

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF MARCH 14, 2007**

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, created by the State of Florida in accordance with Title 23 United States Code, Section 134 and Chapter 339.175 Florida Statutes, met in regular session on Wednesday, March 14, 2007 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Frank Hibbard, *Chair* - Mayor, City of Clearwater
Chris Arbutine, *Vice Chair* - Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA
Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission
William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Robin Saenger - City of Tarpon Springs Commission, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor and Tarpon Springs
Karen Seel - Board of County Commissioners
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners
Bob Clifford, *ex officio* - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

John Bryan - City of St. Petersburg Council
Harriet Crozier - Vice Mayor, City of Largo

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Mahshid Arasteh - Pinellas County Public Works
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park
Ken Jacobs - Pinellas County Public Works
Bill Jonson - City of Clearwater Commission; Chair of Local Coordinating Board
Joe Kubicki - City of St. Petersburg
Rob Meador - Pinellas County Public Works
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant - Transit Consultant
Heather Sobush - MPO Staff
Doug Towne - Disabilities Relations Group; Local Coordinating Board
Tom Whalen - City of St. Petersburg
Pete Yauch - Pinellas County
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hibbard called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION, PLEDGE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Duncan gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The Board members introduced themselves.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Doug Towne, Vice Chair of the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program, addressed the MPO to express his thanks for the leadership of City of Clearwater Councilmember Bill Jonson, outgoing Chair of the LCB.

IV. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Hibbard presented a plaque to City of Clearwater Councilmember Bill Jonson in recognition of his service on the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Councilmember Jonson served on the LCB from 2002 through 2007 and was its Chair for two years.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of February 14, 2007
- B. Approval of Invoices
 - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
 - 2. Renaissance Planning Group
 - 3. American Consulting Engineers
 - 4. PSTA
- C. Approval of Agreement Between MPO and City of St. Petersburg Re Use of Federal Transit Administration Section 5309 Funds
- D. Approval of FY 2007/08 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- E. Approval of Public Participation Effectiveness
- F. Acceptance of FY 2005/06 MPO Audit Report

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING - PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO FY 2006/07-2010/11 TIP FOR ULMERTON ROAD

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requested an amendment to the 2006/07-2010/11 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Project FPN 257154-1. This is a project to add and reconstruct lanes on S.R. 688/Ulmerton Road from El Centro/Ranchero to west of U.S. 19. It is Stage 3 of the six-stage Ulmerton Road project. The amendment reflects an increase of \$7,590,298 in the construction cost estimate. The additional funds will come from District 7's Arterial Contingency Reserve. Other projects should not be affected. The TIP remains financially constrained. The project should be let in May. Both

the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Coordinating Committee recommended that the MPO approve the amendment.

The Chair opened the public hearing. There was no public comment. The public hearing was closed.

ACTION: It was moved and seconded to approve the TIP amendment for Project FPN 257154-1 as requested by the FDOT. The roll was called, and the Board voted as follows: Commissioner Stewart - Yes; Chair Seel - Yes; Councilmember Danner - Yes; Commissioner Eggers - Yes; Mayor Arbutine - Yes; Commissioner Duncan - Yes; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Councilmember Saenger - Yes; Mayor Hibbard - Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. S.R. 679/PINELLAS BAYWAY STRUCTURE E PD&E STUDY

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff reported that the Department has been conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study of bridge improvement alternatives for S.R. 679/Pinellas Bayway Structure E at the intra-coastal waterway. S.R. 679 is a designated hurricane evacuation route and is part of the Pinellas Bayway toll system. The project is for Structure E, the bridge referred to locally as the Tierra Verde Bridge. Because of its age, the bridge has structural deficiencies and needs either rehabilitation or replacement. There are other safety issues as well. Road improvements are included in the project.

A public hearing regarding the project will be held on March 28 at Tampa Bay Watch, 3000 Pinellas Bayway South, Tierra Verde. FDOT staff showed the Power Point presentation which will be given at that time.

The existing bridge is a low-level drawbridge that spans the intra-coastal waterway. It provides the only vehicular access to the islands of Tierra Verde and Mullet Key, where Ft. DeSoto Park is located. No capacity improvements are being considered at this time; however, the FDOT's recommended alternative would accommodate capacity improvements if needed in the future.

In April 2006, the FDOT presented six bridge design alternatives at a public workshop. After reviewing public comment and making further analyses, the Department identified a Recommended Alternative, designated Alternative 6, that calls for replacement of the bridge. The public hearing on March 28 will present this Recommended Alternative and receive public feedback. A no-build alternative, designated Alternative 1, is a design to rehabilitate the existing bridge. It will be presented at the public hearing also.

