

MPO Supports Increased Passenger Rail Service

When Henry Flagler built the Florida East Coast Railroad, it served passengers and freight from Jacksonville to the Florida Keys. Passenger service continued on the FEC until the early 1960's when it ceased and began to carry only freight. Rail passenger services today continue on Amtrak from Jacksonville to Miami through Orlando, before reaching West Palm Beach and points south. In 2001, efforts began to return passenger rail service along the coast from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach but died when nationwide funding cuts were made to Amtrak services. Those efforts are underway again. The MPO is one of over 75 agencies, counties and municipalities asking the Governor and the Florida Department of Transportation to apply for funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Amtrak has also provided support for the project. FDOT has submitted a pre-application for Economic Stimulus funds for passenger services from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach along the coast with eight stations on the FEC. The full application will be submitted in September with a response expected by the end of the year.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Update

A status report on the \$27M funding of the Economic Stimulus Program was presented to the MPO Board in July. The projects approved by the MPO Board in March under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) guidelines, must comply with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) review of those plans and deemed ready for submission to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for approval. FDOT is completing their reviews for applicants to obtain Local Agency Program (LAP) certifications. Local Agencies receiving ARRA funds must be able to prove their capability to administer Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) funded projects. All projects are included in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the State's TIP to meet federal requirements. Two projects have received authorization for funding that will be administered by FDOT. Federal authorization of all funds by March 1, 2010 for approved projects is the ultimate goal.

Water Taxi Dock Completed in Jupiter

The Town of Jupiter has completed construction of a dock to serve water taxis' along the Intracoastal Waterway in northern Palm Beach County. The dock is located on the east side of the Waterway under the Indiantown Road Bridge. The location provides access to the Riverwalk project that Jupiter is constructing along the water with connections to various businesses and developments in the area.

The dock is one of a series of sites along the Intracoastal Waterway funded by the MPO from a federal grant. Other sites will be located on the Jupiter Inlet, north of Donald Ross Road, in downtown West Palm Beach and the City of Lake Worth.



Regional Citizens Advisory Committee Holds Annual Meeting

The Regional Citizens Advisory Committee held its Annual Meeting on June 17 at the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) conference room in Pompano Beach. Representatives from Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach citizens committees were given updated presentations on projects traversing all three counties.

Of great interest to CAC members and citizens in attendance was SFRTA's (Tri-Rail) operating status and projections for the future operation of the commuter rail service. Since Florida's Legislature did not approve a dedicated funding source for the 2009 budget, Tri-Rail staff was charged with presenting options for funding in order to continue commuter services to the community at large. A revised budget was presented on June 26 to the SFRTA Board allowing Tri-Rail to use capital funds for operations in order to continue the 50-train weekday and holiday schedule for one year.

Other update presentations included status of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP), a Regional Freight Study and US 27 Freight Rail Feasibility Study, and the South Florida East Coast Corridor Study.

Did You Know?

- “Click it or Ticket” - July 1st is the effective date for Florida’s new seatbelt law. Drivers can now be pulled over and ticketed by law enforcement officers if seatbelts are not worn.
 - Safe bicycling information can be found at www.sharetheroad.org.
 - An energy-saving transportation alternative is to car-pool or vanpool. South Florida Commuter Services offers valuable tips on their website www.1800234RIDE.com.
 - A SunPass Mini-Sticker transponder can be purchased at Publix, CVS, Navarro, Sedano’s and the PBC Clerk’s Office for \$4.99. SunPass users may pay 25 cents less at toll plazas than using cash.
 - MPO, TAC, CAC and BGPAC agendas can be downloaded each month from the MPO’s web page: www.pbcgov.org/mpo.
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MPO Adopts FY 2010-2014 TIP

The MPO Board adopted the FY 2010-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at its July 2009 meeting. The TIP shows the various transportation projects for maintaining and improving the transportation system funded by Federal, State and local sources. The projects include highways, buses, rail, air and sea ports, bicycle and beautification. The program reflects over \$1 billion in projects over a five-year period. The TIP is based on and reflects the Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) FY 2010-2014 Five-Year Work Program for Palm Beach County, and generally moves forward the projects in the time frame from previous Work Programs. The Program also includes Palm Beach County’s Five-Year Road Program. The TIP is developed through a continuing, cooperative, comprehensive and coordinated effort involving the FDOT, the Board of County Commissioners, the Port of Palm Beach, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and municipalities within the County. The document may be reviewed on the MPO’s webpage.

PBC 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Each month the MPO Board reviews every stage of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. The MPO webpage has a link to the 2035 LRTP update where the public can follow the step-by-step development of the Cost Feasible Plan, Needs Plan and Socio-Economic Data as they are presented to the MPO Board. You may want to add the website to your Favorites: www.palmbeach2035plan.com/. Planning 25-years into the future seems like a daunting task considering the rising costs associated with construction. However, the focus on funding is directed toward transit use in the coming years. Building highways is no longer the primary option for accommodating increased vehicular traffic. The other consideration that must be addressed includes ways to decrease greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels. The MPO is charged with creating a transportation plan for future residents that will protect the natural environment, land use, air quality and move people effectively and efficiently. A daunting task indeed...

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