



# Pinellas County MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

## Planning Assumptions

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## Planning Assumptions

### Roads

- The Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) main priorities for investment will be the remaining partially controlled access facilities (including U.S. Highway 19, Gandy Blvd, and the CR 296 Connector (Future SR 690)), maintenance of the existing transportation system, improving the operations of the existing transportation system, and transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Some roadway capacity projects identified in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the capacity of certain existing roadways will be reconsidered to determine compatibility with the surrounding community and other community goals. On certain corridors, consideration will be given to roadway treatments such as complete streets and road diets.
- The Congestion Management Process (CMP) will become increasingly important as the roadway network becomes built-out and funding for major improvements declines. The CMP will be utilized to identify improvements to maximize the operational efficiency of the roadway network.
- In the LRTP, roadways identified as 'Constrained' will be deficient in the future, even when planned projects are completed. These roadways will not be further widened beyond planned improvements and a certain level of congestion on the corridors will be accepted. These corridors will be analyzed for transit accommodations, operational improvements and other non-capacity enhancements.



### Transit

- Transit service will continue to be evaluated as a way to meet various local and regional travel needs. Given the unique circumstances of each community, consideration will be given to flex service, bus rapid transit, express bus, expanded trolley service, circulators and the Locally Preferred Alternative, as identified through the Pinellas Alternatives Analysis (AA) and through the Pinellas Community Bus Plan.



- The average population of Pinellas County is getting older and household sizes are getting smaller. As older populations are unable to or choose to discontinue use of private automobiles, more mobility options will be necessary. Meanwhile, recent trends nationwide are showing that younger generations are increasingly turning to transit for their everyday transportation needs. In order to attract and retain younger residents and support the local economy, the benefits of investments in transit will need to be considered.

- The MPO recognizes that many residents and visitors, regardless of age, desire a variety of travel options and will work with its partners to design a transportation system that serves the needs of all segments of the population.

#### Other Modes

- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be incorporated into all road projects, where feasible, and where needed to provide access to premium transit services.
- Connectivity amongst modes will be taken into consideration in the design of all transportation projects.
- The completion of the Pinellas Trail Loop and east/west connecting facilities will remain a high priority.
- Strategies to address crashes involving bicycles and pedestrians will be analyzed, including those targeting education and enforcement.

#### Revenues

- Gas tax revenues available for transportation projects will continue to decline with the diminishing purchasing power of the revenues and increased vehicle fuel economy. Additional funding for transportation could be secured in Pinellas County through the passage of the Charter County and Regional Transportation System Surtax (Transportation Surtax), providing revenues for greater transportation investments, including significant transit improvements. The MPO will work closely with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), and the local governments to identify and estimate available revenues for the LRTP update.
- Revenue from the Penny for Pinellas is projected to increase 3% annually going forward. Discussion will continue regarding local revenues available for transportation projects through the year 2040.

#### Demographics

- Without a significant change in the land use pattern, the permanent population of Pinellas County is projected to increase by small amounts each year from now until 2040, with a large portion of the gain coming through higher density redevelopment. The development of a light rail transit system has the potential to have a significant impact on land use patterns, particularly around station areas, and provide for more substantial population increases. The MPO will analyze this through the scenario planning process.
- Similar to population growth, without a significant change in the land use pattern to draw new residents, the number of jobs in Pinellas County will grow at small amounts annually until 2040, providing employment opportunities for the growing county population and for the region as a whole. The development of a light rail transit system has the potential to provide for more employment growth opportunities, attracting new residents to expand the local labor force and by spurring investment and redevelopment. The MPO will analyze this through the scenario planning process.
- School enrollment will continue to decline in the next few years, although not by as many students as had occurred in the past decade. After that, incremental increases in school enrollment are expected.
- The major industrial businesses in the county are anticipated to remain concentrated in the freight activity centers, particularly in the Gateway area. The MPO will continue to monitor the needs of the freight community and make sure the transportation network is responsive to

those needs. All projects along identified truck routes and serving industrial areas will take freight movements into account.

## Major Findings and Trends

### Document Review

In order to identify the major trends affecting the development of the LRTP, completed studies were reviewed in an effort to identify any recurring themes or data trends. These findings and trends were identified through a document review as well as through interviews with members of the local planning, housing and economic development departments, and from information gathered from other local agency representatives. The findings from the document review were considered in the development of this document.

#### Documents Reviewed Include:

- Local government comprehensive plans
- Pinellas County MPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan
- Pinellas Alternatives Analysis
- Pinellas County 2011 Economic Profile, Pinellas County Economic Development
- Pinellas Planning Council Countywide Plan
- 2010 State of the System Report
- 2000 and 2010 Census Data
- St. Petersburg Vision 2020 and Vision 2020 Special Area Plan
- City of Largo Strategic Plan
- Largo Downtown Multi-Modal Plan
- Largo Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Dunedin 2005 Vision
- Dunedin Corridor Studies
- Tarpon Springs Multimodal District
- Clearwater Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Clearwater Downtown Plan
- Clearwater Greenprint
- Target Employment and Industrial Lands Study for the Pinellas Community
- PSTA TDP
- 2011 Tampa Bay Regional Scorecard, Tampa Bay Partnership
- MPOAC Revenue Study
- Pinellas By Design
- TBARTA Master Plan
- 2060 Florida Transportation Plan
- Gateway Areawide Plan
- Gulf Blvd. Studies/Plans
- Pedestrian Safety Action Plan
- 2006 Clearwater Evaluation and Appraisal Report

## Agency Interviews and Survey

### Interviews

Interviews were held with representatives from economic development, transportation and planning departments from the county and selected cities. The cities were selected for interviews in order to obtain a representative response from the many distinct communities throughout Pinellas County.

