



Policy Positions - 2019

Adopted February 13, 2019

Support Urban Agriculture. Local governments are discouraged from allowing urban agriculture because the Florida Right to Farm Act (Section 823.14, Florida Statutes) exempts commercial farms from most local land development regulation. This protects rural farms from encroaching suburban development, a necessary and beneficial purpose. However, the statute is broadly written and so applies to commercial farms in urban areas, which bring value to communities from a health, economic development and affordability standpoint, and where reasonable regulation is required to protect adjacent development. *Forward Pinellas supports proposed bill language amending the Florida Right to Farm Act to define urban agriculture and appropriately exempt it from restrictions on local land development regulation.*

Protect Trust Funds. Trust funds such as the State Housing Trust Fund, the State Transportation Trust Fund and Local Government Housing Trust Fund are established with a clear purpose. These trust funds should be protected and not subject to transfers to the Budget Stabilization Fund and the General Revenue Fund. *Forward Pinellas specifically supports Senate Bill 70, protecting funding intended for affordable housing from being transferred to other sources.*

Support Transportation Funding.

- Taxes on fuel are a primary source of transportation funding for local governments. Increasing fuel efficiency, more electric vehicles in the fleet, and rising roadway maintenance and operating costs are placing pressure on local governments to search for additional funding. Local fuel taxes are not indexed to the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation, as state fuel taxes are, and therefore, revenues are declining at a faster rate. *Forward Pinellas supports the Legislature permitting the indexing of local fuel taxes for inflation to better keep pace with transportation needs like it has done for state fuel tax revenues.*
- The Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) receives the vast majority of state transportation funding. As our highway network continues to mature in urban areas like Pinellas County, and reaches a point where expansion is not a feasible or affordable option, *Forward Pinellas supports increased flexibility for SIS funds for premium or express transit operating on the SIS roadway, but not necessarily on its own fixed guideway.* This is consistent with the legislative position of the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council.

Stop Distracted Driving. Texting while driving and related distractions pose a threat to the safety of motorists and non-motorized users. Forward Pinellas is committed to a Vision Zero initiative to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways. In 2017, there were 106 serious injury and 8 fatal crashes in Pinellas County due to distracted driving (Forward Pinellas 2018 Countywide Trends and Conditions Report). SB 76 and HB 107 authorize law enforcement officers to stop motor vehicles and issue citations

to persons who are using a wireless communications device while driving. *Forward Pinellas supports legislation that prohibits distracted driving by addressing the use of wireless communications devices with clear definitions and clarification on what it means to be stationary and operating.*

Maintain MPO Authority for Apportionment Structure. State-mandated changes to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), such as HB 385 this year and HB 575 last year, are a recurring concern to Forward Pinellas and other MPOs statewide. Attempts like HB 385, which is aimed at one county, could easily be revised to apply to other MPOs. *Forward Pinellas opposes one-size-fits all changes that would usurp local authority to determine the most appropriate structure of MPOs consistent with federal law and consultation with the Governor.*

Encourage Transportation Mobility. *Forward Pinellas supports micromobility options, such as electric bicycles and scooters as described in HB 453 and SB 542, and encourages first and last mile transportation options to reduce driving. These new micromobility options should be subject to appropriate and reasonable local regulations to address liability and ensure safety and compatibility with local conditions and procedures.*

Support Home Rule. Florida is a diverse state characterized by unique communities. Pinellas County is an example of that with its many downtowns, beach communities and neighborhoods. Home rule allows local governments to align the values of a community to its ordinances and other governing elements. *Forward Pinellas supports home rule and opposes bills that erode the ability of local governments to reflect the wishes and desires of their communities. A few examples:*

- Many of Florida's local governments, including those in Pinellas County, are still struggling with the effects of previous legislation, such as those amending Section 509.032(7)(b) that limit the ability of local governments to address vacation rentals. The preemption of local laws, ordinances or regulations to regulate the duration or frequency of vacation rentals limits the ability of local governments to respond to the negative impacts that may occur with vacation rentals.
- HB 385 restricts the ability of local governments to use the charter county and regional transportation system surtax on system operations, an ongoing expense.
- SB 588 and HB 603 would preempt regulation of single-use plastic straws to the state.
- SB 336 would require that a referendum to adopt or amend a local discretionary sales surtax be held at a general election, replacing the current ability of governing bodies to set a time at its discretion.