

Mobility



ISSUE: MOBILITY

As Pinellas County approaches a buildout situation, community leaders are having to adapt transportation solutions to an urbanized county that has relied on the automobile for mobility, enabling establishment of a low-density land use pattern throughout most of the County. Pinellas County will address the need for a balanced mobility network, which includes improvements to, and expansion of, the existing transportation system as well as viable transportation alternatives and land use patterns that will reduce dependence upon the automobile for moving people about the county and region. A primary objective will be to improve the ability to move people and goods into and out of the County, and within the County, both safely and efficiently. In addressing this subject, Pinellas County will include the following topics:

- Coordinate with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and determine how the construction of transportation alternatives to the automobile will potentially alter existing land use patterns in certain areas of the County, and result in changes to the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map. Identify changes to the Comprehensive Plan necessary to respond to these potential land use changes.
- Review the Plan to determine what changes are needed to support improvements to the County's transit system. This review would encompass the bus system and other transit options, along with the management and funding structures to operate an improved system. In addition, the review will evaluate different options for increasing use of mass transit.
- Expand and improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities as a way to encourage the use of these alternative transportation modes. Support the construction of additional sidewalks and bike lanes/trails to encourage walking and the use of bicycles. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections between residential areas and nearby commercial, employment areas, and schools as well as recreational areas and parks.

DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE

Major Road Improvements

The Transportation Element, and the Traffic Circulation Element which preceded it, has historically relied on capacity improvements to address problems with roadway congestion and to meet adopted level of service (LOS) standards. Buoyed by the Penny for Pinellas infrastructure sales tax approved by the voters in 1989 and again in 1997, which extended the tax through 2010, the County embarked on an aggressive road building campaign, adding 54 lane miles to the County road network. FDOT paralleled that effort with the construction of 43 lane miles of roadway on the State network with major funding coming from the Intermodal Surface Transportation

Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) in 1998. The combination of these capital improvement efforts provided substantial benefits from the standpoint of alleviating traffic congestion across the County.

Where traffic congestion remains most prevalent is on the major corridors in north County, including U.S. Highway 19 and McMullen Booth/East Lake Road and in mid-County on Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard and Ulmerton Road. Consequently, the County and FDOT road building programs have reached a point where the main focus is on increasing roadway capacity in these areas. Improvements to mid-County facilities such as Ulmerton Road, Bryan Dairy Road, the 118th Avenue Expressway, the Roosevelt Boulevard/County Road 296 Connector and to major north-south roads such as U.S. Highway 19, County Road 1 and Belcher Road are scheduled and planned as part of a larger effort to relieve existing and future traffic congestion in these areas while increasing regional as well as intra-County mobility. Ulmerton Road, the Roosevelt Boulevard/County Road 296 Connector and U.S. Highway 19 are State facilities. Bryan Dairy Road, County Road 1, Belcher Road and the 118th Avenue Expressway are County facilities.

Pinellas County “Parallel Relief” Projects

Transportation Element Policy 1.1.3 directs the County to undertake “parallel relief” projects on County roads that run parallel to State facilities. The concept behind this approach is to allow the State facilities such as U.S. Highway 19 and Ulmerton Road to carry the higher volume regional and commercial traffic while the parallel County roads serve more localized travel needs. For example, County Road 1 and Belcher Road are considered reliever facilities for U.S. Highway 19 while County Road 296 is a reliever for Ulmerton Road. The remaining improvements on County Road 1 and Belcher Road, excluding the Clearwater segment from Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard to Northeast Coachman Road, and Bryan Dairy Road are scheduled for improvement within the next four years. The 118th Avenue Expressway, which is part of the County Road 296 corridor, planned to occur by 2025 according to the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan. However, there is currently no construction funding available for this project, which is currently estimated at \$200 million. This project was recently elevated on the MPO Project Priority list for Surface Transportation Program funding as Pinellas County is actively pursuing the acceleration of this project as well as the State’s Roosevelt Boulevard/County Road 296 Connector project.

In addition to 118th Avenue, the 2004 update of the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan included a list of 20 County road improvement projects planned for construction beyond 2010. Construction of these projects is dependent upon the extension of the Penny for Pinellas infrastructure sales tax, which expires in 2010. This list of County projects is shown on the following page, excluding improvements to 102nd Avenue, 54th Avenue North from 34th Street to 44th Street, 58th Street and Sunset Point Road which have since been moved into the County’s Capital Improvement Program and

Capital Improvements Element. The total cost of the projects listed, as indicated in the MPO Plan, is \$56.5 million.

As one of the County's key north-south "parallel relief" corridors, the improvement of Belcher Road is arguably the most critical project on the list. Segments within this planned project are currently operating at either level of service E or F. Between NE Coachman Road and Gulf-To-Bay Boulevard, the roadway is operating at 100 percent or more of its physical capacity.

