

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on January 13, 2021 at 1 p.m. in the Magnolia Room at the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension. Presenters and members of the public also had the opportunity to participate virtually to ensure public safety in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see the following link for more information about virtual meeting [policies and procedures](#).

The board unanimously approved a letter to provide comments on the Florida Department of Transportation's FY 2021/22-2025/26 Draft Tentative Work Program

Justin Hall, FDOT reviewed the additions and postponements to the Draft Tentative Five Year Work Program that outlines the state and federally-funded transportation projects for the next five years. Given the impacts from the ongoing pandemic, Florida is facing a \$1.4 billion deficit in its projected transportation revenues across the next five years. The Tampa Bay area felt the biggest sting from the budget cuts with the two-year delay of the Westshore Interchange Project and deferral of other I-275 improvements. Pinellas County's near-\$300 million budget cut was disproportionately higher than the rest of the state.

Secretary Gwynn discussed why several significant transportation projects were postponed, highlighting that they tried to honor ongoing construction projects, planned safety projects, and any maintenance projects to make sure current projects are able to continue. He noted that the majority of what they had available to cut in the budget was from the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) program and the Westshore Interchange was the biggest SIS project in the Five Year Work Program. He encouraged the board to continue regional coordination and speak with one voice. In addition, he committed to continuing to pursue the postponed projects so they are ready to be implemented once funding is in place, hopefully sooner than anticipated.

- **Questions & Comments:**

Commissioner Eggers requested an update on the Drew Street project.

- FDOT is working with Forward Pinellas staff, local governments, and the public on a planning study that will result in a proposed alternative that will move into the design phase after it is completed in the next nine months. They expect the construction phase to begin two years after that.

Commissioner Seel confirmed with FDOT that the U.S. 19 projects remain fully funded for construction from Main St. to Curlew Rd. In addition, Seel and Eggers also expressed a desire to advance funding for U.S. 19 improvements north at least through Tampa Road.

Commissioner Long expressed her displeasure about all the project delays, especially the postponement of the Westshore Interchange.

Chair Rice asked if the delays in the Westshore Interchange would impact the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority's Regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

- Secretary Gwynn said that because the Westshore Intermodal Center is directly tied to the Westshore Interchange, delays in this project will also cause delays to the BRT.

Vice Mayor Cliff Merz highlighted his concern about the congestion and safety issues due to traffic merging and weaving at the Roosevelt Blvd/SR 686 connection with Ulmerton Road, and requested FDOT look into possible improvements for this area.

- Secretary Gwynn said the Department would look into it and that this may be eligible for a Design-Build Push Button process that often takes only 36 months to go from concept to concrete. Justin Hall committed to taking this back to his team and trying to find a solution.

Pinellas County resident Karen Mullins, voiced disappointment in the postponements outlined in the Five Year Work Program and would like to see FDOT and Forward Pinellas look at other funding sources so we can continue these projects, especially the Regional Bus Rapid Transit project.

The board unanimously approved the Transportation Alternatives Program Grant Awards

St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park, and Pinellas County are the latest local governments in Pinellas County seeking funding under the Forward Pinellas Transportation Alternatives Program, which assists communities wishing to improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities within their communities

Based on the scoring process approved by the board, Forward Pinellas staff recommended these four projects be added to the bottom of the priority list in this order, allowing FDOT to consider these projects for future funding:

1. 118th Ave. in Pinellas Park
2. 28th St. in St. Petersburg
3. 46th St. N. in Lealman (unincorporated Pinellas County)
4. 62nd Ave. S. in St. Petersburg

- **Questions & Comments:**

Councilmember Gabbard asked what the process is for applications that don't get approved.

- Forward Pinellas Staff meets with all applicants to discuss how the scoring criteria are applied to each application and answer any questions the local government might have.

Commissioner Long inquired about the status of corridor improvements along 102nd Ave. in the Seminole area

- Pinellas County is currently engaged in a process to identify improvements along this corridor from 113th St. to the west. Forward Pinellas staff is coordinating with County staff on the project and they're working collaboratively to ensure that sidewalks, bike lanes and possible trail facilities are considered during the design of the future project.

The board approved two amendments to the Countywide Plan Map

- The board recommended approval of two amendments:
 - An amendment from the City of Tarpon Springs to amend properties at 324 East Pine Street, 424 North Ring Avenue, & 395 North Grosse Avenue from Residential Low Medium to Public/Semi-Public to ensure the existing uses conforms to the appropriate Countywide Plan Map category. (12-0)
 - An amendment from the City of Tarpon Springs to amend approximately 8.61 acres at Marina Drive from Resort to Residential Low Medium to ensure consistency with the existing single-family residential neighborhood. (12-0)

The board unanimously approved the 2021 legislative policy priorities based on the Legislative Committee recommendation and appointed new members to the Legislative Committee.

