

PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF JANUARY 13, 2010

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, January 13, 2010 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Arbutine – *Chairman* – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA
Karen Seel – *Secretary/Treasurer* – Board of County Commissioners (arrived 1:52 p.m.)
Neil Brickfield – Board of County Commissioners
Jeff Danner – City of St. Petersburg Council
Harriet Crozier – Vice Mayor, City of Largo (arrived at 1:14 p.m.)
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Herbert Polson – City of St. Petersburg Council
Kenneth Welch – Board of County Commissioners
Don Skelton, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

David Eggers – *Vice Chairman* – City of Dunedin Commission
Andy Steingold – Mayor, City of Safety Harbor representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Division Manager
David Sadowsky – County Attorney's Office
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Ming Gao – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Joe Kubicki – City of St. Petersburg
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg
Rick Eggers – City of Pinellas Park
Bob Klute – City of Largo
Tim Garling – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)
Bill Ruttercutter – City of Pinellas Park
Michael Audino – Express Medical Transporters
Ned Allen – Citizens Advisory Committee
Joel Rey – Tindale-Oliver and Associates
Leland Dicus – City of Largo
Michael Witty – Coral Heights Community
Heather Sobush – MPO Staff
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Arbutine called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Mayor Hibbard performed the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board members introduced themselves.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO OUTGOING CAC MEMBER NED ALLEN

Chairman Arbutine presented a plaque to outgoing Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) member Ned Allen, noting his various accomplishments while serving. Mr. Allen made a few comments. Mayor Mischler and Mayor Hibbard thanked Mr. Allen for his service and his dedication.

IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Ned Allen, 3998 14th Lane NE, St. Petersburg, spoke regarding a concern he had about driving distractions, including digital billboards. He is against the digital billboards since they add to driver distractions, including the use of cell phones while driving. He noted he doesn't have an objection to those who choose to ride a motorcycle without a helmet; however, he suggested those riders be required to have \$1 million insurance policy due to the severity of crashes without a helmet.

Michael Witty, 1657 Palm Way, Coral Heights Community (a low income community), spoke indicating he has a disabled household and has been dealing with the CTD (Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged) Program over the last five years. He has a son who is disabled; although, he is 18 years old, he is mentally much younger. There is a policy that requires those over 18 to handle their own transportation and he and/or his wife have been making the arrangements for their son. He asked if this was a policy or just information they were told. They use the bus pass they receive under the Transportation Disadvantaged Program to get around to various places except they can only travel to another county during the week. This makes it difficult for Pinellas County residents to travel to Hillsborough County under this program during the weekend. **Chairman Arbutine responded this information would be forwarded to the appropriate people for a response.**

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- **Approval of Minutes – Meeting of December 9, 2009**
- **Approval of Invoices –**
 1. **Tindale-Oliver and Associates**
 2. **Renaissance Planning Group**
- **Approval of Request for Local Funds for MPOAC Legislative Advocacy Activities for 2010**

Mayor Mischler moved, Mayor Hibbard seconded, and motion carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented (Vote 7-0).

****Commissioner Crozier arrived at 1:14 p.m.****

VI. JOBS FOR MAIN STREET ACT – 2010 – Action on Priority Listing

Chairman Arbutine indicated an attachment was included in the members' folders. Mr. Smith noted there had been earlier MPO action regarding federal stimulus funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). The banks have begun to repay funds they had borrowed and that money is being placed in the Jobs for Main Street Act. The House of Representatives has approved the funds and the Senate is to take it up next month. These funds will have the same requirements as the earlier funds in that projects must be ready to go. A package of background information was included in the folders, including a staff recommendation. The recommendation consists of three suggestions:

- **Add the Bayway Bridge Structure E replacement to the priority list as Number 3 below the Bayway Bridge Structure C;**

- Clarify the North Bay Trail as the Number 1 priority for funding with the project limits 30th Avenue to 78th Avenue; and
- Initiate the procedure to open up the Enhancement listing for new projects on an expedited basis.

Upon query by Commissioner Welch regarding the available funds, Mr. Skelton responded the House passed an identical funding amount as the previous federal stimulus funds, which is \$1.5 billion for Florida. The Senate has agreed to take up this issued but has not yet taken action.

