

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF JULY 11, 2007**

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, July 11, 2007 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
John Bryan - City of St. Petersburg Council
Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission
William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Robin Saenger - City of Tarpon Springs Commission, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners
Don Skelton, *ex officio* - Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

Harriet Crozier - Vice Mayor, City of Largo
Karen Seel - Board of County Commissioners

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater
David Bredahl - American Consulting Engineers
Jim Byers - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Marlene Clausen - Town of Indian Shores Council
Jewel Cole - Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Scott Collister - Florida Department of Transportation
Jose Coppen - City of Indian Rocks Beach Commission
Rick Eggers - City of Pinellas Park Traffic Department
Rita Farlow - St. Petersburg *Times*
Paul Giuliani - Pinellas County Utilities
Gina Harvey - MPO Staff
Joan Herndon - Vice Mayor, Town of Indian Shores
Bob Klute - City of Largo Community Development
Jim Lawrence - Mayor, Town of Indian Shores
Bill Ockunzzi - Mayor, City of Indian Rocks Beach
Mary Sheets - Florida Department of Transportation
Bill Smith - Town of Indian Shores Council
Steve Sutch - Town of Indian Shores Council

Mike Sweet - Director of Engineering, Pinellas County Utilities
Tom Whalen - City of St. Petersburg
Ed Williams - Town Administrator, Town of Indian Shores
Residents of the City of Indian Rocks Beach and the Town of Indian Shores
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hibbard called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

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

*At 1:04 p.m., Commissioners Duncan and Stewart arrived.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE

On behalf of the MPO, Chairman Hibbard presented a plaque to former MPO Board Member Richard Kriseman, who had represented the City of St. Petersburg and is now serving in the Florida House of Representatives.

Representative Kriseman thanked the MPO and noted that at the next session of the State Legislature, he would reintroduce the pedestrian safety bill initiated by Pinellas County.

*At 1:08 p.m., Mayor Arbutine arrived.

IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There was no citizen comment.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of June 13, 2007
- B. Approval of Invoices
 - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
 - 2. Renaissance Planning Group
 - 3. American Consulting Engineers
 - 4. MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc.
- C. Approval of Short-listing of Firms and Authorization to Negotiate a Contract with the Number 1 Ranked Firm for MPO Auditing Services

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved approval of the consent agenda, Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING - ADOPTION OF FY 2007/08-2011/12 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Ward presented the proposed FY 2007/08-2011/12 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The program reflects the priorities for federal funding that the MPO adopted in September 2006. Since the adoption of the FDOT's Tentative Work Program, there has been a funding shortfall, and this is reflected in the program.

The MPO's priorities include Ulmerton Road, US 19, CR 296 and 118th Avenue, and Gandy Boulevard. There are capacity improvements and resurfacing projects in response to the DOT's policy of maintaining the existing highway system. Ms. Ward highlighted the major projects.

Councilmember Bryan thanked Secretary Skelton for his comments quoted in a news article that the number one priority for the County is the 118th Avenue connector. Ms. Ward said that the project should be able to move ahead. The funds are there to begin work on the design. A resolution from the County is needed to commit to the funding.

The FDOT will check on the schedule for the resurfacing project at the intersection of Gandy Boulevard and the dog track. This is a resurfacing project to install a skid-friction overlay.

The FDOT will check on what work is being done in the area of Gandy Boulevard between 4th Street and 9th Street. Councilmember Bryan said that it appears that soil samples are being taken.

Chairman Hibbard opened the public hearing.

Bill Wallace, a resident of Turner Street, Clearwater, addressed the board about the Clearwater–Beach Connector Trail and the segment of it going from the Pinellas Trail at Turner Street to the east end of the Memorial Bridge. This segment of the trail will pass through residential areas. The current concrete sidewalk and parking spaces would be removed even though parking is an important issue to the residents. The proposed eight-foot path is not wide enough for both pedestrians and bicycles. Solid waste removal may be a problem. The hours of trail operation may make it unsafe for residents or businesses that are close to the trail.

Mr. Wallace discussed alternatives to the present plan and proposed a different trail path with less negative impact to the neighborhood. The neighborhood residents support a beach connector trail, but they would like to find a path that would be less intrusive and would have less negative impact than the one planned for Turner Street. A petition signed by residents and businesses along Turner Street was left with the board.

