or Andrews (especially if the one-way pair is going forward, which he was not clear on) or (2) to continue the Airport-Seaport rail line along 17th Street to Andrews or 3rd whichever is appropriate. Based on history, 17th Street connection would only work if it was elevated due to capacity on the surface. If the County moves forward with the 17th Street initiative with support of the City of Fort Lauderdale, there would already be an elevated network that may address the north-south pedestrian connection (but not a "park" like Bill Cole described).

Alan Cohen stated that the County has just hired consultants to work on the first leg from the Airport to the Port because that is supported with ridership. The next step would be some other locations but would need the City to weigh in.

Commissioner Sorensen asked how the City can weigh in.

Alan Cohen stated that since this meeting is to identify new priorities, to make it the first one to work on and comprehensively address all the potential issues and concerns with the group and stakeholders. He stated that timing is fine right now for this step.

Bill Cole asked if the Pandemic has any impacts to future needs of the Convention Center.

Alan Cohen stated that the activities of the Convention Center has little to no impact on 17th Street and the evidence of this is in the O/D Study (yearlong analysis). There are high volume consumer shows that can be problematic because there is more regional traffic driving to the Convention Center. The international “business-to-business” type shows where people are flying in for the event and not the same traffic volume as with a consumer show with the day time traffic from the region. The Convention Center’s Business Model is focusing on bringing in more of the “business-to-business” shows and professional association shows because those shows generate “heads in beds” and all the ancillary benefits (restaurants, etc.).

Alan Cohen stated with regard to your question about COVID, we are looking at all of the studies that are coming out now from the research community on telecommuting. There was a New York Times or Wall Street Journal article that stated that on a permanent basis, CEOs say teleworking does not work for their model. They need people coming in and being face to face and exchanging ideas but perspectives on business operations are definitely changing and meetings will not be happening until there is a vaccine and people’s comfort levels go up to do personal networking but it is not changing its existing Plan for the Convention Center.

Greg Stuart stated that a 21% to 38% decrease in traffic on our state and federal facilities since the COVID outbreak. He stated that the MPO has been talking to private sector industries within the region (Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, and Broward) and there seems to be a fluctuation on which organizations would return employees to full time status within the physical offices and those that will remain remote workers. The MPO is working with the federal government on how this all will play out. Businesses have been successful with remote employees which may impact capacity projects. If the reductions stay true, there may not be a need to widen or continue address the constraints of 17th Street. The seaport-airport connector has been discussed for over 20 years and he was glad to see that moving forward which would help with capacity for 17th Street as well as US 1. The MPO is reviewing counts on certain facilities to analyze the pre and post-COVID activity and working with peers in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York to see what the trend will be over the next decade in this remote environment since it has been successful with businesses.

Alan Cohen stated that the O/D Study shows most of the traffic is coming from the south (90%). The location of Port Everglades makes 17th Street take on much of the load (comparing other port locations that is absorbed by A1A/US1). It is unclear for the purpose of the trip (work, restaurants, etc.) on the barrier island.

Darci Mayer identified the study area and went over the common categories related to goals and solutions of the Plan.

The first category related to the bicycle, pedestrian, transit and complete streets strategies that included improvements that address network connectivity upgrades, new mobility options, and comfort.

She identified the outstanding projects in the Plan under the first category ranging from identifying pedestrian crossings and bike lanes modification.

The second category is Network Connectivity and Access Management which include strategies changes to the street network and roadway to provide alternative routes, turning movements and driveways. These remaining projects include new connections within the network (e.g. I-595 at Andrews)

The third category is Vehicle Operations Solutions which aim to modify traffic signals to get movement in and out of the area. The majority of these improvements are signal modification, right turn overlaps, railroad preemption, all of which are remaining in the Plan.

The fourth category is the Policy, Wayfinding and other strategies support the transportation improvements including land use changes to encourage more walkable developments and to change the way people navigate the area (e.g. policy prohibiting drive-thru, cross access, and shared driveways).

