



To: MetroPlan Orlando Board  
From: Central Floridians for Public Transit (CFL4Transit)  
Re: MetroPlan Orlando's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan  
Date: 20 November 2020

Dear MetroPlan Orlando Board,

First, we want to thank the MetroPlan Orlando staff for the thoroughness in putting together this comprehensive draft of the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Florida region. With a series of 10 technical documents as well as multiple accompanying addendums and spreadsheets, it is quite a daunting amount of information to assemble as well as for concerned community members to navigate and provide intentional feedback.

It is clear to us that the MPO staff continues to improve upon making the long-range transportation planning process as well as project prioritization and funding feasibility more transparent, collaborative and flexible, particularly in centering public transit, multimodal and Complete Streets projects.

In terms of public engagement to date, it is encouraging to see that two of the top desired changes from the public to Central Florida's transportation system are public transit-related: 1) more frequent public transit that goes to more places and 2) better connections between public transit and final destinations. It's also inspiring to see that the runner-ups were multimodal and public transit-oriented as well: 1) making roads more friendly for pedestrians & bicyclists, 2) expanding the trail system, 3) mobile information about the best way to reach your destination and 4) bus-only lanes for rapid service.

That being said, we are concerned that this plan's project prioritization and funding strategies, which we understand are limited primarily to fuel tax and toll road revenues often with designated allocations, do not align with what Central Floridians need and want for the region in terms of public transit and multimodal transportation options over the next 25 years.

Accounting for the toll road funding as well, there is a budget of approximately \$25.7 billion projected for the next 25 years. Though we understand that toll road funds are not at the discretion of MetroPlan Orlando to re-allocate, toll road infrastructure does not exist in a political, funding or prioritization vacuum from current disinvestment in public transit in this

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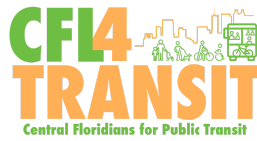
region. Therefore, we prefer to view this budget and allocation percentages within the context of \$25.7 Billion not the \$12.85 Billion within MetroPlan Orlando's immediate coordination.

Reviewing the pie chart from the presentation (focused on \$12.85 Billion within MetroPlan's control), we re-interpret the numbers to say that 89% of this total budget of \$25.7 Billion is going to road projects or road-oriented projects, some of which may also benefit public transit services that use these roads though with minimal to no transit prioritization for buses in mixed traffic.

We understand 9.5% of this financial forecast is earmarked for sustaining bus and rail service *as is* for the next two decades, not enhancing service coverage, frequency, hours of operation or connectivity. Furthermore, 1% of the budget is going to Complete Streets projects and .5% to infrastructure for people rolling, walking, and biking. While we heard mentioned that other line items such as "Local" and "State Roads" have the potential for funding multimodal projects, it is not immediately clear that such projects will indeed be multimodal and directly benefit transit riders. Furthermore, considering that Central Florida continues to hold the distinction of being one of the most dangerous metros in the country for people rolling, walking and biking, it doesn't appear that the MetroPlan Orlando Board is financially committed to transformative transit projects, protected bike/ped infrastructure or Complete Streets since only 11% of the total budget for the next two decades are directed to these three project types.

An additional concern is that \$7.07 billion in public transit projects remain unfunded, which we presume includes stalled Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) proposals for connecting the Orlando International Airport to International Drive as well as BRT projects for State Road 50, State Road 436 and US Route 192. We understand there is concern about providing capital funding for transit projects without operating funding, but if this logic is to be used for transit it should apply equally to roads. Are we requiring that all newly constructed roadways come with a plan for regular operations, maintenance, and a reasonable resurfacing schedule before new roadways are built? Without accounting for ongoing life-cycle costs of roadways, we are failing to address the "operating" costs of these facilities.

