

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES – MEETING OF JUNE 8, 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, June 8, 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
John Doglione – Mayor, City of Dunedin
Ronnie Duncan – Board of County Commissioners
Pat Gerard – City of Largo Commission
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater
Jay Lasita – City of St. Petersburg Council
Jim Ronecker – City of Oldsmar Council, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs
Robert Stewart – Board of County Commissioners
Ken Hartmann, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Members Absent

Chris Arbutine – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park

Others Present

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Ned Allen – MPO Citizens Advisory Committee
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater
Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park
Bob Clifford – Florida Department of Transportation
Mike Crawford – Grimail Crawford, Inc.
Rick Eggers – City of Pinellas Park
Donny Hamilton – MPO
Thea Johnson – Neighborly Care Network
Joe Kubicki – City of St. Petersburg
Deborah Lynes – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
John Mulvihill – City of Oldsmar
Courtney Orr – Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
David Sadowsky – Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant – Sky Train Corp.
Don Skelton - Florida Department of Transportation
David Troemel – Kimley-Horn and Associates
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 Karen Seel called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

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

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE

Chair Seel noted that Secretary Hartmann would be retiring from the Florida Department of Transportation on June 30. Speaking for the MPO, Chair Seel thanked the Secretary for his work on behalf of Pinellas County and District 7 and presented him with a plaque and a specially mounted piece of U.S. 19.

Chair Seel also recognized Brian Smith for his 35 years of service with Pinellas County and presented him with several tokens of appreciation.

IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There was no citizen comment.

At this time, Secretary Hartman introduced Don Skelton, who will succeed him as Secretary of District 7.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of May 11, 2005**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
 - 1. Renaissance Planning Group**
 - 2. Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority**
 - 3. Center for Urban Transportation Research, University of South Florida, Alternative Transportation Trip Value Study**
- C. Approval of Printing of Annual Traffic Count Map**
- D. Approval of 2005 Transportation Level of Service Report**
- E. Approval of Travel for State Transportation Disadvantaged Conference**
- F. Approval of PSTA Planning Funds Joint Participation Agreement**

ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the consent agenda, Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.
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Mayor Doglione referred to page 12, Item IX of the minutes of May 11. He said that the City of Dunedin hadn't received an update from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on a plan to correct the drainage problems on Curlew Road at Birdie Lane and at Eagle Lane. Don Skelton of the FDOT responded that a construction project review meeting had been held that morning. These issues were raised, and staff will be working to resolve them within the next few weeks.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

A. Proposed Traffic Signal – Forest Lakes Boulevard at Brooker Creek Boulevard

Paul Bertels, chairman of the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee (TS&MCC), reported that on May 25 the committee had reviewed a request from the City of Oldsmar for a traffic signal on Forest Lakes Boulevard at Brooker Creek Boulevard. Currently the signal does not meet warrants. However, over the next several months, office buildings under construction in that area will be finished and occupied. At that time, the signal will probably meet warrants. The TS&MCC recommended that a mast arm signal be installed and operate in a flash mode until the warrants are met. Then, the study would return to the TS&MCC for review and a final recommendation regarding full operation.

John Mulvihill, Public Works Director for the City of Oldsmar, addressed the board. When the warrant study was done last spring, two warrants were met. They were the four-hour vehicle warrant and the peak hour warrant. The signal failed to meet the eight-hour vehicle warrant because not all the buildings of Neilson Media were occupied at that time. That business now has 1,700 employees in the area. If traffic were recounted, the warrants would probably be met.

Also, three new, large office buildings have been constructed north of Forrest Lakes Boulevard on Brooker Creek Loop Road, which is part of the four-way intersection. Most of the buildings will be occupied within the next three months. Two more buildings will be constructed in the future.

At its March meeting, the City of Oldsmar Council voted unanimously to recommend approval of the signal's installation. If the signal were approved by the MPO, its construction would be completed in six to nine months. Mr. Mulvihill believes it will need full-time activation.

David Troemel of Kimley-Horn and Associates addressed the board. Kimley-Horn made the warrant analyses. Currently, the signal meets six of the eight hours of Volume Warrant 1, which is almost a full day. As volume increases, the signal will meet the full daytime period to be turned on.