Mayor Hibbard said that the City of Clearwater had discussed this matter at length with Mr. Wallace. The City needs this connection to the Pinellas Trail and the Progress Energy Trail. There are no good alternatives in Clearwater. The City has tried to address the solid waste issue. Pedestrians, bikes and vehicles will have to co-exist in this area, but they must be connected to the beach connector, which is a sought-after trail in the City. The City feels it has done everything it can to accommodate residents' needs.

There was no other public comment. The public hearing was closed.

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved to approve the FY 2007/08-2011/12 Transportation Improvement Program. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion. The roll was called, and the board voted as follows: Mayor Arbutine - Yes; Councilmember Bryan - Yes; Councilmember Danner - Yes; Commissioner Duncan - Yes; Commissioner Eggers - Yes; Mayor Hibbard - Yes; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Councilmember Saenger - Yes; Commissioner Stewart - Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. GULF BOULEVARD IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

The FDOT had proposed a scaled-back project for Gulf Boulevard at a cost of \$26 million. It would enable the project to stay within the funds that are available for the project at this time. The \$26 million is a guaranteed maximum price under a "construction manager at risk" procurement process. If the project runs over the estimated cost, the construction manager would bear the extra cost.

The DOT believes the modified project will fulfill much of the intent of the original, \$38 million project. The modified design can fit in the budget for the coming fiscal year, 07/08. Secretary Skelton said that if the MPO would like to defer another project costing \$13 million, the Department will listen to their proposal.

*At 1:33 p.m., Commissioner Duncan left.

Scott Collister, Director of Transportation Development for District 7, reviewed the project chronology starting with 1999; explained the proposed design in detail with the DOT's construction costs; and outlined an action plan for constructing the project. It was noted that the new design uses pervious pavement to facilitate drainage into the roadway. The DOT has determined that it can provide up to \$15 million for its portion of the project, which is a joint project with Pinellas County Utilities.

*At 1:36 p.m., Commissioner Duncan returned.

The DOT's recommendation was to proceed with the new design and, in partnership with Pinellas County Utilities, complete the negotiations with the County's contractor. Construction could begin this fall.

Mr. Collister said that by having a guaranteed maximum price, there is already an existing contract. That saves the time of putting out another project for bid. Other advantages of changing to this design are that it will decrease the duration of the project and drive down the costs for both the maintenance of traffic and the contractor's mobilization.

The board asked several questions about the design, the lighting, the drainage, and the materials that will be used. The drainage will not be the same in the redesign nor will it be superior to the other design, but it will enhance the existing drainage. Pervious pavement should provide at least 15 years of service.

Mayor Jim Lawrence of the Town of Indian Shores said that the Town is concerned about pedestrian safety and flood control. Pervious pavement on its beach accesses has not been very successful. He noted that several million dollars have already been spent on the

planning process for the larger project. The town has spent \$80,000 on a storm water management master plan and has funded three phases of implementation of that plan at a cost of \$861,000. Regarding the utility under-grounding, the town has embarked on its \$6.3 million dollar project. Millions of dollars have been spent on these projects in order to comply with the previous plan. Also, it was the consensus of the Big-C that the original plan should continue.

Councilmember Bill Smith of the Town of Indian Shores said that the proposed plan is not comparable and that there is no equivalence in drainage with a pervious surface. There will be a problem with vehicles using the sidewalks as a passing lane. In the long run, the more expensive project will be the least costly solution to solve the road's problems. A modified project will not meet the needs over time and eventually will have to be done over again. Also, the Gulf Boulevard beautification project can't happen in this section if the road isn't improved properly.

Mayor Bill Ockunzzi of the City of Indian Rocks Beach talked about the life cycle costs of the project. The lesser project will have higher maintenance costs over time. The current, more expensive project would bring this segment of Gulf Boulevard up to the standard of the rest of the road. The extra money should be found now to create a project that will last for the long term.

Commissioner Jose Copen of the City of Indian Rocks Beach expressed concerns about the contracting method used and the riparian rights of the homeowners. Secretary Skelton explained that "construction manager at risk" is the contracting method that Pinellas County Utilities chose for this project, and this is a joint project under Utilities' management.

