

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MINUTES - MEETING OF APRIL 9, 2008**

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, April 9, 2008 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Frank Hibbard, *Chairman* - Mayor, City of Clearwater  
Chris Arbutine, *Vice Chairman* - Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA  
Harriet Crozier - Vice Mayor, City of Largo  
Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council  
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners  
William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park  
Herbert Polson - City of St. Petersburg Council  
Robin Saenger - City of Tarpon Springs Commission, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs  
Karen Seel - Board of County Commissioners  
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners  
Bob Clifford, *ex officio* - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director  
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator  
Trudy Barker - Bayway Task Force  
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation  
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park  
Rich Clarendon - U.R.S.  
Scott Collister - Florida Department of Transportation  
Tim Garling - Executive Director, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  
Travis Jarman - Bayway Task Force  
Bill Jonson - MPO Citizens Advisory Committee; Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority Board  
Bob Lasher - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  
Geraldine Raja - Bayway Task Force  
Rein Raja - Tierra Verde  
David Sadowsky - County Attorney's Office  
Wilfred Sergeant - Transit consultant  
Don Stout - Pinellas County Veterans Services  
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder  
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Hibbard called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

## **II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE**

Mayor Mischler gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The board members introduced themselves.

\*At 1:02 p.m., Commissioner Stewart arrived.

## **III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There was no citizen comment.

## **IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of March 12, 2008
- B. Approval of Invoices
  - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
  - 2. Renaissance Planning Group
  - 3. University of South Florida
  - 4. Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
- C. Endorsement of Pasco County Section 5307 Transit Grant
- D. Approval of Transportation Disadvantaged Trip/Equipment Grant for FY 2008/09
- E. Approval of Transportation Disadvantaged Planning Grant for FY 2008/09
- F. Approval of Section 5303 Grant
- G. Approval of Amendment No. 1 to St. Petersburg Inter-modal Agreement
- H. Approval of Amendments to HART, Neighborly Care Network, and Hillsborough Health and Human Services JARC and New Freedom Agreements

Board members asked several questions about the consent agenda, and staff responded.

- Regarding Item C, the Pinellas County MPO is the designated recipient and administrator of grant funds intended for Pasco County. This service has been provided by the MPO for many years because Pasco County does not have the staff to administer its funds. The arrangement has the approval of the Federal Transit Administration. Pinellas County is not repaid for this service because the time and cost involved are minimal.
- Regarding Item G, the earmark was from 2005. With the requested amendment, the funds will still be available for the study.
- Regarding Item H, the awarding of the grants was delayed eight weeks. It is staff's understanding that an extension of the contract could be granted for a full year but not for a partial year. Extending the agreements' expiration dates will not affect the funding to be discussed under Item 7 of this agenda. Staff will provide additional information to Commissioner Seel.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Commissioner Duncan moved to approve the consent agenda, Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.</p>
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## V. PRESENTATION RE TAMPA BAY AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Mr. Clifford updated the board on the activities of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA).

The purpose of TBARTA is to move people around the region without worrying about political or jurisdictional boundaries in the process. It is the only regional organization that has the ability to plan, design, construct, own, operate, maintain, and finance transportation facilities, with a particular emphasis on transit. It is dealing with two major transportation issues in the Tampa Bay region, and they are quality of life and economic development.

TBARTA will progress to implementation—building the system. What is unique about the Authority is its ability to accept donations and develop partnerships between the public and private sectors in order to deliver transportation. Long-term responsibilities include working with each community in the member counties, including the MPOs and the local transit agencies.

The TBARTA Board has adopted four guiding principles: 1) regionalism; 2) a Master Plan; 3) communication; and 4) funding and financing.

The Master Plan is being developed along three work tracks: 1) technical steps; 2) public engagement; and 3) finance.

Seven community workshops have been held, and 400 people attended them. Another 60 public meetings have reached over 2,000 citizens, and 700 comments have been received. One hundred other community groups have been contacted to see if they would like a presentation. A consistent message the Authority has received is that a regional system and regional transit are needed in the Tampa Bay area. The subject of land use has been part of the discussion as well.