Mr. Bertels said that the location had not met the warrants with the study that the TS&MCC had received. Probably, it won't meet warrants until the buildings are almost fully occupied. There are two signals on the road already, and this proposed signal shouldn't be turned on fully until it meets the warrants. It may meet warrants in the near future, and the study should return to the TS&MCC at that time.

Councilmember Ronecker said that he drives on this road every day on the way to work. He has noticed many cars on the side of the road waiting to turn left. A full-time signal is warranted there now. Two office buildings are fully occupied, and three more are being constructed. In the last three weeks, 700 new employees of Nielson have started working in that area. Those numbers may not show up in the current study.

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

ACTION: Mayor Doglione moved to approve the recommendation of the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee regarding a signal on Forest Lakes Boulevard at Brooker Creek Boulevard. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion. Board discussion followed.

Mayor Doglione, noting that it would take six to nine months to install the signal, asked when the final study would go to the TS&MCC for review so that the signal doesn't exist on flash mode longer than is necessary. Mr. Bertels responded that currently, there are no accidents at this intersection. It would be up to the City of Oldsmar to monitor the location, and it would be their responsibility to decide when to do another study to ensure that it has the proper warrants. Then the matter would return to the TS&MCC for review and recommendation.

Commissioner Duncan asked if it is possible, through modeling, to forecast warrants. Mr. Bertels responded that it is possible to forecast what traffic is going to be generated by development and to indicate where signals would probably be installed.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried.

B. Proposed Amendments to Transportation Improvement Program

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requested that the FY 2004/05-2008/09 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be amended to include six projects: FPN 418846 1, 418847 1, 418850 1, 418851 1, 418869 1, and 418870 1. All would be funded with federal earmarks. They are contained in the TIP that the board approved in May. All the applicants would like to start their projects between July 1 and October 1 this year. Therefore, these projects should be included in the current TIP so that they can be let during the next three months.

Joe Kubicki of the City of St. Petersburg clarified that the project on Gandy Boulevard is for six-laning a section between Dr. Martin Luther King Street and Fourth Street.

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

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

VII. FOLLOW-UP FROM 118TH AVENUE WORKSHOP

Chair Seel reported that she and Commissioner Stewart had attended the workshop on the 118th Avenue/Roosevelt Boulevard connector held in the Planning Department offices that morning. She said that the workshop was enlightening and thanked Florida Department of Transportation staff for their participation.

VIII. FLORIDA INTRASTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM (FIHS) – DRAFT OF COST AFFORDABLE PLAN

Bob Clifford of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) reported on the draft of the Florida Intrastate Highway System's (FIHS) Cost Affordable Plan. The plan covers the years 2016-2025. The majority of the funds for this system are state-managed funds.

Mr. Clifford reviewed the Draft Proposed Cost Feasible Plan Project List, highlighting the projects in Pinellas County. They are: 1) U.S. 19 from north of C.R. 580 to north of C.R. 95, which includes the Curlew interchange; 2) Gandy Boulevard between Fourth Street and Ninth Street; and, 3) the northern extension of U.S. 19 from north of C.R. 95 to north of Nebraska Avenue.

Secretary Hartmann noted that the three corridors in Pinellas County that are part of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) are I-275, U.S. 19, and Gandy Boulevard. Mr. Clifford said that the SIS includes U.S. 19 extending into Pasco County.

The Cost Affordable Plan does not include the 118th Avenue connector because that is not part of the SIS. Chair Seel said that the PD&E study on this project is almost finished. There will be a public hearing in July. The connector might become part of the SIS system, but that requires federal approval.

IX. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE POSITION STATEMENT

The final draft of the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Position Statement, prepared by the PMI Steering Committee chaired by Commissioner Duncan, was presented to the board.

Mr. Smith reviewed that the current PMI effort was preceded by the Major Investment Study. Mike Crawford of Grimail Crawford, Inc. gave a powerpoint presentation in which he briefly reviewed the key points and components of the PMI including a map of the proposed system. Mr. Smith then gave a slide presentation, reviewing key points of the Position Statement.

