

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

Advisory Board Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Held at Port of Tampa Bay, 1101 Channelside Dr, Tampa, FL 33602 and via MS TEAMS
May 20, 2025 · 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET

- Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Acting Chair, Ron Howse at 2:39 PM ET.
- Roll Call

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

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

Guests

CUTR Leadership

- Dr. Fred Mannering, CUTR Director
- Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director

CUTR Program Directors

- Pei-Sung Lin, PhD

CUTR Faculty and Staff

- Jodi Godfrey
- Sarah Payton
- Roberta Yegidis
- Stephanie Lewis
- Paul Goyette

Other Guests

- Hung Mai, Florida Transportation Commissioner
- Charles Klug, Principal Counsel, Port of Tampa Bay

Agenda

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

Topic #1: Approval of Minutes. *Ron Howse, CUTR Advisory Board Acting Chair*

- Quorum is met for the meeting. Chair Howse asks if there are any motions for approval of minutes.
- Thornton Williams moves to approve the minutes of the February 2025 Advisory Board meeting.
- The motion is seconded by Ram Kancharla.
- There is no opposition to the approval; the meeting moves forward, per the agenda.

Topic #2: FDOT Updates. *Kelli Bradley, FDOT District 7*

- Kelli Bradley, Interim Director of Transportation Development, FDOT District 7 presents the FDOT update on behalf of Secretary Jared Perdue.
- **NASA Causeway Bridge.** The bridge to Kennedy Space Center was completed 6 months ahead of schedule. It stands 4,000 feet long and is raised, no longer needing a draw bridge. The project is a partnership between FDOT, NASA, and Space Florida.

- **Florida-Italy Memorandum of Understanding.** Agreement was signed (virtually on March 12, 2025, in person on April 4, 2025) and is expected to improve trade, logistics, economic growth, and workforce development between Italy and Florida.
- **1-4 Improvements.** The project on I-4 near US27 to construct six miles of additional lanes in each direction was completed ahead of schedule.
- **Statewide Safety Summit and Rodeo.** Best equipment operators from each FDOT district compete. Winners move on to compete in the regional competition in Lexington, KY in September.
- **Leadership updates.** Three new positions within FDOT.
 - Jennifer Marshall new Chief Engineer replacing Dan Furtado
 - Daniel Iglesias new District 6 Secretary
 - Justin Hall new District 7 Secretary
- **District 7 Proposed 5-Year Work Program.** District 7 includes 5 counties. Budget totals \$4.56M and will potentially be signed July 1, 2025.
- **Pinellas Gateway project.** Opened late 2024 and creates a limited access gateway for another traffic route option.
- **Howard Frankland Bridge.** After 5 years of work, the last beam was placed on the bridge December 5, 2024. In March 2025, new lanes were opened to traffic. Pending work includes moving east-bound traffic to the old west lanes, so east lanes can be demolished.
- **Safety Community Outreach**
 - **Classrooms:** Educate students on distracted driving and behavior.
 - **ELEE:** FDOT identifies corridors that have safety issues. Law enforcement are gives points for traffic citations give out these areas, redeemable for equipment to help them in their job. It is a popular program.
- **D7 Community Engagement.** Outreach includes school supply giveaways, the Great American Teach In, and transportation talks where representatives get feedback on what the community issues/needs are regarding transportation.
- **Resource Challenges.** Currently \$3.4M of active projects in D7, \$1M in local projects, \$200M+ in hurricane damage, and \$256M in potential surtax construction projects. Labor shortages are a major issue.
 - Created “Onboard Tampa Bay” website for recruitment. Held hiring event 200 people attended.
- **Moving Florida Forward.** Contract was awarded to Prince Contracting in March. Will add two lanes in both directions to a Pinellas County portion of I-275. Project is scheduled to open in 2029.
- **Questions**
 - Ysela Llort asks, regarding safety conversations with students, if FDOT also covers safe bicycle behavior? Kelly answers, yes. They have training

materials for cyclists and pedestrians. During “Take Your Kid to Work” day they do sessions on bike and pedestrian safety. They have printed resources. Ysela wants to know what age groups are covered. Kelly notes they have education for all school ages K-12, and topics are customized to age group.

