

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES – MEETING OF MARCH 12, 2008**

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 12, 2008 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Frank Hibbard, *Chairman* – Mayor, City of Clearwater
Chris Arbutine, *Vice Chairman* – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA
Ronnie Duncan – Board of County Commissioners
David Eggers – City of Dunedin Commission
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Herbert Polson – City of St. Petersburg Council
Robin Saenger – City of Tarpon Springs Commission, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs
Karen Seel – Board of County Commissioners
Robert Stewart – Board of County Commissioners
Don Skelton, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

MEMBERS ABSENT

Harriet Crozier – Vice Mayor, City of Largo
Jeff Danner – City of St. Petersburg Council

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Mahshid Arasteh – Pinellas County Public Works
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater
Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park
Diane Caruso – QCA
Scott Collister – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Michael Dean – Clearwater Yellow Cab
Rick Eggers – Pinellas Park
Tim Garling - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Bill Jonson – MPO Citizens Advisory Committee
Bob Klute – City of Largo
Bob Lasher – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Rob Meador – Pinellas County Public Works
Bill Peterson – Clearwater Yellow Cab
Deborah Rose – City of Pinellas Park
David Sadowsky – Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Wilfred Sergeant – Traffic Consultant
Don Stout – Pinellas County Veterans Services
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay – MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hibbard called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner Stewart gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The board members introduced themselves.

*At 1:04 p.m., Councilmember Polson arrived.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There was no citizen comment.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of February 13, 2008**
- B. Approval of Invoices – Renaissance Planning Group**
- C. Approval of FY 2008/09-2009/10 Unified Planning Work Program**
- D. Approval of Amended MPO Staff Services Agreement Based on FDOT Comment**

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Saenger seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO FY 2007/08-2011-12 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requested an amendment to the FY 2007/08—2011/12 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Project FPN 4188691.

*At 1:06 p.m., Mayor Arbutine and Commissioner Seel arrived.

This is a project to add two lanes to a segment of S.R. 694 (Gandy Boulevard) in the City of St. Petersburg. The original project limits were from MLK Jr. Boulevard to Brighton Bay in the east. For cost reasons, the City is unable to advance work on that project. In order to retain the earmark in the amount of \$900,213, the City has changed the project limits, which are now from MLK Jr. Boulevard to 28th Street in the west. The City has already completed the design for this project and needs only construction funds for it. With the amendment, money intended for the design of the Brighton Bay project would be used for the construction of the 28th Street project. Construction is scheduled for FY 2008.

Both the Technical Coordinating Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed the amendment and recommended approval.

Chairman Hibbard opened the public hearing. There was no public comment. The public hearing was closed.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved approval of the amendment to the TIP. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion. The roll was called, and the board voted as follows: Commissioner Stewart—Yes; Commissioner Seel—Yes; Councilmember Polson—Yes; Commissioner Eggers—Yes; Mayor Arbutine—Yes; Commissioner Duncan—Yes; Commissioner Saenger—Yes; Mayor Mischler—Yes; Mayor Hibbard—Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO TRUCK ROUTE PLAN

The MPO includes in its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) a Countywide Truck Route Plan Map. The map shows which roads are open to trucks and the hours that the roads may be traveled.

Several amendments were proposed to the Truck Route Plan. They were based on evaluations made by the consultant for the Goods Movement Study and input from the Goods Movement Advisory Committee, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and MPO staff. Also, the City of St. Petersburg requested amendments to the MPO's Truck Route Plan in order to achieve consistency with the City's own Truck Route Map.

Ms. Ward reviewed a list of the affected roads and a map showing the proposed changes. Commissioner Saenger requested that the map be corrected to show that in Tarpon Springs, Belcher Road now extends from Tampa Road to Klosterman Road.

Chairman Hibbard opened the public hearing. There was no public comment. The public hearing was closed.