Questions to be answered are:

- From the perspectives of quality of life and economic development, does the funding investment we believe we will have to make in transportation—particularly transit—match the benefit we believe we will receive?
- What is the role of the private sector?
- What have other, comparable areas of the country done to implement regional plans?
- What worked and what didn't?

Dollars are scarce, so the right projects and the right dollars are needed to advance this transportation effort.

The TBARTA Board has asked that the Master Plan be developed by the end of this calendar year. Next year begins a new federal reauthorization process, and TBARTA should be in line for that transit discussion.

In its Work Program, the FDOT has committed \$23 million to TBARTA. The funds are being spent on the development of the Master Plan, which will include a consultant's analysis, and the steps to get to the implementation stage.

\*At 1:25 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

Pinellas County is well represented on the TBARTA Board and its subcommittees. The next TBARTA Board meeting will be on April 25.

\*At 1:26 p.m., Commissioner Stewart returned.

Commissioner Duncan said that the TBARTA Board wants to know more about the challenges each county is facing before the Master Plan is put into place. On Wednesday, May 7, 1:00-4:00 p.m., at PSTA headquarters, a discussion about Pinellas County will take place.

## **VI. BAYWAY BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

Mr. Collister gave a presentation on the S.R. 682/Pinellas Bayway Bridge and the S.R. 679/Tierra Verde Bridge and discussed the financial picture for rehabilitating the bridges rather than replacing them.

Both bridges were built to have 50-year service lives, which will end by 2012. Major rehabilitation projects to keep both bridges in a state of readiness would cost \$53.5 million. This work could be done between 2009 and 2012. Routine rehabilitation of both bridges up through 2038 would cost \$80.2 million.

Rehabilitation estimates will be programmed into the FDOT's new five-year Work Program. Costs would be paid from toll revenues.

The FDOT's decision to replace both bridges was based upon the following:

- The PD&E recommended alternative is to replace both bridges.
- It would be cost-effective to replace the bridges within the next 5 years.
- The cost to rehabilitate the bridges over the next three years
- The cost over 30 years to rehabilitate the bridges and to provide routine operation and maintenance work
- Improved traffic flow
- Improved access to beaches and Ft. DeSoto Park
- No improvement to traffic flow or to hurricane evacuation capability if not replaced

Currently, both structures are safe and undergo routine inspections. The DOT wants to keep them in a state of readiness for the traveling public.

Mr. Clifford reviewed the status of the bridge-replacement effort. There will be no toll increases in 2008. Legislative action and a new finance plan are needed. The DOT is determining the availability of federal discretionary funds for bridge replacements. The DOT's goal is that these discretionary funds would come from a category that only covers bridges. The funds have to be new money, and they should come from the right program. All the money in the trust fund has been spent. The DOT wants to have two new replacement bridges within the next five years.

Travis Jarmon of 4971 61st Avenue S. in Bayway Isles in St. Petersburg addressed the board. He spoke on behalf of the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) and the Council of

North County Neighborhoods (CNCN), which are part of the Bayway Task Force Coalition. They have many questions regarding the bridge toll system, funding, and equity. In particular, the use of the Bayway System tolls for other projects is a major concern. Other questions and concerns were noted in a letter dated March 31 from Mr. Jarmon to the MPO. The Coalition has proposed establishing a working group with representatives of the FDOT and the MPO. The City of St. Pete Beach and the City of St. Petersburg have expressed interest in participating.

Commissioner Stewart said that two new bridges are needed. Spending millions of dollars to rehabilitate the bridges would be the wrong way to go. The MPO is the most appropriate agency to take the lead and bring representatives of the concerned parties to the table. The parties would include the Bayway Task Force Coalition, the FDOT, Pinellas County, the City of St. Petersburg, the City of St. Pete Beach, legislators, and the MPO. They would examine alternative funding sources and discuss the issue of audits.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Stewart moved to form a bridge task force. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

Mayor Mischler said that making repairs is not the answer. The safety factor is a big issue. He would not support removing the tolls.

