

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MINUTES - MEETING OF MARCH 11, 2009**

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 11, 2009 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Chris Arbutine – *Chairman* – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA  
David Eggers – *Vice Chairman* – City of Dunedin Commission  
Neil Brickfield – Board of County Commissioners  
Jeff Danner – City of St. Petersburg Council  
Harriet Crozier – City of Largo Commission  
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park  
Herbert Polson – City of St. Petersburg Council  
Andy Steingold – Mayor, City of Safety Harbor representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs (arrived 1:12 p.m.)  
Kenneth Welch – Board of County Commissioners  
Don Skelton, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation District 7

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Karen Seel – *Secretary/Treasurer* – Board of County Commissioners  
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director  
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Division Manager  
David Sadowsky – County Attorney's Office  
Mahshid Arasteh – Pinellas County Public Works  
Rob Meador - Pinellas County Public Works  
Ken Jacobs – Pinellas County Traffic  
Lee Royal – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)  
Scott Collister – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)  
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater  
Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park  
Joe Kubicki – City of St. Petersburg  
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg  
Tim Garling – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)  
Wilfred Sergeant – Citizen (Citizens Advisory Committee)  
Ryan Brinson – MPO Staff  
Heather Sobush – MPO Staff  
Joel Rey – Tindale-Oliver and Associates  
Peter B. Ferraro – Harbor Club Condo Association  
Dallas Brents – Visitor  
Richard Petrif – Visitor  
Jack Nazario – Harbor Club Condo Association  
Brian Shuford – Pinellas Realtor Organization  
Jivian Peters – TBADA  
Manny Koutsourais – Harbor Club Condo  
Larry Macy – Harbor Club Condo  
Dean Johnson – Harbor Club Condo

Allen Ibaugh – DTS  
Travis Jarman – CI Bayway Task Force  
Raymond J. Krepfle – Tierra Verde Community Association  
Geraldine Raja – Tierra Verde Community Association  
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Arbutine called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

**II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE**

Commissioner Harriet Crozier gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board members introduced themselves.

**III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Peter Ferraro, 100 Bluff View Drive, Belleair Bluffs, spoke on the safety impacts that will result once the construction of the new Belleair Beach Causeway is complete. There are a number of condos located in this area on West Bay Drive that will be affected. The residents appreciate the construction of the new bridge since it will serve the needs of the motor vehicles and the residents in case of an evacuation. The traffic in this area continues to increase, which creates a negative impact for residents attempting to access West Bay Drive. In addition, a number of motorists exceed the speed limit. Once the construction is complete, the condo driveway will be located at the base of a deep valley due to the grade of the new bridge. The new bridge replaces a bascule bridge, which when open, would allow vehicles to access West Bay Drive. In addition, the road was flatter which allowed motorists unobstructed visibility and the ability to estimate vehicle speeds. This situation has changed with the construction of the new bridge and the widening and other improvements to West Bay Drive. The configuration to their driveway has changed, which makes it more difficult to enter onto West Bay Drive. In addition, the condos are a 55+ age community and the reconfiguration of the driveway significantly impacts the residents due to their age and other physical deteriorations. He invited the MPO members to experience first-hand this situation. The residents' goal is to eliminate the potential for a deadly accident; therefore, they would like the consideration of traffic signals at appropriate locations. Installation of the signals would stop motorists; thereby, allowing the condo residents to exit the condo driveway. In addition, traffic signals would allow vehicles with boat trailers to enter and exit the new boat ramp area and would allow pedestrians and handicapped individuals to cross the roadway. The residents would also like speed warning signs installed on both sides of West Bay Drive to warn motorists they are exceeding the 35 mph speed limit.

**\*\*During the presentation, at 1:12 p.m., Mayor Andy Steingold arrived\*\***

Mayor Arbutine added additional details regarding this situation. This issue was brought to the attention of the County staff and they sent a letter they would perform a traffic warrant study; however, the residents feel the decision has already been made there would not be a traffic signal if it's not installed at the time of construction.

Discussion followed by the MPO members. Mr. Smith commented the County has agreed to perform a traffic study once construction has been complete so they knew the conditions, then the City would bring a proposal for a traffic signal forward that would go through the committee and MPO process.

Ken Jacobs, Pinellas County Traffic Division, indicated they explained to the City that, once the bridge is open and traffic is stabilized, they would perform a study. Currently, there are still barricades and the main span is not open.

