

INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSITION COMMITTEE – TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

MISSION / CHARGE

To meet with traffic and transportation officials involved in planning future transportation projects, including new highways and roadways, improvements to waterways, transit, unmanned and electric vehicles, to determine what city policies need to be implemented for best practices and use. Discuss possible transit-oriented design (TOD) and transit adjacent development, and identify methods to enhance safety for all users based on Vision Zero principles. **(REVISIONS TO CHARGE VOTED ON AND APPROVED 8-0)**

OBSERVATIONS

There are a number of agencies responsible for the planning, design, and implementation of transportation infrastructure and services in Jacksonville. These include COJ Planning, COJ Public Works, DIA, JTA, JAA, FDOT, and the North Florida TPO. Other agencies, such as JaxPort and JEA are also involved in transportation investments. While many of these agencies meet regularly as a group, a fully coordinated approach to decision-making is lacking. There remain silos that hamper collaboration. Furthermore, the City has the opportunity to “speak with one voice” with state and regional agencies (FDOT & North Florida TPO). This has not always been the case.

Another key observation of the committee relates to the lack of significant progress being made regarding safety in our transportation system, particularly for our most vulnerable users (bicyclists and pedestrians). We understand this is a priority of Mayor Deegan, and our committee fully supports this. We also understand that many of the crashes leading to severe injuries and fatalities occur on major roads in the city, which are predominantly under the jurisdiction of FDOT.

A third observation is that Jacksonville has the potential to be a leader in new transportation technologies, including connected and autonomous vehicles. JTA has been engaged in this arena for a number of years, and organizations such as Smart North Florida are advancing innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The subcommittee completed its work on August 11th, although several recommendations were approved at the August 4th meeting. The recommendations are divided into the three main areas mentioned above, including coordination, safety, and transportation technology. We believe these recommendations will yield more resilient infrastructure, promote healthy communities, and enhance economic development opportunities for all.

Transportation Coordination

- Recognizing a need for more comprehensive coordination in transportation infrastructure planning and implementation, establish a Mayor’s Mobility Committee. The various transportation infrastructure agencies shall meet monthly, at a minimum, as part of this committee. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- Consider combining some functions of the Public Works and Planning Departments into a new Mobility Department. **(APPROVED 6-0)**

- The Mayor’s Mobility Committee shall be charged with developing a comprehensive citywide plan focused on transportation mobility infrastructure. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- Incorporate TOD land use areas and standards into the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code and consider potential incentives for development in these focus areas. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- Support the Jacksonville Transportation Authority’s (JTA) effort to deliver its 5-year strategic plan, known as the Mobility Optimization through Vision and Excellence 2027 (MOVE2027). These include items such as **(APPROVED 6-0)**:
 - Support the full development and deployment of the Ultimate Urban Circulator, and integration of autonomous shuttles into the transportation network.
 - Support the full development and construction of the Emerald Trail.
 - Support efforts for a new vessel for the St. Johns River Ferry, and enhanced and expanded service.
 - Support enhanced and expanded mobility services and projects in Jacksonville, and for regional connectivity.

Transportation Safety

- The City of Jacksonville should join the National Association of City Transportation Officials <https://nacto.org/> <https://nacto.org/member-cities/> **(APPROVED 7-0)**
- The City should adopt a Vision Zero policy and become a member of the Vision Zero Network <https://visionzeronetwork.org/> <https://visionzeronetwork.org/resources/vision-zero-communities/> **(APPROVED 7-0)**
- The City should strengthen personnel and resources dedicated to addressing the chronic bicycle and pedestrian safety issues in Jacksonville **(APPROVED 7-0)**
- The City should focus on investments that support safe first/last mile travel to transit stops, and close gaps in the bicycle and sidewalk networks. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- As more nonmotorized facilities are constructed, more funding should be allocated to maintenance of these new facilities, as part of enhanced maintenance of the comprehensive mobility system. **(APPROVED 6-0)**

Transportation Technology

- Advance a study of Urban Air Mobility and its integration and applicability in the region’s transportation network. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- Identify and invest in new technologies to assist with asset management. These can include: **(APPROVED 6-0)**
 - Developing scalable solutions for pavement resurfacing
 - Utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist in digitally cataloging and managing assets (signage, ped crossings, etc.)
 - Utilizing AI for curbside management practices, to maximize efficiency of parking and drop-off/loading zones.
- Implement the use of AI as a low-cost solution for analyzing problem intersections for enhanced safety and design methods. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- Work with FDOT on pilot train detection solutions. These collect and send data to dispatchers and others to inform about impending train arrivals and incidents. **(APPROVED 6-0)**
- We recommend that any adopted technologies and vendors abide by robust data privacy standards set by the various implementation agencies **(APPROVED 6-0)**

