

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MINUTES – MEETING OF JANUARY 10, 2007**

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, January 10, 2007 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Frank Hibbard, *Chair*- Mayor, City of Clearwater  
Chris Arbutine, *Vice Chair*- Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing PSTA  
John Bryan - City of St. Petersburg Council  
Harriet Crozier - Vice Mayor, City of Largo  
Jeff Danner - City of St. Petersburg Council  
Ronnie Duncan - Board of County Commissioners  
David Eggers - City of Dunedin Commission  
William Mischler - Mayor, City of Pinellas Park  
Robin Saenger - City of Tarpon Springs Commission, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs  
Robert Stewart - Board of County Commissioners  
Bob Clifford, *ex officio*- Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Karen Seel, Board of County Commissioners

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Brian Smith - MPO Executive Director  
Sarah Ward - MPO Transportation Planning Administrator  
Mahshid Arasteh - City of Clearwater  
Brian Beaty - Florida Department of Transportation, District 7  
Bijan Behzadi - Florida Department of Transportation  
Paul Bertels - City of Clearwater  
Bob Bray - City of Pinellas Park  
Jim Byers - Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  
Rick Eggers - Citizen  
Ali Gord - Gord and Associates  
Marc Hanger - MPO Staff  
Gina Harvey - MPO Staff  
Ken Jacobs - Pinellas County Traffic Engineering  
Doug Johnson - Care Ride, LLC  
Bill Jonson - City of Clearwater Council  
Joe Kubicki - City of St. Petersburg  
Rob Meador - Pinellas County Public Works  
Joel Rey - Tindale-Oliver and Associates  
Jim Ronecker - City of Oldsmar Council  
Heather Sobush - MPO Staff  
David Sadowsky - Pinellas County Attorney's Office  
Pete Yauch - Pinellas County Public Works  
Carolyn Kuntz - MPO Recorder  
Harriet McKay - MPO Staff Secretary

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. INVOCATION / PLEDGE / INTRODUCTIONS**

Councilmember Bryan gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The Board members introduced themselves.

**III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There was no citizen comment.

**IV. PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE**

On behalf of the MPO, Chair Hibbard presented a plaque to Councilmember Jim Ronecker and thanked him for his two years of service on the Board as the representative of the cities of Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, and Tarpon Springs. Board members congratulated Councilmember Ronecker on becoming Mayor-Elect of the City of Oldsmar.

**V. WELCOME TO NEW MPO MEMBER**

The Board welcomed Commissioner Robin Saenger of the City of Tarpon Springs to the MPO as the new representative of the cities of Oldsmar, Safety Harbor and Tarpon Springs.

**VI. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes - Meeting of December 13, 2006
- B. Approval of Invoices
  - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
  - 2. Renaissance Planning Group
- C. Approval of Purchase of Traffic Count Equipment
- D. Approval of Printing of Citizens Guide and MPO Brochures

ACTION: Councilmember Bryan moved approval of the consent agenda, Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
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\*At 1:06 p.m., Commissioner Duncan arrived.

**VII. EVALUATION OF ADVANCED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Several months ago, Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) software was installed on portions of US 19 and Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard (SR 60) so that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) could make an evaluation. Last month, the FDOT completed its evaluation and presented the findings to the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Advisory Committee. Gord and Associates was the consultant to the FDOT, and Mr. Ali Gord presented the results to the Board.

The system became fully operational in adaptive mode in October 2006. Data were collected that month, with two weeks spent on the adaptive system and two weeks spent on the traditional system.

The evaluation included three critical intersections (Tarpon Avenue, Alderman Road, and Curlew Road) on US 19 between Becket Way and Curlew Road and another three critical intersections on SR 60 between Bayside Boulevard and Highland Avenue. The evaluation was designed to determine how well traffic flowed on the main corridors and their side streets by comparing the new adaptive control system to the traditional system.