Road Planned for Improvement	From	To	Existing Lane Configuration	Planned Improvement
126 th Avenue North	34 th Street	125 th Street	2U (portion does not currently exist)	2D/4D
142 nd Avenue	66 th Street	Belcher Road	2U	2U/E
142 nd Avenue	Belcher Road	Starkey Road	N/A	2U/E
16 th Avenue SE	Seminole Blvd.	Donegan Road	2U	2U/E
16 th Avenue SE	Donegan Road	Lake Avenue	2U	2U/E
16 th Avenue SE	Lake Avenue	Starkey Road	N/A	2U/E
54 th Avenue North	Interstate-275	34 th Street North	4U	4D
62 nd Avenue North	49 th Street	66 th Street	2U	2U/E
Belcher Road	NE Coachman Rd	Druid Road	4U	4D
Highland Avenue	East Bay Drive	Druid Road	2U	2U/E
Indian Rocks Road	Walsingham Road	West Bay Drive	2U	2U/E
Keystone Road	East Lake Road	Hills./Pinellas CL	2U	2U/E
Lakeview Road	Missouri Avenue	Hercules Avenue	2U	2U/E
Nursery Road	Highland Avenue	Belcher Road	2U	2U/E

Notes:

- 1) Lane Configurations: U = undivided, D = divided, E = enhanced (turning lanes at intersections, bringing facility up to urban standards addressing required lane widths, set-backs, drainage, curb and gutter improvements and sidewalks)
- 2) 142nd Avenue and 16th Avenue SE improvements may be implemented through a joint participation agreement with the City of Largo, which has scheduled funding in its capital improvement program for preliminary engineering.

State Projects

Regarding the State facilities, U.S. Highway 19 partially controlled access improvements between 49th Street and Countryside Boulevard are scheduled for construction by 2010. The completion of these improvements would convert U.S. Highway 19 to a partially controlled access road, in its entirety, between 49th Street and State Road 580. Partially controlled access improvements are also planned for the segments north of State Road 580 up through Tarpon Avenue, but currently, only the segment between State Road 580 and Curlew Road has funding earmarked.

The FDOT Five-Year Work Program includes scheduled capacity improvements expanding Ulmerton Road to a six lane facility from Indian Rocks Road to 49th Street with the exception of segments between the Seminole Bypass Canal and El Centro Ranchero, which are planned for reconstruction beyond the horizon year of the State

Work Program. The segment from 49th Street to Interstate-275 is also planned for reconstruction to a six-lane road after the horizon year of the State Work Program. Upon completion of the current scheduled and planned reconstruction of Ulmerton Road, it will be a six-lane facility, in its entirety, from Indian Rocks Road to Interstate-275.

Construction of the Roosevelt Boulevard/County 296 Connector, which is a planned partially controlled access facility, involves several projects. The reconstruction of Roosevelt Boulevard from a four-lane road between 49th Street and Ulmerton Road is planned for construction by 2025. The planned construction of a new road extending Roosevelt Boulevard south from Ulmerton Road to east of 40th Street is also planned for construction by 2025. Projects extending the planned facility from east of 40th Street to Interstate-275 are scheduled in the FDOT Work Program. The 118th Avenue Expressway, which is also planned for construction by 2025, is a key segment linking County Road 296 with the planned Roosevelt Boulevard/County Road 296 Connector between U.S. Highway 19 and east of 40th Street. Identifying the needed funding for the construction of this project is a critical issue.

Strategic Intermodal System

In January 2005, FDOT adopted its Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Strategic Plan. The SIS is a statewide system of high-priority regional transportation facilities. It includes the state's largest and most significant commercial service airports, spaceport, deepwater seaports, freight rail terminals, passenger rail and intercity bus terminals, rail corridors, waterways and highways. Pinellas County facilities currently included in the State's SIS network are U.S. Highway 19 from Gandy Boulevard to the Pasco/Pinellas County Line, Gandy Boulevard from U.S. Highway 19 to the Hillsborough/Pinellas County Line and the Interstate System.

The SIS Plan recognizes these facilities as top priorities for State discretionary capacity funding and calls for 75 percent of these monies to be allocated to SIS facility projects by 2015. While this Policy would support the effort to continue the implementation of improvements on U.S. Highway 19, it could draw funds away from other State roads where needed improvements are not currently scheduled for construction. This would include portions of Ulmerton Road as well as the Roosevelt Boulevard/County Road 296 Connector. As more State revenue shifts toward SIS facilities, these planned projects may lose needed funding support. Recognizing its importance to the State's transportation network as well as the region's economy and mobility needs, Pinellas County is seeking to transfer jurisdiction of the 118th Avenue Expressway to the FDOT and to have the corridor designated as a SIS facility. The County is also pursuing an SIS designation under "emerging SIS facilities" for the St. Petersburg Clearwater International Airport.

