

**Forward Pinellas Board Work Session
Summary
February 14, 2024**

Board Members in Attendance:

Janet C. Long, Chair, Pinellas County Commissioner
Julie Ward Bujalski, Vice Chair, City of Dunedin Mayor (late arrival)
David Allbritton, Treasurer, City of Clearwater Councilmember
Gina Driscoll, Secretary, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)
Chris Burke, City of Seminole Councilor
Representing Inland Communities
Dave Eggers, Pinellas County Commissioner
Richie Floyd, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Eric Gerard, City of Largo Vice Mayor
Andrew Knapp, City of Oldsmar Vice Mayor
Representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor and Tarpon Springs
John Muhammad, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Patti Reed, City of Pinellas Park Vice Mayor
Brian Scott, Pinellas County Commissioner

Board Members Not in Attendance:

Mayor David Will, Town of Redington Beach Mayor
Representing Beach Communities

Others Present:

Commissioner Thomas Kelly, Town of Belleair
Mayor Sam Henderson, City of Gulfport
Vice Mayor Mike Eisner, City of Tarpon Springs

Planning for the Reapportioned Board

Staff reviewed the new board composition and led a discussion about the best ways for it to function effectively with 19 members. The discussion also covered options for how regional transportation entities should be considered in the formation of a regional MPO.

Discussion:

- How can the executive director best engage with each board member?

- Councilmember Driscoll said more phone calls could be used and one-on-one meetings would be by request from either side.
- Vice Mayor Knapp shared he thinks it is beneficial to continue opportunities to have one-on-one time with the executive director.
- Commissioner Eggers noted that the one-on-one meetings are particularly helpful to new board members, in their first year.
- What strategies can Forward Pinellas staff employ to maximize productivity at board meetings? (e.g., quarterly workshops, board committees)
 - Quarterly workshops are an appealing idea to Councilmember Driscoll, Mayor Henderson, Commissioner Kelly, Commissioner Eggers, Councilmember Floyd, Vice Mayor Burke, Vice Mayor Eisner, and Chair Long.
 - Mayor Henderson would prefer workshops to be on the day of regular board meetings, instead of on separate days.
 - Commissioner Kelly thinks that quarterly workshops would be more inclusive of diverse opinions by allowing people to speak more freely.
 - Incorporating committees was not appealing to Vice Mayor Burke, Commissioner Eggers, and Vice Mayor Eisner. Councilmember Driscoll noted she would first need to know how many committees there would be and for what specific purpose. Then, she suggested it should be required that each board member serve on at least one of the committees.
 - Councilmember Driscoll provided the following thoughts –
 - Including 5 out of 8 city councilmembers for St. Petersburg on the board can present a bandwidth challenge.
 - She requested to be moved to one of the new St. Petersburg seats under the new board structure to open the PSTA seat to a member from a different municipality.
 - Board members should be mindful to look at the agenda and be prepared with any questions prior to the meeting.
 - Commissioner Brian Scott noted he sees this exercise as a primer for what the MPO board merger process will look like and is curious about what other merged MPOs do with their boards. Whit Blanton shared that the bigger the MPO is the more committees and more formal processes there are. For example, in Orlando, there is a committee that represents cities that are too small to have a formal seat. Forward Pinellas will share case examples at this month's TMA meeting, following the board workshop.
 - Related to rotating board seats, Vice Mayor Knapp inquired how we can ensure that the cities that are not on the current rotation keep abreast of current issues? Whit Blanton responded that this is something we can improve upon and suggested that occasional speaking opportunities could be scheduled with those cities.
 - Commissioner Eggers said a one-page primer of key points for the upcoming meeting would be helpful, as well as open mic time at the end of workshops.

