



CENTRAL FLORIDA
MPO
ALLIANCE

Regional Prioritization Priorities and Process

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Regional Prioritization Initiative
Adopted April 2013
Revised October 2018

Background

The Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Alliance (CFMPOA) has been active as a six-MPO forum for more than a decade, meeting quarterly to address regional transportation issues and legislative items. The group has been successful in building consensus on regional transportation issues by working together to complete a variety of regional planning studies and by adopting policies that promote regional transportation decision-making. In 2013, the Alliance adopted a transportation project prioritization process to provide clear support to the Florida Department of Transportation regarding the collective priorities for the region. This process is used to create a Regional List of Project Priorities (LOPP) that respects the independent decision-making of each member-MPO while working through the CFMPOA to collectively benefit from a regional prioritization process. By working as an Alliance to prioritize appropriate regional projects, each MPO will individually benefit while also benefitting the Central Florida Region. Through a unified approach, additional funding resources can be leveraged by working as an Alliance with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

The Project Categories

Not all transportation projects and funding categories are appropriate for a regional approach. However, three categories have emerged through the consensus-building process. Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) projects are of regional and statewide importance. Therefore SIS projects, both interstate and non-interstate projects, would be addressed by the Alliance in order to potentially leverage increased transportation resources for the region. This category would not include US highways and state roads that are funded through the FDOT's Other Arterials program.

As a result of the "Close the Gaps" initiative that began in Central Florida in 2012, and the Florida Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUNTrails) program established in 2015, Regional Trails comprise the second category of transportation projects to be prioritized by the Alliance. Through this regional approach, greater resources are leveraged by prioritizing among the five MPOs within FDOT District 5 the trail projects that can most quickly lead to completed systems of trails that connect populations

and attractions, thus resulting in eco-tourism opportunities for the region. This category includes regional, showcase trails, not sidewalks, local trails and other enhancement projects.

The third category for prioritization includes transit projects that contribute to connectivity on a regional scale. Transit projects that cross county lines and MPO boundaries could be considered for the Alliance prioritization process. Mass transit projects like SunRail and connections to the commuter rail system may be considered for regional prioritization. This category does not include localized transit projects.

The CFMPOA is currently evaluating options to integrate Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) projects and Transportation Planning projects as additional categories in the future. See "Proposed Future Categories" below.

The Process

Each MPO adheres to an annual prioritization process to establish funding needs within individual MPO Areas. That annual process typically begins near the start of the calendar year and usually concludes in June or July of each year. September-November, the FDOT begins the process of gaming, which results in new projects entering into the FDOT's Tentative Work Program or programmed projects being advanced in the Tentative Work Program. The five District 5 MPOs working on a unified priority list will empower the FDOT to incorporate the actions of the Alliance into the new Work Program.

The process will respect each MPO's order of projects within the three aforementioned categories. The CFMPOA prioritization process will follow the order within each MPO's list while melding the five lists into one regional list. Costs, the scale of magnitude of projects and the cost-benefit factor of projects will be considered, as well as the urbanized population and visitor population served by projects. To achieve a sense of equity, efforts will be made to rotate, as feasible, among the five MPOs to ensure the development of a regional list that advances projects important to each MPO in the region.

The Timeline

In order to meet the FDOT's deadline for release of the Tentative Work Program, each MPO will individually follow its own process. Meanwhile, the CFMPOA will review and update the Regional Prioritization Priorities and Process at the April meeting. A draft list will be developed for review and comment in July. Just prior to the July meeting, the executive directors will reconvene to refine the priority list for presentation to the Alliance. Based on action by the CFMPOA, the priority list will be compared to each individual MPO's priority list to ensure consistency with individual MPO priorities. Final

action will occur in September or early-October on each individual MPO's List of Priority Projects.