Darci highlighted the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) that the MPO has been tasked to do for the City, including all modes over a 10 year horizon and will build on existing plans. As part of the TMP there will be a needs assessment that will list projects that this group will identify as viable projects. The next steps will include a survey that will depict the remaining projects and get everyone's individual opinion if the project is still viable and should be included in the ranking and prioritization of the TMP. The second part is to identify the goals and priorities of this group moving forward. Also, we would like to discuss a meeting schedule.

Marilyn Mammano stated that the Plan was done many years ago and one of the projects that was not included that is being discussed now is the reconfiguration of Eisenhower Blvd. and 17th Street on the north side. Karen stated that it is in the Plan.

Darci stated that there will be multiple opportunities in the development of the TMP to get input and add additional projects.

Karen stated that the intent of the TMP is to take all the work that has been done (completed projects) as the first step and then look at all remaining projects that have not been accomplished and to see if those remaining projects are still a priority or not (through a survey). After we narrowed the list down considering those strategies, identify what will be the next 10 priorities.

Alan Cohen asked if the original top 10 should remain because some of them are still underway.

Christina Currie recommended that the document identify which projects are completed, which ones are on-going, which ones are pending and which ones are off the list and not going anywhere so that there is a clear record of these projects. She stated that she is concerned with the continuity of this group because it use to be fairly regular and since the Interlocal was entered the information is not coming to the group in one voice. She asked if Karen and Darci are working together or if certain things are being done by Karen and others are being done by Darci. Commissioner asked Karen to clarify how

the City is working with the MPO. Karen stated that prior to the transition to the MPO, this group was managed by staff within her department. There was a gap in time between when City staff left and when the MPO started. Karen stated that there was disconnect of the group between two summers ago and this past March. Christina Currie liked the idea of the survey but use it in a way to reengage and add new voices to the table since it has been the same three resident voices.

Marilyn Mammano felt that there could be a problem if residents have not seen this in three years they would be very confused with what is going on. She also asked if the survey is the only option to get new voices and asked who is on the list that would receive the survey.

Commissioner Sorensen stated that (1) we need to meet monthly to track our progress and (2) he and his staff will publicize and share these meetings to get more people involved and get the word out on the efforts.

Karen suggested that at the next meeting we can have this group take an interactive survey by category and get instant results and answer any questions during the survey as a group. She suggested that we can push out to the original membership, the neighborhood associations and other interested people to say this is our next step at our next meeting and hopefully reboot this group instead of doing an online survey by yourself.

Alan stated that he is very comfortable for this group to develop the next 10 priorities because that is what this group was tasked to do. However, he was not comfortable with revisiting all of the project because those were not developed by this working group; that was done by an exhaustive community involvement process over 1 or 2 years. He felt that it was not this working group's responsibility to say a project is no longer viable.

Greg stated that the MPO has Slido technology that can be used with instant results. He stated that the TMP is a marriage of all of the projects throughout the community in addition to this working group's projects. The MPO was hired to identify for the entire city a master plan of projects throughout the city and once we identify the City's priorities citywide, then becomes the harder part of the City Commission prioritizing projects and when they will be funded, which is a similar process that the MPO does with the cities at a regional level. And doing this for the City of Fort Lauderdale since it is a regional hub for all of us. While some projects on 17th Street may be super important to this group but there could be a project somewhere else (such as downtown) that takes a higher priority.

Commissioner stated that a simple survey that we can share with our neighborhoods would be the best approach and anyone is welcomed to participate in this working group's meetings.

Karen stated that the presentation will be posted on the website and plan for the next meeting to go through what the group will focus on over the next 5 years and that will then feed into the City's overall Master Plan as its priority. Karen recommended using the Slido at the next meeting so that it is an engaged activity to identify the priorities.

Darci suggested going category by category since there are a substantial amount of projects and if there is a lot of discussion on the projects may require multiple meetings.

Karen agreed to go by category is the best approach.