On US 19, it appears that the adaptive system compromised the non-peak direction in order to optimize flow in the peak direction. However, overall there would be an annual savings of \$4.8 million due to the adaptive control. Savings would result from reductions in delays and fuel consumption.

It appears that the adaptive control compromised traffic flow on the side streets of the three critical intersections in order to improve traffic flow on the main street. The net impact would be a \$1.2 million "penalty" to the side streets. Prorated for the eight intersections along the study corridor and subtracted from the savings realized along US 19, there would be a net benefit of \$834,000 annually.

On SR 60, the adaptive system performed much better than the traditional system. The savings would be \$2.5 million annually. On the side streets, the adaptive system improved traffic flow, with the exception of the point at which US 19 approaches SR 60, where there was some cost. Prorated, the net benefit would be about \$1.4 million for SR 60.

Mr. Gord explained how labor and fuel savings were calculated. Reviewing the life cycle and cost-to-benefit analysis, and using a 10-year life for the system, he said there was a significant return for the investment in this project. Noting that some of the side streets resulted in a cost, the plan is to go back and see what can be done to improve traffic flow on those side streets.

The total deployment cost for the project thus far is \$9 million, which includes elements of the Traffic Management Center. About one third of the deployment cost has been for the adaptive control system.

The Traffic Management Center is ready to assume control of the corridors as they become prioritized. A master plan for the priority corridors in the County, including cost estimates, must still be finalized, and technologies to be deployed on them must be determined. Operational strategies, incident management strategies, and response plans must be further developed. Staffs of the MPO and the FDOT will be working with Gord and Associates to develop the master plan and cost estimates.

Federal monies funded this current project. Fund sources for future additions to the ATMS are local, state and federal, with the County's 1 cent gas tax providing local funds. The 1 cent gas tax is intended to fund the system in later years for operations and maintenance. County staff will monitor the system.

The corridors are monitored between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. The ultimate plan is to have the Traffic Management Center monitor the corridors 24 hours per day. It is possible that a County radio station could be used to forward traffic information to the public as they drive around the County.

## **VIII. PINELLAS MOBILITY INITIATIVE PROGRAM**

### **A. Approval of Contract with MACTEC**

Staff reported that they had negotiated a contract with MACTEC to evaluate the Downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach Guideway Project. The contract includes a detailed scope. The contract is for \$274,000, which is within the funds available for the study.

**ACTION:** Councilmember Bryan moved approval of the contract with MACTEC. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Report on Bus Rapid Transit Study**

Mr. Joel Rey of Tindale-Oliver and Associates, consultant to the MPO, updated the Board on the Countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. Tindale-Oliver is working on the study with Kittelson and Associates in Orlando and the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida. The purpose of the project is to identify corridors in the County that have the greatest potential for BRT.

Twenty-nine corridors in the County have been identified as potential candidates for BRT. These corridors include Central Avenue in St. Petersburg in order to check the process. McMullen-Booth Road has been included as well. The corridors will be run through a preliminary screening matrix, and eight high-potential corridors will be identified. This first analysis should be completed in February. The information will go to the PMI Steering Committee for review of the findings. Then, presentations will be made to the MPO and the PSTA boards.

From a second, feasibility screening matrix, the eight high-potential corridors will be reduced to two final candidate corridors for planning BRT services. These two corridors would be in addition to Central Avenue in St. Petersburg. This analysis should be completed in March or April.

The matrix the consultant is using to evaluate the corridors is based on five objectives that are documented by the Federal Transit Administration for planning BRT services. They are: 1) ridership; 2) effectiveness of capital cost implementation; 3) efficiency of operations; 4) potential for economic development in the corridors; and 5) improvement of accessibility to other transportation alternatives in the community. The study will also evaluate the corridors for their connectivity and their regional application to BRT.