Commissioner Welch noted that he and the other County Commissioners visited the area previously and there was a lot of discussion during design, especially regarding configuration of the bridge.

Mayor Arbutine indicated this situation has been ongoing but the residents and City first wanted to know the type and alignment of the bridge.

Mr. Jacobs responded the road is being constructed as two lanes with a center turn lane and they need to look at the entire area, determine appropriate locations, and how to accommodate for the resident needs as well as safety.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meetings of February 11 and 17, 2009**
- B. Approval of Invoices –**
  - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates**
  - 2. Renaissance Planning Group**
- C. Acceptance of FY 2007/08 MPO Audit Report**
- D. Acceptance of 2007 Crash Facts Report**

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Crozier seconded, and motion carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.***

**V. PROPOSED INTERACTIVE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE, AND SUPPORT AGREEMENT**

**A. Vendor Presentation**

Mr. Smith provided introductory remarks noting the software would be a tool to allow the public to access more information regarding the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**\*\*At 1:26 p.m., Commissioner Brickfield left the meeting\*\***

Allen Ibaugh, Data Transfer Solutions (DTS), reviewed the idea behind the software and a demonstration as to how the software would work. Currently, seven MPOs within the State have implemented the software and other MPOs have agreed to implement it. The software actually builds the TIP document and allows searching for specific projects through various ways and includes dropdown menus and interactive maps. The software can compare projects with other years to check on the progress and provides the data in a pdf format. The software can be customized based on each MPO's needs and he will be working with the MPO staff to customize it for Pinellas County. Projects can be formatted with one project per page, including the map, or turn off the maps and have multiple projects per page, or download the document to Microsoft Excel.

**\*\*At 1:27 p.m., Commissioner Brickfield returned to the meeting\*\***

Discussion, questions, and answers followed regarding the time frame for implementation, the cost and time period, ability to leverage the County's GIS, etc. Mr. Ibaugh noted the set up cost is \$9,500 and the ongoing annual maintenance cost is \$9,600 but is negotiable based on the aspects involved.

***Commissioner Welch moved, Councilman Polson seconded, and motion carried to approve the agreement with DTS.***

- B. Unified Planning Work Program Amendment**  
***Commissioner Welch moved, Commissioner Eggers seconded, and motion carried to approve the amendment to the 2008/09 – 2009/10 Unified Planning Work Program.***

**VI. UPDATE ON ADVANCED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROJECTS**

Mahshid Arasteh, Pinellas County Director of Transportation, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation, which included background information; funding sources, approval of a one cent gas tax (ninth cent motor fuel sales tax); approval of an Interlocal Agreement that the County would fund the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS)/Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) implementation countywide, manage/operate/maintain countywide ATMS/ITS and the Primary Control Center, and establishment of a multi-jurisdictional advisory committee; goals of the system; adaptive control; traveler information; incident management; emergency response enhancements; infrastructure for future transit enhancements; ATMS/ITS communications network; status of projects completed and future projects; other ATMS/ITS projects and initiatives; and ATMS/ITS benefits (including cost savings to the County and the motorists). A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was distributed to the members and made part of the record.

\*\*During the presentation, at 1:54 p.m., Commissioner Eggers left the meeting\*\*

\*\*At 1:56 p.m., Commissioner Eggers returned to the meeting\*\*

Commissioner Welch questioned about the use of two different types of software for ATMS and the plan for the future. Ms. Arasteh responded a committee was formed to choose which software to implement and they chose these two types of software to compare the technologies. Mr. Smith added one software program communicates intersection to intersection and the other software communicates intersection to the central communication. An overall software program, MIST, will be implemented to communicate with both types of software. McMullen-Booth Road will be going on line with different options to be used as a test bed. Mr. Jacobs indicated the two adaptive control software packages work well in different areas. OPAC works well on a highly congested roadway such as U.S. 19 and RHODES works well where traffic signals are more closely spaced. They would like to better define the best adaptive control software package that should be installed for each corridor that would work the best. The overall program, MIST, would operate either adaptive software that provides the best solution.

