

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES – MEETING OF OCTOBER 12, 2005**

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, created by the State of Florida in accordance with Title 23 Section 134 United States Code and Chapter 339 Florida Statutes, met in regular session on Wednesday, October 12, 2005 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Members Present

Karen Seel, *Chair* – Board of County Commissioners
Richard Kriseman, *Vice Chair* – City of St. Petersburg Council
Chris Arbutine – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Ronnie Duncan – Board of County Commissioners
David Eggers – City of Dunedin Commission
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater
Jay Lasita – City of St. Petersburg Council
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Jim Ronecker – City of Oldsmar Council, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs
Robert Stewart – Board of County Commissioners
Don Skelton, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Members Absent

Pat Gerard – City of Largo Commission

Others Present

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Ned Allen – Citizens Advisory Committee
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater
Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park
Neil Brickfield – Safety Harbor
Bob Clifford – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Donna Davis – Faith in Action for Strength Together
Steve Fairchild – Pinellas County Schools
R. B. Johnson – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Joe Kubicki – City of St. Petersburg
Deborah Kynes – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Rob Meador – Pinellas County Public Works
John Morrone – Board of County Commissioners
Courtney Orr – Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
David Sadowsky – Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Jim Sebesta – Florida State Senate
Wilfred Sergeant – Sky Train Corporation
Roger Sweeney – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg
Pete Yauch – Pinellas County Public Works

Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay – MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Seel called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Councilmember Kriseman gave the invocation, and Commissioner Duncan led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Seel presented a plaque to George Krause in recognition of his five years of service on the Citizens Advisory Committee.

IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There was no citizen comment.

V. PRESENTATION BY SENATOR SEBESTA RE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

Senator Jim Sebesta addressed the board about the Florida High Speed Rail. He reviewed that last November, the voters removed the amendment for a high-speed rail from the State constitution. He supported that vote. One reason the voters rejected the amendment was that the estimated \$2 billion price of the system was too high.

Senator Sebesta said that he still believes that a high-speed rail has a strong future in Florida, and he has considered how one could be built without tax dollars. There are groups that have the financial means to build such a system. He is speaking with two private firms that are very interested in a high-speed rail in Florida. Neither is based in the U.S. One is the eighth largest development company in the world. This initiative is going forward.

The rail system would be a private development project, not a government project. The developer would design, finance, build, and manage a privately-held high-speed rail. The system would start somewhere in Pinellas County and go east, connecting the west coast to the east coast. The segment that would be easy to build is along the I-4 corridor because the High-Speed Rail Authority worked on that segment for a number of years. The only step left is to secure a permit from the Federal Railway Administration.

Choosing the other segments, particularly in the Pinellas County and Orlando areas, is not as easy. The Senator outlined a possible route that would start in Pinellas County at the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport, using the inter-modal center that the Department of Transportation is planning for that general area. It would go east through Tampa and connect with Disney World, Universal, the convention center, and Orlando International Airport. From that point, the rail could go north to Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, or go to Port Canaveral, or go south to Miami.

Senator Sebesta said that it is essential that the communities along the way build their feeder systems into the intermodal centers so that the systems can work together. Magnetic levitation technology is being discussed for the high-speed rail.

Senator Sebesta noted that his term of office will end in November 2006. He hopes to get this project going by that time.

Mayor Mischler said that the most important issue for the County's residents would be that the high-speed rail comes here. Senator Sebesta responded that the developers would make the final decision, but bringing the rail to Pinellas County is one of his goals.

Councilmember Lasita noted that the public had expressed an interest in having such a rail system. It would provide the County with a regional connection, which is important for getting State and Federal funding for future transportation projects.

Senator Sebesta noted that the Boards of County Commissioners in Pinellas County and Hillsborough County would have to start working together on this, as would both MPOs. Chair Seel said that she would be talking with Chairman Harrison of the Hillsborough County MPO.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of September 14, 2005**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
 - 1. Renaissance Planning Group**
 - 2. Tindale-Oliver & Associates**
- C. Approval of Repairs/Replacement of Traffic Count Equipment**
- D. Approval of Printing of Long Range Transportation Plan Summary Report**
- E. Acceptance of Long Range Transportation Plan 2025 Traffic Forecasts Report**
- F. Acceptance of Distribution Agreement for FTA Section 5307 Funds**

ACTION: Mayor Hibbard moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.
--

VII. REPORT ON COMMUTER CHOICES WEEK

Mr. Smith showed a video compilation of several TV news reports about the kayak trip to work taken by himself and County Administrator Spratt during Commuter Choices Week. The trip helped to publicize that week.

