

Chapter 4.0 Public Participation



“The Green Machine is a locomotive and runs on air pollution. An opening in the front of the train sucks in air pollution and goes out the back as purified air. It goes as fast as any person needs to get to a place in time.”

Mariah Daly, 6th grade at Bok Academy

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4.0 WHAT THE PUBLIC SAID ABOUT THE 2035 MVP

Much of the effort in developing the 2035 MVP centered on engaging citizens and community groups to aid with setting the priorities of the Plan. A transportation plan cannot be prepared by technical staff alone and public input is essential to creating a plan that considers the needs of the entire county and gain broad support from the public. The 2035 MVP employed multiple outreach initiatives and the thrust of the outreach strategy was threefold:

1. Create awareness of the TPO and the 2035 MVP;
2. Inform and educate citizens and other stakeholders about transportation issues, a range of possible solutions, and the implications for the next 25 years; and
3. Obtain public and stakeholder preferences and substantive comments, and then synthesize and present this input to the TPO board for consideration in their decision-making process as the 2035 MVP comes together.

4.1 SPREADING THE WORD

Several different methods and types of media were used to engage various members of the community with the 2035 MVP. Individual citizens, chambers of commerce, and business and civic groups throughout Polk County were given the opportunity to take part in the LRTP update process. In addition to these mainstream groups, traditionally underserved populations were specifically targeted for outreach efforts and participation in the Plan update. A concerted effort was made to solicit and obtain a diverse set of opinions and input for the 2035 MVP.

4.1.1 Newsletters



The TPO distributed two newsletters to the public during the 2035 MVP update process. The release of each of the news briefs was coordinated with key events of the planning process. The newsletters detailed the latest Plan developments and solicited input from the public through surveys that were created to go with the content of each newsletter. The first newsletter, circulated in the fall of 2009,

focused on explaining the planning process and establishing goals, objectives, and policies and transportation needs for the community. The second newsletter, which was also translated into Spanish, was circulated in the summer and fall of 2010. It included the Cost Affordable Plans for transit, roadway, and non-motorized modes (sidewalk, bicycle, and multi-use trails). The survey sought public opinion on whether or not projects should be added or removed from the Plan.

4.1.2 Polk TV and Radio

Polk Government Television (PGTV), which airs on Brighthouse Channel 622, Verizon Channel 20, and Comcast Channel 5, was utilized in the 2035 MVP public involvement effort. TPO staff provided PGTV with a narrated presentation similar to that used for the four formal public workshops conducted throughout Polk County from August to October of 2010. The narrated presentation, also posted on the 2035 MVP website, describes the role of the TPO and LRTP. The video focuses on the function of the TPO and the development of the 2035 MVP Needs and Cost Affordable Plans. It also stresses the need for public comment to guide project prioritization.

In addition to television, TPO staff participated in interviews that were broadcast on local radio stations WONN AM 1250 and WLKF AM 1430. The radio interviews consisted of question and answer sessions in which station staff posed a series of questions relating to the 2035 MVP.

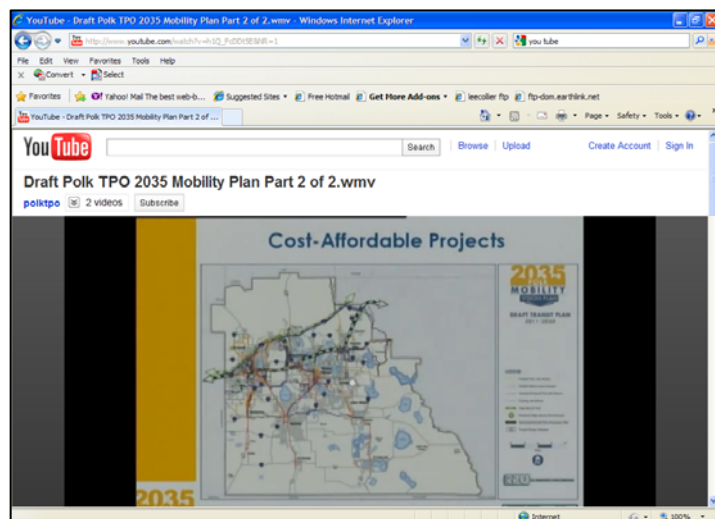
4.1.3 Newspaper and Print Media

Print media, specifically local newspapers, played an important role in the distribution of the 2035 MVP information. TPO staff participated in multiple interviews with reporters from the Lakeland Ledger, the Lake Wales News, and the Winter Haven News Chief. Each of the newspapers ran articles discussing details of the 2035 MVP. TPO staff worked closely with the local news organizations to ensure rapid and accurate transmission of information was achieved through press releases and legal notices.

