

■ ■ *An Intermodal Transportation Hub For The Future*

An intermodal “hub” is envisioned in the Gateway Area, with its confluence at the 112 acre former “Speedway” and adjacent horse stables site. The area is seen as an ideal site for the co-location of several transportation-related uses, including the Roosevelt Boulevard/CR 296 connector and an intermodal/high speed rail terminal. According to the 2002 Airport Master Plan Update, “it is envisioned as a consolidated regional transfer center for passengers using the Airport, monorail, local/regional bus service, and rental cars” and would be designed to accommodate high speed rail. The monorail is currently proposed to connect the Airport to downtown St. Petersburg and downtown Clearwater. Funding has been earmarked for the Roosevelt Boulevard/CR 296 connector, and the Speedway site was recently acquired for this purpose. Construction dollars are not yet committed. Several segments of the CR 296 connector are already in design, but construction is not anticipated until the outer years of FDOT’s work program. There are also plans for integrating the rest of the intermodal plan, including elevated guideway and bus rapid transit, into the Area. Because of the suitability of the Speedway site, should a specific commitment be made to the intermodal projects, up to two thirds of the property is currently considered “reserved” for these uses.

As mentioned earlier, PSTA is interested in using a portion of the property for a Cross-Bay terminal, for commuter buses to and from Hillsborough County. The County, the FDOT and PSTA will be working closely during 2005 to evaluate the options, and develop a conceptual plan, for optimal co-location of uses at this site.

PSTA, FDOT and the MPO are currently evaluating Ulmerton Road to determine its suitability for Bus Rapid Transit strategies such as signal priority and “queue jumpers” (i.e., allowing the bus to advance first at intersections by using the right lane to “jump” around cars). Trolleys, or “loopers” are being considered in other locations around the County to move people around a limited area; an evaluation of the Gateway Area for such a service might be warranted to complete the mix of integrated mobility options.

Overall, this intermodal “hub” would be designed to support the economic, employment and transportation goals of the Gateway Area and the County as a whole, by optimizing mobility in and around the Area. Obviously, to achieve this will require coordination and a common interest among County departments, as well as federal, state and local agencies and governments. Therefore, in regard to planning and decision-making, the County should be a leader, as countywide interests are at stake with the commitments made to this project area, or mobility “hub.”

■ ■ *Implementing Airport Plans and the St. Petersburg-Clearwater Airport Master Plan Update*

Airport Operations

The Board approved the Airport Master Plan Update on December 21 of 2004. Because airport markets and climate are volatile, the County must plan for a future that recognizes the cyclical nature of the industry. The Master Plan contains specific funding