VIII. TIP AMENDMENT

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requested that the FY 2005/06-2009/10 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be amended to include FPN 406066 1 in FY 2006. This would permit the construction of bus pads for the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority at 1,000 locations throughout the County. The project would cost \$600,000 and would use Federal enhancement funds. The project is already in the work program and is being moved up. Money has already been allocated to it.

ACTION: Councilmember Lasita moved approval of the TIP amendment for FPN 406066 1. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

IX. UPDATE ON TAMPA BAY INTERMODAL FACILITIES STUDY

Jerry Comellas of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) gave an update on the Tampa Bay Intermodal Facilities Study. The study began two years ago, the feasibility study was completed last December, and the PD&E study began last January. The study's purpose was to examine alternatives to cars and to consider building a facility that would address different modes of transportation within a given area covering Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. The study's goal was to identify sites that could compete for Federal money in the future so that right-of-way needed then could be purchased at today's cost.

The feasibility study considered 53 sites and chose six of them for further study. They were in: 1) the USF area, 2) downtown Tampa, 3) two areas in the West Shore Business District, 4) the Gateway area, and 5) downtown St. Petersburg. In August, two of the sites were recommended for further study. They were: 1) the downtown Tampa site, adjacent to the old jail property and the Marion Transit Center, and 2) the Gateway area. The Gateway site is on the Sunshine Speedway property, which the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) now owns. Regional significance was one of the biggest factors in making these recommendations.

The introduction of an intermodal center onto a site would be staged. In the first phase, there would be at-grade bus service. Then the center would graduate to light rail and high-speed rail. Introducing those other modes means that other amenities such as small businesses could be introduced.

At the Gateway site, a new headquarters for the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority is being built. Close to this site is PSTA's 300X route. The St. Petersburg/Clearwater airport is in that area, as is Greyhound Bus. At-grade bus service, parking features, and rent-a-car services for airport customers could be added. The study has identified areas for retention, and the site could graduate to a full intermodal center.

In the PD&E study, the no-build alternative is a viable alternative that has been carried forth with the study. This will continue until the final recommendation goes to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The two selected sites have no significant environmental impact. There are a few minor wetland impacts on the Gateway site. Potentially, there are high contamination sites there because of its prior use as a speedway.

The Draft Environmental Assessment is in the Federal Transit Administration's office for review. The FDOT will respond to their comments and then submit to them a finding of "No Significant Impact", incorporating their comments and addressing their concerns. They hope to have that this month.

A public hearing was held, and the period of comment has ended. Two workshops were held regarding the feasibility study, and two public hearings were held in August regarding the PD&E study. The City of St. Petersburg wrote a letter to the FDOT expressing strong concerns about the downtown St. Petersburg site not having been chosen for further study. The FDOT is preparing its response to the City. At the public hearings, Mr. Smith spoke on behalf of the MPO in favor of the Gateway site. The public's comments indicated that there was broad support for a regional facility.

The FDOT hopes to complete the PD&E study very soon. Preliminary design should start this fall. Currently, there is no right-of-way or construction funded for this project.

Responding to Commissioner Stewart, Mr. Comellas said that estimates for a Gateway center are about \$163 million. Thus far, everything has been funded with State dollars. Other sources of funds haven't been determined. Public/private partnerships could be considered.

Councilmember Lasita asked why the Gateway area is being considered rather than the downtown St. Petersburg site, particularly since downtown Tampa, a chosen site, is like St. Petersburg. Mr. Comellas responded that the Gateway's strategic regional location, along with the traffic demand analysis of all the sites, made the Gateway stand out as the best choice. The sites identified in the areas of West Shore, St. Petersburg, and USF are still being identified as area transit centers that could accommodate a mode up to a light rail system but not a high-speed rail. The DOT is working on a regional transit study that will probably be carrying those sites along.