- Dr. Pei-Sung Lin has a comment regarding school zone speed cameras. CUTR is working on a study in Manatee County for FDOT. It shows communication is very important. Feedback gained from the community shows reveals the inaccurate perception by part of the community that school zones are active only during school morning intake and afternoon release hours, and not in the middle of the day when school is in session. Consequently, a lot of people are getting traffic citations in the middle of the day. People feel cameras should not ticket when schools are not letting in or out. There is a negative perception about speeding cameras being profit-driven when they operate during this time.

Topic #6: CUTR Advisory Board Updates/Business. *Ron Howse, CUTR Advisory Board Acting Chair*

- **Chair and Vice Chair Nominations/Selections** moves up on the agenda to accommodate board members that need to leave the meeting early.
- Lisa Staes explains the process of elections.
- Ram Kancharla nominates Ron Howse as Chair.
- Thornton Williams discusses the length of term of chairs. It maxes out at two 5-year terms.
- Chair Howse mentions that he can only commit to a 1-year term.
- Lisa Staes notes the CUTR bylaws limit the position to 6 consecutive years.
- There are no other nominations. Nominations are closed.
- Ram Kancharla nominates Ron Howse as Chair for a 1-year term. Thornton Williams seconds the nomination.
 - A verbal yay/nay vote is taken. None are opposed.
- Ram Kancharla nominates Thornton Williams as vice chair as requested by the Chair. Chair Howse seconds the nomination.
 - No other nominations are made. Closed nominations.
 - A verbal yay/nay vote is taken. None are opposed.
 - Ysela Llort asks to clarify that the vice chair term also be for one year to match the Chair’s term.
- **Results:** Ron Howse elected as Chair, Thornton Williams elected as Vice Chair. Both for a 1-year term.
- **CLARIFICATION, RE:** CUTR ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR/VICE CHAIR TERMS: According to bylaw modifications made on April 12, 2021 (referenced in change log), there is a 3-year term for the chair/vice chair. However, the modifications

were not made to the bylaw document. The modification is only noted in the change log.

Topic #4: Florida Transportation Hall of Fame Selection. *Ron Howse, CUTR Advisory Board Acting Chair*

- Chair Howse moves the Hall of Fame selection up on the agenda to accommodate board members that need to leave the meeting early.
- Chair Howse reads out the nominees.
- The top 2 candidates identified by the selection committee are Jeff Brandis and Husein Cumber.
- Ram suggests the idea of having 2 winners this year. The board agrees that having two winners would dilute the brand of the event, which has been focused on highlighting one winner.
- Thornton Williams suggests making Jeff Brandis a default front-runner for next year. He suggests that the only scenario where 2 winners in a year may be acceptable is if the accomplishments involved a collaboration.
- Kim DeBosier asks if this is the right time for selecting Husein. Does timing of the Brightline Orlando project make it more impactful for CUTR to award him now?
- The board agrees that it is more impactful to be responsive to the timing of events and recognize Brightline and Husein Cumber's accomplishment in the rail line's first year.
- Ysela Llori notes that it is important for CUTR to be multimodal. Last year was an aviation winner, this year could be a pioneer in rail.
- Thornton Williams discloses that he has represented Brightline in the past, though not recently.
- Ram Kancharla moves to nominate Husein Cumber as the Florida Transportation Hall of Fame winner. Thornton Williams seconds the motion.
 - There is no further discussion on the motion. Chair Howse closes the discussion.
 - A verbal yay/nay vote is taken. None are opposed.
- Chair Howse suggests the Board keep this discussion in mind when selecting front runners for next year.
- Thornton Williams leaves the meeting early.
- Kim DeBosier leaves the meeting early.

Topic #3: CUTR Updates. *Fred Mannering, CUTR Executive Director; Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director; Pei-Sung Li, Program Director*

- **Executive Director Update: Dr. Fred Mannering**
 - The CUTR board room is under reconstruction and should be completed by next board meeting.
 - The Florida Transportation Research Institute legislation has passed.