4.1.4 Website/Internet

The 2035 MVP website (www.2035mobilityvisionplan.org) served as the primary source of information for the 2035 MVP. The website provided an outlet for a variety of informational items to be presented and displayed to the public. The website contained a series of draft map and plan elements, an events calendar, links to related sites, TPO presentations, video presentations, list serve registration, and TPO staff contact information. In addition to the presentation of information the website facilitated interaction with the public by offering the surveys in a web-based format for submission by residents.

The website functioned as a cornerstone in the public involvement effort. The site was referenced in much of the public involvement material and served as a centralized source for information.



The TPO used YouTube to air a video presentation on the Cost Affordable Plan.

4.1.5 Workshops and Special Events

Beginning in the fall of 2009, TPO staff began interacting with community stakeholders to formulate the goals and objectives needed to guide the development of the 2035 MVP. In the year leading up to adoption of the 2035 MVP, TPO staff participated in multiple outreach events that varied in scale and focus. The first phase of public outreach began with TPO staff making presentations to numerous civic and community groups. These small-scale meetings served to provide details of the 2035 MVP and solicit opinions through the first survey and included groups such as the Bartow Kiwanis Club, the Republican Women’s Club, and the Polk County Farm Bureau. TPO staff also made special efforts to interact with traditionally underserved areas in Polk County with regards to the 2035 MVP.



The draft 2035 MVP was displayed at regional malls in September 2010.

During the late summer and fall of 2010, the TPO conducted a series of formal workshops in Lakeland, Winter Haven, Davenport, and Poinciana, which were attended by a total of approximately 100 people. At each of these formally scheduled events, TPO staff presented the Cost Affordable component of the 2035 MVP and once again solicited public comment and opinion with the second survey. In addition, TPO staff attended 28 different public events in order to disseminate information about the 2035 MVP. In total, more than 2,750 attendees participated in the public outreach events that shaped the 2035 MVP. **Table 4-1** lists the dates and events the TPO participated in.



The TPO made a point of taking the draft 2035 MVP to events drawing large crowds, such as the Lakeland Hispanic Festival.

TABLE 4-1: 2035 MVP COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS, AND EVENTS

2035 MVP Workshops	
August 24, 2010	Lakeland Police Department
August 31, 2010	Winter Haven Public Library
September 21, 2010	Polk County Sheriff’s Office Northeast Substation
October 7 , 2010	Poinciana Community Center
2035 MVP Community Group Meetings/Events	
January 27, 2009	Dundee City Commission
March 16, 2009	Frostproof City Commission
May 26, 2009	Lake Wales Rotary Club
June 23,2009	Polk County Urban Form Focus Group
August 20, 2009	Winter Haven Rotary Club
September 14, 2009	Northeast Winter Haven Neighborhood Association
October 5, 2009	Haines City Chamber of Commerce

TABLE 4-1: 2035 MVP COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS, AND EVENTS (CONTINUED)