Mr. Smith noted that a federal earmark of \$3 million has been assigned to the MPO for the PMI program. This gives the MPO some resources to follow through on some projects and to advance the program.

Commissioner Duncan noted how the PMI program had evolved and changed. Some cities have already stepped ahead. St. Petersburg is working on bus rapid transit (BRT) with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. He also noted the importance of taking advantage of funding opportunities and of engaging the citizenry in the discussion.

Mayor Hibbard, a member of the PMI Steering Committee, noted that the county had been discussing enhanced transportation programs for over 30 years. However, no steps forward had been taken. The county must not miss an opportunity to develop economically in the future and to move people around in an affordable way. Alternatives to building more lanes must be found, and bold steps must be taken.

Councilmember Lasita, a member of the PMI Steering Committee, acknowledged the hard work of the consultants. He said that now it is time to move ahead and to pick a route that would bring the best chance of success. The county must not remain stagnant while its needs increase. The plan must also be put into the hands of the citizens who pay the bills. A demonstration project would be helpful.

Mayor Doglione, a member of the PMI Steering Committee, expressed his support for the initiative. He said that it was about an integrated system that would meet all the needs for transit within Pinellas County. He said that the county is not built out because it has shown the capacity for vertical planning. The PMI is good for the future of the county and West Central Florida.

Commissioner Gerard, a member of the PMI Steering Committee, thanked Commissioner Duncan for his work. She noted that the Position Statement said, “The future economic health of the county is dependent upon development of a viable alternative means of transportation.” She said that if the county doesn’t do something, it will start to decline. The county can’t keep widening roads and installing more traffic signals.

Councilmember Kriseman thanked the steering committee for their work and for the Position Statement. He agreed with others that a light rail system would not be the whole answer to the county’s transit problems but would be part of a bigger solution. He said that the PMI makes good economic sense and that it offers a travel time advantage over conventional systems.

Councilmember Ronecker said that he agreed with the other board members and hoped that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) would support this project. As the project moves ahead, more support can be gathered.

Commissioner Seel asked what the early projects would be and what the \$3 million would be spent on. Mr. Smith responded that this would be discussed at the next PMI meeting. Likely projects are in Clearwater and St. Petersburg.

Commissioner Duncan said that before the PMI goes to the BCC, the steering committee must further examine potential funding sources and how best to use the \$3 million earmark. Also, there should be more discussions with the municipalities and the business community.

ACTION: Mayor Doglione moved that the MPO support the PMI Steering Committee’s Position Statement. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion. Board discussion continued.

Commissioner Seel said that the PMI should be coming to the BCC because they are responsible for initiating the gas tax and/or the referendum for the local transit sales tax. She would like to see the \$3 million used for something that “hits the road,” such as bus rapid transit (BRT), which could be tried first to see if it has the ridership and the validity to be translated into a future rail system. She said that whatever is done, it must be cost feasible, practical, and usable. She said that the board must consider if the citizens want what is being created for the future, which could include increased density and vertical buildup.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried, with Commissioner Seel dissenting.

X. TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT FUNDING INCREASE FOR SHORE ACRES BICYCLE LANES PROJECT IN ST. PETERSBURG

The City of St. Petersburg asked that enhancement funding be increased for the Shore Acres Bicycle Lanes Project. The city had envisioned bicycle lanes within the roadway right-of-way along 62nd Avenue. Based on limited right-of-way and community concerns, a decision was made to design a side path, and that resulted in a cost increase. The MPO has approximately \$659,000 in reserves for the current year that are not allocated to any project. These funds could be applied to this project, with the balance being covered by the city.

Mayor Doglione noted that the original project was to be an on-street bicycle lane for \$128,372. Now, it is a sidepath costing \$844,712, an increase of \$716,340. He said that sidewalks serve

more of the public than bicycle lanes and that there are many areas in the county that have broken sidewalks, incomplete sidewalks, or no sidewalks.