Commissioner Sorensen requested a meeting in two weeks: August 11, 2020, 1 p.m.

Christina Currie requested the Commissioner's office to send a reminder email the day before or two days before so people from the large list can be made aware of this meeting and attend.

Commissioner Sorensen requested Juan and Alex to make sure to send the meeting announcement and backup out to the HOA presidents, next newsletter and social media.

Commissioner Sorensen requested the following items to be posted on the website:

- Summary minutes.
- Summary of what has been done.
- Juan and Alex will send this information to the larger email list.

Commissioner Sorensen asked Greg Stuart for an update on the surtax issue.

Greg Stuart stated that the County Administrator believes that there is a potential conflict of interest with the MPO doing work for our municipalities and also the MPO doing the non-federally required work on surtax ranking. The County has added language to their 3rd party agreements that provides surtax funding. The MPO has objected to the language because we have contracts with Fort Lauderdale and seven other municipalities in the region. He stated that he has a meeting today with the City Manager Chris Lagerbloom to do a memorandum between the MPO and City stating that the MPO will not be involved in surtax swaps or anything else like that because the task is really focused on the TMP and connectivity to the MPO's MTP for federal funding. He stated that he will see where that ends up with the County but as of right now the MPO has curtailed all surtax work because of the County's concerns. His bigger concern is the MPO's federal role in providing planning services to local governments and to coordinate regional transportation movement and not to prioritize a desperate amount of local surtax projects that really do not connect to anything. So there is no federal purpose to do surtax projects but there is a federal purpose to work with the municipalities for regional connectivity.

He explained that the surtax projects are drainage, sidewalks but the bigger picture do not make a network. With the city work, we are tasked to create a network. The surtax collects about \$30 million for city surtax projects if the county collects \$300 million a year (which they are collecting less right now). We are going to continue with working with the cities as agreed. The MPO may go back to helping the County on surtax if we come to some agreement but it does not serve any purpose for the MPO to do surtax. Greg stated that he has had this discussion with federal highway and USDOT in Washington and they are in agreement on this assessment.

Alan Cohen stated that he does not have information on this topic.

Commissioner Sorensen asked Greg Stuart if there is some level of recusal from surtax with the MPO does that prohibit engagement and strategic discussions on surtax with City staff. Greg Stuart stated that would not stop a conversation since there is freedom of speech.

Marilyn stated she is concerned and does not want the city to be not plugged in and ready to go and eligible for and top of the list for surtax money. She does not want to forgo any surtax money.

Greg Stuart stated that would not happen. The way the MPO prioritize projects means that each local government gets one project before you go to a second tier of projects. The County has the final discretion on surtax projects.

Christina asked for clarification on the curtailing of surtax and will it negatively impact this fiscal year's projects. Greg Stuart stated that the first cycle of projects are funded. Christina asked if the MPO would help create projects so that the City can get surtax funding. Greg Stuart stated that it is up to the County to make that call since the MPO provides service to many municipalities.

Marilyn stated that she trusts the MPO with respect to the MPO's federal projects but she wants to make sure that that she gets the same level of service for surtax projects.

Commissioner Sorensen stated that the City has that covered with regard to surtax and a relationship with someone on the Surtax Board.

Greg Stuart stated that the City has staff to make application for the surtax projects.

Karen stated that she is the surtax point of contact and everything surtax goes through her.

Commissioner Sorensen asked Greg Stuart for the timing of a resolution to the surtax issue.

Greg Stuart stated that last Thursday the MPO's attorney provided the County attorney revised language and hopefully will hear back from the County by the end of the week or Monday.

Commissioner Sorensen asked if this requires County Commission action.

Greg Stuart stated that there is no legal issue, it is a business decision but was not clear if it required County Commission action.

Tasks/To Do:

- **Darci will prepare a live polling of the remaining projects for the next meeting**
- **Next meeting August 11, 2020 at 1:00 pm (via Zoom)**