



River to Sea TPO FY 2019/20 Annual Report

A Welcome Message from the River to Sea TPO Chairperson City of New Smyrna Beach Commissioner Jason McGuirk

For the River to Sea TPO, the start of this past fiscal year began the same as many others. Transportation planning and project programming activities were keeping staff busy, annual reviews and audits were underway and growth and development projects throughout the planning area were moving along. The TPO was focused on the data collection and analysis needed to support development of our 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and public outreach was getting underway.

And then, midway through the fiscal year, the world around us began to change. In February 2020, news stories began to circulate about a highly contagious virus dubbed COVID-19 and by the end of March, Florida, along with other states were taking a variety of precautions to reduce the spread of the virus. For the River to Sea TPO, that meant halting all in-person meetings, public events, and activities considered key to successful community planning. This was difficult, because the very nature of the TPO involves convening groups of people together to discuss transportation needs of the community.



The TPO was able to shift gears quickly and met the challenge of keeping the information and ideas flowing under these highly unusual circumstances. The River to Sea TPO was one of the first planning organizations in the state to host a virtual board meeting, which occurred on March 25, 2020 using the GoToMeeting platform. While the first meeting involved some uncertainty, the TPO has held more than 65 committee and public meetings at this point and the ease of accessibility of video meetings has contributed to an increase of just over 10% in meeting attendance.

The River to Sea TPO was also quick to pivot public outreach activities to ensure our mission of engagement continued. The overall public outreach program increased the utilization of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to keep people informed of TPO activities, and the community safety program partnered with local law enforcement agencies and Votran to distribute safety materials such as bicycle and pedestrian lights. Efforts to promote involvement in the long-range plan included video presentations to various groups as well as Facebook advertisements and YouTube videos to explain issues associated with transportation.

As we've moved through this challenging period, we're also beginning to evaluate the impact that social restrictions have had on the transportation system itself. Travel and tourism figures are down, as is driving associated with daily job commutes. The decrease in driving means a significant reduction in fuel tax revenue that is used to operate, maintain and upgrade our transportation system. An initial update from the Florida Department of Transportation reduced estimates by almost \$1.5 million for the current five-year work program. Meanwhile, the cost of construction continues to rise.

Public transit has also been hit hard by restrictions and concerns over public contact. As the need to protect drivers and keep vehicles sanitized has increased, the willingness of people to ride public transit has decreased. Ridership on Votran has decreased roughly 29% over the previous year.

With regards to transportation, we were left with many questions as the fiscal year drew to a close. What will happen to transportation revenues in the short run? How quickly will the economy recover? Will commuting patterns and traffic volumes return over time or will society be changed? But those questions pale in comparison to the uncertainty of how this pandemic has changed us as a society. How will we recover and what choices will we make in our lives going forward? My hope is that we learn to better care for and protect each other, to stay safe and to keep looking for the silver linings.

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Introduction

The River to Sea TPO is an organization where elected officials from member local governments and citizens voice concerns, identify transportation priorities and plan for transportation improvements across all modes of transportation – roads, public transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Our metropolitan planning area includes all of Volusia County, and the developed areas of eastern Flagler County including Beverly Beach and Flagler Beach as well as portions of Palm Coast and Bunnell.

The responsibility of the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is to manage a “3-C” planning process (continuing, cooperative and comprehensive) that results in the development of a safe, efficient, interconnected transportation system. The TPO provides a forum for cooperative decision-making by elected officials of affected local governmental entities with input from citizens and stakeholder groups. These plans serve as the framework for making transportation investment decisions in Volusia and Flagler Counties. Public participation is a key component of transportation planning and one of the core functions of the River to Sea TPO. Meaningful and effective public involvement brings a diverse set of views into the discussion and improves decision-making by generating ideas for how the transportation system may be improved.

VISION

To ensure our transportation system provides a safe and accessible range of transportation options that enhance existing communities while providing mobility in a fiscally responsible, energy efficient and environmentally compatible manner. This integrated, connected system will support economic development, allowing for the effective movement of all people, goods, and services necessary to maintain and enhance our quality of life.

