FDOT District 6 Managed Lanes Peer Exchange

A TPCB Peer Exchange Event

Location: Virtual

Date: May 20 – 21, 2020

Host Agency: Florida Department of Transportation, District 6

National Peers: Georgia DOT (Matthew Fowler, Matthew Glasser, Charles A. Robinson)
Minnesota DOT (Brad Larsen)
Washington State DOT (Rob Fellows, Tyler Patterson)

Sponsoring Agencies: Federal Transit Administration
Federal Highway Administration

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

This report summarizes proceedings of a virtual peer exchange sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and hosted by the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) on May 20 and 21, 2020. The purpose of the peer exchange was to discuss the experiences, successes, challenges, and lessons learned from three peer agencies (Georgia DOT, Minnesota DOT, and Washington State DOT) in support of Florida DOT and their efforts to implement both short- and long-term strategies to improve the effectiveness of managed lanes. Florida DOT seeks to utilize the outcomes of the peer exchange to reduce congestion on its existing managed lanes network on the I-95 Corridor known as 95 Express. The event was sponsored by FHWA through its Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program, led in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration.

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List of Acronyms

BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
DOT	Department of Transportation
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
HOT	High-Occupancy Toll Lane
HOV	High-Occupancy Vehicle
HOV2+	High-Occupancy Vehicle with a minimum of two occupants
HOV3+	High-Occupancy Vehicle with a minimum of three occupants
MARTA	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPH	Miles per Hour
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
SOV	Single-Occupancy Vehicle
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TNC	Transportation Network Companies
TPCB	Transportation Planning Capacity Building
VMS	Variable Message Sign
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
WsDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

Contents

Introduction

This report highlights the presentations, discussions, and key takeaways from the "Florida DOT District 6 Managed Lanes Peer Exchange" held virtually on May 20-21, 2020 using Adobe Connect. This event was sponsored by the joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Peer Program, and was jointly funded by FHWA and FTA. The goal of the TPCB Program is to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building by connecting peers from different States and/or agencies to exchange best practices and innovative solutions to transportation planning challenges.

Peer Exchange Overview

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 6 requested a peer exchange from the FHWA/FTA TPCB Program to provide FDOT with examples of how their peers have used short- and long-term strategies to improve the effectiveness of managed lanes. This is part of an effort to reduce congestion through more efficient utilization of the existing managed lanes network on the I-95 corridor in South Florida known as the 95 Express.

In particular, FDOT sought input from peers who had effectively:

- Increased vehicle occupancy through managed lanes;
- Reduced reliance on single-occupant vehicles (SOVs);
- Partnered and collaborated with other agencies and entities;
- Improved the operations of managed lanes along Federal or State highways;
- Introduced transit options in managed lanes;
- Implemented affordable solutions for accessible public transit services; and
- Solicited public support for managed lane projects.

Peer Selections

FHWA and FDOT worked together to identify peer agencies from which FDOT could learn about effective practices for making improvements to the I-95 Express Lanes. The three peer agencies chosen were:

- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT);
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT); and
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WsDOT).

A list of key peer exchange contacts is included in Appendix A.

Peer Exchange Sessions

During the peer exchange, FDOT provided a brief overview of the region and its efforts to improve their managed lane program. The three national peers then presented on their experiences in planning and operating managed lanes. Following that, FHWA presented on the operational considerations associated with successfully delivering managed lanes, as well as potential funding opportunities. Representatives

from FHWA and the U.S. DOT Volpe Center (Volpe) facilitated discussions among participants on the following topics:

- Congestion and Mobility: Multimodal, TDM, and Operations;
- Congestion and Mobility: Emerging Transportation Issues and Disruptors; and
- Marketing, Coordination, Governance and Communication.

The peer exchange agenda is included in Appendix B.

