

Florida's Transportation Planning Process for Non- Metropolitan Areas



Florida Department of
Transportation

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Introduction

Pursuant to 23 United States Code Section 135, each state must have a documented process for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials during development of the long range statewide transportation plan and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.



With the enactment of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (“MAP-21”), 23 United States Code Section 135 includes revisions to the role of non-metropolitan area officials in the development of the long range statewide transportation plan (Florida Transportation Plan or FTP) and project selection for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)¹. More specifically, non-metropolitan officials must be involved cooperatively in the development of the FTP, as well as the STIP project selection process. Non-metropolitan officials will continue to be consulted during the development of the STIP and selection of STIP projects on the National Highway System² and those projects funded by the Bridge or Interstate Maintenance Programs³.

Additional requirements for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials are included in Title 23, Part 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations. These regulations, which have not been updated to reflect revisions implemented in 23 United States Code Section 135, provide: “The state shall have a documented process(es) for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials representing units of general purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process and provides an opportunity for their participation in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP.” In addition, at least once every five years states must review and solicit comments from non-metropolitan local officials and other interested parties, for a period of not less than 60 calendar days, regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and any proposed changes. A specific request for comments must be directed to the state association of counties, state municipal league, regional planning agencies, or directly to non-metropolitan local officials.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) first documented its consultative planning process for non-metropolitan areas in May 1999.⁴ The department updated its consultative process document in 2004 and 2009 after soliciting comments from various partners (Florida Regional Councils Association, Florida League of Cities, Small County Coalition, and Florida Association of Counties) and posting the document on its website for a 60-day review period. This report updates and documents FDOT’s continuing efforts to coordinate transportation planning and programming activities with non-metropolitan officials.

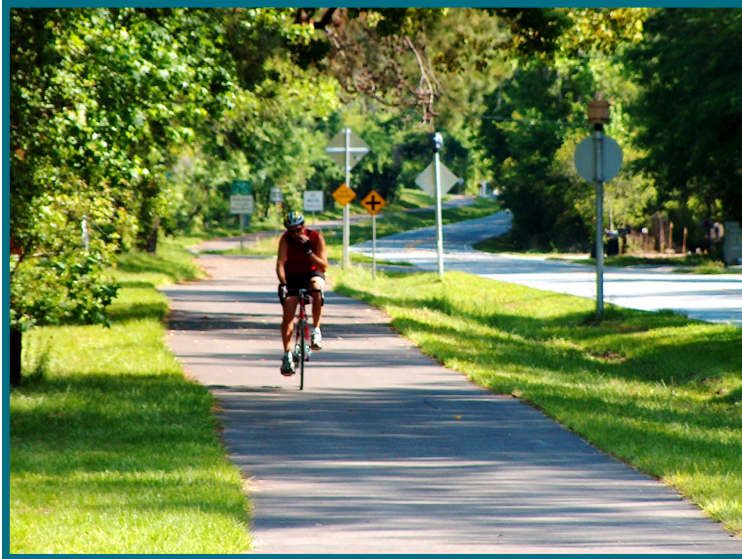
¹ A staged, multi-year, statewide, intermodal program of transportation projects, consistent with the statewide transportation plan and planning processes as well as metropolitan plans, TIPS, and processes.

² The system of highways designated and approved in accordance with the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 103(b).

³ Bridge and Interstate Maintenance Projects would include those under 49 U.S.C. 5310, 5311, 5316 and 5317.

⁴ Florida Department of Transportation, Office of Policy Planning, “Florida’s Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas, May 1999.”

Overview of Transportation Planning in Florida



Transportation planning decisions in Florida are made continuously at all levels of government and by the private sector. The roles and responsibilities of each level of government influence the planning and decision making process. Planning in Florida takes place under the shared vision of the State Comprehensive Plan, found in state law.⁵ The following discussion highlights the roles and responsibilities of various transportation planning entities in Florida.

Local Governments - Each of Florida's 67 counties and over 400 municipalities has adopted, and periodically revises, a comprehensive plan to guide growth, development and the provision of government services for periods of 5 to 20 years. Future development and public facilities, such as those for transportation, must be consistent with those plans. Counties and municipalities are responsible for planning, building and maintaining local road systems. Local governments are also responsible for most public transit systems, airports and seaports, either directly or in conjunction with special authorities created to manage and provide services.

FDOT districts review local government comprehensive plan amendments and comment on issues within the agency's jurisdiction related to state transportation resources and facilities of state importance. These resources and facilities of state importance may include transportation resources of the state such as rights-of-way, and any transportation facility on the State Highway System (SHS)⁶, Strategic Intermodal System⁷ or National Highway System. The FDOT districts coordinate these reviews with the state land planning agency, the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). These efforts involve extensive coordination and cooperation with various local, regional and state government officials.

