

**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 May 12, 2021 at 1 p.m. in the Magnolia Room at 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](#).

**FDOT District 7 Alex Henry gave a status update on US 19 Frontage Road Study**

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) safety action plan for the US 19 (SR 55) frontage roads is focused on the 11.5-mile segment running from north of 49th Street to north of SR 580 (Main Street) through the cities of Pinellas Park, Largo, and Clearwater, as well as unincorporated Pinellas County. Significant redevelopment is planned for this area and the safety action plan will help align transportation strategies with changing land use and development intensity. FDOT presented challenges, needs, preliminary recommendations, and next steps, including a technical analysis and public outreach. FDOT will bring back final recommendations for the board in Fall 2021.

- Commissioner Seel stated that she would like to see a common vision for the treatments along the entirety of the frontage roads and agreed that decreasing target speed is needed. However, she is hesitant to remove lanes and asked staff their reasoning behind the cost for some of the preliminary recommendations.
  - Alex Henry stated that he observed a regular amount people on bicycles and walking around these major intersections and accessing transit. Because the highest cost comes from relocating a curb line and its related impacts on drainage, they were looking at options for sidewalks and on street bike facilities that don't require curbs to be relocated.
- Commissioner Merz also understands slowing down traffic but expressed concern with the removal of a lane, noting that additional congestion could inhibit emergency vehicles if a lane is removed.
- Commissioner Eggers agreed with Commissioner Seel and Commissioner Merz that the best and quickest way to see safety improvements was to lower speeds. He would rather spend more money widening the sidewalk than removing a lane.
- Mayor Buljalski would like to hear from FDOT what solutions would improve traffic, reduce congestion and provide for safety before they think about the cost.
- Whit Blanton was also cautious about reducing lanes but stated this could be one solution in our toolbox for portions of the 11.5-mile corridor. He noted that it will take design changes to

achieve the goal of lowering speeds on the frontage roads to better match the posted speed limit..

### **The board adopted the Multimodal Transportation Priorities with the addition of the SR580 Duke Energy Trail overpass**

The board, acting as the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, adopted the Multimodal Priority List for state and federal funding, with the addition of Duke Energy Trail overpass at SR580 to the unfunded priorities list along with similar trail overpasses on the Duke Energy Trail at Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard and Roosevelt Boulevard. The SR 580 trail overpass was originally ranked seventh on the Active Transportation Overpass Priority List. Forward Pinellas staff will review the four planned overpasses ranked #3 through #6 with local agency staff and provide an update to the board in coming months.

#### *Newly funded Multimodal projects:*

- Skinner Blvd Complete Street Modifications
- SunRunner Bus Rapid Transit
- Drew Street Operational and Safety Improvements
- Alt US 19/Bayshore/Curlew Intersection Improvements

#### *New Multimodal projects proposed for funding:*

- St. Pete 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Complete Street Modifications
- TBARTA Vanpool Expansion
- Cross Bay Ferry Captial Funding
- MLK S Improvements from 30<sup>th</sup> Ave S to 7<sup>th</sup> Ave S
- 28<sup>th</sup> Street Trail
- Duke Energy Overpass at Roosevelt/Carillon
- Integrated Waterborne Transportation System – Phase I (North Pinellas County)
- SR 580 Trail Overpass (\*Added to the unfunded priority list due to board motion)

### **Multimodal Priorities**

- Commissioner Eggers and Commissioner Seel expressed concern that the SR580 Trail Overpass was not on the priority list since other portions of the Pinellas Trail Loop around SR580 were already under construction. They primarily sought to keep this project in the forefront of everyone’s mind during future discussions about our funding priorities.
- Commissioner Long suggested adopting the list now so their current needs are clear, then reassessing once there is a federal roadmap for transportation funding.
- Whit Blanton provided clarification that SR580 Trail Overpass was not included in the staff-recommended priority list because it is seventh on our Active Transportation Plan Overpass technical ranking. He noted that we’re trying to be judicious with our limited resources.

However, once the extent of federal funding is clear we can come back and amend this list if needed.

