

MPO Members Tour Grassy Waters Preserve



Several MPO Board members toured the Grassy Waters Preserve, formerly known as the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area, to obtain a different perspective of the proposed extension of State Road 7. The City of West Palm Beach and residents living in the area have objected to the extension of State Road 7 as they feel the project will impact the environment and wildlife habitats. The project is located along several housing developments where residents expressed concern about the noise pollution from vehicular traffic. Other residents, primarily in the Acreage area, have indicated support for the project for additional access and as an alternative for large trucks using Seminole Pratt Whitney Road.

Regional Long Range Transportation Plan Nears Completion

While the Palm Beach MPO was developing its 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, it was also working with the MPOs in Broward and Miami-Dade counties to develop a regional 2035 transportation plan. This regional plan will identify regional travel corridors and incorporate projects from local plans on those corridors. The regional plan ensures connections across county lines and that scheduled improvements occur in the appropriate time frame. Additional funding sources can be applied to regional projects and free up local funds for other needs. The regional plan also provides a better overview of the impacts of regional services like Tri-Rail and possible future service on the FEC railroad. Consideration of the regional plan by the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC) is expected in April. Following SEFTC approval, the three MPO's will consider approval of the plan.

Belle Glade Celebrates New Community Bus Service

The City of Belle Glade held its ribbon cutting ceremony for a new community bus service known as the Belle Glade Express on a very cold, windy January day. Brand new buses, fully equipped with air-conditioning, wheelchair lifts, plush and comfortable seats, destination signs identifying the routes, and driven by professional bus operators, began the new routes on January 11. The four routes will connect to the fixed routes operated by Palm Tran. The new system is under contract with Midnight Sun Tours for the city and will provide continuous service to residents and visitors to the area. Mayor Steven Wilson welcomed speakers from the Palm Beach MPO, Florida Department of Transportation, Belle Glade Chamber of Commerce and Midnight Sun. The first three months of the service are being offered free of charge in order to encourage citizens to utilize the new system.



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new Belle Glade Express



Transportation Enhancement Projects Cycle Begins

The 2010 Transportation Enhancements project selection cycle began with a Workshop on March 4th at the MPO offices. This workshop provided information for guiding applicants through the process. **The application due date is set for Monday, May 3rd at 5:00 PM. One original, 3 hard copies, and 3 electronic copies are required to be submitted.**

Some topics included:

- Local Agency Program Certification
- Completing the Application
- Eligible/Ineligible Projects
- Funding Limits and Disbursement
- Project Implementation

The program is open to general purpose local governments and requires a commitment to maintain the project upon completion. Only construction phases are eligible for payment. **Please be aware that Local Agency Program (LAP) certification is required to administer a Transportation Enhancement-funded project.**

The MPO Bicycle, Greenway and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BGPAC) will be holding the application review and ranking meeting, where applicants are invited to provide a 20 minute presentation on their project, on May 13th. Additional guidance will be provided as this date nears.

Questions regarding the Transportation Enhancement Program may be directed to the MPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator, Bret Baronak, at 561.684.4163

Stimulus Projects Moving Forward

Last year, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to encourage investment in infrastructure and jobs. The transportation portion of the Act provides \$27 million to Palm Beach County. The Act required the funds to be authorized by March 2, 2010 or be returned to USDOT. All funds were allocated and authorized in Palm Beach County in advance of the deadline. Several projects have been let for bid or under construction. All projects are on schedule to be completed within the three-year schedule for the ARRA funds. The Florida Department of Transportation will be providing reports to USDOT on progress of the projects and the number of associated jobs.

Did You Know?

- Instant or text messaging while driving tops the list as the biggest distraction for teen drivers. A national survey done by AAA of 16 and 17 year olds in 2007 found that 46% send text messages with their cell phone while driving. Check out Florida Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) at <http://www.floridasadd.org/>
 - Safe bicycling information can be found at www.sharetheroad.org.
 - An energy-saving transportation alternative is to car-pool or vanpool. South Florida Commuter Services offers valuable tips on their website www.1800234RIDE.com.
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Development of Bicycle Transportation Plan Gets Underway

The MPO recently began the process of developing a comprehensive bicycle transportation master plan for Palm Beach County. Utilizing the bicycle, while always representing a viable mode of transportation, has in recent times heralded much attention and visibility across the Country – Palm Beach County is no different. Bicycle usage in the County has increased over the past few years, and as part of its multi-modal approach to transportation planning, the MPO commenced a planning process to address the future needs of bicyclists throughout the County.

The Plan, which will be developed throughout 2010, will examine the County's existing transportation system, primarily centered on the roadways, and will recommend strategies both in the form of infrastructure improvements, as well as policy recommendations to ensure that future accommodations are provided for bicyclists. Ultimately, the goal will be for the Plan to lay out a "blueprint" for creating a safer and more comfortable environment for cyclists, and increasing use of this non-motorized mode. While this Plan focuses mostly with "on-road" transportation, it will examine linkages to greenways and trails that are being planned or exist within the County. Additionally, a bicycle suitability map, describing the conditions of roadways for accommodating cyclists, will be produced.

At the heart of the planning process, will be a series of public workshops to gather input from individuals on their ideas and issues that need addressed. It is important that all users of the transportation system participate in the workshops, as motorists and bicyclists (who are also typically motorists) can discuss and generate ideas that work toward improving the traffic interaction that takes place on the roadways.

The first round of public workshops will begin in mid-April. The MPO is in the process of creating a page on its website dedicated to information and updates on the Bicycle Plan. For information contact Bret Baronak at the MPO office.

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