Constrained Facilities and Induced Travel Demand

As Pinellas County and FDOT pursue the implementation of capacity projects on U.S. Highway 19 and in the mid-County area, traffic volumes on facilities where

improvements were completed since 1990 are approaching saturation levels. For County roads, this trend is most evident in north Pinellas. Average daily traffic volumes on Tampa Road, which was expanded to a six lane divided road from U.S. Highway 19 to East Lake Road, and Keene Road, a four/six lane facility constructed from Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard to Sunset Point Road, have increased to nearly 90 percent of the road's physical capacity.

County Road 611, including McMullen Booth Road and East Lake Road, gives reason for more serious concern as peak hour conditions on this corridor have degraded to a LOS F. McMullen Booth Road/East Lake Road was improved to six-lane divided facility from Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard to Brooker Creek and East Lake Road from Brooker Creek Road to Keystone Road was improved to a four-divided facility in the 1990s. McMullen Booth Road and East Lake Road are currently designated in the Comprehensive Plan as constrained facilities, meaning they cannot be expanded as necessary to alleviate deficient operating conditions due to policy and physical constraints.

From Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard to Brooker Creek Road, the corridor is physically constrained due to the encroachment of adjacent development activity. The section north of Brooker Creek Road to Keystone Road is policy constrained. Although right-of-way is available to expand this section to a six-lane facility, there are no plans for such an improvement based on concerns regarding neighborhood impacts. The scheduled and planned expansion of U.S. Highway 19 from Clearwater to Tarpon Springs to a partially controlled access road is expected to relieve a significant level of demand for McMullen Booth Road and East Lake Road. However, in the short term, Pinellas County is working with the MPO to identify and implement other solutions to reducing travel demand on the corridor as well as increasing the efficiency of its current operations.

In addition to improving parallel roads, the Transportation Element seeks to address traffic congestion on constrained facilities through the implementation of small-scale physical and operational improvements identified through MPO-sponsored corridor strategy plans (Policy 1.1.7). Such a Plan has been developed for McMullen Booth Road and some improvements have been identified including adding and extending turn lanes at intersections, access management strategies, transit route enhancements and trail extensions. However, as indicated in the final report of the corridor management study, while these improvements can help facilitate increased mobility in the corridor, they are not likely to reduce traffic congestion, particularly in the near term.

The situation on McMullen Booth Road and East Lake Road is a reflective of a trend in Pinellas of increased inter-county travel demand resulting in large part from a growing employment base in Pinellas County coupled with increasing population growth in neighboring counties. In Hillsborough and Pasco Counties, for example, there was a 30 and 26 percent increase in residential housing, respectively. Also during this time, Pinellas County experienced an increase of 108 thousand jobs, nearly 30 percent, the second highest increase in the eight-county West Central Florida region. Paralleling this employment and residential growth, were sharp increases in the number of vehicles traveling Pinellas County roads originating from other counties. The table below reveals

the significant growth in traffic on inter-county roadways that occurred from 1995 to 2004 at the County line, notwithstanding the Courtney Campbell Causeway.

Road	Adjoining County	1995 AADT	2004 AADT	Change
U.S. Highway 19	Pasco	52,293	64,000	22%
East Lake Road	Pasco	21,017	29,061	38%
Courtney Campbell Causeway	Hillsborough	53,228	51,000	-4%
Howard Frankland Bridge	Hillsborough	100,134	134,500	34%
Gandy Bridge	Hillsborough	26,327	31,500	20%
Skyway Bridge	Manatee	32,323	44,500	38%

AADT = Average Annual Daily Traffic

In addition, job market growth and a reducing supply of affordable housing that is occurring in Pinellas County causes more of its workers to live in areas outside its boundaries. This leads to more people having to commute to their job sites from longer distances, adding more vehicles and longer trip lengths and travel times to the County's road network. This is not intended as justification to discount the need to expand roadway capacity, which is recognized as being necessary to sustain a healthy economy and facilitate the effective movement of people and goods throughout the County. It does, however, underscore the need to provide a greater balance in travel choices and to identify strategies that can effectively reduce demand for single occupant vehicle travel, which constitutes nearly 80 percent of all the vehicles on the County's roads during peak hours.

It is also important to note the importance of providing affordable housing proximate to job sites in Pinellas County. Forcing people to seek housing further away from their employers places a greater strain on the County's roadways as well as its economy and quality of life. This issue is addressed in more detail in discussion of the Housing Element.

Transportation Safety

The safety of the users of Pinellas County's transportation system is a major concern. In 2004, there were over 15 thousand reported crashes throughout Pinellas County, resulting in a similar number of injuries and 114 fatalities. There were a wide variety of crash types, most involving a violation of an assumed right of way. About one-third of the fatalities consisted of pedestrians and bicyclists, a special concern that is discussed later in this report.

The remaining crash incidents can be attributed to a number of causes, including aggressive driving and speeding, red-light running, drunk or impaired driving and errors in judgment. The combination of motorists who are elderly and tourists with commuter traffic and students present a significant challenge for Pinellas County in its efforts to ensure safe driving conditions on its roadways.