Mr. Comellas said that it will be important to have a facility in downtown St. Petersburg but that it must be asked if a high-speed rail should go there. Given where it will be coming from across the bay, should the investment be made to send it to St. Petersburg or Clearwater if you're trying to get it to the center of the County.

Secretary Skelton said that when the study examined the sites on the Hillsborough County side, even though West Shore is similar to the Gateway area--a chosen site--it was found that West Shore didn't have the available sites that would work well. An inter-modal center, with all it has to do, wouldn't fit into West Shore, so downtown Tampa was selected.

Responding to Mayor Mischler, Secretary Skelton said that there would have to be a connection from downtown Tampa to Tampa International Airport, and potentially it would be something other than a bus or shuttle bus. Mr. Comellas said that it should be kept in mind that the subject of discussion is an inter-modal center that distributes other modes of travel.

Councilmember Kriseman said that the data bear revisiting, as indicated by the Secretary, because only two sites in Pinellas were considered in the study, and St. Petersburg is undergoing changes that make the City worthy of further examination.

X. ROAD NAMING CONSISTENCY PROJECT

Chair Seel said that there is public support for consistency in road naming. Regarding C.R. 296, the MPO had everyone's concurrence on this road with the exception of the segment from 28th Street to the interstate. The City of St. Petersburg passed a resolution requesting that only the segment from Hamlin Boulevard to U.S. 19 be named Bryan Dairy Road.

Chair Seel said that she would be willing to visit the municipalities or perhaps address the Mayor's Council or conduct a workshop in order to get concurrence and more input. However, it was time for some action.

Councilmember Lasita said that while he supports the idea of Bryan Dairy Road running from the interstate, as St. Petersburg's representative on the MPO he would support the City's resolution. He noted that with all the road building in the U.S. 19 and 118th Avenue North areas, a corridor from the Skyway Bridge to Curlew Road using three highways was forming a Pinellas Parkway. The board should be considering applying one name to that road.

Mayor Mischler said that the C.R. 296 segment from U.S. 19 to 28th Street is not in the jurisdiction of the City of St. Petersburg. The City of Seminole and the City of Pinellas Park have asked that the corridor be named Bryan Dairy Road because it is in their municipalities. He believed that the County would be in favor of this. He noted that this had been discussed for several years and that it was time to move on.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved that C.R. 296 beginning at Hamlin Boulevard and ending on the west side of 28th Street North, which includes 102nd Avenue North, Bryan Dairy Road, and 118th Avenue North, be renamed Bryan Dairy Road. Mayor Arbutine seconded the motion. The motion carried, with Councilmember Kriseman and Councilmember Lasita dissenting.

Mayor Hibbard said that this matter had been discussed by the City of Clearwater. The overall goal of making things easier for residents and tourists is good, but this is a monumental task because of parochialism. He recommended adding the state road designation to the municipality's name for the road because that continues through the various jurisdictions.

Chair Seel said that while referring to state or county road designations has merit, it would still be an issue when looking up an address in the phone book. Parochialism should be put aside because road name consistency is for the benefit of the whole county.

Commissioner Stewart said that it is desirable to have single names for the roads, but reality will prevent that. It would be appropriate to identify the major roadways for which the board could make a name change. He noted that only five of 24 cities had responded to the MPO's letter about road naming, and he did not know how the board could make any conclusions about their interest in this. There are community identity issues and differences of opinion, but the board should focus on where it can make small gains.

*At 2:05 p.m., Councilmember Kriseman left.

Chair Seel asked staff to give the board the map that outlined where the roads change names. She said that the Technical Coordinating Committee had identified some roads they thought could be renamed. Also, dual name signs might work.

*At 2:07 p.m., Councilmember Lasita left.

Mayor Mischler suggested following-up with the cities that had not responded via a strong letter emphasizing that input is essential. He said that the cities don't look at the issue in the way the MPO looks at it.

Commissioner Stewart said that the MPO is a County-wide board that should focus beyond city boundaries. The County draws five million tourists per year, which is why road naming is on the agenda. While he understood the parochial view of some, he urged the board to rise above that and look at the bigger reasons for trying to accomplish road name consistency.

