

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF NOVEMBER 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, November 14, 2007 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Frank Hibbard, *Chairman* - Mayor, City of Clearwater
Chris Arbutine, *Vice Chairman* - Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA
Harriet Crozier - City of Largo Commission
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission
William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Herbert Polson - City of St. Petersburg Council
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

Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park
Jim Byers - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Rich Clarendon - URS Corporation
Bob Clifford - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Scott Collister - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Bobby Crozier - Largo
Frank DeLuca - H.W. Lochner
Rick Eggers - City of Pinellas Park
Tim Garling - Executive Director, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Richard Hunter - American Consulting Engineers of Florida
Bill Jonson - PSTA Board of Directors
Scott Kistler - The Hospice of the Florida Suncoast
Bob Klute - City of Largo
Joe Kubicki - City of St. Petersburg
Bruce Landis - Sprinkle Consulting
Rob Meador - Pinellas County Public Works

Amy Neidringhaus - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Theo Petritsch - Sprinkle Consulting
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant - Transit Consultant
Samantha Silber
Don Stout - Pinellas Veterans Services
Tom Whalen - City of St. Petersburg
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hibbard called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

II. INVOCATION, PLEDGE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Eggers gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The board members introduced themselves.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE

The MPO recognized Col. Jack Brunton, outgoing member of the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program, and thanked him for his five years of service on those committees. Chairman Hibbard presented a plaque to Col. Brunton.

IV. INTRODUCTION OF NEW PSTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chairman Hibbard introduced Tim Garling, new Executive Director of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), and welcomed him to Pinellas County. Mr. Garling comes from Portland, Oregon. He said that he looks forward to working with the MPO and the County to ensure that the County benefits from public transportation.

V. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

*At 1:10 p.m., Commissioner Seel arrived.

John Wiser, a resident of Clearwater, addressed the board. He referred to the Ironman competition held on November 10. He noted that sidewalk has been installed on Belcher Road, which was part of the Ironman trail. Three months ago, he had asked that the road be cleaned from Drew Street to Top of the World. He tried to clean up an area from the railroad tracks to the Long Center. He found lots of debris during one hour of work that covered about 200 feet. He said that the Pinellas Highway Maintenance Department should be cleaning up road debris.

Scott Kistler, Vice President of Operations for the Hospice of the Florida Suncoast, addressed the board. He said that a left-turn arrow signal is needed at the intersection of 58th Street and Roosevelt Boulevard, the site of the hospice community service center. More than two dozen accidents have occurred at this intersection in 2006 and 2007. Two traffic studies have been made, but they were not done during peak hours, and they did not take into account

that it is impossible to make a safe left turn when another vehicle is waiting in the opposite turn lane on Roosevelt Boulevard to make a southbound turn onto 58th Street. It is impossible to see oncoming, westbound traffic coming around the bend on Roosevelt Boulevard. A near-fatal accident occurred a few weeks ago. On behalf of the staff, volunteers and visitors to the hospice center, he asked for the support and advocacy of the MPO for the installation of a left-turn signal at the intersection of Roosevelt Boulevard and 58th Street.

Commissioner Crozier responded that when she heard about the accident, she contacted the City of Largo's Community Development Department. A formal request for a signal is being prepared by the City. It should be ready to bring before the MPO in another month.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of October 10, 2007
- B. Approval of Invoices
 - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
 - 2. Renaissance Planning Group
 - 3. American Consulting Engineers
- C. Approval of General Planning Consultants Contracts
- D. Approval of Modifications to Constrained Roadways Map
- E. Approval of Amendment to Countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) CUTR Agreement to Add Tindale-Oliver as a Sub-consultant

ACTION: Commissioner Eggers moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Crozier seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING – FALL UPDATE OF FY 2007/08–2011/12 TIP

Ms. Ward reviewed the major County and municipal projects that were incorporated into the fall update of the FY 2007/08–2011/12 TIP. Like the State, the County and the cities are experiencing project cost increases, and some projects have been deferred since the last work program was adopted.

It was clarified that the Pinellas Trail overpass at 34th Street in St. Petersburg is not in the work program. It is still being discussed as a possible project, and funding has not been determined or allocated.

