TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 8

From: Staff

Date: May 19, 2017 Council Meeting

Subject: Florida Department of Transportation Complete Streets Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this item is to provide a review and recommended revisions to the draft Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Complete Streets Handbook, which was published for review on April 25, 2017. This handbook is intended to help implement FDOT's Complete Streets policy, adopted in September 2014, to "promote safety, quality of life, and economic development in Florida." Within that policy, the Department specifically recognized Complete Streets as context-sensitive facilities that require transportation system design to consider local land development patterns and the built form. The Handbook was developed after FDOT conducted a state-wide, year-long effort, including participation by Council as well as other partner agencies to evaluate existing conditions, FDOT documents and manuals, and develop a new Complete Streets approach for the state transportation network.

Background

More than twenty years ago, the Federal Highway Administration released guidance encouraging context-based transportation planning and design to improve safety, function, and sustainability of communities. Safety improvements in particular have been highlighted as a key benefit for multi-modal transportation networks that balance the needs of all users and integrate land use conditions in their design. National studies have consistently identified Florida's transportation network as one of the most dangerous in the nation for pedestrians and bicyclists. For example, the 2016 "Dangerous by Design" publication by Smart Growth America, the State of Florida was ranked as the most dangerous state in the nation for pedestrians due to the high number of injuries and fatalities on the state transportation network.

In September 2014, FDOT responded to growing concerns about dangerous conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists with the adoption of the Statewide Complete Streets Policy. The goal of this policy is to improve safety, quality of life, and economic development in Florida by advancing a context-sensitive system of Complete Streets that considers the full range of users on the multi-modal transportation network: cyclists, motorists, pedestrians, transit riders, and freight handlers. To implement this policy, FDOT indicated it would coordinate with the full range of transportation partners, including local governments, metropolitan planning

organizations, transportation agencies, and fully integrate the Complete Streets policy into the Department's manuals, guidelines, and related documents for implementation.

In 2015, FDOT initiated a broad, multi-agency effort to objectively and thoroughly evaluate regulatory documents, manuals, and procedures; and identify changes needed to advance Complete Streets through context-sensitive design. Council was invited to participate in this year-long effort, which was facilitated by Smart Growth America, a nationally recognized leader in the application of these concepts. The Complete Streets Handbook is a key implementation manual to assist FDOT, local governments, metropolitan/transportation planning organizations (MPO/TPOs), and other partners with guidance and criteria to advance a holistic readdress of the state's transportation network. The approach fully integrates local land use patterns and is designed to address the transportation needs of system users of all ages and abilities, regardless of mode choice. The Handbook is aligned with the Florida Transportation Plan, which is the statewide long-range transportation plan guiding Florida's transportation future.

