

FREIGHT AND RAIL COMMITTEE

Florida MPO Advisory Council

July 29th, 2021





Agenda

- Previously on...
- How did we get here?
- Freight Priorities Program Recap, Proposed Options, and Discussion
- Passenger Rail Proposed Options and Discussion

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PREVIOUSLY ON....

The April 29th, 2021 MPOAC Freight Committee Meeting

Motion to Expand the FPP

That the Freight Priorities Program expand its criteria to include projects that...

- 1) Are in the Feasibility/Planning phase and have not advanced far enough to have a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study** either planned, ongoing, or complete, and
- 2) Are composed of different freight-related transportation modes** apart from highways (e.g., rail, seaport, airport, complete streets, high-value freight).

Further Amended:

That the Committee also **consider reexamining the purpose and goals of the FPP Project List.**

Motion to Add Passenger Rail

That the MPOAC Freight Advisory Committee,

align its efforts with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and follow federal guidance

to expand its current scope (i.e., vision, mission, and objectives) to incorporate passenger rail into its purview.

In addition, the Freight Committee will update its title to become the **Freight and Rail Committee.**

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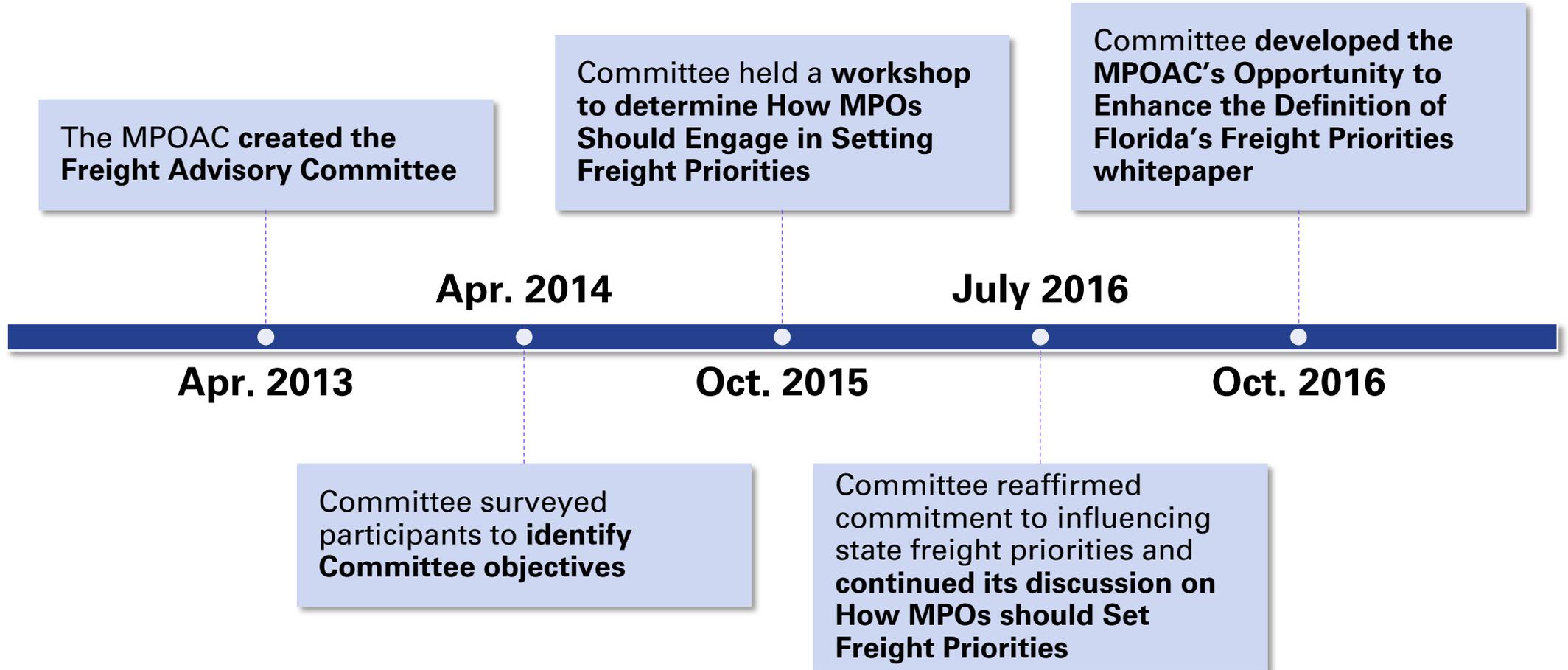
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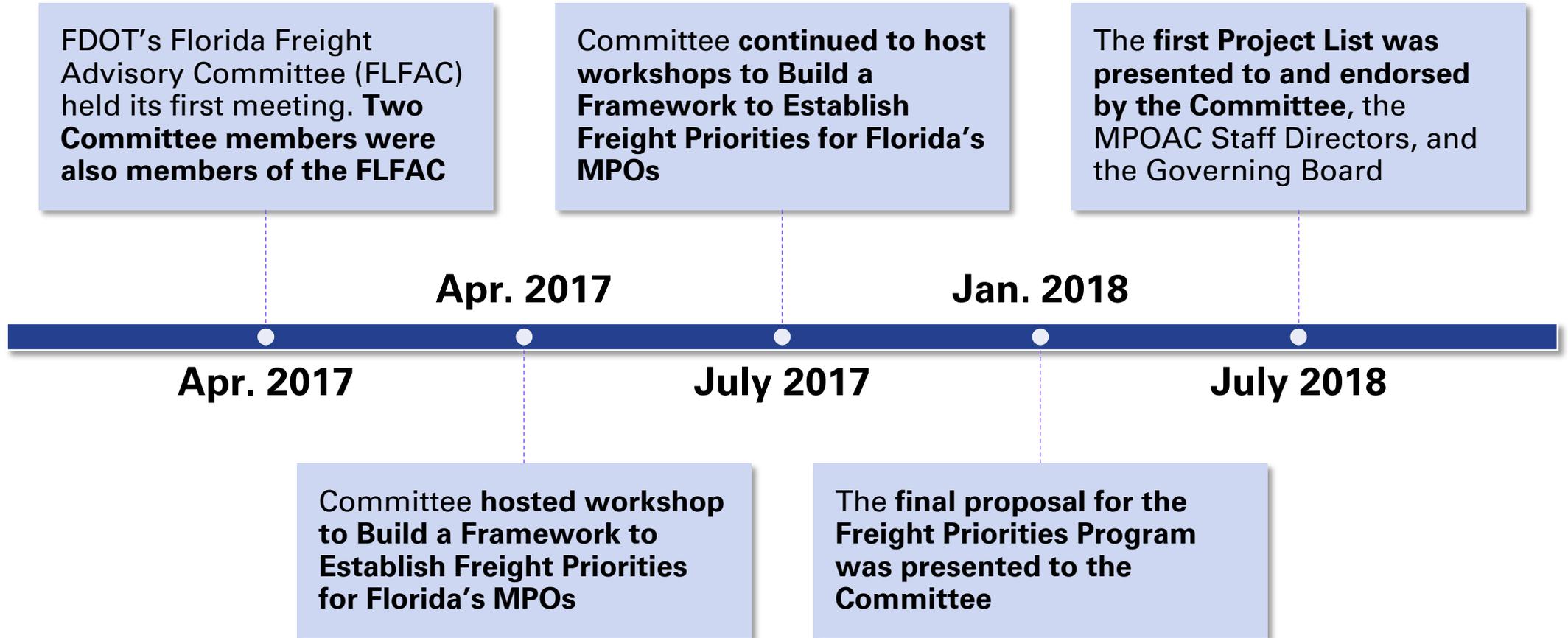
HOW DID WE GET HERE?