A Balanced Approach - System Management, Demand Management and Mobility Choices

With the exception of the major road corridors identified for capacity projects in the Transportation Element and MPO Plan, the County's strategy for addressing traffic congestion on a long-term basis is shifting away from road building to more of a balanced approach. This approach seeks to maximize the operating efficiency of the transportation system, reduce the demand for single occupant vehicle travel and to provide better mobility choices. Included in Goal 1 of the Transportation Element is the reduction of demand for single occupant vehicle travel, which is addressed in several policies that seek to encourage alternative travel modes and ride sharing. In addition, this goal addresses the need to provide a transportation system that serves to enhance the quality of life in Pinellas County. This is an important aspect of cultivating a transportation system that provides better mobility choices in terms of providing alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

In Objective 1.9 of the Transportation Element, Pinellas County indicates its commitment to providing for safety and efficiency in the movement of people and goods. Regarding operating efficiency, the County is relying on the utilization of intelligent transportation system (ITS) tools to expedite and better coordinate the movement of vehicular traffic on the major road network. In an effort to maximize the efficiency of local transportation systems, the concept of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) has gained considerable momentum in recent years throughout the Country as well as in Pinellas County.

Intelligent transportation systems involve the application of advanced technology solutions to improve traffic flow while reducing travel times. These systems include a wide range of applications, from automated fare boxes on public buses, and electronic accident information signs to centralized signal systems and vehicle detection devices. A number of ITS technologies are currently in place in Pinellas County including PSTA's automated farebox system and an automated pre-paid toll (Sun Pass) system for motorists entering or departing from the Skyway Bridge. In addition, traffic monitoring cameras and adaptive control signals are currently being installed.

The major emphasis of current and planned ITS initiatives in Pinellas County is on arterial roadway management through the implementation of advanced traffic management system (ATMS) and freeway management system applications for SIS facilities. These management systems include, as examples, the installation of dynamic message signs that provide traveler information and video monitoring equipment that provides for better incident management and emergency response. Four priority corridors are identified in the MPO Plan for the implementation of ATMS improvements. These include Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard, U.S. Highway 19, Ulmerton Road and East Lake/McMullen Booth Road, where the County has installed monitoring equipment.

As part of its Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal process, Pinellas County distributed transportation surveys in conjunction with the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan Update in 2004 to collect the opinions of local citizens regarding various transportation issues. The surveys indicated a strong desire for the implementation of ITS applications to address traffic congestion. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents ranked improved signal timing as a top priority for addressing traffic congestion. Computer controlled traffic signals with the capacity to change in response to traffic conditions was the popular choice when asked about priorities for various ITS strategies.

Although considerable progress has been made in ATMS and ITS initiatives in Pinellas County, the future planning and implementation of these projects is limited by the lack of a dedicated funding source. Current efforts to secure Federal funding for these projects have to compete against non-ITS projects, including road construction, for the same monies. In the meantime, local governments such as Pinellas will need to rely heavily on local funding to continue the gains that have been made to date.

Mobility Choices

As Florida's population continues to grow so does the number of vehicles on its roadways. From 1990 to 2000, the number of licensed drivers in the State increased by 39 percent, from 9.2 million to 12.85 million. From 1998 to 2002, the number of daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased by 11.4 percent, from 239.9 million to 267.3 million. The largest percentage of this VMT falls into the category of people driving to work most of who drive alone.

Regarding alternative travel modes, the County has been proactive in the area of expanding trail facilities and sidewalks for bicyclists and pedestrians, providing greater opportunities for these travel modes. Concerning transit, the County has been actively involved with the MPO in discussions regarding the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) effort, which is evaluating long-range options for mass transit, including monorail and bus rapid transit (BRT). The current PMI plan adopted by the MPO in 2004 includes a monorail system alignment that connects northwest St. Petersburg with downtown St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport, downtown Clearwater and Countryside Mall. Corridors such as McMullen Booth Road/East Lake Road, U.S. Highway 19, Ulmerton Road and 4th Street are identified in the PMI plan for enhanced bus service, which may involve bus rapid transit or express bus service. Implementation of this plan is dependent on identifying and instituting a dedicated funding source such as a transit surtax. Establishing a governance framework for countywide transit service needed to manage and operate the system that would result from the PMI final recommendations also needs to be determined.

Transit Service

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) is the primary provider of transit service in the County. They are responsible for the operations and planning of the fixed route bus system and paratransit service for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligible customers. Ridership on PSTA has risen steadily in recent years. They served over 9.7 million riders in fiscal year 2003/04. However, only 1.7 percent of workers in Pinellas County are using PSTA services to get to and from their job sites. To encourage more commuters to utilize the bus, PSTA has been aggressively pursuing new and/or enhanced express route service to expedite travel times for this travel market. These services include Route 300X, from mid-County to downtown Tampa; Route 93, from downtown Clearwater to Oldsmar; Route 90, from downtown St. Petersburg to the South County Beaches and Routes 96 and 98 connecting downtown Clearwater and downtown St. Petersburg to the Carillon development in mid-County. Recently developing conditions with regard to rising gas prices has boosted these efforts. With gas prices nearing \$3 per gallon in August, 940,000 people rode the bus, a 19 percent increase over the previous year.