Alternative 6, the FDOT's Recommended Alternative, is a high-level, fixed-span replacement bridge that would provide 65 feet of vertical navigational clearance. It would accommodate 99% of the typical boat traffic, and it would have no operating costs. A fixed-span bridge would improve traffic flow in general and speed evacuation of the islands if necessary. Building this bridge would require relocating the channel.

Alternative 1, the no-build alternative, would repair and rehabilitate the existing structure in its current configuration and maintain the existing roadway characteristics. It would provide the same 75-year life as a replacement bridge. This is considered a viable alternative and will remain so throughout the PD&E study.

The affects of the various designs were assessed and documented in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). The Draft EA is available for public reading at the St. Pete Beach Library until April 9 and at FDOT District 7 headquarters.

After the public hearing on March 28, the FDOT will review and document the public comments and refine the Recommended Alternative as needed. Upon U.S. Coast Guard approval of the final environmental document, expected this summer, the FDOT will notify the community of the approved action. The PD&E study is scheduled to be completed this year. No funding is programmed for the bridge's design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction. The bridge would be maintained by the FDOT's Bridge Maintenance Program.

A rehabilitated bridge would cost \$90-93 million. A new bridge would cost \$110 million. The FDOT is seeking a way to use the Bayway toll system to build this bridge as well as a bridge to St. Pete Beach. The Department estimates that construction would take 2-3 years, with completion in 2016, and they have planned for maintenance of the current bridge during the interim period.

VIII. SAFETEA-LU COMPLIANCE REVIEW

By July 1, 2007, all MPOs must bring their transportation planning activities, including their Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), into compliance with the SAFETEA-LU legislation of 2005.

The changes the MPOs must make affect consultation with other agencies regarding growth management and economic development. Other matters that must be addressed include safety, security, public participation, and more public-friendly visuals in documents. The MPOs must show how they deal with operational improvements, or how to get greater efficiency from their existing systems. In the future, the LRTPs will include operational projects such as intersections, the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), and transportation demand management.

In May, an addendum to the adopted LRTP, a summary document of compliance activities, and a resolution for action will be presented to the MPO Board.

IX. LCB/PSTA COORDINATION CONTRACT STATUS

Councilmember Bill Jonson of the City of Clearwater, outgoing Chair of the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD), addressed the MPO. He reviewed that the TD Program receives about \$1.3 million from the State. Funds are awarded to the County based on a formula that includes ridership. The formula would allow Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) trips provided by the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) to be included in the LCB's annual report to the State, even though no TD dollars go to the ADA trips. Including the trips would permit the TD Program to receive an additional \$70-80,000 from the State.

For the past year, the staffs of the MPO and the PSTA have been discussing forming a coordination contract under which the PSTA would report annually the number of ADA trips they provide so that the LCB can report them to the State. There has been agreement on almost all of the issues. The one item on which they cannot agree is that PSTA would like to

have all the money that comes from the State TD Program as a result of reporting the ADA trips. They would use the money to purchase bus passes. MPO staff has said that they can't guarantee that arrangement would be made.

No contract has been agreed upon at this time. Councilmember Jonson noted that three members of the PSTA board also sit on the MPO. He suggested that some compromise could be reached on the wording of the contract so that the MPO could receive more funds from the State for the TD program and the PSTA could receive some revenue from the sale of additional bus passes.

Staff reviewed that the TD trips are arranged through a dispatching system and trips are assigned based on what mode of transportation the client needs, which could be bus, van or taxi. To take funds off the top and designate them for a particular mode of transportation would be inappropriate. The MPO has contracts with other agencies in which such a stipulation does not exist. Pinellas County's TD Program is built on a coordinated system in which everyone is an equal participant, and the disbursement of funds has to do with the clients and their needs, not a particular agency's needs.

Currently, about 1,800 bus passes are purchased from the PSTA for distribution to TD clients. Staff noted that while most of the TD funds do go for the purchase of bus passes, with the remaining funds going for taxis or wheelchair providers, it does not seem justifiable to give PSTA the additional funds before knowing what the client need will be.

This matter has not been presented formally to the PSTA Board for a full discussion. Mayor Arbutine said that the PSTA was hoping that the staffs could agree on a contract. They do not want to cause a problem for the MPO.

The Board asked staff to prepare a coordination contract that they believe is reasonable and fair to the PSTA and than forward it to the PSTA Board for examination.

X. TRANSPORTATION IMPACT FEE ORDINANCE UPDATE

The Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance (TIFO) is undergoing its biennial review and update. This includes a review of the impact fee calculation formula and fee schedule.

Proposed changes to the TIFO include amending the trip generation rates for nine land use categories. Also, it is proposed to change the calculation formula by using the cost figure of \$2.8 million per one-lane mile. That change would result in a 21% increase in the per unit impact fee rate for all the categories except those with proposed trip generation rate changes.