- The new Dean of the College of Engineering starts on August 9.
- There is currently Federal funding uncertainty. The Mineta Center funding has been cut. CUTR is actively working to secure funding for projects that can support affected researchers.
- Uncertainty will continue until a new Federal funding bill has been passed.
- CUTR should have more clarity by next the board meeting.
- **NICR Update:** *Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director*
 - Total number of NICR research reports is 55.
 - August is end-date of the program. Staff are wrapping things up right now.
 - Website stats are still high.
 - All-time readership includes 115 countries and 671 institutions.
 - Lisa Staes recognizes the NICR team.
- **Associate Director Updates:** *Lisa Staes, CUTR Associate Director*
 - **CUTR Budget Brief**
 - As of April 30, 2025 research funding is at just over \$20M.
 - Tracking performance measures of proposals vs success. Currently at 47% down from 79% last year. This is due to fewer Federal funding opportunities – RFPs and NOFOs, proposal processes being cancelled while in process, and grants and/or grant programs being cancelled. Another factor might be that, before, we were pursuing less competitive grants compared to now. CUTR will work on improving the success rate.
 - Chair Howse inquires as to the break-down of funds spent in-house vs on subcontracts. CUTR should consider whether it should include sub-contracted funds as it is not real representation of what funds are actually going to CUTR.
 - A large portion of the \$20M is subcontracted, including to marketing companies on FDOT contracts.
 - Fred Mannering mentions that USF likes to include the ‘flow-through’ numbers because it looks like the university is getting more money.
 - CUTR will work with USF to track in-house vs subcontracted dollars, as well as labor costs.
 - Chair Howse recommends that, if budgets are cut, CUTR can try to absorb the cuts by reducing the value of subcontracts and transitioning to using CUTR internal resources.
 - **2025 Florida Legislative Summary**
 - Lisa Staes has a conversation with FDOT Central Office regarding any opportunities for CUTR that may come out of the Florida Transportation Research Institute. They have not yet determined the structure of the program and associated processes.

- Chair Howse notes that the Governor has not signed the transportation bill yet. Once signed, the Institute will include University of Florida, University of Central Florida, Florida International University, University of South Florida, and Indian River State College. The goal of the Institute is to pool resources from everywhere to one state agency rather than being in one single school, creating a unified effort. Currently, the focus is on passing the bill. The Governor's office will look at processes after it is passed. They are looking at possible funding impacts from other legislation such as potential loss of sales tax.
- Lisa Staes added that another opportunity may come through the requirements in the bill for the Florida Transportation Commission to monitor any recipient of Florida Public Transit Block Grant funding. This could be an opportunity for CUTR. We are well positioned to support or lead this effort for the FTC.
- Ralph Yoder notes that the FTC is trying to figure out what the expectation is for them on oversight, how they should handle the new volume of monitoring needs, and from where it is sourced.
- Lisa Staes offers that CUTR would like to support the FTC, in any capacity.
- FDOT Transportation Academy supports workforce recruitment and retention. CUTR does a significant amount of workforce development. Lisa Staes shared CUTR's work during her visit at FDOT Central Office and would look for opportunities to share this with lawmakers.
- One item of concern is the possible removal of programs that support alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles. CUTR will monitor news on those grants.
- Chair Howse recounts his involvement in the development of the UF transportation master's degree program, suggesting that USF should consider a similar program. Such a program would help FDOT D7, as an example, to retain their engineering workforce, which is regularly being poached by the consulting industry. There is an increased need for master's degrees for job candidates.
- Lisa Staes recommends suggesting this idea to the new Dean when he arrives.
- **CUTR Transportation Achievement Awards/Florida Transportation Hall of Fame Event Update**
 - Event info is shared with the Board
 - Lisa Staes poses the question to the Board. Should the board meeting be held on a different day, rather than right before event?

- Will not have a room block this year. If you need a hotel room, please reach out to CUTR.
- **CUTR Update:** *Jodi Godfrey, Senior Research Associate*
 - **New Voice in Transportation Award**
 - CUTR has received a few nominations already.
 - Jodi Godfrey encourages the Board to spread the word and to become judges.
 - 12 volunteer judges have already been recruited.
 - **Student Mock Interviews**
 - The annual event was a success with nearly 50 attendees (24 pros, 26 students)
 - 1 student received a summer internship offer during event
 - Event usually get more pros than students attending. It is common for students to RSVP and not attend.

