

PINELLAS COUNTY MOBILITY PLAN SUMMARY REPORT

In September, 2013, the Pinellas County Mobility Plan Report was approved by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This action endorsed a countywide framework for managing the traffic impacts of development projects while increasing mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motor vehicles through local site plan review processes. The Mobility Plan also seeks to further local plans to develop a multi-modal network and to reduce demand on single occupant vehicle travel throughout Pinellas County. This report is intended to present a summary discussion of the Mobility Plan related to its development, objectives and contents.

Growth Management Legislation

The Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 360, the Florida Community Renewal Act, into law in 2009. The Act amended Florida's growth management law, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes. It designated eight counties, including Pinellas, as dense urban land areas (DULAs). The Act effectively removed State-mandated transportation concurrency management requirements in these designated areas. It also provided local governments within DULAs the option of establishing mobility plans and fees as growth management tools to be utilized in place of traditional concurrency management regulations. Following passage of the Community Renewal Act, the MPO began working with the County's local governments to develop a county-wide mobility plan and fee system as a replacement to local transportation concurrency management systems.

With the mobility fee provisions in Senate Bill 360, local governments were enabled to utilize a "pay and go" alternative to mitigation requirements applied to development projects as necessary to maintain adopted level of service (LOS) standards on impacted transportation facilities. The University of South Florida Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) prepared the *Evaluation of the Mobility Fee Concept* in November, 2009 for the Florida Department of Community Affairs and the Florida Department of Transportation. The report provided a methodology for establishing a mobility fee.

Mobility Plan Development

To develop a mobility plan and fee methodology as provided for in Senate Bill 360, the MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) formed the Mobility Plan Task Force in October, 2009. Comprised of planning staff from the County's local governments, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 7 Office as well as citizen and business representatives, the Mobility Plan Task Force began meeting in January, 2010. The Task Force meetings were discontinued temporarily in August, 2010 after Senate Bill 360 was ruled unconstitutional by a Leon County circuit court. In response to the ruling, the bill was modified in the 2011 Florida Legislative Session and re-introduced and adopted as House Bill 7207, the Community Planning Act. This Act furthered the intent of Senate Bill 360 by removing State imposed concurrency management

requirements for all local governments in Florida. The Task Force resumed meeting in June, 2011 after the conclusion of the legislative session.

With the repeal of the concurrency mandate, House Bill 7207 provided local governments with an open slate in terms of their procedures for managing growth. The Bill encouraged the implementation of creative strategic approaches aimed at increasing mobility and managing growth, including the development of “mobility fees”. The objective of the Task Force in this effort was to create an approach that achieved the following:

- Improved efficiency of local site plan review processes in the application of growth management requirements;
- Consistency in the application of growth management requirements across jurisdictional boundaries;
- Furthering of the mobility goals of the local governments;
- Addressing the transportation impacts of development projects effectively and equitably; and
- Furthering the emphasis on multi-modal transportation embraced by local comprehensive plans as well as the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Rather than create a mobility fee, the Mobility Plan Task Force endorsed the idea of utilizing the County’s impact fee program to fund projects designed to improve travel conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists. In addition, they supported a growth management process enabling local governments to address the impacts of moderate to large scale development projects through the implementation of multi-modal strategies and improvements commensurate with their transportation impacts. The combination of utilizing impact fees and a growth management process that addresses moderate to large scale development projects is central to the Pinellas County Mobility Plan.

Multi-modal Impact Fees

As called for in the Mobility Plan, the countywide Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance (TIFO) will be renamed the Multi-modal Impact Fee Ordinance to recognize that monies generated through these fees are intended to be used to fund improvements serving all principal modes of travel. These include walking, bicycling and transit as well as automobile use. In accordance with the terms of the Ordinance, the improvements must provide a capacity benefit to the major road network, either by infrastructure expansion or by lessening the demand for single occupant vehicle travel. They must also be consistent with the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan and local comprehensive plans. Other than the name change, the Mobility plan does not require any modifications to the TIFO, which has been in effect since 1986, and will continue to be applied countywide.

Impact fees that have been applied pursuant to the Pinellas County TIFO are “consumption-based” in that new development is assessed based on the value of the increment of a transportation facility needed to serve it. The other common approach to calculating impact

fees is improvement-based, whereby fees are based on the total cost of transportation improvement needs identified within a defined area or district. Developers pay a percentage of the total costs based on the number of vehicle trips their project generates.