Once each MPO has taken action and transmitted their LOPPs to the FDOT, the executive directors will reconvene to review actions and to make a determination if changes are needed to the CFMPOA priority list. The finalized list will be presented to the Alliance at the October meeting for ratification and the list will be formally transmitted to the FDOT. From the time of adoption of each individual MPO's LOPP until ratification by the Alliance, the executive directors will remain in communication with FDOT personnel on the pending CFMPOA priority list to ensure awareness of progress on the regional effort.

The Outcomes

Once the CFMPOA ratifies the list in October, a landmark moment occurs in Florida as an unprecedented level of regional transportation coordination is formalized. For each of the three project categories, the potential outcomes are unique. For SIS priorities, the regional list affords the Central Office of FDOT an opportunity to look at the Central Florida Region in a new manner. When examining the potential funding of mega-projects, a unified list incorporating the five MPO's and nine counties of District 5, and potentially Polk County and the Polk County TPO, will enhance the process between MPOs and the FDOT of establishing priorities and programming funds. The planned outcome is the leveraging of greater resources to the region.

In light of the changes in state and federal funding opportunities for regional trail projects, a unified list of regional trail priorities is critical to meeting the goals of the "Close the Gaps" and SUNTrail program initiatives. Leveraging additional FDOT funds is the focus of the regional trail priority list. The regional trail section includes three independent lists of trail projects identified through the Tier I and Tier II SUNTrails program, as well as a master list of regional trail projects, ordered by phases so that shovel-ready projects are top priority. This list provides District 5 with an opportunity to program funds for multiple projects and supports applications from Alliance members for Tier III SUNTrail funding. The result is intended to expedite construction of multiple trail segments that will begin closing the gaps in the regional network. This approach will catalyze an eco-tourism opportunity of national and international proportions.

Regarding regional transit projects, the CFMPOA process is focused on mass transit that has regional implications beyond localized transit services. The Alliance list is intended to coalesce efforts throughout the region into a unified approach and to further the recommendations of the Regional Transit Study completed through the CFMPOA. Rail and bus-rapid-transit projects would be the focus of the CFMPOA list, while localized transit services would remain part of each individual MPO's prioritization process. This approach will aid the FDOT in developing a regional mass transit vision for Central Florida beyond the initial phases of SunRail.

Proposed Future Categories

Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO)

Innovations in information and communications technologies are leading to improvements and efficiencies in transportation which provides another category of transportation projects to be prioritized by the Alliance. Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) refers to "the application of multimodal transportation strategies and technologies intended to maximize the efficiency, safety, and utility of the existing transportation network". It includes a set of projects and strategies that use technology and real-time operational procedures. When well integrated into at the state, regional and local levels, TSMO offers a cost effective, efficient platform to significantly improve safety while at the same time enhancing the movement of people and goods, all with a positive impact on individual and national economic prosperity.

In reviewing the Regional Prioritization Priorities and Process during the 2018 update, the growing influence of advanced technologies under the Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) program was recognized. A regional consortium of industry professionals convenes regularly in FDOT District 5 to consider these evolving technologies and to work together in advancing their deployment. In addition, CFMPOA members are developing independent TSM&O programs and masterplans to effectively implement projects. Adding a TSMO project list conveys a strong message to the FDOT on the important role that information and communication technologies will play in a 21st Century transportation system. With this, and the endorsement of the Alliance, these projects will have a competitive advantage over projects that are submitted from other regions for FDOT funds targeted for projects in this category.

In the next year, CFMPOA members intend to work together, along with FDOT staff and the consortium, to develop a program that will incorporate regional TSM&O projects into the Regional List of Priority Projects. This will require defining a "regional" project, establishing a process that incorporates independent M/TPO's and outlining the funding opportunities.

Regional Planning Studies

The CFMPOA also recognizes the opportunity to engage in various planning activities on a regional scale. Examples of this in recent years include the Regional Truck Parking Study, the Regional Transit Study and the development of a Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. These studies typically involve FDOT District 5 staff and outcomes that benefit from early involvement by stakeholders in the development of scopes of services and project schedules. In the coming year, members of the CFMPOA also intend to identify and develop a list of Planning Studies that will best advance the shared goals of the alliance.

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