



**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE  
MEETING AGENDA**

**November 9, 2022 – 11:00 a.m.**

333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater  
The Palm Room

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

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 12, 2022**
3. **FLORIDA POLITICS ESSAY ON PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASSES**
4. **POTENTIAL PROPOSAL FOR MPO MERGER**
5. **PROPOSED PREEMPTION OPT-OUT BILL**
6. **2023 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM AND PRIORITIES**
7. **ADJOURNMENT**

*Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the Office of Human Rights, 400 South Fort Harrison Avenue, Suite 300, Clearwater, Florida 33756; [(727) 464-4062 (V/TDD)] at least seven days prior to the meeting.*

*Appeals: Certain public meetings result in actions taken by the public board, commission or agency that may be appealed; in such case persons are advised that, if they decide to appeal any decision made at a public meeting/hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and, for such purposes, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.*

## **Legislative Committee – November 9, 2022**



### **2. Approval of Minutes from October 12, 2022**

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#### **SUMMARY**

The minutes from the previous Legislative Committee meeting are attached for the committee's review and approval.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S):**

- Minutes of the October 12, 2022 Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee Meeting

**ACTION:** Committee to review and approve the meeting minutes.

**FORWARD PINELLAS  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY  
OCTOBER 12, 2022**

Committee Members in Attendance:

Councilmember Brandi Gabbard, City of St. Petersburg, Committee Chair  
Councilmember David Allbritton, City of Clearwater, Forward Pinellas Treasurer  
Commissioner Dave Eggers, Pinellas County  
Vice Mayor Patti Reed, City of Pinellas Park (*Representing the Inland Communities*)

Also Present:

Whit Blanton, Executive Director  
Linda Fisher, Principal Planner  
Tina Jablon, Executive Administrative Secretary  
Brian Lowack, Pinellas County  
Mayor David Will, Redington Beach

The Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee met in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building; 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councilmember Gabbard called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 13, 2022

A motion was made by Councilmember Allbritton and seconded by Commissioner Eggers, and carried unanimously, to approve the minutes from the April meeting.  
(vote: 4-0)

3. ELECTION OF NEW COMMITTEE CHAIR

Commissioner Eggers nominated Councilmember Brandi Gabbard, which was supported by Councilmember Allbritton. However, Councilmember Gabbard declined the nomination, suggesting Vice Mayor Reed would be an ideal fit this year, allowing her to expand her role with Forward Pinellas even further. Councilmember Allbritton made a motion to support the nomination of Vice Mayor Reed, which was seconded by Commissioner Eggers and carried unanimously. Vice Mayor Reed accepted the appointment as Chair of the Legislative Committee.

4. UNFUNDED LOCAL SUPPORT GRANTS

Linda Fisher alerted the committee that although the state budget included a line item to support unfunded local grants this year, Governor DeSantis did not release the \$175 million in funding for these grants by the deadline thus nullifying the awards. Two local projects were affected by the Governor's decision, including the West Klosterman Preserve and a University of South Florida St. Petersburg facility to house the Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research & Innovation.

Whit Blanton reiterated the local impacts when earmarks are requested and granted. He cited a few examples to reinforce the reason Forward Pinellas discourages these requests from local governments.

Commissioner Eggers recommended that Mr. Blanton attend city manager meetings with the County Administrator, Barry Burton, to discuss earmarks. Councilmember Gabbard suggested that staff also connect with cities that have their own legislative committees to attend those meetings in order to keep abreast of activities and priorities or provide input.

In response to query from Councilmember Gabbard, Mr. Blanton advised that Forward Pinellas has previously worked with the local governments to discourage earmarks and called upon Tina Jablon to highlight the previous efforts that were undertaken.

Councilmember Gabbard suggested using a variety of methods, including sending letters, to encourage positive dialogue with the cities on this issue. Mr. Blanton expounded on this by suggesting resurrecting a previously published blog post on the topic and including it with any communications to help increase awareness.

