

PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES - MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2010

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, September 8, 2010 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Arbutine – *Chairman* – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA
Karen Seel – *Secretary/Treasurer* – Board of County Commissioners
Neil Brickfield – Board of County Commissioners
Harriet Crozier – Commissioner, City of Largo
Jeff Danner – Councilman, City of St. Petersburg Council
Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Herbert Polson – Councilman, City of St. Petersburg Council
Kenneth Welch – Board of County Commissioners
Don Skelton – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) (*ex officio*)

MEMBERS ABSENT

David Eggers – *Vice Chairman* – Mayor, City of Dunedin Commission
Andy Steingold – Mayor, City of Safety Harbor representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs

OTHERS PRESENT

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Division Manager
David Sadowsky – County Attorney's Office
Scott Collister – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Tim Garling – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)
Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg
Joe Kubicki – City of St. Petersburg
Rob Meador – Pinellas County Public Works
Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park
Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater
Bill Ball – Tindale/Oliver and Associates
Bob Klute – City of Largo
Wilfred Sergeant – Citizens Advisory Committee
Brian Pitts – Citizen
Smith Howard – Citizen
Joan Andrade – Suncoast Center (LCB Member)
Heather Sobush – Pinellas County Planning/MPO
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Arbutine called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner Welch performed the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO OUTGOING PTAC MEMBER/CHAIRMAN BRIAN MICHAELS

Brian Michaels could not attend today's meeting to receive his plaque for his service as a member and Chairman on the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee.

IV. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Brian Pitts, 1119 Newton Avenue South, St. Petersburg, thanked the MPO for the bus pass program in that it helps a lot of people; however, there needs to be a better job in advertising the program so more people who need it are aware. He encouraged the MPO to continue working with TBARTA (Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority), noting that TBARTA is getting all the credit and the MPO is not doing what it's supposed to be doing according to their guidelines; there is a lot of congestion and the majority of people travel around the State via vehicle; Commissioner Seel has convened a Transportation Task Force; the MPO needs to act like it knows what it's supposed to be doing; there is a lot of confusion.

Mayor Hibbard responded the Pinellas County MPO is working on several facets but can only work within the confines of Pinellas County, while TBARTA is a regional agency serving seven counties. There are three members who serve on the MPO Board who also serve on the TBARTA Board representing Pinellas County. There is a coordination effort going on since this is the first time there has been such a regional entity looking at all the various issues.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of July 14, 2010

B. Approval of Invoices –

1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates

2. Renaissance Planning Group

C. Approval of Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Subgrantee Agreements

D. Approval of Revised Section 5303 Resolution (FDOT)

E. Approval of Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment

F. Approval to enter into New General Planning Consultant (GPC) Contracts

G. Approval of Printing of Pedestrian Safety Awareness Brochures

H. Approval of Level of Service (LOS) Table and Maps

Mr. Smith indicated staff is requesting the Tindale-Oliver invoice for \$20,329 be pulled from the Consent Agenda due to it being incorrect. Based on consensus, this invoice was pulled.

Commissioner Seel asked who ranked the consultants for the new General Planning Consultants. Mr. Smith and Ms. Ward responded Brian Beaty of FDOT and Gina Harvey, Al Bartolotta, and Heather Sobush of the MPO.

Councilman Polson questioned the disparity of votes for Tindale-Oliver and Associates. Brian Beaty, FDOT, responded that was his baseline and his end results of the voting were in concert with the three MPO staff. The voting had nothing to do with their qualifications; only to establish a baseline for voting.

Commissioner Seel noted there is a transit evaluation for Clearwater to Clearwater Beach and that the PMI Committee that had previously reviewed these reports has sunset and stated there needs to be a mechanism for regular reports for this study. She indicated the MPO is approving invoices for the study without the benefit of regular reports. Mr. Smith responded that he, along with Tim Garling, had been managing the study and regular reports would be provided to the MPO in the future, as well as the Committee.

Councilman Polson moved, Mayor Mischler seconded, and motion carried to approve the Consent Agenda as amended (Vote 9-0).

VI. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS FOR THE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

A. FY 2010/11 – FY 2014/15 TIP Roll Forward Amendment for 2010

Brian Beaty, FDOT, reviewed the roll forward amendment to align the FDOT Work Program with the TIP.

