

May 8, 2019

Please note that this summary has not been approved as the official minutes of the board.

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

A consultant for Pinellas County presented alternative options for improving traffic flow and reducing travel times at the intersection at Gulf to Bay and Belcher Road

- A representative from the county had previously come to the Forward Pinellas Board in February 2017 to discuss original recommendations for the intersection
 - Options of widening the roadway and adding turn lanes would cost between \$15M and \$18M but would not improve the traffic level of service to justify the cost
 - An overpass at Belcher Road would improve traffic flow and level of service, but cost more than \$80M
 - Pinellas County directed staff to look at additional alternatives to improve traffic flow and safety
- The consultant is a national expert in innovative intersection designs
- The new recommended alternative would create “Michigan U-turn” options instead of left turns at the intersection, resulting in a greatly improved estimated level of service
 - Signalized U-turns would be added in the medians 500-700 feet east and west of Belcher, based on observed traffic patterns
 - This would allow better traffic flow with reduced travel time, shorter intersection cycle time, and increase pedestrian safety for crossing
 - This alternative would also allow the signal to remain at Walmart/Publix on Belcher, which would have to be removed in many of the expanded roadway scenario
 - Small amounts of right-of-way would have to be purchased to allow “bump-outs” that would help large trucks make the U-turns safely
 - This would be by the cheapest option of all alternatives, coming in at \$13.4M
 - It would be nearly as effective as the \$80M overpass option previously rejected
- Board members expressed concern about several factors, including the difficulty of conveying advantages to the public, whether the U-turn option would be intuitive for drivers, and whether the U-turn would decrease traffic volume at this intersection but increase congestion at other intersections
- The presentation was not an action item and will come before the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners for a decision

Forward Pinellas staff presented an update on the Advantage Pinellas Plan

- Staff presented a snapshot of the outreach activity that has been conducted countywide for the past several months, which shows widespread support for spending funds on better bus service, rail and bicycle/pedestrian connections and lack of support for spending on more or wider roads
 - This generated significant discussion among board members, who expressed surprise at the results and felt it told a story that would be valuable in development of the plan
 - Board members asked staff to explain the locations and methodology of the activity
 - The activity is a ball game survey to help people define funding preferences and is not statistically valid
 - Outreach events thus far have occurred mainly in South Pinellas County with more planned for spring and summer elsewhere
 - Board members liked the exercise and expressed desire to see more outreach in all parts of the county
- Staff also spoke about the needs assessment with the roadway network adjustment and priority transit corridors

- Staff are running computer model tests on various roadways to evaluate changes to the road network, such as widening/reducing lanes or using toll roads, including east-west corridor alternatives
- Transit needs are being developed, focusing on suitability for improved service to connect existing residents to workforce development and job-training opportunities
 - Premium or priority transit corridors were identified by connecting the highest employment and workforce development areas with transit-supportive neighborhoods, reflecting population and social/economic characteristics
 - This resulted in developing three main types of inter-connected premium transit corridors
 - Regional
 - Tourism-oriented
 - Intra-County
- Board members expressed a desire that the Gateway area be served by premium transit and that transit corridors serve tourists as well as residents

FDOT District 7 Secretary David Gwynn gave a status update on several Tampa Bay Next projects

- Express lanes on I-275 from I-375 to Gandy are currently being evaluated
- FDOT is in the process of designing a Bus on Shoulder pilot project on I-275 in Pinellas County, with construction estimated to be completed in 2022
- The \$580M Gateway Expressway project is underway, with completion in 2022
 - The Gateway Expressway will provide connections from US 19 and Bayside Bridge to I-275, and the I-275 widening will create a tolled express lane in each direction from south of Gandy to north of 4th Street N
 - Gwynn also discussed the workforce training program that District 7 had implemented for the Gateway Expressway project, which had been very successful in training and retaining workers
- Howard Frankland Bridge construction will begin in early 2020, with a transit envelope designed to support future light rail
- FDOT is still working to obtain funding for the full Westshore interchange, which has been prioritized by Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco as the number one regional priority and includes:
 - Three general purpose and two express lanes in each direction
 - Express lane access to Tampa International Airport
 - Dedicated ramp from Kennedy Blvd to the airport
 - Connects Veteran's to I-275 via express lanes
 - Local street connections under I-275
 - New connection from Rio Street to I-275
- The difficulty has been that the downtown interchange still faces community opposition, and the Federal Highway Administration would prefer to move the two interchanges forward at once
 - District 7 would prefer to separate the Westshore interchange and advance that billion-dollar project separately while continuing to work with the community on solutions for the downtown interchange