Shown below is the impact fee formula that has been applied in Pinellas County. A table of land use categories with corresponding trip generation rates (TGR), percent new trips (NT) and trip lengths (TL) are included within Schedule A and Schedule B of the Ordinance. Schedule B is a discounted rate schedule applied in downtown districts. There are eight downtown districts located in Oldsmar, Palm Harbor, Dunedin, Safety Harbor, Clearwater, Largo, Pinellas Park and St. Petersburg. The reduced rates are based on trip generation data showing that, due to the concentration and mix of land uses in these areas, they produce less vehicle trips.

Current Transportation Impact Fee Calculation Formula

$$\text{TGR} \times \% \text{NT} \times \text{TL} \times \text{CST (RF)} / \text{CAP} \times 2$$

Where:

TGR = Trip generation rate, as per fee schedule

%NT = Percent new trips

TL = Average trip length, varies by land use

CST = Cost to construct one-lane mile of roadway (\$2,216,466.00)

CAP = Capacity of one-lane mile of roadway (6,900 vehicles per lane, per day)

2 = Allocation of one-half the impact to the origin and one-half to the destination

RF = Reduction factor (.268)

Percent NT and TL figures are derived from independent study data. Trip generation rates are based on the *Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Manual* as well as independent studies. The cost of construction for one-lane mile of roadway is based on FDOT published estimates and the capacity figure is based on FDOT's *Generalized Annual Average Daily Volumes for Florida's Urbanized Areas* published in their Quality/Level of Service Manual. The reduction factor (RF) was established as a discretionary adjustment when the TIFO was initially adopted to provide a discount for development projects on the fully allocated impact fee cost of their projects. Using the impact fee for a single family home as an example, applying the fully allocated rate would result in a cost of \$32,497 to the fee payer. With the reduction factor applied, the cost is \$2,066, bringing the fee into proximity with that of other Florida counties.

The Ordinance requires a review of the fee schedule and the calculation formula variables every two years. The biennial review is carried out through the MPO planning process. Adoption of proposed amendments to the Ordinance is the responsibility of the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners. This action relies on a recommendation of approval from the MPO.

Managing Development Impacts

The Pinellas County Mobility Plan seeks to allow local governments to manage moderate to large scale projects through the application of development requirements in addition to, in-lieu of or as credit toward their multi-modal impact fee assessment. These requirements are applied through local government land development codes and site plan review processes.

“Moderate to large scale” development projects impacting roads with deficient operating conditions are classified in the Mobility Plan as either Tier 1 or Tier 2. Tier 1 projects include those that generate between 51 and 300 new peak hour trips. Development projects generating more than 300 new peak hour trips are classified as Tier 2. “Deficient” roads operate with peak hour LOS E or F conditions and/or volume-to-capacity of 0.9 or higher. Volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio is a measure of the saturation level of a roadway, expressing existing traffic volumes as a percentage of roadway capacity.

The Mobility Plan requires developers of Tier 1 and 2 projects to submit a transportation management plan (TMP) to the applicable local government during the site plan review process. Transportation management plans must address development impacts while increasing mobility and reducing the demand for single occupant vehicle travel. Listed below are strategies that can be identified in a TMP. The cost of transportation improvements or strategies included in a TMP would be creditable toward the multi-modal impact fee assessments of development projects. If the cost of the TMP meets or exceeds the assessment, the development project would not be subject to payment of the fee.

Transportation Management Plan Strategies

- Access management improvements:
 - Acceleration/deceleration lane;
 - Reduction of driveways; and
 - Shared driveways/cross access easements with neighboring properties.
- Intersection capacity improvements, such as signal timing and turn lane storage capacity
- Provision of transit accommodations developed in coordination with PSTA:
 - New or enhanced transit stop(s) or shelter(s);
 - Walkways connecting transit stops to the principle building(s);
 - Bus pull-off area(s); and
 - Dedication of park and ride parking spaces.
- Provision of pedestrian accommodations:
 - Sidewalks along all street frontages;
 - Sidewalk/walkway connecting building entrance with frontage sidewalk;
 - Other pedestrian treatments in parking areas; and
 - Other sidewalks connecting to adjacent neighborhoods.

- Provision of bicycle accommodations, such as, but not limited to:
 - Bicycle rack(s);
 - Trail improvement; and
 - Bicycle lane installation.
- Implementation of transportation demand management strategies:
 - Ridesharing programs;
 - Flexible work hours; and
 - Telecommuting.
- Provision of traditional neighborhood site design features:
 - Orientation of building toward street
 - Parking oriented to side or rear of building; and
 - Building entry on street.
- Pedestrian shade accommodations such as awnings over sidewalks and other outdoor walkways, and tree plantings providing canopy
- Site design that minimizes cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets by encouraging vehicular traffic to utilize the major road network to travel to or from the site, utilizing local roads only for immediate site access.