5. STATE COMMENT ON GAINESVILLE'S MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING ORDINANCE

After brief introduction of this item by Whit Blanton outlining the connection to affordable housing and some proposed legislation, Linda Fisher explained to the committee that the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has reviewing authority over local government comprehensive plan amendments. The DEO has issued a comment to the City of Gainesville opposing its effort to allow zoning for "missing middle" housing in single-family neighborhoods. She further explained that although the city is not obligated to do anything different based on the comment, it is now anticipated that bills will be filed this session related to this topic.

There was discussion among the committee members about protecting "Home Rule," the impacts already felt locally due to state preemption, and how to approach this through policy positions for this session.

Specifically, Councilmember Gabbard suggested approaching these topics through one policy related to protecting "Home Rule" as opposed to addressing each bill separately.

Commissioner Eggers suggested improving proactive communications with the state to keep the legislators apprised of initiatives and activities in Pinellas County to prevent counterproductive legislation from being filed.

6. PROPOSED PREEMPTION OPT-OUT BILL

Linda Fisher introduced Mayor David Will of Redington Beach, who was in attendance, to outline a bill he is proposing to decrease preemption by the state and seek input/support from the committee.

The proposed legislation would allow citizens to vote to override state preemption laws in their own communities. The bill would allow for a local referendum to opt out of any statute that "expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance, resolution or rule pursuant to the [local government's] home rule authority." This would allow voters the ability to directly express their desires to state legislators independent of the local governments. The proposed bill does not yet have a legislative sponsor.

In response to a query by Councilmember Gabbard, Mayor Will advised he has spoken to state legislators on the subject, specifically Senator Hooper. Mayor Will further advised that the Florida League of Cities would be in support of the proposed legislation.

Whit Blanton suggested discussing this further at the next meeting to formalize its addition to the Forward Pinellas priorities. Vice Mayor Reed agreed to add it to the agenda for further consideration at the next meeting and Mr. Blanton advised staff would work on doing so.

7. APA-FL 2023 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Referring to the agenda packet, Mr. Blanton advised the 2023 APA-FL legislative platform was included for the committee's awareness.

Ms. Fisher outlined topics of interest for the committee's information.

Mr. Blanton explained that under the topic of Community Engagement, modifications were made to include bullet points that would allow for virtual public meetings without a physical quorum requirement. Specifically, he cited the importance of this for advisory committee meetings.

8. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Linda Fisher provided a preview of the preliminary 2023 legislative priorities for Forward Pinellas. She advised they are very similar to last year and highlighted a few key changes. Committee members were asked to offer input on the priorities for the coming year.

At the request of Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Brian Lowack, Pinellas County, expounded on the approach used by the County when drafting priorities. He advised that the priority list is long and does not change much from year to year. However, two or three items are selected annually from that list to focus on.

Commissioner Eggers suggested that, similar to the approach taken by Pinellas County, the list be limited and specific items grouped underneath broad categories. Councilmember Gabbard wanted to ensure the quorum issue was included and Mr. Blanton suggested Mayor Will's proposed bill be considered as well.

Mr. Blanton advised the committee that on the topic of funding flexibility, Forward Pinellas, in collaboration with FDOT District Seven, has been leading the way in the state and cited some examples of positive changes that have been initiated as a result of our efforts. However, since those changes are still pending, he recommends keeping the related policy positions until they are official.

9. 2023 SESSION DATES

Referring to the agenda packet, Mr. Blanton pointed out that the 2023 session dates and deadlines were included for informational purposes.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional items for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

### **3. Florida Politics Essay on U.S. 19 Pedestrian Underpasses**

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#### **SUMMARY**

On October 18, the Florida Politics blog ran an essay attributed to Senator Ed Hooper, criticizing the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for what it describes as a project to create three pedestrian underpasses on U.S. Highway 19 from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive at a cost of \$242 million. The essay contains a significant amount of incorrect information.