The following is a list of those that participated in the agency interviews:

- City of Clearwater: Gina Clayton, Lauren Matzke
- City of Dunedin: Greg Rice, Joan Rice, Tom Burke
- City of Indian Rocks Beach: Danny Taylor
- City of Largo: Carol Stricklin, Robert Klute, Leland Dicus
- City of Oldsmar: Marie Daupinais, Michele Parisano
- City of Pinellas Park: Robert Bray
- City of Seminole: Mark Ely
- City of St. Petersburg: David Goodwin, Derek Kilborn, Rick MacAuley, Tom Whalen, Joe Kubicki
- City of Tarpon Springs: Renea Vincent, Rodney Chatman
- Pinellas County: Larry Arrington, Gordon Beardslee, Elizabeth Freeman, Ivan Fernandez, Armanda Lampley, Cindy Margiotta, John Cueva, Al Bartolotta

As Pinellas County is made up of 25 different jurisdictions (24 municipalities and the county), transportation priorities and issues are varied and unique to each community. Each community has its own vision of what its future will be like and with that, an understanding of the transportation improvements necessary to attain that vision. MPO staff met with each of the participating agency representatives to help to get an understanding of what the transportation issues and priorities were in various parts of the county. The MPO understands that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to transportation and that any improvements or changes to the transportation network need to be coordinated with the local agencies to ensure they balance the needs of the overall transportation system with the goals of the surrounding community.

While the transportation issues brought up by the various jurisdictions were wide ranging, a common theme that resonated during the interviews was that connectivity was a high priority. All jurisdictions noted the importance of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations for their residents and expressed a desire to improve the connections between these facilities and residential and commercial areas. However, some communities did not highlight the provision of such facilities within neighborhoods as a priority. In addition, some of the local governments are looking to develop and implement Complete Streets policies that take all modes into consideration during roadway design, and do not just target automobiles.

Most local governments interviewed also mentioned the importance of transit service for their communities. The idea of express bus service along major corridors with local circulator service was brought up by several of the interviewed local governments as transit service that they would like to see in their communities. On the other hand, one local government noted that the transit priority was to

bring workers into the city in the morning and out of the city in the evenings, with little need for local circulator service. The communities along the corridor identified in the Pinellas Alternatives Analysis discussed the potential positive impacts that a light rail line could have on their communities, with increased transportation options and the development potential around station areas.

Each interviewed local government shared with MPO staff the approximate types and locations for future redevelopment in their communities and discussed with staff potential transportation impacts that such future development may have on the overall transportation system. Each interview also included a recommended list of documents that the MPO should review to get a better idea of how and where each local government was planning to grow. In addition, each community identified locations with transportation issues within their borders that they considered priorities for the MPO to consider during the development of the 2040 LRTP. Notes from each meeting with the local governments are included as an attachment to this document.

### Surveys

Surveys were supplied to members of the MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee. Survey results were utilized to help inform the development of the Planning Assumptions and helped MPO staff gather an understanding of the transportation issues at the local level. Completed surveys are attached to this document. The questions posed by the survey are listed below.

#### Survey Questions:

1. What are the priority transportation mobility issues in your community that need to be addressed by the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan?
2. What redevelopment, economic or demographic trends do you see having the greatest influence on Pinellas County's transportation system in the future?
3. How can transportation investments better support economic growth and opportunity in the community?
4. What are the transportation projects or strategies that would most support your agency's or community's objectives?
5. In terms of funding of transportation needs, how could the MPO better direct its priorities to support your agency or community's objectives?
6. Do you have any additional thoughts or guidance concerning the LRTP update?
7. What planning challenges are you facing in your community?

### **Emerging Issues**

#### Climate Change/Sustainability

Legislation was passed at the federal level and in Florida encouraging each MPO to consider strategies that integrate transportation and land use planning in their LRTP to provide for sustainable development and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as include energy considerations in all state, regional and local planning. The LRTP update will include discussion regarding the integration of transportation and

land use strategies to encourage sustainability. In addition, goals, objectives and policies discussing climate change and sustainability concepts will also be developed.

#### Performance Measures

The new federal surface transportation legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) includes requirements that MPOs use a performance-based approach to transportation planning. MPOs must set performance targets, in coordination with states and public transportation agencies, for each of national goals outlined in the legislation. The LRTP must include a description of the MPO's performance measures and targets, and a system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets. The MPO will work with the state, PSTA, and the MPO advisory committees to develop the performance measures and targets and integrate them into the LRTP.

#### Sustainable Transportation and Context Sensitive Solutions

MPOs are encouraged to identify and suggest contextual solutions for appropriate transportation corridors. For example, Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) may be appropriate for historic parkways, historic districts, town centers, dense "walkable" neighborhood areas or simply where right of way is not readily available. The value of resources present may suggest the need for alternative or special treatments (or even accepting a level of congestion and lower speeds that respects the resources). In these instances, specific livability principles might be employed for improved pedestrian and transit access – especially to schools and even traffic calming. Also, spatial relationships that support public transit like transit-oriented-development and the "trip not taken" while reducing greenhouse gases might be recognized as characteristics of a town center or mixed use area with public transit access. Other livability planning goals might need to be recognized like preserving affordable housing, improving/preserving special resources like parks, monuments and tourism areas, increasing floor area ratios and reducing parking minimums in select corridors to encourage walking trips and public transit, transportation demand management, etc. Pinellas MPO will be considering CSS strategies throughout the development of the next LRTP and will evaluate how to best integrate into the LRTP.