There being no public comment, **Mayor Hibbard moved, Commissioner Brickfield seconded, and motion carried by roll call vote to approve the TIP amendment (Vote 9-0).**

B. TIP Amendment Concerning Pinellas Park Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Brian Beaty, FDOT, reviewed the TIP amendment concerning Pinellas Park safety improvements (TIP form included in member's folders). The amount is \$85,000 for pedestrian safety projects at six locations in Pinellas Park.

Some discussion followed regarding the Federal Highway Administration discretionary funds, noting they are funded at various levels each year and go through the appropriations process.

There being no public comment, **Commissioner Crozier moved, Mayor Mischler seconded, and motion carried by roll call vote to approve the TIP amendment (Vote 9-0).**

C. Adoption of TIP Priorities for FY 2011/12 – 2015/16

Sarah Ward indicated the MPO reviews its priority lists every September and then transmits the lists to FDOT by October 1. There is the Surface Transportation Project (STP) Priority List and Congestion Management Process (CMP) Priority List that includes operational projects. These operational projects are not tied to a specific funding source but are funded as there are opportunities. The Transportation Enhancement (TE) Priority List is usually reviewed at this time; however, the list is still in the process of being reviewed by the various committees. The MPO will act on the TE list at the next MPO meeting. The 2006 and 2007 TE lists are still in place and staff will communicate where they are in the process to FDOT when the other priority lists are transmitted. She reviewed the projects on the STP, which includes major roadway projects. She reviewed the projects on the list that have been completed and will be removed from the list. The new list will have 11 projects instead of the current 14. The projects included on the CMP are not ranked in a specific priority. FDOT will use the priority lists in developing their Tentative Work Program that the MPO will review in December.

There being no public comment, **Mayor Hibbard moved, Commissioner Crozier seconded, and motion carried by roll call vote to approve the STP and CMP Priority Lists (Vote 9-0).**

VII. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE COUNTYWIDE TRUCK ROUTE PLAN – FORREST LAKES BOULEVARD

Sarah Ward reviewed the fact the MPO has a Truck Route Plan that includes municipal and Pinellas County designated truck routes. All State Roads are open to truck traffic. The proposed amendment to the Truck Route Plan is to remove a segment of Forest Lakes Boulevard due to the poor condition of the roadway. This segment of roadway doesn't connect to other segments on the Truck Route Plan other than Commerce Boulevard, which would remain as a designated truck route to serve an industrial area. Trucks are allowed to utilize non-truck routes for local delivery utilizing the most direct route if there is not a designated truck route. Both the Technical Coordinating and Citizens Advisory Committees have reviewed the proposal and recommended approval.

There being no public comment, ***Commissioner Seel moved, Mayor Mischler seconded, and motion carried by roll call vote to approve the amendment to the Truck Route Plan (Vote 9-0).***

VIII. REVIEW OF PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

Mr. Smith stated staff received proposals from the various local jurisdictions, with those projects being reviewed by the various committees. The committees heard from various representatives and the members filled out the forms and submitted them to the MPO office, with the idea of reviewing the recommended priority and taking action at their meeting. The MPO will review the committees' recommendations and take action. Staff will develop various options for the MPO to consider at their October meeting.

Some general discussion followed regarding what was included in the request for projects and the Trail costs as described on Page 23.

IX. JOINT TRANSPORTATION/LAND USE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Smith indicated a preliminary draft regarding modifications to the Special Act that would merge the MPO and PPC Boards. The next meeting will be early October, where the Committee will review the draft Special Act and transmit it to the MPO, PPC, and BCC for action. The other change being considered is increasing the MPO membership from 11 to 13 to allow for additional representation by communities that do not currently have direct representation on the MPO. The MPO would have to pursue the membership change through the reapportionment process.

Commissioner Seel noted County Attorney Jewel Cole is in the process of setting up a meeting with the city attorneys for their feedback. Commissioner Seel along with Ms. Cole presented this at the City Mangers' meeting and they were enthusiastic.

Mr. Smith indicated the MPO will be taking action on this item at their October meeting.

