

**MOBILITY 2040: A Vision for the SR 54/56 Corridor  
Phase 1: Defining the Alternatives**

**Joint Task Force Meeting Summary  
Tuesday, February 2, 2016 (5:30 pm–7:30 pm)**

Rasmussen College Room # 102 | 18600 Fernview Street, Land O'Lakes, FL 34638

**Task Force Members Present**

Debby Catanzaro, Citizen-at-Large, East Task Force  
Joe Cimino, Developer Representative, East Task Force  
Donna Collier, Citizen-at-Large, West Task Force  
John Copeland, Pasco Alliance of Community Associations (PACA), West Task Force  
Marilynn deChant, MPO Citizens Advisory Committee, West Task Force  
Sandy Graves, Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce, East Task Force  
Susie Hoeller, Central Pasco/Land O' Lakes Chamber of Commerce, West Task Force  
Ronald Hubbs, Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA), West Task Force  
Fred Krauer, Pasco Alliance of Community Associations, East Task Force  
Bruce Mills, West Pasco Chamber of Commerce, West Task Force  
Kelly Miller, MPO Citizens Advisory Committee, West Task Force  
Kelly Mothershead, Citizen at Large, East Task Force  
Brent Nye, Pasco Economic Development Council, East Task Force  
Sharon Ogborn, Pasco Fiasco, West Task Force  
Tom Ryan, Pasco Economic Development Council (EDC) & MPO CAC, West Task Force  
Robb Sercu, MPO Citizens Advisory Committee, East Task Force  
Christie Zimmer, MPO Citizens Advisory Committee, East Task Force

**MPO/County Staff and Consultants Present**

Pasco County MPO: Ali Atefi, Jim Edwards, Mabel Risner  
Pasco County: Matt Armstrong, David Goldstein, Jennifer Carpenter  
Florida Department of Transportation: Dan Santos, Waddah Farrah  
Tindale Oliver: Wally Blain

**Citizens**

D'Ann White, Adam Parker, Bill Hastings Kathy Steele, Frank Hauser, Ken McCalvey, Jean McCalvey, Jim Flateau, Harry Sakalian, Lance Hungerford, Dave Miller, Debbie Olavarria, Fernando Garcia, Bill Russell, Alan Gaddie, Wayne Hawes, Jeannie James, Joseph Bryant, Georgianne Ratliff, Sandy Anderson, Gary Edwards, Patrick Knight, Debra Hedding, Tim Hayes, Michael Buday, Shawn Scott, Mary Lynn Gorsline, Marge Kloess

**Call to Order**

- The Joint Task Force Meeting was called to order by East Task Force Chair Sandy Graves at 5:37 PM.

### Procedures for Joint Task Force Meeting

- Chair Graves outlined the purpose of the meeting as an open discussion between the members of the East Task Force and West Task Force regarding the issues and proposed solutions that have been brought forward. Following discussion by the Task Force Members, there will be an opportunity for public comment.

