

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MINUTES - MEETING OF JANUARY 11, 2006**

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, January 11, 2006 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 Bryan - City of St. Petersburg Council  
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners  
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission  
Pat Gerard - City of Largo Commission  
Frank Hibbard - Mayor, City of Clearwater  
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners  
Bob Clifford, *ex officio* - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

**Members Absent**

William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park  
Jim Ronecker - City of Oldsmar Council, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs

**Others Present**

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director  
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator  
Bill Ball - Tindale-Oliver & Associates  
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7  
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater  
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park  
Rodney Chatman - City of Tarpon Springs  
Alan Danaher - Kittelson & Associates  
Rick Eggers - City of Pinellas Park  
Jessica Minnick - Tierra, Inc.  
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office  
Wilfred Sergeant - Sky Train Corporation  
Jack Weiss - Citizens Advisory Committee  
Tom Whalen - City of St. Petersburg  
Pete 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 1:05 p.m.

## **II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE**

Commissioner Stewart gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

## **III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE**

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Seel presented a plaque to outgoing board member Jay Lasita, thanking him for his service as a representative of the City of St. Petersburg.

\*At 1:11 p.m., Commissioner Duncan arrived.

## **IV. RECOGNITION OF NEW MPO MEMBER**

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Seel welcomed to the board Council Member John Bryan of the City of St. Petersburg.

## **V. INTRODUCTION OF NEW OFFICERS OF CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Chair Seel reported that the officers of the Citizens Advisory Committee for 2006 are Steven Cohen, chairman, and Jack Weiss, vice chairman. Mr. Weiss addressed the board and said that he and Mr. Cohen look forward to working with the MPO.

## **VI. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There was no citizen comment.

## **VII. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of December 14, 2005**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
  - 1. Renaissance Planning Group**
  - 2. Tindale-Oliver & Associates**
- C. Approval of Image One Software and Hardware Invoices for Crash Data Center**

**ACTION:** Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the consent agenda, Council Member Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

## **VIII. EAST LAKE/McMULLEN-BOOTH ROAD BUS RAPID TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Staff reported that the MPO and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority had conducted a feasibility study for bus rapid transit (BRT) on the East Lake/McMullen-Booth Road corridor from the planned inter-modal center on Ulmerton Road north to the intersection of East Lake Road and Trinity Boulevard. Bill Ball of Tindale-Oliver & Associates, accompanied by Alan Danaher of Kittelson & Associates, gave a Power Point presentation and overview of the study, entitled "East Lake/McMullen Booth Road Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study-Phase 1-Fatal Flaw Assessment." A copy of the study was included with meeting materials, and a copy of the Power Point was distributed to the board at the meeting.

The conclusion of the study was that there is limited market potential at this time and through the year 2015 for an investment in premium transit service along the subject corridor. In order for

BRT to work in a mixed traffic sense, there must be more roadway capacity, which is a significant investment. The use of exclusive bus lanes would have a higher impact on cost.

It was recommended that PSTA continue to monitor the corridor and the service area to see if local bus service should be added over time in order to develop ridership. Currently, there is no service operating north of Tampa Road, and there is no connection to Pasco County's bus system.

A cursory assessment of some parallel corridors suggested that it might be better to take a closer look at the US 19 corridor, where residential density and development activity are greater. Service extends to Pasco County with good ridership, and road conditions are more conducive to building a BRT.

It was also recommended that Phase II of the study should not be pursued. If the MPO considers using its resources for additional analysis, they should consider using them to assess another corridor such as US 19, or Ulmerton Road and SR 60 as east-west corridors.

The study will be presented to the PSTA board later this month.

Board discussion followed.

The funds for this study came from regular MPO funds, or what is known as transit money that is used for special studies. Mr. Ball said that the MPO asked for the study in cooperation with the PSTA.

Commissioner Stewart said that the conclusions could have been reached without a formal study. Mr. Ball responded that over the past several years, the Transit Development Plan, the Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Regional Transit Action Plan have identified McMullen-Booth Road as a priority corridor for premium transit service. There was some concern about where transit activity was headed.