The \$242 million will fund a much larger project to convert a 1.5-mile segment of U.S. 19 into a controlled access roadway with frontage roads. The design calls for only one pedestrian underpass between Evans Road and Republic Drive, and a new pedestrian bridge Northside Drive. The pedestrian facilities will comprise only a small fraction of the overall cost. Safe pedestrian crossing options are needed along the roadway, which has seen five fatal or severe injury crashes involving pedestrians in the past five years.

The project has been thoroughly vetted and received multiple approvals since 2018. The Forward Pinellas Board voted unanimously in favor of the project in May 2018 and September 2020. Various MPO advisory committees have also recommended approval, and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority has written a letter of support.

The contract for the project has been awarded, with construction to begin next year and be completed by 2029.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S):**

- “\$242M and counting — taxpayer dollars wasted on a Pinellas County pedestrian project.” [FloridaPolitics.com](https://www.floridapolitics.com), October 18, 2022
- Email from FDOT to Whit Blanton, October 20, 2022

**ACTION:** Committee to provide direction to staff.

# Ed Hooper: \$242M and counting — taxpayer dollars wasted on a Pinellas County pedestrian project

*Guest Author*

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has agreed to construct an unwanted \$242 million pedestrian project in Pinellas County, and I am urging Gov. **Ron DeSantis** to stop it before it begins.

When this project was originally proposed, the price tag was approximately \$163 million; now \$242 million. Costs for this project are exploding and it should be alarming to all of us that FDOT is investing over \$242 million of Florida's taxpayer dollars to construct three pedestrian underpass tunnels along US-19, a roadway where sidewalks already exist. In addition, the 1.5-mile section from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive is an industrial area that pedestrians currently do not utilize and most likely never will.

These three tunnels were proposed to make the area safer for pedestrians; however, even if pedestrians did frequent this area, this would not be the solution to safer walkways. It would have the opposite effect. Pedestrian underpasses are not safe and are becoming increasingly known as "Drug Alleyways" among the homeless population, providing a significant safety concern among residents with overpriced and unpassable walkways. With homelessness on the rise, individuals in areas where underpasses do exist have turned the pedestrian walkways into makeshift homes equipped with beds, couches, and sometimes electricity.

The exorbitant amount of money proposed for these unneeded pedestrian underpasses should cause Gov. DeSantis and the residents of Pinellas County to pause and think about the many projects that could be funded to improve the lives of our community.

I urge Gov. DeSantis and FDOT to reevaluate this project and put a stop to it before construction begins in the Spring of 2023. The people of Pinellas County deserve better. They deserve their hard-earned money to be used for something that directly benefits the people of Pinellas County.

Instead of investing \$242 million into pedestrian underpasses that will undoubtedly be underutilized and have zero economic impact within our community, let's consider reinvesting these taxpayer dollars. Let's reinvest these dollars for more pressing transportation needs in the immediate area, not for three underutilized underpasses. By reallocating this money to provide the necessary resources that our community quite frankly deserves, our people and our community can thrive.

Gov. DeSantis, not only is this a complete waste of taxpayer dollars, but the businesses along the 1.5-mile section from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive is an industrial area that suffered greatly when this road was reconstructed by FDOT nearly six years ago, which still feels like yesterday to the businesses that have not yet recovered from that fiscal hit plus COVID-19. If this project were to begin, it would again significantly harm all these businesses. We urge you to put an immediate stop to this project. Now is the time to stop the US-19 construction project and reroute our taxpayer dollars into something more viable for our community's future.

For more information about the pedestrian project and to take action against FDOT, visit [www.DumpTheHumps.com](http://www.DumpTheHumps.com).

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Sen. **Ed Hooper** represents Senate District 16, which includes Clearwater and Largo in northern Pinellas and western Pasco counties.

## FACT VS FICTION

Email from FDOT staff to Whit Blanton, October 20, 2022

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has agreed to construct an unwanted \$242 million pedestrian project (**FICTION**) in Pinellas County, and I am urging Gov. **Ron DeSantis** to stop it before it begins.