#### Scenario Planning

MPOs are encouraged to use the tools and techniques that are collectively called scenario planning. Scenarios are narratives or sets of assumptions that explore plausible trajectories of change and provide a means of visioning possible future changes and different policy and investment options. The key elements in scenario planning include the use of scenarios to compare and contrast interactions between multiple factors, such as transportation, land use, and economic development; analysis of how different land use, demographic, or other types of scenarios could impact transportation networks; identification of possible strategies that lead a community, region, or study area toward achieving elements of the preferred future; and emphasizes public stakeholder involvement throughout the process to help create options (scenarios) and assess outcomes. The Pinellas MPO will be embarking on a scenario planning effort with the development of the 2040 LRTP, including an assessment of a trend scenario, a scenario with increased investments in bus transit and highway networks, and a scenario that includes investments in bus transit, highway networks and a light rail transit system.

### Freight

The importance of freight to the nation's economic well-being and global competitiveness, as well as its support and promotion of job creation and retention has heightened its status at the national and regional level. With the passage of MAP-21, the planning focus on freight transportation has increased, and is included as one of seven national goals. In addition to its importance at the national level, the movement of freight is a priority at the local level as well. The MPO will continue to monitor the priorities of the local governments and the planning requirements that have come out of the new federal transportation bill so that freight transportation receives the full attention it requires in the next LRTP update.

### **Major Road Capacity Projects**

Moving forward with the next LRTP update, it is assumed that the MPO will continue to pursue the remaining major capacity and partially controlled access facility projects on Roosevelt Blvd., Ulmerton Rd., the CR 296 Connector, Gandy Blvd., and U.S. Highway 19. Given the built-out nature of the major road network, the MPO will be working to identify operational improvements, transit, and other strategies to maximize the capacity of the existing roadway network. Beyond the roadways listed above, there are very few opportunities to expand



capacity on existing roadway corridors, and even fewer opportunities to construct more roads. Some of the local governments interviewed as part of this effort expressed a desire to provide for more 'Complete Streets' that accommodate alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle and improve operational efficiency without adding more lanes. Many of the agencies interviewed also listed specific locations where there were transportation issues and recommended solutions to those problems. The MPO will continue working with the local jurisdictions to see how the LRTP can support the transportation needs of the local governments and help to remedy the problems identified both through this process and going forward.

While evaluating the need for transportation projects, the cost to operate and maintain these facilities needs to be closely considered. The long term costs associated with transportation investments need to be taken into consideration and provided to all parties, including the general public, so that everyone is well-informed of the details needed in order to make the best decision for the entire community.

### **Land Use Strategy**

This update of the LRTP is an opportunity to further integrate transportation and land use. Our transportation system needs to be responsive to the needs of the community and the region, and planning for that system must take consider the desired future direction of the community. As little

additional roadway capacity will be built, alternative modes of transportation are needed to accommodate additional growth, and the land use strategy employed by the local governments should reflect that. Countywide transportation and land use planning efforts are being re-envisioned simultaneously so that they support one another.



The MPO will be working closely with the local countywide land use agency, the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC), and the local governments so that projects and programs incorporated into the LRTP support future land use planning priorities. In a community such as ours, with little vacant developable land, the highest densities and intensities should be concentrated in areas with current or planned access to transit. Some of the municipalities, the county and the PPC have developed station area typologies to help guide

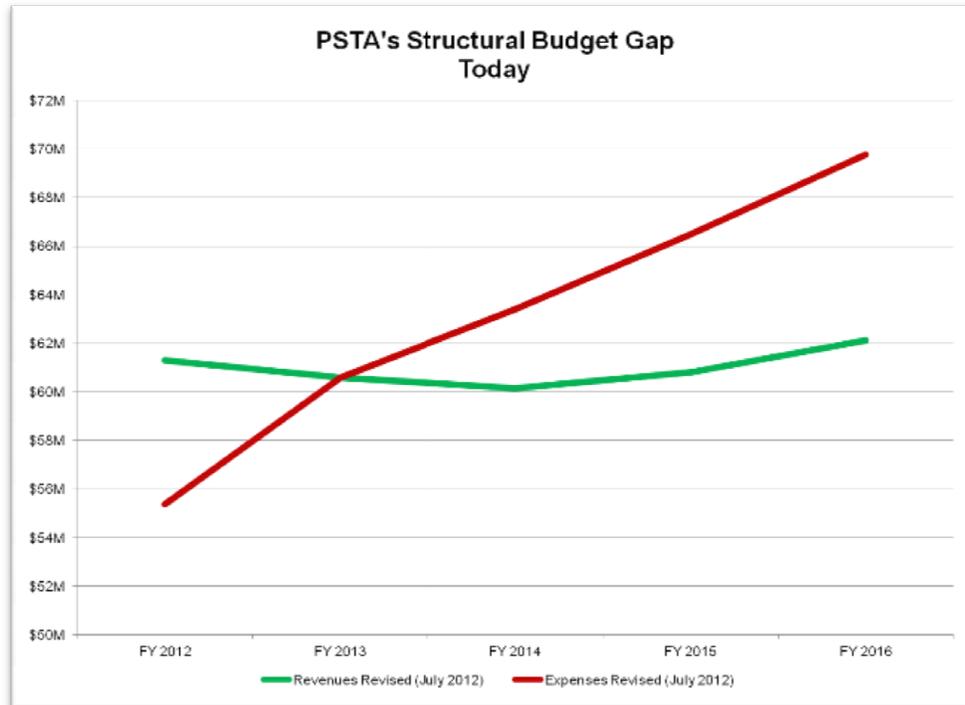
development decisions around future premium transit stations. These typologies will provide the framework to direct an appropriate level of transit-oriented development to station areas, and will help to provide the demand and ridership to support a premium transit system.

### **Revenue Projections**

With the nationwide economic decline and stagnation in recent years, revenues available for transportation projects and programs at the local, state and federal level have significantly decreased.

