

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on January 10, 2024, at 1 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

The board endorsed the Regional Transportation Priorities.

Chelsea Favero of Forward Pinellas presented the Regional Transportation Priorities to the board, including the 2024 Transportation Management Area Top Priorities and the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA) Regional Transportation Priority Project List.

Discussion:

- Mayor Julie Bujalski noted there are relatively few projects in Pinellas County compared to Hillsborough County on the lists. Whit Blanton added that the projects included are deemed of regional significance, are very well defined, and just need funding. Notable recent examples from this list have included the Gateway Expressway and the SunRunner.
- Chair Janet Long inquired if attention is being paid to north-south connections between counties, particularly to the north and south of the Skyway Bridge, which can form traffic bottlenecks. Whit Blanton shared the I-275 projects will apply all the way down to 54th Ave South, which will help operating issues on the north end, in travelling into St. Petersburg from the Skyway Bridge. The Sarasota-Manatee MPO covers the area to the south of the bridge, and they are members of the SCTPA, which provides an avenue to continued discussion.

The board unanimously approved the Advantage Alt 19 plan and recommendations.

In June 2022, Forward Pinellas began work on an Advantage Pinellas Investment Corridor Transition Plan to develop a mobility, safety, and redevelopment strategy for Alternate US 19. Kimley-Horn and Forward Pinellas staff provided an overview of the completed Advantage Alt 19, or the *Advantage Alt 19: Investing in People and Places along the Alternate US 19 Corridor*, plan and recommendations. The redevelopment vision featured in the plan encourages the incorporation of enhanced transit service and other multimodal transportation options to link jobs, job training, and workforce housing.

Discussion:

- Sharon Calvert of Tierra Verde shared a public comment that she considers the project to be financially risky considering the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority's (PSTA's) finances, which are shared in the public record.

- Commissioner Brian Scott and Whit Blanton clarified the board’s approval today approves this as a planning document and it does not represent commitment to particular projects or funding.
- Whit Blanton further added that this is a development plan overall, not only a transportation plan. Specific projects would only move forward after extensive technical analysis and public outreach.
- Mayor Julie Bujalski also shared, from her experience sitting on the PSTA Board for nine years, the PSTA budget has not indicated a lack of funds leading to a future of insolvency but rather is a conservative presentation of the budget. She noted PSTA may want to revisit how the budget is displayed to the public to prevent future misunderstanding.
- Mayor Julie Bujalski stressed the need to attend to tourism traffic along such corridors.
- Chair Janet Long noted that public officials would benefit in learning about the lengthy funding process transportation projects must move through.

The board approved the Complete Streets Grant Program Awards.

Kyle Simpson presented the recommendations for the Complete Streets Grant Program Awards. Now in its eighth year, the Complete Streets Grant Program provides annual allocations for concept planning and construction projects. The recommendations were as follows:

- \$100,000 to the City of St. Petersburg for the 31st Street Planning Study
- \$1,500,000 to the City of St. Petersburg for the Grand Central District Curb Extensions.

Discussion:

- David Ballard Geddis Jr. provided a public comment expressing his belief and concern that the equity in his home would be levied to pay for Complete Streets projects.
- Sharon Calvert provided a public comment that she desires more details be provided to the public.

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

- Case CW 24-01 – A request from the City of Clearwater to amend 0.54 acres of property located at 210 Meadow Lark Lane from Residential Low Medium to Public/Semi-Public. The applicant is requesting the proposed amendment to use the site as a softball field for Calvary Christian High School. As Calvary Christian High School’s athletic facilities have expanded over time, properties have been annexed and incorporated into the main parcel, future land use and zoning amendments have been approved to ensure the overall property would have a consistent designation.
- Case CW 24-02 – A request from Pinellas County to amend 0.19 acres of property located at 4685 Park Street from Residential Low Medium to Retail & Services. The site is currently vacant

and was historically used as a towing yard. The applicant wishes to use the property for a recreational vehicle and boat storage use.