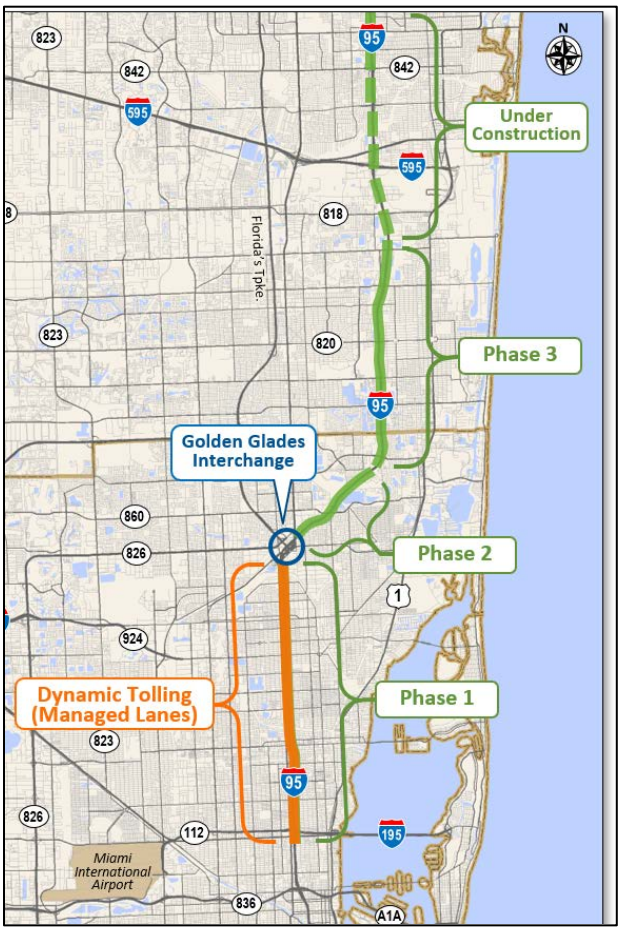
Host and Peer Presentations

Florida DOT District 6

FDOT District 6 encompasses Monroe and Miami-Dade County in South Florida, with a population of nearly 3.5 million people. The area is expected to grow by at least 5.5% in the next five years. FDOT District 6 is responsible for the operations and maintenance of nearly three million miles of travel lanes. FDOT also provides funding assistance to Miami-Dade Transit and the City of Key West Department of Transportation. The area is also served by seven public airports, 78 private airports, two rail lines, and two deep-water ports: the Port of Miami and the Port of Key West.

The I-95 Express Lanes opened in December 2008 (Phase 1 in map at right). Extensions opened in January 2010 (Phase 2) and October 2016 (Phase 3), respectively, resulting in a 21-mile network.

Over 52,000 vehicles move along the corridor every day. Increased congestion has diminished the capacity of the corridor. Despite plans to increase the physical capacity of the roadway, construction of additional lanes will not be completed before 2031.



The map above shows the I-95 Express Lane network, including those phases currently under construction.
Image courtesy of FDOT District 6.

Miami-Dade Transit operates several bus and rail routes along or near the I-95 corridor. Public transit buses serve over 5,700 daily passengers in addition to public and private rail passengers on the Metrorail, Tri-Rail and Brightline/Virgin Rail systems. The existing I-95 Express Bus route is at capacity and often cannot maintain a predictable schedule given the congestion along the corridor.

The Florida State legislature introduced dynamic tolling ("managed lanes") along a seven-mile stretch of

I-95 Express, including areas managed by FDOT District 6. Signs along the corridor communicate changes in toll prices to drivers based on current traffic flow. The minimum toll is set to $0.50 and generally adjusts every 15 minutes based on congestion. The State legislature has imposed maximum tolls on the managed lanes, which limits FDOT's ability to fully adjust prices to ensure free flow traffic.