Current Trends and Issues



Fiscal year (FY) 2019/20 brought with it challenges never seen before. COVID-19, a public health crisis, began to impact Florida in March 2020. State and local governments, businesses and public institutions implemented measures to slow the spread of the virus. The State of Florida went into a lockdown and on March 20, 2020, Florida’s Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-69 which allowed local government meetings to be conducted via teleconference or other technological means. The Executive Order it suspended the requirement that these meetings have an in-person quorum and permitted the River to Sea TPO to hold its board and committee meetings virtually. TPO Board and committee meetings were successfully held via the GoToMeeting video platform which saw a 10% increase in attendance. The TPO’s public involvement activities, however, are typically planned for in-person events. Restrictions on social gatherings led to cancellation of many events including the River to Sea TPO’s Annual Planning Retreat and Not So Noisy Bike Week. Public outreach staff quickly revised outreach plans to shift the in-person focus to using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. While the second half of FY 2019/20 created many obstacles to our traditional public outreach, it also created many opportunities to reach out to the community in different ways.

Transportation Statistics

Total population: (Source US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2018 5-Year Estimates)

Volusia County: 527,634

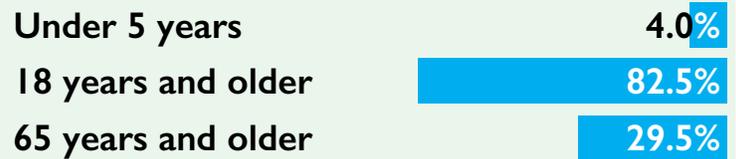
Volusia County, Florida
Median Age: 46.5 (+/-0.1)

Flagler County: 107,139

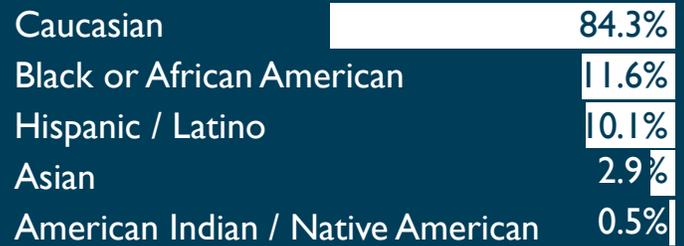
Flagler County, Florida
Median Age: 50.9 (+/-0.2)



More Information about Age



Race:



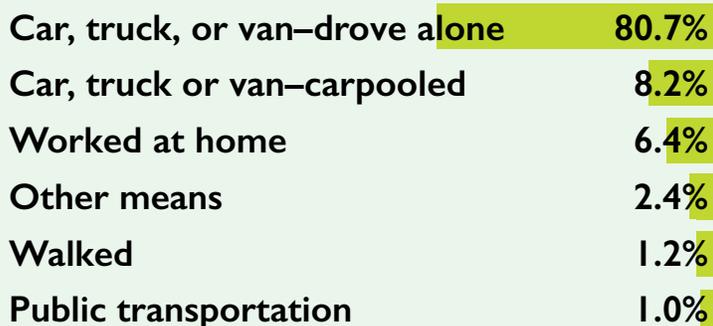
Volusia County, Florida
Mean travel time to work (minutes): 25.7 (+/-0.4)

Flagler County, Florida
Mean travel time to work (minutes): 26.7 (+/-1.0)