- Case CW 24-03 – A request from the City of St. Petersburg to amend 0.41 acres of property located at 200 66th St. N from Office to Multimodal Corridor. The current use of the property is as a single-family home. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to allow for the redevelopment of the property to support up to nine townhomes with the potential for retail or other permitted mixed uses.

Forward Pinellas staff provided an update on the Housing Action Plan.

Linda Fisher provided this bi-monthly briefing, which included information about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – what they are, how they are beneficial to the community, how to prevent them from becoming vacation rentals, and other common community concerns.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Gina Driscoll inquired if the dashboard to track countywide projects would include all development, including private. Linda clarified that it would.
- Commissioner Eric Gerard noted that he sits on the advisory council for the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Inc., and at each meeting they receive reports on housing insecurity of seniors. They received 2,000 calls last year about this issue. He requests we pay attention to access to housing for seniors, such as adding a specific category for them. Linda advised that data breakdowns by age will be included in reporting.
- Mayor Julie Bujalski shared the City of Dunedin's experience with ADUs. Approximately 15 years ago, the city wrote into their rules that someone dwelling in an ADU had to be a relative, and short-term rentals are solely designated to a certain area of the city that are more tourism centric. She does not anticipate those to change.
- Councilmember Driscoll shared that St. Petersburg has made some great progress with ADUs using incremental changes over time. Roughly 5-6 years ago, the city reduced the minimum lot size, which resulted in more lots being used for ADUs. In 2017, 23 permits were pulled for ADUs, whereas in 2022 there was 86.
- Mike Eisner, a commissioner from Tarpon Springs, offered public comment to say these sorts of dwellings could work only if there is close oversight and enforcement of rules and regulations related.
- Commissioner Gerard noted ADUs are being encouraged in Largo. They held a Housing for All session where ADUs were discussed in length. Possibilities of mitigating the use of them as vacation rentals entails requiring the property owner to live in the main house or the ADU itself and including incentives in the contract so it is not used as a rental. He added that ADUs are a great opportunity in cases to keep elderly parents nearby, rather than them going into a senior care facility or risking homelessness.

- Mayor Julie Bujalski added that people in the City of Dunedin who do have ADUs are typically not renting them affordably.

The Board recognized outgoing BPAC Member Brian Smith.

Over the past last 10 years, Brian Smith has been the chair of Forward Pinellas’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). Brian has previously served as the MPO Planning Director and the PPC Director, amongst other roles with the county. He has done an excellent job in leading both technical and non-technical members in BPAC. He will continue working with the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation.

The Board recognized outgoing Board Member Jarrod Buchman.

Board Member Jarrod Buchman resigned from his position as councilmember for the City of Oldsmar and is departing from the Forward Pinellas Board. Andrew Knapp will be replacing him starting at the February board meeting.

The board appointed the Commissioner Brian Scott to the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC) Governing Board as a second alternative.

SPOTlight Update

Executive Director Whit Blanton provided the following updates:

- Enhancing Beach Access – A report that was completed earlier this year has been distributed that provides analysis of the turnaround at the end of the Causeway Blvd. at the entrance of Honeymoon Island State Park. The study showed the turn around is not functional as currently designed because back-ups occur when people arrive at the end of the turn around and only then realize they must pay for entry to the park. Forward Pinellas will have a call with the County and park staff to discuss the report’s findings.
- Gateway Area – Forward Pinellas is about to kick off a survey of the business and employers in the area. The scope of services has been developed and approved by the Department of Transportation. Forward Pinellas is waiting on the department to put the funding in place to kick off the project.
- Waterborne Transportation – Forward Pinellas is working with the City of Clearwater on the docking agreement for the ferry at the marina to determine how it will affect PSTA’s pending procurement for the \$655,000 grant which was recently awarded. Whit Blanton also has a meeting planned with Brian Lowack of Visit St. Petersburg-Clearwater to talk further about

potential financial participation of the County's tourism tax. The target timeline is to have an operating program sometime after October of this year.

