



HERNANDO-CITRUS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) BOARD

Minutes of Thursday, September 4, 2025

DRAFT

The Hernando-Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Board held a regular public meeting at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 4, 2025, at the Lecanto Government Building, 3600 W. Sovereign Path, Room 166, Lecanto, Florida. The meeting was publicly noticed on the Hernando County, Citrus County, and Hernando-Citrus MPO websites.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Kinnard, Citrus County Commissioner (Acting Chair)
John Allocco, Hernando County Commissioner
Jerry Campbell, Hernando County Commissioner
Ryan Amsler, MPO Board Alternate Member, Hernando County Commissioner
Gene Davis, Councilman, City of Inverness
Joe Meek, Mayor, City of Crystal River
Thomas Bronson, Vice Mayor, City of Brooksville
Elisa Joyner, Non-Voting Advisor, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

Rebecca Bays, MPO Chair, Citrus County Commissioner
Brian Hawkins, MPO Vice Chair, Hernando County Commissioner
Steve Champion, Hernando County Commissioner
Christa Tanner, Mayor, City of Brooksville

OTHERS PRESENT

Bob Esposito, MPO Executive Director
Mary Elwin, MPO Coordinator
Joy Turner, MPO Executive Assistant
Suzanne Ziegler, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Motion: A motion was made by Commissioner Campbell to nominate Commissioner Kinnard as Acting Chair for the September 4, 2025, MPO Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Davis and the motion passed 6-0.

- MPO Board Acting Chair, Jeff Kinnard, called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.
- The Pledge of Allegiance and the introductions of the Board and staff followed the Invocation.
- A quorum was declared, and Ms. Turner noted for the record that the public notice for the meeting was posted in accordance with the adopted policies.

APPROVAL/MODIFICATION OF AGENDA

Motion: A motion was made by Commissioner Amsler to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Campbell and the motion passed 6-0.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Esposito provided an overview of the three items on the Consent Agenda which were:

1. Review and Approval of the August 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes of the Hernando-Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Board
2. Approval of Alternate Members from the City of Brooksville to the Hernando-Citrus MPO Board and the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA). Additional appointments of City Council Members Thomas Bronson, Vice Mayor, and J.W. McKethan as representatives of the City of Brooksville to serve on the MPO Board. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the appointment of all five City Council Members, i.e., Mayor Christa Tanner, Vice Mayor Thomas Bronson, Betty Erhard, Louis Hallal, and J.W. McKethan to serve as alternate members to the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA).
3. Review and Approval of Contract Amendment 1 to the Kimley-Horn General Planning Consultant Contract #RG-230033(AP) adding the use of Nationwide Traffic Data as a subconsultant to the contract.

[For the record, it is noted that Vice Mayor Bronson of the City of Brooksville is authorized to serve as an alternate voting member of the MPO Board.]

Motion: A motion was made by Commissioner Amsler to approve Consent Agenda Items 1 through 3. The motion was seconded by Councilman Davis and the motion passed 7-0.

ACTION ITEM

Review and Approval of the Annual Roll-Forward Amendment of the FY2026-FY2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Esposito presented the Hernando-Citrus annual roll-forward amendment of the FY2026-FY2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He noted that a Roll-Call vote is required.

Acting Chair Kinnard asked if there was anyone in the audience wishing to speak on this matter. No one from the audience came forward.

Motion: A motion was made by Mayor Meek to approve the annual roll-forward amendment of the FY2026-FY2030 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Bronson and a Roll-Call vote carried the motion 7-0.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

MPO DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Mr. Esposito shared the following updates:

- Mr. Esposito expressed his appreciation to the City of Brooksville for appointing all of its council members as alternate representatives to both the MPO Board and the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA). To help ensure quorum requirements are consistently met at meetings, he encouraged the remaining jurisdictions to adopt a similar approach.
- Mr. Esposito reported that Mary Elwin, MPO Coordinator, attended the Transportation Disadvantaged Training Session on September 3 in St. Petersburg. The session was held as part of the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Annual Conference and is a mandatory training required by the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) to support continued education and regulatory compliance of the planning grant.

- In today's meeting, the MPO Board voted to add Nationwide Traffic Data as a subcontractor to the Kimley-Horn GPC contract. As a result, staff will issue a purchase order for traffic counts at 71 locations throughout Hernando, along with a level-of-service analysis. An additional scope will be finalized for the Citrus County traffic counts and a level of service analysis.
- Notices to Proceed have been issued for the Complete Streets and Congestion Management projects. Kick-off meetings for both initiatives were held last week.
- Following a review of upcoming agenda items, staff indicated that the MPO Board meetings scheduled for October and December will likely be cancelled. However, the November 6 meeting is expected to proceed as scheduled.
- During a previous MPO Board meeting, Commissioner Champion raised concerns regarding the visibility of pavement markings, particularly on concrete pads. He noted that the markings are difficult to see during rainy conditions and that vehicle recognition systems have trouble detecting them. *[Subsequent to the meeting, FDOT confirmed black contrast will be added to the white lane striping to increase visibility on concrete pavement.]*
- Mr. Esposito invited Darlene Lollie, Hernando County Transit Administrator, and Joanne Granger, Transit Director for Citrus County, to provide updates on the operating costs for their transit systems that were discussed during the Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update for Citrus County (FY26-FY35) at the August 7, 2025, MPO Board meeting.

