

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF MARCH 8, 2006**

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, March 8, 2006 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Seel, *Chair* - Board of County Commissioners
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 - Mayor-elect, City of Largo
Frank Hibbard - Mayor, City of Clearwater
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
Don Skelton, *ex officio* - Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

Richard Kriseman, *Vice Chair* - City of St. Petersburg Council

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park
Rodney Chatman - City of Tarpon Springs
Bob Clifford - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Mike Crawford - Grimail Crawford, Inc.
Jim Harpham - Dunedin
Deputy Ingolgia - Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Joe Kubicki - City of St. Petersburg
Deborah Kynes - City of Dunedin Commission and Chair, PSTA Board
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant - Sky Train Corporation
Roger Sweeney - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
John Wiser - Bicycle Advisory Committee
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Seel called the meeting to order at 1:11 p.m.

The board congratulated Mayor Mischler upon his reelection to office and Commissioner Gerard upon being elected Mayor of the City of Largo.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Councilmember Bryan gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Jon Wisner of Clearwater, a member of the MPO's Bicycle Advisory Committee, addressed the board. He spoke about the Clearwater East Rotary Club's project "Pedal Power", through which bikes are distributed to children. He said that he is seeing an increase in bicycle ridership. He asked the board to continue its support of bicycle trails. He also spoke about a segment of sidewalk on Belcher Road. Interested people can contact Mr. Wisner at 727-791-1026. Chair Seel asked staff to check on the status of the sidewalk.

Deputy Matt Ingolglia of the County Sheriff's Office appeared on behalf of Sergeant Glen Lubin, who is an active member of the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee and the Bicycle Advisory Committee. He noted that the Sheriff's Office is represented on several other MPO advisory committees. The Sheriff's Office wants a safe environment for the citizenry. They support the Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan being prepared by the MPO. They look forward to a continued good working relationship with the MPO. Deputy Ingolglia thanked the board for its support. Chair Seel noted the good work of the Community Transportation Safety Team.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of February 8, 2006**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
 - 1. Renaissance Planning Group**
 - 2. Tindale-Oliver & Associates**
 - 3. American Consulting Engineers**
- C. Endorsement of Pasco County Section 5307 Transit Grant**

<p>ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved to approve the consent agenda, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>

V. ADMINISTRATIVE TIP AMENDMENT

The Florida Department of Transportation requested that the FY 2005/06 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be amended with regard to Project FPN 413001-1, a sidewalk project in the City of St. Petersburg. The project is on the south side of 17th Avenue North between 35th Street and 46th Street. The city wishes to break the project into two smaller projects so that the design phase would be funded separately from the build phase. The project's cost remains \$133,500. It would be funded through the Enhancement Program. Joe Kubicki of the City of St. Petersburg said that the reason for this request was that there has been a change in the way the rules of the LAP agreements are applied.

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved to approve the FDOT's request to amend the TIP with regard to FPN 413001-1. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the board voted as follows: Mayor Arbutine - Yes; Councilmember Bryan - Yes; Commissioner Duncan - Yes; Commissioner Eggers - Yes; Commissioner Gerard - Yes; Mayor Hibbard - Yes; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Councilmember Ronecker - Yes; Commissioner Stewart - Yes; Chair Seel - Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE PROGRAM

Commissioner Duncan reported that the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Steering Committee had met on March 6 and voted to make a recommendation for the expenditure of the \$3 million earmark for PMI projects in the county and another \$1 million to be allocated over the next four years. The PSTA, the City of St. Petersburg, and the City of Clearwater had appeared before the Steering Committee to make presentations regarding how they would like to see these funds allocated.

Joe Kubicki, Director of Transportation for the City of St. Petersburg, addressed the MPO about the Bus Rapid Transit project, known as the Central Avenue BRT Project, the City is planning. He briefly reviewed the history of these plans and why the City believes this project would be successful. The project would be in conjunction with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA).

Roger Sweeney, Executive Director of the PSTA, gave a status report on the project. He noted that it was adopted by the PSTA as well as the MPO in its Long Range Transportation Plan. Ridership and costs were identified. Annual ridership would vary between 679,000 to 956,000 depending on headway.