Forward Pinellas staff outlined changes to the Transportation Alternatives Program, which were approved by the board

- The TA Program uses federal funds to construct pedestrian and bicycle projects, as well as infrastructure to improve non-car access to transit
- In the past, subjective scoring and loose application requirements had led to a long list with many projects and very limited funding, resulting in projects that stayed on the list for long periods of time without funding
- The revised program structure would have a more fully outlined set of criteria
 - Minimum award of \$300K, maximum award of \$2M

- Forward Pinellas will select a maximum of four projects for funding each year
- Each jurisdiction would only be allowed to submit two projects per year
 - In the first year of the new criteria, jurisdictions would be allowed to submit three projects if they had projects on the previous list
- After three years without getting funding, projects will be removed from the list
- Jurisdictions must meet three prerequisites for projects to be considered
 - Local commitment
 - 100% of right-of-way or easement
 - Have achieved Local Agency Program (LAP) certification, make progress toward LAP certification, or partner with a LAP-certified agency to build the project
- Scoring criteria (including percentage of local match, filling a gap, access to priority transit, and more), are assigned points, for a maximum of 80
- The new TA project priority list will come to the board for approval in March 2020

The board approved amendments to the current Transportation Improvement Program

- An amendment adding \$2.5M in FY2020 toward design for express lanes and lane continuity on I-275
- An amendment adding \$533K to FY2019 for engineering design of a roundabout to improve intersection safety on Alternate US 19 at Florida Avenue

The board recommended approval for two amendments to the Countywide Plan submitted by the City of Largo

- A subthreshold amendment from Retail and Services to Employment for a property on 66th street north, allowing for future development of what is currently a warehouse and storage facility
- A regular amendment from Employment and Target Employment Center to Retail and Services and Target Employment Center for a property in the ICOT center, allowing for continued retail and commercial uses on the property

Other Items

- Tarpon Springs Vice-Mayor Townsend Tarapani joined the board, filling the seat previously held by Tarpon Springs City Commissioner Jacob Karr
- The board approved amendments to the agency's Public Participation Plan
- The board heard an update from Bike/Walk Tampa Bay about its initiatives to increase safety and biking/walking education in the region
- The Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee will be adjourning until September as the legislative session has ended
- The Indian Shores mayor will be coming before the board in June to talk about drainage issues and sidewalk needs on Gulf Boulevard
- The 2017/18 agency audit was presented and approved, with one internal control finding on the MPO side that had been swiftly addressed

Action Sheet

May 8, 2019

At its May meeting, the Forward Pinellas Board took the following official actions:

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 12-0)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the April 10, 2019 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments (CAC & LCB)
 - C. Acceptance of Quarter Two Financial Report
 - D. Approval of Forward Pinellas/FDOT Joint Certification Statement and Summary
 - E. Cancellation of the August Forward Pinellas Meeting

- **Proposed Amendment(s) to FY 2018/19 – FY 2022/23 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
Following a description of the amendments by FDOT, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved two amendments to the TIP by roll call vote to:
 - add \$2.5 million to FY2020 toward the development of design concept plans for improvements to I-275 (SR93) from 54th Avenue South to South of Roosevelt Boulevard (vote: 12-0)
 - add \$533,000 to FY2019 for the preliminary engineering of a roundabout to improve intersection safety on Alternate US 19 at Florida Avenue (vote: 12-0)

- **Proposed Amendments to the Public Participation Plan (PPP)**
Following a staff presentation, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the amendments to the Public Participation Plan as outlined. (vote: 12-0)

- **Subthreshold Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
One case was recommended for approval:
 - 1. CW 19-09 – City of Largo (vote: 11-0, Councilmember Rice had stepped out of the meeting)

- **Regular Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
One case was recommended for approval:
 - 1. CW 19-10 – City of Largo (vote: 11-0, Councilmember Rice had stepped out of the meeting)

- **FY 2017/18 PPC and MPO Audits**
Following a presentation by the audit firm, the board accepted the final audits for both the PPC and MPO. (vote: 12-0)

- **Transportation Alternatives Program**
Following a staff presentation, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, voted to approve the changes to the program as outlined. (vote: 12-0)