Mayor Mischler said that Bryan Dairy Road from Starkey Road to 72nd Street is the only four-lane segment from the interstate to the Lake Seminole Bridge. Traffic bottlenecks in that segment as it heads toward Starkey, where the road then widens again going west to the bridge. The project is being delayed another year. However, this widening improvement is greatly needed.

Mr. Clifford responded that the problem is not cost escalation because that has stabilized. The issue now is that State revenues are significantly down and are forecast to stay that way for some time. The State work program may need to shift programs. Counties and cities are facing the same problem. Next month, the State will present its next work program cycle.

Rob Meador of Pinellas County Public Works responded that the delay is caused by project timing with right-of-way acquisitions and other stages of the project development. The funding is there from the State grants, TRIP, and federal funds. All of the needed right-of-way has not been acquired.

Some projects are slipping back several years to the next Penny. The 62nd Avenue project will have a more refined schedule now that there is a consultant working on the project and the timing to do the project has been pushed out.

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

Both the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Coordinating Committee had recommended approval of the updated TIP.

ACTION: Commissioner Crozier moved approval of the fall update of the FY 07/08-11/12 TIP. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion. The roll was called and the board voted as follows: Commissioner Seel - Yes; Commissioner Stewart - Yes; Councilmember Polson - Yes; Commissioner Eggers - Yes; Mayor Arbutine - Yes; Commissioner Crozier - Yes; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Commissioner Saenger - Yes; Mayor Hibbard - Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. REPLACEMENT DESIGN FOR ENTERPRISE ROAD INTERCHANGE AND REVIEW OF US 19 FUNDING

A. Design Alternatives for Enterprise Road Interchange

Mr. Smith reviewed that at an earlier MPO meeting, the board moved funding from the Enterprise Road interchange project to fully fund the 118th Avenue interchange and partly fund the Belleair Road interchange. They eliminated from the program the Enterprise Road interchange with the idea of preparing some replacement designs. The board had requested more information on the replacement designs and a financial assessment of the US 19 corridor.

Mr. Collister gave a presentation on the three design alternatives for the Enterprise Road interchange and briefly reviewed the studies that are being done to measure traffic. The designs include a six-lane alternative, an eight-lane alternative, and a frontage road alternative. Costs range from \$5 million to \$31 million. An alternative should be selected in February or March 2008.

B. Progress Energy Trail

Mr. Collister reviewed that originally, a pedestrian overpass was integrated into the US 19/Enterprise project. It was removed from the road project at the time the DOT was trying to build its work program and validate the construction costs for all of the projects in the five-year work program. The current cost estimate is \$6.3 million, and the TIP amendment provides \$6.392 million. Construction should let on December 5, 2007.

C. Funding for US 19 Corridor

Mr. Clifford reviewed the current and future projects programmed for the US 19 corridor and what has been spent on them. From a capacity perspective, the

earmarks total \$67 million; and with additional dollars, the earmarks provide \$73 million. The dollars expended or currently in the work program now total over \$600 million.

Chairman Hibbard said that a recent ad in the *St. Petersburg Times* focused on earmarks and targeted Congressman Young. He said that those earmarks are the citizens' federal tax dollars, and they came back to the County and its citizens for good projects.

Commissioner Seel requested that a thank you letter and a copy of Mr. Clifford's presentation be sent to Congressman Young.

IX. PINELLAS TRAIL CROSSING OF US 19 IN ST. PETERSBURG

Theo Petritsch of Sprinkle Consulting gave a Power Point presentation on Phase I of the Pinellas Trail crossing project. He noted that Richard Hunter of American Consulting Engineers of Florida is involved in this effort as well as the FDOT.

Phase I is a general assessment of what designs or measures might work at this crossing area. Per day, between 36,000 and 39,000 vehicles travel US 19 in this area. It is a six-lane roadway, and the speed limit is 35 mph. Mr. Petritsch described several crossing options and reviewed their advantages and disadvantages. The "Pinellas Trail 34th Street Crossing Study", dated November 13, 2007, was included with meeting materials.

In Phase II of this project, analyses of the options will continue, and a report will be made to the MPO on December 12.

During board discussion, Mr. Petritsch noted that one other option is to divert pedestrians to the nearest traffic signals, which are at 5th Street and 11th Street.

