

2021 Legislative Positions

Adopted by River to Sea TPO Board 01-27-2021



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“On behalf of the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization, I want to thank you for the work you do serving the State of Florida and as a representative of our planning area. As we enter this legislative session, we recognize the significant fiscal challenges being faced throughout the state and nation. These legislative positions were developed with consideration to the reduced availability of revenues needed to manage an efficient and resilient transportation system. We look forward to working with you to tackle challenging transportation issues and to provide the support you may need during the 2021 Legislative Session.”

River to Sea TPO Chairperson, Jason McGuirk

2021 Legislative Positions

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- **Maintain transportation funding levels & expand funding flexibility**
- **Improve transportation safety by discouraging the use of handheld devices while driving & improving pedestrian and bicycling safety**
- **Increase the efficiency of existing transportation systems by maximizing the deployment of advanced transportation technologies**

Thank you for considering the legislative positions established by the River to Sea TPO. As these positions were developed, consideration was given to the positions established by organizations throughout the state of Florida including the Florida Association of Counties (FAC), the Florida League of Cities (FLC), Florida Public Transit Association (FPTA) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC). We value our relationship with these organizations and appreciate the support and leadership they provide.

River to Sea TPO Legislative Issues Subcommittee

Transportation Priority -- Funding

The River to Sea TPO supports legislation that *preserves transportation funding and provides greater flexibility of funding* to support the safety, efficiency and preservation of the transportation system.

Background

Transportation revenue is collected to support the preservation and development of a safe and efficient transportation system. State revenue is derived from a variety of sources, and the primary resource, the State Comprehensive Enhanced Transportation System tax is indexed for inflation. Transportation revenues overall, however, are not keeping pace with increased costs and demand. Compounding the shortfall is a reduction in revenue estimates of almost \$1.5 billion over the next 5-year period resulting from reduced driving associated with COVID-19. Actions supported by the River to Sea TPO include:

- **Identify and Implement New Revenue Sources Needed to Maintain the Transportation System**

While we recognize the benefits of autonomous vehicles (AV) and alternative fuel vehicles (AFV) in improving transportation efficiency, safety, and air quality, we also understand the potential impacts on fuel sales throughout the state of Florida. Recent estimates made by FDOT show that the increased adoption of AFVs and AVs will result in net revenue losses to the state of 16% in 2040 (moderate scenario). The River to Sea TPO supports implementation of vehicle registration fees, electric charging station surcharges or mileage-based fees that ensure equity among all road users contributing to the maintenance and preservation of the existing system.

- **Indexing Local Option Fuel Taxes to Keep Pace with Inflation**

Revenue studies completed in Florida by the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) and the Florida Transportation Commission (FTC) have shown that transportation revenues are not keeping pace with increased costs over time. The River to Sea TPO supports efforts to index city/county fuel taxes.

- **Stabilize Funding Levels for the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)**

TRIP funding promotes regional transportation planning and project development and has been used to fund important infrastructure improvements. The program is funded primarily through Documentary Stamp proceeds and the allocations have varied significantly in recent years from a low of \$11 million in 2016 to approximately \$157 million in 2014. The R2CTPO supports stable and consistent funding through TRIP.

- **Allow Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) and State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) Dollars to be Used on Local Road Improvements that are Needed to Support the SIS or State Facility**

State law limits the allocation of SIS funds and STTF funds to use on those systems. However, there are occasions where the most effective solution to managing congestion on an SIS or state facility is to improve local arterial, collector and distributor roads. The River to Sea TPO supports increasing flexibility of SIS and STTF funds to be used “off-system” when transportation analysis recommends improvements on supporting roads that enhance freight, safety, emergency management, travel time reliability and congestion.

Benefit

Efficient transportation systems are necessary to support a strong economy. Inadequate funding to support capital projects as well as operations and maintenance will lead to increased congestion and degradation of vital infrastructure. Increased traffic congestion has negative economic and environmental impacts.

Transportation Priority -- Safety

The River to Sea TPO supports legislation that improves transportation safety.

Background

These items are intended to support safety initiatives in the State of Florida as well as the national emphasis on transportation safety improvements outlined in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

Florida consistently ranks at or near the top of the nation in pedestrian and bicycle injuries and fatalities. Increasing safety and reducing these rates requires education, engineering and law enforcement efforts.

The River to Sea TPO supports:

- enhanced funding for educational programs that show positive results;
- strengthening existing pedestrian and bicycle safety laws;
- increasing performance driven funding for projects that address unsafe conditions; and
- the installation of pedestrian crossing traffic control devices (beacons) in areas with documented safety concerns.

