

PEER EXCHANGE AGENDA AND SUMMARY REPORT

REGIONAL TSMO PROGRAMS AND FRAMEWORK

September 13, 2022; 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm ET

PURPOSE

Eight MPOs responsible for transportation planning in Central Florida formed an informal Regional TSMO Working Group to share strategies on planning for TSMO, including congestion management. They include MetroPlan Orlando, Forward Pinellas, Hillsborough MPO, Pasco County MPO, Polk TPO, Sarasota/Manatee MPO, Space Coast TPO, and River-to-Sea TPO.

Beginning in 2021, researchers at the National Institute for Congestion Reduction (NICR) and the Regional TSMO Working Group collaborated on a project to explore the potential for establishing and sustaining a more formal entity in Central Florida comprised of the eight MPOs to advance TSMO. The goal of the project is to identify characteristics of such an alliance and a recommended framework for a regional TSMO program in this context. As part of the study, organizations that use TSMO programs at the regional and megaregional level were identified, interviewed, and asked to participate in a peer exchange with the Regional TSMO Working Group. Those organizations included the Eastern Transportation Coalition, Niagara International Transportation Technology Coalition, Oregon Metro, Atlanta Regional Commission, and the I-10 Corridor Coalition.

The purpose of the TSMO peer exchange was to discuss the value and potential for establishing a more formal MPO-centered entity to advance TSMO governance and collaboration across the Central Florida megaregion. This report summarizes that TSMO Peer Exchange.

PARTICIPANTS

Regional TSMO Working Group

Hillsborough TPO - Beth Alden, Executive Director
Forward Pinellas - Chelsea Favero, Planning Director
Space Coast TPO - Georganna Gillette, Executive Director
Sarasota/Manatee MPO - Dave Hutchinson, Executive Director
MetroPlan Orlando - Gary Huttman, Executive Director
Pasco County MPO - Carl Mikyska, Executive Director
River to Sea TPO - Colleen Nicoulin, Interim Executive Director

TSMO Peer Organizations

The Eastern Transportation Coalition (TETC) - Denise Markow, TSMO Director
Niagara Intl. Transportation Technology Coalition (NITTEC) - Athena Hutchins, Executive Director
Oregon Metro - Caleb Winter, TSMO Program Lead
Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) - Maria Roell, Principal Planner
I-10 Coalition - Susan Anderson, Arizona DOT, Systems Technology Group Manager, TSMO Division

*See Appendix for additional meeting guests and participants

1:30 WELCOME AND REMARKS

Virginia L. Whittington, Director of Regional Partnerships at MetroPlan Orlando opening remarks on behalf of Metroplan Orlando Executive Director Gary Huttman: Today's event is a milestone – the coming together of those people who see the benefit of cooperative efforts like these, and the opportunities that exist in positioning, speaking, and behaving as a region. Virginia recited the quote, “Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.”

Ralph Volpe, Transportation Systems Operations Specialist, FHWA: What this region is working towards in terms of TSMO, the FHWA has been focusing on for several years and has grown from the Strategic Highway Research Program. It's important to think of these actions as “organizing for TSMO” which includes not only operations but all of the planning, coordination, and analytics that regional TSMO entails. It's important for planning agencies (as well as FDOT, Florida Turnpike, and the various transit agencies) within the region to bond together and understand each other's unique goals and objectives. This Working Group provides that opportunity.

Alison Stettner, Director, Office of Policy Planning, FDOT: The sharing of knowledge from outside expertise to Central Florida is very welcome. We are excited to scale up some of the current TSMO activities to enhance safety, mobility, and the reliability of our systems. It's exchanges like this where we can really learn and grow from each other, develop champions, build upon the business case for TSMO strategies, and leverage limited resources to enhance mobility for all of our communities.

1:45 SETTING THE STAGE

Eric Hill, Director of TSMO, MetroPlan Orlando set the stage for the meeting with an overview of what to expect in the session: This peer exchange represents an inflection point on a journey that we started almost two years ago and that is to advance TSMO planning in Central Florida. This has involved the MPOs and TPOs within Central Florida including Pasco County MPO, Polk TPO, Hillsborough TPO, Forward Pinellas, Sarasota/Manatee MPO, Metroplan Orlando, Space Coast TPO, and River to Sea TPO. This journey started with an MOU between these MPOs and TPOs and the creation of a Working Group representing the staff from these agencies as well as other transportation organizations in Central Florida including the Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority, the Central Florida Expressway, and the Turnpike Enterprise. The Working Group has maintained a regular meeting schedule and has established goals. Establishing a peer exchange is one of the key goals established under the Working Group.

As part of the research by the Center for Urban Transportation (CUTR) on the feasibility to advance formal MPO-centered entity in Central Florida, several organizations were identified and interviewed to provide insight on the feasibility to develop similar programs for the region. This peer exchange will highlight the work of these organizations and the preliminary research findings from the researchers at CUTR. Before concluding the exchange, we will seek guidance from the MPO and TPO directors on the next step for this program and we will discuss not only problems to mitigate but opportunities to take advantage of through innovative transportation strategies.

