

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MINUTES – MEETING OF FEBRUARY 9, 2005**

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, created by the State of Florida in accordance with Title 23 Section 134 United States Code and Chapter 339 Florida Statutes, met in regular session on Wednesday, February 9, 2005 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Karen Seel, Chair – Board of County Commissioners  
Richard Kriseman, Vice Chair – City of St. Petersburg Council  
Chris Arbutine – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  
John Doglione – Mayor, City of Dunedin  
Pat Gerard – City of Largo Commission  
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater  
Jay Lasita – City of St. Petersburg Council  
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park  
Jim Ronecker – City of Oldsmar Council, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs  
Robert Stewart – Board of County Commissioners  
Ken Hartmann, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Dept. of Transportation, District 7

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Ronnie Duncan – Board of County Commissioners

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director  
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Administrator  
Ned Allen – Citizens Advisory Committee  
Ed Armstrong – Johnson, Pope  
Brian Beaty – Florida Dept. of Transportation  
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater  
Robert Brotherton – Brotherton Engineering, Inc.  
Roy Chapman – Florida Design Consultants  
Bob Clifford – Florida Dept. of Transportation  
Mark Ely – City of Seminole Planning Department  
Gina Harvey – MPO Staff  
Morry LaTour – Pinellas Council of the Blind  
Lynn Rives – City of Oldsmar  
David Sadowsky – Pinellas County Attorney's Office  
Wilfred Sergeant – Sky Train Corporation  
Bill Smith – Town of Indian Shores Council  
Marcie Smith – Indian Shores  
Roger Sweeney – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  
Don Taber – Mayor, Town of Indian Shores  
Vasanth Tatipalli – City of Indian Rocks Beach  
Marty Watkins – Operation PAR, Inc.  
Lara Webster – Carter & Burgess  
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg  
Peter Yauch – Pinellas County Public Works  
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder  
Harriet McKay – MPO Staff Secretary

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Seel called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

**II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE**

Councilmember Kriseman gave the invocation, and Mayor Hibbard led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE**

The presentation of a plaque was postponed until March because the recipient was unable to attend the meeting.

**IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There was no citizen comment.

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of January 12, 2005**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
  - 1. Tindale-Oliver & Associates**
  - 2. Renaissance Planning Group**
- C. Approval of New General Planning Consultant (GPC) Contracts**
- D. Approval of Printing of MPO Annual Report**

Mayor Hibbard said that the cost of printing the MPO Annual Report was a substantial amount of money and asked if a study had been done on its readership and its effectiveness as means of communication.

Mr. Smith responded that the report has always generated a good response. It meets the federal requirement for public outreach, and federal agencies consider this a model for other MPOs. The *St. Petersburg Times* prints the report and distributes it to 300,000 readers. The *Tampa Tribune* distributes it to 30,000 readers.

Mayor Mischler asked if the printing had been put out for bid. Mr. Smith responded that it has been put out for bid in the past; and while the charges of other printers were on a par with the *Times*, the logistics of delivery and distribution had to be factored in, and that made the *Times* the most efficient and economical means of reaching the public. It has not been put on the MPO web site because not everyone has access to the internet.

Mayor Doglione said that some organizations use glossier publications that cost more. Pinellas County is getting a good product with wide distribution without separate handling or mailouts. Over the years, this means of communication has been the best means for the money to meet the requirement to inform the public about the MPO.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the consent agenda, Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>
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**VI. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

**A. Proposed Traffic Signal – Park Boulevard/74<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Seminole Isles Entrance and Lake Seminole County Park.**

Paul Bertels, chairman of the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee, reported that at their meeting on January 26, the TS&MCC considered a request from the City of Seminole for the installation of a traffic signal on Park Boulevard/74<sup>th</sup> Avenue at the entrance to Seminole Isles and Lake Seminole County Park. On the south, approximately 600 town houses and condominiums are being built. The intersection meets warrants on a projected basis.

Regarding spacing to the next signals, which are at Seminole Boulevard to the west and Starkey Road to the east, the proposed signal is in a good location and will help regulate traffic speed. The TS&MCC recommended that the MPO approve this request. The developer will pay for the signalization and for modifications at the entrance to the county park. It would take two to four months from date of approval to install the signal.