⁵ Chapter 187, Florida Statutes, includes the adopted State Comprehensive Plan.

⁶ The State Highway System includes roads under the jurisdiction of the Florida Department of Transportation, state-chartered expressway authorities, and other state agencies.

⁷ The Strategic Intermodal System is the statewide network of high priority transportation facilities established in accordance with Chapter 339, Florida Statutes.



Metropolitan and Regional Entities - Currently, there are 26 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in Florida's urbanized areas. Each MPO is responsible for developing long range transportation plans, transportation improvement programs and setting transportation funding priorities. The MPO planning area includes the urbanized area plus the area expected to become urbanized in 20 years.

Some MPOs and rural counties have formed regional partnerships to develop regional visions to guide future growth and plans to identify and implement regional transportation priorities. For example, to be eligible for funding under the Transportation Regional Incentive Program⁸ (TRIP), regional transportation partners must develop a regional transportation plan identifying regionally significant transportation facilities and prioritizing regional transportation projects. As of September 2013, 58 out of 67 Florida counties have entered into TRIP partnerships.

Regional planning councils (RPCs) composed of local elected and appointed officials and lay citizens consider planning and development issues from a multi-county perspective. Florida's 11 RPCs review and comment on local government comprehensive plan amendments, particularly for regional issues. They are responsible for the development of strategic regional policy plans containing regional goals and policies for transportation, economic development, natural resources and other issues. As outlined later in this report, RPCs have also entered into agreements with FDOT district offices to facilitate transportation planning within rural areas.

State-Level Planning Entities - FDOT is responsible for planning, operating and maintaining the State Highway System. Additionally, FDOT assists local governments, metropolitan and regional agencies and the private sector in providing public transit, aviation, rail, seaport, bicycle and pedestrian and other transportation facilities and services. In addition to the statewide long range transportation plan, the department develops numerous statewide modal plans. FDOT also annually adopts a five-year Work Program, which balances priorities and production schedules for transportation improvements with expected state and federal transportation funds. All projects in the Work Program must be consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with local government comprehensive plans.

Each year, DEO reviews the FDOT Work Program and MPO transportation improvement programs to ensure consistency with local government comprehensive plans, including those in non-metropolitan areas⁹. Other state agencies and organizations participate in transportation

⁸ The Transportation Regional Incentive Program is designed to encourage regional planning by providing state matching funds for improvements to regionally significant transportation facilities identified and prioritized by regional partners.

⁹ Section 339.135, Florida Statutes, requires that all projects submitted as part of the FDOT Work Program be consistent with the approved local comprehensive plan of the appropriate local government(s). If the project is inconsistent with the local comprehensive plan(s), correspondence is provided by the DEO (to the Florida Transportation Commission) explaining the inconsistency.

decision making on issues such as permitting, economic development and human services.¹⁰ Florida's RPCs are among these agencies and are federally recognized economic development districts¹¹ that work with local governments to provide planning assistance and coordination of regional economic development initiatives¹². As part of this support, the RPCs promote and build consensus on multijurisdictional problems, regional priorities and develop a Regional Strategic Policy Plan. These plans provide regional transportation priorities and are developed to align regional priorities with statewide planning initiatives¹³.

Additional state agencies facilitating transportation project development include the Department of Environmental Protection which works closely with FDOT and local governments on natural resource, air quality and other environmental issues, during planning, development, design and construction of transportation projects. Five Water Management Districts are responsible for assessing potential impacts of transportation projects on water resources. State agencies involved with permitting for transportation projects and plan consistency oversight participate in the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM)¹⁴ process as representatives on the Environmental Technical Advisory Team. All local governments are provided an additional opportunity to provide project comments using the ETDM process through the public access portal¹⁵.



Statewide Transportation Planning

FDOT is responsible for developing the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) and long range plans for seaports, transit, aviation, rail, and other major modes of transportation. The processes for consulting with local government officials (including those in non-metropolitan areas) are tailored to the roles, responsibilities and issues unique to the individual long range plan, but are consistent with the department's overall framework for public and partner involvement. This framework is based on the three tenets and three components shown on the next page.

¹⁰ The Florida Strategic Plan for Economic Development provides an integrated statewide vision for addressing economic development, land use, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, talent development, and community development over a 50 year period.

¹¹ The website <http://floridaregionalcounselsa.homestead.com/RPCs.html> describes the functions and programs of Florida's Regional Planning Councils.

¹² Section 186.505, Florida Statutes, provides a description of the powers and duties of Florida's Regional Planning Councils.

¹³ Section 186.507, Florida Statutes, details the requirement of each Regional Planning Council to develop a Regional Strategic Policy Plan and section 186.508, Florida Statutes, describes the statutory requirements for Strategic Regional Plan adoption and consistency with the State Comprehensive Plan.