1:50 PEER PROGRAMS

Each TSMO peer organization discussed basic governance, staffing, and funding arrangements for their TSMO collaborations, as well as best practices and lessons learned for their programs, Eric Hill, Director of TSMO, MetroPlan Orlando facilitated the conversation as participants asked peers for additional information about their programs and experiences.

Highlights of the session include:

- Description of TSMO Program:
 - TETC (Denise) – The Coalition has 17 member states and the District of Columbia running from Maine to Florida. The newest member is Kentucky which joined March 2021. The TSMO program within the Coalition has four core pillars which work together like the hub of a wheel: training, traveler information, incident management, and data.
 - NITTEC (Athena) - NITTEC is a Coalition in Western New York and Southern Ontario, so a bi-national coalition consisting of 42 member agencies. NITTEC also runs the Traffic Operations Center on behalf of NYSDOT and the four counties in their region. They follow the New York State TSMO plan as well as strategies and objectives from their Canadian partners.
 - Oregon Metro (Caleb) – Metro’s TSMO program is built on partner operator efforts that were ad hoc, but in 2010 Metro received support from FHWA to develop the first TSMO strategy for the Portland region. In 2021 Metro produced their new 10-year TSMO strategic plan built on the pillars of equity, safety, and climate.
 - ARC (Maria) – The MPO’s first regional TSMO strategic plan was adopted in 2020. Georgia DOT is very involved with TSMO within the state, so they are a great partner in TSMO with ARC. The language in their policy framework and strategic plan, as well as support from their local and state partners, have allowed them to set a foundation that has allowed them to prioritize and get started on a lot of exciting TSMO projects.
 - I-10 (Susan) – Arizona DOT developed a TSMO division within the Department and soon thereafter (2016) formed the I-10 Coalition with the states of Texas, New Mexico, and California, focusing primarily on freight operations. The states signed a charter that guides coalition activities, pool resources for this purpose, and collectively pursue federal grant opportunities. Together they identified the issues on the corridor which led to the coalition being awarded a federal grant focusing on truck parking issues in the corridor and conducting a.
- Motivations for participating in a regional TSMO organization: (responded to as a group)
 - Coordination and improved situational awareness (to avoid duplication of efforts, for example)
 - Getting agencies to work together to alleviate congestion at border crossings
 - Collaboration, exchanging idea, best practices, lessons learned around transportation issues related to weather events such as snowstorms, icing, hurricanes, flooding etc.
 - Funding opportunities; leveraging collaboration to secure grants in the region
 - Data sharing (Denise mentioned that aside from their members they have affiliate members that opt in for access to the coalition data in their Data Marketplace)

- Ability to broaden the perspective to include transportation demand management and other activities
- Overcoming problems that were difficult to address as single agencies, such as truck parking and traffic signal timing; prioritizing efforts
- Challenges of being part of a regional TSMO organization: (responded to as a group)
 - Designating roles and responsibilities
 - Hosting arrangements/agreements
 - Lack of dedicated personnel; personnel turnover
 - Allocating Federal funds towards smaller technology projects
 - Inertia; continuing past the initial problem statement
 - Transitioning from federal funding to member dues; documenting and proving value to members
 - Access; data sharing; who hosts the data/IT framework
- How they are funded:
 - ARC (Maria) – PL funds for staff. There is no set aside for TIP funding, but projects are prioritized with the funds they do have. ARC has a charter that outlines the amount of funds it would contribute if other MPOs join in a regional program and a framework for what that would look like – but no one has pursued the opportunity to date.
 - NITTEC (Athena) – Federal and local match. NITTEC does not have dues. TSMO specific programs look like projects in the STIP.
 - Oregon Metro (Caleb) – Regional flexible funds. Two million dollars is set aside per year for TSMO projects and staff. Additionally, the Oregon Metro TSMO team competes well for integrated mobility studies, such as mobility on demand.
 - I-10 (Susan) – Project based. Each state provides funding or in-kind match for federal grants that are pursued. All four states must agree on a project and be able to fund the match.
 - TETC (Denise) – Member dues and federal grants. TETC also pursues special projects with funding participating by states. The staff (9 people) is funded through special project funds, dues, and federal grants.

3:00 A POTENTIAL FRAMEWORK

Jeff Kramer, Senior Research Associate, Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), presented highlights from the CUTR study on regional TSMO governance and collaboration in planning and a potential framework to advance a formal MPO-centered entity in the Central Florida megaregion. The eight key actions identified in the study to increase the potential for a successful regional TSMO program are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a TSMO strategic plan 2. Publish a work plan 3. Publish an annual review 4. Identify stable and dedicated funding mechanisms for specific purposes 5. Provide dedicated staff | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Establish a clear governance structure and foster political support 7. Develop an education and communication program 8. Address equity within the regional TSMO framework |
|--|---|

3:20 REACTIONS AND GUIDANCE

All attendees of the peer exchange meeting joined in discussion, facilitated by Eric Hill, on whether to move forward with one or more steps in the framework.