- Chelsea Favero also explained that if an earmark can be secured, or other additional funding, it is easier to advance other projects through the priority list process.
- Mayor Buljalski suggested adding SR580 Trail Overpass to the unfunded projects list, knowing that there is a possibility federal funding could assist in the future. Commissioner Eggers and Commissioner Seel agreed with this recommendation.
- Mr. Blanton stated that adding this project to the unfunded priority list would provide an advantage in funding decisions through FDOT. He also noted the current designed trail crossing of SR580 will be full traffic signal and that will be safer than most trail crossings today.
- Chair Rice agreed that Mayor Buljalski's recommendation seems reasonable and could also help provide clarity about our priorities when we're looking at future earmarks.
- Councilmember Gabbard noted that SR580 is on the Active Transportation priority list and these projects weren't just disappearing if not prioritized today. She expressed concern that adding this project would be going against the staff recommendation and cause further confusion. In addition, she questioned why we were only adding SR580 and not the other four overpass projects that are ranked above that.
- Whit Blanton suggested adding the SR580 Trail Overpass project to the list at this time and directing staff to revisit all the overpass projects to ensure each project is prioritized correctly. In this way he felt assured the other priorities would also be considered.

The board first made a motion to adopt the original priority list as recommended by staff, which did not garner enough votes.

The next motion by the board, to adopt the Multimodal Priority List with the addition of the SR 580 Trail Overpass project to unfunded projects list, passed 12-1 with Councilmember Gabbard dissenting.

### **The board unanimously adopted the Transportation Alternatives Priorities and Regional Transportation Priorities**

The board, acting as the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, adopted the annual Transportation Alternatives Program Priority List and the Regional Transportation Priorities.

#### *Newly funded Transportation Alternatives projects:*

- 28<sup>th</sup> St. from Pinellas Trail to 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N
- Central Ave from 34<sup>th</sup> St to 31<sup>st</sup> St (design only)

#### *New Transportation Alternatives projects proposed for funding:*

- 118<sup>th</sup> Ave in Pinellas Park
- 28<sup>th</sup> St. in St. Petersburg
- 46<sup>th</sup> St. N in Lealman
- 62<sup>nd</sup> Ave S in St. Petersburg

*Funded Regional Transportation projects:*

- Howard Frankland Bridge Replacement
- Gateway Expressway
- I-75 Interchange at Overpass Road
- I-75 Interchange at Big Bend Road
- Suncoast Parkway 2 Expansion
- I-275/SR 60 Tampa Westshore District Interchange
- Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (SunRunner)

*Regional Transportation projects proposed for funding:*

- I-275 Express Lanes from I-375 to Gandy Blvd.
- I-75 Interchange at Gibsonton Drive
- I-275 improvements north of Downtown Tampa(I-4 to Bearss Ave)
- Central Polk Parkway Segment 1
- US 41 from SR 44 to SR 200
- Desoto Bridge Replacement
- Bradenton-Palmetto Connector
- CR 557 from US 17/92 to I-4
- Regional Rapid Transit in the I-275 Corridor
- Support HART's exploration and negotiation for use of the CSX right-of-way for passenger transportation

**The board unanimously approved modifications to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The board approved the following modifications to the TIP, adjusting the amount of funds for 2021-2024 (FY) to match the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):

- FY 2022 Federal Highway Planning (PL) funds are being adjusted from \$997,948 to \$1,107,369
- FY 2022 Federal Highway Planning (SU) funds are being adjusted from \$500,000 to \$666,047
- Mayor Buljalski clarified with staff that the extra funds are for planning, not capital projects.

**The board approved one amendment to the Countywide Plan Map**

- The board approved one amendment:
  - An amendment from the City of St. Petersburg to amend the property at 6021 142<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North from Public/Semi-Public and Residential Low Medium to Residential Medium and Residential Low Medium to allow for a multifamily residential development (13-0)
- Derek Kilborn, City of St. Petersburg Manager for the Urban Planning and Preservation Division, agreed with staff's recommendation for approval, and noted that there were legal challenges to the City's approval in the fall of 2020 that were overturned in favor of the city in April 2021.

- Commissioner Eggers clarified that the height restrictions for the property were appropriate for the area.
- Sean Wilson, President of Blue Sky Communities, also agreed with the staff recommendation. He also provided insight into the preliminary site plan (not yet approved by the City) indicating the building would be four stories and designed to integrate into the surrounding uses.
- Don Mastry, a lawyer for Trenchum Law who worked with the church located on the property and Blue Sky Communities, agreed with staff recommendations. He provided more information about the buffering on all sides and details on the previous lawsuit.
- Chair Rice gave insight into her vote to approve this proposal when it came before the City of St. Petersburg, stating that she not only used the city's affordable housing criteria to evaluate this project, but also spent time at the site ensuring she had considered all viewpoints.
- Councilmember Gabbard also stated that the City of St. Petersburg heard concerns about crime, congestion, and if there would be a decrease in property values and felt they had been adequately addressed.
- Commissioner Smith clarified with city staff that traffic analyses had been conducted finding sufficient levels of service.
- Commissioner Long clarified with Forward Pinellas staff that there is no impact to the portion of property that is in a Coastal High Hazard Area because it is not increasing in density.
- Commissioner Gerrard clarified with Blue Sky Communities that they are proposing a total of 85 units in their preliminary site plan.