Additionally, the City of St. Petersburg has proposed a change in the Ordinance that would permit them to expand their downtown district.

In February, the Technical Coordinating Committee recommended approval of the proposed changes to the Ordinance. The Livable Communities Task Force will review it on March 26. In April, the MPO Board will be asked to authorize a public hearing for May. After MPO approval in May, an amended TIFO and a recommendation will be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners in June.

Commissioner Seel said that if the MPO offers one city the opportunity to expand its no-fee zone for economic reasons, they will have to offer this opportunity to every city in order to be fair.

XI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Staff reported that the legislative session began the first week of March and will continue through early May.

A bill addressing MPOs in terms of their organization is moving forward. There is support for a change to the Charter County Transportation System Surtax to make that available to all counties. Senate Bill 506 and House Bill 251 concern a Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Authority. Several bills concerning safety have been introduced. House Bill HB 331, the pedestrian safety bill, has been introduced by Representative Kriseman. Senate Bill 670 is the companion bill that was introduced by Senator Fasano.

A 2007 State Legislation Summary Status Report, prepared by the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC), listing all the transportation bills pending in the State Legislature was included with meeting materials.

Mr. Clifford noted that Secretary Skelton was in Tallahassee to discuss budget issues. It is estimated that the State will receive less revenue than expected over the next five years. As this pertains to transportation, there will be an impact to over \$400 million in projects Statewide.

XII. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE UPDATE

The PMI Steering Committee did not meet in March. A meeting is scheduled for April.

XIII. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PLAN

Under SAFETEA-LU legislation, in order to receive the funds granted under the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs, the MPO must file and maintain a Program Management Plan (PMP) with the Federal Transit Administration. The Plan details the objectives, policies, procedures and administrative requirements for the projects being funded. A copy of the PMP was included with meeting materials.

The PMP also references the Tri-County Access Plan (TCAP), which is the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco Counties. The TCAP will be brought to the MPO for approval in May.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved approval of the Program Management Plan, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
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XIV. APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD CHAIRMAN

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved appointment of Commissioner David Eggers as Chair of the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. The motion was seconded, and it carried unanimously.
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XV. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

A. Citizens Advisory Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved to appoint Robert Detweiler to the CAC as a representative of Pinellas Park/Mid-County. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

The Board deferred action on the appointment of Mike Finnerity to the CAC as a representative of the Beach communities. At the April meeting, the Board will discuss establishing a policy regarding the appointment of elected officials to the MPO's advisory committees.

B. Bicycle Advisory Committee

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to appoint Scotty Schrier to the BAC as the representative of Bay Area Commuter Services and Sheila Martin as the alternate representative. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved the following appointments to the PTAC: 1) Phyllis Johnson as an At Large representative; and 2) Scotty Schrier as the alternate representative of Bay Area Commuter Services. Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Technical Coordinating Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved the following appointments to the TCC: 1) Catherine Porter and Cky Ready as alternate representatives to Michael Delk, representing Clearwater Planning Department; 2) Mark Ely as the representative of the City of Seminole; and 3) Mahshid Arasteh as the representative of Pinellas County Public Works. Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Traffic Signal & Median Control Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved to appoint Mahshid Arasteh to the TS&MCC as the representative of Pinellas County Public Works. Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

F. Intelligent Transportation System Advisory Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved to appoint Mahshid Arasteh to the ITS as the representative of Pinellas County Public Works. Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

G. Local Coordinating Board

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved to appoint Michael Hill to the LCB as the representative of Veterans Services. Commissioner Seel seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XVI. PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Board of the PSTA met on February 28. Minutes were included with meeting materials.

A workshop will be held on March 21 to discuss the BRT route from Downtown St. Petersburg to the Beaches. The PSTA has invited the MPO and the Pinellas Mobility Initiative Steering Committee to come to the meeting and make comment. The PSTA hopes to build this route as the showcase BRT route in the County. Mayor Arbutine noted that there are many operational questions to be answered before BRT is established throughout the County.

XVII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Medicaid

A chart showing Medicaid NET expenditures through January 2007 was included with meeting materials. The fund balance was \$581,618.52.

B. Chairs Coordinating Committee

The West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee met on March 9 in Hernando County. An agenda was included with meeting materials.

C. Correspondence

Several items of correspondence were included with meeting materials. No action was needed.

D. Other

Mayor Mischler noted that Bert Valery, a member of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, had recently been elected to public office and that his membership on the BAC may need to be reviewed given that the Board wants to discuss a policy regarding elected officials serving on MPO advisory committees. Staff responded that some of the advisory committees function differently from the Citizens Advisory Committee and do have elected officials.

XVIII. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Frank Hibbard, Chair