Joe Kubicki, Director of Transportation and Parking for the City of St. Petersburg, addressed the board. He said that this project was prioritized by the MPO and funded through enhancement funds over one year ago. This is part of the Shore Acres loop project. About 16 months ago, the city completed a bicycle/pedestrian master plan. Sidewalk projects were included, with a goal of 100 miles of sidewalk. Mr. Kubicki further explained the master plan and the trail plans for the city. The neighborhood had concerns about 62nd Avenue. There are several schools and recreation facilities along that road, and it would be a heavily used section of roadway. Also, materials costs have gone up. The city wants to allocate what it can into the facility in addition to requesting what it can from the MPO's unused enhancement funds for this year.

Responding to Commissioner Seel, Ms. Ward said that FDOT had told staff the MPO has \$659,000 for the current year, so it doesn't show in the future program. On the current list, there are some projects that have not moved, so staff must contact local governments to see if they are still interested in their projects. If projects don't go forward, the MPO can seek new projects, and there are other projects on the candidate list. There is nothing current year that would be impacted by this increase for the Shore Acres project. These are current-year dollars that are not spoken for.

Mr. Kubicki said that design of this project is complete and that the city is ready to go to construction very soon.

Commissioner Seel asked about the Tarpon Avenue/Pinellas Avenue streetscape, noting that it shows as eligible and feasible. Don Skelton of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) responded that when the governor vetoes a line item in the budget, he vetoes the idea along with the money. That means no budget in the state can be used for that particular project during that fiscal year. That is the problem for the Tarpon Springs streetscape project. No monies can be budgeted for that particular project for FY 2005/06.

Commissioner Seel asked if the enhancement monies could be carried over to another year and if any other project on the priority list would be harmed. Mr. Smith responded that the monies could be rolled to the next year. However, staff tries to keep projects moving, and this project is ready for construction. There will be more money available next year for other projects.

Commissioner Gerard noted that under Transportation Enhancements in the Tentative Work Program, there is a note about putting sidewalks on both sides of Dryer Avenue and there is another note about adding a connection on Indian Rocks Road from the hospital to Dryer Avenue. She suggested not stopping at the hospital because there is a stretch of road where there is nothing. Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works responded that the county has a project that is in the survey stage, going into design, for sidewalks from Walsingham Road to 8th Avenue.

Mayor Doglione noted the increase in the cost of this one particular project. He said that other projects would benefit from the enhancement funds.

<p>ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the request of the City of St. Petersburg, and Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The motion carried, with Mayor Doglione dissenting.</p>

At this time, Chair Seel noted that there was no more business for the FDOT.

XI. BIG-C REQUEST FOR MPO RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR CONSISTENT SPEED LIMIT OF 35 MPH ON GULF BOULEVARD

Chair Seel reported that Secretary Abreu, Secretary Hartmann, and Mayor Fountaine had met to discuss this matter. A letter dated May 16 from Secretary Abreu to Mayor Fountaine was distributed to the board. Discussion by the MPO was not deemed necessary at this time.

XII. BAC AND PTAC RECOMMENDATIONS RE SCENIC DESIGNATION FOR COURTNEY CAMPBELL CAUSEWAY

Mr. Smith reported that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had approved the request of a community advisory group to give the Courtney Campbell Causeway a scenic designation. A letter was included with meeting materials.

Both the Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee had passed motions recommending that the MPO endorse the scenic designation strategy and make a trail project a priority.

Commissioner Seel noted that the community advisory group that applied for the scenic designation has reached out to private companies to form partnerships.

Staff asked the MPO to support establishing the causeway as a regional priority. The other action would be to seek statewide enhancement dollars. There is a separate pot of enhancement money for state and regional projects. In the past, the Chairs Coordinating Committee has received money for the Suncoast Parkway Trail. Staff directors for the region are recommending that the CCC approve the priority list of projects and then support the statewide enhancement application.

Ned Allen of the Citizens Advisory Committee addressed the board. He said that the Joint CAC of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties has supported this idea on at least two other occasions.

