

FLORIDA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

2023 POLICY POSITIONS

2023 Policy Position:

- 1. Support an increase in transportation investments through dedicated and sustainable funding, including innovative financing options; encourage partnerships between public and private entities; and facilitate the expedited delivery of projects.**

Key Recommendations:

- Expand the Charter County and Regional Transportation System Surtax to allow municipalities over 150,000 in population (or the largest municipality in a county) and all counties located in MPO areas to enact up to a one cent local option surtax by referendum.
- Charge alternatively fueled vehicles a fee equal to the fuel tax paid by gasoline or diesel fueled vehicles, such as an electric vehicle registration fee.
- No reduction in local option transportation revenue sources.
- Use the existing MPO and local planning processes to select individual transportation projects rather than legislative appropriations (commonly referred to as earmarks). Ensure that all legislative appropriations that are passed come from non-transportation funding sources (i.e. general revenue funds).
- Fund the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) at a predictable level of a minimum of \$250 Million per year.
- Establish flexible and predictable funding for transit projects (capital and operating) identified through the metropolitan transportation planning process by removing various funding limitations for the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF).
- Make FDOT and Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF) grants more flexible:
 - Extend TDTF grants for each county to the next year,
 - Allow TDTF funds to be used for meal, grocery, and prescription deliveries, and
 - Allow other FDOT grants to be used on transit improvement and operating funds.

2023 Policy Position:

- 2. Regulate distracted driving by prohibiting the handheld use of electronic wireless communication devices and other similar distracting devices while operating a motor vehicle on any roadway.**

The 2018 Florida legislature enacted the “Wireless Communications While Driving” law that makes texting while driving a primary offense. One of the expressed concerns of opponents of this law is the potential for racial profiling during enforcement. This legislative proposal would increase roadway safety by prohibiting the handheld use of electronic wireless devices for any purpose, making enforcement easier and reducing the potential for racial profiling.

2023 Policy Position:

- 3. Add provision to Florida’s Sunshine Law to allow all government entities to hold virtual meetings during a declared emergency plus a period of 90 days past the declared emergency dates.**

The ability to hold virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting from Executive Orders issued by the Governor, was a significant benefit to government agencies and the people of Florida. This proposal would permit units of government to meet virtually, so long as there is an opportunity for the public to participate, upon the declaration of an emergency by the Governor of Florida or the federal government. Recognizing that some declared emergencies can take extended periods of time to recover, this legislative proposal would also include an additional 90 days for governments to repair damaged facilities used to hold meetings or to hold meetings that have already been advertised as being virtual.

In addition, the MPOAC supports the American Planning Association of Florida proposed language to allow virtual meetings in all cases.

APA Florida strongly supports citizen access and public input to the planning process and is committed to improving citizen involvement. APA Florida supports an open and collaborative planning process that encourages meaningful citizen participation and environmental justice through reasonable notice, open public records and accessibility to all stages of the planning process, as well as promoting the use of citizen participation best practices at the local level.

- APA Florida supports legislation that will clarify the use of technology, i.e., virtual meetings to expand access to information and participation in public hearings and meetings.
- APA Florida supports legislation that would permit governmental boards or agencies to conduct meetings using communication technology in lieu of a quorum being physically present.

2023 Policy Position:

- 4. Recognize that federal metropolitan transportation planning funds shall not be regarded as state funds for purposes of expenditure.**

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) provides funding to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to carry out their federally required duties. Those federal funds are given to states who in turn distribute them to MPOs based upon a formula agreed upon by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Florida MPOs and then approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS) has determined that the expenditure of federal funds by MPOs shall be subject to all state requirements, laws and regulations even where such laws conflict with federal laws, regulations and requirements. This limits the ability of the Florida MPOs to use federal funds for their intended purpose and impinges on their ability to carry out their responsibilities as outlined in federal rule. This proposal would clarify that federal monies passed through the State of Florida to MPOs and the Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC) shall not be regarded as state funds for purposes of expenditure.