ACTION: Commissioner Saenger moved to approve the amendments to the Countywide Truck Route Plan. Councilmember Polson seconded the motion. The roll was called, and the board voted as follows: Commissioner Stewart—Yes; Commissioner Seel—Yes; Councilmember Polson—Yes; Commissioner Eggers—Yes; Mayor Arbutine—Yes; Commissioner Duncan—Yes; Commissioner Saenger—Yes; Mayor Mischler—Yes; Mayor Hibbard—Yes. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Seel said that possibly the Belcher Road extension should be designated as daylight hours for trucks. Mr. Smith said that extending the truck route farther north was considered by the committee and was rejected. However, this matter could be reviewed. Commissioner Saenger noted that the area around the road extension is heavily residential and there are many elementary school zones. The road winds a great deal, possibly making it difficult for large trucks to drive through the area.

VI-A. BAYWAY TOLL LEGISLATION

(This item was added to the agenda after publication.)

Staff briefly reviewed legislative proposals to fund the construction of the two replacement bridges of the Bayway System. For the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to proceed with the building of the bridges, the special act that sets the tolls for the Bayway System would have to be repealed. Legislation to accomplish this has been proposed. There was a brief review of some past legal issues surrounding the bridges.

Secretary Skelton reviewed the history of the bridges and the toll system. The Bayway System was built in 1962 as a toll system. The tolls are expected to cover all of the operations and maintenance of the system as long as it exists, and this includes bridge repairs and replacement. The bridges are now 46 years old. Within the next five years, both bridges will need significant maintenance that will total about \$49 million. With future expenditures, the bridges could last another 30 years, at which time they should be replaced. The cost to replace the bridges is currently estimated to be \$179.5 million. The only way to finance the replacements is to modify the toll finance plan.

This is the only area where the tolls have been established by law. Everywhere else in the State, the FDOT and Florida's Turnpike Enterprise have the authority and responsibility to set tolls that would ensure proper operation and maintenance of toll facilities. The proposed legislation would repeal the current law governing the two Bayway System bridges and give the FDOT the authority and responsibility for their toll system.

The DOT is looking for the minimal amount that will finance the two bridges. No monies from the Bayway System account have been spent on anything but the bridges, with the exception of Blind Pass Road. To reduce the proposed funding plan would necessitate using monies from some outside source. It was noted that the State Revenue Conference has forecast another reduction in transportation revenues of about \$500 million over five years. A workshop will be held this evening, March 12, at 6:00 p.m. in the St. Pete Beach Community Center to discuss the funding plan.

Responding to questions from Councilmember Polson, Secretary Skelton said that the DOT requested the proposed legislation. The bill is considered a general bill, not a local bill, by both the DOT and the legislature. It was presented to the local delegation, even though that was not required. Councilmember Polson responded that he believes it is a local bill and should have gone through a public hearing process by the local delegation, followed by a vote to take it forward or not. He also noted that a letter was written by Mayor Baker to Secretary Skelton about combining the two bridges into a single project when the bridges should have been separated into two projects.

An annual report on the Bayway System looks at the gross revenues received and identifies the operation and maintenance that occurs. Currently, about \$1.5 million is accruing annually in the construction reserve account. With bonding capacity of \$20 million and the \$37 million currently in the account, about \$58 million would be available for the bridge replacements.

Secretary Skelton will update the board on the revised finance plan. The toll and pass fee chart dated October 10, 2007, which was included with meeting materials, has been revised to show lower fees. He will provide the board with the new proposed toll rates.

Commissioner Duncan said that it is important to get the most up-to-date and accurate information to the public because current perceptions are inaccurate. Updated information is going to be available at this evening's public open house.

Commissioner Seel said that it appears the bridges will have to be rebuilt every 50 years. Therefore, somewhere in the proposed legislation, the toll revenues beyond 2038 should be maintained in this account as "sacred" so that people will be prepared to build the next set of bridges in the 50-year timespan.

VII. CLEVELAND STREETScape AND BEACH WALK PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Paul Bertels of the City of Clearwater gave a PowerPoint presentation on the City's recent Cleveland Street Streetscape and Beach Walk projects. Photos of the projects showed how these areas now look. The Streetscape is complete, and the Beach Walk should be completed in May, approximately eight months ahead of schedule.