Gas tax revenues that are available for transportation projects are declining as the tax rates are a fixed amount (not a percentage of the cost of a gallon of gas) and are not tied to inflation. Economic stagnation that has taken cars off of the road, increases in the fuel economy of all vehicles, and the decreasing purchasing power of the gas tax, have resulted in further decreases in the revenues available from the gas tax. It is not anticipated that the gas tax will be increased or otherwise adjusted to increase the amount of revenue collected from it. With increasing fuel economy standards being phased in starting in 2017, it is assumed that revenues from the gas tax will continue to decline, and the purchasing power of the revenues that are collected will be further diminished due to inflation. In May 2012, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a brief titled "How Would Proposed Fuel Economy Standards Affect the Highway Trust Fund." In this brief, the CBO estimates that the proposed fuel standards would gradually reduce gas tax revenues, eventually by 21 percent. The CBO reports that the full effect would not be seen until 2040, the end year of the LRTP update. Decreases are estimated to result in a \$57 billion decline in revenues credited to the Highway Trust Fund over the 11 year period from 2012-2022. This decrease in revenues available for transportation projects will have an impact on funding available for transportation improvements in Pinellas County and the MPO will need to adjust its planning accordingly.

PSTA receives the majority of its funding through local property tax collections and federal grants. Farebox revenues account for approximately 23% of the agency’s budget, which is above the national farebox recovery rate of 18-20%. Ridership has increased in recent years, leading to an increase in the



revenue available from the farebox (a 24% increase from FY2007 to FY2012). IN FY2012, property tax collections comprised 54% of PSTA revenues. However, with decreased property values, the amount PSTA collects for transit service through the ad valorem tax has declined significantly (more than a 10% decline from FY2007 to

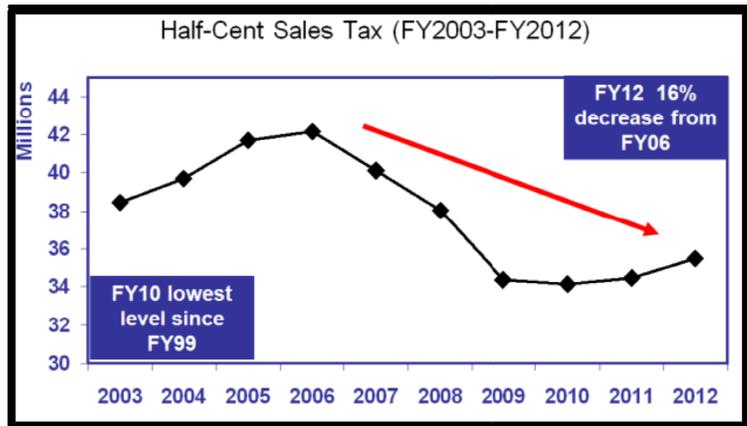
FY2012 despite a millage increase from .5601 to .7305 in 2011). County budget forecasters are anticipating continued reductions in taxable property values through 2014, with a 2% increase in 2015 and a 4% increase annually from 2016 through 2022. Under current economic conditions, PSTA is operating in an environment where no significant growth in the system is possible and existing revenue streams will not keep up with rising operating costs. With economic recovery, it is anticipated that PSTA will soon begin to recover some of the revenue lost from declining ad valorem taxes, but it will likely take a number of years. Should Pinellas County voters approve a Transportation Surtax referendum, PSTA would cease collection of its ad valorem taxes and rely primarily upon both farebox and the sales tax collections for its local funding. Restructuring PSTA’s funding in that way would provide more revenue than is currently collected and would allow the agency to significantly enhance existing transit service.

An option discussed for increasing revenue for transportation projects has been the Charter County and Regional Transportation System Surtax (Transportation Surtax), a local option sales tax, which would need to be approved by voter referendum and can be implemented at a rate of up to 1%. The revenue from the Transportation Surtax would primarily fund transit projects, but up to 25% of revenues would be available for investments in other modes, including roads, sidewalks and bike path/lane projects. The revenue percentages that would be available for the various modes are still undetermined and the discussion regarding these details will continue. Without the Transportation Surtax, it is anticipated that the funding available for transportation projects will continue to decline and that low-cost

improvements that focus on the efficient operation of the existing system will take on a greater role in the improvement of the local transportation system. At the local level, recent economic conditions have led to decreased gas tax, sales tax and property tax revenue funds available for transportation improvements.

The Penny for Pinellas is a 1% sales tax distributed amongst all local governments in Pinellas County for capital projects. The Penny for Pinellas is approved by voters for a ten-year period, with the current Penny for Pinellas continuing until 2020. With the economic conditions of recent years, the current Penny for Pinellas has brought in less revenue than originally anticipated, thereby reducing revenues available for transportation projects. However, sales tax revenues have increased recently, with a

3% annual increase anticipated each year from 2013 and on. This will be factored into the estimation of available revenues for transportation improvements with the 2040 LRTP.



As a part of the LRTP update, the MPO will work with the local governments, FDOT, and PSTA to develop comprehensive revenue projections to cover the time period included in the 2040 LRTP. These projections will help determine what transportation projects the MPO can reasonably expect to be able to fund through 2040.

### Cost Projections

The MPO will work closely with FDOT, PSTA, the County and the other local governments to estimate project cost projections through the outer years of the LRTP. The cost projections for projects included in the Cost Feasible Plan of the LRTP will be shown in Year of Expenditure dollars.

### Transportation Safety

The safety of the transportation system has long been a priority of the MPO. While improvements have been made in reducing the crash rate, the rate of fatal and incapacitating crashes in Pinellas County continues to be high, especially amongst bicyclists and pedestrians. During the development of the LRTP, the safety of the transportation system will continue to be taken into consideration and all projects will be analyzed to ensure that the safety of all users is addressed.