¹⁴ The website <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo/ETDM.shtm> provides an overview of the ETDM process and the role of stakeholders within this process.

¹⁵ The website <https://etdmpub.fla-etat.org/est/> provides access to public portal of ETDM.

Figure 1: Framework for Public and Partner Involvement

Tenets for Involvement		Components of Process	
Early	Inform and provide opportunities to develop cooperative ideas at the beginning of project/plan	Awareness	Continuously involve parties in cooperative process
Often	Communicate at each stage of project/plan development	Input	Seek involvement before the project/plan is completed
Continuously	Continue dialogue with those who participated earlier	Feedback	Show how input was addressed in the project/plan

The FTP is the state’s long range statewide transportation plan and is developed in cooperation and consultation with non-metropolitan local officials and other partners. The FTP identifies long range goals, objectives, and strategies to address the needs of the entire transportation system. The FTP is updated at least every five years. A public involvement plan is published for each update of the plan and is available from the FDOT Office of Policy Planning. Consultative, as well as cooperative involvement with non-metropolitan local officials is provided through statewide summits, public workshops held throughout the state, and direct communication with the FDOT, including presentations at scheduled local government meetings. Officials from non-metropolitan areas served on the Steering Committee, appointed by the Secretary of FDOT, to draft the most recent update to the FTP.

The department has also worked closely with non-metropolitan local officials and other partners during the development of and updates to the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), which comprises corridors, facilities and services of statewide and interregional significance. For example the SIS Steering Committee formed in 2002 to recommend criteria for designating SIS facilities included representatives of the various transportation modes (e.g. airports, rail), business interests (e.g. freight, economic development), local and regional governments (e.g. Small County Coalition) and other stakeholders. The department’s SIS Strategic Plan helps guide future investments in and management of the SIS and must be updated every five years. Both the first strategic plan adopted in 2005 and the 2010 SIS Strategic Plan were developed by FDOT in consultation with partners from throughout the state, including non-metropolitan local officials.


Statewide modal plans developed by the department and its partners include the Florida Aviation System Plan¹⁶, the Florida Seaport System Plan¹⁷, the Florida Freight Mobility and Trade Plan¹⁸ and the Florida Rail System Plan¹⁹. In each instance a stakeholder (including local elected officials) involvement process is tailored to meet the roles, responsibilities and issues

¹⁶ The Florida Aviation System Plan (2025) was last update in February of 2012.

¹⁷ The Florida Seaport System Plan was last updated in December of 2010.

¹⁸ The Florida Mobility and Trade Plan – Policy Element was adopted in June of 2013.

¹⁹ The most recent Florida Rail System Plan was developed in two documents: the 2009 (Policy Element) and 2010 (Investment Element).



related to each mode. For example, in the development of the Florida Rail System Plan, the department seeks advice on policy issues from stakeholders representing various interests around the state. These interests include not only the rail industry, but also shippers, seaports, passenger rail agencies, legislative, state, regional and local entities, as well as growth management and environmental groups.



Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The department annually develops and adopts a five-year Work Program, a listing of all projects planned by the department for the following five years. The first four years of the Work Program are incorporated into the federally-required State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The Work Program is developed cooperatively with elected officials from non-metropolitan areas. Between July and October of each fiscal year, the MPOs and the board of county commissioners from non-MPO areas provide the department's districts with transportation project priorities. These project priorities are included, to the maximum extent feasible, in the district Work Programs. Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration annually provides the department with a list of projects from the current Indian Reservation Road Transportation Improvement Program and the current Public Lands Transportation Improvement Plan. These projects are included in the STIP and applicable MPO transportation improvement programs.

The department annually presents the proposed district Work Program to the counties and MPOs to determine if changes are needed. At least one public hearing is held in each FDOT district to review the proposed district Work Program and to determine whether changes should be made before it is submitted to the department's central office. The FDOT central office prepares a Tentative Work Program representing a compilation of all district Work Programs. A final statewide public hearing is held by the Florida Transportation Commission prior to submitting the department's Tentative Work Program to the Executive Office of the Governor and legislative appropriations committees. Once the Tentative Work Program is approved by the Governor and Legislature it becomes the Adopted Work Program and takes effect on July 1st, the beginning of the state's fiscal year.

When the department proposes an amendment (with certain exceptions) to the Adopted Work Program, the proposed amendment is submitted to the Governor for approval. The department also notifies appropriate state legislative committees and affected state legislators, units of local government and metropolitan planning organizations. The amendment provides a complete justification of the need for the proposed amendment. All parties have 14 days to express their views to the Governor before the Governor can approve the proposed amendment.