ACTION: Mayor Doglione moved to approve the recommendations of the BAC and the PTAC to endorse the scenic designation strategy and to make a trail project a priority . Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XIII. AMENDMENT TO TRAILWAYS PLAN – NORTH BAY TRAIL

Staff reported that the City of St. Petersburg is developing several trail projects. One of the projects is the North Bay Trail. As development has proceeded, the trail corridor has become better defined and has been realigned. The Bicycle Advisory Committee recommended that the MPO amend the Trailways Plan component of the Long Range Transportation Plan to show this new alignment of the trail.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved to amend the Trailways Plan to show the new alignment of the North Bay Trail. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XIV. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. PTAC Motion Re Standardized Use of Amber and Red Lights for School Buses

At its May 16 meeting, the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) recommended standardizing the use of the amber and red lights on school buses. The committee noted that there is no established standard for using these lights. They are used according to the judgment of the bus driver. PTAC recommended that standards be established to make the signals more predictable for people driving behind the buses.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved to approve the recommendation of the PTAC. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

B. BAC Recommendation Re Sidewalks Along Belcher Road Near the Long Center

In Clearwater, there is a missing segment of sidewalk on Belcher Road near a railroad crossing that is under construction. This is near the Long Center. At its May 23 meeting, the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) recommended that this segment could be built while the railroad crossing is under construction.

Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works addressed the board. He said that it is too late to incorporate a sidewalk into the railroad crossing project. The way that the crossing has been designed, there are provisions for pedestrians to cross. Public Works is considering how to add sidewalks in the near future.

Chair Seel noted that the area is heavily used by pedestrians and that a sidewalk segment is badly needed. Mr. Smith said that if there were to be a sidewalk project, that project would have to be broader in scope than the BAC's recommendation.

ACTION: Commissioner Gerard moved to approve the BAC's recommendation, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XV. PROPOSAL FOR CLEARINGHOUSE APPROACH TO NEEDED TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Staff requested approval to establish a work group to develop a clearinghouse for transportation services. This would be in lieu of developing a scope of services and hiring a consultant as requested by staff at the May MPO meeting. Subsequent to the MPO's May meeting, the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for the Transportation Disadvantaged had a lengthy discussion about this matter. Several of the LCB's members represent agencies that provide transportation services, and they are informed about other existing services. Staff believes that a work group of these members might be able to accomplish what is needed. Representatives of FAST would like to attend these meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved to approve the formation of a clearinghouse committee and work group. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XVI. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT FOR NEW MPO VOTING PROCEDURE

Staff reported that the state legislature had passed a law requiring MPOs to take roll call votes when voting to approve their Long Range Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Programs, and amendments that affect projects in the first three years. This action was taken because of concerns about concurrency.

XVII. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A summary of all the transportation-related bills passed by the legislature during the last session was included with meeting materials. Next month, staff will be able to report which bills were signed into law. As of this date, the growth management bill had not been signed by the governor.

At the federal level, a new federal highway transit bill had not been passed by the end of May. The president signed a seventh extension to carry the current bill to June 30. The difference between the president's bill and congress' bill is the dollar amount.

XVIII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

There were no committee appointments. Vacancies exist on several committees. Staff reported that Morry LaTour had resigned from the Citizens Advisory Committee as a representative of Largo.

XIX. PSTA

The minutes of the May 25 meeting of the PSTA's board of directors were included with meeting materials.

XX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. TD Program – Medicaid Non-emergency Transportation

A status report was included with meeting materials.

B. Status of Alt. U.S. 19/Curlew Road/Pinellas Trail Review by TS&MCC

A memo dated May 25, 2005 from Paul Bertels, chairman of the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee, gave an update on this signal proposal. The committee may be able to make another recommendation after its June or July meeting.

C. Joint CCC Meeting

The West Central Florida MPOs Chairs Coordinating Committee will meet on June 10, 2005 at Brooker Creek Preserve.

D. Correspondence

A memo from County Administrator Spratt and a news item were included with meeting materials.

E. Other

Mayor Doglione thanked the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority for their assistance with the emergency transport of 100 people to North County and then back to their homes. He also thanked PSTA for participating in the Touch-a-Truck Program.

Mayor Doglione said that a left-turn arrow signal is needed at C.R. 1/Keene Road south of Virginia Street heading into the Weathersfield Drive area. With the opening of C.R. 1, there is increased traffic in that area. Via a memo to Paul Bertels, the mayor asked the Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee to review this request.

XXI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Karen Williams Seel, Chair