

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

Advisory Board Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Held at CUT101 Board Room and via MS TEAMS

February 18, 2025 · 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET

- Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Acting Chair, Ron Howse at 1:00 PM ET.
- Roll Call

Advisory Board Members and Designees (P = Present, T = Telephone/Teams, A = Absent)

	Name	Title	Organization	Designee	
T	Ron Howse, Chair (T)	Acting Chair	Florida Transportation Commission		Statute
A	Jared Perdue, P.E. (A)	Secretary	Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)	Ming Gao, FDOT District 7 Representative (P)	Statute
T	Kimberlee DeBosier (T)	Vice President, Transportation Division	WGI, Inc.		
A	J. Alex Kelly	Secretary	Florida Department of Commerce	Scott Rogers, FDEO (T)	
A	Ram Kancharla (A)	Vice President, Planning and Development	Port Tampa Bay		
A	Alexis A. Lambert	Secretary	Florida Department of Environmental Protection	Chris Stahl (T)	Statute
A	Thornton J. Williams (A)	Managing Partner	Williams Law Group, P.A.		
T	Ysela Llort (T)	Principal	Renaissance Planning Group, Inc.		
T	Ralph Yoder (T)	Executive Director	Florida Transportation Commission		Ex-Officio
T	Lisa Bacot (T)	Executive Director	Florida Public Transportation Association		Ex-Officio

Guests

CUTR Leadership

- Dr. Fred Mannering, CUTR Director
- Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director
- Yu Zhang, PhD, NICR Director

CUTR Program Directors

- Sisinnio Concas, PhD
- Jeffrey Kramer, AICP
- Pei-Sung Lin, PhD
- Phil Winters

CUTR Faculty and Staff

- Molly Buffington
- Lisa Farrell
- Jodi Godfrey
- Jason Jackman
- Sarah Payton
- Arman Sargolzaei, PhD
- Roberta Yegidis

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions: *CUTR Advisory Board Acting Chair, Ron Howse*

Topic #1: Approval of Minutes. *Chair, Ron Howse*

- Quorum was met for the meeting. Chair Howse asked if there were any motions for approval of minutes.
- Kim DeBosier moved to approve the minutes of the October 2024 Advisory Board meeting.
- The motion was seconded by Ysela Llort.
- There was no opposition to the approval; the meeting moved forward, per the agenda.

Topic #2: FDOT Updates. *FDOT District Seven, Ming Gao*

- FDOT D7 representative Ming Gao presented the FDOT update, on behalf of Secretary Jared Perdue.
- **Legislative session:** starts March 4
 - State legislators requested subcommittee presentations on Sunrail, Moving Florida Forward, Advanced Air Mobility, and others.
- **Workforce:** The district recognizes the aging workforce. Talent, tools, and technology are the 3T approach to develop and retain staff, as well as recruit new talent.

- FDOT expects \$5 Billion in upcoming construction projects, creating opportunities for jobs.
- OnBoard Tampa Bay is a workforce initiative throughout FDOT which builds a pipeline for creating a skilled labor pool and facilitating recruitment.
- **2024 Hurricane response:** 3 hurricanes in relatively short succession impacted the area.
 - Hurricane Helene created 2,800 truckloads of debris. FDOT partnered with various agencies in a push to remove the debris before the arrival of Hurricane Milton.
 - District 7 experienced a loss of 600 traffic signals, which significantly exceeded the current generator supply. Advances are being made to add adapters to signals, to be able to hook up to generator without needing a technician, reducing downtime.
- **Florida Winter:** A new snow fall record was set with 9.8 inches in Milton, Florida.
 - Using connections with other state DOTs for equipment, 250 personnel and snow removal equipment were mobilized to clear roadways.
 - It took 25 hours to clear I-10.
- **Technology:** The Smart Cities Alliance, which D7 is a founding member of, was touted for its regional initiatives: Integrated Corridor Management (ICM), Westshore interchange diversion routes, fiberoptic corridor, and City of Tampa tech upgrades (ATMS project), among others.
- **Space:** Florida is leading in space launches worldwide (80 last year).

Topic #3: CUTR Advisory Board Updates/Business. *Chair, Ron Howse*

- Chair Howse noted the shortage of surveyors, due to an aging workforce, and encouraged the training of young people in the field. There is a discussion about expanding the surveying coursework at USF to meet licensing requirements.
- The Governor's office reappointed the entire Florida Transportation Commission, except for one person. Two new members were added from the Tampa Bay Region.
- Legislation has been submitted by Jason Brodeur to allow more freedoms to the water management board.
- The Board continues to monitor HB 567, which once again looks at the CUTR Advisory Board membership and certain projects, as well as language about MPOs.