Analysis

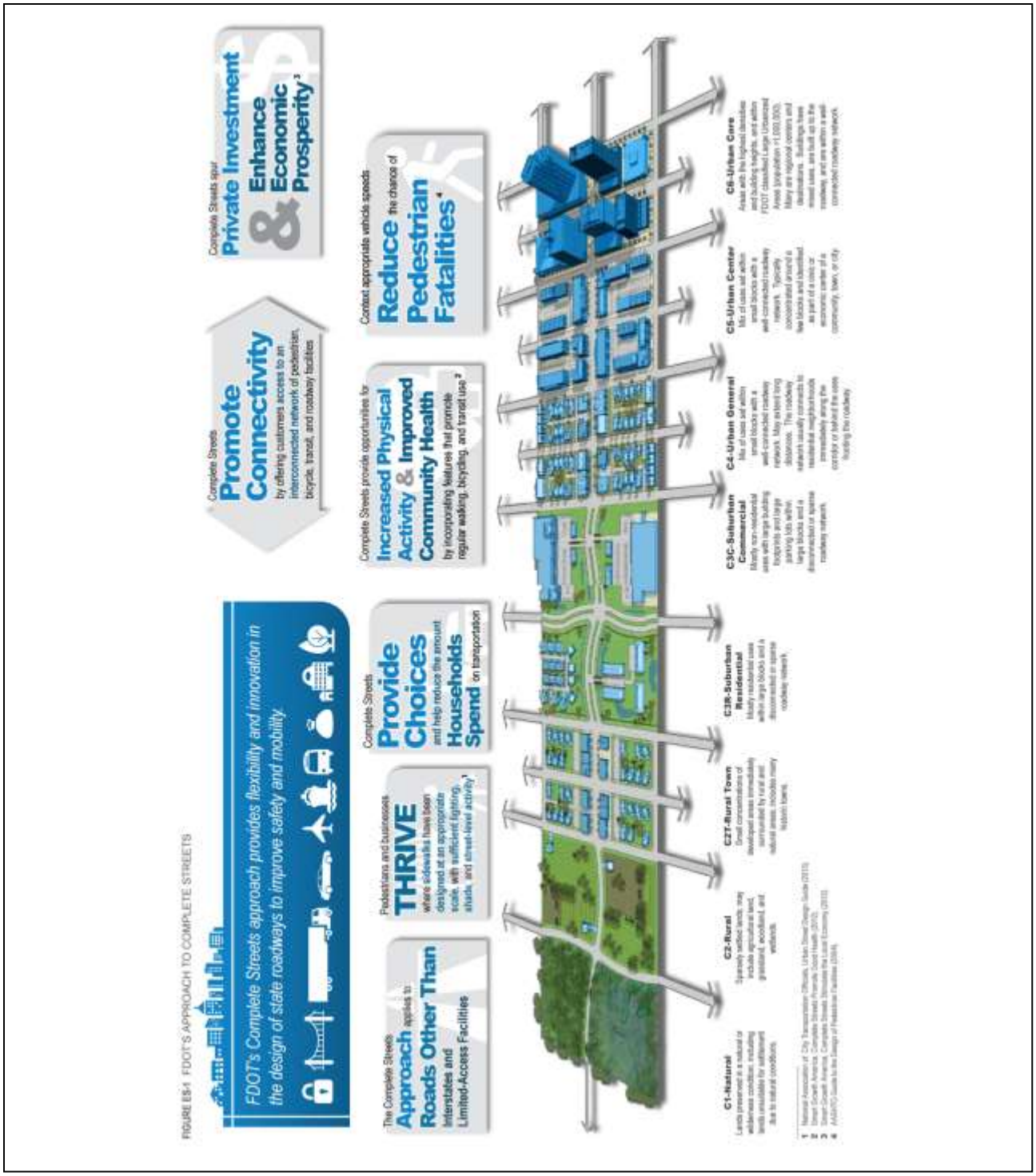
The Complete Streets Handbook provides a detailed overview of Complete Streets and how they may be implemented across the state's transportation network. It includes:

- An explanation of FDOT's Complete Streets approach and principles for state roads;
- Guidelines for FDOT's collaboration with local and regional partners;
- Definitions of context classifications used for state roads;
- Guidelines for applying a Complete Streets approach to state projects;
- Guidelines for roadway design considerations;
- Appendix A describing land use tools to support safe and comfortable multi-modal travel; and
- Appendices B-F providing context classification case studies, calculation of floor-area ratios, proposed design speed ranges by context, sample FDOT context classification letters of agreement for local governments, and a list of handbooks and guidance documents with tools for Complete Streets implementation.

Each of these components is evaluated below.

FDOT's Complete Streets Approach and Principles

The cornerstone of FDOT's Complete Streets approach is the recognition that a context classification is needed to enable different types of transportation facilities to be designed in a manner that is appropriate for the different types of land use conditions in which they are located. While a high-speed rural context may be appropriately served by a facility with wider travel lanes and minimal bicycling and pedestrian features, an urban context requires facilities that are expressly multi-modal with design features to slow traffic and features that supports economic development and encourages bicycling and pedestrian activity. The Handbook includes a composite illustration that depicts the range of context classifications identified for Florida's varied geography, arrayed from the lowest intensity natural and rural conditions to the urban conditions with the highest density and intensity.



