

Meeting Summary

Volusia County Expressway Authority Coalition

February 23, 2000

Volusia County Mobility Management Center
950 Big Tree Road, South Daytona, Florida

Members Present:

Lori Campbell Baker
Joseph Benedict III
Brad Blais
Jon Cheney
Doug Daniels
James Ely

Maryam Hosseini Ghyabi
Charles Lydecker
Richard McMahan
Karl Welzenbach
Linda White

Others Present:

Darla Zakaluzny, Recording Secretary
Council Member Ann McFall
Council member Pat Northey
Council Member Dwight Lewis
John Harper
Carolyn Hyland Ismart

Dave Castagnacci
Allen Watts
Glenn Storch
Betty Holness
Sandra Pedicini

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Maryam Ghyabi called the first meeting of the **Volusia County Expressway Authority Coalition** to order at 10:10 AM. Introductions of the committee members and staff were made. Ms. Ghyabi also recognized the elected officials that were present this morning.

2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Mr. Lydecker moved to recommend Ms. Ghyabi as Chairman and Mr. McMahan as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Cheney seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. Purpose: Transportation, Environment, Funding

Chair Ghyabi stated that the purpose of the meeting is to examine the possibility of toll roads. In putting the agenda together she came up with three items that need to be looked at: transportation, environment, and funding.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that the committee needs to set evaluation criteria and a framework to address each of the different areas regarding transportation. He noted that a matrix would assist the committee in making a recommendation to the County Council.

Ms. Baker agreed that the evaluation and timeframe are very important as it would give the committee deadlines to work towards.

Mr. Daniels asked if any specific needs are to be addressed or any roads that are to be looked at specifically? Chair Ghyabi replied that no specific roads were discussed, they only identified there is a need for additional roads, possibly something that is parallel to I-4.

Chair Ghyabi noted that a presentation by Mr. Harold Worrall, Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority, was given a couple months ago and it would be a good idea to invite him to the next meeting to give the same presentation. She stated that he would also be able to tell the Committee what steps need to be taken and what should be looked into so that committee could make a recommendation to the County Council.

Mr. Ely stated that he is not an advocate of toll roads, but he is an advocate of transportation. He stated that toll roads are a means to an end. The mission or the objective should be focused on transportation. Mr. Ely stated that he would like to speak at a future meeting about the Turnpike's program and how they could possibly help.

Mr. Lydecker asked that the County Council Members present this morning give a summary of what they would like to see the Committee address. He also questioned the appointments to the Committee.

Council Member Northey stated that she is hopeful that the Committee does not come back with routes laid out. She stated that she would like to know if there is a need to do an Expressway Authority or a Turnpike Authority here. Council Member Northey stated that the question is whether or not Volusia County can afford to do that or is there a need for it. If there is, then what are the options out there for moving that forward? Would it be an independent authority? Would it be something done through the Volusia County Council?

Council Member Northey stated that that issue has never been made clear to her as a Council Member and what the role the Council would play. She stated that she has heard that the Expressway Authority does not require the support of the County Council and other times she has heard that it does because they would have to be authorized to do the initial bonding for it.

Council Member Northey stated that she does not want to hear definite routing, but she would be interested in knowing where the Committee thinks potential routes may be located. She stated that the final decision on routing would be made by an Expressway Authority or the County Council if they decide to move ahead.

Council Member Northey stated that it is not clear to her on who would make the final decision.

Council Member Lewis stated that it is a look by the County Council on the County's transportation needs of the future. Council Member Lewis stated that he does not see it as a property tax deal and people would not stand for that anymore.

Council Member Lewis stated that the presentation by the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority was very good and he agrees that it would be a good idea to have the presentation made to this Committee. Council Member Lewis noted that during the County Council's road workshops, it would be a good idea to come up with a purpose and goal, which could be addressed. He stated that we need to address the transportation needs of this County.

Council Member McFall stated that the Committee is made up of seven County Council appointments, and a representative from FDOT, the MPO, County staff, and the Legislative Delegation. She stated that the MPO Board has discussed this issue over the past couple of years.

Council Member McFall stated that according to the Florida Expressway Act, a county or two contiguous counties may (by resolution) form an Expressway Authority, which is a agency of the State. She stated that she was hesitant in forming it, because she thought the County would be going into debt to build the roads. The money could be given up front, but who would have the bonding liability.

Council Member McFall stated that we need to say here and now, that no particular roads are being looked at, it is the funding source. She stated that the five cent gas tax barely helps the County catch up (57% goes to the County and the remainder is split between the cities). Council Member McFall stated that there are a lot of needs out there and a lot of new growth, but there are no roads to a lot of properties.

Council Member McFall stated that there are a lot of options to look at and the Council did not want to give a lot of job descriptions to Committee.