Mr. Clifford noted that currently there is a proposal in the State House to remove \$700 million from the Work Program for next year. On the Senate side, the budget presents a challenge. On the Federal side, the trust fund is empty.

Mayor Arbutine asked for assurance that the decisions and recommendations reached by the task force would come back to the MPO for approval.

Commissioner Stewart responded that historically, when the MPO has created a committee, there has been a monthly report from the MPO representative on that committee. It has been a transparent process with public participation.

Commissioner Seel responded that the task force should understand that the MPO has been working on the Work Program for many years and it has a list of priorities that it adopts every year. She expressed concern about diverting any money from projects, particularly from U.S. 19, which is the most dangerous highway in the County.

Mr. Clifford said that there is a limited amount of time to work on a solution. Therefore, the task force should be given a specified time frame in which to complete its work. The deadline should probably be before the next State legislative session.

Chairman Hibbard requested that the MPO's representative on the task force come from a jurisdiction not affected by the bridges. This would give balance to the discussion. He noted the board's consensus that the bridges need to be replaced rather than repaired.

**VOTE ON MOTION:** The motion carried unanimously.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD

### A. Request for Proposals/Qualifications for Transportation Disadvantaged Providers

In recent months, the MPO has been contacted by a wheelchair transportation company and a taxi cab company about becoming TD Program service providers. At their March 18, 2008 meeting, the LCB discussed whether a Request for Qualification (RFQ) or a Request for Proposal (RFP) process should be initiated to identify providers able to meet requirements of the TD Program. The board did not make a formal recommendation. A Request for Qualification (RFQ) process was opened in 2005 to allow for new ambulatory (taxi) service providers. Prior to 2000, an RFQ process was opened for wheelchair service providers.

Staff recommended using the RFQ process and including a requirement that the respondents must be able to provide service under the existing rate structure. By doing so, service to TD Program clients and the provider choice system could be maintained.

**ACTION:** Vice Mayor Crozier moved to initiate an RFQ process, Commissioner Saenger seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

### B. JARC/New Freedom Project Priorities

For the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, \$1,283,907 is available for Fiscal Year (FY) 08/09 and \$1,116,859 is available for FY 09/10. For the New Freedom Program, \$1,198,306 is available for FY 08/09 and \$810,746 is available for FY 09/10. For both programs, the amount for FY 08/09 includes carryover funding from the previous two years.

Projects funded under of these programs must be competitively selected. A call for applications for both programs for FYs 08/09 and 09/10 was issued on December 14, 2007. Three eligible applications were received for the JARC Program, and three were received for the New Freedom Program. On March 14, 2008, a committee consisting of one staff member from each county MPO (Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco), an FDOT District 7 representative, and a Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council staff member reviewed and scored the applications. A brief description of the projects, the funding request amounts, and the project priority ranking were included with meeting materials.

Once the priority project ranking has been approved by the necessary committees and boards in Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco Counties, a formal Program of Projects (POP) will be developed for approval by the Pinellas MPO and submittal to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The POP will include the project funding amounts recommended to the FTA. The FTA must approve the POP before issuing any JARC or New Freedom funds to the MPO.

At its March 18 meeting, the LCB recommended that the MPO approve the POP.

Responding to questions from the board, Mr. Smith said that there were not more applications because service agencies find it difficult to meet the required 50% match in funds. The board agreed that a better job needed to be done to publicize these programs so that more agencies could apply.

It was noted that any leftover funds can be rolled over to the next fiscal year.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved approval of the Program of Projects, Vice Mayor Crozier seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
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### **VIII. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

The 2008 State legislative session began in early March. Ms. Ward reviewed the transportation-related bills that have been proposed.

Regarding the Charter County Transit System Surtax, under the current law, a minimum of 75% must be used for transit, permitting 25% for other uses. Some local governments wanted to create the broader use for transportation because they need a local funding source for TRIP, which may go away. Now, the focus is on expanding the eligibility. Staff will follow up to see if non-charter counties are included in the current bill.

