

**Pinellas Assembly Transportation Integration Task Force**  
**Raymond James & Associates, 880 Carillon Parkway, St. Petersburg**  
**Third Floor, Tower 3**  
**Wednesday, August 20, 2003, 4:10 p.m.**

Present: Chairman Frank Murphy and Task Force Members Don Crane, Roy Harrell, Julio Maggi, Brian Smith, Jim Holton, Pete Pensa, Ed Hawkes, Joel Giles, and Joe Kubicki (non-voting member).

Also: Pinellas County Assistant Attorney David Sadowsky; Phil Graham, President of Phil Graham & Company; and City of St. Petersburg City Clerk Eva Andujar.

Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order. Mr. Kubicki introduced Mr. Giles, a recent addition to the Task Force membership. Mr. Sadowsky introduced himself and stated he has been assigned to the Task Force to respond to any legal issues. The Task Force reviewed the August 6, 2003 minutes.

Mr. Smith reviewed the planned improvements and projects along U.S. 19. which includes various interchange segments to complete U.S. 19 in an expressway configuration from State Road 580 to just North of Gandy with the exception of Whitney Road to North of S.R. 60. This remaining segment is currently unfunded and is estimated to cost between \$125 to \$200 million. Mr. Kubicki spoke with Mr. Ken Hartmann who estimated the cost of this segment at \$130 million and the State is down \$80 million dollars to complete this particular segment of U.S. 19. The connector road from 118 Avenue between U.S. 19 and I-275 is also unfunded. Resurfacing the whole of U.S. 19 over the next several years is included. Continuous right turn lanes, North of S.R. 580 are nearly complete as is channelized medians at numerous locations, including Whitney Road to S.R. 60 which are underway, to address safety issues. Mr. Smith reported that sidewalks are also planned along U.S. 19 to eliminate the more than 72 sidewalk gaps which will make U. S. 19 safer for pedestrians. Advanced Traffic Management (Intelligent Transportation System) improvements are also planned at various locations. Mr. Smith reported that the installation of Wayfinding Signs (purple signs along the side of U.S. 19 at about every 1/4 mile) is complete and has proven to be very helpful to the public.

Mr. Smith then reviewed four specific funding sources for potential transit projects. ELMS 5 Cent Gas Tax with a 9<sup>th</sup> Cent will generate \$18 million per year and requires an agreement between the County and all municipalities concerning the allocation of funds. The Transit Surtax is a one cent sales tax on top of the current penny and will generate \$116 to \$120 million per year. Monies must be used at least 75% on transit capital and operating expenses. Mr. Kubicki asked if the tax could be levied for a 10 or 20 year period with the initial years being predominately highway to build out our highway program and the latter years predominately transit to build out our rail system such that at the end of whatever period we decided on it would be a 75/25 split? The Penny Extension is in place through 2010 and is the source everyone is using for capital projects. The Current Local Gas Tax (six cents) has been in place since the mid 1980's and generates \$21 million per year with \$7 million used for bond/debt service and the rest of the money used for operating and maintenance. In summary, the Penny Extension and the Current Local Gas Tax are currently being utilized for funding, the ELMS 5 Cent Gas Tax with 9<sup>th</sup> Cent and the Transit Surtax are not in use. It was pointed out that the more communities do locally, the better opportunity we have to obtain Federal funding. Chair Murphy stated we have to look at the challenges as a Task Force and look at those areas where we have had County and City agreement and if we can come up with rationale for that continued agreement, we could have an impact.

Mr. Graham made a detailed presentation on landscape and beautification initiatives along highway corridors. Some interesting things have happened recently in beautification in terms of streetscaping, DOT and how communities are generally looking at their streets. He stated this is an opportunity for government to improve the right-of-way and there is funding to do so. Streetscape is very important to pedestrians and vehicular users and there are lots of things we can do that are exciting and serve several functions: safety, functional design, enhance aesthetics, provide pedestrian comfort, as well as address community character, etc. Some of our best, most traveled corridors are the worst looking and are in need of beautification and sometimes just removing overhead electric wires is an improvement.

