

TO: Pinellas County Commissioner Karen Seel, Co-Chairman,
Mayor Frank DiDonato, Co-Chairman, Pinellas Assembly Steering Committee

FROM: Frank Murphy, Chairman, Pinellas Assembly Transportation Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed Local Gas Tax for Pinellas County

DATE: October 6, 2003

As you are aware, the Pinellas Assembly program established our Transportation Committee to look at the integration of transportation in our County, and to make recommendations where appropriate. It was brought to our attention that the Local Gas Tax proposal that is being circulated to the public should be reviewed by our committee in the context of our other work. We agreed to do this, and took the matter up at our October 1st meeting. I should mention that we have met for several months and have looked at transportation in our county on a very in-depth basis. As part of that review, our committee has gained a good grasp of the Gas Tax Proposal. We also understand the intergovernmental questions and issues that relate to this proposal. It is with this background that we make the following recommendations:

- A. Pinellas County in cooperation with the MPO and municipalities should initiate a 6 cent local gas tax which would include the 5 cent local option gas tax and 9th cent gas tax for a total of 6 cents per gallon.
- B. The Local Option Gas tax should be distributed fairly and equitably between the County and municipalities.
- C. The County funds should be assigned to major regional transportation projects and the local/City funds should be assigned to quality of life transportation projects.
- D. The Committee believes there are County funds already available for resurfacing and rehabilitation of the road and bridge system from the existing tax, such as the 6 cent Local Option Gas Tax. The Committee believes with the continuation of that funding past 2007, there is an annual 7 million debt obligation that will terminate; therefore this would be a viable future funding source for these infrastructure replacements.
- E. The major regional transportation projects are defined to be projects that provide considerable Countywide benefit to all the people in the County, and would include projects on the State roadway system. It should be noted that such quality of life initiatives as landscaping/beautification should be applied to these projects so they are in keeping with the overall quality of life goal for Pinellas County.
- F. The local/city quality of life transportation projects would include such matters as trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, beautification / landscaping, local traffic solutions, construction of new roadways that connect with the County's or State's road system, and other quality of life projects. These projects will be recognized by the MPO, by formal action, and will be included in the community's local Comprehensive Plan. These projects would be those that the local communities could not otherwise obtain without the new tax, and would not be used to offset capital projects that would otherwise be contained in the community's budget.
- G. Local action to initiate the Gas Tax would put the County in a better position when it seeks Federal and State funds for transportation.

The committee plans to continue its work on the other aspects of its agenda for the Pinellas Assembly, but felt due to the timeliness of the Gas Tax proposal consideration, we would provide this recommendation to you earlier, before our full report. I, and the members of my Committee, are available at any time to meet with you to present our thinking, if that is your desire.