



## Board Meeting Summary & Action Sheet

March 8, 2023

*Please note that this summary has not been approved as the official minutes of the board.*

### THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

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The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on March 8, 2023, at 1 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

#### **The board unanimously approved the Complete Streets Funding Recommendations.**

The Complete Streets Grant Program provides annual allocations of up to \$100,000 for concept planning projects and up to \$1 million for construction projects. Following a call for projects, Forward Pinellas reviewed three applications for concept planning funding and one application for construction funding. Upon review of the applications, three recommendations for funding were developed.

- \$65,000 to the City of Largo for the Clearwater-Largo Road Multimodal Safety Improvements Project.
- \$37,500 to the City of Pinellas Park for the 60<sup>th</sup> Street North Complete Street Concept Plan Project.
- \$460,755.17 to the City of St. Petersburg for construction of the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South Bikeway Improvements Project.

Kyle Simpson of Forward Pinellas presented the funding recommendations to the board and requested approval of the Complete Streets Grant Awards.

- Councilmember Floyd requested additional information on the \$1 million available for construction projects. Councilmember Floyd inquired as to what happens to the balance of the million dollars if not all is requested. Mr. Simpson responded that St. Petersburg was the only construction application with a specific amount requested and unused funds would later fund another project on the priority list. He said the money is not actually in an account, but is for future funding through the FDOT work program. Councilmember Floyd inquired as to why there were not more applications for this available funding, with Whit Blanton responding that the available funding does not cover much when it comes to constructing a project, and a local government must have local funding to construct a typical project. Councilmember Floyd shared that St. Petersburg did not request the full amount in order to allow for other local governments to also receive funding.

#### **The board approved the Forward Pinellas Apportionment Plan.**

Chelsea Favero presented recommended changes to the Forward Pinellas Apportionment Plan.

Per Section 339.175, F.S., in its capacity as the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Forward Pinellas staff recommended changing the voting structure of the board to account for the latest population data from the 2020 Census.

Based on the discussion following the presentation of this item in February, Forward Pinellas staff has modified the proposed changes to retain the single Dunedin seat and the seat shared by Oldsmar, Safety Harbor and Tarpon Springs. This proposal increases the number of seats on the Forward Pinellas Board from 13 to 15 voting members and restructures the shared seats to allow rotating members to have three-year terms.

- The motion passed for approval of the Forward Pinellas Apportionment Plan with a 7 -5 vote, with Councilmember Buchmann, Commissioner Scott, Councilmember Muhammad, Councilmember Reed, and Councilor Burke dissenting.
- Tarpon Springs Mayor Costa Vatikiotis provided public comment requesting consideration for Tarpon Springs to have its own seat on the Forward Pinellas Board.
- Tarpon Springs Vice Mayor Craig Lunt provided public comment with general comments and sharing that waiting six years for a seat on the board is not adequate.
- Commissioner Panagiotis “Peter” Koulias provided public comment noting that a representative from another city may not understand the issues happening in Tarpon Springs and advocated for the city to have its own seat.
- Commissioner Brian Scott noted he is in favor of staff recommendations to the Apportionment Plan and suggested that Forward Pinellas consider increasing the number of seats to 16 to allow Tarpon Springs to have its own seat.
- Councilmember Jarrod Buchman inquired if Forward Pinellas Board ever had an impasse. Whit Blanton shared that the Board has not experienced an impasse, however, the nominating committee has. The best practice would be to have an odd number of members on the board.
- Councilor Burke inquired as to whether non-voting members can be added to the board.
- Commissioner Janet Long suggested that since the conversations have begun regarding having one regional MPO, the board should accept the staff recommendations on the Apportionment Plan and look forward to what will happen with creating one regional MPO.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Long that the board accept the recommendations of the staff. This motion was seconded by Councilmember Driscoll. Mayor Bujalski mentioned a scrivener’s error that omitted Dunedin from a section of the draft Apportionment Plan. Commissioner Long accepted the change in the motion to include the correction to the scrivener’s error.

#### **Appointment of Auditor Selection Committee Chair**

The board appointed Councilor Chris Burke as the Auditor Selection Committee Chair.

## **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff presented the Gandy Project Development & Environment Study.**

Craig Fox, FDOT, shared a presentation with the board on the Gandy Boulevard (US 92/SR 600) Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study, evaluating capacity, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements along the study corridor. The study limits are from 4th St. North in Pinellas County to West Shore Blvd (CR 587) in Hillsborough County. The purpose of this project is to reduce traffic congestion and improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations by reconstructing Gandy Boulevard to provide an elevated controlled access 4-lane to 6-lane roadway mainline separated from local traffic with frontage roads and multiuse trails on both sides of the corridor for bicyclists and pedestrians. The proposed project will also widen the existing westbound Gandy Bridge to accommodate a third travel lane and construct a new bridge to provide a wider structure for three travel lanes and a multi-use trail. The study is divided into three segments: 1) the Pinellas segment from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west end of the Gandy Bridge; 2) the Bay segment includes both Gandy Bridges over Old Tampa Bay and 3) the final segment is in Hillsborough County. Mr. Fox reviewed the preferred typical sections, the project schedule and the project cost with the board. An Open House was held on February 28, 2023, at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center. Questions were taken and appropriately answered.

- Councilmember Floyd shared a concern with the traffic flow at 4<sup>th</sup> Street and the increasing capacity on Gandy Blvd. FDOT assured that the changes would allow a free flow of traffic at this location.