Responding to a request from Chair Seel, Mr. Sweeney supplied ridership figures for the PSTA's five most traveled routes:

Route 19 = 1.1 million rides/year
Route 18 = 1 million rides/year
Route 52 (no figure given)
Route 4 = 800,000 rides/year
Beach Trolley = 680,000 rides/year

The proposed BRT route would rank among the most heavily traveled in the system. The annual gross operating cost would vary between \$1.9 million and \$2.6 million. There are opportunities to revise the services in this corridor. Capital cost would be \$8.5 million to \$9.9 million. The variations in these figures are due to differences in service. A Preliminary Engineering Study is underway, and it should be completed in December.

The PSTA and the City are also looking at three alternative BRT routes to the beaches from the Central Plaza Terminal. A study should be completed in August.

Councilmember Bryan said that the project could be funded by the PSTA if funding is not available from other sources.

Mayor Hibbard noted that the PMI has been looking for a location to build a pilot light rail project for the County. Because of persistent congestion problems, the Clearwater Beach-to-Clearwater Bluffs route would be the best choice for this project.

Mike Crawford of Grimail Crawford gave presentation for the City of Clearwater re this proposed light rail project. He reviewed the history of the project discussions and studies.

The capital costs are: the PD&E phase, which is the next phase, at \$1.4 million; design phase at \$3 million; construction costs at \$50-60 million; and annual operation and maintenance costs at \$2 million annually.

Previous studies show this project as a people mover. Current thinking is to design it as a system that could be expanded Countywide. It could be constructed on the new bridge because there is room on the median.

Redevelopment has accelerated on the beaches and in downtown Clearwater. There would be a two-way trip function getting people between the beaches and downtown. It would serve tourists and employees going to the beaches. However, more work needs to be done to determine how many riders might use such a system.

The system would be paid for through fares, licensing and merchandising, retail space under the stations, private sector sources, city general funds, county/state/federal sources, and station naming rights and advertising. The PSTA, a franchise operation, or a special corporation could operate the system.

It would take about 2,800 rides per day, or 840,000 rides annually, to recover its annual O&M costs.

The next step would be the Preliminary Engineering phase with a project specific to the ridership forecasting process.

Chair Seel asked how the construction cost was determined. Mr. Crawford responded that it was based on the PMI study work plus some additional dollars. Cost would depend on the construction materials and types of trains used.

Chair Seel asked how people would move about. Mr. Crawford said that the marina would have shared parking and the downtown plan provides a surface lot of 250 spaces. Project developers in the downtown could assist with parking. Trolley circulators could operate at either end.

Commissioner Stewart said that a lot of money has been spent on the PMI. Staff said that for both the MIS study and the PMI study, a total of \$4.6 million has been spent. Commissioner Stewart said that the rail component of the study seemed economically unfeasible. He asked where the \$60 million in capital money would come from. From a capital cost standpoint, it is not affordable. He noted that the PSTA has asked for the \$2.3 million to get started but they know they can finance the project to finish it. The light rail proposal isn't offering that. He doesn't think that it would be a good use of the earmark dollars to move this project forward. Mayor Hibbard said that while the financial numbers are overwhelming, the funds for US 19 seemed overwhelming at one time. He asked what the solution would be for traffic congestion. This project is only a first step to show the citizens what is possible.

Chair Seel referred to the new Clearwater Bridge and asked if pre-bridge and post-bridge traffic studies have been made. Paul Bertels addressed the board and said that they are working on

this with a consulting firm and staffs from the County and State. Capacity has not changed although the traffic flow has improved. The question is where to put additional cars when they reach the beach.

Commissioner Duncan presented the recommendation of the PMI Steering Committee. It was to spend \$2.3 million on the St. Petersburg/PSTA BRT project; \$900,00 to \$1 million on the Clearwater Bluffs-to-Beach Guideway; and \$150,00 to fully fund the Countywide BRT study.

Regarding funding a PD&E study for the Clearwater project, Commissioner Eggers said that he is concerned about getting a study document that the board feels confident in using as a decision making tool. The board needs to have control over the study and how it's being done. They need consensus on how to determine ridership and capital costs and how much of the operating costs must be covered by ridership.

Commissioner Gerard said that she supports the Clearwater project. The board needs to be thinking long term. Regarding BRT, the board needs information it doesn't have.

Mayor Mischler said that he had been a supporter of light rail, but the MPO has spent millions of dollars on studies and shelved them. The numbers don't work for a guideway system. There are many variables on the ridership numbers. The MPO shouldn't spend more taxpayers' money on studies that are going to be shelved.

Commissioner Ronecker asked where people would park in downtown Clearwater and on Clearwater Beach. That wasn't included in the \$60 million. He supported funding the BRT for St. Petersburg and giving the remaining funds to the Countywide BRT study.