As illustrated in the transect image above, FDOT's Complete Streets approach establishes a context classification that acknowledges land use patterns in Florida range from the natural/rural to urban core. Accordingly, the approach anticipates transportation facilities will be provided in a form that corresponds to the place and character in which they are located. This provides for variation and design flexibility regarding roadway dimensions, amenities, access, and function.

Context Classifications Used for State Roads

The Handbook provides a context classification matrix that differentiates classifications by land use, building heights, building placement, fronting uses, location of off-street parking, and roadway connectivity (e.g., intersection density, block perimeters, and block length). It also includes secondary measures such as residential density, non-residential intensity, and population and employment density. **There are several measures that should be added into the list of primary measures for the definition of context classification: (1) the location of on-street parking, and (2) the alley network (as a measure of roadway connectivity). Both of these measures should be addressed in detail in the narrative and illustrations provided to more completely define context and recognize the benefits these features can provide in creating a sense of place, calming traffic, protecting bicyclists and pedestrians, and improving connectivity.**

This chapter also provides a series of factors for the identification of roadway-specific transportation travel demands, including land uses, vehicular trip types, travel patterns, the types of pedestrians and bicyclists, transit users, and freight. **While the Handbook includes a broad approach to pedestrian considerations, the approach for bicycling facilities is too narrow and should be expanded to consider parallel and alternative bicycling facilities as well as those facilities provided within a subject roadway. This revision would create additional flexibility for communities to more efficiently plan for their mobility needs and enable more context-appropriate transportation facilities as prioritized locally.**

Collaboration with Local and Regional Partners

The Handbook emphasizes the value of establishing regional and community visions to help define contexts. These approaches can engage both public and private partners and help inform land development regulations and policies. In particular, the Handbook notes the efficiency of early collaboration between FDOT and local governments to identify the context classification of a roadway and synchronize the land use/transportation relationship. MPO/TPOs are identified to assist in clarifying and defining visions and infrastructure design and funding. The chapter also identifies transit agencies, regional planning councils, and private sector stakeholders as key partners. In addition to the construction of new facilities, the Handbook highlights the opportunities presented by maintenance and resurfacing projects to spur the redesign of transportation facilities to better complement surrounding land use patterns.

Applying a Complete Streets Approach to State Projects

The Handbook acknowledges that Complete Streets are not a specific type of project. Instead, Complete Streets represents an approach to ensuring that projects are designed according to their unique context. An approach is presented to provide that FDOT consistently consider the context throughout the design, engineering, development, and implementation process. Early screening is recommended at the onset of project initiation to gain stakeholder input and broaden due diligence to further inform context classifications. **The chapter includes a series of measures to be considered by mode; however, two key measures are missing: the presence of on-street parking and presence of alternative and parallel bicycle facilities. This chapter should be modified to integrate these measures as well as a broader consideration of parking location and its contribution to a "park once" environment.**

The chapter describes the review processes for different types of FDOT projects, including those carried through the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process as well as other FDOT projects that are screened independently**. While the ETDM process notes the review of all applicable local documents (e.g., comprehensive plans, master plans, redevelopment plans, and other vision-based documents), the alternative review process omits these local documents in early screening. This section should be amended to include emphasis on the review of all applicable local documents to fully inform context considerations.**

The implementation chapter also includes a discussion of funding and maintenance of Complete Streets. Throughout the Handbook, there is emphasis on the value of leveraging routine maintenance projects, such as resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation (RRR) projects, to create Complete Streets. However, the chapter notes there is no separate FDOT funding category or source to advance this effort. **To more effectively implement Complete Streets, a separate funding source should be established within the seven FDOT districts that could be accessed by MPO/TPOs for qualifying local government projects. This would accelerate the safety improvements provided by this approach and create potential to leverage state funding with other public and private funds for faster implementation.**