### Public Transportation

Pinellas County is a community with very little vacant and developable land. This also means that there is little room left for roadway capacity projects; with the completion of capacity projects in the Gateway area and improvements to US 19, the county's major road network will be substantially complete. In order to accommodate future growth in the county, there will need to be an efficient transit system in

place to absorb trips and ensure the reliability of the existing roadway system, to avoid causing significant delays and negatively impacting residents and businesses. Significant investment in a premium transit system is needed in order to accommodate growth and economic development in the county as little additional capacity will be added to the roadway network. Many local governments in the county have expressed interest in increased transit service in their communities to relieve congestion and provide transportation options for their residents and visitors.

Recent trends indicate that younger people are showing more of an interest in living in urban environments, foregoing or delaying vehicle purchases and opting instead to use transit. The development of a premium transit system in Pinellas County could be an element in enticing workers to either remain in or move to the area. In light of the aging population in Pinellas County, attracting and retaining younger residents could provide for a more diversified workforce to serve existing businesses and those businesses considering locating here. Station areas serving premium transit routes often spur redevelopment, creating new and more diversified housing types, thus helping to revitalize communities.

The MPO will work closely with PSTA during the LRTP update to analyze the existing transit system and determine where and how improvements can be made to better serve the county and its residents. Access to transit was identified in the Industrial Lands Study as an issue that is important for Pinellas County to meet its goals for job growth. The MPO will remain cognizant of this as the LRTP is updated. Additionally, the demand for late night and weekend bus service for those employed in the service sector is increasing, and will be taken into consideration during the development of the LRTP and through the Pinellas Community Bus Plan.

The Pinellas Alternatives Analysis (AA) study was looked at the potential for premium transit service in Pinellas County and was completed recently with the endorsement of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The LPA includes a light rail system in exclusive guideway connecting St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park, Greater Gateway, Largo and Clearwater, with a regional connection across Tampa Bay to Hillsborough County. The light rail system is anticipated to serve more than 24,000 riders daily, relieving congestion on surface roads and absorbing trips generated by future development along the transit corridor. The LPA also identifies 16 potential stations and includes countywide service enhancements to support its operation. Most of the local governments served by the transit corridor and the Pinellas Planning Council have developed station area typologies to help to guide development decisions around station areas. These typologies will serve to ensure that an appropriate level of transit-oriented development is directed to station areas, and will help to provide the demand and ridership to support the system into the future. The ability to construct the premium transit system identified by the LPA will depend on the ability of the county to secure additional funding. As discussed earlier, there is consideration being given to holding a referendum on the Transportation Surtax, a sales tax levied at a rate of up to one percent, the proceeds of which would be utilized for transportation improvements, including the construction and operation of a light-rail system and significant new investments in the bus system countywide.



PSTA is currently implementing a North County Flex Service. This service will offer passengers the option of calling for a ride on the route-deviation service or picking up the Flex vehicle at one of its regularly scheduled Flex stops along the selected corridor. The Flex vehicle is a 16-passenger vehicle with space for two wheelchairs and travels within Flex zones in East Lake, Palm Harbor, and Tarpon Springs. This service is anticipated to be less expensive than fixed-route service as it can meet specific customer needs with fewer hours or miles of service.

PSTA continues to offer a trolley service along the beaches and has recently extended this service to connect with the broader community. The trolley on St. Pete Beach now travels into downtown St. Petersburg to the Pier, providing another transportation option for visitors who would like to visit attractions off of the beach, and also serves commuters who work on the beaches but live on the mainland. The implementation of the North County Jolley Trolley has proven to be very popular, connecting Clearwater Beach, Dunedin, Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs. This service has brought visitors from the beach to destinations and businesses in North County and also provides another option for commuters by linking with the broader PSTA network.

PSTA is also currently working on the Pinellas Community Bus Plan to outline how the PSTA Bus System can be transformed into a new network of transit services that best benefits the future needs of the community. This study is scheduled to be completed by mid-2013. The MPO will incorporate recommendations from the Bus Plan into the 2040 LRTP.

The public transportation system in Pinellas County is continuously evolving to meet the needs of residents and visitors, while making adjustments to deal with declining revenues due to economic retraction. As previously discussed, if PSTA continues to rely on ad valorem revenues for its funding, it is anticipated that service will need to be adjusted in the next few years to deal with continued revenue decreases. If the voters approve a referendum for Transportation Surtax, revenues may increase for PSTA, which will then be able to provide additional public transportation services.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

A common theme in the planning documents of the various local governments in Pinellas County is that pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided whenever possible. Quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities that provide connections to where people live, work and play will remain a high priority for the MPO.

The MPO will maintain its policy of including bicycle facilities on every road construction and resurfacing project. In addition, the completion of the Pinellas Trail Loop will remain a high priority for the MPO and as the funds to finish the project become available, they will be allocated accordingly. New and replacement pedestrian facilities will be prioritized accordingly, with the proximity to school facilities, location along major roadways, ability to fill in existing gaps, and linkages to future premium transit stations being taken into consideration in the prioritization process. With a decrease in the provision of busing for school children, increased emphasis will be placed on the safety of students walking or biking to school. In addition, some communities are experiencing a growth in the number of people commuting by bicycle. Designs for roads and transit accommodations need to take users of bicycle facilities into account, to ensure that the transportation system accommodates all users.



With less of a focus on capacity projects, the LRTP update will explore improvements in multimodal connectivity throughout the county to offer transportation alternatives to residents, support community development goals, and to increase the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians utilizing the roadway network. An update to the Pinellas County Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan is currently underway and will evaluate gaps, connectivity issues and safety problems related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The results of this study will be incorporated into the LRTP.