### Open Discussion between Task Force Members

- Chair Graves opened the Task Force discussion by recognizing Mr. Ryan, who reminded everyone that no matter what the Task Force recommends, such as driveways, bus rapid transit, etc., there will be substantial disruption to the public. Travel conditions in the future will be impacted significantly by housing and development, and it must be recognized that any recommendation likely will cause some concerns, including by businesses, so solutions to address those concerns may be needed as well.
- Ms. deChant discussed a recent newspaper article as a reminder to everyone to remain aware of the many agencies, businesses, and organizations involved in transportation planning that must work together and that this awareness can help to avoid negative feedback.
- Mr. Hubbs mentioned a forwarded email he received regarding the purchase of development entitlements and allocation throughout the county. This email advocated for the purchase of entitlements along the corridor which could then be re-allocated to designated transit locations within the corridor. Mr. Goldstein cautioned that the premise of that email is based on a recommendation coming from this study which includes an alternative with premium transit that will stop at various stations and that development should be concentrated around those stations. He cautioned that unless the committee recommends significant investment in transit for the corridor, premium transit cannot be an option. It could be used as an implementation tool, but it is not the solution. Mr. Cimino asked, if transit is selected, what would be the method for obtaining the entitlements and putting them in desired locations? Mr. Goldstein indicated that a funding source would be needed to buy the entitlements instead of putting money in road improvements. It's an innovative thought, but the mechanics of making it work haven't been fully considered.
- Ms. Miller discussed the concept of identifying locations along the corridor at which different options could be implemented rather than selecting one alternative for the entire corridor. She suggested that each Task Force discuss the options and ideas for each segment of the corridor.
- Chair Graves asked to confirm that everyone understood the difference between the MPO and the FDOT and how they work together.
- The need to have staff discuss each of the 10 alternatives was discussed, but it determined that this would take more time than was allocated for the entire meeting. It was recommended that the format for the Task Force discussion focus on the intersections throughout the corridor rather than the alternatives.
- Chair Graves asked for clarification on the inclusion of tolls with Alternative A. Staff indicated that tolling would be a topic for implementation but it is too early for that decision at this point in the study. Mr. Krauer indicated that he had attended the FDOT meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> and both alternatives presented by FDOT included tolls, which upset many residents. He also expressed concern that only Alternatives 3A and 3C were presented, but not 3B.
- Mr. Farrah clarified that the FDOT study of the SR 54 and US 41 intersection began long ago and that the recommendations from the PD&E study are based on the future growth projections. He discussed previous study efforts and the impact on other locations, such as the US 41 and Dale Mabry intersection, and indicated that there was an earlier option that evaluated the cost of the overpass of SR 54 at US 41 without tolls.
- Ms. Hoeller commented that tolls are not just a method of financing and that they can hurt small and delivery-oriented businesses that have to pay the tolls to deliver items as well as older adults living on fixed incomes. She recommended considering other options for financing roads in addition to tolls and noted that the social impacts on the community need to be evaluated in addition to the transportation impacts.



- Ms. Ogborn addressed the length of time that alternatives considering overpasses and elevated solutions along the corridor have been studied with regard to the cost of construction as well as the business impacts due to right-of-way purchases. She commented that the citizens are not supportive of this and that other resources and solutions should be identified.
- Ms. DeChant pointed out that tolls have certain places where they should be implemented and some people don't mind paying. She asked for clarification on the Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI). Mr. Farrah clarified that the DDI still requires a grade-separated intersection to be implemented.
- Mr. Sercu referenced the cost differences included in the handout from the PD&E workshop. In comparing the 3A and 3C alternatives for the 54/41 interchange, he asked if other options could be considered that merged the recommendations from these two alternatives, such as blending the turn lanes into one alternative with piers for the elevated overpass as an option to reduce business impacts.
- Chair Graves asked why the intersection of SR 54 and US 41 is the first location being studied. Mr. Atefi noted that, at this time, it is the most congested intersection.
- Mr. Ryan noted future conditions on the corridor, including the number of future traffic signals and traffic turn lanes. He noted that the Task Force needs to keep in mind that the solutions should address what the citizens want in maintaining the quality of life. To that end, he asked to discuss the addition of continuous right lanes since diverting traffic around intersections would reduce delay. He referenced the merging lane being constructed at the I-75 and SR 52 interchange as an option. Ms. Catanzaro agreed with Mr. Ryan regarding his suggestions about providing a bypass road at 41 and 54. Ms. Hoeller suggested service roads as a solution such as those in Texas that could work well for people that only need to get to a business and could take the service road. She also commented that Mr. Ryan's suggestion could work at other intersections, not just on 54 and 41. Mr. Sercu mentioned that in the alternatives presented, some of the add-on alternatives are similar to many of the topics being discussed. He specifically addressed the median U-turn option. Mr. Copeland reminded the Task Force about the meetings that occurred a year ago at which a 14-lane solution was proposed by the County. Given the current options, he commented that perhaps that is a better solution than the elevated or toll road or expressway currently being proposed.
- **Ms. Miller made a motion that the County move forward with studying the intersection of 54 and 41 as a starting point to consider the turn-lane options that have been discussed and to evaluate cost factors. Mr. Sercu seconded the motion.** Chair Graves agreed that this would be a good starting point, noting that the decision made by the Task Force will influence the decisions in the rest of the corridor. The impacts to the community around the SR 54/US 41 intersection should be considered. Mr. Goldstein asked for clarification if the motion varies from the add-on alternatives that have been presented; Mr. Ryan said he would seek clarification from staff.
- Mr. Cimino commented that much attention was being given to one intersection and noted that further east, where much new development is occurring, stricter development standards are being followed that are set up for at-grade facilities like cross-access. Creative storm water solutions are less costly than creating elevated solutions.
- Mr. Sercu mentioned this could be two studies, one looking at a bypass road concept for right-turns and another that would address left turns as a bypass road (turning earlier to make a left) or a median U-turn. Mr. Atefi clarified that these considerations of turns can be separated at signals with the add-on alternatives. He also reminded Task Force Members that the MPO is currently working with FHWA to study alternative intersection designs in the SR 54/56 corridor. Mr. Ryan clarified that there needs to be a collective understanding of the future as it relates to the amount of time it will take to travel on 54 and the congestion people are willing to accept, noting that there will be more traffic, more lights, and more congestion in the future. So far, the solutions being proposed are not popular with the public. Mr. Sercu referenced the I-275 NB exit onto SR 56 as a good example, at which two turn lanes were added, but right turns are backed up because of the number of left turns being made. Extending the right turn lane would remove them from the backup. Mr. Atefi clarified that addressing turning cars should be included, but that it will not completely address the problem.