### **SPOTlight Update**

- Forward Pinellas is planning a fall workshop for the US 19 North Innovative Intersections study. Before the workshop, staff will reach out to the community to get a sense of their values, concerns and priorities. After the workshop, Forward Pinellas will go back out to the public focusing on possible recommendations.
- Forward Pinellas is reaching out to several local governments to request a commitment for a local match to get the Clearwater Ferry back to regular services. The future integration of PSTA will make this a more seamless service, and a local commitment for operations will help attract funding from other non-local sources.
- FDOT confirmed with staff that the 34<sup>th</sup> St. South complete street project will include consistent speeds of 40 mph, with a commitment to re-evaluate for a possibly lower speed limit after the resurfacing project soon to begin is completed.
- Forward Pinellas is looking at an investment corridor planning effort as part of the FY22 budget as this was the cornerstone of our Long Range Transportation Plan.

## Updates

- Brad Miller, PSTA CEO, presented updates on active PSTA projects including the completion of the SunRunner construction on the west end of the line, the launch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AVA autonomous vehicle pilot program in Dunedin, the addition of four electric buses and one electric Jolley Trolley as well as the expansion of services for the Jolley Trolley, the bus on shoulder pilot project, the Clearwater Multimodal Center, and the upcoming full-service Ferry transit. In addition, PSTA will begin regular services this summer and will begin using the Flamingo Fares mobile app.
- The board expressed consensus for the Legislative Committee to hold a workshop in August focusing on proactive measures to work with legislative delegation in the future.
- Whit Blanton and Commissioner Smith presented updates from the last MPOAC Meeting in April, including possible new federal funding as well as the impacts of electric vehicles on gas taxes and possible solutions.

## Other Items

- The board unanimously approved a modification to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan to include more complete documentation of its cost feasibility in response to the federal certification review that occurred in January. No changes are being made to project costs or revenues.
- The board authorized advertising for public hearings to consider several changes to the Countywide Rules including a Senior Housing Bonus, Map Adjustments and other minor amendments.
- The board approved Forward Pinellas to send a letter of support for a call to reform of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) as part of the comment period on the Notice of Proposed Amendments. The goal is to include more multimodal and safe streets concepts.
- Austin Britt, University of South Florida intern, presented the Forward Pinellas Educational Project entitled “City by Design.” This educational curriculum is designed to spur student interest in urban, regional and community planning. Staff is working with Pinellas County Schools to implement this hands-on, student-centered learning module into high school and middle school classrooms.
- The Gulf Coast Safe Streets Summit and Bike/Walk Tampa Bay Summit are set for November 2-5<sup>th</sup>, 2021. See more information at [www.gulfcoastsafestreetssummit.org](http://www.gulfcoastsafestreetssummit.org) or follow us on social media for the latest updates.

## Action Sheet

May 12, 2021

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

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 13-0)  
Approved to include the following:
  - A. Approval of Minutes of the April 14, 2021 Meeting
  - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
  - C. Approval of Forward Pinellas/FDOT Joint Certification Statement and Summary
  - D. Cancellation of the August Forward Pinellas Board Meeting
  - E. Map Adjustment – City of Clearwater – Official Acceptance
  
- **Proposed Modification(s) to the FY 2020/21 – FY 2024/25 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**  
Following a presentation by Forward Pinellas staff and public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the modification to the TIP. (roll call vote: 13-0)
  
- **Modification to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**  
Following a presentation by Forward Pinellas staff and public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the modification to the LRTP. (roll call vote: 13-0)
  
- **Annual Adoption of Priorities**  
Following a presentation by Forward Pinellas staff, public hearing and robust discussion, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the Multimodal, Transportation Alternatives and Regional Transportation Priority Project Lists with roll call votes as follows:
  - Multimodal (roll call vote: 12-1, with Councilmember Gabbard dissenting)
  - Transportation Alternatives (roll call vote: 13-0)
  - Regional Transportation (roll call vote: 13-0)
  
- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**  
One case was recommended for approval:
  - 1. CW 20-16 – City of St. Petersburg (vote: 13-0)
  
- **Proposed Amendments to the Countywide Rules**  
Following a presentation by Forward Pinellas staff, the board authorized advertising for a public hearing to consider the amendments to the Countywide Rules. (vote: 10-0, Commissioners Eggers, Long, and Seel had left the meeting)
  
- **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Notice of Proposed Amendments**  
Following a brief description of this item by the Executive Director, the remaining board members showed consensus for a letter to be written supporting a rewrite of the MUTCD.