Regarding the Pedestrian Safety and Driver Requirements, this bill is not going in the direction the MPO would like it to go. Currently, it has gone through the Senate but not the House. Staff will send the details of its progress to the board so they can encourage their representatives to support this bill.

Regarding the CSX rail issue, TBARTA has not taken a position other than it is supportive of regional transit efforts. The DOT is supportive of the process moving forward. Commissioner Duncan said that if an agreement isn't reached now, another opportunity will probably not occur. The board agreed to write a letter in support of the need for the County to cooperate with CSX throughout the State.

### **IX. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Steering Committee met with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) on Monday, April 7. They discussed the PSTA's Transit Development Plan.

Prior to that joint meeting, the PMI Committee met to discuss development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2035 Update. The committee made two recommendations to the MPO. The first was to reactivate the Corven Engineering study evaluation of the feasibility of building a guideway on the Clearwater Memorial Causeway Bridge. This information will be needed regardless of what alternative is chosen. The second recommendation was to terminate the MacTec contract and re-scope the project to include both short-range and long-range improvements.

ACTION: Vice Mayor Crozier moved to support the recommendations of the PMI Steering Committee. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
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**X. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

**A. Citizens Advisory Committee**

ACTION: Commissioner Seel moved the following appointments to the CAC: 1) Rene Flowers as a representative of St. Petersburg; 2) Herb Elliott as a representative of Tarpon Springs/Oldsmar/Safety Harbor; and 3) Wilfred Sergeant as an At Large representative. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

**B. Local Coordinating Board**

Terms for several LCB members have expired. Reappointment procedures will be initiated so that the MPO can take action at its May meeting.

**XI. CONFIRMATION OF AUGUST MPO MEETING CANCELLATION**

The board canceled the August meeting.

Commissioner Stewart questioned the need for the MPO Board to meet every month. He noted that several members travel a long distance to attend the meetings and that some of the meetings have been short and have had few items of substance to discuss. He suggested that in the near future, the board examine the need to have meetings every month.

Responding to a question from Chairman Hibbard, Mr. Clifford said that the Hernando County and Pasco County MPOs do not meet monthly, and the Hillsborough County MPO takes more than one month off every year. All the other boards recess in July rather than August.

Chairman Hibbard said that there have been many advisory committees that meet monthly and take action. However, as these committees disband, the board may be able to meet less frequently.

**XII. PSTA ACTIVITIES**

The Board of Directors of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) met on March 26. A Meeting Summary was included with meeting materials.

Mayor Arbutine noted that in February, ridership increased by 15.2% to just over 1 million riders.

Tim Garling, Executive Director of the PSTA, thanked the members of the Pinellas Mobility Initiative Steering Committee who participated in the joint meeting with the PSTA. He said that it is important to reach consensus on the projects ahead and to resolve outstanding issues. Good partnerships are being developed in this regard.

Regarding the PSTA's Transportation Development Plan, the PSTA is looking toward a goal of doubling ridership over a ten-year period. This requires a focus on ten major corridors. Local service is important to the development of regional transportation.

**XIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. West Central Florida Chairs Coordinating Committee**

The CCC met on March 14 in Sarasota. Discussions of particular interest concerned the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority, the participation of the MPOs, and future turnpike tolling technology.

**B. Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council**

The MPOAC met on April 3. The Council discussed the reauthorization of the federal bill, greenhouse emission reductions, air quality standards, and the Florida Rail Plan. Time was allowed for the attendees to meet with legislators.

**C. Correspondence**

Commissioner Stewart, as Chairman of the Pinellas County Commission, wrote a letter on March 12 to Mayor Baker of the City of St. Petersburg. The City and the MPO need to discuss the transportation concurrency program.

**D. Other**

As of February 2008, the balance in the Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation fund was \$733,957.98.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

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Frank Hibbard, Chairman