Land Use Patterns and Site Design

A major impediment to transit in Pinellas County is the prevalence of low density, strip commercial development patterns that are designed for convenient use of the personal automobile. To allow transit service to be a more viable form of transportation in the County from the standpoint of reducing automobile dependence, more mixed-use concentrated urban communities are needed to support it.

The Transportation Element (Policies 1.7.14 and 1.8.9) calls for Code amendments to introduce provisions requiring development projects to make accommodations for transit users and walkers, including sidewalks that connect proximate bus stops to building entrances, orienting building entrances closer to the street and providing buffered and landscaped sidewalks/walkways through parking areas. Some development projects have added amenities such as this to meet their concurrency management requirements. But they need to be required as a condition of site plan approval in order to attain Transportation Element objectives relating to creating a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly environment in Pinellas County.

Policies in the Transportation Element calling for Code modifications to include on-site provisions for bicyclists, walkers and transit users have yet to be implemented. These actions are pending the completion of the next phase of the MPO's livable communities initiative, which will involve the development of model language for local land development codes to implement provisions associated with livable community design features. Supporting transit use as well as other alternative travel modes is one of the characteristics of livable community design, which is intended to create distinct urban environments with balanced transportation choices, interesting architectural features, human scale site design, and public gathering places. The livable communities concept and plans for its implementation in Pinellas County will be discussed further in the next section.

Ride Sharing and Commuter Assistance

In terms of ride sharing, Bay Area Commuter Services (BACS), a non-profit agency based in Tampa, was established in 1992 to promote transportation alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle in the Tampa Bay area and surrounding counties. They are funded by FDOT. BACS' activities involve the promotion of car/vanpools, telecommuting and variable work schedules and, to a lesser extent, bicycling, walking and transit use. Their efforts are targeted toward major employers and the reduction of commuter trips. As with PSTA and transit, much of the County's efforts with regard to commuter assistance, ride sharing and vanpooling is in support of BACS' programs.

Transportation Element Policy 1.8.6 directs the County to evaluate whether to amend its Land Development Code to include provisions requiring development projects to implement commuter assistance programs. As with the introduction of Code requirements to incorporate pedestrian and transit-friendly design features, consideration of ride sharing requirements and/or incentives will be considered for incorporation into the model code language developed for the livable community provisions.

Policy 1.8.7 of the Transportation Element directs the County to develop strategies to increase participation among employees in ride-sharing activities, which has not been actively promoted since the adoption of the Element in 1998. With over 3,000 workers in the downtown Clearwater area, there is significant potential for more ride sharing activity among County employees. In addition to savings in fuel and vehicle maintenance expenses, another benefit to employees that should be considered is for the County to provide some incentive based on the reduction in demand for parking which is a capital improvement expenditure that needs to be accounted for in planning for facilities housing County staff. An effective ride sharing program could result in substantial cost savings to the County based on the reduction of parking spaces needed to provide for the workforce in the Clearwater area.

Policy 1.1.8 addresses the need for greater involvement by the private sector in commuter assistance and ride sharing programs. The County has sought to encourage private companies to implement these programs through the application of the Concurrency Management System, but has had limited success in this effort.

Livable Communities

Goal 1 of the Transportation Element calls out the need to increase mobility, reduce the incidence of single occupant vehicle travel and to improve the quality of life in Pinellas County. The Planning To Stay Element takes this goal a step further and provides the Policy framework linking transportation and land use planning to create a better quality of life in Pinellas County through the creation of distinctive urban environments that offer mobility and lifestyle choices and a place where people want to work and live.

This concept is central to the livable communities initiative that was launched by the MPO through its Livable Communities Task Force in 2002 as part of the effort to update the Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance. The Task Force identified urban design and transportation improvements that were critical elements in the development of livable communities. Amendments to the TIFO in 2005 introduced provisions allowing for development projects to implement these improvements in-lieu of credits that can be applied toward the payment of impact fees. In addition to the development of the TIFO amendments, the Task Force further recommended that model regulatory language be developed for inclusion into local government land development codes to implement livable community design standards through their site plan review processes. This effort is considered essential to beginning to change the pattern of development in the County from segregated auto-centric land uses to more mixed use projects with quality urban design that is more inviting to transit users and pedestrians.