Board members noted that the major issues were pedestrian safety, drainage, the choice of a pervious pavement, and funding. They also noted that there would be no curbing between the vehicle, bike, and pedestrian lanes.

*At 2:36 p.m., Commissioner Duncan left.

In discussing the limited funds and what projects might yield the needed \$10 million to complete the MPO's funding, Mr. Smith said that the two projects in the work program that have the money are Ulmerton Road and the 118th Avenue connector. If money were taken from these projects, they would have to move out of the five-year program.

*At 2:37 p.m., Commissioner Saenger left.

Secretary Skelton said that efficiencies would be achieved if the road project were done at the same time as the reclaimed water project of Pinellas County Utilities. In the Department's opinion, moving forward with the road project and doing as much as possible with the \$15 million project would be the best way to go.

*At 2:38 p.m., Commissioner Saenger returned.

Construction plans are 100% complete for the full project of \$38,000,000. Plans are not complete for the \$15 million project, but the design consultant is on a path to complete modifications to the existing plans. The plan could be complete in two or three months. Construction could begin in the fall of this year. Mike Sweet, Director of Engineering for

Pinellas County Utilities, said that the original plan would take 36 months to complete, and the revised plan would take 20 months to complete. He said that if the road project is delayed by the MPO, Pinellas County Utilities would proceed with its reclaimed water project because they have been waiting several years to do this work.

*At 2:40 p.m., Commissioner Duncan returned.

Commissioner Stewart said that Utilities must move ahead with its reclaimed water project, noting that several years have been lost to provide that service to their customers. If that project advances and the road project does not move forward with it, the economies will be lost and the inconveniences will increase. Additionally, Pinellas County Utilities would have increased costs if they have to rebuild the pavement they dig up for their project. If the MPO wants to move forward with a project that it can afford and do it in a timely way, it must use the proposed modified design, which would begin construction this fall and would be done at the same time as the Utilities project.

MOTION: Commissioner Stewart moved that the MPO adopt the proposed modified design for Gulf Boulevard. Councilmember Bryan seconded the motion for discussion. Discussion followed.

Responding to Councilmember Danner, Mr. Collister said that at a later time, after this project is completed, a curbed, concrete sidewalk could be phased in to create a safer pedestrian element. He added that a permit situation would be created where adequate drainage is required at impervious areas.

Mayor Arbutine said that while he believes that the \$15 million project does not solve the problems sufficiently, it seems that the time has come to act. He said he could support the modified project because the paving of a parking area is part of the plan.

Mr. Collister said that the modified project adds five significant drainage outfalls to pull storm water away from where it's ponding now. Inlets will be connected to them. There will be six miles of pervious pavement on either side of the road. He confirmed that a parking area will be paved.

Councilmember Bryan agreed that the modified project will make a significant improvement and that it needs to be done with Utilities' project. The extra \$10 million does not exist now. If needed, improvements may have to be added later to the work program.

Chairman Hibbard noted that the State, the County, and local jurisdictions are economizing in their budgets. The modified plan gets the work done while economizing. The other projects from which money could be taken are extremely important to the County because they will move traffic. He noted that before property taxes and property insurance, the one problem on the citizens' minds was traffic.

Mayor Mischler said that no one liked scaling back the project but it is long overdue. Most every other project in the work program has been pushed back for years, too. They are roads with heavy traffic, and the County is dependent upon them for evacuations. This is the time to move ahead because next year the project costs will rise even more.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

Mr. Smith reported that the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Steering Committee met on Monday, July 9. They discussed the following projects:

- *Clearwater-to-Clearwater Beach Guideway Project* - The committee received a report from the consultant. The outstanding issue is the suitability of the Memorial Causeway Bridge to support a guideway. The committee concluded that no further work should be done on the project until that assessment is complete. The assessment report is expected to be presented to the PMI in September.
- *CSX Corridor* - MPO staff reported on the corridor width and gave an indication of the possibilities for the corridor.
- *St. Petersburg-to-Beaches BRT Project* - The committee felt that they did not have enough information to make a recommendation to the MPO. They concluded that a joint meeting is needed among the key agencies—the PMI Steering Committee, the MPO, and the PSTA—working on this project. The deadline is September 7 to submit an application for Federal grant funds for the coming fiscal year.
- *County-wide BRT Project* - The committee received a status report.