Councilmember Kriseman asked when the new homes would be completed and when the signal would begin operating. Mark Ely of the City of Seminole Planning Department reported that a four-year build-out is anticipated. The first 90 units are being completed, and they should be ready this fall. Mr. Bertels said that Pinellas County would control the signal and would determine in concert with the City of Seminole when to begin operating it.

Mayor Mischler said that he would support the signal because it is needed to accommodate the traffic that will come from the new housing. However, an additional signal in that area would impede traffic. He noted that the proposed signal currently doesn't meet the warrants.

Mr. Bertels said that initially the signal would flash. Mayor Mischler requested that the signal be put on blinker after 10:00 p.m., when the park will be closed and vehicles will not be waiting to exit. Mr. Bertels noted that the predominant activity exiting the park is turning left and going east on Park Boulevard.

Ed Armstrong of Johnson, Pope said that the extreme distance between the two existing lights has created a mini drag strip. The signal would give some protection to boat-trailer traffic exiting park and merging with high-speed traffic.

Roy Chapman of Florida Design Consultants said that currently the intersection meets the eight-hour and four-hour warrants. Peak season at the park is 30% higher than normal traffic; and at that time, there will be a lot of boat-trailer traffic, which would meet the warrants. There are also safety considerations.

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

Councilmember Kriseman said that he would support the installation but was concerned about starting operation before the units were occupied.

Mr. Bertels said that county staff would monitor the signal once installed and will turn it on at the most advantageous time for the people using Park Boulevard. The timing would be reassessed as the project unfolds.

Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works said that the signal's completion would probably coincide with the opening of the first condominium units.

*ACTION:* Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the installation of a traffic signal at Park Boulevard/74<sup>th</sup> Avenue N. at the entrance to Seminole Isles and Lake Seminole County Park. Mayor Doglione seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

## **B. Proposed Amendments to Transportation Improvement Program**

### **1. FDOT Request for Gulf Boulevard Funding**

Brian Beaty of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requested that the adopted FY 2004/05-2008/09 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be amended to include \$13,500,000 in the current year for the S.R. 699/Gulf Boulevard Urban Corridor Improvement Project. This project extends from 192<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to Walsingham Road. The funds will come from the State Infrastructure Bank. The Technical Coordinating Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed this request and recommended approval. The DOT's resurfacing work is being combined with a water reclamation project of Pinellas County Utilities.

Mayor Taber of the Town of Indian Shores addressed the board. The town has borrowed and received \$6,300,000 for its own under-grounding project. The town would like to see the Gulf Boulevard project get its funding so that all the projects can be coordinated and the road won't have to be torn up twice.

Chair Seel reported that she had a call from a resident of Indian Shores who was unhappy that a middle lane won't be included on Gulf Boulevard. Secretary Hartmann said that this was thoroughly evaluated. The drainage had to be addressed first and then the deteriorating pavement and accommodating pedestrian traffic. All the improvements had to fit within the existing right-of-way. Adding road capacity as well would have necessitated buying right-of-way, and that would have cost \$50 million or more, which couldn't be justified.

Mayor Taber said that the town also considered three lanes. Before making a decision, the town took a massive survey with two mailings to all of its residents. The overwhelming response was that the town would accept a two-lane road if it could have sidewalks, storm water sewers, and curbing because of the safety issues.

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

*ACTION:* Mayor Doglione moved to approve the FDOT's request to amend the TIP as requested. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

### **2. PSTA Request for Congressional Funding**

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) received two congressional earmarks totaling \$9.9 million for the purchase of 33 replacement buses. The PSTA requested that

the adopted FY 2004/05-2008/09 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be amended to include these funds.

Roger Sweeney, executive director of the PSTA, addressed the board. He said that the new buses will replace buses that are twelve years old or older. The buses would arrive in mid-2006.

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

**ACTION:** Mayor Doglione moved to amend the adopted FY 2004/05-2008/09 TIP as requested by the PSTA. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Councilmember Lasita asked if any diesel-electric hybrid buses would be incorporated into the system. Mr. Sweeney responded that HARTLine in Hillsborough County has some of these buses. Initial cost is about \$500,000 per vehicle compared to about \$270,000 for a regular transit bus of similar size. This cost should decrease. The industry has been using this equipment for about three years. The bus hasn't been tested to failure yet. When the questions have been answered, it might be wise to consider acquiring these buses.