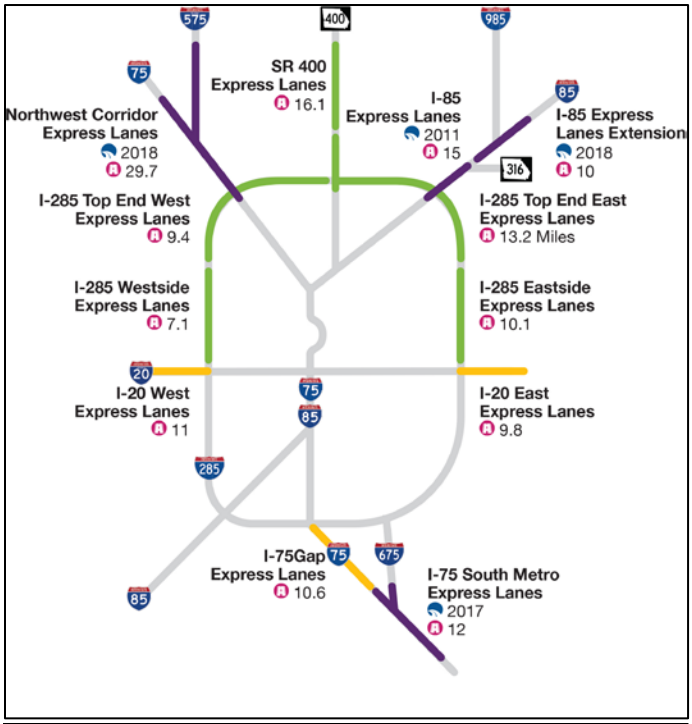
Toll exempt users include: registered South Florida vanpools; registered carpools of three or more persons; hybrid vehicles; registered Miami-Dade County buses; registered Broward County buses and registered regular transit; registered public school and registered over-the-road buses; motorcycles; and emergency vehicles.

Given legislative constraints of raising tolls along the corridor, FDOT District 6 seeks to improve mobility and access along the I-95 corridor through other means. Goals for the corridor include:

- Reduce overall congestion of the I-95 facility;
- Provide a safe and predictable traffic flow;
- Maintain free flow traffic in the express lanes traveling at 45 MPH or faster; and
- Increase overall people-moving capacity of the highway for all modes.

Georgia DOT

State roads in Georgia experience 205 million miles of daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) every day. Along Interstate corridors, commuters can experience up to a 20 MPH difference in travel speeds based on their lane choices. During peak times, express lane users travel at an average speed of 70 MPH, while general-purpose lane users travel at average speeds around 50 MPH. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) attributes these differences in speed to their extensive managed lane system.



The image above shows the Georgia Express lane network.
Image courtesy of GDOT.

GDOT launched its high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) system plan in 2000 and opened its I-85 Express lanes in 2011 as a pilot project. Currently, GDOT operates more than 66 miles of express lanes on I-75, I-575, and I-85 (including High-Occupancy Toll, or HOT lanes) and 39 miles of HOV lanes on I-20, I-75 and I-85 in metro Atlanta, with plans to expand the current system by an additional 90+ miles. The GDOT HOV lanes and express lanes enable more reliable and consistent speeds and provide greater access for transit and other high occupancy vehicles along transportation corridors. GDOT uses dynamic tolling as one method to optimize use of the corridor. The Georgia legislature lifted a cap on tolling along these corridors in 2018.

The I-75 south metro express lanes carry, on average, over 9,200 vehicles a day. After the implementation of dynamic tolling, users along this corridor experience travel speeds 18% faster than the general-purpose lanes with an average fare of $0.73. With over 27,000 weekday trips, the northwest corridor express lanes experience 20% faster travel speeds then the general-purpose lanes with an average daily fare of $2.32.

GDOT reported that express lanes have had a positive impact on expanding transit in the region, a major goal of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Regional Transportation Plan. The Plan aims to reduce emissions, improve air quality, give transit drivers more time to address other issues, and provide faster and more reliable travel times. Public transit vehicles, including those operated by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) are able to utilize the express lanes free of charge.

GDOT also aims to improve freight traffic flow with dedicated commercial vehicle lanes. Commercial truck drivers report that they often add an hour of travel time to account for congestion in the metro Atlanta region. The addition of two northbound commercial vehicle lanes will:

- Separate freight traffic from general motorists, creating safer trips for all roadway users;
- Accommodate growth in commercial vehicle traffic;
- Promote continued regional economic development while supporting future port of Savannah expansion; and
- Facilitate the use of emerging connected and automated vehicle (CAV) technologies.

GDOT stressed the importance of developing a strong vision when considering managed lane projects, including making decisions on key goals and in relation to other projects. For example, some projects, or regional networks, may aim to increase mobility as part of a network strategy, while others might aim to generate revenue as a stand-alone project. GDOT recommended that agencies adopt business rules and policies on pricing, eligibility, and enforcement to maintain fairness and efficiency, and create performance metrics to measure project success. GDOT also identified public education as a critical part of project success.