X. SUSPENSION OF COUNTYWIDE MOBILITY PLAN PROJECT

Mr. Smith reported that SB 360 that had previously been approved by the Legislature dealt with growth management and changing the transportation impact fee to a mobility fee that would include other modes of travel besides road projects. A Mobility Task Force was established and has been meeting for several months to discuss how to modify the fee process and establish a mobility plan taking into account other modes, such as transit. There was recent court action that struck down SB 360 as an amendment to the Growth Management Act. The Bill's author has indicated he would make modifications to the Bill and introduce it for the next legislative session. Based on the court's ruling, staff recommends placing the Task Force on hold until there is new legislation. In addition, the Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance is reviewed every two years but staff put that review on hold until the mobility plan was finalized; therefore, staff will bring back a report to the next meeting with suggestions regarding the process to take. In addition to the mobility fee being included in SB 360, there were other requirements that will also be put on hold.

Based on consensus, **the MPO concurred to place the mobility plan on hold until there is legislative action.**

XI. PEDESTRIAN SAFETY DAY RESOLUTION

Mr. Smith reported, one day a year, there is a focus on pedestrian safety. A brochure regarding pedestrian safety is distributed to the students through the school system. The focus is two fold: students who walk or bike to and from school and those who are in carpools. The resolution declares November 8 as Pedestrian Safety Day.

Mayor Hibbard moved, Commissioner Crozier seconded, and motion carried to approve the resolution (Vote 9-0).

XII. PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Smith noted there have been two meetings. There was a request to have voting members of HART and the Hillsborough MPO attend the meetings as ex officio. Therefore, HART has appointed David Mechanik and the Hillsborough MPO has appointed Mary Mulhern, with both attending the last meeting. As part of the last meeting, there was an in depth review of the Hillsborough County Alternatives Analysis.

XIII. LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**A. PSTA Bus Pass Agreement and****B. Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) Amendment**

Mr. Smith indicated the intent is to provide service within the budget for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program and the Medicaid Program. These programs are done in coordination with PSTA and their DART Program. For the last couple of years, the MPO has had an agreement with PSTA for monthly bus passes. The MPO reimburses PSTA \$1 million a year for the bus passes that are provided to individuals who qualify for either program. As a result of more people who were regular bus users now qualifying under the TD Program, the number of bus users paying full price has decreased and the demand for reduced bus passes has increased. MPO staff met with Tim Garling, PSTA, and other involved parties to develop ideas to balance the system. Those ideas were discussed at the recent Local Coordinating Board (LCB) meeting. PSTA has increased their regular monthly bus pass to \$65 and the LCB recommendation is to increase the local match for the reduced bus pass under the TD Program from the current \$4.20 to \$8.25. One of the criteria to qualify for the TD Program is an income level of 200% or less above the poverty level; therefore, staff had recommended reducing it to 150% above the poverty level, which is above minimum wage. The LCB recommended the \$8.25 co-pay for the monthly bus pass, 150% above poverty level to qualify for the TD program, and to implement the recommendations as soon as possible. These recommendations were reviewed by the PSTA Board and they felt reducing the qualification to 150% above poverty level was being done too quickly. The management firm, GPTMS, had not been tracking very closely the income levels so, now, as part of the requirements to qualify under the TD Program, the applicant has to provide proof of income. PSTA requested the reduction of income level be placed on hold to allow enough time to know how many people would be affected by the reduction and then revisit this in January. Therefore, the recommendation is to have an agreement with PSTA for \$1 million for monthly bus passes, require a client match of \$8.25, and work with GPTMS to track income levels and then review the income level with the LCB in January, with a recommendation to the PSTA and MPO.

Joan Andrade, Suncoast Center located at 4024 Central Avenue, St. Petersburg, and an LCB member representing the local medical community, spoke regarding her concerns as to the proposed increase in the co-pay to \$8.25 for the group of people who live in assisted living facilities (ALF). This group receives a monthly stipend of \$54, whether they receive SSI or SSD. There are 214 ALFs in Pinellas County, which equates to over 8,000 beds. Her concern is that the proposed \$8.25 co-pay equals 15% of the monthly stipend they receive, which also has to pay for the medication co-pays and personal hygiene items. The concern is that they couldn't afford the co-pay for the monthly bus pass that helps them get to their medical appointments (whether psychiatric or doctor). Some of the clients have case workers who can take them to their medical appointments but the majority does not. If the clients do not go to their psychiatric appointments and receive their proper medication, they will either end up hospitalized or in the jail, which will cause additional burden to these facilities and to the taxpayers. She would like to request if it becomes a problem where these people are not able to pay the \$8.25 and, therefore, do not go to their appointments, there could be an alternative such as lowering the fee for this specific group of people.