**VII. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS INCLUDED IN 2005 APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

Staff reported that the 2005 federal appropriations bill contained earmarks for several county projects. These projects include the Belleair Causeway Bridge, Gandy Boulevard, and the Pinellas Trail, among others. All the projects total \$58,350,000. Of that, \$34,000,000 is for the Belleair Causeway Bridge replacement. However, there may be insufficient funds in some of the federal programs to cover these earmarked projects.

Secretary Hartmann said that the DOT had some information that, in general, the projects in Sections 117 and 126 of the appropriations bill would come out of the normal allocation; but that hasn't been confirmed. At this time, this possibility hasn't been addressed in the tentative work program. The FDOT is still considering its course of action should that happen. It is possible that Pinellas County will have to defer projects or phases of projects. Secretary Hartmann noted that Pinellas County has more than half of the state's total appropriation in earmarks.

**VIII. DELETION OF CONGESTION MITIGATION AIR QUALITY FUNDING CATEGORY**

Bob Clifford of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) reviewed that the Pinellas-Hillsborough airshed will be in attainment effective June 15, 2005, which means that Pinellas County, along with the entire state, will no longer be eligible for CMAQ funds. The CMAQ funds in the current fiscal year of 2004/05 and in previous fiscal years will remain. Mr. Clifford explained that the state will still receive the funds but in a different form as part of the minimum guarantee allocation, which is available to all the counties in the state. The CMAQ funds had been a sub-allocation out of the minimum guarantee that the state received.

There are CMAQ projects in the adopted work program for 04/05-08/09, and the DOT will hold those projects in the program. The DOT has not determined what funds to use for them. CMAQ projects in the tentative work program have been removed. There were unobligated

CMAQ funds totaling \$3.5 million, and they were moved to the Enterprise interchange project, which is a trail overpass. There won't be any money in the reserve box.

Commissioner Stewart noted that Ulmerton Road shows \$3.5 million in FY 2005/06 and asked if those dollars would be available. Mr. Clifford responded that the CMAQ dollars won't be available; but the project is in the adopted work program and will remain there. There may be dollars in the reauthorization bill or from another source.

Mayor Doglione asked if reserve funds could be lost if not expended by June 15. Mr. Clifford responded that the county will keep the allocations for 04/05 and previous years, and the feds will allow up to three years to spend those funds.

Chair Seel noted that the sum of the projects that were removed from the tentative work program, becoming zero funded, was \$20 million.

**IX. RECOMMENDATIONS OF LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM**

**A. Request for Proposal (RFP) Process for Ambulatory Providers**

The Local Coordinating Board recommended that the MPO initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to find additional operators to serve ambulatory clients of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Currently, the program has only two providers who can service ambulatory clients. An RFP process has not been conducted since 1992.

**ACTION:** Councilmember Kriseman moved to authorize a Request for Proposal process for providers to ambulatory clients of the TD Program. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

**B. Persons with Disabilities Representative on Local Coordinating Board**

There is a vacancy on the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for the Persons with Disabilities Representative. Two people have expressed an interest in serving as this representative, and they are Doug Towne and Robert Bowen. At its meeting on January 24, the LCB recommended the appointment of Mr. Bowen.

Since the LCB meeting, the governing rules for the LCB have been clarified. The rules state that the Persons with Disabilities Representative must be disabled. A question arose regarding whether or not Mr. Bowen is qualified to be the representative.

Mr. Sadowsky advised the MPO that it is legally permissible and appropriate to ask what Mr. Bowen's disability is in order to verify that he is qualified for the position. He said that by the next MPO meeting he could conduct some research into the definition of disability.

**ACTION:** Mayor Doglione moved to table the item until the March MPO meeting. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

**C. Local Coordinating Board PSTA Representative**

There is a vacancy on the LCB for a representative from the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. Mayor Arbutine reported that this matter is on the PSTA's agenda for February.