Commissioner Stewart asked if any conclusion could be drawn about whether or not the concept of BRT itself, versus anything else that the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) is looking at, is worthy of pursuit in the County. Mr. Ball responded that they had tried to distinguish at what level of density an agency might consider making a higher level of investment in transit. Ultimately, what kind of fixed guideway technology to invest in is a policy decision.

The Phase I study cost approximately \$45,000.

Mr. Smith said that this corridor had been on the MPO's list of corridors for examination for BRT. The study says that the higher ridership is on US 19. Therefore, work can focus on US 19 and putting regular bus service on McMullen-Booth Road because BRT is presumed to be a bigger investment and commitment. While there is bus service on McMullen-Booth Road now, there is not a lot.

Mayor Hibbard noted that one of the reasons the MPO looked at McMullen-Booth Road was that it had more right-of-way than most of the other corridors. US 19 has greater density but less right-of-way, and there doesn't seem to be much residential area that surrounds it. The real value of BRT is when it is separated from traffic, which is a premium type of service.

Mr. Ball said that the existing bus service on US 19 has extensive ridership now from both Pinellas and Pasco Counties, and there are apartment projects along the corridor.

Commissioner Seel said that if the right-of-way on US 19 is prohibitively expensive, it doesn't make sense to consider BRT for that corridor.

Council Member Bryan said that BRT doesn't need a dedicated lane. It can move in existing lanes, which is the advantage of US 19. This can be done until there are backups. Mr. Ball added that the road has continuous right-turn lanes and less congested facilities. It has more potential even without acquisitions of right-of-way.

Roger Sweeney of the PSTA said that they agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the study. McMullen-Booth Road is one of the most heavily traveled routes in Pinellas County. They wondered if there were anything that premium service could do to reduce congestion in that corridor. They found that the trips are not concentrated but are dispersed significantly. Also, they are of short duration, about 20 minutes or less. Because of those factors, the corridor does not lend itself to express-type service of any sort. The PSTA felt that it was a good decision to examine a corridor they thought was a high candidate but which proved not to be. US 19 might be a better candidate.

Mayor Hibbard referred to a statement in Section 2/Page 2 and asked Mr. Sweeney if any BRT equipment had been purchased prior to the fatal flaw study. Mr. Sweeney responded that no equipment had been purchased. PSTA is conducting an engineering study of another corridor in St. Petersburg on Central Avenue. That study is farther ahead. It should result in a recommendation regarding the kind of infrastructure needed.

Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works addressed the board about a study that his department had done examining users and ridership along the McMullen-Booth corridor. From a technical standpoint, because it had the wide right-of-way and a minimum number of driveways along it, it seemed that BRT would fit there.

Commissioner Duncan said that McMullen-Booth Road is a Level of Service F and beyond repair in some areas. The County still has an obligation to try to mitigate it. He said that the PMI Committee supported that the MPO do this. Because the County has the right-of-way, the expense conceptually was less. The MPO has a \$3 million earmark related to PMI. One of the topics that will be discussed on February 1 at the workshop is what corridors are prime candidates for BRT. There are not only north-south corridors but also east-west corridors that are heavily congested. He said that he would be interested in comments from PSTA regarding the future of bus service or other transit going north-south.

Council Member Bryan said that he supports BRT. It makes good sense for US 19 because it can be installed in a short time. Park-and-ride stations could be built. They could serve McMullen-Booth as well. North-south/east-west links could be created throughout the County. BRT is a more flexible system than fixed guideway. US 19 also makes a good connection into Pasco County.

Commissioner Gerard agreed that US 19 makes more sense. However, the notion of McMullen-Booth did not come out of PMI discussions. The MPO risks abandoning a lot of work of that committee. If it does that, it should be a conscious decision. BRT is a good system, but it won't work everywhere in the County.

Mr. Clifford said that the board must clarify what BRT is and what problems they are trying to solve by installing such a system. Reducing congestion or changing the level of service standard is unlikely. Regarding US 19 and BRT, there are four questions: 1) What type of

BRT? 2) Where should it be? 3) What is the MPO trying to accomplish via the system? 4) What is the plan to get there? Also, does the board want to preclude anything for future transit? Does it want to say at this point in time that BRT on the McMullen-Booth corridor is out of the mix? The board must look farther ahead than 2015, even 20 to 40 years from now. Planning is not solely from a technical perspective because there will always be a fatal flaw. The DOT in its planning is trying to answer the same questions from a regional perspective. It is trying to provide opportunities and not preclude any for the future.