Commissioner Stewart asked why there is a big difference between the estimated costs of the overpasses at Enterprise Road and 34th Street. Mr. Smith responded that Enterprise Road has six lanes as well as service roads to cross, while 34th Street is a four-lane road. There are also differences in the proposed construction materials for the two projects.

Mr. Clifford said that the DOT will be reviewing the cost estimates in time for the MPO's December meeting.

Commissioner Stewart asked where the construction funds will come from. Mr. Smith responded that it is presently assumed that the County will fund the overpass. The at-grade improvement of the trail from the east into downtown would be a City responsibility. The funding has been discussed by the County and City staffs. The Board of County Commissioners has not discussed this project.

Mr. Kubicki said that trail construction would start in approximately two weeks, with completion expected in January. He noted that during discussions about this project, the FDOT had expressed concerns about adding another signal along the US 19 corridor. The City is concerned that the trail will open without consensus on a safe and permanent solution for crossing it.

Chairman Hibbard noted that funding questions remain to be answered.

X. REPORT ON ADDITION OF 118TH AVENUE TO FLORIDA INTRASTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Mr. Clifford reported that the FDOT has succeeded in adding the 118th Avenue corridor to the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) and making it a part of the Strategic Intermodal System. A larger pot of money is now available for this project, but it will compete with other projects. It will connect US 19 and I-275 into a controlled access facility with free-flow conditions and no stops for traffic signals. To add it to the FIHS, some road pieces had to be removed from the system, and they were: 1) US 19 from 118th Avenue to Gandy Blvd., and 2) the piece of Gandy Blvd. between I-275 and US 19. Doing this was necessary in order to avoid having two parallel routes close together.

*At 2:40 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

The ultimate plan is to remove the piece of Roosevelt Blvd. from I-275 to Ulmerton Road from the State Highway System. Added will be the 118th Avenue connector between I-275 and US 19. Additionally, there is the project connecting I-275 to the Bayside Bridge area past the airport. The section of Roosevelt Blvd. removed from the FIHS will come under the County's jurisdiction.

A design consultant has been selected. Also, FDOT is developing a Memorandum of Understanding for all the parties to sign.

*At 2:44 p.m., Commissioner Stewart returned.

It was clarified that the piece of Gandy and the piece of US 19 that are coming off the SIS will still be State roads under FDOT jurisdiction. The only piece that would no longer be a State road is that piece of Roosevelt Blvd. between I-275 and Ulmerton Road.

Mayor Mischler said that there is a serious bottleneck on the overpass at US 19/Park Blvd./Gandy Blvd. There are six lanes on the east side of the overpass and six lanes on the west side. In 2006, on Gandy Blvd. from US 19 to I-275, there were 62,000 vehicles per day. On 118th from 49th Street to 28th Street, there were 42,384 vehicles per day. On Park Blvd. from US 19 to 49th Street, there were 52,000 vehicles per day.

XI. PROGRESS ENERGY TRAIL PROJECT

Mr. Smith reported that the Progress Energy Trail could be fully funded to go north to connect to the overpass at US 19. There is money in the system that has been moved from other projects. Money is also available to start design of Section C to go south from Belleair Road to Ulmerton Road.

The Ulmerton Road project to build an underpass between US 19 and 49th Street has started. It is scheduled for completion in August 2008. Commissioner Seel expressed concern about the planned trail connections to the underpass at Ulmerton and the overpass at US 19 and Enterprise Road, noting that it would be foolish if the trail were not completed to those places and it ended abruptly.

XII. COMMITTEE ACTIONS

A. BAC Recommendation re Signal at 34th Street

This item was deferred.

B. PTAC Recommendation re Large Post/Mast Arm at US 19 & 44th Ave N.

Mr. Smith reported that the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) has identified an issue with respect to a pole and mast arm assembly that was placed on the sidewalk on US 19 at 44th Avenue North. The Committee raised a concern about the appropriateness of the pole in the sidewalk at this location, especially considering the MPO's and FDOT's significant investment in sidewalk provisions along US 19 and the more recent evaluation by the US 19 Task Force and Mark Fenton.

Mr. Clifford and Mr. Collister explained why that design and installation point were selected. The signal is part of the ITS project. Several underground utilities installed there dictated the choice of the signal's foundation, and the middle of the sidewalk was the only suitable location. The pole can't be moved, but the trapezoid could be enlarged, and FDOT will review that. The pole installation does meet the required standard.