**X. U.S. 19 ADDED LANE REVIEW – TS&MCC AND CAC RECOMMENDATIONS**

Mr. Clifford reported that after the MPO's discussion about this matter at the January meeting, the DOT will close four medians in an effort to prevent accidents being caused by left turns. These closures will be made in lieu of closing the right-turn lanes and forcing right turns. They will be done temporarily and monitored. If the strategy is successful, the median closings will become permanent. The median openings to be closed are at: 1) 298<sup>th</sup> Avenue N., 2) the first median opening south of Tampa Road; 3) the first median opening north of Tampa Road; and 4) Highland Boulevard N.

Paul Bertels, chairman of the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee, reported that the TS&MCC had recommended that the DOT do a capacity analysis regarding punching the right-turn lanes through the intersections at Tampa Road, Curlew Road, Tarpon Avenue, and Alderman Road. The committee believes that there would be significant capacity benefits if that were done.

Ned Allen, chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee, reported that the CAC had recommended that all the lanes on U.S. 19 should be consistent and they favored making all the lanes straight-through in order to avoid confusion. If the "porkchop" barriers remain to force the right turns, the signage should be placed well ahead of the intersection.

Secretary Hartmann referred to punching through the lanes at the intersections and said he couldn't support that. This would turn U.S. 19 into an eight-lane highway. The volume of turns at the intersections demands right-turn lanes.

<p><i>ACTION:</i> Commissioner Gerard moved to endorse the DOT's recommendation to close the selected medians and then conduct a public hearing on the matter. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>
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**XI. UPDATE ON FEDERAL TRIENNIAL CERTIFICATION OF MPO PLANNING PROCESS**

Federal authorities met with county staff on January 18 and 19 for a review of the Pinellas County MPO and its procedures. They asked if the makeup of the CAC is representative of the population of the county. Preliminary feedback has been positive. Staff expects a good final report.

A review of the region was held in the Tampa offices of the Florida Department of Transportation on January 24. There was more participation from the public at the workshop than there has been in the past.

**XII. FOLLOW-UP ON PINELLAS ASSEMBLY REPORT RE TRANSPORTATION REVENUES**

The board reviewed a memo dated February 2, 2005 from Mr. Smith that listed the recommendations they made in January regarding transportation revenues.

Councilmember Kriseman said that at the January meeting, during the discussion of the Penny extension, Recommendation B, the MPO decided to include a statement regarding what the Penny had accomplished so that it could be demonstrated that it should be continued in the future. The board agreed that the wording of Recommendation B should be changed to read, “. . . a program of past completed projects and potential projects should be developed . . . .”

Commissioner Stewart said that it was too early to take a position on several of these items. Chair Seel responded that the task forces have completed their work and that the recommendations have been forwarded to the Mayor’s Council and the Board of County Commissioners. There wasn’t 100% agreement on the issues within either group. The MPO, being the transportation board, was asked to give its recommendations on the issues. The Penny is an infrastructure tax; but from the last two Pennies, 50% of the money has been used for road projects.

Mayor Arbutine said that now there is a need for revenues, with a shortfall coming, and the timing is good for a discussion because there is some indication that the public would support an additional gas tax. Mayor Doglione concurred, noting that gas taxes have paid for some badly needed road work, which the public welcomed. Mayor Mischler said that he supported a gas tax as a user fee.

By consensus, the item was tabled until the March meeting to give staff time to reword the recommendations and to allow board members to review these recommendations with their constituencies.

**XIII. PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY PROGRAM OF PROJECTS**

Mike Siebel of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) presented the PSTA’s Program of Projects (POP) for FY 2004/05. The POP consists of PSTA’s proposed capital budget for the coming fiscal year. It amounts to \$8,469,189, and includes a 10% contingency. It covers the purchase of buses and equipment as well as planning studies for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Both the Technical Coordinating Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee recommended approval. The PSTA will hold a public hearing in March. With MPO approval, the program would proceed as a grant application to the Federal Transit Administration.

Mayor Doglione asked if the BRT planning studies were compatible with the PMI discussions or if they were a stand-alone project. If the county moves ahead with the PMI, BRT could be studied as a compatible transit; but a BRT-only study might not be warranted.

Mr. Siebel responded that the PSTA’s philosophy is that BRT is part of the evolutionary process that could lead to something like a light rail. BRT could be looked at as an interim step that would demonstrate the feasibility of having higher forms of mass transit and corridors over and above what exists with local bus service.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Commissioner Gerard moved to approve the PSTA’s Program of Projects for FY 2004/05. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>
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**XIV. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

There was no new information regarding legislative activities. The TEA-21 reauthorization remains pending.