Chair Ghyabi stated that one option is partnering with the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority. She stated that we have to connect to the other counties in the region and this would be a way to do that. Chair Ghyabi stated that we need to narrow down the purpose as she hopes to have the final meeting on September 27, 2000.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that it is his understanding that the County Council does not want the Committee to come back with specific routes. However, most toll way authorities in Florida and other states were formed because they have identified a specific route that needs to be taken care of and there is not enough federal dollars to do it.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that the MPO is in the process of revising 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan. He stated that his staff has done some initial runs on the 2020 Roadway Network and have identified areas of need where the 2020 Plan may not take care of the projected use. Mr. Welzenbach went on to say that Alternative #1 would not take care of the projected use. He stated that he would be happy to have the MPO Staff make a presentation on this at a future meeting.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that he is having difficulty framing the discussion without identifying routes because without identifying the needs and a projected use, you can not respond to the question of funding or whether an Expressway Authority is needed.

Mr. Ely stated that the first step is to understand the ins and outs of creating an Expressway Authority (the make up, the organization, and the funding sources, etc.). The second step would be to look at some specificity of projects. Mr. Ely stated that some projects do not make good toll roads. Part of the route selection is to look at the extent of local support, environmental soundness of the project, and the traffic revenue potential of the project. Mr. Ely noted that some projects do not support the bonds issue.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that we could come back to the County Council and say yes, we need an Expressway Authority, but the question would be why. We have not identified routes or needs.

Council Member Northey stated that she is not opposed to the Committee looking at routing, but she does not want the Committee to make the decision about a particular road (i.e. SR 415). Mr. Welzenbach replied that if we have understood or identified areas of need that have a lack of funding and based on that lack of funding and the identified demand then yes, we need an Expressway Authority. Council Member Northey agreed.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that we need to address the issue of whether we have the sufficient demand and a lack of funding that could generate enough revenue to cover the needs. Council Member Northey replied that they would also need to be told why that area is needed. She stated that people in the County and the community would have their own ideas of where the expressway would go. Council Member Northey stated that the Committee would need to sort through that and determine what is in the best public interest.

Mr. Welzenbach agreed, and added that we need to come up with some level of criteria or matrix within which that is discussed. Chair Ghyabi asked if Mr. Welzenbach was speaking about corridors? Mr. Welzenbach replied yes.

Chair Ghyabi stated that it would be great if the MPO staff could provide a report, which identifies the existing and ten-year needs. Council Member Northey noted that roads outside of the county should be looked at as well.

Mr. Cheney stated that in addition to the funding, transportation, and environmental aspects there are legal aspects on how the Expressway Authority Act is and what the implications would be for forming an Expressway Authority. Mr. Cheney stated that also discussed was the partnering with others such as the Turnpike Authority or the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority.

Council Member Lewis stated that the Committee needs to meet with other agencies in order to gather background information on how they started, why they got started and funding sources, etc.

Mr. Glenn Storch stated that he is concerned about the need for additional traffic corridors in the future. He stated that there is a need for those types of corridors now and there will be a need for additional funding sources too. Mr. Storch stated that the Committee should look at the idea of what it takes to create an Expressway Authority and if it is in the best interests of Volusia County.

Mr. Benedict stated that the environmental issue should be dropped as that is done as a part of the planning and permitting process. Mr. Benedict stated that the Committee needs to focus on the transportation needs and funding, and how we merge the two together. He went on to say that we need to know where the projected funds are coming from for the next 20 years and what the demand is going to be for the next 20 years.

Mr. Lydecker expressed appreciation to the Council Members for their comments. He stated that the Committee needs to determine if such an authority should be formed.

Mr. McMahon expressed interest in having someone explain what an authority is and what they do. He also expressed agreement with Mr. Benedict regarding the environmental aspect.

Chair Ghyabi stated that a report prepared by CUTR on expressway authorities was included in the agenda packets for the members to review.

Mr. Ely noted that there are three primary expressway authorities in the State of Florida. He stated that the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority by virtue of statutory change has the ability to expand their wings outside their area. Mr. Ely stated that Mr. Worrall would be an excellent source to have at a future meeting in order to talk about how they were created and what the strengths and weaknesses of creating an authority is.

Mr. Ely stated that he would like to present another way to build projects, which is a partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation through the Turnpike District. He stated that we need to look at all of the options and decide what is best for Volusia County.

Mr. Daniels noted that the study said that not all of the expressway authorities that were created were successful. Mr. Daniels stated that it would be very important for the Committee to look at the economics of what it would cost to build an expressway authority and what the toll fee would be, etc.

Mr. Ely stated that the support of local government is needed for toll roads.

Ms. White suggested staying in an exploration phase in the early stages and provide a clear framework for what the Committee's role is.