## Socioeconomic Data

### Population and Demographics

With the release of data from the 2010 Census, it is clear that Pinellas County has lost population since 2000. The economy appears to be stabilizing, however, and it is projected that there will be gradual, but small, increases in the population between now and 2040, without any significant changes to the land use pattern or policies. With little vacant/developable land, many of the opportunities for population growth in Pinellas County will come from higher-density redevelopment focused in specific and appropriate areas of the county. The development of a light rail transit system would create even more opportunities for redevelopment in the county, spurring additional population growth.



From 2000 to 2010, the median age in Pinellas County rose from 43 to 46.3. This compares with a nationwide median age of 37.2. The average household size decreased slightly from 2.17 to 2.16, compared with a nationwide average household size of 2.58. This data is indicative of the large number of retirees that call Pinellas County home. As our residents age, they may be less willing and able to take a personal vehicle for their daily transportation needs. The needs of the older populations will be considered in the further development of the transportation system. A transit and para-transit system that can serve the needs of an aging population can provide a crucial link that these residents need in order to be able to remain active in their communities and also to remain in their homes.

In addition to serving the older residents of the county, the transportation system needs to work for younger generations as well. As previously mentioned, recent trends are showing that the younger generations are locating in urban areas where they can avoid driving for their everyday needs and instead take public transportation. The transportation system of Pinellas County will need to be able to compete with other major metropolitan areas and provide the transportation options that the younger generations are looking for. Without a premium transit system, Pinellas County may have a difficult time retaining and attracting younger residents, which may have an impact on the local labor force and economy.

MPO staff is identifying areas in Pinellas County with high concentrations of minority and low-income populations. These groups are considered to be traditionally underserved and MPO staff will be targeting outreach activities in these areas to ensure that underserved groups are involved in the process to update the LRTP. In addition, Environmental Justice regulations require that these groups are not disproportionately burdened by the impacts of transportation projects and also that they are not denied the benefits of transportation investments. Areas with high concentrations of these populations will be mapped and compared to planned transportation projects to ensure that the costs and benefits of transportation improvements are distributed equally amongst all populations in Pinellas County.

Demographically, from 2000 to 2010, Pinellas County experienced an overall decline in the total population, equal to approximately 0.5%, while the minority population, as a percentage of the total county population, increased by over 35%. This increase is significant and the MPO will continue to monitor these demographic changes to see if there are any corresponding impacts to the travel patterns and mode split because of it.

**Minority Population Changes in Pinellas County from 2000 to 2010**

<b>Population Group</b>	<b>Total in Population Group in 2000</b>	<b>% of Total Population in 2000</b>	<b>Total in Population Group in 2010</b>	<b>% of Total Population in 2010</b>	<b>% Change in Total Population from 2000-2010</b>
Black or African American Population Alone	82,384	8.80%	94,745	10.30%	15.00%
Hispanic or Latino Population	42,128	4.60%	73,241	8%	73.85%
Asian American Population	18,783	2.10%	27,148	3%	44.53%
American Indian and Alaska Native Population	2,719	0.30%	2,892	0.30%	6.36%
Native-Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Population	484	0.05%	810	0.10%	67.36%
White Population	799,111	86.72%	752,892	82.14%	-5.78%
<i>Total Minority Group Population</i>	<i>146,498</i>	<i>15.90%</i>	<i>198,836</i>	<i>21.69%</i>	<b><i>35.73%</i></b>
<i>Total Population</i>	<i>921,482</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>916,542</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<b><i>-0.54%</i></b>

\*Source: Census Bureau

Note that for the Census data, "Hispanic or Latino" is an ethnicity, not a race. Therefore, there is double-counting amongst the Hispanics and the race groups of Black or African American Alone, Asian American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native-Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White.

Regarding the income level of Pinellas County residents, the overall rate of poverty in Pinellas County increased from 10% in 1999 to 12.1% in 2010. The groups with the highest percentage of low-income residents living at or below the poverty level were Black or African American and Native-Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Population, with about 27% of both groups living at or below the poverty level. This is followed by American Indian and Alaska Native Population (22%), White Alone Population (10%), Hispanic or Latino Population (8%), and Asian Population (3%).

### Growth in Jobs

Since the last update of the LRTP, the local economy has not seen the growth that Pinellas County has been accustomed to, mirroring nationwide trends. After a few years of job losses and a high unemployment rate, it now appears that the unemployment rate is coming down and the economy is stabilizing. Without significant changes to the land use pattern, modest increases in the number of jobs in Pinellas County is projected between now and 2040. The development of a light rail transit system has the potential to have a significant impact on the employment forecast through 2040 by attracting a



larger and more diverse labor pool and spurring investment throughout the community. During the development of the LRTP, the MPO will be working with the local governments on developing employment projections for the county, which will help to further refine forecasts of employment growth in the county.

### School Enrollment

The student enrollment in Pinellas County public and private schools has been declining for several years now, with a decrease of 8.1% from 2002-2003 to 2009-2010. A number of public schools have closed in the past several years in order to compensate for the reduced number of students. In addition, with declining property tax revenues, the public school district is operating on less funding than several years earlier, and closing schools has been a way to consolidate and save valuable resources. It is believed that the number of students enrolled in both public and private schools in Pinellas County will continue to decrease in the next several years, although at a smaller rate than in the previous decade. After several more years of decline, the student population should stabilize and remain constant or increase by small amounts each year until 2040.

### **Goods Movement**

The movement of goods in Pinellas County is critical to the local economy and the new federal transportation legislation, MAP-21, has brought increased attention to the importance of freight. Local businesses receive deliveries and make shipments predominantly using trucks on the county's roadway system. Inadequate roadway design, congestion, and poor access to businesses can all have negative impacts on a business' ability to conduct business and support the local economy. Such factors can also deter a business from locating in the area. During interviews with the county and municipalities, and in the Pinellas County MPO Goods Movement Study, those areas with freight movement concerns have been identified. The MPO will continue to work with the local agencies to identify additional areas and try to ensure that roadway projects are addressing the needs of the freight industry.