\*\*At 1:58 p.m., Mayor Arbutine left the meeting\*\*

\*\*At 2:00 p.m., Mayor Arbutine returned to the meeting\*\*

**VII. MPO BAYWAY BRIDGES TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Smith indicated the MPO established a Task Force to review the Bayway Bridges situation and how they could be funded. The Task Force met eight times and recommended that both bridges be reconstructed as a fixed-span. The west bridge is known as Structure C and is to be a capacity improvement from two lanes to four lanes. The southern bridge is known as Structure E and will remain two lanes with other improvements. The cost to construct both bridges is \$171 million. There is currently \$40 million in the Bayway escrow account. Staff has identified various toll options for additional revenue. The Bayway Task Force concluded they would like to eventually eliminate the tolls but need the revenue to reconstruct the bridges. The Task Force recommended: 1) both bridges should be replaced as fixed spans; and 2) continue the current toll revenue and seek the balance of funds through a federal source, such as Stimulus or the Reauthorization Act. FDOT had indicated the need to subtract the cost of the operation and maintenance of the bridges from the gross toll revenue.

Commissioner Welch questioned if the \$24 million diverted for the Blind Pass Road improvements would be reallocated to the Bayway escrow account. Representative Frishe served on the Task Force and he indicated the Legislature is attempting to pursue the reallocation of those monies.

Discussion followed regarding the benefits to reconstruct the bridges versus rehabilitating the bridges; the need to subtract routine maintenance and ongoing operation and maintenance from the toll escrow account; the negative impact if the MPO approved this project a priority on the Stimulus Program but noting it was included on the State's priority list; general discussion regarding the Stimulus Program; reallocation of the Blind Pass Road improvement funds of \$24 million; separating the 2 bridges into separate projects instead of 1 project package and the potential impacts; the request for the MPO to send a letter of support for the reallocation of the \$24 million for the Blind Pass Road improvements; another category within the Stimulus Package that is discretionary that could possibly be used for the Bayway Bridges; this is not a time sensitive issue and could be deferred; the need to raise the tolls; the need to clarify the amounts that could be bonded based on toll amounts; the remaining life of the 2 bridges; the need to move forward with either rehabilitation or reconstruction of the bridges; the north-south bridge is better from a structural perspective but the east-west bridge is better from an operational perspective; and the need for additional information.

***Based on the need for additional information, by consensus, it was determined this item would be placed on next month's MPO agenda.***

Travis Jarman, Chairman of the Council of Neighborhood Associations and St. Petersburg Citizens Task Force and the Bayway Bridges Task Force, appeared and indicated the citizens' position is to eliminate the tolls because they are being discriminated by this being the only toll facility in Pinellas County. In the 1960's, it was alluded the tolls would be discontinued once the bond package was paid; however, that did not happen. There is not support to increase the tolls; however, the citizens are realistic and recognize the need to continue the toll until the future bonds are repaid. It would require legislative action to increase the tolls.

**\*\*At 2:32 p.m., Commissioner Crozier left the meeting\*\***

Raymond Krepfe, Tierra Verde resident and member of the Bridge Advisory Committee and Board of Directors of the Tierra Verde Association, appeared and indicated, if the tolls were increased, the tolls would be automatically increased 3% a year. If the bridges are rebuilt as fixed span, the life expectancy would be 75 years; however, the tolls would only be bonded for 30 years. This is the only access to Tierra Verde and Ft. DeSoto Park.

**\*\*At 2:34 p.m., Commissioner Crozier returned\*\***

**\*\*At 2:35 p.m., Commissioner Brickfield left the meeting\*\***

**\*\*At 2:35 p.m., Commissioner Eggers left the meeting\*\***

**\*\*At 2:36 p.m., Commissioner Brickfield returned\*\***

Further discussion ensued regarding the cost of the passes and the fact that any resident could purchase a pass; tolls have existed since the bridges were built; this is a safety issue but no financing plan other than tolls; commitment from the community to keep the tolls the same; whether the Tierra Verde residents could pay the current rate for a pass and increase it for everyone else; annual indexing of the tolls/passes; increasing the Bayway Isles pass of \$15 would require FDOT to enter into re-negotiations with that community because of a right-of-way settlement agreement; and the need for additional information.

Councilman Danner requested information on how much of the toll revenue includes the \$50 pass be brought back next month.

**Noting more information is needed, this item was deferred until the next MPO meeting.**

**VIII. FEDERAL STIMULUS PROGRAM**

**A. MPO Reporting Responsibilities**

Mr. Smith noted one of the requirements by the U.S. House of Representatives was each MPO must file a report within 45 days as to how projects were prioritized; therefore, staff will be writing that report on the MPO's behalf.