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

Timeline



Timeline

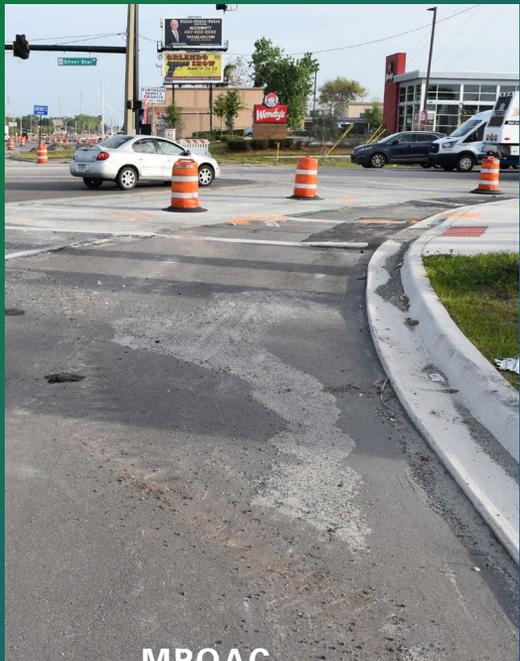




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FREIGHT PRIORITIES PROGRAM

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee



MPOAC

Purpose of the FPP

- To provide MPOs with an **opportunity to identify high priority freight projects** on an annual basis
- To **use the MPOAC as a united voice** to promote and endorse these priorities on behalf of its members, for consideration by FDOT

Guiding Principles

Every Advantage

Florida's **MPOs must have every advantage possible to compete for and prioritize available funding** to enhance their freight transportation and logistics systems while protecting their communities' quality of life and economic prosperity.

Jurisdiction

State freight priorities address the most strategic freight needs; thus, **MPOs must provide input to help identify them, especially when they fall within urbanized areas** (i.e., MPO jurisdictions).

Unified Input

As a statewide forum, **the MPOAC must provide unified input by the MPOs** to FDOT on freight priorities to ensure local and regional freight needs are addressed in funding decisions.

Lessons Learned

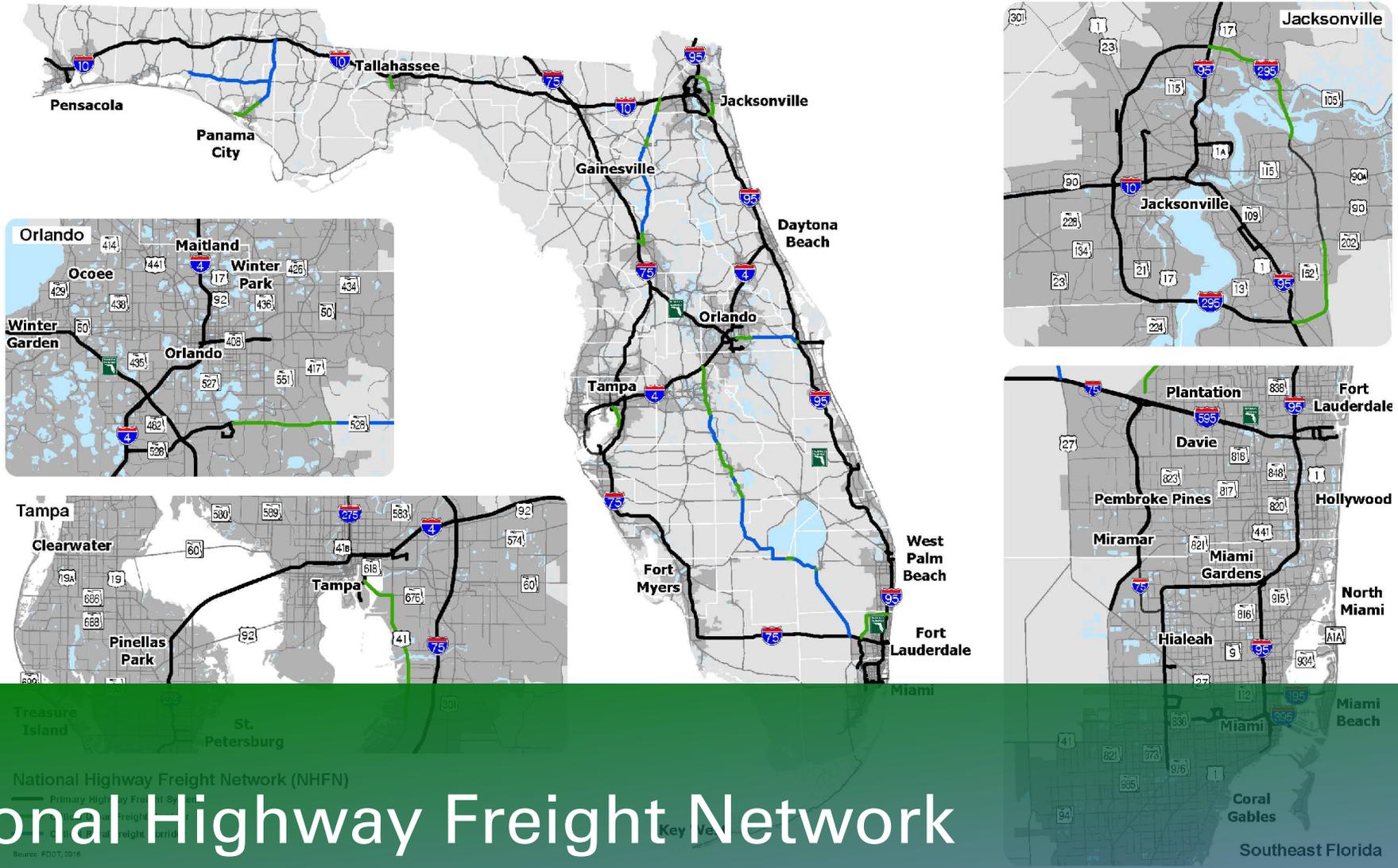
- Not all MPOs identify or prioritize freight projects
- Freight needs are often identified through a variety of activities:
 - Working with regional partners (e.g., freight operators, FDOT, municipalities);
 - Conducting bottleneck analyses, stakeholder surveys/partner input, capital improvement plans/master plans; or
 - Including them as part of their overall capacity improvements.
- Non-roadway improvements are often included in LRTPs by reference (e.g., port master plan); and
- Projects are prioritized based on freight volumes, freight intensity, mode, economic impact, system efficiencies, and more.