Topic #4: CUTR Updates. *Fred Mannering, CUTR Executive Director; Yu Zhang, NICR Director; Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director*

- **Executive Director Update:** *Dr. Fred Mannering*
 - CUTR sees uncertainty in the next 3-6 months, in terms of funding, related to Trump Administration-related changes, which may lead to program changes nationally and within the university.
 - An audit of websites and digital publications is being conducted to remove language that is no longer administratively approved.
 - Dr. Mannering stated that CUTR's focus on safety should not be impacted.

- A College of Engineering faculty search, headed by Dr. Yu Zhang, is underway seeking a resilience-focused tenured faculty member.
- Our new College of Engineering dean – Dr. Levi Thompson arrives in August. He was previously Dean at the U. Delaware and is well regarded. Dr. Mannering and Ms. Staes have an upcoming meeting with he and the college's chairs on Wednesday.
- Yesterday, USF President Law announced her upcoming retirement. A search for a replacement will begin. University presidents are a difficult search in today's environment, requiring someone who is politically savvy. This will be a challenging search process. CUTR will keep the board updated on search.
- **NICR Update: Dr. Yu Zhang, NICR Director**
 - Dr. Zhang provided an update on NICR activities.
 - She notes that the research paper awards won by NICR authors were from larger committees with 100s of members.
 - During the Council of University Transportation Centers meeting held at TRB, there was discussion on reauthorization for the next 5 years, and possibly expanding from 5 to 7 UTCs.
 - The NICR UTC will end on August 2025. Staff are wrapping up and working on final reports to be submitted by the deadline.
- **Associate Director Updates: Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director**
 - CUTR research funding shows an upward trend
 - CUTR faculty continues to be aggressive in proposal submissions and has many currently under development.
 - Ms. Staes provided an update on CUTR's participation at TRB 2025. CUTR continues to be well represented in committees, panels, and projects.
 - Transportation Tech Center in Pueblo, CO.
 - 4 courses have been provided for 170 Transportation Security Administration Surface Transportation professionals
 - New activity in the expansion of TTC's grade crossing testbeds which will include upgrades to 5 existing crossing and the creation of a new crossing to accommodate research, testing, and evaluation activities across all surface transportation modes.
 - Assigned an FRA-led grade crossing testbed advisory group comprised of CUTR, Atkins-Realis, ENSCO, all USDOT modal administrations, three other universities, and Volpe.
 - TTC hopes to attract additional research to the testbed from state, federal, and private industry.

Topic #5: CUTR Internal Grant Award. Jason Jackman, CUTR

- **Evaluating Student Knowledge and Behaviors:** The project team conducted a survey at the USF Tampa campus to better understand student driving (multimodal). Helmet use was also studied.
- Students were involved in distribution of surveys.
- The data collected has identified opportunities for future projects and can be used in future research.

- The project team is meeting with USF facilities planning to see what they are doing regarding improvement after data collection.
- Recommendations include:
 - More speed enforcement at peak times
 - Student education campaign
 - Improved pedestrian accessibility to areas of campus that have seen increased traffic due to recent campus changes.
 - CUTR would like to partner with other groups on campus (e.g., USFPD, student health services, etc.) for bike helmet distribution
 - Driver safety training for students and distracted driver programs
 - Creation of a Transportation Officer position in student government
- Efforts are being made to expand this research effort to 7 other universities.

Topic #6: 2025 Florida's Transportation Hall of Fame/CUTR Transportation

Achievement Award Event. *Chair, Ron Howse; Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director*

- The event date will be October 21 or October 28, 2025 @ USF Marshall Center. CUTR is waiting on USF to confirm the Homecoming Schedule before they can confirm the date of our event.
- Chair Howse called for nominees for the award selection committee. The committee will include Chair Ron Howse (volunteer), Ysela Llort (volunteered), Kimberlee DeBosier (volunteered), and Ram Kancharla (nominated in absentia)
 - The 4-member committee will review nominees, bring a top three list to the advisory board to the May meeting, where the final selection will be made by the board.
 - Kim requested the list of strong candidates from last year, while Ysela requested the discussion summary, to help identify contenders for this year.
 - Lisa will email the award committee:
 - The guiding principles for the search
 - Notes from the spring meeting with candidate list and discussion
 - Doodle poll to schedule an award selection committee meeting

Topic #5: FINAL COMMENTS and MEETING CLOSE: Acting Chair Ron Howse, Lisa Staes, Associate Director of CUTR

- The May Advisory board meeting will be hosted by Ram Kancharla at the Port of Tampa and will include a boat ride. The time of the event may be adjusted a little.
- Kim will be out of town on May 13 and will assign a proxy for voting.
- The floor was opened to public comments:
 - Jodi Godfrey: There will be student mock interviews on April 17 for engineering students and asked anyone interested in being an interviewer to contact her (jodis@usf.edu).
- The CUTR Board meeting was adjourned by Chair Ron Howse at 2:15pm.