Ms. Granger began by clarifying that Hernando County Transit operates a fixed-route system under the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners. The Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for transportation-disadvantaged services is a separate entity, You Thrive Florida. In contrast, Citrus County Transit operates a deviated fixed-route system and also serves as the CTC for transportation-disadvantaged services. Both functions are managed directly by the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners.

Funding for Citrus County Transit comes from Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants, specifically 5307 and 5311 for rural areas, and the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD). According to the FY2024 National Transit Database (NTD), the cost per trip is \$70 for door-to-door service and \$35 for the deviated fixed route service. Citrus County received approximately \$3.2 million in transit grants for FY2024. In response to Councilman Davis's inquiry, Ms. Granger noted that the local match equaled \$469,000 of which \$160,000 was paid with an allocation from the County's Ninth-Cent gas tax and \$309,000 from ad valorem taxes resulting in an average local match cost of \$8.37 per trip.

Ms. Lollie noted that the only deviation from the fixed-route service in Hernando County is the requirement of providing ADA complementary service (within ¼ of a mile from the fixed-route). Ms. Lollie presented a spreadsheet comparing FY2023 NTD data for several Florida MPOs, highlighting fare revenue as a percentage of expenses and operating costs per unlinked passenger trip (UPT). The data showed consistent cost per trip figures across most of the MPOs reviewed.

Ms. Granger shared that a five-mile Uber ride typically costs around \$27, while a cross-county trip could exceed \$50. For wheelchair users, Uber Health, which is only available through medical providers, would have to be used. Citrus County recorded 3,077 wheelchair trips in FY2024.

As the CTC, Citrus County Transit is eligible to apply for an Innovative Service Development (ISD) grant. If awarded, the grant could fund vouchers for services like Uber, Lyft, or taxis, particularly for individuals needing transportation outside regular bus hours. The ISD grant requires a 10% county match. Ms. Lollie later emphasized that federally funded transit services must comply with FTA ADA regulations, even when using third-party providers.

Ms. Granger clarified that the financial figures in the FY2026-FY2035 Transit Development Plan (TDP) pertain solely to Citrus County's deviated fixed-route system. She explained that the TDP is a 10-year strategic plan incorporating public input; however, implementing its recommendations, especially those requiring significant local funding, is at the discretion of the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners. Maintaining a fixed-route system is a requirement to qualify for the state block grant.

Ms. Elwin affirmed that counties receiving block grants must produce a TDP every five years. She stressed the importance of public input and feasibility assessments when developing the plan, which serves as a guide for future transit services.

During a discussion on fare increases, Ms. Lollie explained that fare revenue is deducted from total operating costs before grant reductions are applied. Therefore, increasing fare revenue may not significantly reduce the amount of gas tax funding needed to meet the local match requirements.

Commissioner Allocco inquired about tracking the cost of individualized services, such as year-long medical transportation for a single person. He emphasized the need for data to help decision-makers balance service delivery with fiscal responsibility, especially since transit services are generally subsidized nationwide.

In response to Commissioner Allocco's question, Ms. Granger clarified that each leg of a transit journey counts as a separate trip. For example, traveling from a bus stop to Walmart and returning constitutes two trips.

Councilman Davis asked why Citrus County has more buses than Hernando County. Ms. Granger explained that Citrus County, as the CTC, provides transportation-disadvantaged services directly, whereas Hernando County contracts with You Thrive Florida, which owns the bus inventory.

Commissioner Campbell asked if the Ninth-Cent gas tax could only be used for public transit and Ms. Elwin stated that for Hernando County, the Ninth-Cent gas tax could also be used for improvement for certain road improvements as well as funding public transit.

Walt Eastmond, County Engineer and Technical Services Director for Citrus County Public Works, noted that Citrus County's Ninth-Cent gas tax is set to expire in 2034 and, to his knowledge, cannot be renewed. Commissioner Kinnard asked what steps would be needed to extend [or renew] the tax. Ms. Elwin committed to reviewing the sunset provisions for Citrus County and reporting back to the Board.

Commissioner Allocco shared his personal experience using public transportation for shopping and encouraged fellow Board members to do the same to better understand available resources. He also advocated for expanding the use of the tourism tax to support county and city operating expenses, suggesting that this could help offset the strain caused by tourism rather than limiting its use to promote tourism.

The Board expressed appreciation for the informative discussion and insights provided.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Councilman Davis noted that the Turnpike Extension Project has adversely affected signal timing at the on-and-off ramps at SR 44 and Veterans Expressway in Citrus County.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Elisa Joyner, District 7 liaison for the Florida Department of Transportation, informed the Board that Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) is actively addressing the issue and anticipates a

resolution during the week of September 15, 2025].

ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Board is scheduled for Thursday, October 2, 2025, beginning at 1:30 pm, in the Lecanto Government Building, 3600 W. Sovereign Path, Room 166, Lecanto, Florida. [It is noted for this record that the October meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is on November 6, 2025, at 1:30 pm in Lecanto.

Motion: A motion was made by Commissioner Campbell to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Allocco and the motion passed 7-0.

Acting Chair Kinnard adjourned the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

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