Other Items

- PSTA Report: PSTA now oversees the vanpool services contract that was previously overseen by TBARTA.
- Regional Activities Report: Executive Director Whit Blanton shared the following regarding the regional MPO merger:
 - A letter was sent to Secretary Gwynn requesting the initial startup expense of \$500,000, including procuring a management consultant and an independent legal advisor.
 - Options for board governance will be discussed at the next TMA Leadership Group meeting. At that meeting, Forward Pinellas staff will also provide examples of how other MPOs have set up their board and advisory committees.
- Legislative Update (not an exhaustive list):
 - Senate Bill 1092 is a broad transportation bill with significant impacts to MPOs. It would require FDOT to review each MPO's long range transportation plan (LRTP) for productive traffic flow and connectivity of people and freight. If a plan is found to be unsatisfactory it would be returned to the MPO for revision. It also would require FDOT to set quality performance metrics and a minimum acceptable score to rate each MPO service to its community (e.g., managing traffic congestion, utilization rate of multimodal transportation facilities). An MPO that does not achieve a minimum score could be taken over by the FDOT and restructured.
 - Senate Bill 1487 would make changes to PSTA's board structure and require the board to approve items by 2/3 majority vote.
 - Senate Bill 1226 is a bill that directs the DOT to preserve a rail corridor with a right of way along I-4 between Tampa and Orlando to be used for advanced multimodal planning.
 - House Bill 1275 and Senate Bill 1506 would direct the DOT to develop a strategic infrastructure investment plan to address freight mobility infrastructure including rail, airports, and seaports.
 - House Bill 1440 would raise the penalty of street racing, or anyone driving 30 mph over the speed limit, to a felony.
 - Senate Bill 386 would reduce the parking requirements for affordable housing if at least 75% are affordable and near a major transportation hub.
 - Mayor Bujalski expressed concern for the City of Dunedin over a recently passed state law that will allow golfcarts to operate on sidewalks adjacent to state highways only if they yield to pedestrians.
- Regarding the Carbon Reduction Program funding, the State of Florida has told the USDOT that they will not comply with setting targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions and in developing a carbon reduction plan. This effectively makes the state ineligible for \$320 million

from the federal Infrastructure Law. Multiple projects in the Forward Pinellas Work Program could have made use of those funds.

- Public Comment:
 - Sharon Calvert expressed her desire for more detailed public records and public engagement opportunities, beyond FDOT requirements, for planned projects, citing the Tierra Verde Cycle Track and 34th St. Lane elimination project.
 - David Ballard Geddis Jr. expressed his concern over water supply governance.
- The Forward Pinellas Board will hold a workshop on February 14th at 10am in the Palm Room of the Pinellas County Communications Building.

Action Sheet
January 10, 2024

At its January 2024 meeting, the Forward Pinellas Board took the following official actions:

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 10-0)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the November 8, 2023 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval of and Authorization to Distribute Annual Report
 - D. Acceptance of FY23 Year-End Financial Report
 - E. Approval of Scope and Fee for Advantage Alt 19 City of Largo Implementation

- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
Following a presentation by Emma Wennick, Forward Pinellas staff, and public hearing, three cases were recommended for approval:
 1. Case CW 24-01 – City of Clearwater (vote: 10-0)
 2. Case CW 24-02 – Pinellas County (vote: 10-0)
 3. Case CW 24-03 – City of St. Petersburg (vote: 10-0)

- **Board Endorsement of Regional Transportation Priorities**
Following a presentation by Chelsea Favero, Forward Pinellas staff, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, endorsed the regional transportation priorities of the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group and the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA). (vote: 10-0)

- **Acceptance of Plan and Approval of Recommendations on Advantage Alt 19**
Following a presentation by Jared Schneider of Kimley-Horn, the board accepted the final Plan and approved the recommendations for Advantage Alt 19. (vote: 10-0)

- **Complete Streets Grant Program Awards**
Following a presentation by Kyle Simpson, Forward Pinellas staff, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the Complete Streets Grant Program awards. (vote: 10-0)

- **Appointment to the MPOAC**
Following an introduction of this item by the executive director, Commissioner Brian Scott volunteered to serve as an alternate on the MPOAC. Subsequently, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, affirmed his appointment to replace former board member Jarrod Buchman. (vote: 10-0)