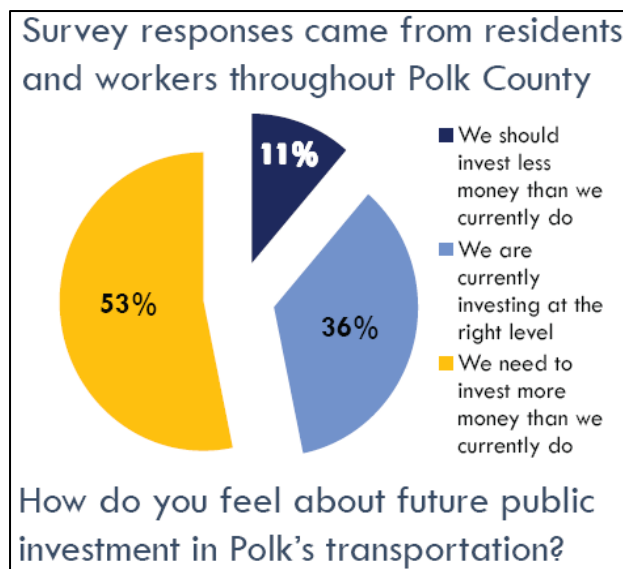
2035 MVP Community Group Meetings/Events (Continued)	
October 20, 2009	Frostproof Chamber of Commerce
October 28, 2009	Polk County Human Services Department Open House
October 31, 2009	Water, Wings, and Things
November 9, 2009	Tiger Bay Club
November 12, 2009	Polk County Farm Bureau
November 19, 2009	Republican Women's Club
January 21, 2010	Blind Veterans of Polk County
February 3, 2010	Deer Creek Community
February 5, 2010	East Polk Committee of 100
February 17, 2010	Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce
March 19, 2010	Bartow Kiwanis Club
March 26, 2010	Lakeland Kiwanis Club
April 8, 2010	Winter Haven Leadership Class
June 2, 2010	Bartow Rotary
June 5, 2010	Polk County Hurricane Expo
June 9, 2010	2060 Florida Transportation Plan Workshop
June 28, 2010	Medulla Community Meeting
September 11, 2010	Eagle Ridge Mall
September 25, 2010	Lakeland Square Mall
October 23, 2010	Lakeland Hispanic Festival
October 30, 2010	Water, Wings, and Wild Things
November, 17 2010	Polk County Geographic Information System (GIS) Day

4.2 PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

4.2.1 Survey #1 – Setting Transportation Goals and Identifying Needs

The 2035 MVP project priorities are based, in part, on the public feedback received during 2009. The TPO released a newsletter and also used the 2035 MVP website to conduct the survey. Over 300 completed surveys were received during the period the first survey was available. Respondents

FIGURE 4-1: SURVEY #1 RESULTS

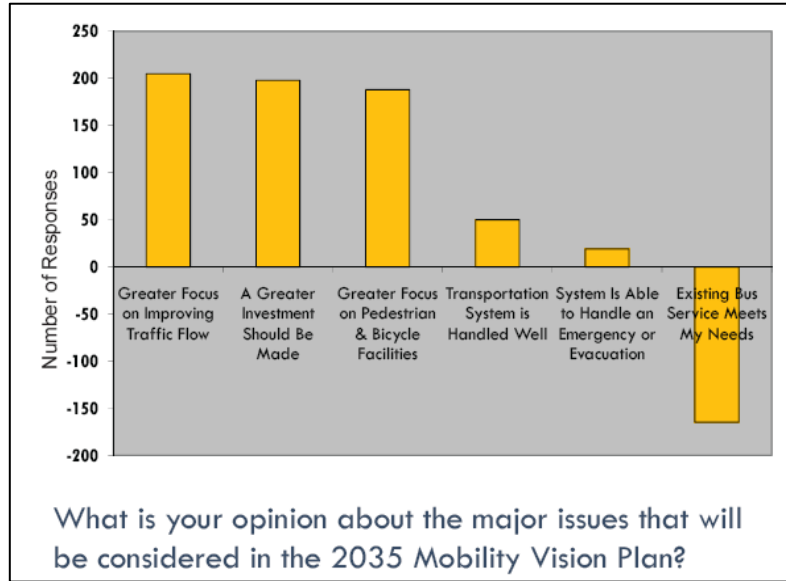


were asked a series of questions about the importance of different transportation investments and funding strategies in Polk County. The results indicated a number of issues to address as part of the 2035 MVP plan development.

Survey responses indicated that the amount of money available to maintain and improve the transportation system in Polk County is the biggest issue. **Figure 4-1** shows the majority of respondents indicated more money should be invested in the transportation system.

Figure 4-2 shows survey responses relative to the major components of the 2035 MVP. Positive responses indicate agreement and negative responses indicate disagreement. Respondents emphasized the need to improve traffic flow and increase the focus on pedestrian and bicycle facilities. A sizable majority of respondents did not feel the existing bus service is meeting their needs.