XI. WHITE ENFORCEMENT LIGHTS

Pete Yauch, Director of Transportation for Pinellas County Public Works, made a presentation about the device being used in the County to detect the running of red lights. It is an incandescent white light attached to the signal light, and it is wired to the same circuit as the

signal head. It can be seen from all angles at an intersection. Without this device, police must see the stop light, the stop line, and the position of the vehicle running the light. Then, the officer must drive through the red light himself to catch the driver, which is a safety hazard. Or the officer can radio ahead to a second officer in a pickup vehicle. With the enforcement light, one police car is needed, which can be parked down the road from the intersection. The officer can see the stop bar and the position of the vehicle, and he knows that the red light is on because the white light is on. Only one police vehicle is needed to monitor the intersection, and the system is safer. Judges have accepted that if the white light goes on, the driver has run the red light.

White lights are installed at 75-80 intersections in the County. They have a significant positive effect by reducing crashes at intersections. They have been written about in the Best Practices Book of the Florida Community Traffic Safety Teams, which is published by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The FDOT is using it and supporting it at locations around the state. They have also developed a training book for using white lights.

Mayor Hibbard noted that when the City of Clearwater has sent out its traffic teams for a day to watch specifically for red light running, 60-70 tickets are written.

These devices cost about \$100. The County is converting traffic signals to LED lights and it is experimenting with an LED white light. The LED lights will keep energy costs down.

XII. MPO CONCURRENCY COORDINATION PROJECT

Mr. Smith said that concurrency was invented almost 20 years ago, but there were no State guidelines for achieving it. There have been different approaches in the local jurisdictions. A new state law requires that the County have a standardized approach to concurrency. Staff have started to work with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on this matter by examining how concurrency is reached in each jurisdiction. They are surveying each local government. The Technical Coordinating Committee is assisting this effort.

*At 2:23 p.m., Mayor Hibbard left.

The goal is to identify a single approach to concurrency in which all jurisdictions would use a standardized MPO evaluation process for assessing roads. Staff will present a plan to the MPO in February.

Mr. Smith further noted that the State translates its laws through rule. State law says that there must be one standard approach to concurrency in the County, that the County must work with the State on this, and that the State wants to work through the MPO.

*At 2:26 p.m., Mayor Hibbard returned.

Chair Seel said that this is particularly important as the County moves toward redevelopment and it wants more home rule.

Mayor Mischler asked if there are traffic counts for Bryan Dairy Road to compare to Park Boulevard and Ulmerton Road. Mr. Smith responded that C.R. 296 is pulling traffic off Ulmerton Road, but Ulmerton Road is still at an "F" level of service because it remains congested.

XIII. ONE-NUMBER SERVICE FOR TRANSPORTATION

The Local Coordinating Board’s ad hoc committee for the one-number clearinghouse for transportation services has met with representatives of several service agencies. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Pinellas and Pasco Counties has been working to establish a one-number call-in center to answer questions about services. The AAA would be willing to add transportation as a service for which it can supply information. MPO staff can work with them on this. It shouldn’t cost any extra money to provide transportation information because it’s being provided by an existing agency.

The State is placing a high priority on AAA’s project, so they are giving them some resources to do this, including software. The center should come online in December. Parties have agreed that the service will start in January.

The proposed plan will be presented to Faith in Action for Strength Together (FAST) at their October 24 meeting. If this is acceptable to them, the plan will return to the MPO for final approval in November.

MOTION: Commissioner Stewart moved approval of staff’s recommendations. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion.

A representative of FAST thanked Mr. Smith and the staff for their work on this project and offered FAST’s continued assistance to the MPO. She noted that on October 24, at 6:45 p.m., in Shiloh Baptist Church on 118th Avenue North, FAST will have a general assembly meeting to discuss the one-number plan and other matters of concern.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried.

XIV. LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to discussing Agenda Sub-items A (“Proposed Increase in GPTMS’ Bus Pass Fee for the TD Program”) and B (“Proposed Interim Rate Increase for Providers”), the board reviewed a chart entitled “Estimated SFY 05-06 Proposed Funding Cuts”.

