

## **Mobility Hub Usage in West Palm Beach**

**Recipient/Grant (Contract) Number:** University of New Orleans; Florida Atlantic University; University of Florida/69A3552348337

**Center Name:** Center for Equitable Transit Oriented Communities (CETOC)

**Research Priority:** Preserving the Environment

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**Project Partners:** City of West Palm Beach Community Redevelopment Agency; Palm Beach County Transportation Planning Agency

**Project Funding:** \$55,000 (USDOT) + \$27,500 (matching funds) = \$82,500 (total)

**Project Start and End Date:** 10/01/2024 - 09/30/2025

**Project Description:** Promoting mobility hub usage can reduce automobile dependency with the goal of meeting carbon pollution reduction goals. Transportation planners need data on mobility hub usage to engage users, increase usage, and to plan and improve infrastructure. This project focuses on residents’ experiences at mobility hubs in Greater West Palm Beach, Florida, for example, at a recently completed workforce housing project, Flagler Station. Flagler Station promotes itself as a micromobility hub with plans for further enhancement and is located with walking distance of a tri-county rail line and downtown. Completed in 2022 at the corner of Banyan Boulevard and North Tamarind Avenue, Flagler Station is an eight-story apartment building designed for downtown workers. In addition to housing, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) believes the area will benefit from a mobility hub planned to be created adjacent, as well as further infrastructure enhancement nearby. The CRA incentivized development to revitalize the Banyan corridor, a high traffic route between downtown and the Historic Northwest district, an historically underinvested community. In 2020, \$500,000 in funding was approved for to create a 34-foot-wide, landscaped, lighted linear park between Tamarind and Sapodilla. A “ghost train” artwork will honor the site’s historic significance as a spur of Henry Flagler’s railway. A linear park will provide an inviting pedestrian pathway to the nearby Tri-Rail station and connect to the Tamarind streetscape project linking Banyan with Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard, another important corridor. The park extends the City’s Rails-to-Trails program and improves the pedestrian network in and around the site. The proposed project builds on previous research by the PIs to determine residents’ preferences and access to public and active transportation. For the previous project, an analytical tool was developed to empower

cities and transit agencies to leverage both traditional datasets and emerging mobility datasets to make context-aware, and data-informed decisions on mobility hub site selection and feature programming. A survey collected data about transit and transportation usage in West Palm Beach. The proposed project supplements the quantitative data using qualitative research methods. Focus groups will convene users and non-users of mobility hubs to further interpret the earlier study's findings. The data will guide decision makers toward evidence-based transportation infrastructure development.

**USDOT Priorities:** *Equity- Equity & Accessibility Advancement; Mobility Innovation:* The proposed project investigates access to transportation via mobility hubs, places where people can seamlessly connect with multiple modes of transportation such as transit, biking, walking, and shared mobility. Cities and transit agencies around the world are identifying ways to harness the benefits of innovative technology while minimizing risks. Developing mobility hubs is one of the main strategies widely implemented across cities and regions. Flagler Station is located in the Historic Northwest of West Palm Beach, a historically underinvested minority community. In terms of climate equity, carless and vulnerable populations such as older and low-income people may lack the means to evacuate during extreme weather related to climate change, in which case public transit and multimodal options can provide vital support for these individuals.

**Outputs:** 1. Analysis of focus group findings will be compiled into a report and distributed via website and direct distribution to partners. 2. Findings will be presented at one or more academic and/or professional conferences 3. Findings will be published in one or more academic journals 4. An in-person or virtual meeting will be held to present findings to local partners and stakeholders.

**Outcomes/Impacts:** This project leverages partnerships between FAU and UF and the City of West Palm Beach as well as the Palm Beach County Transportation Planning Agency, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority operating Tri-Rail. The project's outputs aim to assist decision makers in planning infrastructure investments that can serve transit users, especially underserved or vulnerable populations, by enhancing multimodal experiences and reducing transportation cost burdens.

**Final Research Report:** (Link to be provided after project completion).