**B. MPO Follow-up Actions on Program**

Mr. Smith indicated the local governments were asked to submit their proposed project lists to the MPO. The MPO at their last meeting prioritized U.S. 19 for the Stimulus funding and prioritized Enhancement projects. Staff would like to recognize the effort the local governments put into submitting projects that are eligible for federal funding but are not in a prioritized order but could be eligible for another funding category.

Following some discussion, ***Commissioner Brickfield moved and Commissioner Crozier seconded a motion to receive and file the staff report listing projects but not prioritized.***

The members wanted assurance that this list would not be considered as a priority list for any funding. Mr. Skelton clarified that the MPO received a letter from Congressmen Oberstar and DeFazio who wanted a report recording the requirements on the projects that will utilize Stimulus funding. They did not ask for the list but a report within 45 days. There is still a lot of discussion between the State DOT, MPOAC, and others regarding the reporting so there is not a duplication of effort since FDOT is also required to file a report.

***Following discussion, the motion was approved.***

**IX. FOLLOW-UP ON MPOAC FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION PRINCIPLES**

Mr. Smith suggested this item be deferred until the next MPO meeting.

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to defer this item until next month.***

**X. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE (PMI) UPDATE**

**A. Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Plan**

Mr. Smith indicated the various committees have reviewed the plan and, based on comment, this is now considered a concept plan and is back before the MPO for approval.

**\*\*At 2:54 p.m., Commissioner Welch left the meeting\*\***

Joel Rey, Tindale-Oliver and Associates, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation including background information. They modified the document in response to PSTA comments, which included the lack of an east-west connection. They have updated the plan to show future premium, enhanced transit services along S.R. 580, from Oldsmar across U.S. 19 to Alternate 19, and Curlew Road, between U.S. 19 and Alternate 19. They included additional text to explain these additions. The service modes include circulatory/feeder, local bus, premium, limited stop connector, feeder express, and regional. He reviewed the various elements (and criteria used) of the implementation concept plan, including stations,

stops, service, type of mode, running way, signal priority technology, intersection geometry, frequency (including federal requirements), fare collection, branding. He reviewed three examples: U.S. 19, 4<sup>th</sup> Street/Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard, and enhanced trolley on Gulf Boulevard, including the activity centers served and potential benefits. This review included estimated costs, including costs for various options. PSTA has a concern with the maintenance issues involved with off-fare collections. The estimated costs include potential acquisition of right-of-way, updated signal controllers where signal priority is anticipated, frequency, types of vehicle depending on service and included the environmental analysis. This information is for planning purposes and the alternatives analysis and preliminary engineering for each corridor would have more detailed analysis. This study did not look at the local bus service being provided by PSTA other than acknowledge its presence; however, PSTA, is aware this service would have to be reconfigured to support the enhanced transit network. PSTA has accommodated for this in their Transit Development Plan. The consultant included estimated costs for increasing headways for the current bus service and for operation and maintenance. He reviewed the next steps and additional planning requirements, which include public involvement (two workshops, newsletters, website, etc.) and coordination with the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Update for additional public workshops. Mr. Rey noted, based on comments, the title has been changed to a concept plan.

**\*\*During the presentation, at 2:58 p.m., Commissioner Welch returned\*\***

**\*\*During the presentation, at 3:01 p.m., Commissioner Crozier left the meeting\*\***

Mr. Smith indicated that Table 2-2 was changed to include the future routes on Curlew Road and S.R. 580. Mr. Rey indicated there were a few minor changes based on comment, noting they will be looking at U.S. 19 comparative travel times.

***Councilman Danner moved, Councilman Polson seconded, and motion carried to approve the report.***

**B. Long Range Transportation Plan – Transit Component**

Mr. Smith indicated the PMI Committee recommended approval of the graphics that show future rail service on U.S. 19 north to Pasco County, the priority of the existing rail corridor from St. Petersburg to Clearwater and from St. Petersburg across the Bay to Tampa, and the enhanced bus system is part of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

***Councilman Polson moved, Commissioner Welch seconded, and motion carried to approve the modified graphics.***

**XI. BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC) RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A. MPO Resolution #09-1 Endorsing March as Bicycle Month**

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Welch seconded, and motion carried to approve MPO Resolution #09-1.***

**B. BAC Motion Regarding the Pinellas Trail Loop and the Trail Section Connection**

Mr. Smith explained the BAC motion and some discussion followed regarding the connectivity and staff is still working on the details for the north route.