Commissioner Welch asked the rationale why Bayway Bridge Structure E should be Number 3 on the priority list. Ms. Ward responded the other projects were either funded or in the Work Program except the Bayway Bridge Structure C, which the MPO had requested a TIGER grant be pursued. U.S. 19 is under construction, the Ulmerton Road project is scheduled to begin within the next two years, Gandy Boulevard is ready to go out to bid, and Bryan Dairy Road is in the Work Program but has some right-of-way issues.

Mr. Skelton noted the House version has a requirement that the project must be ready to go to contract within 90 days. Some discussion followed regarding this expectation and what FDOT was doing to be ready.

Councilman Polson noted his concern that if the Bayway Bridge Structure C is not funded using TIGER grant funds, it would need to be prioritized above the Bayway Bridge Structure E. Mr. Skelton responded that his opinion is that, if the funds from the TIGER grant does not get used for the Bayway Bridge Structure C, it would become priority 1 on the list and the Bayway Bridge Structure E would become priority 2. Mr. Skelton also noted that Structure C is further along and FDOT is processing the plans; whereas, Structure E would have to be a design/build project and would probably not be ready in 90 days.

Regarding Bryan Dairy Road, Rob Meador, Pinellas County Public Works, indicated the project is production ready; however, there are some minor right-of-way issues that they are working on resolving. All right-of-way has been either acquired or is under contract at this time so this project could be ready to go to construction.

Some discussion followed regarding the need to include Structure E on the list and which priority it should be assigned.

Commissioner Crozier stated Largo is requesting a substitute of their project on the Transportation Enhancement priority list for a road widening trail project between Lake Avenue and Keene Road off East Bay Drive. This project is ready to go but needs to be included on the Priority List.

Mr. Smith noted the reason the staff is recommending the Enhancement list be opened is because there are other agencies that wish to have projects on the list, including the cities of St. Petersburg and Safety Harbor.

In response to Mayor Hibbard, Ms. Ward indicated FDOT contacted the various jurisdictions that had projects on the list to determine the project's readiness but it is an MPO decision whether to open the process to more applications.

Mayor Hibbard stated his concern regarding the process and allowing governments to include projects without opening the process to all local jurisdictions. In addition, the

Bayway Bridge Structure E needs to be replaced due to safety and evacuation concerns but, currently, there is no funding; therefore, it should be placed on the top of the priority list to apply for the Stimulus funding.

Therefore, ***Mayor Hibbard moved and Councilman Danner seconded the motion to concur with staff's recommendation for the placement of the Bayway Bridge Structure E on the priority list as Number 3.***

Mr. Smith indicated that the MPO could open up the process for additional Enhancement projects, work with the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and review this at the next MPO meeting. This would not allow a lot of time but could be done on an expeditious basis.

Ms. Ward added Largo's project has not yet been reviewed to determine whether it would meet the requirements as an Enhancement project, however, having this matter go to the TCC would allow the process to take place to determine its eligibility.

Councilman Polson had a concern with not following the adopted priority lists that were adopted in 2006 and 2007 without completing those lists and opening up new Enhancement lists. He added the Stimulus funds have not yet been authorized so this is an opportunity to develop a process with the communities to be ready for the next MPO meeting.

Mr. Skelton responded that is possible but if the funds are approved before the next MPO meeting, FDOT will move forward with the projects on the priority lists. Regarding Largo's request to substitute a project, he noted the project must be eligible and meet all the federal requirements.

Some further discussion ensued regarding the Bayway Bridge Structure E and whether the Enhancement procedure should be opened to allow new projects and whether Largo should be allowed to substitute the new project with an existing project on the priority list.

Mayor Hibbard clarified his motion to approve the priority list as recommended by staff to add the Bayway Bridge Structure E as Number 3 to the priority list.

Following discussion, ***the motion passed 7-1 by a roll call vote, with Mayor Mischler casting the dissenting vote.***

Upon query by Commissioner Crozier regarding Largo's request to substitute the Enhancement project, Mayor Hibbard suggested it go through the Technical Coordinating Committee process and come back to the MPO at the next meeting with all the information (including cost); whereas, Commissioner Crozier concurred with that approach. In addition, Mr. Beaty responded FDOT could review the Largo application once Largo forwards it to them to determine its eligibility and feasibility. Mr. Skelton added this would be a concurrent process.