Commissioner Stewart said that he thought with regard to issues of transportation in the County that the objective was to reduce congestion. Through a PMI study, the MPO is seeking ways to get people out of their cars. He asked what the objective of the PMI is.

Commissioner Duncan, chairman of the PMI Committee, responded that the objectives were to mitigate congestion and to design and propose a system with varied components that provide options and choices.

Mayor Arbutine said that the McMullen-Booth study looks at the corridor as an entity in itself. Everyone at PSTA recognized that eventually BRT would be necessary on that corridor. It is part of a bigger system. He said that BRT on that corridor should not be considered "dead" because the premise was that it could service east-west routes. As BRT routes are installed, they will be a component of the Pinellas Mobility Initiative system.

Commissioner Duncan said that the PMI is not just fixed rail. It is an integrated set of initiatives and diverse types of transportation modes that will create a system. He supports the St. Petersburg BRT east-west development. Because the County is trying to mitigate traffic congestion, it should consider other desirable options and pursue them, but not at the exclusion of looking at other things on the table.

Council Member Bryan said that there are options for lanes. The PSTA board has moved forward on this quickly because it must get something done to produce rides for people. It wants "exotic" equipment and good infrastructure. It must entice people to get on the bus. The BRT can be adjusted along the way, unlike fixed guideway, and have quality service. This doesn't discount fixed guideway. The BRT route in St. Petersburg is very successful and could become a fixed guideway route.

Council Member Kriseman said that BRT can be a precursor to a light rail system. He is not ready to take McMullen-Booth Road out of the equation for the future because conditions could change and the system could grow. Regarding congestion, to some degree what the MPO is trying to do is stop it from getting worse.

Commissioner Gerard said that one thing the PMI consultants emphasized was that people are not going to ride an alternative transportation unless it saves them time and is more convenient. She would like to see premium bus service going up to Pasco County, before Pinellas County installs something as expensive as BRT, to prove that people from that area will get on a bus.

Commissioner Eggers said that the study doesn't contain a detailed origin/destination section, which is a big component of the issue. He asked if such information would yield any additional information that would be beneficial. He noted that the board is making a big statement and taking a big step in ruling out a corridor that it hasn't spent a lot of time on.

Mr. Smith responded that the corridor study used a regional model, and the growth in Pasco is part of it. The model is calibrated on an annual basis to be correct. It is very expensive to do

origin/destination studies, and staff felt that the investment shouldn't be made. Mr. Ball said that the FDOT validates the model regularly to support the MPO's planning process. Mr. Smith cautioned about putting millions of dollars into a corridor that might not have high demand.

Mayor Hibbard said that people will not get out of their cars until they perceive a significant benefit. Until it is separated from regular traffic, a system may not be used. However, separation means significantly higher costs. Eventually, the board must talk about options because there is no way to add capacity to some corridors. Once the overpasses on US 19 are finished, the corridor should be done. The right-of-way is too expensive to add anything, including HOV lanes.

By consensus, the board referred the study to the PMI Committee and to the PSTA for their review and comment.

#### **IX. CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROGRAM**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Gerard moved to appoint Terry Fortner and Merideth Grannan to the Citizens Advisory Committee as members at large. Council Member Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Chair Seel urged board members to seek candidates to fill the seven vacancies on the CAC. Also, she will distribute to the board a copy of a citizens survey regarding what the public thinks about transportation-related matters.

**ACTION:** Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the amended CAC bylaws. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

\*At 2:21 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

#### **X. BIKE/PEDESTRIAN PLAN PUBLIC WORKSHOP AND PLAN ADOPTION SCHEDULE**

Ms. Ward reported that staff is developing a Countywide bike/pedestrian plan that would state policy and define trails, bike lanes, and pedestrian sidewalks. There is no single County document that contains all of this. Staff is working with a consultant and the advisory committees on the plan.

\*At 2:22 p.m., Commissioner Stewart returned.

Ms. Ward reviewed the goals of the plan, noting that they are also found in the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Countywide plan would include the bike and pedestrian plans of the local governments to ensure that it is consistent with those initiatives.

