

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF NOVEMBER 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, November 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
Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission
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
Bob Clifford - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Members Absent

Harriet Crozier - City of Largo Commission
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners

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
Keith Crawford - Florida Department of Transportation
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant - Transit Consultant, Largo
Bill Steele - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
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

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

At this time, Chair Seel welcomed to the MPO Councilmember Jeff Danner of the City of St. Petersburg.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Peter Reuter of Clearwater addressed the board about the County's east-west traffic movement and how it could be improved by using overpasses, particularly those on U.S. 19 at 125th Street and 142nd Street.

*At 1:07 p.m., Councilmember Bryan arrived.

Mid-county needs more corridors to facilitate east-west traffic movement. A follow-up letter will be faxed to the board members.

Wilfred Sergeant of Largo addressed the board about the need to determine the objectives for the transit projects that the MPO is discussing, particularly the BRT projects, and how to measure those projects' success.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of October 11, 2006**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
 - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates**
 - 2. HNTB**
- C. Approval of Contract Amendment with American Consulting Engineers of Florida**

<p>ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p>
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V. PUBLIC HEARING - FALL UPDATE TO FY 2006/07 TIP

Ms. Ward reviewed the fall update to the Fiscal Year 2006/07 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The update occurs after the County and the municipalities adopt their new budgets, and it reflects capital improvement changes in the County and Municipal Work Programs.

Ms. Ward reviewed the County's key projects. A number of smaller projects for local streets have been deferred to permit funds to be used on the Belleair Bridge project, which has realized a significant cost increase. Corrections to the project map were noted. Also included in the County's Work Program is the funding for the extension of the Pinellas Trail into downtown St. Petersburg. This is not an active CSX corridor but an abandoned corridor.

Ms. Ward reviewed the key municipal projects. These are smaller roadway improvements rather than major capacity projects.

Regarding Bryan Dairy Road from Starkey Road to 72nd Street, staff will confirm the limits of this project to see if it extends to 66th Street.

Bryan Dairy Road is slipping because it must be constructed after Starkey Road, and this is because these roads have a shared drainage system. The first segment of Starkey Road will begin construction next year. The project is on schedule.

Mayor Mischler suggested that flyovers be constructed on Bryan Dairy Road at Belcher Road and Starkey Road. This would create a freeway from Alternate 19 to the interstate. The consensus of the board was that the idea should be considered. Public Works will prepare a preliminary cost analysis to show what would be needed to put these projects into the work program.

Chair Seel opened the public hearing. There was no public comment. The hearing was closed.

Chair Seel noted that on Chart 3, the Board of County Commissioners did not approve the City of St. Pete Beach Transportation Impact Fee Grant, so that shall be removed from the TIP.

ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved approval of the update to the FY 2006/07 TIP, as amended. 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 Ronecker - Yes; Chair Seel - Yes. The motion carried.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FY 2006/07 TIP

Brian Beaty of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) presented for approval five amendments to the FY 2006/07-2010/11 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). They were for the following projects:

- FPN 421758-1 is a safety project to install 38 advance street name signs on the north and south approaches to 19 signalized intersections on CR 611/McMullen-Booth Road from the Pasco County Line to the Bayside Bridge. Cost will be \$127,300. Funding will come from the District's Arterial Safety Contingency Reserve.
- FPN 413076-1 is to install bicycle racks and lockers at 14 locations in St. Petersburg. Construction cost is \$16,800.
- FPN 406058 1 is to install landscaping and an irrigation system in the median of the Clearwater Memorial Causeway/SR 60 from the west end of Memorial Bridge to the east end of the Mandalay Channel Bridge. Construction cost is \$300,000.
- FPN 415744-2 is to construct an 8-foot asphalt trail with landscaping and irrigation from the east end of the Memorial Bridge to the Pinellas Trail in Clearwater. This is the Clearwater Beach Connector Trail East. Construction cost is \$416,152.
- FPN 406484-7 is to design a 10-foot asphalt multi-use trail from 54th Avenue to 37th Street in St. Petersburg as part of the Skyway Trail. Design cost is \$120,000.

The latter four projects are enhancements projects and have been programmed for the current year. They were recently prioritized by the MPO as Tier 1 projects, with the exception of the Beach Connector, which is a Tier 2 project. All of them are Local Agency Program (LAP) projects. The funds will come from the Enhancement Reserve Fund for the County.

- An additional TIP amendment was presented for FPN 421358-1, a safety improvement project on Gandy Boulevard between Oak Street and San Martin Boulevard. An amendment to add the project to the TIP was approved by the board in September. Since that time, a revised construction cost estimate has been completed by the DOT. The cost was \$235,460 and is now estimated to be \$140,000-\$160,000 higher than that. Funds will come from the Arterial Safety Contingency Reserve.

Chair Seel opened the public hearing. There was no public comment. The hearing was closed.

It was noted that the costs of asphalt and concrete have risen sharply in recent years.