The 2019 Dangerous by Design report listed the Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach Metropolitan Area as the 2nd most dangerous metropolitan area in the nation. FDOT is using the Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow program along with changes in design standards to drive down pedestrian fatalities and injuries across the state. Though not in the top 10, Flagler County has also recorded bicycle and pedestrian crashes, which may be addressed through proactive efforts involving evaluation, education, engineering and enforcement.

Prohibit the Use of Handheld Electronic Devices While Driving

The "Wireless Communications While Driving" law passed by the legislature in 2018 made texting while driving a primary offense. The law was further expanded in 2019 to ban handheld devices for drivers operating a vehicle in school and work zones. The River to Sea TPO supports legislation that would improve roadway safety by prohibiting the use of handheld electronic devices while driving.

Recent crash analyses completed by the River to Sea TPO shows that crashes resulting from distracted driving occur at a higher rate than other crash types. While further research is needed to determine the role of handheld devices in these crashes, other industry research has linked these devices to increases in vehicle crashes.

Establish Protections for Vulnerable Road Users

Transportation corridors should be designed and managed to protect the safety and well-being of those travelling or rendering assistance within the corridor. This includes persons in wheelchairs, First Responders, utility workers, tow truck operators and others operating in vulnerable circumstances.

Benefit

Transportation safety is critical for residents and for the thousands of visitors who choose to vacation here. Changes in Florida law along with other crash reduction efforts improve quality of life and support economic development.

Transportation Priority -- Advancing Technology

The River to Sea TPO supports legislation that increases the efficiency of existing transportation systems by maximizing the deployment of advanced transportation technologies.

Background

Transportation technologies are advancing in ways that will transform the industry and, potentially, how people and goods will move in and between our metropolitan areas. Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, automated and connected vehicles, advanced transit systems, advanced traffic signals, and drone delivery as well as technologies not yet developed, provide tremendous opportunities to improve the efficiency and safety of travel.

The River to Sea TPO supports and encourages the Florida legislature to continue establishing state laws and funding mechanisms to support the development and implementation of these technological advances. Potential actions include:

- Increased infrastructure funding for projects that advance Automated, Connected, Electric and Shared (ACES) technologies.
- Increased funding and technical assistance to support the planning and implementation of Smart Cities, automated vehicle pilot projects and other technology innovations.
- Establishing laws that address the malicious and intentional interference of the proper functioning of transportation vehicles and systems.
- Continued promotion of interoperable and multi-modal smartcard technology that is compatible, universal and accessible for use by all other smartcard technology systems.
- Legislative support and funding for the regulation and infrastructure modifications needed to safely and effectively manage the expansion of micro-mobility devices.
- Requiring public Electric Vehicle Support Equipment (EVSE) to be open to all users regardless of membership to a specific charging network.

Benefit

Advanced technologies in transportation will transform our communities and our economies. These technologies have the potential to dramatically improve safety and efficiency of our existing transportation infrastructure. They also offer improvements in air quality, mobility for transportation disadvantaged people, and quality of life advantages. Cities and states that are proactive in the deployment of transportation technology will be better positioned for success and economic stability in the future.

Additional Positions

The River to Sea TPO also supports legislation that:

- Protects the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) and the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund from efforts to reduce or divert funds.
- Offers incentives for employers that reduce peak-hour demand by allowing off-peak commuting and telecommuting options to employees.
- Increases MPO/TPO involvement in growth management, mobility planning and visioning activities to promote a stronger linkage between land-use, transportation and economic development.
- Increases the percentage of the state transportation capacity program allocated to non-SIS highways and transit programs in order to improve mobility on regional and metropolitan area transportation facilities.
- Requires TPO concurrence for public-private partnership agreements related to the lease or sale of transportation facilities that are publicly owned and operated within metropolitan areas and any subsequent modifications to such agreements.
- Provides mandatory funding for driver education programs in high schools.
- Changes the Consultants' Competitive Negotiation Act (CCNA) to allow agencies to introduce a "best-value" option that considers cost as a factor when selecting a firm.

The River to Sea TPO opposes legislation that:

- Seeks to eliminate Regional Planning Council's (RPCs) from Florida Statutes or seeks to diminish their role in supporting regional planning efforts.

The River to Sea TPO will monitor legislation that:

- Authorizes counties to form a regional transportation finance authority for the purpose of financing, constructing, maintaining and operating transportation projects that are consistent with MPO plans.
- Proposes to establish Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts associated with expressway or passenger rail corridors for the purposes of financing the debt issued to pay for the project.
- Promotes the continued development and expansion of bus and rail transit as well as efforts to accommodate the growing demand for alternative mobility vehicles (low-speed vehicles, electric vehicles and golf carts).
- Imposes restrictions on Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) governing board membership, voting, and/or terms of service.

