

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on February 14, 2024, at 1 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

The board endorsed the Safety Performance Measures and Targets.

Chelsea Favero provided an overview of the Safety Performance Measures and the progress being made towards the achievement of each target. There has been a downward trend for pedestrian and bike fatalities and serious injuries, which was enough to meet the previously adopted target and, thus, necessitates a new target be set. Given there is still progress to be made toward achieving the targets set last year for other measures, such as fatal crashes and fatal crash rates, Forward Pinellas is recommending that those targets remain the same for the coming year.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Eggers inquired if speeding is a consistent concern related to the fatality data. Chelsea confirmed that, yes, speed is a very common factor.
- For pedestrian fatality statistic, Commissioner Gerard inquired if there is data on if pedestrians were in a crosswalk or not? Chelsea confirmed that this data can be pulled from Forward Pinellas's comprehensive crash database, if desired.

The board recommended approval of the following amendments to the Countywide Plan Map.

- Case CW 24-04 – A request from Pinellas County to amend 3.4 acres of property located at 3720 and 3730 Tampa Road from Office and Preservation to Public/Semi-Public. The parcels currently contains a beauty salon and an office. The applicant desires to have the ability to construct additional building square footage, which would require a local future land use map amendment to a category that allows a higher floor area ratio as well as the termination of the 2014 deed restrictions.

Discussion:

- Vice Mayor Burke asked what would happen to the preservation portion of the lot. Emma Wennick provided clarification that there was a discrepancy between the Forward Pinellas and city-provided map. Although the map is showing as preservation on the Forward Pinellas map, it is all upland and none of the actual wetlands are

included in the amendment portion. The Forward Pinellas map included the buffer space, whereas the city's map did not. There are currently no plans to develop in the upland and buffer space.

- Todd Pressman provided public comment that there has been zero opposition to this case throughout the hearings.

The board voted to continue Case CW 24-05 from the City of Tarpon Springs to the March Board Meeting.

Case CW 24-05 – The City of Tarpon Springs has requested this case be continued to the March Planners Advisory Committee and Forward Pinellas Board Meetings.

Forward Pinellas staff provided an update on the Multimodal Impact Fee Ordinance.

Jared Austin advised the board that over the past few months, Forward Pinellas and Pinellas County Housing and Community Development have been working towards an update to the County's Multimodal Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance, a countywide ordinance that is used to ensure that new development bears a proportionate share of the cost of capital expenditures necessary to meet mobility needs. Forward Pinellas has engaged in "listening sessions" and gathered input from neighboring communities, such as Tampa and Sarasota, that are updating their ordinances.

Discussion:

- Mayor Bujalski inquired if the money would only be used towards the impact of new residents to your community, as typical with impact fees? Jared Austin clarified that the fees collected can only go toward a new development and not toward an existing deficiency. Mayor Bujalski furthered that these sort of impact fees were more appropriate before the county was built out or in a state of redevelopment.

Forward Pinellas staff provided an update on the Live Local Dashboard.

Jared Austin provided an update that Forward Pinellas has been developing a Live Local Dashboard to track development activity related to prior preemptions in HB 1339 and SB 962, as well as the Live Local Act. Forward Pinellas has met with municipalities across the county to gather feedback on the tool's application and practical use. The tool has been adjusted based on feedback. The dashboard is now live and is updated monthly: <https://pinellas-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/a66289aa8aab49dda315092593dba60e>.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Eggers noted that target employment centers (TECs) and the use of industrial lands will be important to track. The dashboard would be a useful educational tool to pass on to the legislative delegation.
- Vice Mayor Gerard inquired if the affordable units by area median income (AMI) category section of the dashboard include the lower AMI categories, such as 50%? Jared Austin responded that it does include those categories. The dashboard is helpful in this way because it shows, of the projects taking advantage of these preemptions, what specific units are being built, and for what income brackets. Based on dashboard results, Vice Mayor Gerard noted that it appears the population in the most desperate need for affordable housing is currently not being addressed.

Forward Pinellas welcomed back Principal Planner Nousheen Rahman.

After departing in 2023 for the private sector, Nousheen Rahman has returned to Forward Pinellas as a Principal Planner. Nousheen is also the chair of the APA Florida Suncoast Section, covering the Tampa Bay region from Hernando to Sarasota County.

The board welcomed the new board member from Oldsmar, Vice Mayor Andrew Knapp.

Vice Mayor Andrew Knapp has been on the Oldsmar City Commission for the past four years and is replacing Jarrod Buchman on the Forward Pinellas Board.

