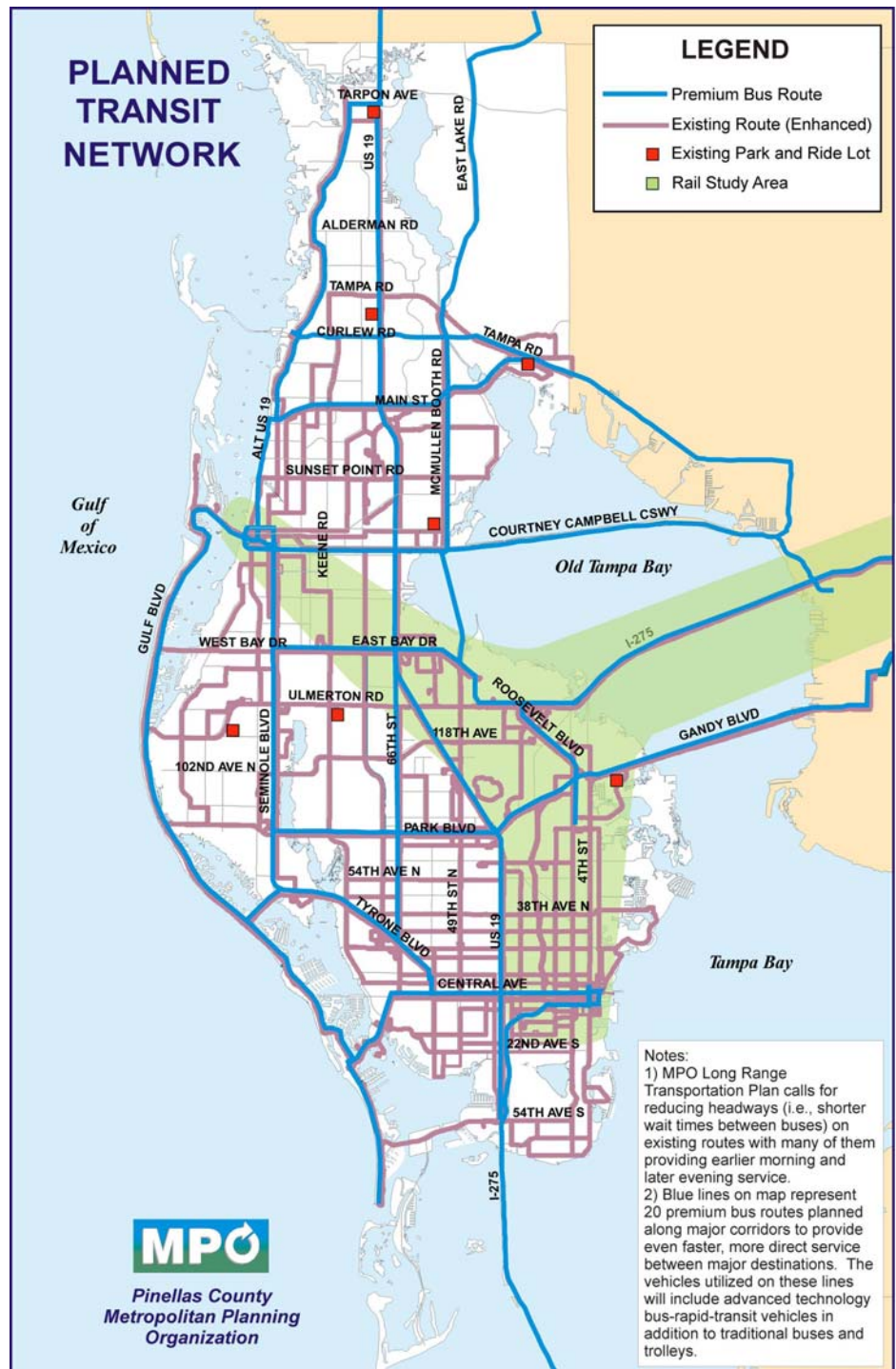


Future Transportation Plans on Track

The 2035 MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which was adopted in December 2009, set a new course for transportation in Pinellas County. It's one that relies on a robust network of high-speed bus service throughout the county and to neighboring counties and provision of a feeder service to a rail system. This rail system would be comprised of passenger rail lines extending from downtown Clearwater to the Gateway area and from St. Petersburg to Tampa, with a connection to the planned Florida High Speed Rail. The 2035 LRTP reflects a historic shift of the MPO from a primary emphasis on road building to mass transit.

Getting Up To Speed

In addition to rail, the 2035 LRTP includes many improvements to the existing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority bus system. The service will be faster with less wait time between buses, and on many routes, earlier morning and later evening service will be provided. Premium bus service will be added along major corridors to provide even faster more direct service between major destinations. People will be able to access premium bus and also rail service through the improved regular bus system.



High Speed Rail Coming to Florida

On January 28, 2010, President Obama announced that Florida would receive \$1.25 billion for the [Florida High Speed Rail](#) link between Orlando and Tampa. This rail service will operate largely along Interstate 4 and will be capable of reaching speeds greater than 150 miles per hour, allowing passengers to travel between the two cities in less than an hour. As the Florida Rail Enterprise moves forward to implement the high speed rail, local transit systems in the affected jurisdictions are stepping up plans to provide rail connections to the station areas. In Pinellas County, alternatives analysis studies will begin soon to determine the optimal route alignments and station locations and associated costs to develop a rail system and connect it to high speed



rail. The recently formed Project Advisory Committee (PAC), consisting of MPO, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority, Hillsborough County and Florida Department of Transportation representatives, will review the scope of the studies at its first meeting on July 12, 2010.

Land Use Connection

A successful transit system is dependent upon local land use plans that support pedestrian friendly mixed-use and compact development proximate to terminals, stations and stops. This is necessary to provide destination points along the rail line and to create walkable environments that provide viable mobility options to the personal automobile. Through its [Livable Communities Initiative](#), the MPO published the *Livable Communities Model Comprehensive Plan Objectives and Policies* in 2006 and the *Livable Communities Model Land Development Code* in 2008, which provided local



governments with a toolkit to create the policies and regulatory codes necessary to establish and/or expand pedestrian friendly communities in Pinellas County. When located around transit stations, the type of street, building and land design advocated in these publications is also referred to as transit-oriented design or "TODs".

Finding the Money

Property taxes pay for most transit service in Pinellas County. But with shrinking property values and a growing demand for service, current funding levels are not sufficient to keep up with the county's existing transit needs let alone future bus and rail improvements. A 24-member Pinellas County Transportation Task Force has been assembled under the direction of Pinellas Commission Chair Karen Williams Seel that includes elected officials, civic leaders and business people who will recommend options for a funding plan. The task force will meet monthly throughout 2010. Check the [MPO website](#) for meeting schedules, times and locations.