What were the Objectives?

- Working with FDOT, the Committee learned that funding eligibility is mainly tied to freight network designations. These mainly include but are not limited to...



Freight Mobility and Trade Plan



National Highway Freight Network

Figure 2 | National Highway Freight Network

What were the Objectives?



- To ensure the successful implementation of the program, the **prioritization framework needed to promote freight projects that are immediately eligible for these key funding programs**



- Proposed freight projects would need to be **“shovel ready”** and linked to either the NHFN, SIS, or the State Highway System (SHS)



- During our July 19, 2017 meeting, the Committee agreed that a completed **Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study** should be required for any proposed project

Why a PD&E?

- A PD&E would help **guarantee that the given project would meet most of the other proposed requirements and be ready to advance funding**
 - Project location
 - A feasible conceptual design
 - Its social and environmental impacts identified
 - Identified in a plan
- At some later time, a **separate process could be developed for projects that still require a PD&E** and/or need assistance with other phases to prepare for funding

What are the FPP requirements?

- Each MPO can **submit up to three (3) freight projects**
- Projects **should fall on the SHS** and must have a **PD&E complete, underway, or funded** (i.e., ready for design/engineering or construction)
- Projects **must be able to accept funds in the current Five-Year Work Program** (e.g., be unfunded, partially funded, or able to accept accelerated funding)

What are the FPP requirements?

- Each project screening checklist must be completed when submitted
- The Project List must be developed for Florida and presented to the MPOAC for approval
- The approved Project List must be transmitted to FDOT to help inform the annual Five-Year Work Program's development activities

Highly Encouraged Practices

- Applicants should **work with their District Freight Coordinators (DFC)** to to share information on priority freight projects
- Each MPO should **promote the approved Project List** to their DFC to encourage successful implementation.
- Advocating for a project on the Project List can also help build public support, **making the project more competitive when pursuing other funding opportunities** (e.g., federal grant discretionary funds).



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RECAP, PROPOSED OPTIONS, AND DISCUSSION

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

What does Expansion Mean?