**FACT** – *this is a capacity project. This project will change the existing six lane divided highway to a six-lane controlled access roadway with one-way frontage roads in both directions parallel to US 19 between SR 580 and CR 95 (Curlew Road). An Interchange is planned midway between SR 580 and SR 586 (Curlew Road), just north of Boy Scout Road. A new interchange at SR 586 (Curlew Road) will also be added so that US 19 traffic will travel uninterrupted as it passes over SR 586. Pedestrians will have a dedicated underpass between Evans Road and Republic Drive. A new pedestrian bridge over US 19 is planned at Northside Drive.*

When this project was originally proposed, the price tag was approximately \$163 million; now \$242 million. Costs for this project are exploding (\*\*) and it should be alarming to all of us that FDOT is investing over \$242 million of Florida's taxpayer dollars to construct three pedestrian underpass tunnels (**FICTION**) along US-19, a roadway where sidewalks already exist. In addition, the 1.5-mile section from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive is an industrial area that pedestrians currently do not utilize and most likely never will.

**\*\*Construction prices have generally increased across the state.**

**FACT** – *There will be one dedicated pedestrian underpass between Evans Road and Republic Drive to make the area safer for pedestrians. Over the past 5 years there have been 5 fatal/severe injury crashes involving pedestrians within the 1.5-mile section from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive.*

*The Pinellas MPO (Forward Pinellas) has voted 3 times in favor of pedestrian crossings along US 19 including most recently a vote to support the underpass. This project (256774-2 & 256774-3) has been an MPO priority since 1990. The MPO uses a combination of sources to create their priority list. This includes input from local municipalities, citizens, and other interested parties. Factors that influence prioritization include safety, congestion, and condition of the facility. Every year Forward Pinellas' priority list is reviewed, updated, and goes through their public participation process. This formal process includes vetting by their committees, including the Citizens Advisory Committee, being posted on their website for public review and comment, and review and approval by their governing board. The public is invited to comment on the list at any point during its development.*

These three tunnels (**FICTION**) were proposed to make the area safer for pedestrians; however, even if pedestrians did frequent this area, this would not be the solution to safer walkways. It would have the opposite effect. Pedestrian underpasses are not safe and are becoming increasingly known as "Drug Alleyways" among the homeless population, providing a significant



safety concern among residents with overpriced and unpassable walkways. With homelessness on the rise, individuals in areas where underpasses do exist have turned the pedestrian walkways into makeshift homes equipped with beds, couches, and sometimes electricity.

**FACT** – There will be one dedicated pedestrian underpass between Evans Road and Republic Drive.

(Note) District 7 recently opened a pedestrian underpass in Citrus County that has been widely celebrated and utilized, there have not been any incidents since opening this year.

The exorbitant amount of money proposed for these unneeded pedestrian underpasses should cause Gov. DeSantis and the residents of Pinellas County to pause and think about the many projects that could be funded to improve the lives of our community.

I urge Gov. DeSantis and FDOT to reevaluate this project and put a stop to it before construction begins in the Spring of 2023. The people of Pinellas County deserve better. They deserve their hard-earned money to be used for something that directly benefits the people of Pinellas County.

Instead of investing \$242 million into pedestrian underpasses that will undoubtedly be underutilized and have zero economic impact within our community, let's consider reinvesting these taxpayer dollars. Let's reinvest these dollars for more pressing transportation needs in the immediate area, not for three underutilized underpasses. By reallocating this money to provide the necessary resources that our community quite frankly deserves, our people and our community can thrive.

Gov. DeSantis, not only is this a complete waste of taxpayer dollars, but the businesses along the 1.5-mile section from north of SR 580 to Northside Drive is an industrial area that suffered greatly when this road was reconstructed by FDOT nearly six years ago, **(FICTION)** which still feels like yesterday to the businesses that have not yet recovered from that fiscal hit plus COVID-19. If this project were to begin, it would again significantly harm all these businesses. We urge you to put an immediate stop to this project. Now is the time to stop the US-19 construction project and reroute our taxpayer dollars into something more viable for our community's future.