Key points of the open discussion included:

- The Regional TSMO Working Group is focused on the planning side of TSMO, not implementation or operations.
- How would a TSMO strategic plan for these eight MPOs be different than what is being worked on already with the FDOT statewide strategic plan? Would the Regional TSMO Working Group simply be another layer of planning that duplicates the activities of existing state and regional agencies?
 - Carl Mikyska offered that the TSMO Working Group could help drill down to the local level. Work that is being done to combat congestion at the FDOT level is good, but is TSMO getting drilled down to the local level - not only for congestion, but safety as well? Pasco County has made significant advances in safety in lock step with FDOT. The complementary relationship ensures that TSMO is being implemented at the lowest level.
 - Georganna Gillette agreed, stating that each municipality does things a little differently and there is value in bringing TSMO to the regional and local level through the Working Group.
- Many of the peers mentioned that they got their start with a problem that needed to be solved and could be addressed through TSMO. Is there a problem statement for this region? What is it?
 - Eric Hill suggested that rather than search for a problem to fix, the group could look for opportunities to advance TSMO planning in the region – the value and benefits TSMO planning can provide especially when addressed at the regional level.
 - Many agencies do not necessarily have the resources to move TSMO forward, but a regional group could.
- Where does the TSMO Strategic Plan go if there is no greater approving body?
 - The people who participate in the development of the plan should approve the plan. Form an organization to support or adopt the outcome of the plan, or have it supported by the MPOs that helped to develop it.
- How do we present the need for TSMO in a manner that resonates with leadership or a political body and continue to get funding? This is a huge challenge when people aren't familiar with TSMO.
 - Denise Markow responded that it is all about the data. How many accidents did you prevent today? How do you measure that?
 - Dave Hutchinson stated that one method is communication with local partners and MPOs. The group could help with planning, funding, and communicating to political leaders on the importance of TSMO.
- Is there consensus to move forward with a strategic plan for the Central Florida Region?
 - Support for a strategic plan was mixed, with some ready to move forward and others cautious about duplication of efforts and/or needing a better understanding of the problem the plan would solve.
 - Directors from three of the eight MPOs agreed to meet again to further discuss the establishment of a TSMO strategic plan by the Working Group.

4:00 PEER EXCHANGE ADJOURNS

APPENDIX: TSMO PEER EXCHANGE ATTENDANCE

Attendee Name	Position & Organization
Peer Representatives	
Susan Anderson	Systems Technology Group Manager, TSMO Division, Arizona DOT (representing the I-10 Corridor Coalition)
Athena Hutchins	Executive Director, Niagara International Transportation Technology Coalition
Denise Markow	TSMO Director, The Eastern Transportation Coalition
Maria Roell	Principal Planner, Atlanta Regional Commission
Caleb Winter	TSMO Program Lead, Senior Transportation Planner, Oregon Metro
Central Florida MPO Representatives	
Beth Alden	Executive Director, Hillsborough TPO
Chelsea Favero	Planning Manager, Forward Pinellas
Georganna Gillette	Executive Director, Space Coast TPO
Dave Hutchinson	Executive Director, Sarasota/Manatee MPO
Gary Huttman	Executive Director, MetroPlan Orlando
Carl Mikyska	Executive Director, Pasco County MPO
Colleen Nicoulin	Interim Executive Director, River to Sea TPO
Presenters and Facilitators	
Alison Stettner	Director, Office of Policy Planning, FDOT
Eric Hill	Director of TSMO, MetroPlan Orlando
Jeff Kramer	Senior Research Associate, CUTR/USF
Ralph Volpe	Operations Systems Operations Specialist, FHWA Resource Center
Virginia L. Whittington	Director of Regional Partnerships, MetroPlan Orlando
Other Participants	
Megan Arasteh	TSMO Program Engineer, FDOT District 7
Steven Bostel	Transportation Program Manager, Space Coast TPO
Ronald Chin	Design Engineer, FDOT District 7
Dale Cody	Exec. VP of Traffic Operations and ITS, Metric Engineering
Frank Corrado	ITS/Traffic Ops. Engineer, FHWA Florida Division
Steven Davis	District TSMO Program Engineer, FDOT District 1
Jeremy Dilmore	TSMO Program Engineer, District 5

Attendee Name	Position & Organization
Taylor Dinehart	Research Associate, CUTR/USF
Carlos Gonzalez	Transportation Planning Specialist, FHWA Florida Division
Eric Gordin	Assistant Traffic Operations Engineer, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
Tania Gorman	Principal Transportation Planner, Pasco County MPO
Joe Gregory	TSMO Program Manager, FHWA Office of Operations
Bryan Homayouni	Manager of Traffic Operations, Central Florida Expressway Authority
Courtney Reynolds	Transit Planning Manager, one.network
Cynthia Lambert	Public Information Manager, MetroPlan Orlando
Mark Mathes	Traffic Operations Engineer, FDOT District 1
Tushar Patel	Project Manager, FDOT District 5
Lisa Smith	Board Services Coordinator, MetroPlan Orlando
Kristine Williams	Program Director, Planning and Corridor Management, CUTR/USF
David Williams	Transportation Planner, VHB
Bruce Wolny	FMS/AMS Engineer, FDOT