- We recommend the City pursue opportunities and incentivize expansion of the use of electric vehicles and sustainable charging networks, with prioritization focused on public assets, new developments, and under-resourced areas. **(APPROVED 6-0)**

SELECTED NOTES FROM PRESENTATIONS TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE

Fred Jones, a certified planner with Haskell, spoke about the national “Complete Streets” coalition aimed at making streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. “Bike/Ped” safety was an issue that came up repeatedly during other presentations as well. Jones pointed out that Jacksonville ranks 6th in the U.S. in pedestrian fatalities (Smart Growth America’s Dangerous by Design report). This speaks eloquently to the urgency of adopting Vision Zero as a citywide policy and joining the international Vision Zero Network. Mr. Jones also noted the resources available through the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and how the City can take advantage of their guides to rapidly implement changes to the City’s roadway design standards.

Chris LeDew of the COJ’s Public Works Department, Traffic Engineering Division discussed that office’s portfolio which includes citywide transportation infrastructure, systems and operations. He observed that the staff of 36 is predominantly “complaint-driven,” responding to input from their data sources and the public. Mr. LeDew noted the need for more staff and additional funds to maintain signals, signs, and pavement markings.

Laurie Santana, Chief of the Transportation Planning Division within COJ’S Planning Department also made a presentation to the Subcommittee, noting issues having to do with ADA infrastructure and bicycle pedestrian safety. In the latter concern, we learned that only one member of that Division’s staff is dedicated to bike / ped safety, which reinforced the Subcommittee’s recommendation to reinforce this function with additional staff and resources. Ms. Santana also noted the need for more funds for maintenance, and expressed a desire to expand the Venture Out Jax effort into a comprehensive citywide transportation master plan.

Jeff Sheffield of the North Florida TPO discussed that organization’s multiple planning initiatives, institutional relationships and funding. The TPO anticipates adoption of its 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) by November of 2024, making this mayoral transition an opportune inflection point for coordination with the City of Jacksonville. Mr. Sheffield also noted that COJ has 4 seats on the TPO Board (3 City Council Members + the Mayor), in addition to a representative from the Beaches communities and the various authorities (JTA, JAA, and JaxPort). It is worth noting that the Jacksonville Mayor usually cedes their seat to a Councilmember, but the opportunity is there for the Mayor to sit on the TPO Board.

In the context of public procurement limitations, especially for smaller units of government, Mr. Sheffield described a nonprofit that the TPO and the University of North Florida helped launch,

called Smart North Florida (SNF). SNF fosters creative / emergent smart technologies in the transportation sector. (The Executive Director of SNF, Clayton Levins, serves as a member of this subcommittee).

Cleveland Ferguson, VP and Chief Administrative Officer at the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, made a particularly thorough and comprehensive presentation touching on JTA'S ongoing role in various transportation modalities beyond just the transit system for which is most noted. JTA's portfolio intersects with every other transportation agency and organization in the region. In that context, Mr. Ferguson clearly articulated the need for greater organizational coherence in management and planning for transportation infrastructure. This need emerged from nearly every presenter to the Subcommittee, and forms the basis for our recommendation that the Mayor charter a Mayoral Mobility Committee.

DIA Executive Director Lori Boyer reported to the Subcommittee on transportation elements of the DIA's downtown plan. She placed special emphasis on downtown parking as a pertinent transportation issue that differentiates downtown from other Jacksonville neighborhoods, and called attention to the fact that parking ordinances are outdated and at times conflicting. DIA's recommendations included revisions to various COJ parking ordinances, and although this was not a specific recommendation to the Office of the Mayor, the Subcommittee viewed this as an appropriate initiative deserving attention from the Mayor's Mobility Committee.

Jim Knight of the Florida Department of Transportation District Two Urban Office discussed state and federal highways within the COJ's jurisdiction, and explained the administrative apparatus through which State road projects are conceived, budgeted and prioritized by FDOT. As was noted by other presenters, the major source of funding for streets and highways continues to be the motor fuels tax, which is demonstrably unsustainable going into the future. Policy makers are widely aware of the urgency of identifying and implementing alternatives to so-called "gas taxes," however no solutions are yet established in any form that appears likely to gain public support. Mr. Knight also noted the value in Jacksonville leaders "speaking with one voice" when working through the FDOT and North Florida TPO prioritization and funding processes.

* * * *

The Subcommittee wished to continue its investigation of issues and opportunities to elevate Jacksonville as a model city in transportation policies and practices, but recognizes the urgency of delivering actionable recommendations to the Office of the Mayor. We appreciate having a voice in developing these recommendations, and hope that they may be seen as useful.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

Alan Bliss – Co-Chair

Wiatt Bowers, AICP – Co-Chair

Charles Garrison

Greg Grant, PE

Clayton Levins

Matthew Maggiore, PE

Nashon Nicks

Larry Roberts

Ivan Rodriguez