**FACT** – FDOT has not done any reconstruction in this 1.5 mile section in the last decade.

For more information about the pedestrian project and to take action against FDOT, visit [www.DumpTheHumps.com](http://www.DumpTheHumps.com).

Sen. **Ed Hooper** represents Senate District 16, which includes Clearwater and Largo in northern Pinellas and western Pasco counties.

#### **4. Potential Proposal for MPO Merger**

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##### **SUMMARY**

[Section 339.175](#), Florida Statutes, states that only one metropolitan planning organization (MPO) shall be designated for each contiguous urbanized area, unless more than one is warranted by the size and complexity of the urbanized area, with the agreement of the governor and existing MPOs. The census-designated urbanized area to which Pinellas belongs spans the boundaries of Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties, but each county has historically retained its own MPO.

The statute also stipulates that MPOs redesignate their composition and membership following each decennial census. At these times, there is typically public consideration of merging all or some of the three counties' MPOs. That conversation is emerging once again with the approach of the redesignation process following the 2020 census. The Forward Pinellas executive director will report on the current status of this issue.

**ATTACHMENT(S):** None

**ACTION:** Committee to provide direction to staff.

**5. Proposed Preemption Opt-Out Bill**

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**SUMMARY**

At the October meeting, the committee held a preliminary discussion of a proposed bill that would allow citizens to vote to override state preemption laws in their communities. The bill, drafted by Mayor David Will of Redington Beach, would allow a local referendum to opt out of any statute that “expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance, resolution or rule pursuant to the [local government’s] home rule authority.” The committee expressed a desire to continue the discussion in November.

The proposed bill does not yet have a legislative sponsor. The Mayor is seeking the committee’s input and consideration of support for the bill.

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Proposed Preemption Opt-Out Bill

**ACTION:** Committee to provide direction to staff.

## A bill to be entitled

An act relating to laws of Florida which preempt local governments from adopting regulations regarding various matters at the local level; creating s. 125.01005 and 166.0315; authorizing the electors of the state's municipalities and counties to opt out of statutory preemptions of local regulations by referendum vote; providing for the effect of votes approving of an opt out; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. 125.01005, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

125.01005 Preemption opt-out referendum. –

(1) Within one year of June 1, 2023, the electors within the unincorporated portions of a county may, by a referendum vote, opt out of any statute existing on that which statute expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance, resolution or rule pursuant to the county's home rule authority.

(2) Within one year of the effective date of any statute which becomes effective on or after June 1, 2023, and which expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance, resolution or rule pursuant to a county's home rule authority, the electors within the unincorporated portions of the county may, by a referendum vote, opt out of the statute.

(3) A referendum vote conducted pursuant to this section shall be scheduled by the county's governing board and shall be paid for by the county. The result of a referendum vote conducted pursuant to this section shall become effective on the date the result of the vote is certified by the canvassing board, and shall be codified in the county's code.

Section 2. 166.0315, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

166.0315 Preemption opt-out referendum. –

(1) Within one year of June 1, 2023, the electors within a municipality may, by a referendum vote, opt out of any statute existing on that which statute expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance, resolution or rule pursuant to the municipality's home rule authority.

(2) Within one year of the effective date of any statute which becomes effective on or after June 1, 2023, and which expressly preempts to the state the authority to adopt a local ordinance,

resolution or rule pursuant to a municipality's home rule authority, the electors within the municipality may, by a referendum vote, opt out of the statute.

(3) A referendum vote conducted pursuant to this section shall be scheduled by the county's governing board and shall be paid for by the county. The result of a referendum vote conducted pursuant to this section shall become effective on the date the result of the vote is certified by the canvassing board, and shall be codified in the municipality's code.

Section 3. This act shall take effect June 1, 2023.

**6. 2023 Legislative Platform and Priorities**

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**SUMMARY**

The Legislative Committee is tasked with recommending an annual set of legislative priorities to focus on during each session. Upon board approval and further direction, those priorities serve as the basis for coordinating countywide messages and communicating with responsible entities.