Topic #5: CUTR Workforce Development Initiatives. *Dr. Pei-Sung Lin, Program Director; Stephanie Lewis, Instructional/Multimedia Project Manager*

- There are numerous CUTR programs that provide workforce development and training to industry professionals and we are having a global impact.
- From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 these programs had over 27K participants and over 58K contact hours.
- Today's presentation will focus on workforce development and training performed by two of CUTR's program areas.
- **RTAP, Transit Agency, and TSA:** *Stephanie Lewis, Instructional/Multimedia Project Manager*
 - Stephanie Lewis provided list of training topics and highlighted the large number of training partners.
 - These training programs are making an impact around the country, holding 127 events in 2024 with almost 16,000 contact hours.
 - 2025 year-to-date, they have held 55 trainings with over 9,000 contact hours.
 - **FDOT emergency preparedness training.** At least one agency representative per Florida agency attends. This training has been held since 2020. This year 17 sessions were offered. Supports a wide variety of agencies. All are strongly encouraged to participate.
 - **RTAP Active shooter training for rural transit agencies.** In Marianna, FL. 15 transit representative attended. Will continue to offer additional courses. RTAP is an FDOT sponsored program.
 - Chair Howse inquires as to how much CUTR got paid to do that training.
 - Lisa shared that when CUTR performs tasks for clients, the cost includes our base salary, fringe rate, any associated expenses, and a 10-15% indirect rate (for FDOT contracts/task orders).

- Chair Howse remarks that CUTR should promote/prag about this kind of information more. The impact of the work. As CUTR, as part of USF, within the state.
- Guest, Hung Mai, asks if TSWD has training courses that are qualified for CEUs. TSWD generally does not offer CEU credits, though they have in the past. LTAP provides extensive CEU credits through its training offerings.. Hung Mai recommends offering more CEU-eligible courses within TSWD to increase the attraction to training with added benefit.
- **FDOT-sponsored Transit Immersion Leadership Experience (TILE) program**, in “pilot” stage since 2022. Program is geared towards Florida’s transit industry high performers. FDOT employees visit transit agencies and transit agency employees visit FDOT. A year-long program, the 4th cohort begins in June. Five agencies across the state are being visited this year. Sixteen agencies total have participated. Six new agencies were added this year.
- **Apprenticeship academy**: The transit industry experiences high turnover rates for mechanics and operators. CUTR worked with the Federal Transit Administration Transit Workforce Center, FDOT, and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) to create the apprenticeship program. What does it take to set up an apprenticeship program at your agency? Panel members work together to figure out requirements.
 - Gainesville RTS success story. 1st mentorship program in the state.
 - Miami-Dade has a mentorship program as well.
 - An apprenticeship primer is planned to re-engage the agencies.
- Stephanie Lewis highlighted upcoming training opportunities. CUTR is trying to expand its reach across the country.
- **LTAP and FRA: Dr. Pei-Sung Lin, Program Director**
 - FDOT-sponsored Florida Local Technical Assistance Program (FLTAP) moved from UF to USF in 2018. LTAP provides training to people regardless of roles.
 - A needs assessment survey was performed to determine the trainings offered.
 - Most trainings are offered online but still have in-person options.
 - In 2024 trainings had over 17,000 attendees. During COVID, numbers surged, with 400 participants per session.
 - As requested by FDOT CUTR provides on-demand webinars and participants can download certificates upon completion.
 - Dr. Pei-Sung shared FLTAP website traffic statistics, which include over 45,000 users. Most users are in the US, but there is also a global audience.

- Partnerships are very important. More money = more trainings. As an example, the program has partnered with the American Public Works Association (APWA) and Florida Pavement Preservation Council, which allows increased reach across the industry.
- Dr. Pei-Sung highlights the “Build a Better Mousetrap” competition and additional grants being facilitated by FLTAP.
- **Safe routes to school.** Currently working on development and delivery of training.
- Future plans include building more partnerships. CUTR needs to highlight the partner’s benefit. Areas to look at include how to use AI, and how to improve the website.

Topic #7: FINAL COMMENTS and MEETING CLOSE. *Acting Chair Ron Howse, Lisa Staes, Associate Director of CUTR*

- Chair Howse asks if there are any other orders of business. There are none.
- Meeting is adjourned at 4:40pm.