Commissioner Duncan said that the countywide BRT analysis is critical. Currently, it is not part of planned road expansion and improvements.

Several board members asked how \$150,000 would pay for a countywide BRT study when it cost \$50,000 to study McMullen-Booth Road alone.

Commissioner Eggers noted that the BRT effort in St. Petersburg is financed and meets operational standards.

MOTION: Councilmember Bryan moved that the MPO spend \$2.3 million for a study of the Central Avenue BRT project in St. Petersburg. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ronecker. Discussion continued.

Mr. Sweeney said that the routes for the BRT are still being finalized. A critical question is where the station should be located.

Mayor Hibbard said that he supports the BRT study. People need to see what BRT looks like and how it will function. However, BRT does not work well with congestion issues. At some point the MPO must redefine the mission. He asked the members opposed to the light rail what the solutions will be when more traffic lanes can't be built.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mayor Arbutine moved that the MPO fund the monorail study with the remainder of the earmark and the next portion of the second earmark. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

Mayor Arbutine said he would like a PD&E study in order to make an informed decision on monorail. Chair Seel said that the MPO had spent \$2.6 million on the present study and should have had better routes identified, ridership numbers, and accurate construction figures. She said that she could not support moving forward with another study.

Noting that this agenda item was not scheduled as a public hearing item, Chair Seel asked the board if they would allow a member of the public, who is also a member of the CAC, to speak.

ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved to allow a member of the CAC to address the MPO on this agenda item. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Jim Harpham, a four-year member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, addressed the board as a private citizen. He said that while he has been a member of the CAC, the County has done nothing to move ahead on transportation problems. He commended the City of St. Petersburg for moving ahead with a BRT project. Costs for a monorail have risen dramatically. Building it at ground level to Clearwater Beach would corrode it, and a hurricane would demolish it. The City of Clearwater must zone more wisely on the beach. Countywide, as roads are built, no space is allowed for mass transit. He opposed what he considered a poor study of monorail for the county.

Councilmember Bryan said that there are not good cost and ridership numbers for monorail. If a good study shows good numbers, then it would be worth moving ahead with that project.

Commissioner Stewart noted that in June of 2005, the MPO approved a position statement for PMI that included BRT. For several reasons, this is a good time to study countywide BRT. He said he opposed the motion on the floor but offered a substitute motion.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart offered a substitute motion that the balance of the dollars be prioritized for a countywide plan for BRT. Councilmember Bryan seconded the motion. It was clarified that a countywide BRT study would be overseen by the PSTA, working with the MPO. The motion carried, with Mayor Arbutine, Mayor Gerard, and Mayor Hibbard dissenting.

*At 3:00 p.m., Commissioner Gerard left.

There was discussion about the cost of the countywide BRT study, which is unknown.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved that he will work with staff to determine how much the countywide BRT study will cost. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion. The motion carried.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved that the PMI Steering Committee will work with MPO staff and PSTA staff to bring to the MPO board a finalized scope, proposal and budget. This information will be presented at the next MPO meeting. Councilmember Bryan seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Chair Seel noted that the MPO is not trying to "look over the shoulder" of the PSTA. Rather, the MPO is the planning entity per the federal government. She would like both agencies to work together in a way that permits oversight from both directions.

*At 3:04 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

*At 3:05 p.m., Mayor Arbutine and Mayor Hibbard left.

VII. REVIEW OF MPO GENERAL AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ms. Ward reviewed the MPO's general authority and responsibilities regarding the transportation planning process. Included with meeting materials was Chapter 5 of the MPO manual developed by the Department of Transportation. This chapter focuses on the Transportation Improvement Program.

*At 3:06 p.m., Mayor Hibbard and Commissioner Stewart returned.

Ms. Ward highlighted the sections regarding the legal authority for the TIP, the TIP schedule, financial constraint limitations, selection of projects, and approval of project priorities.

*At 3:10 p.m., Commissioner Eggers left.

VIII. 2006/07 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Ms. Ward reviewed the draft of the 2006/07 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). A copy of the UPWP was included with meeting materials.

*At 3:12 p.m., Commissioner Eggers returned.

Ms. Ward noted the major tasks that will be emphasized in the upcoming fiscal year as well as the funding levels.

*At 3:13 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

Chair Seel asked how the four general planning consultants on retainer for FY 2006/07 were selected. Ms. Ward responded that they are selected by a committee composed of MPO and DOT staff members.

*At 3:14 p.m., Commissioner Stewart returned.