Special consideration is also given to the regional goods movement system. The FDOT District 7 is working on a Regional Goods Movement Study to identify hot spots and other issues with the regional

freight network. The MPO will be incorporating aspects of the Regional Study into the LRTP update, as appropriate. In addition, both the FDOT and the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) Master Plan identify freight corridors that are of particular importance to the regional movement of goods. The MPO will continue to review road projects that impact the regional freight network and ensure that freight considerations are taken into account and any issues are addressed.

### Congestion Management



With few remaining road capacity projects, operations and management projects are taking on increased significance in improving the efficiency of the transportation system. The MPO will be conducting a countywide Congestion Management Process (CMP) initiative to help identify the most severely congested road corridors in the county and to prioritize them for improvements. The results of this initiative will result in the identification of lower cost improvements that can be programmed in the LRTP and improve the operations of the identified corridors without building additional capacity. It is anticipated that the CMP will continue to

become increasingly significant to help solve congestion problems throughout the county without increasing the capacity of the roadway system.

### Availability of Land

As was the case in the last update of the LRTP, there is very little vacant, developable land remaining in Pinellas County. Due to this fact, redevelopment will be the driver of construction activity in the county. The trend of existing commercial and residential properties being converted into higher density and intensity developments is expected to continue in the coming years. The development of a light rail transit system has the potential to increase the pace at which properties are redeveloped, increasing the local population and expanding the opportunities for economic growth.

### Constrained Corridors

Within Pinellas County, various physical, environmental and local policy constraints influence the transportation planning vision for the county. Right-of-way acquisition and roadway capacity improvements through additional lanes have become too expensive a venture to be considered the only option when planning for future transportation demand. In addition, continuing to further widen existing roadways can have a negative impact on the communities through which the roads traverse, increasing safety concerns for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. MPO staff has tentatively identified facilities that are projected to be deficient in the future, defined as those roadways with a level-of-service grade of E or F in 2035 or with a volume-to-capacity ratio of .9 or greater. Some of these roadways have capacity improvements scheduled or planned on them before 2035 and are anticipated to still fail in the future years.

By labeling these facilities as constrained, solutions to help alleviate congestion and improve traffic flow will shift away from vehicular capacity improvements and certain levels of congestion along the corridors will be accepted. These roadways will need close consideration for non-roadway capacity improvements that can help improve road conditions without adding more lanes for vehicle traffic. Examples of non-capacity improvements can include, but are not limited to, intersection improvements, ITS treatments, enhanced transit service, safety improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian enhancements that can provide alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel and help to alleviate demand for vehicle capacity. The draft map on page 23 identifies these constrained facilities and will serve as a tool to help guide the selection of projects for inclusion in the LRTP.

For some of the County facilities that were previously recommended for capacity improvements, these projects may no longer be the most appropriate solution to congestion along those corridors. Park St./Starkey Rd. from Tyrone Blvd. to East Bay Dr. is one such example. The communities along this road corridor have expressed an interest in having the road improved to include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and intersection improvements, but do not want to have it widened to include two more lanes, as the County has previously planned. Other facilities, such as Pasadena Ave., are currently being evaluated for a reduction in capacity in order to better serve the needs of the community. This corridor is under consideration for a reduction of two lanes with enhancements added for bicycles, pedestrians and transit stops. While a segment of this roadway is projected to fail in the future, constraining the corridor would allow for the acceptance of a certain level of congestion, while focusing on non-capacity improvements to enhance the community through which the corridor traverses.

### **Beach Communities**

With eleven (11) different jurisdictions lining the Gulf of Mexico on the western side of Pinellas County, the beach communities face unique transportation issues. The common thread for each of the beach communities is Gulf Blvd., a 2-4 lane road that travels north-south through each of the narrow jurisdictions. This roadway carries all north-south traffic along the beaches including tourists, permanent local residents and seasonal residents. Due to its nature, the roadway can act as a barrier to people accessing the beaches on one side of the road and much of the lodging and retail located on the other. With high volumes of bicycle and pedestrian activity and high volumes of vehicular traffic, the needs of all users need to be taken into account in roadway projects along this corridor.

The MPO has been working closely with the communities located along the beach and with FDOT, who has jurisdiction over a substantial portion of the road, to improve pedestrian crossing accommodations along the corridor. In recent years, sidewalks and bike lanes have been installed and improved along the corridor to help improve safety for these modes of travel. In addition, PSTA has been providing trolley service along the entire length of Gulf Blvd., to provide a transportation alternative to both residents and tourists traversing the corridor. The trolley helps absorb both short trips and longer trips along the corridor, removing vehicles from the roadway and improving the safety of bicycles, pedestrians and other vehicles.

**Regional Travel**

With a highly developed roadway network and four bridges connecting Pinellas County to other communities throughout the region, regional travel is an important component of the transportation system. The roadway system and the personal automobile make it possible for people to live in one community and to work in another. Over time, the reduced emphasis on living and working in the same communities has created a demand on the transportation system to cater to both local and regional trips. The US 19 and McMullen Booth corridors are prime examples of the nature of regional travel in Pinellas County. These two roadways are direct connections between residential communities in Pasco County and employment centers in Pinellas County. Many of the vehicle trips along these corridors are regional in nature, bringing Pasco residents to employment and shopping destinations in Pinellas. The employment centers in mid-and southern-Pinellas County draw residents from both Hillsborough and Manatee counties along the I-275 corridor.

The MPO will continue to work with its partners to identify transportation issues, priorities and solutions that are vital to the movement of people and goods throughout the region. With regional travel constituting a large number of trips in Pinellas County, it is vital to ensure that the major roadways that connect to regional destinations are capable of handling the trips. In addition, the opportunities for regional transit connections are becoming increasingly important to provide an alternative mode of transportation as more people seek to travel between housing and employment destinations throughout the region.