Minnesota DOT

The first Minnesota Express (MnPASS) lanes opened on I-394 in 2005 as HOV lanes converted to HOT lanes. Today, there are three freeway corridors with MnPASS lanes totaling 70 lane miles. In 2021, 20 additional lane miles will be opening on I-35W with four additional corridors currently under environmental review.

The goal of the MnPASS system is to reduce and manage congestion. Tolls are active during peak travel periods, and inactive during off-peak periods. The majority of MnPASS lanes are single HOT lanes with a two-foot stripped buffers. They allow transit and HOV2+ vehicles to travel free of charge. Other vehicles are subject to dynamic tolling, with prices ranging from $0.25 to $8.00.

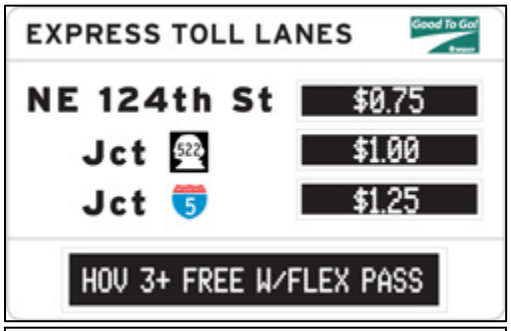
The image highlights the price to utilize the MnPASS lanes, which adjusts based on congestion, thus providing drivers with information with which to make travel decisions.
Image courtesy of MnDOT.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has performance goals that include person throughput, travel time savings and reliability, transit ridership and carpool use, violation rates, and customer satisfaction. MnPASS meets the 45 MPH HOT lane requirement 93% of the time, and, based on past and current performance, the system is expected to perform adequately for the next decade. In order to address lane capacity issues when they arise, MnDOT employs a number of techniques including: adjusting the pricing algorithm, modifying lane access, increasing enforcement, improving transit, and collaborating with transportation demand modeling (TDM) organizations. Long-term solutions include spot mobility projects, which are lower in cost and aim to reduce MnPASS lane demand with the addition of auxiliary lanes, interchange modification, and transit improvements. In the future, MnDOT is considering increasing the maximum toll rate, increasing occupancy requirements to HOV3+, implementing camera-based license plate tolling, and adding more MnPASS lanes.

Washington DOT

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WsDOT) manages five toll facilities, including express lanes, HOT lanes, and traditional tolling. Their HOV program started in the 1970s with the intent to use bus rapid transit (BRT). In 1991, the State legislature mandated that HOV2+ become the standard. This legislation established the performance standard of traffic flow at 45 MPH at least 90% of the time. Moving forward, WsDOT plans to change roads to HOV3+ when needed to meet the performance standard.

The Washington State legislature authorized the I-405 express toll lanes in 2011 with operations beginning in 2015. The express lanes use dynamic tolling to manage vehicle volume. The Flex Pass enables free travel for drivers and passengers in carpools. The lanes are buffer-separated and have distinguished access points. The lanes operate from 5AM to 7PM Monday through Friday. The minimum toll rate is $0.75 and the maximum toll rate is $10.00.



I-405 Express Toll Lanes Toll Rate VMS.
Image courtesy of WsDOT.

WsDOT continually monitors the performance of the system and as a result has adjusted the length and configuration of access points, has changed the hours of operation of the toll road, and has updated its toll algorithm.

WsDOT has been successful using the current algorithm to manage traffic volume and growth. The algorithm uses the slowest five segments of each trip to calculate a unique toll rate for each zone. The algorithm increases the toll price in advance of congestion, which reduces the volume at a bottleneck. While algorithms have to operate within minimum and maximum toll rates, they can be re-examined during the next phase of express toll operations.

FHWA Presentations

During the peer exchange, FHWA presented on Federal resources available for agencies seeking to implement or bolster managed lanes programs, as well as improve coordination among regional stakeholders.

Operations

The Office of Operations has several grant programs for States, local governments, and tribal organizations seeking to improve roadway efficiency, including:

- Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program funds projects that use innovative technologies to improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment.
- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants assist grantees with building and repairing critical pieces of freight and passenger transportation networks.
- Infrastructure and Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants fund nationally and regionally significant freight and highway projects. These grants promote incorporation of innovative technologies and incentivize coordination and collaboration between public and private sector partners.
- Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives Program provides grants to States to demonstrate user-based alternative revenue mechanisms
- Accelerated Innovation Deployment (AID) Demonstration Program provides funding as an incentive for eligible entities to accelerate the implementation and adoption of innovation in highway transportation.