FIGURE 4-2: SURVEY #1 COMPONENTS



4.2.2 Survey #2 – Identifying Transportation Investment Priorities

A second survey was introduced to the public in the summer of 2010. This survey was distributed in both English and Spanish, and was targeted to collect input from both mainstream and traditionally underserved groups. The survey was available for three months, from August 2010 until November 2010 and could be filled out via the paper copy or online at the 2035 MVP website (<http://www.2035mobilityvisionplan.org>). Participants were asked to identify priorities based on the projects identified in preliminary stages of the 2035 MVP process. The survey questions asked for feedback on cost affordable priority improvements for roadways, transit, sidewalks, and bicycle/trail facilities.

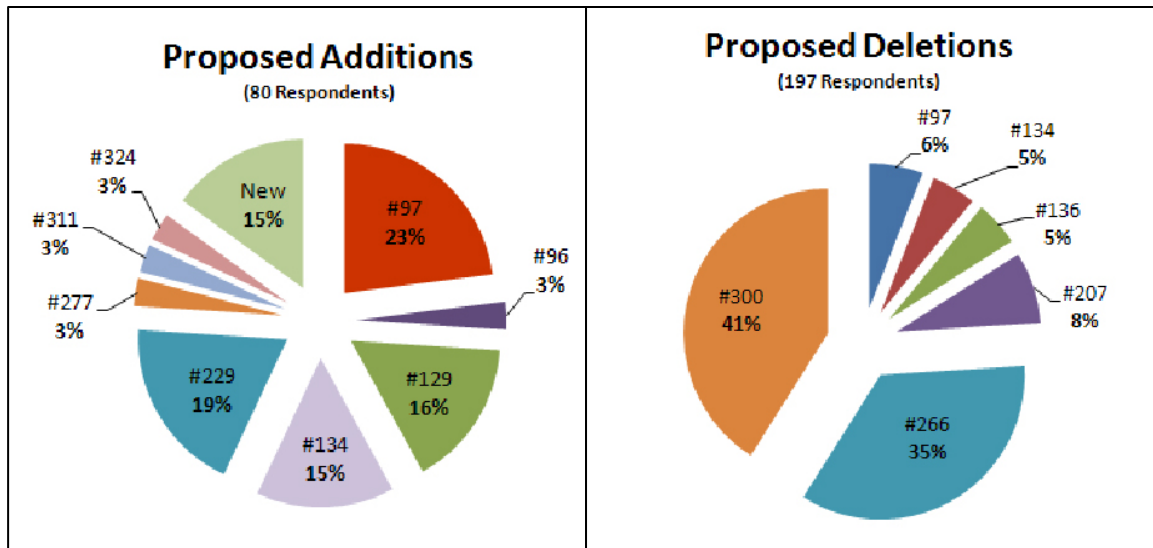
The survey presented respondents with the Preliminary Cost Feasible Project Map, and asked that they identify those projects that they felt should either be added to or removed from the Plan.

Eighty (80) respondents identified projects to be added and one-hundred ninety-three (193) respondents identified roadway projects described in the draft Cost Affordable Plan that they felt should not be included (Figure 4-3). Of the projects that garnered a negative response from the public, only a handful received more than two negative comments. Of these, two projects received the most attention; Project #266 (Haines City - Davenport Eastern Road) received 13 requests for removal and Project #300 (CPP - East Corridor, specifically, the alternative referred to as E205 in the ongoing PD&E Study) received 15 responses indicating the project should be removed from the Plan.



The TPO held community workshops, such as this one at the Poinciana Community Center, to get public input on project priorities.

FIGURE 4-3: SURVEY #2 RESULTS



Fifteen (15) respondents identified Project #97 (US 17/92) and 12 respondents identified Project #229 (Poinciana Parkway) for inclusion in the plan (see Figure 4-3).

Based in part on the comments received, funding was reallocated for both Projects #97 and #229. The additional funding for these projects will speed implementation of each. Both projects were moved from the preliminary Unfunded Needs Plan to the Adopted Cost Feasible Plan.

Similar questions regarding the proposed transit, sidewalk, and bike/trail networks were included as part of the survey. None of the response groupings associated with these questions showed strong community opposition or support for any of the listed projects.

The remainder of Survey #2 posed questions directed at identifying current levels of satisfaction with Polk County’s transportation system, preferred sources of transportation funding, and appropriate means of information distribution. Appendix B provides more details.