Chair Ghyabi expressed agreement that it would be a good idea to have the MPO staff provide some numbers and ideas of where the roads would be failing. She suggested looking at the existing numbers, a 10-year projection, and levels of service. Mr. Welzenbach replied that staff could provide 20-year projections and existing data.

Mr. Ely expressed agreement that the environmental issue should not be addressed at this time.

Mr. Blais stated that it would be helpful to see some of the transportation elements of the local comprehensive plans from the cities and the County.

Discussion continued.

Council Member Northey suggested looking at what is happening in other cities and look to see if it would be possible to work with them and/or the State.

Mr. Ely recommended having a presentation by some of the rating agencies at a future meeting. He noted that he would be happy to make those arrangements. There were no objections.

Mr. Lydecker suggested communicating with the County Council Members in order to hear their feedback. He verified that the Committee is under the requirements of the Florida Sunshine Law. Council Member Northey replied that the public records will be kept at the MPO office.

Mr. Ely moved to explore various organizational options and funding alternatives to address Volusia County's transportation needs, and make a recommendation to the County Council. Also, it was agreed that the environmental issues would not be looked at at this time due to a lack of means and staff availability. Mr. Lydecker seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. Discussion: "A Review of the Current Functions of Independent Transportation Authorities in Florida that Own or Operate Roadways or Bridges or Toll Facilities"

Chair Ghyabi referenced the CUTR Report, which was distributed in the agenda packet. Mr. Welzenbach stated that it might be a good idea to discuss this item at the next

meeting or do it after the presentations by the Turnpike Authority and Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority.

Mr. Ely suggested starting the next meeting with a discussion of the CUTR Report. He stated that it might be a good idea to invite the person who compiled the report to the meeting so that they can answer questions. Following that item, a presentation by the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority could be made.

Chair Ghyabi replied that would be too much for one meeting; therefore, she recommended that it be split up.

Mr. Ely stated that it would be a good idea to have the CUTR Report discussed at the next meeting and noted that he would contact CUTR regarding this presentation.

It was stated that Mr. Ely could make his presentation on the Turnpike District at the April meeting.

Mr. Welzenbach requested that the MPO staff presentation be placed on the May or June meeting agenda due to the fact that the MPO staff is currently working on the TIP and UPWP.

Mr. Ely also recommended that a presentation on funding sources be placed on a meeting agenda. Mr. Welzenbach noted that the Expressway Authority presentation does address some of the funding sources.

Chair Ghyabi asked that Mr. Ely invite a representative from the FDOT Bond Financing Department to the April meeting to discuss funding sources. It was noted that the rating agencies would be placed on the May meeting agenda.

Mr. Cheney noted that the CUTR Report does not include the Osceola County Expressway Authority. Mr. Ely replied that they are separate from the County. Mr. Ely distributed and briefly went over the material contained in the Turnpike District's FY 1999 Annual Report.

5. Tentative Meeting Schedule (Dates and Locations)

Chair Ghyabi distributed a handout showing the possible meeting dates of the Committee. The next meeting of the Committee will be March 23, 2000. Mr. Welzenbach requested that the meeting time be changed as he has a conflict. It was agreed that the meeting would be changed to 2:00 PM and due to a conflict in meeting locations, it would be held at the MPO Offices depending on the availability of the meeting room.

It was noted that the remainder of the meetings would be held at 10:00 AM.

6. Where Do We Go From Here?

Chair Ghyabi stated that this issue was discussed earlier. The following items were selected to be on future meeting agendas:

March

Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority presentation
CUTR presentation (report distributed for this meeting)

April

Turnpike District presentation and information on the different types of funding sources

May

Presentation by rating agencies

June

MPO Staff Report

July & August

Evaluation of all information gathered to date and try to reach a conclusion

September

Make a conclusion on the issue before the Committee

Mr. Welzenbach recommended that the draft report be started in the July and August timeframe and that a draft report be given to the Committee at the August meeting. The final report would be reviewed at the September meeting.

7. Member Comments/Discussion

Mr. Ely stated that there are plenty of expressway authorities in the State of Florida. It under scores the right thing that we are doing in Volusia County to understand what it takes to create an expressway authority and if is this the best mechanism versus launching something that may not pan out.

Mr. Ely informed the members that the headquarters of the Turnpike District would be moving to Orange County as directed by the Florida Legislature. A new facility will be constructed to house the Turnpike District offices.

8. Public Discussion

Council Member Lewis expressed thanks to the members on behalf of the County Council. He stated that the members of the Council appreciate the Members willingness to serve on this committee.

Ms. Zakaluzny noted that the CUTR Report is still being copied; therefore, those people interested in receiving a copy were asked not to leave the meeting room until the copies arrive.

9. Notification Roster

Everyone present was asked to make sure that they signed the attendance roster.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.