Developers of Tier 2 projects are required to conduct a traffic study and submit an accompanying report. The report must include the results of the study and a transportation management plan identifying improvements necessary to manage the impacts of their project as identified in the traffic study. The report is subject to review and approval during the site plan review processes by the applicable jurisdiction. The cost of the transportation management plan strategies can be applied as credit toward the development's multi-modal fee assessment or payment of the fee could be combined with a transportation improvement/strategy as part of the transportation management plan. It should be noted that, in accordance with House Bill 7207, developers can only be required to address the impacts associated with their project rather than any pre-existing traffic congestion or deficient level of service conditions. Shown below are examples of development projects that meet the threshold of the Tier 1 and 2 categories under the Mobility Plan.

Examples of development projects that would generate 51 peak hour trips (Tier 1) shown below.

- *55 single family homes*
- *35,076 square foot general office*
- *11,335 square foot general commercial*
- *81,677 square foot general industrial*

Examples of development projects that would generate 301 peak hour trips (Tier 2) shown below.

- *330 single family homes*
- *298,393 square foot general office*
- *68,035 square foot general commercial*
- *490,217 square foot general industrial*

Development projects that generate less than 51 new peak hour trips are required to pay a multi-modal impact fee based on the proposed land use. They are not required to submit a transportation management plan or traffic study. A traffic study and corresponding transportation management plan for a land development project generating more than 50 new peak hour trips outside a deficient road corridor may be required. This would be the case if through the site plan review process it is determined that operational improvements such as intersection or median modifications are necessary to accommodate the additional trips generated by the proposed land use.

Mobility Plan Improvements

Projects funded by multi-modal impact fee revenues need to be identified in a local comprehensive plan or the MPO LRTP and/or must be consistent with and further the goals and objectives of these plans. The LRTP identifies a countywide network of existing and planned sidewalk, trail and bicycle lanes developed as part of the MPO Bicycle Pedestrian Facilities Element. Regarding transit, the LRTP identifies a planned network that includes express service and bus rapid transit (BRT) on its existing core routes where headways will be reduced to 15 minutes or less and a rail system extending from downtown St. Petersburg to the Gateway/Carillon area in mid-county to downtown Clearwater and providing for a future connection from Gateway/Carillon to Tampa. Road improvement needs identified in the LRTP are primarily “enhancement” projects that involve intersection modifications (e.g., addition/extension of turn lanes) as well as the addition of curb and gutter, sidewalks and bike lanes. The LRTP is based on the policies and improvement needs of the local comprehensive plans. These types of projects and others that support their implementation such as bus stop amenities along a route planned for improvement can be funded with multi-modal impact fee revenue. In accordance with the Mobility Plan, particular emphasis is placed on funding multi-modal projects that increase the mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users while reducing demand on single-occupant vehicle travel. It should also be noted that the Mobility Plan does not support the use of impact fee revenue for operations funding or for improvements that are standard requirements of local site plan review processes.

Summary

The Mobility Plan provides Pinellas County’s local governments with a new approach for managing growth as it relates to the transportation impacts of development projects. The Plan revolves around utilizing the established framework of the TIFO, which has provided a countywide uniform approach to the assessment, collection and expenditure of transportation impact fees since 1986. It also replaces traditional concurrency management systems based on maintaining roadway LOS standards with a more flexible approach that draws from existing practices in Pinellas County. Lastly, the Plan promotes multi-modal transportation and greater consistency among local governments in the application of growth management requirements through their site plan review processes.

Another advantage of utilizing the TIFO is that by affording developers credit for pre-existing uses, it encourages redevelopment and re-use of existing structures. It also encourages redevelopment activity in downtown districts where more density is desired with lower fees. It should be noted that the Ordinance doesn't allow for waiving or lowering impact fee rates on development projects without supporting technical data. Such data would need to show that the trip characteristics of the development warrant a lower fee or waiver. If a local government wishes to reduce or waive impact fees for certain developments in situations where such action isn't warranted by technical data, they need to subsidize the fees.

In terms of growth management procedures, the Mobility Plan shifts the focus from roadway LOS, which was central to traditional concurrency, to improving mobility through the implementation of multi-modal improvements and strategies. It also enables local governments to provide a pay and go option for development projects not determined to have a significant impact on the surrounding road network. This provides for a more efficient and consistent review process across the County.