**XV. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

**A. Citizens Advisory Committee**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Gerard moved to appoint Morry LaTour to the CAC as a representative of Largo. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

**B. Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee**

**ACTION:** Mayor Doglione moved to appoint Robert Yunk to the PTAC as an at-large representative. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

**XVI. PSTA ACTIVITIES**

Minutes of the PSTA's Board of Directors meeting of January 26, 2005 were included with meeting materials. Mayor Arbutine reported that the PSTA participated in a workshop and visited the Share-a-Ride facility, which is near completion. He noted that it will be an excellent facility.

**XVII. OTHER BUSINESS**

*(Items XVII-A and XVII-B were discussed after Item XI.)*

**A. TEA-21 Federal Funding Requests**

The board reviewed Transportation Project Evaluation Criteria that had been prepared by staff for eleven projects to be considered in the TEA-21 reauthorization. The list must also go to the Board of County Commissioners for their approval because they are the requesting organization.

Commissioner Stewart noted the presence of the Friendship Trail on the list and asked if the MPO understands the financial consequences of the bridge.

Commissioner Seel said that the bridge will need several million dollars for repairs in the very near future. In the distant future, it will require \$5 million apiece from Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties for demolition because it will no longer be sound.

Mayor Mischler and Secretary Hartmann noted that several years ago the FDOT wanted to demolish the bridge but the county boards voted to keep it. The FDOT then turned over the bridge to the two counties.

Secretary Hartmann said that the board should ask itself if the bridge is a transportation facility or a recreational facility and how it fits into TEA-21. Mr. Smith clarified that the listed project is the trail itself and not the bridge.

Commissioner Stewart said that it is appropriate to keep the trail and the PMI on the list but that the bridge may not exist in five or ten years and that it may not be the connector the county thought it would be.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Stewart moved that MPO accept the list of project priorities for TEA-21 re-authorization, with the exception that the Pinellas Trail Extension will be listed ahead of the Friendship Trail. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Secretary Hartmann said that the MPO had indicated its priorities in the form of the work program and cautioned against putting projects in jeopardy.

### **B. Resurfacing of Alternate U.S. 19**

Bob Clifford of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) updated the board on the DOT's resurfacing projects on Alternate U.S. 19. These projects are in several municipalities. A jurisdictional road transfer will take place that will give a portion of Alternate U.S. 19 to the City of Largo and the City of Clearwater.

Secretary Hartmann reviewed projects on U.S. 19 that had been completed including the sidewalk project. The interchange at Drew Street should be completed by the end of the year. The bridge in Clearwater is on schedule.

### **C. Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council**

The MPOAC met on January 27, 2005 in Orlando. Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT) presented their proposals. The MPOAC endorsed the concept of increased revenues as proposed by FBT but did not take action on any of the proposals.

The council received a presentation by the Department of Community Affairs regarding the governor's proposed growth management bill. Some recommendations could impact the MPOs, giving more authority to the regional planning councils over some functions of the MPOs, and the council is concerned about legislation that could shift those functions.

### **D. TD Program – Medicaid Non-emergency Transportation**

For the month of January 2005, actual spending was \$282,000, and the carryover was \$36,161. After three months of operation, the county's Medicaid non-emergency transportation program has a total carryover of \$71,856.60.

### **E. PMI Steering Committee**

The PMI Steering Committee met on February 7.

**F. Signal at Alt. U.S. 19 and Florida Avenue and Pedestrian Signal at Delaware Avenue**

This item was deferred until the March meeting to allow the FDOT time to complete an operational study.

**G. Alt. U.S. 19/Curlew Road/Pinellas Trail Review**

This item was deferred until the March meeting to permit the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee additional time to collect and review data.

**H. Correspondence**

Several items of correspondence were noted.

**I. Other**

Mayor Mischler reported that there had been a groundbreaking ceremony for the Park Boulevard drainage project. Secretary Hartmann and several county commissioners were present. He thanked the Congressman Bill Young, the Board of County Commissioners, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the MPO for helping to make this possible.

Mayor Mischler thanked all the staff for their hard work on behalf of the MPO.

**XVIII. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

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Karen Seel, Chair