



A MASTER PLAN FOR THE GATEWAY AREA

November 2015

Project Introduction

At its September Work Session, the Pinellas Planning Council/Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (PPC/MPO) Board identified three priority emphasis areas: a vision for the US 19 corridor, enhancing beach access and a master plan for the Gateway area. The Gateway emphasis area will focus on building partnerships to create a master plan that will guide future development and multimodal connectivity, both regionally and throughout the district.

The “Gateway,” a loosely defined area of about 30 square miles under four local government jurisdictions, is a primary economic engine of Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region. The Gateway area is home to a large number of higher wage jobs and young professionals because of its accessibility to regional highways, downtown St. Petersburg and destinations in Tampa, yet it suffers from the challenges of a disparate, disconnected and disinvested automobile-centric development pattern. The Countywide Land Use Plan enables major increases in density/intensity with its new Target Employment and Activity Center designations. While there is significant state highway investment in the area (both completed and planned), a result of its auto-oriented development pattern is that accessibility for transit and non-motorized travel remains relatively limited. There has been interest expressed by the City of St. Petersburg in addressing the connectivity issues in Gateway and by Pinellas County to ensure adequate capacity and more resilient stormwater and utility infrastructure necessary for the area’s redevelopment.

Pinellas County’s transit planning efforts have long focused on serving the Gateway as a key regional employment center. It is a critical hub and connecting point for premium transit service linking downtown St. Petersburg, Westshore and downtown Tampa in Hillsborough County, the beaches and areas in northern Pinellas County. A well thought-out plan for multimodal connectivity is needed to preserve the investments made in the area’s regional highway network, take pressure off the surface roadways, and to foster more efficient, compact development. From a land use perspective, there is a balance needed between protecting existing industrial and target employment land and providing housing options that enable people to live closer to their destinations.

Communications and Public Involvement

Throughout the project, maintaining clear and consistent communication is a priority. Key messages will be developed based on support data from current plans. A communications and education campaign will be used to share these messages and tell the story of the corridor, including characteristics, trends and issues/opportunities. A communications and outreach plan will be developed that will define key stakeholders/contacts, build capacity for area businesses to take an active role in planning and developing the district, and engage a diverse array of local government, agency and citizen stakeholders. A potential outcome of this process is to re-establish a Transportation Management Organization for the Gateway that would be responsible for working with businesses promote travel choices, improve accessibility and enhance the area.



Project Work Plan

A master plan for this area is likely to be a major planning effort. Thus, the two-year work plan is focused on building support for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to improving multimodal connectivity in the area. Initial activities will largely entail outreach and engagement with partner state, regional and local organizations, as well as major employers and other stakeholders to undertake the master plan.

A key task will be to define the planning boundary and potential sub-districts or focal points of the Gateway area, and begin setting context for how the area may evolve and grow. This will provide a basis for scoping the work and developing a budget for the master plan, which is likely to need some funding participation from partner agencies.

The PPC/MPO will facilitate formation and activities of a steering committee comprised of local governments, partner agencies and major employers to develop a coordinated work plan for the Gateway area. This will entail convening agencies and their appropriate staff who are responsible for public facilities, land use, transportation and economic development. The roles of passenger and freight transportation, and the improvements necessary to ensure their lasting value, are critical to the study effort. PPC/MPO staff will develop information to set the context for the area through its communications plan by focusing attention on key issues, opportunities and options for how the area is to evolve over time.

One of the important objectives for the Gateway is to identify a suitable location to establish an intermodal center that can function as a hub for regional and local transit services. The intermodal center should be supported by a transit oriented development framework that entails a mix of uses and a compact, walkable scale for maximum accessibility. Other objectives include a multimodal connectivity plan for the area, a funding strategy, a coordinated land use-transportation strategy, an infrastructure master plan for areawide public facilities needed for future growth and climate change adaptation, and formation of a business/employer-led organization to help guide planning and development activities (as exists in Westshore).

End Products/Results

The goal is to initiate the Gateway Master Plan effort within the next two years based on the input and commitments from partner organizations. The master plan will guide the identification of transportation project priorities and public infrastructure necessary to sustain future development and economic growth of the Gateway area.

PPC/MPO JOINT ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/INFORMATION

A. Board Workshop Follow-Up

2. Approval of Complete Streets Plan – Action

For the last several months, PPC/MPO staff has been working with the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) to develop a policy for Complete Streets, an approach to ensuring that Pinellas County's roadways better accommodate the needs of all users to improve safety, access and support community redevelopment objectives. As a result of those discussions and the recognition that the state and various local governments have either adopted or were developing their own Complete Streets policies, the PPC/MPO began focusing on developing a Complete Streets program, which would entail working with local governments and the Florida Department of Transportation, as appropriate, to provide technical assistance in developing feasible plans and designs for Complete Streets projects, and providing a predictable funding source to advance one or more Complete Streets projects through to construction.

PPC/MPO staff has developed the outlines of a proposed Complete Streets program for which local governments would be encouraged to submit applications for funding of planning, engineering/design or construction activities. The eligible project would need to meet certain criteria, most notably having a strong land use/redevelopment emphasis, and would most likely entail a funding match from the local government and demonstrate community support for the project.

Based on discussion and Board guidance at the December 4 work session, PPC/MPO staff is seeking Board action to authorize continued development of the Complete Streets program, beginning with the 2016-17 fiscal year. If authorized, the Board will be asked to approve the proposed program and associate funding levels at a future meeting in 2016.

ATTACHMENT: None

ACTION: Board to authorize continued development of the Complete Streets Program

Pinellas MPO: 12/09/15