- **Ms. Miller revised her motion to examine Alternative F and Alternative G with the add-on alternative intersection design, specifically including the Michigan Left Turn.** Mr. Atefi noted that this was included as an alternative intersection design and that a survey being sent to Task Force members would ask them to rank their top 5 alternatives and they will be able to identify the desired add-on alternatives or propose additional alternatives. The results of the survey will be presented to the Task Force at the March meeting. The Task Force then will be able to select their recommended alternatives to present to the MPO Board. Mr. Goldstein clarified the expectation that Task Force members requested having this joint meeting to discuss preferences prior to completing the survey and making recommendations.
- Mr. Copeland requested clarification on the County's policy regarding a limit on more than three thru lanes. Mr. Atefi said that this is a policy regarding general purpose lanes and that dedicated lanes or special use lanes can be added, noting that this policy is consistent with bypass or extended turn lanes to avoid congestion at an intersection. In response to Ms. Miller's revised motion, Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Atefi answered that these are feasible to include with Alternatives F and G.
- After further discussion, Mr. Atefi asked if there were any additional alternatives that could be clarified by staff. Chair Graves asked for clarification regarding use of the at-grade express lanes by both cars and buses. Mr. Atefi said express lanes can be used by buses. He noted that at-grade express lanes will not work on SR 54, but were included in the 54/56 study because they were proposed as an option in the TBARTA study and all options that had previously been studied were included so as to not eliminate any alternatives without the Task Force having an opportunity to comment. He noted that at-grade express lanes would block intersections and that they work mostly on expressways where there are no traffic signals. Options would include going over the intersection or blocking it off. At-grade BRT would work since there are gaps between buses, noting that there are no gaps in vehicular traffic. Ms. DeChant commented that she believes an elevated toll would work well for BRT. Chair Graves mentioned that the elevated proposal had 8 exits and entrances that will require much right-of-way and would be very expensive.
- **Chair Graves directed the Task Force back to Ms. Miller's revised motion and requested a second. Mr. Hobbs seconded the motion, which was supported by the members.**
- Staff asked if there was anything further that needed to be discussed regarding add-on alternatives. It was generally agreed that selecting the frontage/bypass add-on alternative is supportive of the concept put forward by Mr. Ryan and selecting the alternative intersection option is supportive of the concept put forward by Mr. Sercu.
- Mr. Goldstein clarified that the upcoming survey would include an option for which specific locations along the corridor could be indicated for recommending these options.
- Ms. Zimmer asked if 54 and 41 being a tolled intersection was still being considered asked about regional funding. Task Force members responded that it is an option. Mr. Atefi reminded Task Force members that the funding discussion will be part of the implementation phase. At this time, selection of an alternative does not specifically determine the funding and implementation of future projects. He also noted that if tolls are included in the future, the existing lane would remain untolled. Mr. Goldstein noted that because this is a State facility, State and federal money would be used. Mr. Cimino clarified that the Task Force Members are strictly voting on functionality of the alternatives at this point. After additional discussion, Mr. Sercu and Mr. Ryan noted that what had been discussed most closely resembled Alternative H with the add-on alternatives. Mr. Mills commented that he would prefer to see tolls used for funding the solution rather than it being funded by taxpayers and homeowners.
- Chair Graves closed the Task Force discussion by reminding Task Force members that information had been sent out regarding recent trends in elevated highways.