VII. PRESENTATION REGARDING 58th STREET AND ROOSEVELT BOULEVARD – Follow-Up to CAC Motion

Mr. Smith indicated the Citizens Advisory Committee had made a recommendation regarding 58th Street and Roosevelt Boulevard that went before the MPO. The MPO forwarded the recommendation to the ITS Advisory Committee for their review. The recommendation was for the installation of the left-turn signal at the 58th Street interchange

with Roosevelt Boulevard to allow access into the Hospice facility and surrounding businesses north of Roosevelt Boulevard. During the ITS Advisory Committee's review, FDOT recognized some improvement was needed at the intersection, although the warrants did not justify a left-turn signal. The suggested improvements was to modify the left-turn lanes to allow a slight staggering so the left-turning motorists could see past the opposite left-turn movements for oncoming traffic. FDOT indicated this improvement could probably be accomplished within six months to a year. The ITS Advisory Committee agreed and recommended the MPO concur with the improvement.

Commissioner Crozier added they had requested that FDOT put this information in writing that they are moving forward with an improvement.

Mr. Skelton responded he would put the information in writing although the time line would be uncertain.

Commissioner Crozier added the County is looking at a County park and affordable housing in the area, which will add to the traffic, with the possibility of a signal at Bolesta, which would help slow traffic and create gaps to allow the left-turn movements.

****Commissioner Seel arrived at 1:52 p.m.****

Following discussion, ***Commissioner Crozier moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to approve the ITS Advisory Committee recommendation (Vote 9-0).***

VIII. RED LIGHT RUNNING PROPOSAL – ITS Advisory Committee Action

Mr. Smith indicated the MPO reviewed this issue at their last meeting and approved sending a letter to the Legislature supporting red-light running technology and, in addition, recommended the development of a pilot project, which they referred to the ITS Advisory Committee. The ITS Advisory Committee concurred this was a good idea and referred it to a subgroup of traffic engineers, who will make their recommendation to the ITS Advisory Committee in March and then to the MPO in March.

Chairman Arbutine asked if this venture would be done in-house or by a third party. He was against the use of a third party vendor because he was not in favor of privatizing any part of law enforcement since this could set a precedent for the future. In addition, the use of red-light cameras should be done for safety and not for profit, which would be the case of a third party vendor.

Commissioner Welch commented that other places using a third party vendor seem to have success, especially in light of the cutbacks with enforcement personnel but he agreed it should not be a revenue-based issue but safety. Most models he's aware of use a private provider to install, monitor, and maintain the system with good results.

Commissioner Brickfield noted that local jurisdictions within Pinellas County are looking at implementing an ordinance for use of red-light cameras and, if there is not a countywide ordinance, each jurisdiction will have a different approach.

Councilman Polson stated the ITS Advisory Committee had received a list of the intersections with the majority of crashes and that each jurisdiction needs to look at the list to see if there is an intersection they think could be utilized; however, the list of intersections varies from other lists with crash data.

Commissioner Seel suggested that, perhaps, the countywide crash data system needs to be reviewed to make sure it's functioning the way it was intended.

Mr. Smith responded the list the ITS Advisory Committee received included all types of crashes and not just those caused by red-light running. Part of the reason the issue was deferred until March was to receive the information for those crashes attributed to red-light running.

Mayor Hibbard added that jurisdictions have to look at how technology can be utilized to offset manpower that has been constrained due to budgets but that signals are governed by state and federal regulations and the timing of the yellow phase cannot be shortened and citizens need to realize the use of cameras would not be used to generate a source of revenue. Since the private vendor would be installing the equipment on behalf of the local jurisdictions, the jurisdictions could place restrictions to control how tickets are given and information is disseminated.

Mayor Hibbard moved and Commissioner Welch seconded a motion to concur with the ITS Advisory Committee recommendation.

Michael Witty, 1657 Palm Way, indicated the slowing instead of stopping for right-turn-on red is as big of a problem as the straight through red light running. Due to the fact the motorist is on a cell phone or other type of distraction, they don't see the pedestrian, bicyclists, or person on a scooter as they turn right. A lot of people will jaywalk because they feel it's safer than crossing at the intersection where people are turning right without stopping.

The motion carried unanimously (9-0).