The concept of “livable communities” is similar to the smart growth and traditional neighborhood design movements that have taken hold across the country in recent years. Like these other concepts, a “livable community” is defined as having the following characteristics:

- ***Design and Public Safety*** – Streets, buildings and public spaces are designed to human scale to create a friendly and safe environment for pedestrians with urban design characteristics that put more people and more eyes on the street, that are visually attractive and that preserve links to natural, cultural and architectural history.
- ***Public Spaces and Town Centers*** – Open spaces that serve the entire community in the form of parks, town squares and/or green areas. Boulevards, streets, and paths are designed attractively, creating a pleasant environment for citizens to gather throughout the day and into the night. These areas also combine commercial, cultural, civic and recreational uses that are linked to public transportation systems.
- ***Balanced Transportation Choices*** – The transportation system should provide a balance of mobility choices by providing pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit service that reduces dependence on single occupant automobile travel while providing secure, convenient and affordable mobility options for all citizens. Compact land use patterns are part of the mix to improve access to jobs, recreation, shopping and community services for all ages and incomes. Streets, and pedestrian and bike paths are linked in a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations.
- ***Diversity*** – Livable communities contain a mix of housing and employment opportunities for citizens from all ages, ethnicities and incomes. Civic facilities and services reflect the needs of the residents.
- ***Environmental Sustainability*** – Livable communities conserve resources, natural habitat and air quality while conserving energy through appropriate design and placement of buildings, shading and landscaping.

- Livable community design offers many benefits to a community from the standpoint of economic development and quality of life as well as transportation. A 2002 report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, entitled *Transportation for Livable Communities* lists some of these benefits.
- *Improvement of Air Quality - Development in livable communities tends to reduce air pollution because regionally accessible, centrally located sites require shorter average trip distances than do sites at the periphery.*
- *Reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emissions occur by changing travel behavior. Trip lengths are reduced because activities are closer together. Proximity of different types of land uses gives people a choice of walking, bicycling, taking transit, or driving. Vehicle ownership may also decline because need for multiple vehicles is reduced.*
- *Reduction of infrastructure costs such as water, sewage and roads to local governments and property owners resulting from more compact and infill development.*

It is anticipated that implementation of livable community development codes in Pinellas County will require the identification of areas that would be most appropriate for their application. This would be based on the community's vision and goals in terms of their redevelopment.

In accordance with the intentions of the Livable Communities Task Force and the MPO, the implementation of livable community design standards and development codes needs to be a cooperative multi-jurisdictional effort to create quality urban environments throughout the County. Recognizing the importance of this countywide approach to furthering the development of livable communities, Pinellas County shall continue to participate in the efforts of the MPO and the Livable Communities Task Force to develop a consistent and coordinated approach to the development and implementation of livable community policies, standards and land development provisions. Subsequent to or in conjunction with this effort, Pinellas County will need to amend its Land Development Code as necessary to implement livable community provisions in the unincorporated areas where deemed appropriate.

Concurrency Management

Amendments to Chapter 163, F.S., passed into Law by the Florida Legislature in 2005 will bring about major changes to local concurrency management systems throughout the State. The changes include a requirement that transportation facilities needed to service new development be in place or under construction within three years (it was previously five) after the local government approves a building permit resulting in traffic generation. The amendment encourages the coordination of local governments in the development and application of a methodology for measuring transportation impacts. Lastly, the new Law allows for developers to satisfy their concurrency requirements by contributing or paying proportionate fair-share mitigation if transportation facilities identified as mitigating projects are specifically identified for funding in local government's five-year schedule of capital improvements. The process and requirements associated with the fair-share mitigation provisions will require adoption of a local ordinance. This could prove to be a major challenge for Pinellas County where alleviating deficient level of service conditions through the implementation of a capacity improvement is not a feasible option.

The full ramification of these changes on the Pinellas County Concurrency Management System won't be known until the Department of Community Affairs enacts the rule changes necessary to administer them. However, it is anticipated that Pinellas County will need to engage in a coordinated approach with the MPO and the other local governments to develop a consistent methodology for measuring transportation impacts as well as a level of service standard for major roads not designated as SIS facilities. FDOT will be responsible for setting the level of service standard on SIS facilities. The County's SIS facilities include U.S. Highway 19 from Gandy Boulevard to the Pasco/Pinellas County Line, Gandy Boulevard from U.S. Highway 19 to the Hillsborough/Pinellas County Line and the Interstate System. Pinellas County currently has a long-term concurrency management system in place for the SIS portion of U.S. Highway 19 in accordance with Chapter 163, F.S. A discussion of the County's experience with the application of long-term concurrency management on U.S. Highway 19 is discussed in the Matching Development Capabilities with Natural Resource and Infrastructure Capabilities issue section

Road and Bridge Maintenance

As Pinellas County continues to pursue the completion of its long-range plan for roadway improvements, the need for pavement maintenance and rehabilitation becomes more pronounced. The County is currently responsible for maintaining over 2,650 lane miles of roads. The State average for pavement rehabilitation costs for a lane mile of road is approximately \$13,150. By comparison, the average cost of constructing a lane mile of road in Pinellas County is more than \$2 million. In 2003, the Pinellas County Public Works Department estimated a backlog in pavement preservation needs that amounted to over \$10 million. Also in 2003, it was estimated that \$56.7 million was needed to cover the costs of anticipated maintenance costs on County roads over the next 20 years.