Responding to Board inquiry, Mr. Clifford said that Pinellas County's plans for BRT are ahead of plans in other counties in the region. Councilmember Bryan said that Pinellas County must be cognizant of where its project is in relation to other counties because regionalization could slow things down. Commissioner Duncan concurred. He noted that there will be a meeting of Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco Counties, including their MPOs and transit authorities. One topic of discussion will be connectivity between the counties as they all discuss BRT transit.

The total study cost to determine the two corridors is about \$375,000. The first part of the project is to determine the two corridors, and the second part is to do some additional alternatives analysis and documentation to position the County for the competitive funding

process at the federal level. A preliminary engineering study would follow the corridor selection.

The cost to build two corridors hasn't been determined. Constructing the Central Avenue BRT project was initially estimated to be \$25 million.

Mr. Clifford referred to the idea of leveraging future road improvements with BRT construction. He cautioned everyone to consider that carefully because if there are additional costs, it doesn't matter where they are borne. For instance, there is not enough money for Ulmerton Road improvements; and if it is assumed that some of the roadway costs could be covered by BRT costs, the dollars must still be found. Mr. Rey concurred, noting that the timing of road improvements is important too.

Chair Hibbard said that it is important that BRT get people out of their cars and into mass transit. The system remains to be proven.

Commissioner Stewart said that all the different transit potentials to get people out of their cars still include a form of rail. Making a commitment to \$25 million for Central Avenue, or to more millions for other corridors, would eliminate any further discussions about rail for the long, foreseeable future. There is a long queue for those kinds of federal dollars.

Commissioner Duncan responded that there is not much support in Washington for rail these days. However, BRT projects are getting a good reception, and the queue for those projects is getting longer.

Mayor Arbutine and Mr. Rey said that most of the \$25 million for the St. Petersburg Central Avenue project is for station construction and equipment. The buses would be operating on existing right-of-way. At a future time, a successful BRT system could have a light-rail system overlaid onto it.

## **IX. 118th AVENUE PROJECT FUNDING**

During the presentation of the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Tentative Work Program in December, the Board discussed the 118th Avenue project that is scheduled for design in FY 2011/12. They noted this project's importance to the economic development of the County and discussed if the project's design phase could be advanced in the Work Program. It was noted that there are \$5.2 million in TRIP funds that could be used, but that would require a 50% match from a local government. It was hoped that additional funds could be found before the Tentative Work Program is locked down on January 22.

Pete Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works reported that his staff was able to find \$3.6 million of unspent TRIP funds that had been allocated to the Bryan Dairy Road Project. This money could be moved to the 118th Avenue project. Staff will continue searching for additional funds to complete the needed TRIP match. Full design of 118th Avenue will cost approximately \$12 million, and \$10 million have been found.

Councilmember Bryan thanked everyone, including the Board of County Commissioners, for moving quickly on this project, noting its economic impact on the County.

**X. US 19 PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TASK FORCE**

\*At 2:21 p.m., Commissioner Stewart left.

Staff gave a progress report on the work of the US 19 Pedestrian Safety Task Force. The Task Force has had several meetings, and initiatives are being defined. Subcommittees are working on transit issues and law enforcement/education activities. Included with meeting materials was the Task Force's report dated December 15, 2006. A formal report to the MPO will be issued later in the year.

\*At 2:24 p.m., Commissioner Stewart returned.

Mayor Mischler, a member of the Task Force, said that there is another active task force including representatives of the Sheriff's Department and the municipal police departments that will be performing enforcement activities along US 19 during the month of January. There will be zero tolerance for traffic infractions against pedestrians.

**XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMITTEE**

\*At 2:28 p.m., Councilmember Bryan left.

At its meeting on January 3, 2007, the School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC) made two recommendations to the MPO.

\*At 2:30 p.m., Councilmember Bryan returned.

**A. Consistent Protocols for School Crossing Zones**

Several months ago, the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) made the recommendation that the protocols for school crossing zones should be consistent throughout the County. Subsequent to the PTAC's recommendation, the School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC) created a work group to identify how consistency could be established. The work group identified protocols that could be applied by all the jurisdictions in the County, and a report was approved by the STSC. Staff reviewed the report, "STSC Consistent School Crossing Review Recommendations", which was included with meeting materials.