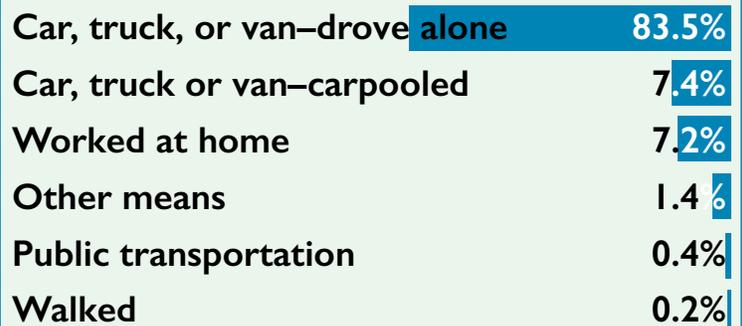


More Information about Commuting to Work

Volusia County



Flagler County



River to Sea TPO Activities

Connect 2045, Long Range Transportation Plan

One of the main requirements of the TPO is to develop a long-range transportation plan. During the past fiscal year, the TPO began development of *Connect 2045, Your Community Transportation Plan*. The plan's theme of "connection" emphasizes the important role of transportation to serve the community by connecting people and places. It also recognizes the transportation system itself, connecting local roads to national highways, buses to planes, and homes to places we work, learn and play.



Connect 2045 takes a look 25 years into the future to identify strategies that will help satisfy the transportation needs of our changing community. Updated every five years, this plan serves as primary guidance for developing transportation system improvements and lays the groundwork for a sustainable system that preserves existing transportation infrastructure, enhances Florida's economic competitiveness, and improves travel choices to ensure safe and efficient mobility.

To support the development of Connect 2045, three important themes, and their influence on transportation were analyzed:

Technology transforming our transportation systems in new ways and the pace of these changes is accelerating.

Resiliency reflects our ability to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover rapidly after disruptive events such as flooding, hurricane impacts, wildfires, or major traffic incidents.

Funding Choices must balance forecasted revenue, anticipated population growth, and projected changes in travel demand.

The core element of a long-range transportation plan is the Cost Feasible Plan, which consists of proposed projects and programs that are considered the highest priorities. Connect 2045's Cost Feasible Plan identifies financially viable improvements to the area's transportation network to include, but not be limited to, roadway improvements, operational strategies and technology improvements to maximize safety and efficiency, support for public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian enhancements.

In order to both inform and solicit input from local residents and stakeholders throughout the development of the plan, a robust public involvement campaign was created that included a dedicated Connect 2045 website, www.r2ctpoconnect2045.com, three informative videos (www.youtube.com/user/volusiatpoFL), more than 10 public workshops and 10 community presentations, both in-person and virtual, and a Connect 2045 survey. In addition, there was also an extensive social media campaign to solicit input on the plan. Connect 2045 will be adopted on September 23, 2020 by the River to Sea TPO Board.



Connect 2045 Video

2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment

In October 2019, the TPO’s current 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was amended by the TPO Board. Projects included:

- SR 40 widening to four lanes, from Cone Road to SR 11 - advance funding
- SR 40 widening to six lanes from SR 11 to SR 15 (US 17) - advance funding
- I-95/US-1 Interchange Improvement – move from the Unfunded Needs List to the SIS Cost-Feasible Projects List.

Priority Process/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Each year, the River to Sea TPO solicits project applications from local governments to compete for federal and state transportation funding. Priority lists in various categories are developed and provided to FDOT for programming into the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is the TPO’s “short-range” transportation plan and all projects must originate from the adopted long-range plan. Projects recently added to the TIP include:

- I-95 Interchange at US-1 (SR-5) in Ormond Beach
- New Interchange at I-95 and Maytown Road

Projects currently underway include:

- Volusia County Pedestrian Lighting Bundle (22 intersections along Nova Road from Spruce Creek Road to Main Trail-Ormond Beach
- Roundabout on SR 5 (US 1) at Matanzas Woods Parkway
- Roundabout on SR 5 (US 1) at Old Dixie Highway
- Adaptive Signal Control System on US 17/92 from Seminole County to Minnesota Avenue

Projects completed include:

- St. Johns River to Sea Loop Trail (Edgewater)
- US 92 Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon/Midblock Crossing (Daytona Beach)

TPO Feasibility Studies

Annually, the TPO sets aside funding for to assist local governments to evaluate the feasibility of projects needed in their community. A feasibility study helps to assess the constructability of the project and the costs associated with construction. In FY 2019/20, the TPO completed the following feasibility studies:



Location	Feasibility Study
New Smyrna Beach	SR 44 Trail
Pierson	Washington Ave Railroad Crossing
Port Orange	Williamson Blvd & Willow Run Blvd Sidewalk
Port Orange	Clyde Morris Blvd Right Turn Lane
Port Orange	Dunlawton Ave Left Turn Lane Extension
Port Orange	Taylor Rd/Williamson Blvd Intersection
Port Orange	Dunlawton Ave Corridor @ I-95
South Daytona	Reed Canal N Sidewalk
South Daytona	Sauls St Bridge Replacement

Technology

Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) Study & Technology Transition Plan (TTP)

The TPO is preparing for the impacts of transformational technologies (including connected and automated vehicles) and the opportunities created by new applications of these technologies through the production of this planning project. In 2020, the TPO began the CAV Study by conducting a thorough review of connected and automated vehicle (CAV) readiness, including an assessment of the region's preparedness to adopt and adapt to new technologies and mobility solutions. The results of the assessment are combined with industry expert recommendations to form the Technology Transition Plan (TTP). The TTP outlines the TPO's goals and objectives for adopting and adapting to transformational transportation technologies. This TTP also provides decision-maker guidance for updating policies and procedures to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology. Most importantly, the TTP outlines a transition

plan that is specific to the River to Sea TPO planning area for adopting transformational technologies at the local community level and for incorporating new transportation technologies into regional plans, land development codes, and funding.

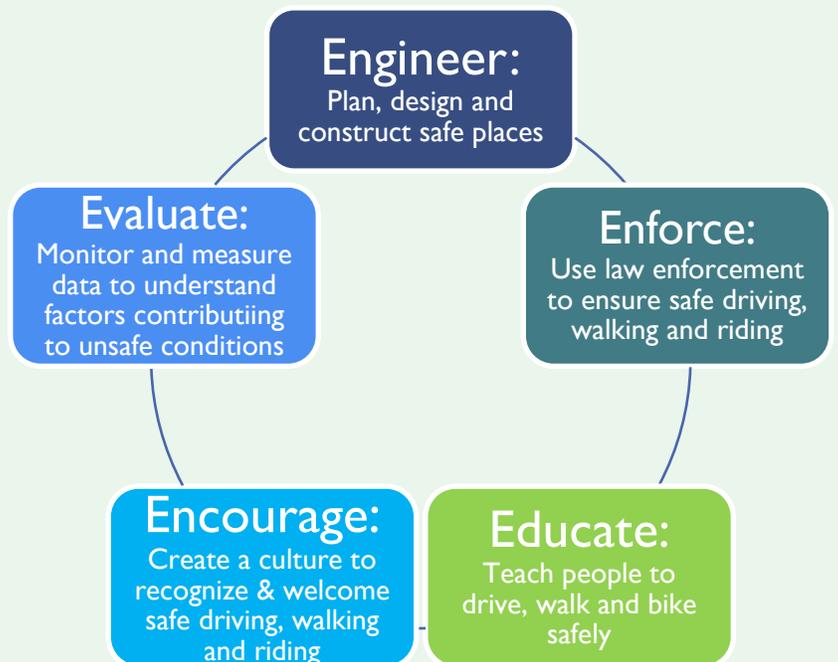


Safety

Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP)

A safe community is one where people are able to participate and live their lives in an environment without fear or risk of harm or injury. During FY 2019/20, the TPO developed a Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP) designed to address and improve transportation safety within our local community. The River to Sea TPO, in partnership with community agencies such as the Florida Department of Health in Volusia & Flagler, law enforcement agencies and local cities and counties, worked to address the five "E's" of safety; engineering, enforcement, education, encouragement and evaluation. The plan assessed existing safety strategies utilized in our planning area and identified community outreach activities that would build upon those efforts to further promote safety. Out of this study came

recommendations to develop an education and awareness campaign to reduce speeding and distracted driving, create a targeted print and social media campaign, develop a speakers' group that can be used as a resource for the community and to continue the TPO's existing programs and activities.