Initial contracts were set at \$150,000 and can be extended up to five years. Chair Seel said that she would like to see the budget for each initiative of the Work Program and who the consultant is.

In May, the final draft of the UPWP will be presented to the MPO for adoption.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved to approve the draft UPWP. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

IX. PEDESTRIAN INITIATIVE ON U.S. 19

Chair Seel reported that there are concerns about pedestrian safety on US 19, particularly with regard to crossing the road and accessing the bus system. She and staff proposed that a task force be established by the MPO to evaluate the situation and make recommendations for improved safety. Also considered will be safety techniques that could be applied to arterial roads.

Members of the task force will be citizens, elected officials, and business owners. FDOT will be an ex officio member. Steven Cohen, chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee, has volunteered to serve. The Sheriff's Department and the Community Transportation Safety Team will be represented. Chair Seel will welcome suggestions for other members.

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved to approve the formation of a task force to study pedestrian safety on US 19. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

X. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The legislative session started this week. Ms Ward highlighted two bills:

- An MPO bill would clarify MPO status as a legal entity and make provisions for independent MPOs to be part of the Florida Retirement System.
- A County Transportation System Surtax bill would amend current law to make the surtax available to more counties beyond the seven charter counties. This would enable other counties to raise general funds for their transportation projects.

The legislature has a revenue surplus this year. Floridians for Better Transportation is urging boards such as the MPO to ask the legislature to allocate at least \$1 billion of the surplus to transportation.

Responding to Mayor Hibbard, Secretary Skelton said that he did not think that Pinellas County would be penalized if it chose not to use the County Transportation System Surtax, should this legislation pass.

XI. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved that the following appointments be made to the Citizens Advisory Committee: Clark Carey as an At Large representative and Brian Hayes to represent the City of Dunedin. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XII. PSTA ACTIVITIES

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors met on February 22. Minutes were included with meeting materials.

Councilmember Bryan reported that that PSTA had entered into an agreement with Triangle Development Company to purchase property on Wyatt Street and MLK South. This area is approximately three miles south of PSTA's bus depot in downtown Clearwater and three blocks to the east of South Fort Harrison Avenue. Purchasing this property would enable the PSTA to build a new bus depot with more land around it. Zoning changes and other details are still being worked on.

Mayor Hibbard said that the City of Clearwater has mixed feelings about this move.

XIII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Report on Traffic Incidents for 2004

The top 100 worst intersections for crashes were listed in a report submitted by the MPO's Countywide Crash Data Center. Chair Seel asked the MPO to review this information and compare it to the Long Range Transportation Plan and intersection plans to ensure that accident situations are being addressed.

Staff will check to see if data for Drew/Osceola were included with data for Cleveland/Osceola because of the proximity of these intersections.

B. Status of Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Spending

A chart showing Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) expenditures through January 2006 was included with meeting materials.

Mr. Smith reported that State Senator Mike Fasano had written a letter on February 22, 2006 to the Agency for Health Care Administration (Medicare) requesting that new language be added to the next Medicare NET contract with the MPO. The new language would allow the MPO, as Community Transportation Coordinator for Pinellas County's Transportation Disadvantaged Program, to receive a pre-paid amount each month. This would permit the TD Program's operators to be reimbursed in a timely manner.

C. Joint Chairs Coordinating Committee

The West Central Florida MPOs Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) met on March 10 in Tampa. The agenda was included with meeting materials.

D. School Transportation Safety Committee

The STSC and the 1906 Subcommittee met on March 1. An agenda was included with meeting materials. At the STSC meeting, the committee determined that there are issues regarding traffic circulation around a school. Chairman Latvala will write a letter to the Superintendent to get assistance for a special traffic study to look at that situation.

E. Correspondence

Several items of correspondence were included with meeting materials.

F. Other

Secretary Skelton reviewed a handout showing the re-pricing of some projects that remain to be let in this current year. There were some significant cost increases, and this resulted in some changes to the current Five-Year Work Program that were made after the public hearing. For Pinellas County, the Curlew/US 19 Interchange design was moved from 2010 to 2011.

Councilmember Bryan asked Secretary Skelton to check to see if a traffic improvement could be made in the Roosevelt Boulevard area heading toward Clearwater International Airport. Secretary Skelton responded that he would check into it.

Mayor Mischler encouraged board members to visit the new PSTA facility. The PSTA has invited the MPO to have a board meeting at its new facility.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no other business. The meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Karen Williams Seel, Chair