Councilmember Bryan supported the recommended protocols and the effort toward consistency. He noted that the City of St. Petersburg had school crossings that were designed years ago to meet the needs of those times and that it would take time to make changes as the City improves its streets and also proceeds with its own pedestrian safety initiative. Staff noted that the recommendations specify no schedule for implementation.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Commissioner Stewart moved to approve the recommendations of the STSC and to recommend their use by all the jurisdictions in the County. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.</p>
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## B. FDOT Survey Concern

The recent federal legislation SAFETEA-LU established a category to fund "safe walking" to school. This initiative is being managed through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The FDOT has asked that a survey be distributed to all school districts in the State in order to gather data. Transportation money from the FDOT is tied to this survey.

Both the School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC) and the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) examined the survey and agreed that it was not practical to administer it. They also noted that the data would be changing every year. School Board members serving on the STSC asked if anyone else was aware of the survey or had completed it.

Mr. Clifford said that the FDOT is following directions from the federal government and that this was the first time that anyone had questioned the survey. It came out of the National Center for Safe Routes to Schools. The data will be used to see how kids get to school and how to best spend the dollars in the program. The information will go to the State and then the District will examine the data. From the State's perspective, in District 7 the data will help the FDOT prioritize sidewalk improvements and other projects. The data could tell which corridors have high student traffic. Mr. Clifford said that he didn't know what would happen if a jurisdiction does not comply with the survey.

Board members asked why certain questions were on the survey, particularly those wanting to know how much fun the child had walking to school and what the parents' education level was.

Mr. Clifford said that the FDOT would welcome suggestions for better ways to meet the federal requirements. The goal is to have safer routes to school, and it must be understood how students get there and back.

Councilmember Bill Jonson, a member of the STSC, addressed the Board. He said that the School Board members had said that it would be a burden on the teachers to administer this survey in addition to their other duties. It would also be burdensome to organize a mailing to the parents and to get the survey back from them.

Commissioner Stewart said that the MPO could express its opinion in order to call attention to the survey and ask that someone read it in light of its appearance of being cumbersome and unrealistic. It is possible that this survey hasn't been reviewed by anyone for several years.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Commissioner Duncan moved to send a letter expressing the MPO's opinion on the survey to the FDOT Secretary. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.</p>
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Councilmember Bryan and Commissioner Duncan said that most school districts have already gathered this type of data in order to determine where the bus stops and school crossings should be.

## **XII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

### **A. Citizens Advisory Committee**

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved that Kasey Cursey be appointed to the CAC as an At Large representative. Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee**

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved that Kevin Fannon be appointed to the PTAC as the School System representative, with Steve Fairchild as the alternate representative. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

### **C. Pinellas Mobility Initiative Steering Committee**

ACTION: Commissioner Stewart moved that City of Largo Vice Mayor Harriet Crozier be appointed to the PMI Steering Committee. The motion was seconded, and it carried unanimously.

## **XIII. PSTA ACTIVITIES**

The PSTA Board did not meet in December. Mayor Arbutine reported that the PSTA Board had authorized a discount procedure for government agencies and 501(c)3 agencies that distribute bus passes. This procedure will now include Greater Pinellas Transportation Management Services, which distributes bus passes for the County's Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

## **XIV. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. Medicaid**

A chart showing Medicaid NET expenditures through November 2006 was included with meeting materials. The program is still operating within budget.

### **B. Correspondence**

Several items of correspondence were included with meeting materials for the Board's review. No action was needed.

### **C. Other**

The Livable Community Task Force will reconvene in mid-February. Commissioner Stewart will chair the committee again, and Councilmember Danner will also serve. There are two vacancies on the committee. Private sector representatives would be welcomed.

## **XV. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

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Frank Hibbard, Chair