## Public Comment

Chair Graves opened the public comment portion of the agenda by reading from the comment/question cards that had been collected.

- Wayne Hawes from the Keystone Community Church asked if the timeframe for any changes on SR 54 had been determined. Are we talking 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years? Mr. Atefi answered that there are different phases of the project and reiterated that no funding has been identified. If the funding becomes available, it would take a few years for design to be completed, another three years for right-of-way purchase, and an additional couple of years for construction—a total of about 7–8 years if all funding was in place.
- Sandy Anderson asked if there are plans to consider incorporating CSX freight lines into the design to improve transportation options and congestion. Mr. Atefi responded that the CSX corridor has been discussed and that FDOT is currently starting a regional transit study that includes the CSX corridor.
- Jim Flateau asked if an elevated highway was being considered for construction from the Suncoast Parkway east to US 41. Mr. Goldstein indicated that this was included as part of Alternatives C and D.
- Harry Sakalian asked about the urgency of making these decisions. He also enquired about the number of vacant lots, permits taken out through 2015, and the inventory of the unsold lots in Pasco County, etc., and noted that there seems to be an urgency. Mr. Atefi indicated that, with planning, the ultimate vision must be determined to identify the steps for implementation. The County's GIS website has a tool called PascoView that displays how much right-of-way is available.
- Patrick Knight stated that a traffic light is needed at the entrance to the Stonegate community and noted the public does not want elevated roadways, noting an incident of someone getting hit. He cited more traffic from additional development being built on the south side of SR 54.
- Ken McCalvey commented that when considering trains and express buses, no one will ride them if they do not stop within walking distance of their destination.
- Frank Hauser asked if a new route 19 was going to be built and commented that building an overpass at one intersection would require continuing to build overpasses at every other intersection.
- Debra Hedding asked if the expansion alternatives on SR 54 will put additional traffic on small side roads and in residential areas and expressed concern that widening these roads and connecting dead end roads could mean residents homes may be taken via eminent domain. Mr. Atefi indicated that improvements to the SR 54/56 corridor should help the traffic situation in neighborhoods.
- Jeannine James indicated that the community of Big Moss Lake is in favor of the elevated plan with available thru lanes at grade. In addition, if funds do not cover the costs, a toll in lieu of property taxes would be preferred.
- Dave Miller discussed his concerns regarding the County's Comprehensive Plan and the change in 2010 that created the Urban Transit Area. He feels that Pasco County's Comprehensive Plan needs to be reevaluated and reviewed by the State.

## Announcements

Mr. Atefi mentioned that upcoming meetings are listed on the agenda.

## Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.