SPOTlight Update

Executive Director Whit Blanton provided the following updates:

- Vision for US 19 Corridor – Along US 19, single-point interchanges have been built based on a project development and environmental study approved in the 1990s. Upon further discussion with FDOT, consideration is underway to examine alternative concepts for the stretch north of Nebraska Ave to the county line to address business concerns about the highway becoming a barrier to access and reducing visibility. One option is to build a viaduct (an elevated roadway over an existing roadway) instead of single point interchanges. This type of improvement would also offer more visibility and local access to surrounding areas and businesses. If FDOT moves forward with this design, the design of the frontage roads and how much space to include underneath and how it may be used would also be part of the discussion. This matter will be brought before Forward Pinellas’s advisory committees in March and outreach to the public will be conducted this spring. This will also be brought back to the board for consideration as it pertains to the long range transportation plan (LRTP).
 - Vice Mayor Knapp inquired if contingencies are being planned for in context to the MPO merger; specifically, would this project continue into Pasco County? Whit Blanton shared that there has been a conversation with Pasco County on this topic. Pasco

County has a plan in place to develop US 19 in a significantly different way that would not conflict.

- Commissioner Eggers expressed concerns about taking the concepts to the public prior to having the board review them first. Whit Blanton responded that the schedule will reflect a discussion with the board before any public outreach on the concepts occurs.
- Enhancing Beach Community Access – A request has been made from the Forward Pinellas Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) of the board to ask Pinellas County to consider removal of signs on the Dunedin Causeway that direct bicyclists to “Dismount Bike if Riding on Sidewalk.” The sign is in place due to bottle-neck areas on the bridge that place bicyclists and pedestrians in conflict for space. However, the BPAC has forwarded that the signs are not practical in this application due to the significant distance people would have to push their bikes and the unsafe alternative of bicyclists entering a traffic lane to avoid dismounting.
 - Mayor Bujalski concurred that this is an issue along the bridge and requested coordination with the City of Dunedin before a decision is made.
 - Commissioner Scott noted there are currently temporary signs to remind roadway users of the speed limit and that bicyclists may use the full lane.

Other Items

- Whit Blanton provided an update on Drew Street, a Complete Streets project. FDOT is completing a traffic study mandated by the legislature. The project has now become a campaign issue in the Clearwater City election. Forward Pinellas will await city election results and then meet with the newly elected officials to inform them of the plan. Whether the project proceeds or not will ultimately be determined by the City of Clearwater.
- PSTA Report:
 - The Board adopted a resolution authorizing the sale of the Park Street Terminal property and the execution of documents necessary to transfer the property to the City. This will allow PSTA to finalize the land swap process for the purposes of constructing the multi-modal Clearwater Transit Center on the site at Court Street and Myrtle Avenue.
 - The Board approved a Transit Concepts and Alternatives (TCAR) Study of Alternate 19 from downtown Clearwater to St. Petersburg. This study is the next step following Forward Pinellas’ Alternate 19 Corridor Plan, which focused on redevelopment opportunities complemented by a conceptual premium transit plan. This TCAR study is a required step to obtain certain sources of state and federal funding.
- Regional Activities Report: Executive Director Whit Blanton shared the TMA Leadership Group has requested \$500,000 in startup funding for a regional MPO. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has identified a funding source. They are also looking into procuring a management consultant and an independent legal advisor. He provided a chart that demonstrates this will be an independent process led by the MPOs themselves and that the funds and consultant will not be provided by FDOT.
- Whit Blanton provided the following legislative updates:

- Brightline will be submitting a legislative earmark requesting \$50 million to help address building service from Orlando International Airport to the Tampa International Airport. The board agreed by consensus to support Brightline service being extended from Orlando to Tampa without supporting any legislative appropriations to do so.
- Senate Bill 1032 and House Bill 749 would fundamentally influence the way the MPO operates. On a yearly basis, the MPO would have to post a series of predetermined performance quality metrics for transportation designed to measure quality, such as traffic congestion and utilization of transit facilities. Whit Blanton stated that the concern with this is that transportation projects require multiple years for development, thus metrics updated so frequently would not accurately reflect progress being made. Additionally, usability metrics (e.g., how many people utilized a stretch of sidewalk) would be very burdensome to track. The bills also forward that the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan is to be submitted to the state to determine if it is in congruence with the metropolitan area, something that is an MPO responsibility under federal law.
- Public Comment: David Ballard Geddis Jr. expressed his discontent with the county's bus system and cited Disney's tram system as a desirable model to follow.
- The following agenda item was removed from the discussion as the item no longer required approval – "6A. Proposed Amendment(s) to the FY 2023/24 – 2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)."

**Action Sheet
February 14, 2024**

At its February 2024 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 January 10, 2024 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Acceptance of Quarter One Financial Report
 - D. Approval of Scope and Fee Cost Feasible Plan
 - E. Approval of Countywide Plan Appendix Update
- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
Following a presentation by Emma Wennick, Forward Pinellas staff, and public hearing, one case was recommended for approval:
 1. Case CW 24-04 – Pinellas County (vote: 12-0)

Case CW 24-05 – City of Tarpon Springs was continued to the March 13, 2024 Forward Pinellas

Board meeting. (vote:12-0)

- **Safety Performance Measures and Targets**

Following a presentation by Chelsea Favero, Forward Pinellas staff, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the Safety Performance Measures and Targets. (vote: 12-0)

- **Legislative Update**

As part of the Director's Report and Legislative Update, the board, by consensus, agreed to offer its support for the Brightline connection to Tampa without endorsing the request for a legislative appropriation.