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved approval of the amendments to the TIP as requested by the FDOT. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion. The roll was called, and the board voted as follows: Mayor Arbutine - Yes; Councilmember Bryan - Yes; Councilmember Danner - Yes; Commissioner Duncan - No; Commissioner Eggers - Yes; Mayor Hibbard - Yes; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Councilmember Ronecker - Yes; Chair Seel - Yes. The motion carried by a vote of 8-1.

VII. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE PROJECTS UPDATE

A. Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Study

The Countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study has been initiated. Tindale-Oliver is the consultant, and they will work with the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR). The study will examine all the major corridors in Pinellas County for BRT feasibility. Eight to ten corridors will be prioritized. By February or March, the corridors should be finalized for further examination and developing implementation plans.

B. Downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach Guideway

Three firms submitted proposals in response to the solicitation for Requests for Proposals (RFPs). The Pinellas Mobility Initiative Committee will review them at their meeting on November 15 and make a recommendation to the MPO in December.

C. Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit

The focus of this project is now on the corridor from downtown St. Petersburg to Madeira Beach. More information will be presented to the PSTA Board of Directors regarding how to fund it.

VIII. PROPOSAL TO CLARIFY REVIEW PROCEDURES CONCERNING TRAFFIC SIGNALS

This item was continued from the October meeting. The Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee (TS&MCC) had requested clarification and direction from the MPO regarding what the board expects of the committee. The board directed staff to review the decision-making process and draft a response to the TS&MCC.

Paul Bertels, chair of the TS&MCC, said that the committee wanted to know if it were to continue operating under parameters established when it was created in 1984. Its purpose then was to try to reduce the number of signals that were being installed in protected capacity corridors. It follows technical warrants written in the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). It does consider subjective indicators, but they are not considered of equal importance to the technical warrants. Mr. Bertels noted that if the committee goes outside the technical warrants to base a signal on something else such as a subjective indicator, especially when no warrants have been met, it faces serious liability issues. The warrants are critical to maintaining the line of liability. The MPO itself has no liability because it doesn't own anything. The cities and the State do have liability.

Mr. Bertels also noted that this MPO is the only one in the country that has a signal review committee. The TS&MCC wants to make sure that it is in agreement with the MPO and that it meets the board's needs as well as the local governments' needs to meet liability requirements. They need to know what they should present to the board.

Pete Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works, Vice Chair of the TS&MCC, reviewed that the committee was formed to prevent the installation of some signals on U.S. 19 so that they wouldn't congest traffic on that corridor. Signal requests had been increasing at that time. Over time, there has been a transition from not installing signals on protected corridors in order to reduce congestion to installing signals where they have been requested. Some signals did not meet warrants but they were approved. Installing signals has frequently resulted in an increase in crashes. The warrants are part of the U.S. Code. What the TS&MCC considers is how the signal would improve safety and the operation of the intersection.

Mr. Clifford noted that this is the only MPO that has a signal review committee. While the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is agreeable to using this procedure, the FDOT wants to make it clear that they have jurisdiction over State roadways and will follow their own procedures and policies, which are based on the MUTCD that defines the warrants. If a proposed location meets warrants, it may get a signal, but that is discretionary. If it doesn't meet warrants, it will not get a signal. The FDOT understands the subjective aspects, but it leaves these issues to the technical staff for consideration. Mr. Clifford said that FDOT policy is that signal decisions are best handled by technical personnel. The MPO is a planning entity, but signals are implementation issues. Mr. Clifford also noted that in the other counties, the MPOs don't make a review or decision. The local jurisdictions make the signal decisions. He added that signal matters don't have to come before the MPO. The TS&MCC committee can make a recommendation to the jurisdiction that has the responsibility over the road.

Mr. Smith said that before the MPO's involvement, signals were being installed without the public knowing who had made the decision. The MPO was given review authority as a communication tool to keep the public informed. There was no intent to change the decision-making process or shift liability. It was noted at the time that land use decisions were facing high scrutiny through a public review process while traffic signals were not, yet both actions affected people in the area. The committee was formed because residents complained about the proliferation of signals that were disrupting traffic, and government officials believed the nationally accepted standard for installing signals was too lenient.

County Attorney David Sadowsky clarified that the MPO, as a lay board, is only making a recommendation to a local government. The MPO has no liability in the matter because it doesn't own the road. Therefore, that local government doesn't have to consider the MPO's recommendation. The MPO is one step in the process before the government with jurisdiction over that road makes the final decision.

Several board members said that under these conditions, the MPO should not be involved in the signal review process.

Other board members said that following the warrants would de-politicize the decision, and that subjective indicators from the community shouldn't be considered.

Mr. Yauch explained that in Pinellas County, the County Traffic Engineer is given authority for implementing all traffic control devices except traffic signals, which go to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Under Florida statutes, the cities have traffic control jurisdiction

over their roadways including those segments of County roads that pass through them. Staff has prepared a chart which explains the jurisdictional authorities.

MOTION: Mayor Mischler moved that the MPO shall not review traffic signal requests. The TS&MCC shall make their recommendation directly to the agency with jurisdiction over the road. Councilmember Bryan seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

Mayor Arbutine said that the MPO is comprised of elected officials and that it shouldn't delegate its power. The MPO has the bigger, countywide picture of traffic flow.