A data review and analysis are almost complete. Another review has considered federal, state, and local policies. Challenges, needs, opportunities, and recommendations have been identified. Among the issues examined by the plan are creating a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians; redevelopment and its effects; socio-economic changes and what they mean to transportation and recreation; safe access to schools; demographics; and transit facilities. Recommended priorities for future funding have been reviewed, and east-west movement is included among them.

A draft will be presented to the MPO at its February meeting. It will then go through a review by the advisory committees. A public workshop will be held in February or March. The MPO will conduct a public hearing in April and then take final action regarding approval.

#### **XI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

There was no new legislative activity.

#### **XII. MPO ACTION TO ENDORSE THE CHAIRS COORDINATING COMMITTEE ACTION RE IMPACT FEES**

At their meeting on December 9, the Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) discussed the impact fee evaluation currently being made by the State's Impact Fee Task Force. The CCC voted to send a letter to the task force in which they stated: 1) the local decision making through home rule should be maintained; and 2) the CCC does not support placing the subject of impact fees in State law. The MPO has been asked to endorse this action.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Gerard moved that the MPO endorse the actions of the CCC. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

#### **XIII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Stewart moved to appoint Angela Hurley to the Technical Coordinating Committee as the representative of the City of Gulfport. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

#### **XIV. PSTA ACTIVITIES**

The PSTA Board of Directors did not meet in December.

Council Member Bryan noted that the grand opening of the PSTA's new headquarters on Scherer Drive would take place soon. The headquarters will have facilities for public meetings.

#### **XV. OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **A. FDOT Tentative Work Program Variance Report**

*(This item was discussed after Agenda Item VIII.)*

Mr. Clifford briefly reviewed two variance reports listing the changes proposed for the FY 2005/06 Work Program that are also reflected in the Tentative Work Program reviewed by the MPO at last month's meeting. These changes are projects that were added, advanced, deferred, or deleted from the Work Program.

There was one correction to the variance reports. The Work Program does not include \$8.8 million for bus purchases in the current year.

## **B. Status of Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Spending**

A chart showing expenditures for November 2005 was included with meeting materials. The service charge is a bank charge for the electronic transfers to the providers. Staff will double check the amount shown under "Actual Spending" for the month. It was noted that the program is currently spending more money than it is allocated.

## **C. Status of Multi-Name Roadways**

The final responses from the cities are being received.

## **D. Status of Goods Movement Study**

A scope has been prepared to initiate this project. This is the time for board members to give any input to staff.

## **E. Status of Concurrency Coordination with Local Governments**

Staff is working with the Technical Coordinating Committee to develop a concurrency program for all jurisdictions in the County.

## **F. ITS Advisory Committee**

The Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Advisory Committee met on December 21, 2005. The committee discussed where the next corridors will be, how much money is left for the current projects, and the system architecture.

There are vacancies on the ITS Committee and the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Committee for an elected representative from the City of St. Petersburg.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Commissioner Stewart moved to appoint Council Member Bryan to the PMI Committee and Council Member Kriseman to the ITS Committee. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## **G. 1906 Committee and School Transportation Safety Committee**

The 1906 Committee will be discussing the requirement for a school plan element. Staff noted that through the School Transportation Safety Committee, Pinellas County routinely deals with matters of traffic safety around school sites. This is not a routine practice throughout the state.

## **H. Correspondence**

The MPO received a letter from the City of Belleair Bluffs requesting assistance with implementing a mast arm replacement at the intersection of Indian Rocks Road and West Bay Drive. Mayor Arbutine said that the City thought that the bridge project would include a mast arm project, but the bridge project isn't going as far as the intersection. The City feels that a mast arm is necessary for safety and beautification reasons. They are willing to contribute to the cost.

Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works said that neither end of the bridge is getting a mast arm. Currently, Public Works is fiscally constrained for this type of work. However, they are identifying those intersections where this could be done in the future. Typically, the city has the responsibility for funding a signal replacement.

Staff said it would investigate other avenues of funding for this signal and report to the board.

**I. Other**

The board expressed its sympathy to Mayor Mischler and his family on the passing of his father-in-law.

**XVI. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

---

Karen Williams Seel, Chair