IX. ADOPTION OF UPDATED TRI-COUNTY ACCESS PLAN

Joel Rey, Tindale-Oliver and Associates, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the updated Tri-County Access Plan. This plan covers a three county area of Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas and is done on a coordinated basis. The plan provides potential funding for elderly and disabled individuals through the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and the New Freedom Programs. The original plan was adopted in 2007 to define unmet transportation needs and where gaps currently exist and to identify projects to address those needs. The targeted groups were the elderly, disabled, low income, unemployed, and the current transportation network to see where they live and where they want to travel to identify gaps and any overlaps in service. The plan includes potential strategies and the next steps. The Pasco and Hillsborough MPOs have already approved the plan, with Pinellas County the last to approve it. Applications are due by February 19 and will be reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of five members (one member from each of the three MPOs, one member from FDOT, and one member from TBARTA or the regional planning agency). The selected projects to receive funding will be brought before the three MPOs for approval.

Councilman Polson asked if the plan addressed the issue of not being able to travel between counties. Mr. Rey responded the plan identifies the gaps but does not provide a solution since it's a tool to provide guidance so organizations can put together their applications for service to address those gaps.

Mayor Mischler asked if the unemployed included those over 65 years old; whereas, Mr. Rey responded it includes only those who are working age. Mayor Mischler suggested that

the map indicate it covers those who are under 65. Mr. Rey noted the information is included in the text that describes the maps but he would verify that.

Commissioner Brickfield asked if there was anything to address the issue of traveling between counties so that it could be a seamless venture where, if it's a Medicaid trip, the appropriate agencies could be charged especially in light of the various types of technology (such as a debit card) that are available. Mr. Rey responded there has been some discussion but there needs to be more.

Councilman Danner moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to approve the plan (Vote 9-0).

X. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE (PMI) COMMITTEE REPORT

A. Downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach Transit Alternatives – Preferred Alignment

Mr. Smith indicated the PMI Steering Committee met on Monday and a report was included in the folders. The Committee reviewed the alternatives for Clearwater to Clearwater Beach and recommended a preferred alternative, which is a loop from downtown Clearwater along Myrtle Avenue across the Causeway to the Beach.

Mayor Hibbard added the Committee looked at the various alternatives and determined the hybrid alternative was the best since it separates the Bus Rapid Transit from the beach traffic. In addition, the route to downtown was slightly altered to use Myrtle Avenue since there was an existing signal at that intersection.

Mayor Mischler moved, Mayor Hibbard seconded, and motion carried for approval (Vote 9-0).

Mr. Smith noted there will be follow-up activities with a report to be brought back to the MPO through the PMI Committee to have the consultant put together a New Starts application to be able to proceed forward.

B. Alternatives Analysis – Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Smith indicated the MPO, PSTA, TBARTA, and FDOT have been working together to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for an Alternatives Analysis for a route from downtown St. Petersburg to downtown Clearwater through the Gateway area, with a connection across the Howard Frankland Bridge, including an evaluation of the Howard Frankland Bridge in cooperation with FDOT as part of the package. The agreement defines the agencies funding commitment and the PMI Committee recommended approval.

Commissioner Crozier questioned if the word “transportation” should be included in front of planning agency? Mr. Smith responded the Memorandum of Understanding is for transit so that is the understanding planning is for transportation. Upon further query about the Pinellas Planning Council’s offer of support, Mr. Smith responded there will be a number of agency stakeholders and a committee will be formed to include the various agencies.

Mayor Hibbard commended the four agencies and their staff for their commitment and moving forward.

Councilman Danner moved, Commissioner Welch seconded, and motion carried to approve the Memorandum of Understanding.

XI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

It was noted there was no legislative updates at this time.

XII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to approve Linda Chaney as a Beach representative and Nick DiCeglie as an At Large representative for the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Crozier seconded, and motion carried to approve Linda Fisher as the Pinellas Planning Council representative, with an alternate of Christopher Mettler, on the Technical Coordinating Committee.

XIII. PSTA ACTIVITIES

Tim Garling, PSTA Executive Director, noted the Memorandum of Understanding is important to shape the transportation needs for Pinellas County and commended the cooperation of all the agencies. He noted PSTA needs a long-term sustainable funding source. The Revenue Committee has been meeting over a year and will be providing a report to the PSTA Board later this month, with a recommendation to move forward with a referendum for a transit surtax. On March 22, there will be a Transit Summit, which will include the private sector as well, to bring forward these issues as to how transit and transportation can help with the economic vitality. The idea is to engage the community in those discussions. The Revenue Funding Committee will give their recommendations to the Transportation Task Force that Commissioner Seel has suggested.

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Correspondence

Mr. Smith noted the letter from the Pinellas Planning Council in the packet with a response back that various agencies will be involved in stakeholders in the rail evaluation.

B Other

There was no other business.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Chris Arbutine, Chairman