Unfortunately, this plan draft is not a transit-centered plan even though the Board's goals and indicators, as well as public feedback, identify a want and need for transformative public transit service in Central Florida. Transit projects, both capital and operations, are getting a fraction of funding compared to roads. Additionally, the plan falls short of centering transit dependent and underserved communities particularly as we navigate a massive economic downturn, the COVID-19 global pandemic and racial justice reckonings this year. Before COVID-19, working



families, especially 2nd and 3rd shift workers, women, Black and Brown folks, LGBTQ+ folks, immigrants, veterans, people with disabilities, youth, and seniors were being drastically underserved and disproportionately immobilized by transit disinvestment and pervasive subsidies of automobiles. The on-going subsidization of private automobile ownership and dependency on automobile-oriented revenue streams continues to place a substantial financial burden on Central Floridians in order to participate in the community and access even basic needs. With our current transportation system's design, we are essentially forcing vulnerable community members to spend most of their income on transportation, specifically owning or renting an automobile, if they are able to drive, or increasingly now paying high premiums for ride hailing services in order to avoid spending long hours waiting for the bus, the train or paratransit everyday. The *Orlando Sentinel's* 2019 Laborland investigative series further underscores this particularly in the article titled "It takes her 3 hours to travel 15 miles by bus. Orlando's public transit is failing workers" published on December 12, 2019.

The lack of attention, planning and funding for paratransit improvements re: AccessLYNX is also seriously alarming. It has long been recognized by users and providers in this community that the ridership is underserved. Technology applications for optimizing service are grossly outdated and advancements have not been implemented or are under-utilized. Integration of commercial options should be considered, and changes to outdated rules, regulations and laws need to be revisited for application to current ridership and opportunities.

Additionally, we see an urgency for the region to strategically partner with Amtrak services along with Brightline to maximize intercity rail travel; optimize and open up the freight rail market to move away from privately owned rail networks; adopt and deploy open mobility data standards and mobility hub methodologies that are inclusive of transit dependent commuters; and be extremely intentional through a lens of equity, fairness and justice in the adoption of ACES and shared mobility technologies. We must ensure that emerging mobility technologies center public transit rider experiences in the software and data infrastructures and are universally accessible while also protecting the rights and well-being of transit workers and gig workers. Without great care and collaboration, the emerging technological trends of datafication, electrification and automation will only reinforce transportation inequalities and injustices in the region further leaving behind Central Floridians who are transit dependent while also exploiting transit and gig workers central to operating mobility services.

A 25-year projection should show some specific creativity and energy to re-imagine public transportation to best meet the diverse needs of the community putting people before cars. How are we further optimizing bus route connections and transfers for existing high bus ridership



corridors such as the Link 8, Link 37, Link 42, Link 436S and Link 107 so that these bus riders can get wherever they need to go across the region quickly, efficiently, and safely? How are we incentivizing land use planning and practices that are transit-oriented but also ensure wide availability of affordable housing? Where are the Bus Rapid Transit projects? Why are we not prioritizing express bus services on I-4 and toll roads? Where is weekend and late-night service for SunRail? Where is the expanded regional rail system of which SunRail was supposed to be the backbone? Where are the dedicated bus lanes and protected bike lane/cycle track projects? Why aren't we talking about congestion pricing and Vehicle Miles Traveled taxation as necessary and equitable revenue mechanisms? Instead it seems we continue to plan and reimplement the current status quo so that it appears that this is really a 5-year plan with more and bigger roads.

In summary, it is simply not acceptable for LYNX, AccessLYNX and SunRail to be projected over the next two decades to operate at their current, inefficient and unreliable levels of service, which are already grossly underserving Central Floridians. Regardless of funding limitations, this current disinvestment and de-prioritization of public transit service makes it difficult for our coalition to support this plan as is.

Moving forward, first and foremost, we would like to ask the Board to have the political courage to *now*, not later, correct these failures that have persisted for decades in terms of underfunding and disinvestment in public transit. This budget inherently does not align with MetroPlan Orlando's goals or what the public says they need and want. What road widening and expansion projects can be delayed or canceled? What funding allocated to toll roads or other road projects can be re-allocated to transit? What funding can better prioritize rapid public transit services as the backbone of the future of sustainable and just mobility - in addition to exploring the potential of ride hailing services and autonomous vehicles? This may require some substantial re-organization of how we currently manage programs, operations and revenue in the region including stronger coordination and resource sharing between LYNX, SunRail, CFX, the Florida Turnpike Enterprise, GOAA, etc. We have specific recommendations we will happily provide should the Board be willing to entertain re-thinking what public transportation should look like for Central Florida in 2045.

Sincerely,

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