Bicycling Month Proclamation Highlights Opening of Bluegill Trail and a Master Plan to Increase Safety for Cyclists on Roadways

Recognizing March 2011 as Bicycling Month, Palm Beach County Commission Chair Karen Marcus presented a proclamation to MPO Senior Planner Bret Baronak, Coordinator for the MPO Bicycle / Greenways / Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The month was also marked by the MPO Board’s adoption of a Master Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan to improve accommodations and safety for bicyclists traveling with motorized traffic. Additionally, the Bluegill Trail - a new multi-use trail that will benefit cyclists along with equestrians and hikers - officially opened on March 19 in northern Palm Beach County, between Palm Beach Gardens and Jupiter.

Applications Now Available for MPO Grants

On March 1, the MPO announced opportunities for qualified applicants to seek project funding from two distinctly separate grant programs: the Palm Beach County Thoroughfare Beautification Grant and the Transportation Enhancement Program. Grant guidelines, application forms, and evaluation forms are available on the MPO website at www.pbcgov.com/mpo. The Palm Beach County Thoroughfare Beautification grant, which requires a minimum 50% match from eligible governmental applicants, is designated for the beautification of state roadways. Those applications will be evaluated by the Grants Advisory Committee of Keep Palm Beach County Beautiful, Inc., as has been the case for almost 20 years. The MPO’s Bicycle / Greenways / Pedestrian Advisory Committee will evaluate applications for funding through the Transportation Enhancement Program, which considers a wide variety of project types from qualified governmental entities applying for full project funding up to $750,000.

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Patricia Masterman retired from her position as Public Information Officer in July 2010, ending her distinguished 12-year MPO career. Prior to joining the MPO in 1998, she worked in various Palm Beach County departments including the former Area Planning Board. These days, she is also known as the Reverend Patricia Masterman, volunteering much of her time as Deacon of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Lake Worth. The MPO thanks Ms. Masterman for her many years of service and wishes her well in her retirement.

Last November, the MPO welcomed Malissa Booth as its new Public Information Officer. Ms. Booth brings experience from former positions including Outreach Program Specialist for the US Army Corps of Engineers, and Executive Director of Keep Palm Beach County Beautiful, Inc. She has also held various volunteer leadership positions in marketing, advocacy, and special event management. Because public involvement is a high priority for the MPO, she looks forward to finding new ways to increase local participation in the transportation planning process.
MPO Certification Process Underway
The USDOT reviews and evaluates the transportation planning process every four years within each designated Transportation Management Area (TMA). The review is in light of federal requirements and provides information related to best practices and future direction, but does not address specific projects within the area. The current certification review of the Palm Beach MPO included two days of meetings with staff and a March 16 public meeting. Written comments regarding the local planning process may be made directly to the Florida Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A comment form and mailing instructions may be downloaded from the MPO website at www.pbcgov.com/mpo. Comments are due by April 16, 2011.

Floridians Show Support for Public Transportation
Public transportation can help make America energy independent, create jobs, help the environment, and reduce traffic congestion. The Florida Public Transportation Association has a goal of recruiting and mobilizing supporters through its IM4Transit campaign which launched in January, with a goal of recruiting 100,000 or more Floridians to stand up and be counted as supporters of public transit. Sign up on IM4Transit.org or look for IM4Transit on Facebook and Twitter.

MPO Grants
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Examples of previous projects that have received grant funds through the Transportation Enhancement Program include improvements to the Seaboard Station in West Palm Beach (top photo), where construction is scheduled to begin this year, and Jupiter’s Riverwalk project, a shared use facility (center photo). The Forest Hill Boulevard project (bottom photo) received state funding through the PBC Thoroughfare Beautification Grant program.

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MPO Grant Funded Bluegill Trail Opening Ceremony Held March 19

Bret Baronak, MPO Senior Planner - Bicycle / Greenways / Pedestrian Coordinator, leads more than 100 cyclists in the first ride on the new shared-use pathway in northern Palm Beach County, which also serves equestrians and hikers. Palm Beach County’s Environmental Resources Management (ERM) department received funding from the Transportation Enhancement Program for this 5.4 mile first phase. The MPO administers the annual competitive grant application process.

For more information, visit the MPO website: www.pbcgov.com/mpo