Based on the committee's direction in October, two documents have been drafted for consideration: A longer document with the full Forward Pinellas legislative platform, and a more focused one-page handout with the top three legislative priorities for this year.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- Draft 2023 Legislative Priorities
- Draft 2023 Legislative Platform

**ACTION:** Committee to consider recommending approval of 2023 Legislative Platform and Priorities to the Forward Pinellas board.

# 2023 Legislative Priorities

[DRAFT November 9, 2022]



## STRONG LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Forward Pinellas supports the rights of communities to govern themselves according to the wishes of their residents.

- Allow communities to determine their own character through zoning and building design regulations.
- Allow communities to provide for housing and protect land needed for high-paying jobs.
- Provide a one-year pause before state preemption legislation takes effect, and allow residents to vote on opting out of preemption in their own communities.

## SAFE, EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Forward Pinellas supports flexible, sustained transportation funding that meets the needs of all users, based on community context, and ensures that our streets are safe.

- Expand state transportation funding for transit operations and safe pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, with greater flexibility to meet the needs of urban communities.
- Discourage the use of earmarks that divert funding from the State Transportation Trust Fund and MPO priority process.
- Provide state funding to address the high injury road network, conduct demonstration projects, and educate the public about roadway safety.
- Strengthen penalties for drivers who injure or kill vulnerable road users (people on bicycles, motorcycles, or walking).

## ROBUST CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Forward Pinellas supports increased citizen involvement in local government planning.

- To increase opportunities for participation in citizen advisory boards, permit those boards to conduct meetings using communication technology in lieu of a quorum being physically present.

# 2023 Legislative Platform

[DRAFT November 9, 2022]



## KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES STRONG AND INDEPENDENT.

- Florida is a diverse state characterized by unique communities. Pinellas County is an example of that with its many downtowns, beach communities and neighborhoods. Home rule allows local governments to align the values of a community to its ordinances and other governing elements. **Forward Pinellas supports home rule and opposes bills that erode the ability of local governments to reflect the wishes and desires of their communities.**
- Local governments are designed to give citizens a voice in their own communities. When the state preempts local laws, it deprives citizens of their right to determine how their own communities are governed. **Forward Pinellas supports allowing citizens to vote on whether the state can impose new preemptions on their communities.**
- When preemption laws are passed, local governments bear the burden of amending their local regulations and practices, which is often disruptive and costly. **Forward Pinellas supports a one-year pause before any new preemption law takes effect.**
- To ensure economic opportunity for our citizens, it is essential that local governments allow for diverse housing types that are affordable to a broader range of incomes. State-level interference with local zoning efforts reduces the rights of property owners and compromises the ability of communities to meet the needs of residents. **Forward Pinellas supports local authority to address housing needs through zoning regulations.**
- In urban counties, it is essential to protect dwindling supplies of industrial and office land--needed by the high-wage employers who drive our local economies--from real estate market pressures. Allowing local governments to disregard their adopted regulations for the benefit of luxury residential developments is the opposite of sound planning. **Forward Pinellas supports protection of land needed for high-wage jobs.**
- In 2011, the Florida Legislature passed legislation curtailing the ability of local governments to regulate vacation rentals, defined as residences that are rented out to visitors on a short-term basis. Preemption of this local authority impairs the ability of communities to determine their own character and protect neighboring homes from the impacts of incompatible tourist-related uses. **Forward Pinellas supports the restoration of local authority to regulate vacation rentals.**
- To ensure that local governments accurately reflect and serve the values of their communities, citizens must be able to participate at all levels. Communications technology used during the COVID-19 pandemic opened up new opportunities and removed barriers to citizen involvement. **Forward Pinellas supports allowing advisory boards to conduct meetings using communication technology in lieu of a quorum being physically present.**