XIII. REPORT ON TBARTA MEETING

Chairman Hibbard reported that the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) met on October 27. Representative Galvano was present. Commissioner Duncan has been appointed Vice Chair of that board.

The draft bylaws were reviewed. Each board member may appoint an alternate representative for a single meeting. Representation of the Chairs Coordinating Committee is being discussed. There will be a citizens committee, and Pinellas County should make a recommendation for a representative.

The next meeting will be on November 30 at FDOT headquarters. Topics will include finalizing the bylaws, funding legal counsel, and overall funding of TBARTA. The initial funding for the legal expertise will come from the five participating MPOs, and \$10,000 from each is being requested. There will be a match from the private sector. The County should receive the formal request for the money soon.

XIV. MPO REVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION IMPACT FEE PROPOSAL - DEFERRED FROM MAY 2007 MEETING

A decision regarding the proposed 21% increase in transportation impact fees was deferred from the May meeting. A public hearing was held at that time.

Commissioner Stewart said that the board had received all necessary information and recommendations in May. The municipal and County budgets have been adopted. The State legislature has met. It was time for the MPO to take action and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. He noted that the County's revenues from impact fees are about \$4 million, which is miniscule when compared to other counties. The fee is a passing on of the cost of constructing a road to the people who impact it the most.

Mr. Sadowsky advised that another public hearing is not necessary.

Mayor Mischler said that the MPO had deferred its decision because it thought the State legislature would have made a decision by now, but it appears that won't happen until January. An impact fee increase now will have a detrimental effect on the County's residents and businesses. He urged deferring the vote until March.

Commissioner Seel said that while the MPO has followed correct procedure, to defer action for six months and then present it for vote now, without another opportunity for a public hearing, seems incorrect.

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved to schedule a public hearing for December and consider the impact fee at that time. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion. The motion carried, with Mayor Arbutine, Mayor Mischler, and Commissioner Stewart dissenting.

XV. PMI STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

*At 3:16 p.m., Commissioner Seel left.

The PMI Steering Committee met on November 5. They passed a recommendation to the MPO that Corven Engineering be contracted to perform an evaluation to determine if a guideway system could be built on the Clearwater Memorial Bridge. Corven would be a sub-contractor under general planning consultant Tindale-Oliver. A Scope of Work provided by the FDOT in Tallahassee would be followed. The cost of the evaluation would be \$50,000--\$60,000. FTA Section 5303 funds would pay for the evaluation, which should take about 12 weeks to complete. The overall guideway study being made by MACTEC is on hold.

Also, the steering committee has narrowed the Bus Rapid Transit segments down to three. The north/south segment would be US 19, and there would be two east/west segments. A report will be made to the MPO in December.

ACTION: Commissioner Crozier moved to accept the PMI's recommendation for an evaluation. Commissioner Saenger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

*At 3:19 p.m., Commissioner Seel returned.

XVI. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

There were no committee appointments.

XVII. PSTA ACTIVITIES

Mayor Arbutine noted that the new Executive Director of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) is Tim Garling, and he thanked Bill Steele for his oversight of the PSTA during the interim period. He noted that seven of the fifteen members of the PSTA's Board of Directors have served one year or less. Also, five members of that board also serve on the MPO.

XVIII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Nominating Committee for 2008 Election of MPO Officers

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved that the MPO forgo the nominating process and elect the current slate of officers to serve one final year. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. MPOAC

The Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council met on October 25 in Orlando. An agenda was included with meeting materials.

C. Correspondence

The Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Spending Chart was included with meeting materials. The fund balance as of September 2007 was \$889,095.97.

D. Other

A letter dated November 6, 2007 regarding the Pinellas Bayway System tolls was received from Secretary Skelton. A new set of tolls has been proposed to fund the Tierra Verde Bridge (S.R. 679) and the Pinellas Bayway Bridge (S.R. 682). A public information meeting will be held on November 28, 6-8 p.m., at the St. Pete Beach Community Center. A report will be made at the December MPO meeting.

A letter dated November 2, 2007 regarding pedestrian safety was received from Senator Fasano.

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Frank Hibbard, Chairman