The County was allocated \$3.8 million for FY 04/05 to provide non-emergency Medicaid transportation. Next year’s proposed Medicaid allocation will be \$51,620 less. The staff has been monitoring trip expenses carefully to ensure that trips are covered.

The State started to negotiate with some HMO companies that wanted to provide Medicaid transportation. The State was considering taking about \$26,000 per month from the County’s Medicaid allocation to give to the HMOs. If this happens, one consequence would be that there would no longer be a coordinated system.

The chart also showed that the County will lose about \$26,000 per month in funds irrespective of the HMO. The County is spending the same amount, so there could be a deficit. As of October 7, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) had not provided a final number for funding to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD).

Chair Seel said that in light of the proposed rate increases that were on the agenda for discussion, there was not enough information to make a financially prudent decision about them. Therefore, the board should continue these items until next month when they know what the County's funding allocation will be.

*At 2:35 p.m., Mayor Arbutine left.

Bill Hoel of Care Ride addressed the board. Care Ride, a wheelchair service, is a subsidiary of Morton Plant Mease Healthcare System and is one of the TD program's providers.

*At 2:36 p.m., Mayor Arbutine returned.

Mr. Hoel said that the wheelchair operators were asking for a rate increase for an interim period of four months to get them over a financial hurdle. In the interim period, a task force will discuss this situation and its long-term effects. If the task force cannot find a solution to save money, then the operators will return to the rates that exist now. He noted that when the current rates were negotiated with the County five years ago, gas was about \$1.25 per gallon.

Chair Seel said that she was concerned that with a possible cut of over \$50,000 per month, the reserve funds may be used up just to operate the system.

Mr. Hoel said that the County may need to go to Tallahassee to talk to the CTD. Trips may have to be prioritized. He noted that on other contracts and for other customers, he has added a fuel surcharge.

Chair Seel emphasized the need to get answers about future funding before any decisions can be made.

*At 2:39 p.m., Mayor Hibbard left.

Mr. Smith noted that for the TD program, there is no reserve fund. The Local Coordinating Board has had to cut trips and prioritize them.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to continue Agenda Sub-items A and B to the MPO's November meeting. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XV. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Bicycle Advisory Committee Priority Statement

The BAC met on September 26 and passed a motion expressing its concern that adequate provisions for non-motorized transportation be made in Pinellas County. The committee noted national concerns about fuel sources and costs. They also noted that the Penny will be extended and that projects must be identified for that money and for Federal money. The BAC is developing a set of priorities for trails within the County and for connecting the County to other counties. They are also preparing recommendations for safety initiatives.

*At 2:41 p.m., Mayor Hibbard returned.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to approve BAC Motion #05-7. Mayor Hibbard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

B. Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee Motion

The PTAC met on September 19 and passed a motion supporting the funding of a pedestrian and bicycle coordinator position within the Pinellas County School System. The committee noted that under the new federal law SAFETEA-LU, there is a provision for a Safe Routes to School program. There is an allocation to the State of \$900,000 - \$1 million for this program. Pinellas County Schools have said that they would like a pedestrian/bicycle coordinator to be funded annually. This position could be funded through the Safe Routes to School program.

Secretary Skelton further explained that the Safe Routes to School program requires that every state fund a coordinator position from that money. A minimum of 10% to a maximum of 30% of that money must be used for infrastructure, which would be used for educational purposes. He was not sure if funding a pedestrian and bicycle coordinator would fall within these limits. The DOT is looking into this.

Mr. Smith said that the school system doesn't believe it is possible to fund the position locally. Therefore, they are investigating state funding.

ACTION: Mayor Arbutine moved to continue the agenda item until more information is available regarding the funds. Commissioner Ronecker seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XVI. CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Membership Refinement

Mr. Smith reviewed that the MPO had established four-year terms for CAC members. The staff has been presenting to the CAC some different ideas for changing the bylaws, and they have asked for the committee's comments before the MPO makes any changes. One of the ideas discussed was term limits. The CAC discussed committee membership at its September meeting, but they did not vote to establish term limits. Any changes to the bylaws would have to be approved by the MPO.