- The Committee has **successfully met its initial goal of creating a program that helped its members "participate in the development and prioritization of statewide freight projects."**
- Lessons learned have been **shared on a national level** (e.g., Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Annual Conference) and are well received as an **emerging best practice**.
- Despite the accomplishments to date, working with internal and external partners has made it clear that there is **still much work to be done to increase its inclusivity and effectiveness in influencing funding allocations**.

Feedback: Internal Facilitation

- Adding **intermodal projects** (e.g., rail, seaport, airport, non-state roadways, high-value freight) would help MPOs better address their top freight priorities.
- Perhaps it is time to revisit the original eligibility criteria or develop a separate list to **incorporate more projects in the planning/feasibility phases** and need help getting advanced/funded.
- **Improved consistency across submittals** would better facilitate the review process

Feedback: Internal Facilitation

- In some cases, **MPOs are looking to modify NHFN designations** (e.g., CUFC/CRFC) to help advance projects
- FPP Project List **should include freight projects pursuing federal discretionary grants** (e.g., RAISE, INFRA) where appropriate . Efforts should be made to include MPO grant submission projects in the FPP Project List.

Feedback: External Reception

- **Some FPP projects were included** in FDOT's Freight and Mobility Trade Plan's (FMTP) National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) project selection and prioritization process
 - FPP projects were **awarded extra points**
 - **Some projects received funding**
 - **Identifying all related freight networks was helpful** (e.g., NHFN, SIS)
 - MPOs should feel free to **identify projects that are off the SHS, NHFN, and SIS**

Feedback: External Reception

- The **Project List needs to be championed** by each MPO during the process and after it is approved.
- **DFCs need to be contacted** throughout the Project List development process (February to May) and after to help reconcile information and promote each project.
- It is appropriate for the MPOAC to **coordinate with FDOT on the projects being considered for grants** (e.g., INFRA).

Feedback: External Reception

- More information should be elicited from the MPOs regarding **project readiness**. This would also help FDOT align projects with other potential funding opportunities (e.g., INFRA, RAISE).
- Some of the **larger projects should be broken down** and submitted by phase to optimize funding scalability.
- A **bottleneck analysis** of Florida's freight network could be compared to the FPP Project List to help FDOT prioritize projects that meet their Push-Button Specifications.
- The **FMTP project list** could be compared to the FPP Project List to help FDOT prioritize projects.

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BREAKOUT SESSION

[HANDOUT PAGES 2-5]

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

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Discussion

Option 1 (Recommended)

- Allow for an unlimited number of project submissions regardless of mode or phase.
- The result would be a statewide freight plan capturing critical freight needs from the MPOAC perspective.
- This would facilitate opportunities to incorporate planning practices greater cooperation between the MPOs and FDOT.
- Expanding the program in this way would require an overhaul, complete with a web portal, online submissions, and new standards for project evaluation.

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Discussion

Option 2

- Limit the number of project submissions by limiting what would be considered an eligible submission – accomplished by either transportation mode **OR** project phase.
- This option is a moderated approach that does not quite reach “long-range plan status” but still begins to capture the needs of the MPOs and fosters greater coordination.

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Discussion

Option 3

“Status Quo” -- This option would continue the program as is; issues raised by some MPOs would not be addressed; project list would continue to be sent to FDOT annually to promote roadway projects on the SHS



PASSENGER RAIL

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

Motion to Add Passenger Rail

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align its efforts with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and follow federal guidance

to expand its current scope (i.e., vision, mission, and objectives) to incorporate passenger rail into its purview.

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The Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council

Mayor Richard J. Kaplan
Chairman

MPOAC Freight Committee

Document: Vision and Mission Statements

Vision Statement

Foster the development through the MPOAC of a comprehensive integrated, coordinated multimodal freight network for Florida.

Mission Statement

To be the collective forum for the development and promotion of actionable ideas that foster and support sound goods movement planning and initiatives for all Florida MPOs.