- Councilmember Floyd proposed that meetings be focused on fewer topics to allow each member time to share their thoughts. Whit Blanton noted that informational items on meeting agendas can be moved to quarterly meetings and board meetings can only include action items.
- How should we consider regional transportation entities in the formation of a regional MPO? What is the appropriate role of transportation operators?
 - Chair Long mentioned she would appreciate a summary of what the Atlanta area went through in regionalizing their MPO.
 - Commissioner Eggers noted he would want to ensure the ports, given their location in Hillsborough County, will truly demonstrate regional representation. Whit Blanton confirmed that they are regional in the sense that they transport people and goods to and from the region, but their governing boards only currently include representation from Hillsborough. This could be a condition of the merger that the port and airport revisit their board structure to include representation from surrounding counties, as well.
 - Chair Long said she thinks the St. Pete/Clearwater international (PIE) airport should be included.
 - Several board members noted their representation on the board is important, but there is a question of their incorporation into the voting structure:
 - Commissioner Scott mentioned their seat could rotate.
 - Councilmember Floyd expressed concern that an issue can arise by having appointed officials vs. elected officials on the board.

2050 Long Range Transportation Plan

Chelsea Favero, Planning Manager

Chelsea provided the board with an update on the Regional Needs Assessment, Transit System Plan, and Financial Resources which are key elements of developing the LRTP. An activity was conducted in which each board member ranked various modes of transportation for investment from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest priority and 6 being the least priority. This exercise is similar to the public outreach activity provided on the LRTP outreach website www.advantagepinellas2050.org.

Discussion:

- Multiple board members shared their responses to the ranking activity:
 - Councilmember Allbritton's ranking: 1 - premium transit, which could motivate more people to travel by transit; 2 - local transit, which can allow for more local density; 3 - bicycle/pedestrian; 4 - regional premium transit; 5 - technology, to promote safety; 6 – automobile.
 - Vice Mayor Gerard agreed with Councilmember Allbritton's ranking and noted that north-south routes need to be included for regional transit.
 - Vice Mayor Eisner ranking: 1- technology since people often drive distracted. Motion sensors could trigger automatically when people cross

- on the trail. 2 - bicycle-pedestrian due to the amount of bicycle/pedestrian fatalities. 3 - regional premium transit to the beaches.
- Commissioner Scott's ranking - 1- technology to help route people better, especially in tandem with road/intersection improvements. 2 – bicycle/pedestrian. 3 – local transit, noting that this category can work in tandem with regional transit. He also said that a dedicated tourist-based service and tourist lane would be useful.
- Mayor Bujalski's ranking – 1- premium transit, to allow for tourists to use throughout the region; 2- regional transit; 3 - local transit. 4- technology but provided the caveat that technology should be ingrained in all the other categories. She also echoed Vice Mayor Gerard's thoughts that more attention be paid to the north-south connections.
- Commissioner Eggers also noted that technology should be separate for consideration since it can be incorporated into all the other transit categories.
- Regarding the statistic that 75% of fatalities are of vulnerable users, Commissioner Eggers inquired if there is information available for who is at-fault in those accidents? Chelsea shared that the data are mixed.
- Commissioner Eggers noted it would be helpful to include more formal stop lights on the roadway at each trail crossing and no stops on the trail itself considering trail crossers often do not stop, and to make this consistent across the county.
- Vice Mayor Patti Reed mentioned that attention should be paid to utilizing our local companies, such as Uber, Lyft, and other private companies.
- Vice Mayor Knapp shared that smaller transit projects could be used to spark enthusiasm for traveling by transit before committing to larger projects.
- Councilmember Driscoll said the provision of a social media template would help board members get the word out about advantagepinellas2050.org.

Budgeting for the Future and Projects

Rodney Chatman, Planning Division Manager

Rodney provided an overview of the budget for both the PPC and MPO and sought feedback from the board on the strategic plan, opportunities, challenges, and staffing.

Discussion:

- Mayor Bujalski is under the impression, based on the budget, that transportation is not being prioritized and inquired for more details from the county commissioners.
 - Commissioner Eggers shared that the bulk of Penny for Pinellas funding is being used for roadways and there have also been two millages added that can absorb more roadway improvements.
 - Commissioner Scott added that there is an 18-20 million investment into the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS).

- Councilmember Driscoll inquired if are salaries remaining flat, as presented in the budget, will this apply to the County Administration as well and across all departments? Commissioner Eggers said it relates to every department and is not exclusive to the PPC. Whit Blanton furthered that salary adjustments and health care cost increases will be dealt with separately outside of the presented budget.
- Mayor Sam Henderson inquired if we are in the same ballpark in terms of the number of staff compared to Juvenile Welfare Board and Southwest Water Management District? Rodney Chatman said he would follow-up with these numbers.