Along with roadways it maintains, Pinellas County is responsible for the upkeep of 120 bridges for pedestrian as well as vehicular traffic. The Public Works Department has identified 38 bridges that will exceed this life span over the next 20 years. The total cost of replacing these bridges is estimated at \$124 million. An additional \$31 million would be needed to maintain them. Extension of the current six-cent local fuel tax, which expires in 2007, is expected to be necessary to provide the needed funding for road maintenance and the rehabilitation and replacement of County bridges.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel

Objective 1.7 of the Transportation Element encourages bicycle use and pedestrian activity throughout Pinellas County for recreational and non-recreational purposes. Since the construction of the first segment of the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, from Seminole City Park to Taylor Park in Largo was completed in 1990, the citizens of Pinellas County have embraced the idea of expanding opportunities for bicycling and walking. Today, the Trail covers nearly 40 linear miles from St. Petersburg to Tarpon Springs and is used by over 705 thousand people each year. Another 114 miles of State, County and municipal trail projects are scheduled for construction over the next five years, from fiscal year 2004/05 to 2009/10. It is important to note that 91 miles of the projects are facilities that connect to the Trail, thereby furthering the objective of Pinellas County to make bicycling and walking a more viable form of transportation for commuting purposes as well as for recreation throughout the County.

In addition to these trail projects, FDOT, Pinellas County and the municipal governments have been actively constructing sidewalks throughout the County to provide more opportunities for walking. Much of this construction has focused on improving pedestrian access to public schools pursuant to the implementation of the School Board policy to discontinue transporting students to school who live within two miles of their campus. Lastly, on-street bicycle lanes are becoming more prevalent in Pinellas County, particularly on County roads and in the City of St. Petersburg. Comprehensive Plan Policy directs the County to provide bicycle lanes on its roads in the course of reconstruction or resurfacing projects and St. Petersburg has been pursuing an aggressive Policy to stripe bicycle lanes throughout the City in accordance with its City Trails Plan.

The MPO Trailways Plan, which was recently updated and adopted in 2004 with the Long Range Transportation Plan, identifies future trail facilities planned for construction throughout the County. Facilities that are within the County's jurisdiction currently scheduled for construction include the Progress Energy and Northeast Extensions to the Pinellas Trail. Additional County projects involving extensions to the Pinellas Trail as well as the 62nd Avenue/Joe's Creek Trail, Cultural Facilities Trail, Elfers Trail, Gateway/Weedon Island Nature Trail, Howard Park Trail, Lake Seminole Trail, the Downtown St. Petersburg CSX Trail Extension and the Seminole/St. Petersburg College Trail are identified in the MPO Plan as planned projects that are cost feasible. Pinellas County will be working through the MPO planning process to identify priorities for planned trail projects for inclusion into the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program as well as the Transportation Element.

It should be noted that Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding through TEA 21 has been a major funding source for trail projects in Pinellas County. With the elimination of CMAQ monies coming to Pinellas County, implementation of the Trailways Plan has less revenue to draw on. Pinellas County was particularly hard hit by the loss of CMAQ dollars. Approximately \$20 million that was earmarked for improvements to the Friendship Trail and the Progress Energy Extension of the Pinellas Trail has been removed. Alternative funding sources for these projects and others that were depending upon the availability of CMAQ revenue will need to be identified.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Objective 1.9 of the Transportation Element is to provide for safety in the movement of people and goods, which includes all travel modes. The County's School Transportation Safety Committee, which is comprised of city and County elected officials, School Board representatives and a citizen advocate, provides a forum for pedestrian safety issues relative to school traffic to be addressed. Other groups such as the Community Transportation Safety Team (CTST), the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) also provide a forum for discussion of pedestrian and bicycle safety issues. Pedestrian safety projects, including sidewalk construction in the vicinity of schools, implemented by the County, are identified through the efforts of these committees as well as citizens, County staff, school officials, the Sheriff's Office and other concerned parties.

With an expanding infrastructure, more bicyclists and walkers are being introduced into road corridors and intersections where potential conflicts with vehicular traffic become a more serious concern. Therefore, more attention must be paid to ensuring their safety as they navigate across Pinellas County's busy roadways. The intersection of Alternate U.S. Highway 19 and Curlew Road has been a high profile example of how an increased demand for bicycle and pedestrian travel has created unique challenges for engineers and planners trying to provide safer accommodations for these travel modes. Demand for walking and bicycling within this area is heightened by the existing Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail located on the east side of and running parallel to Alternate U.S. Highway 19. There are sidewalks on both sides of Curlew Road, excluding the south side east of the intersection, and Alternate U.S. Highway 19 on all sides of the intersection.