VIII. ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION FOR PINELLAS TRAIL SEGMENT

At its February 13, 2008 meeting, the MPO approved a request from the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) to authorize the development of a scope for an MPO consultant to evaluate the alternative alignments for the planned northern segment of the Progress Energy Trail. Staff reported that preliminary cost estimates for the evaluation are in the \$50,000-\$60,000 range. However, staff wants to keep the work in the range of \$25,000-\$30,000 and asked for authorization to spend up to that amount.

Commissioner Seel asked how this would be coordinated with Progress Energy. Mr. Smith responded that staff planned to meet with them. He noted that it might not be necessary to move off the corridor and that will be part of the review.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved to authorize the funds for the consultant's evaluation, Commissioner Seel seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
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IX. TRANSPORTATION IMPACT FEE REVIEW ALTERNATIVES

At its December 12, 2007 meeting, the MPO voted not to approve proposed amendments to the Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance (TIFO). Based on this action, the proposed amendments were not brought to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for adoption. Therefore, no further action or public hearings were necessary.

Regarding the schedule of the next TIFO review and update, staff identified three possible dates for future action. They were:

- 2 years from now
- 1 year from now, taking into account that the MPO took 1 year to work through the recently ended review
- The MPO could wait for the State legislature to finish its examination of impact fee programs throughout the State and then reconvene.

It was reviewed that the City of Tarpon Springs is planning to use the multi-modal transportation district (MMTD) approach in their redevelopment district. MMTDs help cities meet their concurrency requirements through the development of multi-modal transportation systems. Fees are collected based on the number of trips generated. The MMTD approach is an alternative to expanding roads in order to meet automobile capacity.

ACTION: Mayor Arbutine moved that the MPO review transportation impact fees one year from its last recommendation to the BCC, or in December 2008. The motion was seconded and it carried, with Commissioner Stewart dissenting.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. PTAC Report on Pedestrian Provisions on Gulf Boulevard

The Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) has been working with the City of St. Pete Beach to address pedestrian safety issues pertaining to crossing Gulf Boulevard. Last January, members of PTAC, St. Pete Beach staff, several concerned citizens, and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff toured Gulf Boulevard to evaluate pedestrian crossing areas. A report, "Conclusions from the January 17, 2008 PTAC Field Review of Gulf Boulevard in St. Pete Beach", was issued.

The PTAC reviewed the report at their February 11, 2008 meeting and approved it for transmittal to FDOT for their consideration. The recommendations contained in the report are presently under review by FDOT. Once that review is complete, a workshop meeting will be set up with the group that prepared the report, and future actions will be considered.

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved to receive the PTAC's report, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Bicycle Advisory Committee Report on Pinellas Trail Rehab

The Bicycle Advisory Committee had prepared a report that identifies segments of the Pinellas Trail that need surface improvements. On February 19, 2008, that report was forwarded to Paul Cozzie, Director of the Culture, Education and Leisure Department, which operates the trail. The County could consider these recommendations during their next budget review process.

Councilmember Polson asked if the BAC had looked at the drainage on the trail, not just the surface. There are sections in the southern part where the ditches to the side of the trail have filled in with debris, and flooding occurs in these areas. He had spoken with Mr. Cozzie about this last year. Maintenance should include drainage, not just surface rehabilitation. Also, the exotic plants, particularly the Brazilian pepper trees, should be removed from the trail. Maintenance of the trail should be from right-of-way to right-of-way on the sidelines, not just on the surface. Mr. Smith said that he would flag these concerns.

Commissioner Saenger referred to the priority list in the report. She asked how they would be handled. She agreed that the exotics need to be removed. Some parts of the trail are overrun with

them. Mr. Smith responded that the list does not rank trail areas by importance but identifies what should be done in the short term. He said that the BAC's report was primarily about the trail surface but the other concerns can be flagged. Some sections of the trail are being cleared of the exotics, and this is an active program. Commissioner Saenger asked for an overview of how that work would fit into the trail program.

Responding to questions from Mayor Mischler, staff said that the County is responsible for maintaining the trail. The County rangers are on the trail to provide security. Law enforcement is provided by the municipalities.