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to receive and file BAC Motion #09-05.***

## **XII. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Ms. Ward indicated one legislative proposal going forward making violation of seat belt use as a primary enforcement. If legislation is passed, the State would be eligible to receive over \$35 million in additional funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Those funds will expire this year. The second legislative proposal calls for traffic and pedestrian-controlled devices be installed at all public and private schools located on state roads unless an engineering study indicates otherwise. The MPOAC is calling for the establishment of a Transportation Revenue Commission to look at a sustainable revenue source. The MPOs have agreed to fund that Commission through their planning funds.

Discussion followed regarding the proposed seatbelt law, the safety aspect, other areas that have enacted such a law, the additional \$35 million that would be available for safety initiatives; and the overall FDOT budget would be affected by approval of mandatory placement of traffic devices at school sites.

***Councilman Danner moved, Mayor Mischler seconded, and motion carried to send a letter of support for the establishment of a Revenue Study Commission.***

Mayor Steingold noted there is proposed legislation regarding the use of cell phones within a school zone and would hope the MPO would take a position regarding safety first. He would like this bill on the next MPO agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Welch noted the high costs associated with accidents where people were not using seatbelts and, in addition, questioned whether the MPO had discussed the issue of red light running cameras in the past. Mayor Mischler indicated some areas that had previously enacted legislation for red light running cameras had removed that legislation. He would like to see information regarding both sides. Mr. Skelton indicated FDOT would not allow red light camera detection in their rights-of-way until there is state legislation but some municipalities that have enacted such ordinances have installed cameras outside the FDOT right-of-way. There is controversy regarding the use of such red light detection cameras. Councilman Polson noted St. Petersburg has looked at this for many years but there is a high cost associated with the installation; therefore, some areas have allowed companies to install the red light cameras and they would receive the revenue but people were concerned that it was a revenue generator and not a safety feature. There are a number of issues associated with this issue; however, a number of areas have enacted ordinances and the number of side crashes has decreased. Commissioner Brickfield would like additional data regarding improved safety. Councilman Danner indicated there is proposed legislation and staff should research and track the proposed legislation. Mayor Mischler requested information as to why areas have rescinded the red light detection cameras.

## **XIII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

***Commissioner Brickfield moved, Mayor Mischler seconded, and motion carried to approve the appointment of Ron Schultz and Adriana Rodriguez as At Large representatives to the Citizens Advisory Committee.***

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to approve the appointment of Cky Ready as Largo's alternate on the Technical Coordinating Committee.***

## **XIV. PSTA ACTIVITIES**

Tim Garling, PSTA Executive Director, discussed the plan for use of the public transit funding PSTA is to receive under the Stimulus proposal. This area is to receive more than \$15 million, in addition to the \$12 million PSTA normally receives in formula for capital assistance. The

Stimulus funds can only be used for capital projects. Staff has been looking for projects that can be awarded in a short time frame. PSTA staff will provide a list to the PSTA Board at their March meeting that would include projects to go forward. This list would include the purchase of hybrid vehicles, Phase 2 of real-time bus information where people can access through hand-held devices such as cell phones, and landing pads at bus stop/shelters. PSTA will request a TIP amendment at the April MPO meeting and then seek final approval of the Stimulus package at the April PSTA meeting. They would then seek a State TIP amendment and have their grant application ready by May 29 since the Federal Transit Administration is requesting all grant applications by May 29.

**XV. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Joint Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) Meeting of March 13, 2009**

**B. Correspondence**

**C. Other**

Mr. Smith noted a CAC motion was included in the members' folders recommending a referendum for a one cent transit sales tax go forward but the tax would not be activated until there is a commitment for State and Federal funding. Councilman Danner indicated the Pinellas County Transit Funding Committee is looking at various revenue sources but this suggestion would be premature at this time until the Committee has completed their work.

***Mayor Mischler moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried to receive and file CAC Motion #09-1.***

Mayor Mischler complimented the staff on the Crash Data Report but noted Pinellas County has a long way to go since Pinellas County rates very high regarding bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

**XVI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

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Chris Arbutine, Chairman