We are a leisure, quality of life destination for individuals and unless we are celebrating that in the way we approach our urban design function, we are missing the boat. And, DOT now takes anywhere from 1-3% of the cost of roadway construction and puts it into a fund for beautification and the funds are discretionary. Collaboration is essential with FDOT and other regulatory agencies. Mr. Harrell stated that quality of life issues must be addressed and felt very strongly that landscaping must be addressed with improvements to roads, etc. In a related discussion concerning the Gulf Boulevard Improvements, it was reported that the eleven beach communities agree and support the improvements including the undergrounding of all overhead wires at an estimated cost of \$51 million. Mr. Smith stated that the Pinellas County Commission has the report on Gulf Boulevard and is trying to figure out how to fund it. They are looking at the gas tax and they can go up to five cents without a referendum.

Mr. Smith then reviewed three maps. The first map is the Transportation Improvement Program Five Year Schedule (all the red lines are State projects, the purple are County and the municipal projects are in orange/yellow). All projects listed on the Five Year Map are funded. Mr. Smith pointed out that State resurfacing projects are not strictly resurfacing as intersection improvements and sidewalks were included in the resurfacing of U.S. 19. (Curlew Road is not a divided as indicated on the map.)

The second map shows the MPO Road Projects 2008-2025 which picks up after the Five Year Plan (with the same color coding). The State Projects are the projects people are going to get excited about in terms of moving traffic i.e. U.S. 19, Ulmerton Road, the elbow connector around the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport area, Gandy Boulevard between U.S. 19 and 4<sup>th</sup> Street/9<sup>th</sup> Street. The section from 49<sup>th</sup> Street over to U. S. 19 on 118 Avenue (the 118 Avenue Connector) is estimated to cost \$63.6 million. The elbow design which is in long-range plan connects the Bayside Bridge to the Interstate. An alternative, proposed by the Mayor of St. Petersburg, which has been added is the connector from U.S. 19 as an expressway to the Interstate via 118 Avenue. If the alternative is built, is it necessary to build the section connecting the Bayside Bridge to the Interstate?

The third map represents Major Road Network Unfunded Projects not listed in the long-range plan. Again, roads are color coded as above. The Belcher Road segment, from Sunset Point to Druid, is estimated at \$38 million because of right-of-way costs, is included in the current package of gas tax projects and is a County project of some significance. Once these missing segments are complete, our system is basically in place and the Task Force needs to look at other means of moving people.

Mr. Crane stated the maps are great, but if we're going to the public with this information he suggested eliminating everything that deals with curbs, right-of-way and just provide capacity with potential construction ending dates. Mr. Harrell stated that before Brian generates additional maps, the Task Force needs to make some basic decisions regarding specific roads, do we want mass transit, do we want to buy right-of-way, set asides for trails/sidewalk and beautification, Gulf Boulevard, etc. and then coming back with some very specific agreements. The Chair stated the Task Force appears to have several issues to address: a timetable, list of priorities, beautification issues, and mass transit. Mr. Giles stated we have to see where the activity is and where older structures are which would appear to indicate where future

activity/development will take place. The Chair stated he would like to include recommendations that are forward thinking i.e. planning the right-of-way issues, etc.

Mr. Harrell feels we should finish some of the road connectors, finish the grid and then beautify it. And, then talk about mass transit i.e. how far do we go to address right-of-way issues, etc. Our recommendations must include funding sources and a process to put it in place. Mr. Maggi stated the Task Force will have to make some strong recommendations concerning funding and feels improvements should be paid for with gas taxes (user fees). Our obligation as a Task Force is to make some of those recommendations, put them on the agenda because they have to be dealt with. Mr. Hawkes stated that sidewalks are needed throughout the County to help move people around. The Chair stated he would like to see the Gulf Boulevard Beautification Executive Summary.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.