Commissioner Eggers said that the MPO serves to de-politicize the process at a local level. It rules on signals in which it has no political stake because it looks at the whole county. The public is expert in its own right and the subjective indicators should be considered.

VOTE ON MOTION: The roll was called, and the board voted as follows: The Mayor Arbutine - No; Councilmember Bryan - Yes; Councilmember Danner - No; Commissioner Duncan - No; Commissioner Eggers - No; Mayor Hibbard - No; Mayor Mischler - Yes; Councilmember Ronecker - Yes; Chair Seel - No. The motion failed by a vote of 6-3.

ACTION: Mayor Arbutine moved that the MPO accept the report that the procedure for reviewing traffic signal requests shall be status quo. Councilmember Ronecker seconded the motion. At the request of the DOT, Mayor Arbutine amended the motion to say that regarding signals on the State highway system, it will be clearly written in the MPO's bylaws that a signal request shall go to the TS&MCC as a courtesy and that the DOT has the authority to make the decision regarding the signal. Councilmember Ronecker agreed to the amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

There were no committee appointments.

X. PSTA ACTIVITIES

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors met on October 25. Minutes were included with the meeting packet. Mayor Arbutine noted that new MPO Board member Jeff Danner also sits on the PSTA Board of Directors.

Councilmember Bryan reported that Mayor Iorio of the City of Tampa has proposed that the PSTA merge with HARTline. The two systems have been working together on several programs. The PSTA Board decided that prior to any study of a merger, a joint meeting of the two transit boards would be appropriate.

Mayor Hibbard said that there has been talk of moving the PSTA's depot from downtown Clearwater to another site. The PSTA board has voted on this. The County and the City of Clearwater had been discussing a joint-use building that could incorporate a new PSTA terminal in the parking garage adjacent to the building. He said that he was alarmed to read in the newspaper that Roger Sweeney, PSTA's Executive Director, had said that if the City and County want the PSTA's current site, they could perhaps buy it one day from Triangle, a private developer. Mayor Hibbard said that government agencies should be working together; and whether the PSTA stays on the site or not, it is irresponsible of them to sell the property to a

private developer without giving the County or the City first rights of refusal. It is possible that the City and the County would have to negotiate with the developer to get the property back.

Councilmember Bryan responded that he agreed with Mayor Hibbard but that no one representing the City of Clearwater was present at the meeting when the discussion took place. He and Mayor Arbutine said that there seemed to be no urgency on this matter from either the County or the City.

Board discussion continued and several observations were made. Communication among the County, the City and the PSTA has been a problem. Parties who should be at the table are not present or are given little time to prepare responses to PSTA proposals. Mr. Smith noted that the PSTA meeting packets were received on a Friday afternoon, leaving everyone two days to prepare to discuss this matter. This could explain why there wasn't the input there should have been at the meeting.

Councilmember Bryan said that this site matter was a staff-driven idea and at the last minute, the PSTA's board was asked to make a decision. He said that he would address the communication problem at the next PSTA Board meeting. Chair Seel noted that for several months, the County, the City and the PSTA's Executive Director had been negotiating the joint funding of a study of the County/City/PSTA piece.

Regarding the site the PSTA is considering, Chair Seel said that the size of the land must be carefully examined. Railroad tracks bisect the site, and it may be inadequate for the purposes PSTA is considering. It will probably require going to the north, which is City of Clearwater property. Inter-governmental cooperation is going to be needed.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Spending

A chart showing Medicaid NET expenditures through September 2006 was included with meeting materials.

B. Correspondence

Several items of correspondence and news articles were included with meeting materials.

C. Other

1. Public Workshop

A public workshop will be held on November 9 to identify transportation needs and solutions for older adults, persons with disabilities and individuals with lower incomes. This is in connection with the Locally Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan

2. Nominating Committee for MPO Officers for 2007

Mayor Mischler, Commissioner Stewart and Commissioner Eggert were appointed to a nominating committee for MPO officers for 2007. The committee will meet at 12:45 p.m. on December 13, before the MPO meeting, to prepare a slate of nominees for presentation to the MPO board.

3. Pedestrian Crosswalk Legislation

A positive response was received from State Senator Fasano regarding the MPO's proposed pedestrian crosswalk legislation. The MPO can ask him to sponsor this legislation in the State Senate. A State Representative is needed to sponsor it in the House.

4. Public Hearings on FDOT Work Program

Two public hearings will be held on the FDOT/District 7 Five-Year Tentative Work Program for Fiscal Years July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2012. They will take place on Tuesday, December 5 in New Port Richey and on Thursday, December 7 in Tampa.

5. Iron Man Competition

Mayor Hibbard thanked the County and the Cities of Pinellas Park, Largo, Belleair, Belleair Bluffs and Safety Harbor for their cooperation in planning the Iron Man World Championship taking place on November 11. He also expressed his thanks to Paul Bertels for his work in coordinating the traffic around the County. Approximately 2,000 athletes from around the world will be participating.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Karen Williams Seel, Chair