Lastly, Curlew Road west of Alternate U.S. Highway 19 leads to the Dunedin Causeway and Honeymoon Island State Park, which are major attractions for walkers, runners, in-line skaters and bicyclists. The County has received many complaints from people who travel through this intersection and there have been six accidents involving pedestrian/bicycle and vehicle conflicts since 2002. The FDOT has installed automated pedestrian signals with a timer counting down the time allowed for safe crossing.

Although there are some unique circumstances associated with the Alternate U.S. Highway 19/Curlew Road intersection, issues concerning bicycle and pedestrian safety at street crossings are expected to become more commonplace throughout the County

as more people take to their local trails, bicycle lanes and sidewalks. On some roads where there are lengthy gaps between intersections, consideration also needs to be given to establishing signalized mid-block crossings and/or traffic calming measures allowing walkers and bicyclists to safely cross the street without having to travel to the nearest intersection. Pedestrians and bicyclists will typically not go out of their way to cross a street at the nearest intersection. It is anticipated that Pinellas County will need to work with the MPO to identify locations on County roads where accommodations for mid-block crossings as well as cross walk enhancements (e.g., striping, pavement variation, pedestrian controlled signals, etc.) are needed.

St. Petersburg Clearwater International Airport

The St. Petersburg Clearwater International Airport (PIE) occupies approximately two thousand acres located along West Roosevelt Boulevard in mid-Pinellas County. The Airport has four active runways, is home to both domestic and international air carriers and is designated as a commercial service small hub airport. There are currently five passenger and two cargo carriers that serve the Airport. PIE predominantly serves general aviation activities, which comprises 85 percent (210,000) of its total operations. General aviation includes the operation of civilian aircraft for purposes other than commercial passenger transport, including personal, business and instructional flying. Military operations, including activities of the Coast Guard air stations located on site, make up 8 percent of the airport operations. The remainder of PIE operations is commercial air service and air taxi activity.

Environmental Impact - Noise

Goal 2 also stresses the need to minimize the impacts of the Airport on the environment and the surrounding area as it seeks to expand its facilities and operations. In Spring 2004, the Airport established a new Noise Affairs Office with a dedicated staff person to monitor, respond and investigate noise related issues and assist in the development of a formal noise program for the Airport.

The Airport also subscribes to a Flight Tracking System used to monitor compliance with noise abatement procedures and respond to resident complaints. The web-based system is available to the public and also serves as an educational tool that enables the community to view aircraft, flight patterns, and altitudes by way of the Internet.

The Airport Noise Abatement and Mitigation Website is also used as a communication tool to help educate the community on existing noise abatement measures, federal restrictions, and progress of the of Noise Abatement Task Force.

Airspace and Noise Studies

The Airport is in the process of commencing two separate studies to address community noise concerns. The first, an Airspace study, is a comprehensive feasibility study to identify and evaluate new approach and departure procedures to help reduce aircraft noise to surrounding communities. The findings and

recommendations (i.e., higher departure clearances, new approach and departure procedures) will be compiled in a feasibility report and presented to the Airport and Noise Abatement Task Force for consideration prior to modeling and developing procedure packages for submittal to the FAA. The Tampa Bay airspace is very complex given the proximity and number of aircraft operations associated with Tampa International Airport, MacDill Air Force Base, St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport, and numerous other general aviation airports located within the Tampa Bay Region.

The second, a Noise Study, includes conducting noise level monitoring in surrounding communities. The data collected will be used to provide real-time noise levels. The study also includes the development of current and future (5 year) noise contour maps.

RNAV GPS-A Approach

Over the past two years, the Airport has been working in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Eastern Flight Procedures Branch to develop a new RNAV GPS-A approach to Runway 17L that will aid in alleviating noise exposure to residential communities north of the Airport. The new RNAV GPS-A procedure is scheduled for implementation and publication on October 27, 2005.

Unlike the existing North Bay Visual Approach to Runway 17L, the new RNAV (GPS)-A does not have nighttime restrictions; therefore, the approach procedure may be utilized around the clock when the Instrument Landing System is not required. The procedure will be limited to aircraft equipped with a flight management system and GPS avionics capable of utilizing this new approach during visual meteorological conditions.

State of Commercial Airline Industry

The St. Petersburg-Clearwater Int'l Airport set a record breaking passenger level in 2004, serving over 1.3 million passengers, which represented a 34 percent increase over 2003. In 2003, the Airport enjoyed a 60 percent increase over 2002, ending the year with 997,761 passengers. In late 2004 and early 2005, the Airport experienced some commercial service cutbacks. The demise of two prominent PIE airlines, Southeast Airlines and Jetsgo, in combination with the pullout of ATA which is in bankruptcy, left PIE with a 74 percent decline in passenger traffic. However, the Airport has begun recovering, and has added Hooters Air and Pan Am to their family of air carriers. With PIE's planned runway extension to be completed in 2006, the Airport will be positioned to take advantage of the increase in European traffic.