Other Examples of Cooperation and Consultation

In addition to the processes and procedures previously discussed, the department engages in a variety of outreach and support activities relating to transportation planning and programming in non-metropolitan areas. For example, the department provides financial assistance to some rural counties in the development and maintenance of their long-range transportation plans as well as technical and financial assistance to support various regional and rural county visioning efforts.

The department is also a key player in developing statewide strategies for increasing economic opportunities in Florida’s rural communities and incorporating those strategies into the transportation planning processes. The department has worked closely with other members of the multi-agency Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) since its inception to address transportation and economic development related issues at the local level.²⁰ As a decentralized agency, much of the interaction between FDOT and non-metropolitan elected officials occurs through the department’s seven district offices. Throughout the year district staff, including designated local government liaisons, work with local officials to identify and address transportation needs and priorities.

As previously noted, FDOT district offices have entered into agreements or sponsored programs with RPCs to facilitate rural transportation planning efforts. These collaborative efforts have included funding for:

- The development of a rural mobility plan that supports the coordination and sharing of transportation provider resources, maximizing funding and grant eligibility, and promoting partnerships, education and awareness;
- A mobility coordinator position to enhance and expand transportation services to the transportation disadvantaged and to support transportation services for job training, education, and access to jobs; and
- Providing Work Program information and presentations to boards of county commissioners and city council members along with facilitating coordination and solicitation of comments related to the Work Program.

Figure 2: Examples of FDOT District Interaction with Local Non-Metropolitan Officials

Assist with coordination and development of rural catalyst sites	Work with MPOs that include rural counties to ensure consideration of rural needs within their long range transportation plan	Attend RPC and board of county commissioner meetings to stay apprised of rural transportation needs and priorities	Solicit and coordinate new transportation projects from non-metropolitan counties and communities	Coordinate with FDOT’s Statewide REDI liaison on a variety of transportation-related issues
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²⁰ Section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, establishes the Rural Economic Development Initiative within DEO to coordinate and focus the efforts and resources of state and regional agencies on the problems that affect the fiscal, economic, and community viability of Florida’s economically-distressed rural communities.



Florida Statutes

Florida Statutes include a number of provisions that require FDOT to coordinate transportation planning and programming activities with local governments. The following discussion summarizes key statutory requirements governing the roles and responsibilities of various state and local entities in transportation planning and programming functions.

- [Section 163.3204, F.S.](#) - Requires all state and regional agencies to cooperate with local governments in the preparation and adoption of their comprehensive plans.
- [Section 339.135\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#) - Requires projects in the department's Work Program to be consistent with an approved local comprehensive plan of any local government within whose boundaries the project is located in whole or in part, or, if inconsistent, is accompanied by an explanation of why the inconsistency should be undertaken.
- [Section 339.135\(4\)\(c\), F.S.](#) - Provides the board of county commissioners shall serve as the MPO in those counties which are not located in an MPO and shall be involved in the development of the department's Work Program to the same extent as an MPO.
- [Section 339.155\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#) - Requires the Florida Transportation Plan to be developed in consultation with affected local officials in non-metropolitan areas and with any affected Indian tribal governments.
- [Section 339.175, F.S.](#) - Requires MPO membership to be determined on an equitable geographic-population ratio basis as approved by the Governor. Therefore, officials responsible for rural areas within a metropolitan planning area may be involved in the MPO through the mandatory county commission membership on the MPO or through direct representation of a small rural community included in a metropolitan planning area to provide geographic balance.



Non-Metropolitan Official Survey Results

The department analyzes the satisfaction of local officials from non-metropolitan areas regarding their input in the development of statewide transportation plans and the Work Program through its ongoing customer surveys of government officials. FDOT surveys officials from cities, counties, MPOs and the state legislature about the transportation system and intergovernmental coordination issues. The Department reviews the satisfaction of local officials from non-metropolitan areas as compared to those from MPO areas.

The satisfaction of local officials from non-metropolitan has been high and comparable to local officials from urban areas. For example, over 81% of the non-metropolitan officials responding in 2012 strongly agreed or agreed that "FDOT District officials seek our government unit's input when establishing priorities for roadway constructions projects." Also, in 2012 79% of the non-metropolitan officials and 82% of MPO area officials strongly agreed or agreed that "FDOT officials seek our government's input when developing statewide plans."

Continuing Support for Non-Metropolitan Official Involvement

The department is committed to continue working to improve and update its processes to achieve its goal of ensuring that all local entities in areas not served by MPOs have sufficient input into transportation planning and programming. To make certain the local government consultation and cooperation processes remain current and effective, FDOT will continue to:

- Support non-metropolitan local officials with information and staff resources as needed to make informed transportation planning and programming decisions;
- Develop opportunities for increased non-metropolitan local official involvement in the planning and programming processes; and
- Seek comments and ideas on how participation in the planning and programming processes can be increased by non-metropolitan local officials.