Coordination

PlanWorks is a web resource, built around key decisions that are common across transportation agencies, that supports collaborative decision-making. PlanWorks has a variety of resources to help in the decision-making process, including information on long range transportation planning and environmental reviews. PlanWorks contains applications that provide specific information on addressing emerging and complex topics collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.

PlanWorks Training Website. *Image courtesy of FHWA.*

Regional Models of Cooperation help State DOTs, MPOs, and other stakeholders work and coordinate with other agencies to share data to work for the betterment of a region. This improves decision-making and saves both time and money through shared resources.

Megaregions builds on Regional Models of Cooperation to promote efficiency on issues that transcend traditional regional boundaries. It focuses on issues in freight, environment, safety, economic vitality, and congestion.

Group Discussions

Congestion and Mobility: Multimodal, TDM & Operations

Peers discussed opportunities for FDOT in the areas of multimodal transportation, transportation demand management, and operations. Potential solutions discussed in detail include:

- **Park-and-Ride Facilities**: Park-and-Rides close to highway onramps and offramps incentivize drivers to park their cars and transfer to public transit, generally bus or rail, to complete their journey. FDOT described efforts to both promote use of existing facilities and also expand facilities to accommodate new users. Although Park-and-Rides may decrease toll revenue, they do help reduce congestion, which is FDOT's primary goal. Peers discussed the utility of information sharing, at public transit hubs and also via signage along the highway. Among the more successful techniques is to be able to convey cost and travel time savings to drivers in real-time. FDOT recognized the need to involve additional stakeholders in future Park-and-Ride discussions.

- **Expanded Carpool and Vanpool Programs**: Higher usage of existing programs that allow commuters to share vehicles with others is an effective way to decrease SOVs, decrease congestion, and increase throughput on the I-95 Express Lanes. Peers highlighted successes working directly with employers in addition to individual drivers. Incentive programs to encourage carpools, vanpools, alternate work schedules, and telecommuting have proven successful, resulting in more people using the roadway without increasing congestion.

Other opportunities identified by the peers include:

- HOV incentives, including bypass lanes on metered ramps;
- Strict enforcement of HOV occupancy laws; and
- Greater regional coordination on bus routes that feed the I-95 Express routes.

Congestion and Mobility: Emerging Transportation Issues, Disruptors

Peers offered the following solutions for FDOT to be able to anticipate the impacts of emerging transportation issues:

- **Shifts in workforce demographics:** Peers encouraged FDOT to be proactive in tracking changes in travel behaviors as a result of shifting demographics in the workforce. Technology may prove pivotal in shifting the workforce more towards telecommuting and alternate work schedules.

- **First/Last mile solutions:** Particularly given the aging population in South Florida, FDOT is cognizant of the need for "door-to-door" solutions for many 95 Express users who may be candidates for shifting modes. Peers suggested the strong role to play for both transit agencies and commuter services organizations to connect people who both live and work within close proximity, as well as the role of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) to enable connections from home to transit hubs and carpool/vanpool pickup locations.

- **Congestion benefits of connected vehicles and automated vehicles**: Peers suggested it may be too early to fully anticipate the impacts of connected vehicles and automated vehicles, they did highlight the opportunities they may pose in terms of congestion benefits. These benefits may appear in the form of increased throughput due to vehicles being able to operate closer together, and route optimization based on real-time travel time data. Peers suggested incorporating strategies into local, regional, and statewide plans to be able to accommodate these forthcoming shifts.

Marketing, Coordination, Governance, Communication

Peers offered FDOT several examples of effective practices related to regional coordination and governance, as well as the key role that marketing and communications play in terms of getting the message out to users. Main discussion points include:

- **Leverage multiple communications platforms:** Peers suggested that communications and outreach plan need to comprise many different mechanisms, ranging from bulletin boards to variable message signs (VMS) to cell phone applications.
- **Engage local and regional stakeholders early and often:** FDOT is encouraged to serve as a convener of local and regional stakeholders to engage their respective constituencies for support for managed lanes and related initiatives. Peers found that early engagement led to synergies among stakeholders that were not always apparent at the outset, and led to mutual buy-in to support managed lanes programs and eventual expansion.
- **Utilize data efficiently and effectively:** Peers all touted the benefits of data to convey key messages and build support for managed lanes programs, but they cautioned against "one size fits all" approaches. Gaining both political support and support from the public are essential, but despite each respective constituency generally having the same goals the messaging around those goals needs to be tailored to individual audiences.