## ENSURE A TARGETED, FOCUSED AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TOWARD SAFETY.

- Safe Streets Pinellas is a collaborative effort to create a transportation system that is safe for everyone. On average, more than two people are killed or seriously injured each day in Pinellas County (Crash Data Management System). Forward Pinellas created Safe Streets Pinellas, a sustained effort of education, research and transportation facility improvements, based on the vision that not one person should be killed or seriously injured using our roadways. **Forward Pinellas supports state funding to address high injury corridors, conduct demonstration projects, and educate the public to ensure that Pinellas County streets are safe.**
- Rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) at pedestrian crossings have proven effective at reducing injuries and fatalities for vulnerable road users. Studies by the National Academies of Science and the Federal Highway Administration show that RRFBs increase driver yielding rates between 73-96% and reduce pedestrian collisions by 47%. **Forward Pinellas supports continued local authority over the use of RRFBs.**
- Distracted driving poses a threat to the safety of motorists and non-motorized users. Between 2017 and 2021, 48 fatalities and 373 incapacitating injuries happened in Pinellas County related to distracted driving crashes (Crash Data Management System). **Forward Pinellas supports legislation that expands upon the adopted Texting While Driving law by prohibiting distracted driving by addressing the use of wireless communications devices with clear definitions and clarification on what it means to be stationary and operating.**

## FIND FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS TO FUND TRANSPORTATION NEEDS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

- Taxes on fuel are a primary source of transportation funding for local governments. Increasing fuel efficiency, more electric vehicles in the fleet, and rising roadway maintenance and operating costs are placing pressure on local governments to search for additional funding. **Forward Pinellas supports the creation of a statewide pilot program to tax automobiles based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), ensuring sufficient roadway funding while charging users fairly.**
- Local fuel taxes are not indexed to the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation, as state fuel taxes are, and therefore, revenues are declining at a faster rate. **Forward Pinellas supports the Legislature permitting the indexing of local fuel taxes for inflation to better keep pace with transportation needs like it has done for state fuel tax revenues.**
- The Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) receives the vast majority of state transportation funding. As our highway network continues to mature in urban areas like Pinellas County, and reaches a point where expansion is not a feasible or affordable option, **Forward Pinellas supports increased flexibility for SIS funds for improvements to parallel non-SIS roadways, and allowing premium or express transit operating on the SIS roadway, but not necessarily on its own fixed guideway, to enhance mobility on the SIS.** This is consistent with the legislative position of the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council.

- The Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) is a valuable transportation funding mechanism based on 50/50 state and local participation through regional collaboration. **Forward Pinellas believes in fostering stronger regional transportation planning and decision-making and supports sustained funding of \$250 million per year for the TRIP program as a way to strengthen regional partnerships to improve mobility.**
- Increasing flexibility of funds in urban areas enables MPOs and transit agencies to collaborate on priorities and direct resources to projects where they are most needed. In contrast, the use of legislative earmarks merely reallocates funding from existing priorities, reducing funding for needed local transit projects. **Forward Pinellas supports the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area position calling for increased flexibility for state transportation funding programs in urban areas while discouraging the use of earmarks.**

#### WORK TOGETHER TO SOLVE BIGGER CHALLENGES.

- State-mandated changes to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are a recurring concern to Forward Pinellas and other MPOs statewide. **Forward Pinellas opposes one-size-fits all changes that would usurp local authority to determine the most appropriate structure of MPOs consistent with federal law and consultation with the Governor.**
- Trust funds such as the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and the State Transportation Trust Fund are established with a clear purpose. These trust funds should be adequately funded and not subject to transfers to the Budget Stabilization Fund and the General Revenue Fund. **Forward Pinellas supports fully funding and protecting state trust funds.**
- The Resilient Tampa Bay Transportation Study, of which Forward Pinellas was a partner along with other MPOs and regional agencies, found that 19% of the Tampa Bay region's roadways are highly or moderately vulnerable to storms, sea level rise, and heavy precipitation. The State can take a leadership role by providing funding to harden infrastructure, conduct vulnerability assessments on transportation projects, incentivize resilient development, and support research and mitigation for sea level rise. **Forward Pinellas supports state funding assistance to address the impacts of climate change and increase the resiliency of our communities.**