4.3 PUBLIC HEARING

Following a 45-day review period and advertisements placed in the Lakeland Ledger on October 13, 2010 and November 24, 2010, as well as notices on the 2035 MVP website, the TPO held a public hearing to obtain comments on the 2035 MVP during the December 7, 2010 TPO Board meeting. One member of the public spoke about the potential environmental impacts to her property from two unfunded needs identified as Projects #226 and #267. Following discussion, the Board voted to modify the Needs Plan, as shown in **Table 4-2**, and then took a roll call vote to adopt the 2035 MVP as modified. The Plan was adopted unanimously.

4.4 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND HOW THE 2035 MVP RESPONDS TO THE COMMENTS

By participating in community meetings and events, hosting MPO 2035 MVP Public Workshops, and administering two surveys, the TPO was successful in soliciting input from diverse groups throughout Polk County. The feedback received was recorded and used to guide the development of the 2035 MVP. Table 4-2 shows the mechanism through which input was solicited and how comments were addressed in the 2035 MVP or through modification of the process.

TABLE 4-2: HOW THE 2035 MVP RESPONDS TO PUBLIC CONCERNS

Event, Topic, or Mode		Results, Response, or Changes
2035 MVP Workshops		
August 24, 2010	Lakeland Police Department	Informational Meeting: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
August 31, 2010	Winter Haven Public Library	Informational Meeting: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
September 21, 2010	Polk County Sheriff's Office Northeast Substation	Informational Meeting: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
October 7, 2010	Poinciana Community Center	Informational Meeting: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
2035 MVP Community Meetings/Events		
January 27, 2009	Dundee City Commission	The comments received from the Dundee City Commission focused on the need to invest in infrastructure in eastern Polk County. Goal 7 and the supporting policy statements in the 2035 MVP address the development of infrastructure as a stimulus for economic activity.
March 16, 2009	Frostproof City Commission	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
May 26, 2009	Lake Wales Rotary Club	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
June 23, 2009	Polk County Urban Form Focus Group	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
August 20, 2009	Winter Haven Rotary Club	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
September 14, 2009	Northeast Winter Haven Neighborhood Association	Many of the comments from this neighborhood meeting centered on the need to improve transit service and facilities. Objective and policy statements included in the 2035 MVP address the development of transit. The 2035 MVP includes a greatly expanded transit system, which is subject to the availability of additional local funding. Additionally, the ranking criteria used in the development of the transit and sidewalk priorities listings weighted projects so those projects connect to transit facilities.
October 5, 2009	Haines City Chamber of Commerce	The comment received from the Haines City Chamber of Commerce stressed the need to develop transit service, specifically BRT and HSR. Objective 5.2 and the supporting policies focus on the development of congestion management strategies, which includes the development of a multi-modal transportation system consisting in part of a robust transit system. The 2035 MVP includes a greatly expanded transit system, which is subject to the availability of additional local funding.
October 20, 2009	Frostproof Chamber of Commerce	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
October 28, 2009	Polk County Human Services Department Open House	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
October 31, 2009	Water, Wings, and Things	Comments were made about the need to extend the Fort Fraser Trail. Many people were excited about the plans to link Circle B with the Fort Fraser Trail and the plan for trails around Lake Hancock. The final version of the Bike/Trails Plan shows the Upper Peace Legacy Trail bordering Lake Hancock as a committed project.
November 9, 2009	Tiger Bay Club	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
November 12, 2009	Polk County Farm Bureau	The participants questioned whether or not the CPP will be built within the next 10 years. A great deal of interest was expressed regarding the HSR, SunRail, and TBARTA projects. Section 2 of the 2035 MVP describes the proximate rail projects including HSR, SunRail, and TBARTA.

TABLE 4-2: HOW THE 2035 MVP RESPONDS TO PUBLIC CONCERNS (CONTINUED)