Mr. Smith noted that the Park Department has been considering ways to maintain the trail at less expense.

Commissioner Eggers said that street lighting and striping at trail crossings should be included in the maintenance program.

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved acceptance of the memo dated February 19, 2008 from the BAC. Councilmember Polson seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XI. PRINTING OF THE MPO ANNUAL REPORT

Staff has been evaluating alternatives to the printing and distribution of the MPO's Annual Report. The Pinellas County MPO is the only agency that prints a report and distributes it via the area's major newspapers, and this has proved to be very expensive. The MPO already has a significant outreach program via brochures and its web site. Currently, the MPO is in conformance with what the federal government requires. Staff reviewed a chart showing how other area agencies accomplish public outreach.

Staff recommended not publishing an annual report. They will continue to examine alternatives to the Annual Report and identify other ways to disseminate information to the public.

ACTION: Commissioner Eggers moved acceptance of the cost savings program, Commissioner Saenger seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XII. TAMPA BAY AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY UPDATE

Chairman Hibbard reported that the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) met on February 22 in Manatee County. Commissioner Duncan chaired the meeting. The board received reports on transit plans for Manatee and Sarasota Counties including how they will link to each other and to the other counties in the TBARTA area.

There was a discussion regarding holding all regions harmless regarding the TBARTA plan, but this idea was voted down.

Through the two county commissions, and with matching funds from the Tampa Bay Partnership, the Sarasota/Manatee MPO has contributed its share of the TBARTA legal expense fund.

The TBARTA workshops are under way. Pinellas County's workshop will be held on Thursday, March 13 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Select at 3535 Ulmerton Road. It will be a public open house format.

XIII. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Commissioner Duncan reported that the PMI Steering Committee met on Monday, March 11. The committee has been given the opportunity to be the clearinghouse and discussion vehicle for transit as part of the update of the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

On Monday, April 7, there will be a meeting of the PMI Steering Committee and the PSTA Board. They will discuss the St. Petersburg-to-Beaches BRT program. There will also be a discussion of the Transit Development Plan that is required of PSTA.

In advance of the April 7 meeting, the Countywide BRT plan and the selection of the top two corridors have been put on hold until the resolution of the St. Petersburg BRT discussions. This should help achieve the goal of connectivity.

The Steering Committee discussed the engineering evaluation of the Clearwater Memorial Bridge as it relates to the potential for adding a guideway system. The consultant's work has been placed on hold as discussions continue between the MPO and the PSTA. Little cost will be incurred by this delay because the engineering review hadn't begun. The consultant understands that further committee discussion is needed before the evaluation begins.

XIV. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

A. Technical Coordinating Committee

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to appoint: 1) Debra Rose as the alternate representative of the Pinellas Park Planning Department; and 2) John Holt as the representative of the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport, replacing Frank Aiello. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Traffic Signal and Median Control Committee

ACTION: Councilmember Polson moved to appoint Bob Bray as the alternate to Tom Whalen as the TCC's representative on the TS&MCC, replacing Ron Hull. Commissioner Seel seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Citizens Advisory Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Eggers moved to appoint David Carson as a representative of Pinellas Park/Mid-County, Councilmember Polson seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

XV. PSTA ACTIVITIES

The Board of Directors of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) met on February 27. A Meeting Summary was included with meeting materials. On April 7, the PSTA and the Pinellas Mobility Initiative (PMI) Steering Committee will meet to discuss the PSTA's Transit Development Plan.

Tim Garling, Executive Director of the PSTA, said that the April 7 meeting would be a good opportunity for the PSTA Board to meet with the Steering Committee and that he appreciated the connectivity between the MPO and the PSTA, which will help to move projects forward.

XVI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Correspondence

Hillsborough County has applied for a grant to perform a feasibility review and project development for ferry service across Tampa Bay. On February 22, 2008, Mr. Smith wrote a letter to Pat Bean, County Administrator of Hillsborough County. The letter states that the Pinellas County MPO would be a willing partner in the project.

B. Other

The board congratulated Mayor Mischler upon his re-election to office.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Frank Hibbard, Chairman