Councilmember Bryan referred to a letter dated July 10 from Mayor Baker of the City of St. Petersburg requesting that the MPO defer any action of support for the PSTA's proposal for the BRT project in the City. The project will be built within the borders of the City, and until the City is happy with the project, they won't support it. The City would prefer to delay the request for funds until the next cycle rather than advance an unacceptable project.

Councilmember Bryan also said that PSTA staff and City staff need to meet to solve the problems that exist between them and that there needs to be greater cooperation from the PSTA before progress can be made. Therefore, the City would like the MPO to defer any decision in support of a project until these two agencies have solved their differences.

Councilmember Danner said that if the project moves forward as the PSTA proposes, it will be detrimental to businesses. Business owners are not happy with what is being proposed now as compared to the original vision they had supported. They will lose parking spaces so that buses can run to the mall. PSTA needs the support of the host city or it shouldn't be done at all. However, it has been difficult to get PSTA staff to sit down with the City.

Mayor Hibbard concurred, saying that this project should be a collaborative effort. The host city should be pleased with the overall plan. This project represents the County's first step into BRT. If unsuccessful, it does not bode well for the rest of the County. The City and the PSTA should hammer out their problems first before other parties enter the discussions.

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved that the MPO defer action on a determination of the consistency of the St. Petersburg-to-Beaches BRT project with the MPO Plan. Councilmember Danner seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

IX. COUNTYWIDE CRASH DATA SYSTEM

*At 3:03 p.m., Commissioner Eggers and Councilmember Bryan left.

MPO staff requested \$50,000 to update and improve the MPO's crash data system. The funds will provide Pinellas County Information Systems with the resources to prioritize and implement the system's programming. The goal is to eliminate the duplication of data entry efforts while providing the local agencies direct and simplified access to the data for analysis purposes. The MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee will provide direction in the development of the new system.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved approval of staff's request for funds. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

X. RECOMMENDATION FROM PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At their meeting on June 18, 2007, the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) passed PTAC Motion #07-1 and asked the MPO to approve it. The motion calls for consistent pedestrian safety messages and facilities among the jurisdictions along Gulf Boulevard and provides guidelines to achieve pedestrian safety and awareness.

ACTION: Mayor Arbutine moved to approve PTAC Motion #07-1. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMITTEE

*At 3:05 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left and Councilmember Bryan returned.

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

The School Transportation Safety Committee met on June 6 and passed two motions. The committee asked the MPO to approve them.

*At 3:07 p.m., Councilmember Bryan left.

A. STSC Motion #07-1

Motion #07-1 called for a Countywide program to manage the school crossing guards. The board asked for further information before making a decision regarding approval.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to defer action on Motion #07-1, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. STSC Motion #07-2

Motion #07-2 recommended that the MPO propose to the FDOT that funding from the Safe Routes to School Program be made available to local governments for safety and education. By consensus, the board directed staff to find out where the referenced 10% monies are being stored.

XII. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The board received from the Metropolitan Planning Organizations Advisory Council (MPOAC) a summary of the transportation bill that was passed during the last State legislative session. An amendment now allows for a show of hands from the MPO boards as opposed to a roll call vote on TIP and LRTP actions. Language regarding the Strategic Intermodal System has been codified, and it delegates to the FDOT the responsibility for adding or deleting SIS facilities. This must be done in coordination with MPOs, local governments, regional planning councils, etc. Other provisions of the bill relate to independent MPOs and private sector involvement.

XIII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to appoint Joan Andrade to the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XIV. PSTA ACTIVITIES

The Board of Directors of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority met on June 27. The minutes were included with meeting materials for the board's information.

XV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. MPO Summer Schedule

If the City of St. Petersburg and the PSTA reach an agreement on the BRT project soon, the MPO may meet in August.

B. Joint Chairs Coordinating Committee

The Joint CCC will meet with the Central Florida MPO Alliance on July 20, 2007 in Polk City. The Alliance represents MPOs from Polk County to the Daytona area.

An MPOAC Institute training session will be offered at a meeting of the Florida League of Cities.

C. Correspondence

An email was received from the FDOT regarding new countdown traffic signals that will be installed throughout the County. This is part of an effort to improve pedestrian safety.

D. Other

A chart showing TD Medicaid expenditures through May 2007 was included with meeting materials.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

Frank Hibbard, Chairman