Objectives in Furtherance of Vision and Mission

- Build on and leverage relationships that promote professional networking between MPO's and other groups with parallel interests in safe, secure, cost-effective and environmentally sensitive goods movement.
- Provide MPOs with materials and media that can be used to help to raise awareness and educate Board members, other MPO staff, the public, elected officials and industry representatives on the importance and relevance of freight planning and freight investments to Florida's economic vitality.
- Provide a forum where MPO's, FDOT and the USDOT can share success stories and lessons learned from freight initiatives.
- Provide MPO's information that can help facilitate compliance with current federal law and regulations relating to freight planning and freight planning performance measurement.
- Serve as a single point of contact for federal and state agencies interested in vetting ideas or searching for ways to promote freight in the metropolitan planning process.
- Participate in the development and prioritization of projects that comprise the comprehensive integrated, coordinated multimodal freight network for Florida.

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Handout Page 7 | Vision, Mission, and Objectives (2014)



MPOAC

Passenger Rail Opportunities

- The Florida passenger rail system currently under the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) jurisdiction includes **Amtrak**, **Brightline**, **SunRail**, and **Tri-Rail**.
- Collectively, they operate on over 600 route miles of track in Florida.
 - **Amtrak** and **Brightline** are both intercity operators and use tracks owned by other railroads.
 - **SunRail** and **Tri-Rail** are both commuter rail operators that run on their own tracks.



Passenger Rail Opportunities

In addition to these four systems, Florida also has four major urban rail systems that are **not connected to the national rail system** (i.e., not under FRA jurisdiction):

- Miami Metrorail
- Miami Metromover
- JTA Skyway
- TECO Line Streetcar



Passenger Rail Opportunities

President Joe Biden is placing a **renewed emphasis on investing in “reliable passenger and freight rail service.”**

“The nation’s **rail networks** have the potential to offer **safe, reliable, efficient,** and **climate-friendly** alternatives for **moving people and freight.**”

“**Invest \$80 billion** to address Amtrak's repair backlog; modernize the high traffic Northeast Corridor; improve existing corridors and connect new city pairs; and enhance grant and loan programs that support passenger and freight rail safety, efficiency, and electrification.”



Passenger Rail Opportunities

- For Florida, this could mean more lines expanded out from Central and South Florida's metro areas and possibly the resurrection of plans to develop a passenger rail service in the Panhandle.
- Amtrak released a [proposed map of new and expanded services](#).



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COMMITTEE EXAMPLES

[HANDOUT PAGES 8-9]

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

Potential Current Issues

- Balancing the **competing needs of freight and passenger rail** on shared track will be paramount for the economy
- Encouraging, by either policy or design, **mode shift to move more vehicles off Florida roadways**
- **Station development along rail corridors** and safe **first- and last-mile connections** at passenger rail stations
- Rail stations sometimes cause **issues on Florida's arterial roadway network** (e.g., lengthy closures from station placement, increased congestion, safety, sustainability)

The background image shows a city street scene with a train on an elevated track. In the foreground, there is a walkway with a railing and several large, white, dome-shaped light fixtures. The scene is overlaid with a blue and green color gradient. A white horizontal line is visible at the top of the image.

PROPOSED OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION [HANDOUT PAGES 10-12]

MPOAC Freight and Rail Committee

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Discussion

Option 1 (Recommended)

- Host a facilitated workshop to collaborate, brainstorm, and identify needed changes to the Committee's strategic direction (i.e., vision, mission, objectives) to incorporate passenger rail.
- The workshop would also examine the Committee's current charge, performance, and structure.
- Any best practices would be retained, and areas for improvement addressed.
- Additionally, the Committee would also identify ways to complement the efforts of its members, stakeholders, and partners.

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Discussion

Option 2 (Recommended)

- Commission a study of the various roles and responsibilities of MPOs, statewide stakeholder groups, regional stakeholder groups, and similar organizations regarding the implementation of passenger rail-related activities.
- Host educational presentations to become more informed about the railroad industry, both in Florida and nationally.

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Discussion

Option 3

- Take an incremental approach to incorporate passenger rail by hosting more educational-style presentations to help build the Committee's comfort level.
- As more information becomes available, the Committee can decide on a course of action to be more involved in Florida's passenger rail discussion.



THANK YOU

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