Brian Pitts, 1119 Newton Avenue South, St. Petersburg, indicated that increasing the co-pay to \$8.25 is almost a 100% increase. He reminded the MPO the purpose of the program, which is

to serve the disadvantaged. He suggested lowering the criteria but keeping the co-pay at \$4.20 or only slightly increasing it to \$5 or \$6.

Upon query by Mayor Hibbard, Ms. Andrade responded the Medicaid Program has a five and ten nonconsecutive day bus pass and that might work for the TD Program; however, it has not been determined the administrative costs and that might be a concern. Another suggestion was to have 2 different co-pays: \$5 for this specific group of clients and \$10 for everyone else. The issue with this suggestion is, again, no one knows the administrative cost and PSTA needs a guarantee of \$82,500.

Chairman Arbutine asked if she could work with staff regarding the impacts if the bus pass co-pay was increased to \$8.25. Ms. Andrade responded, yes, she would work with the other social workers to get information from the various hospitals' admittance to determine the impact. Her main reason for appearing today was to bring attention to this situation and possibly work something out in the future for this group of people. Regarding a request from Mayor Hibbard regarding the number of people this could potentially impact, Ms. Andrade responded she would ask the other agencies and hospitals to be on the lookout and provide her with information and she would report back to the LCB.

In response to Commissioner Welch, Mr. Smith responded the eligibility process will provide the information needed to make an informed decision. The LCB discussed this situation.

In response to further discussion/questions, Ms. Andrade responded, at the last LCB meeting, she gave GPTMS a list of the ALFs from AHCA, which included the addresses, so GPTMS could input the addresses so they could keep track of requests from these facilities. She has not heard back from GPTMS yet as to data they might have generated. This will help to know how many individuals from these ALFs are receiving bus passes under this program.

Upon query by Commissioner Welch regarding the Medicaid and TD Programs, Tim Garling, PSTA, responded these are two different programs: the TD Program has a co-pay and the Medicaid Program does not. PSTA made a change this year for those clients who did not require a monthly bus pass. In addition to the 31-day bus pass, PSTA created a 5-day bus pass that can be used anytime during the month and a 7-day bus pass. This helps target the ride to the need of those under the Medicaid Program. Regarding the TD Program, those clients require trips throughout the month compared to the Medicaid Program; therefore, the five-day and seven-day bus passes don't work for those clients. Based on the agreement with the MPO, PSTA is providing \$2.2 million worth of bus passes for \$1.1 million. The more people who can use the bus, the more trips that can be provided overall. PSTA is willing to work with the MPO. The number of bus passes has increased from 39,000 in 2009 to 69,000 this year without any additional revenue to PSTA. There have been several options under review to reduce the number to a target of 45,000 bus passes, such as increasing the co-pay to PSTA, better job of verifying eligibility requirement, and the use of 5-day and 7-day bus passes in addition to the 31-day bus pass.

Upon further query by Commissioner Welch whether PSTA can track how many bus passes are being used under the TD Program and the Medicaid Program, Mr. Garling responded they can track by the bus pass number but they don't have the information to be able to track by income level.

In depth discussion ensued regarding the lack of information and the fact it's difficult to make decisions without information. Mr. Garling added that the PSTA agreement with the MPO is about to expire so there is a need for a new agreement. In addition, he suggested there be monthly updates so they have information to make decisions as necessary. PSTA can make adjustments to the agreement as necessary.

Councilman Danner felt it was important to approve increasing the co-pay to \$8.25 for bus passes, receive monthly updates, and adjust the agreement as necessary as data is received; therefore, **Councilman Danner moved and Commissioner Welch seconded the motion. Commissioner Welch requested a copy of the eligibility form** and asked how this was being communicated to the clients. Mr. Smith responded it's being mailed to the clients and asking them to call.

Following discussion and clarification that the motion included Items A – D, the motion passed (Vote 9-0).

At 2:22 p.m., Councilman Danner left the meeting

XIV. REVIEW OF HUD SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES GRANT APPLICATION

Mr. Smith reported the area MPOs filed a joint application for a \$5 million package of transit and transit station areas to evaluate how transit could be accommodated. The Hillsborough MPO is the lead agency.