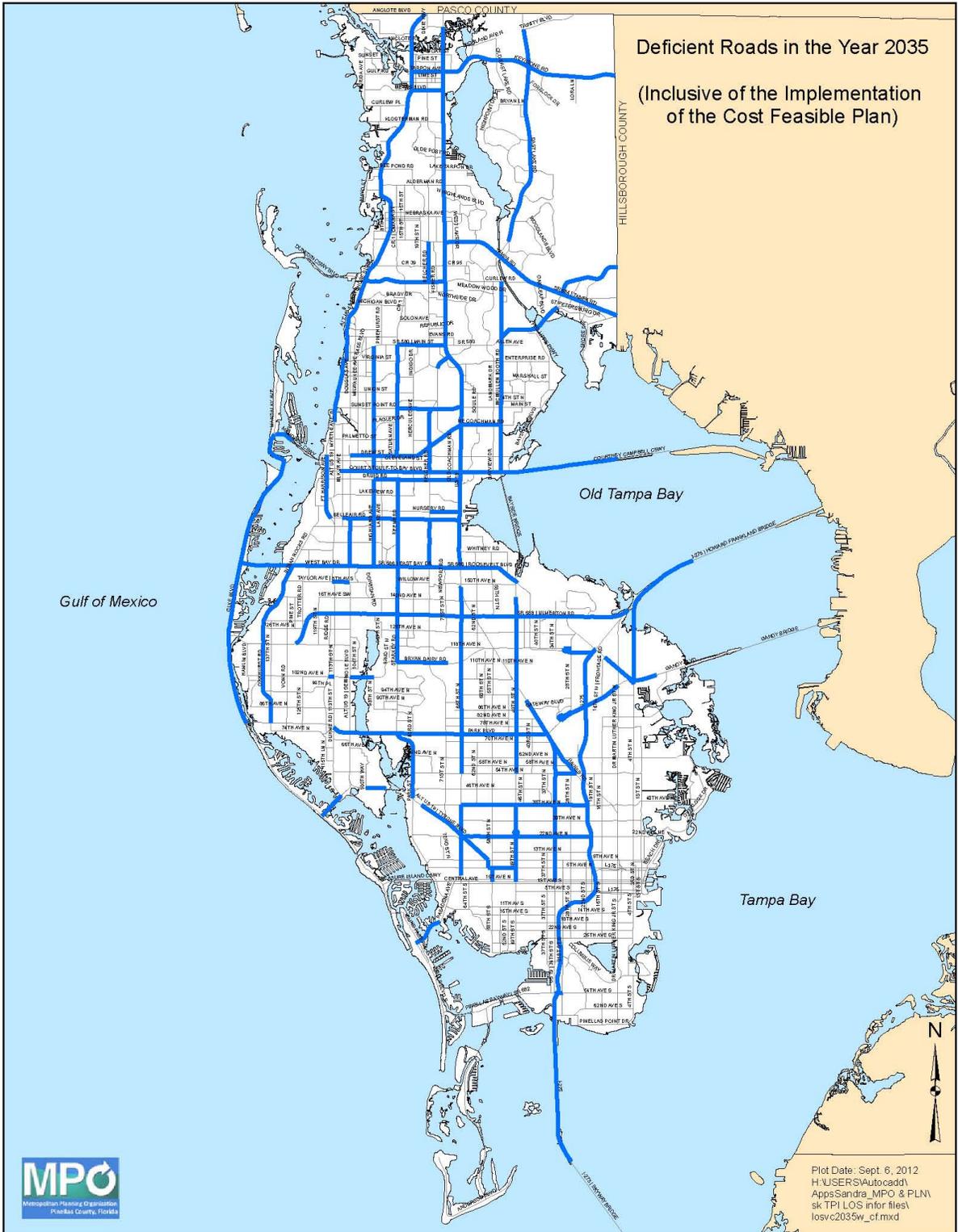
The air pollution generated by the transportation sector is another component of regional travel that needs to be taken into account. Vehicular emissions are a contributor to air quality issues in the Tampa Bay region and are also a contributor to global climate change. While currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has discussed revisiting the current air quality standards in 2013. If the standards for air quality are lowered, particularly for ozone, the Tampa Bay region will likely be designated as a non-attainment area and will then be required to demonstrate conformity between the LRTP and the State Implementation Plan. All transportation projects will have to demonstrate that they will not have a negative impact on the air quality in the Tampa Bay airshed. The MPO will continue to monitor the actions of the EPA and will work with its regional partners to take any necessary steps to deal with issues related to air quality and conformity throughout the development of the LRTP.

**Non-Traditional Vehicles**

In recent years, Pinellas County has seen an increase in the use of non-traditional vehicles (e.g. golf carts, scooters, electric bikes) and in the demand for their accommodation on the transportation system. Some communities have made accommodations to allow golf carts to operate on the network of local streets



and some businesses are even providing parking for these vehicles. The operation of golf carts on state roads is not allowed however, and golf carts may not cross state roads, unless authorized by the state. With communities allowing for the operation of golf carts on the local network, the desire to cross state roads to access certain destinations will continue to come up. An increase in the number of electric bicycles and scooters has also been noticed in recent years. These lower-speed vehicles are creating challenges in that they are not allowed on sidewalks and trails, but can impede traffic flow on the major road network. Alternative accommodations for these non-traditional vehicles will continue to be researched and considered during the development of the 2040 LRTP, given the popularity of these alternatives to automobile travel.





# **ATTACHMENT A: NOTES FROM AGENCY INTERVIEWS**



# **ATTACHMENT B: COMPLETED AGENCY SURVEY FORMS**