Event, Topic, or Mode		Results, Response, or Changes
2035 MVP Community Meetings/Events (Continued)		
November 19, 2009	Republican Women's Club	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
January 21, 2010	Blind Veterans of Polk County	The Blind Veterans of Polk County expressed concern regarding public transportation in the county. The group was particularly concerned with service along US 98 north of Lakeland. Several projects listed in the TDP will address service in this area. The 2035 MVP gives priority to transit projects listed in the TDP. The 2035 MVP includes a greatly expanded transit system, which is subject to the availability of additional local funding.
February 3, 2010	Deer Creek Community	Attendees at the February 3rd meeting expressed concern regarding median cuts, access, and signalization issues. Policy 5.2.1 of the MVP supports the improvement of transportation system management.
February 5, 2010	East Polk Committee of 100	The East Polk Committee of 100 questioned the location of the HSR station, status of the CPP, and delay of the US 17/92 and SR 542 projects. The Cost Feasible Plan indicates approximate YOE for upcoming projects and identifies the time period in which the US 17/92 and SR 542 projects will commence. Section 5.4 of the MVP discusses the possible locations of the HSR terminal.
February 17, 2010	Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce	The Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce voiced concern that increased densities in the county will cause congestion and concurrency problems. The 2035 MVP addresses the development of a sustainable transportation system through Objective 2.1 and the supporting policies.
March 19, 2010	Bartow Kiwanis Club	Comments received from the Bartow Kiwanis Club center on the need to invest additional resources in the transportation and public transit networks. The 2035 MVP, through Objective 7.1, addresses the need to expand revenue sources to fund the transportation.
March 26, 2010	Lakeland Kiwanis Club	One concern was identified during the Lakeland Kiwanis Club meeting: the need for sidewalks on Pipkin Road. Though a sidewalk project on Pipkin Road was not included in the top 100 projects listing, the MVP does, in Section 6, describe the methodology used in selecting the top 100 sidewalk projects.
April 8, 2010	Winter Haven Leadership Class	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
June 2, 2010	Bartow Rotary	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
June 5, 2010	Polk County Hurricane Expo	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
June 9, 2010	2060 Florida Transportation Plan Workshop	Concern was raised during the 2060 Florida Transportation Plan Workshop regarding the need for better access management on US 27 as it extends from Polk County to Highlands County. The policies supporting Objective 5.2 and the Congestion Management Needs Component of the 2035 MVP support the improvement of access management as a means to develop a more efficient transportation system.

TABLE 4-2: HOW THE 2035 MVP RESPONDS TO PUBLIC CONCERNS (CONTINUED)

Event, Topic, or Mode	Results, Response, or Changes
2035 MVP Community Meetings/Events (Continued)	
June 28, 2010 Medulla Community Meeting	Comments were received during the Medulla Community Meeting that raised concern regarding the ability of Old Highway 37 to handle an emergency. The policy statements supporting Objective 6.4 discuss the modification of unsafe roadways to reduce crash rates and the expansion of facilities to support emergency response. The highway needs were prioritized allotting 20 percent of the projects scoring to safety and security concerns. The function of the facility as an emergency evacuation route or history of high crash rates raised the total points used in the ranking of projects.
September 11, 2010 Eagle Ridge Mall	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
September 25, 2010 Lakeland Square Mall	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
October 23, 2010 Lakeland Hispanic Festival	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
October 30, 2010 Water, Wings, and Wild Things	No Immediate Comment: Input Solicited Through Public Survey
MPO 2035 MVP Surveys	
Survey #1 (Spring 2010)	The Polk TPO conducted a community survey in early 2010 to assess opinion regarding the desired form of the future transportation system. The survey posed questions regarding satisfaction with current systems, future funding levels, mode choice, and location of investment. The survey was posted on the 2035 MVP website and distributed as part of the fall 2009 newsletter. More than 300 responses were received by TPO staff. The results of the survey were used to guide the prioritization of the Needs Plan. A more complete summary of the Survey #1 results is detailed in Section 4.2.1 of this document.
Survey #2 (Fall 2010)	A second survey was conducted by the Polk TPO from August to November 2010 to assess opinion regarding the preliminary Cost Affordable Plan. The survey posed questions regarding cost affordable priority improvements for roadways, transit, sidewalks, and bicycle/trail facilities. The survey was distributed at special events, posted on the 2035 MVP website, and distributed as part of the fall 2010 newsletter. A more complete summary of the Survey #2 results is detailed in Section 4.2.2 of this document.
2035 MVP Public Hearing	
December 7, 2010	Concern was raised about environmental impact of Haines City - Davenport Eastern Connector (Project #266) and Warner Road Extension (Project #267). The TPO voted to remove Project #267 from the Needs Plan and change the northern limit of Project #266 to Baker Dairy Road. After a roll-call vote, the overall 2035 MVP was adopted by the TPO.

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