XV. BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Smith indicated the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) had a concern with posts along Gulf Boulevard that were placed in the bike lane and were an obstacle to the bicyclist.

The BAC had worked with FDOT earlier on the design, with this feature being added later, and so they flagged this as an issue. The BAC has had correspondence with FDOT regarding this concern but wanted to make sure the MPO was aware of the dialogue between the BAC and FDOT.

At 2:24 p.m., Commissioner Seel left the meeting

At 2:24 p.m., Councilman Danner returned to the meeting

Mr. Skelton reported FDOT had a concern with separating the vehicles from the pedestrian so the quick curb was installed at crosswalk locations to accomplish this separation. FDOT is aware of the BAC concern so they have installed a shorter version to alleviate their concerns. He emphasized the safety aspect regarding the need to keep the motorist separate from the pedestrian for those vehicles that might want to go around a turning vehicle.

Chairman Arbutine asked if FDOT was waiting to get comment from the BAC and then get back with the MPO; whereas, Mr. Skelton indicated yes.

Councilman Polson indicated he had a procedural question as to whether the BAC as advisory to the MPO normally communicates directly with FDOT or whether they should bring their recommendation to the MPO for action and then the MPO would communicate with FDOT. Mr. Smith responded this was a new concept in that FDOT was working within limited right-of-way and the BAC wanted to ensure bike lanes were included in the design. The BAC had been working with the FDOT design engineer for the project for several meetings regarding the bike lanes and sidewalk. Normally, there is a committee report through the regular MPO process.

Mayor Hibbard stated the BAC should go through the normal process, with Councilman Polson agreeing.

At 2:26 p.m., Commissioner Seel returned to the meeting

Following some discussion, **Mayor Hibbard moved, Commissioner Crozier seconded, and motion passed to have the BAC follow the normal process that they communicate directly with the MPO and the MPO would direct their concerns with FDOT. (Vote 9-0)**

Chairman Arbutine requested FDOT apprise the MPO of any concerns/feedback regarding the bollards in the future.

XVI. ITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Chairman Arbutine indicated there was additional information in the members' folders.

Mr. Smith reported the ITS Advisory Committee reviewed the subject of wireless communication relating to the system and a concern that was flagged regarding the signal at Briar Creek and McMullen-Booth Road. The Committee had received a report that there was an increase in crashes and injuries since the signal was installed. The Committee agreed the report should be sent to the Briar Creek community and the City of Safety Harbor for their information. The Committee also reviewed the red light camera legislation and the guidelines developed by FDOT, which focused on the location and placement of the cameras and not the operation. The law enforcement representatives at the meeting requested a uniformity of approach for all jurisdictions. The Committee agreed with that approach and the law enforcement representatives would take it to the Police Standards Council. Commissioner Seel sent a letter to the Police Standards Council, with that Council taking up the issue at their meeting earlier that day and agreeing to have an in depth review and discussion at their next meeting in October.

XVII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Brickfield moved, Mayor Hibbard seconded, and motion carried to approve Eileen Blackmer as an At Large representative on the Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Brickfield moved, Mayor Hibbard seconded, and motion carried to approve Cate Lee as an alternate for Clearwater Planning on the Technical Coordinating Committee.

Mr. Smith reported Dottie Miller declined a position on the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee due to scheduling conflicts.

XVIII. PSTA ACTIVITIES

Tim Garling, PSTA Executive Director, indicated PSTA will hold a couple of public hearings for the PSTA budget. PSTA has record ridership but has declining revenue. There is the need to balance service with the declining revenue. There are ongoing discussions regarding a long-term funding source but need to discuss the near term during the interim. The PSTA Board is proposing to increase fares from \$1.75 to \$2.00 and increase their bus passes; have cut \$360,000 in services from the lowest performing routes that should have minimal impact on riders; and use \$2 million of reserves until they have a long-term sustainable funding source. PSTA will not have to increase their millage rate. There will be a public hearing tonight, September 8, at 6:00 p.m. and PSTA will adopt their budget at a public hearing on September 15 at 6:00 p.m.

XIX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. MPOAC Meeting of July 22, 2010

B. Joint Chairs Coordinating Committee Meeting of September 17, 2010

C. Correspondence

D. Other

There was no other business to be brought forward.

XX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Chris Arbutine, Chairman