Key Takeaways

This section summarizes noteworthy practices employed by peer agencies that serve not only as recommendations for FDOT but are also applicable elsewhere for agencies planning or seeking to implement managed lanes and other activities to reduce highway congestion.

- **It is critical for agencies to cultivate support from multiple stakeholders representing a multitude of constituencies.** Managed lane projects and other projects aimed at changing traffic flow can be politically and publicly unpopular. Therefore, it is necessary for agencies seeking to use these techniques to engage early and often with potential project supporters. Identifying project champions are important for project success.
- **Public education campaigns and other marketing efforts about the benefits of managed lanes and other projects may be needed.** Public sentiment can be a challenge. Agencies may need to invest in open communication methods to educate the legislature and the public about what managed lanes are and how they will impact communities.
- **Collaboration among agencies and the private sector can increase the potential for success of managed lane projects.** Private sector partnership can enable the communication and project management necessary for success. Private sector employers can influence the acceptance and use of managed lanes through employee incentive programs. It is important to invest in regular communication and relationship-building among agencies, even when not actively engaged in projects, to set up opportunities for future collaboration.

Appendix A: Key Contacts

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Appendix B: Peer Exchange Agenda

Day 1, Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Time (EDT)	Topic
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	**Welcome and Introductions** FHWA (**James Garland**, TPCB Team Leader) welcomes attendees, reviews the agenda, and introduces TPCB and the Peer Program. U.S. DOT Volpe Center (**Michael Kay**) provides an overview of logistics, describes documentation/follow-up, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and establishes ground rules for discussions. Florida DOT (**Daniel Iglesias**, FDOT District 6 Director of Transportation Development) and the FHWA Florida Division Office (**Karen Brunelle**, Director of Project Development) will also provide brief opening remarks.
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	**Florida DOT Overview and Presentation** Florida DOT (**Dat Huynh**) will introduce its Managed Lanes Program, and provide an overview of the issues on which it is seeking input from peers.
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	**Peer Overviews and Presentations** Each of the peers will provide an overview of their Managed Lanes networks: • **Georgia DOT** (**Matthew Fowler, Matthew Glasser, Charles A. Robinson**) • **Minnesota DOT** (**Brad Larsen**) • **Washington State DOT** (**Rob Fellows, Tyler Patterson**)
12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	***Lunch***
1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.	**FHWA Presentation: Operations** FHWA's Office of Operations (**Neil Spiller, Greg Jones**) will provide an overview on its programs and resources.
1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	**Discussion Topic 1 – Congestion and Mobility: Multimodal, TDM, and Operations** A facilitated group discussion on the multimodal, TDM, and Operations-related opportunities to address congestion and mobility issues in Florida.
3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	***Break***
3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	**Discussion Topic 2 – Congestion and Mobility: Emerging Transportation Issues, Disruptors** A facilitated group discussion on emerging transportation issues and potential disruptors, as well as opportunities to overcome them.
4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	**Recap, Wrap-up**

Day 2, Thursday, May 21, 2020

Time (EDT)	Topic
10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.	**Welcome, Day 1 Recap**
10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	**FHWA Presentation: Coordination and Funding** FHWA's Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty (**Reena Mathews,** joined by **Neil Spiller**, Office of Operations) will provide an overview on its programs and resources.
11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	**Discussion Topic 3 – Marketing, Coordination, Governance, Communication** A facilitated group discussion on opportunities for increased coordination among local, regional, and state stakeholders.
12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	***Lunch***
1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.	**General Peer Discussion / Q&A / Parking Lot** Open discussion on topics not yet addressed.
1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	**Action Plan Development (Part 1)** Facilitated brainstorming session among FDOT and peers to determine a plan of action and next steps following the peer exchange.
2:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	***Break***
2:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	**Action Plan Development (continued)** Facilitated brainstorming session among FDOT and peers to determine a plan of action and next steps following the peer exchange.
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	**Wrap-up**