## **Forward Pinellas staff updated the board on the Advantage Alt. 19: Investing in People and Places Project.**

Christina Mendoza of Forward Pinellas presented Advantage Alt. 19: Investing in People and Places, which is evaluating the corridor along Alternate US 19 (SR 595) from SR 60 to 58<sup>th</sup> Street North at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, and 58<sup>th</sup> Street North from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to Central Avenue. The project goal is to provide people with better access from housing that is affordable to jobs and job training opportunities, as well as other desired destinations via safe and reliable transportation options. A broad overview of the findings included in the corridor characteristics and opportunities analysis and a brief update on the next steps were provided.

- Mayor Bujalski suggested adding tourism considered in the statistics used to determine the location of new station areas.
- Mr. Blanton shared that this is a detailed study about redevelopment and how affordable housing can be a part of the redevelopment strategies. The Long Range Transportation Plan will include a Transit System Plan that will analyze the frequency of the Jolly Trolley and other transit services in key corridors and identify improvements to increase ridership.

## **SPOTlight Updates**

- Executive Director Whit Blanton provided updates on
  - The Waterborne Transportation Committee will meet on March 15, 2023, at 1:00 pm in the Palm Room. This meeting is open to anyone who has an interest in waterborne transportation.
  - The Downtown St. Petersburg Mobility Study was completed last year, and Forward Pinellas has been working with FDOT on a conceptual analysis of the I-175 corridor to include possible modifications. A short memo was produced with an outline of the potential alternatives that could be evaluated as part of a PD&E study. A recommendation for adding this to the priority list of projects will be brought to the board later in the spring.

## Other Items

- PSTA Report
  - The Board approved the extension of free fares on the SunRunner for an additional six-month period so that new users can continue to try the service without any barriers while the agency can obtain a full year of data for comparison.
  - The Board voted to approve a contract with Jarrett Walker and Associates to develop the Community Bus Plan, which forms the foundation of the Transit Development Plan and the transit component for the Forward Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan.
  - The Board received a presentation on Spring Break services which have begun and includes the Clearwater Beach Park and Ride.
  - For next month's Forward Pinellas Board meeting, PSTA will give a comprehensive presentation on the first six months of the SunRunner.
- Regional Activities Report
  - The next meeting of the Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group will be on March 24, 2023, at 9:30 am, at the Starkey Ranch Theater Library. This meeting will consist of the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas County MPOs to discuss a possible consolidation or merger of the three MPOs.
  - The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council Resiliency Summit will be held on May 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
  - Commission Janet Long shared that she recently returned from Washington DC and had a conversation with the USDOT Government Relations group. They shared that they have money to spend, and are interested in the types of projects we have that are potentially ready to go.
  - Brightline is currently under construction with high-speed rail from West Palm Beach to Orlando. They will be operating in September 2023, on the Florida East Coast Railroad and will tie into the Orlando International Airport in September. Brightline has committed to coming to Tampa in about four or five years at Union Station in Ybor City. Currently, there is no connection to Pinellas County; however, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee has taken action to request for FDOT to work with Forward Pinellas and all the stakeholders in Pinellas

County to identify and fund a project that will make that connection to Pinellas County.

- Legislative Committee Update
  - Due to a lack of a quorum, the Legislative Committee did not meet.
  - Proposed House Bill 1397 addresses regional transportation planning. This bill focuses on whether to merge or dissolve the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) and PSTA. The House Bill directs FDOT to study whether both agencies should be dissolved, and the Senate Bill only directs FDOT to study the potential merger and focus on HART.
  - Proposed Senate Bill 588 and House Bill 657, filed by Representative Costar in the Oldsmar area would allow school districts to use speed enforcement mechanisms to ticket and warn drivers who are speeding through school zones.
  - An update on proposed Senate Bill 64, the cap placed on the number of public transportation dollars that could be spent from the state's public transportation trust fund has been removed.
  - Proposed Senate Bill 102 & House Bill 627, a preemption bill for housing, which would expand affordable housing funding while it would also restrict local government's ability to regulate density and height of buildings in the community. This is a priority of the senate president, and no amendments will be considered to this bill
  - Proposed Senate Bill 882 & House Bill 885 would broaden the local government infrastructure surtax, such as the Penny for Pinellas, and would allow funds to be spent on operations and maintenance costs instead of just capital costs.
  - Proposed Senate Bill 740 would create a Blue-Ribbon task force to look at county boundaries and potentially realign county boundaries statewide.
  
- Advantage Pinellas Housing Action Plan Summit to be held on April 28<sup>th</sup>
- Potential MPO Consolidation Legislation
- Forward Pinellas is hosting Bike Your City 2023 in Oldsmar for Florida Bicycle Month on March 10, 2023
- Forward Pinellas presented highlights from Community In-Service Day which was held on February 20, 2023.
- Citizen Comments:  
There were no citizen comments

**Action Sheet**  
**March 8, 2023**

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

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 11-0; Commissioner Long had not yet arrived)  
Approved to include the following:
  - A. Approval of Minutes of the February 8, 2023 Meeting
  - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
  - C. Acceptance of Community Transportation Coordinator Annual Evaluation
  
- **Complete Streets Funding Recommendations**  
Following a presentation by Kyle Simpson, Forward Pinellas staff, the board approved the funding recommendations for the Complete Streets grants funding. (vote: 12-0)
  
- **Draft Forward Pinellas Apportionment Plan**  
Following a presentation by Chelsea Favero, Forward Pinellas staff, the board approved the Draft Apportionment Plan. (vote: 7-5; Vice Mayor Buchman, Commissioner Brian Scott, Councilmember John Muhammad, Vice Mayor Patti Reed and Councilor Chris Burke dissenting)
  
- **Appointment of Auditor Selection Committee Chair**  
Following an explanation by Whit Blanton, Forward Pinellas Executive Director, of the need for a board member volunteer to serve on the Auditor Selection Committee as Chair, Councilor Chris Burke volunteered. The board then approved his appointment to the committee. (vote: 10-0; Commissioners Long and Scott had stepped out of the meeting.)