

# FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF: January 10, 2022

FTC Meeting

## **Attendance:**

Members in attendance: Chairman Ron Howse, Vice-Chairman Jay Trumbull, Commissioners John Browning, Julius Davis, David Genson, Alex Lastra and Rusty Roberts

## **Call to Order and Chairman's Opening Remarks:**

Chair Howse called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

The Commission unanimously approved the meeting minutes from the November 10, 2021 meeting on a motion by Vice-Chairman Trumbull and seconded by Commissioner Roberts.

## **Florida Department of Transportation Agency Update:**

- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretary Kevin J. Thibault provided an agency update.
  - Rebekah Davis was chosen as FDOT's new General Counsel.
  - Kenyatta Lee, Chief of Modal Development is serving as the interim Chief of Staff.
  - FDOT welcomed Lisa Saliba back to the Department as the Assistant Secretary for Finance and Operations.
  - Secretary Thibault announced he would be moving into the final round of the interview process for Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority.
  - The Governor's proposed gas tax holiday will be considered during the 2022 legislative session.
  - Secretary Thibault provided an overview of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).
  - An update was provided on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
  - FDOT does not have any specific legislation being proposed this year but will monitor bills being proposed.
- Following the agency update, Chairman Howse allowed for public comment due to the large number of virtual attendees. No comments were made.
  - Chairman Howse stated that there will also be time at the end of the meeting for the public to have the opportunity to speak.

## **Statewide Public Hearing on the FDOT Tentative Work Program:**

- Ralph Yoder, Executive Director of the Florida Transportation Commission gave a detailed overview of the Florida Transportation Commission’s review of the Tentative Work Program.
  - Commissioner Browning mentioned that it has come to his attention that some roadways that were previously on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) had been subsequently removed from the program.
  - Commissioner Browning suggested that the Commission should be made aware, in the future, when facilities are removed from the SIS program.
  - Chairman Howse recommended that changes in the SIS program be provided as a future agenda item for awareness and understanding.
  - Chairman Howse also recommended having a SIS workshop for the benefit of new members of the Commission.
  - Vice-Chairman Trumbull asked about the process for administering the small county programs.
    - Small counties may apply for projects that meet the requirements set forth in Florida Statutes.
    - The small county projects are administered through the respective District.
    - The project applications are reviewed, ranked and programmed by District staff.
    - The projects are funded by the county and reimbursed by the Department after the project is completed.
    - Funding utilized for the small county programs are state funds.
- Secretary Thibault provided a response regarding the Tentative Work Program review.
  - FDOT is committed to building a transportation system that serves Florida’s current and future transportation needs.
  - Secretary Thibault gave an overview of the Governor’s Freedom First Budget Proposal.
  - Secretary Thibault also gave an overview of the FDOT’s 2021 accomplishments.
  - Commissioner Browning thanked the Secretary for the improvements to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. The vertical net put in place has saved many lives.
  - Commissioner Roberts asked if the \$60 million allocated to the Florida Rail Enterprise is a stable number.
    - Secretary Thibault stated that it has been the same since the initiation of the Florida Rail Enterprise.
- Each District, as well as the Turnpike and Rail Enterprise, gave a brief overview of their respective work programs and briefed the Commissioners on their challenges and accomplishments.
- Brad Thoburn, Assistant Secretary of Strategic Development presented on behalf of the Florida Rail Enterprise.
  - In response to earlier questions regarding the Florida Rail Enterprise, Assistant Secretary Thoburn offered the following:

- The \$60 million allocated to the Florida Rail Enterprise, allocated annually, is a baseline. There is significantly more funding through other sources such as SIS and federal funding.
    - The Emerging Speed Rail Safety Pilot was developed in coordination with Indian River County and Brightline to provide safety standards appropriate for high-speed rail, specifically. FDOT wanted to explore additional safety improvements such as crossing and signal enhancements, pedestrian gates, etc. A before and after analysis will be done to see which betterments provided safety improvements on that corridor.
- Executive Director Nicola Liquori presented on behalf of the Florida Turnpike Enterprise.
  - Commissioner Roberts asked about advances in the types of asphalt being used. Some types of coating potentially reflect heat, help with water run-off, etc. Is Florida using or testing any of these types of materials in asphalt?
    - All asphalt testing is done at the State Materials Lab.
    - Courtney Drummond, Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Operations mentioned that no testing has been done on the referenced material properties, but Florida’s asphalt typically lasts around 16 years and holds up well.
    - Chairman Howse mentioned that the Commission may want to tour the State Materials Lab during a future meeting.
  - Chairman Howse mentioned that many people have had questions about the Northern Turnpike Extension. Although there may be some studies being conducted, nothing has been funded beyond the current phase.
    - The funding is currently only for alternative corridor analysis and studies that were required as part of SB 100. Future phases would be design, right of way acquisition and construction, however those phases have not been funded because the process is only in the planning phase.
- Secretary Evans presented on behalf of District 2.
  - Commissioner Browning asked about a bill to allow special lights to be put on some vehicles working at night.
    - During the 2021 legislative session there was a proposal to allow additional flashing light options for certain construction equipment (such as paving equipment). Allowable colors include red and green.
- Secretary Perdue presented on behalf of District 5
  - Commissioner Roberts stated he is looking forward to the completion of the I-4 Ultimate.
  - Chairman Howse stated that a major concern is that Central Florida population is growing by 20% but the district budget remains relatively the same. Other areas of Florida are also experiencing this type of growth as well.
- Secretary Gwynn presented on behalf of District 7.

- Commissioner Davis mentioned that around 160 people are moving to the Tampa Bay area each day. It's difficult for infrastructure to keep up with the growth, even with many people still working from home.
- Secretary O'Reilly presented on behalf of District 4.
- Secretary Miller presented on behalf of District 6.
  - Commissioner Lastra stated that Miami Dade is struggling with growth as well.
  - Commissioner Browning asked if vehicles could be driven on the old 7-mile bridge in Monroe County.
    - Only fire rescue vehicles are allowed to use the bridge. A ferry is used to visit Pigeon Key. In conjunction with Monroe County, re-establishing a trolley system is being considered.
- Secretary Nandam presented on behalf of District 1.
- Secretary Gainer presented on behalf of District 3.
  - Vice-Chairman Trumbull asked about Back Beach Road in Bay County (US 98) and SR 77.
    - The District is working to advance and expedite the projects and is seeking funding for unfunded portions.
- A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Trumbull to accept Commission staff's recommendation that the Tentative Work Program was found to be developed in accordance with state laws and Departmental policies. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browning and unanimously approved.

### **General FTC Issues/ Business**

- Chairman Howse asked Executive Director Yoder if he had any general FTC business that needed to be discussed. Executive Director Yoder did not.

### **Public Comment:**

Chairman Howse asked for public comments. No comments were provided by those attending either virtually or in person.

Prior to the public hearing on the Tentative Work Program review, the Commission received two e-mails referencing a potential Department project. These e-mails were placed on file with the Commission.

### **Adjourn:**

Chair Howse adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.