The board unanimously voted to approve committee appointments to the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group, Chairs Coordinating Committee, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council.

Other Items

- Four incoming Board Members were welcomed to Forward Pinellas – Vice Mayor Cliff Merz, Councilmember Bonnie Noble, Commissioner Pat Gerard, & Councilmember Patti Reed.
- Lee Allen, outgoing CAC member, was recognized for his commitment and dedication to Pinellas County, Forward Pinellas and the City of St. Petersburg.
- Indian Shores and Indian Rocks Beach sidewalk and drainage project is in the PD&E evaluation of alternatives phase with work underway.
- Forward Pinellas staff is working with FDOT on the Frontage Roads Plan for U.S. 19 to identify safety improvements, speed management alternatives, etc. and will bring this plan to the board in the spring.
- FDOT is considering plans to add a second southbound left-turn lane at the Gandy/Park Blvd. interchange with US 19 to relieve queuing for drivers turning toward I-275 by removing a section of the existing bike lane. Forward Pinellas is working with the City of Pinellas Park and FDOT to create a safe routing plan for bicycles and pedestrians in the area, in the event this proposed change is implemented.
- All partners have adopted the Gateway Master Plan Memorandum of Understanding.

- House Bill 1339 was passed allowing for affordable housing to be approved on any land use including an employment area, commercial or industrial land – land uses that are protected in Pinellas County. Forward Pinellas staff is coordinating with the cities and Pinellas County to conduct research on best practices in the decision-making process to enable affordable housing in appropriate areas while also continuing to preserve land for target employment uses.
 - Commissioner Eggers showed support in the research of best practices but urged cities to preserve employment areas that would support more and better jobs.
- PSTA has launched the Automated Vehicle, “AVA” in the City of St. Petersburg. In addition, PSTA and FDOT will soon be launching a pilot program allowing busses to use the shoulder of I-275 during periods of traffic congestion.
- After 10 years of service, Commissioner Seel will be handing over the TBARTA responsibilities to Commissioner Long. Forward Pinellas has reviewed the scope for the aerial gondola feasibility study and expects this project to move forward this month. The feasibility study is considering alternatives for downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach & within Downtown St. Petersburg.
- Councilmember Gabbard requested a commitment from our staff to begin discussions for a unified approach to deploying electric scooters throughout the county. Whit Blanton assured that staff would begin researching current city ordinances and develop an approach for a countywide application for regulations.
- Pinellas County resident Todd Pressman requested the board increase the residential equivalency calculation to allow more beds in assisted living facilities as a housing strategy. In response, Whit Blanton committed that Forward Pinellas will take up this recommendation with local governments as part of a package of potential amendments to the Countywide Plan, and will present this to the board this spring.
- Forward Pinellas is in the process of its Quadrennial Certification with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which includes a virtual meeting on January 28, 2021. This is required to document compliance with all federal laws and policies for Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- Forward Pinellas will hold a Board Workshop on January 29, 2021 to discuss agency objectives and priorities for the coming year.
- Take a look back at Forward Pinellas in our 2020 Annual Report: bit.ly/fp2020report

Action Sheet

January 13, 2021

At its January 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 November 10, 2020 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval and Authorization to Distribute Annual Report
 - D. Approval of Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment

- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**

Two cases were recommended for approval:

1. **CW 21-01 – City of Tarpon Springs** (vote: 12-0)
2. **CW 21-03 – City of Tarpon Springs** (vote: 12-0)

- **FDOT FY 2022/23-2025/26 Draft Tentative Work Program**

Following a presentation by Secretary Gwynn and FDOT staff, Justin Hall, the board approved a letter to provide comments to FDOT on the Draft Tentative Five-Year Work Program. (vote:12-0)

- **Transportation Alternatives Program Grant Awards**

Following a presentation by staff member Chelsea Favero, the board approved the grant awards as outlined. (vote: 12-0)

- **Forward Pinellas Board Committee Appointments**

The board made appointments to committees for 2021. This was accomplished by three separate votes to appoint board members as follows: (all votes: 12-0)

- **Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (TMA)**

Vice Mayor David Allbritton, Commissioner Dave Eggers, Commissioner Janet Long, with Councilmember Brandi Gabbard as the first alternate

- **Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC)**

Councilmember Brandi Gabbard

- **Metropolitan Planning Organizations Advisory Council (MPOAC)**

Commissioner Karen Seel, with Mayor Cookie Kennedy as the first alternate and Commissioner Michael Smith as the second alternate

- **Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee Update**

Following an update by the executive director, the board voted to approve the 2021 legislative priorities and the one pager for distribution. Additionally, the board appointed new members to the committee to include Commissioner Janet Long, Commissioner Michael Smith, Councilmember Bonnie Noble, and Councilmember Patti Reed. (vote: 12-0)