Chair Seel said that she supports term limits so that there would be new thoughts and experiences from which to draw. There are other committees on which people could serve, and someone leaving the CAC could rotate to another committee to serve in a different capacity.

Commissioner Duncan recommended that any refinement of the CAC bylaws be done at one time after all the issues have been brought forward and the board has the whole picture.

Ned Allen, Chairman of the CAC, addressed the board. He said that most of the CAC's members were happy with the bylaws as they are currently written. Members should have a four-year term; and if at the end of four years, the MPO board doesn't want a member's service any longer, that's the way it will be. The CAC understands that the MPO is in charge and that they serve at the pleasure of the MPO. The CAC is not trying to tell the MPO what to do. Rather, the MPO should decide what it wants to do. Several CAC members who have been serving for a long time have never been asked to step down. The CAC agrees that four years is a good time to review if a member should continue to serve.

Mayor Mischler noted that there is not a high demand from the citizens for an opportunity to serve on the advisory committees. He believes that the MPO has some obligation to the people who have served for years. If term limits are set, these members could be grandfathered in; and after a certain date, the term limits could become effective.

Chair Seel said that the board could make its decisions after all the issues have been presented and considered.

B. Recommendation Regarding Additional Through-Lane on Seminole Boulevard

At its meeting on September 22, the CAC passed a motion regarding the intersection of Seminole Boulevard and Ulmerton Road. As cars travel south on Seminole Boulevard and intersect with Ulmerton Road, there is one left-turn lane, and traffic backs up considerably. In its motion, the CAC recommended that one of the through lanes be converted to a second left-turn lane. This was also considered by the Technical Coordinating Committee, which recommended that the MPO request that the Florida Department of Transportation review it for comment because the subject roads are state roads.

XVII. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

In August, Congress passed the SAFETEA-LU bill, the new surface transportation bill, totaling \$286 billion over five years. Florida will receive about \$11.8 billion. A fact sheet was included with meeting materials.

There are several new programs that should benefit Florida. Florida will receive an additional \$50 million per year in safety funds.

There is a higher percentage of dollars returning to Florida through earmarks than through the formula programs. The rate of return to Florida of Federal dollars looks like it will be 95% by 2008-09. This is not a problem for Pinellas County because the earmarks the County pursued and received are consistent with the MPO's plan. There has been a large increase in earmarked federal dollars over several years.

Also included with meeting materials was a letter from Senator Sebesta regarding complaints he had received from locations outside Hillsborough County about travel to Tampa. Included was a draft of the Hillsborough County Public Transportation Commission Bill. This bill concerns taxicabs, limousines, etc. from Pinellas County and other counties that are prohibited from serving Tampa International Airport.

XVIII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

ACTION: Commissioner Duncan moved to appoint Lois Milne to the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee as the representative of the Pinellas County Health Department. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XIX. PSTA ACTIVITIES

A. Update on PSTA Activities

The Board of Directors of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority met on September 28. Minutes were included with meeting materials. The Board elected its officers for the fiscal year 2005-06. They are Deborah Kynes as Chairperson, Bill Jonson as Vice Chairperson, and R. B. Johnson as Secretary/Treasurer.

The Board approved a preliminary engineering study for a bus rapid transit route from downtown St. Petersburg to the Central Plaza Station. Also, the PSTA's new facility will open this month. Ridership has increased 19%.

B. OPPAGA Report

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) is an office of the Florida Legislature. It appears that a member of the legislature requested that OPPAGA review the PSTA. OPPAGA's Report No. 04-55 was included with meeting materials. The report indicated that no changes were recommended for the PSTA.

Mayor Arbutine said that the PSTA had been told that there were some matters that needed clarification. OPPAGA did an extensive investigation and gave the PSTA a clean bill of health. They recommended that the PSTA could communicate better with other agencies. The Board has taken steps to improve in that area.

XX. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Smith reported that for Medicaid expenses of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program, for a long time the program was operating below its monthly allocation. August was the first month to show expenses over the monthly allocation.

The MPO Board expressed its sympathy to David Fisher, the former Mayor of the City of St. Petersburg, on the passing of his wife, Margo Fisher. Mrs. Fisher was a state representative and an active community volunteer.

XXI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Karen Williams Seel, Chair