Roadway Design Considerations

The final section of the Handbook is a detailed discussion of the context-based design controls utilized by FDOT for project design. This includes design users, design vehicles, design speeds, and traffic characteristics. A comprehensive discussion is provided regarding the needs of different users (e.g., drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists) in different contexts and questions that should be raised regarding how to best accommodate their needs. Additional guidance is provided regarding different types of design vehicles and the relationship between roadway speeds and roadway design. The chapter suggests levels of service be considered for all users - vehicles as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

Additionally, this chapter emphasizes that roadways are part of a larger interconnected system that includes public rights-of-ways as well as the land use context within which they exist. Further, FDOT facilities are noted as part of a "context-sensitive **system** of Complete Streets." A fine-grained system of roadways and crossing opportunities produces efficiency, reduces delay, and improves choices for the traveling public. More travel choices and multiple intersections enable smaller, safer roadways that can share the roadway demand instead of wider facilities and intersections that create barriers for bicyclists and pedestrians. This chapter also describes transition zones between various contexts with design guidance to help improve driver behavior. **As noted for previous chapters, this chapter should also be revised to include on-street parking and the presence of parallel and alternative bicycling facilities. Further, an emphasis on local design guidance should be integrated into the network discussion, to highlight the leadership role of local governments in determining prioritization of facility types within their communities.**

Appendix A - Land Use Tools to Support Safe and Comfortable Multi-modal Travel

Appendix A includes a detailed overview of land use tools available to local governments to help advance Complete Streets. Because the transportation/land use planning process is iterative and interdependent, this section recommends local government land use and FDOT transportation planning decisions should be coordinated and collaborative. A series of local government tools is presented, including local network connectivity, investments in local multi-modal infrastructure and network plans, zoning, site design and building placement, access management, and parking standards. **Consistent throughout the Handbook and again in the land use appendix is the omission of on-street parking as a beneficial consideration for Complete Streets. This section should be modified to add language describing on-street parking; its benefits to safety, quality of life, and economic development; the significant protections on-street parking provides for pedestrians; and its inclusion as part of the Complete Streets toolbox.**

Additional Handbook Appendices

The balance of the Handbook includes valuable documents and reference materials to advance Complete Streets implementation.

Conclusion

The FDOT Complete Streets Handbook provides thorough and thoughtful guidance to enhance the state's transportation network in a manner that will promote safety, quality of life, and economic development across the State of Florida. FDOT utilized a thorough process, with broad participation and nationally recognized partners, to objectively evaluate the state's transportation network, regulatory and guidance documents, and produce a comprehensive approach to delivering a Complete Streets network over time. The Handbook employs a cutting-edge approach by recognizing the variation among different contexts, defining a range of context classifications and context-sensitive design features, and holistic roadway design considerations that embrace and integrate land use conditions. The Handbook lays out a step-by-step approach for roadway planning and design that celebrates local government leadership in land use planning and placemaking. Further, the Complete Streets Handbook emphasizes the value of establishing meaningful community and regional visions with broad public input for better integrated outcomes that can more effectively leverage transportation investments as part of an integrated land use/transportation system.

There are several key considerations missing among the measures detailed throughout the Handbook, including on-street parking, the presence of alley networks, and alternative and parallel bicycle facilities. In addition, the Handbook would be improved by calling for non-ETDM projects to also review local plans and for all projects to integrate local design guidance. In addition, implementation would benefit greatly from a designated Complete Streets funding source. By revising the Handbook to include these measures as described above, the application of Complete Streets will be more comprehensive, enable more meaningful local government participation, and provide the appropriate flexibility for Complete Streets to be applied in all context classifications as envisioned.

Recommendation

Council should approve the staff report evaluating the FDOT Complete Streets Handbook for transmittal to the Florida Department of Transportation.