Walkability Action Institute Grant Project and Complete Streets Policy Implementation



Walkability Action Institute

In FY 2018/19, the TPO was awarded a grant to attend and participate in the Step It Up! Action Institute to Increase Walking and Walkability, also known as the Walkability Action Institute (WAI). This institute prepares interdisciplinary teams from metropolitan planning organization (MPO) regions to pursue policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) supports for walking and walkability. As a result of this training, the TPO is developing a Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan. The purpose of this policy is to encourage more complete streets projects that are designed to serve all modes of transportation and users of all ages and abilities. In October 2019, the River to Sea TPO adopted a Complete Streets Policy to encourage more complete streets

projects. In addition, criteria used in scoring project applications for the annual Call for Projects were revised to award additional points for projects that are consistent with the adopted R2CTPO Complete Streets Policy.

Community Engagement

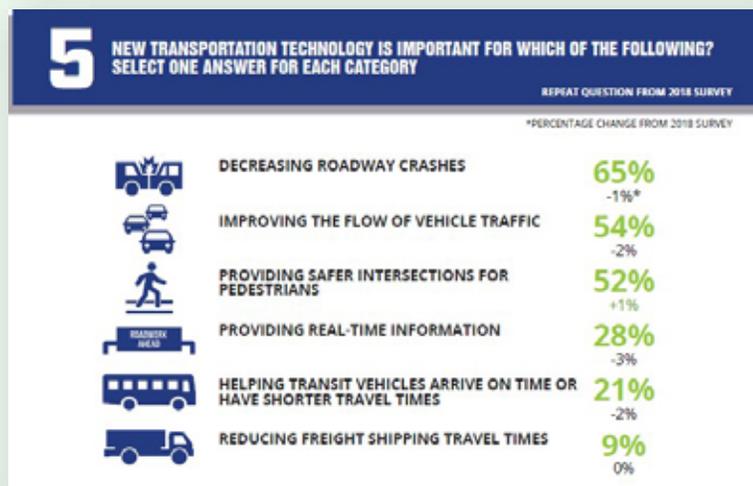
2020 Tell the TPO Survey

The River to Sea TPO officially launched the 2020 “Tell the TPO” Community Transportation Survey Campaign on March 30, 2020. The two-month survey effort ran through June 7, 2020. This survey is conducted every two years and helps provide insights for the TPO as it makes decisions on transportation priorities.

The COVID-19 pandemic restricted the public outreach campaign and influenced the overall response rate. However, to compensate, the campaign increased its focus on electronic and social media distribution as well as personal invitations.

Key Points on Survey Outreach:

- More than 128 companies, organizations, cities and counties posted the survey link on their websites and sent through email newsletters, and social media
- Reached an estimated 45,350 people through email, government and organization websites, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Next-Door and news media
- Received 1,344 responses to the survey



Tell the TPO Survey Question 5 Results

Community Outreach & Safety Awareness

One of the key responsibilities of the TPO is reaching out to the community to inform and receive input on transportation issues. Both the TPO's Public Participation Plan and Connect 2045 Public Involvement Plan were updated in May 2020 to allow for virtual participation in TPO meetings and workshops and to shift in-person activities to an online platform. The TPO's Public Outreach Summary highlights the activities that have taken place over the last fiscal year (www.r2ctpo.org/public-involvement/public-participation-documents/). While COVID-19 caused the cancellation of nine events, the TPO still participated in:

30 in-person community events including Port Orange Family Days, Halifax Art Festival, White Cane and Pedestrian Safety Awareness Day and Orange City's Coleman Skate Park grand opening.

385+ bicycle helmets were fitted and donated to adults and children by TPO staff.

150 bicycle light sets and **250** pedestrian lights. These lights were distributed to the public through partnerships with the Volusia and Flagler County Sheriff's Departments, the Daytona Beach Police Department and Votran.

27 community presentations were given to local groups including city commissions, rotary clubs and Chambers of Commerce (12 virtual and 15 in-person) to engage the community in development of the 2045 long-range plan.

6 advertisements were run on Facebook promoting the TPO and directing individuals to our website as well as the Tell the TPO Survey website; www.FlaglerLive.com hosted a TPO advertisement soliciting public input on our 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan via our Connect 2045 website.

8 press releases were issued; some for events related to Connect 2045 (workshops/webinars/survey release); the release of the Tell the TPO Survey; recognition of Earth Day and the TPO's Federal Certification Review.

Resiliency

East Central Florida Regional Resiliency Action Plan (ECF RRAP)

The River to Sea TPO has been active in assessing and planning for a resilient transportation system. These efforts include evaluating local infrastructure and participating in regional planning activities. Building upon previous efforts in the region, the East Central Florida Regional Resilience Collaborative (R2C) was formed in October 2019, to empower communities in East Central Florida to advance resilience strategies for the region that strengthen and protect the built infrastructure and natural environment, enhance health and equity and ensure a thriving economy. A variety of Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) are now working to establish goals, develop and prioritize strategies and partnerships to work toward implementation of the ECF RRAP. The River to Sea TPO actively participates in the Steering Committee, the Regional Risk & Vulnerability TAC and Infrastructure Assessment.



Port Orange Family Days



Volusia County Council Chair Kelly and Council Member Wheeler

Funding

COVID-19 Effects on Transportation

COVID-19 has had a major impact on transportation in our community. With stay-at-home orders being issued, the number of people commuting daily has decreased. A Cars.com study on commuting, ride-sharing, and public transportation found that more than one third of Americans are currently working from home, and 30% of those who are currently working at an office at least part-time are commuting less often. About 35% of those who typically commuted plan to commute less even after returning to work in person. Fewer cars on the roads translate to lower gas tax revenue. In fact, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has estimates a 30 percent drop in gas tax revenue over the next 18 months. With lower gas tax revenue comes less money for road and safety projects. In addition, transit ridership has decreased due to COVID-19 and a reduction in ridership. One of the benefits to be seen during COVID-19 is that people are walking and biking more often. Only time will tell the full extent that COVID-19 has had on transportation.



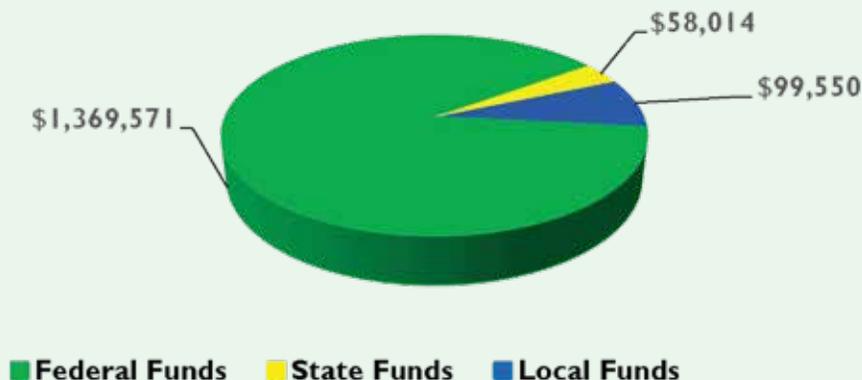
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The TPO's UPWP describes the planning tasks that will be undertaken by the TPO during the upcoming fiscal year and, in some cases, tracks the continuation of projects carried over from previous years. The UPWP also contains the associated costs and agency involvement required for successfully completing each task. In FY 2019/20, the TPO developed and approved its FY 2020/21 and 2021/22 UPWP. Some of the highlights include annual tasks such as the Call for Projects, Feasibility Studies, and Transportation Improvement Program as well as new tasks like the implementation of Constant Contact email marketing, the creation of a speakers' bureau of people who's lives have been affected by distracted driving, the implementation of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Program, and the development of a Regional List of Priority Projects.

TPO Funding for FY 2019/20

The River to Sea TPO receives federal funding that is passed through FDOT, state funds and local funding from the TPO's member governments. The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) identifies various tasks to be undertaken by the River to Sea TPO over a two-year period and how funds will be spent between the tasks. The organization undergoes an annual audit each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) completed by an independent auditor. For the past eight years, there have been no findings in our annual audit.

Total TPO Funding Sources = \$1,527,135





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