

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

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

The board welcomed the new board member, Commissioner Eric Gerard, from the City of Largo.

The board unanimously approved sending a comment letter regarding the draft Tentative Work Program, including a request for the department to fully fund existing priority projects before adding new projects to the work program.

Florida Department of Transportation staff, Brian Hunter, presented highlights from the Draft Tentative Work Program. A public website is available to receive public comments on the Draft Tentative Work Program, with comments due by November 13, 2023. Furthermore, an Open House was held on October 26th from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the FDOT District 7 office. More information on the Draft Tentative Work Program can be found at www.fdot.gov/wpph/district7.

Discussion:

- Whit Blanton shared the resurfacing projects have yielded a lot of safety benefits and expressed concern over the rising cost of asphalt leading the department to reduce the scope of projects, such as incorporating safety components. He furthermore noted the desire to coordinate more with FDOT, at monthly coordination meetings, to communicate with local communities regarding these projects and benefits.
- Commissioner Eggers inquired if the department has determined a cause of the early breakdown of road surfaces. Justin Hall clarified that this issue is widespread throughout the state and is due to a polymer breaking down prematurely. The department has since switched materials, particularly in higher traffic zones such as intersections.
- Considering price increases, Councilmember Richie Floyd inquired about the status of a couple projects in St. Petersburg - the 28th Street North bicycle improvements and 2022 Complete Streets Program project. Whit said the letter can be modified to ask the department to complete projects that are identified as high priority prior to moving on to funding new projects.

The board unanimously approved an amendment to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program.

Forward Pinellas staff, Ariane Martins, presented the following amendment to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 TIP:

- Amendment FPN 449109-1, I-275 (SR 93) from North of 38th Avenue North to North of 4th Street North. This amendment is adding design funds for the I-275 corridor project that will add two new tolled express lanes from 38th Avenue North to Gandy Boulevard and add one tolled express lane from Gandy Boulevard to 4th Street North. This will provide two continuous tolled express lanes along I-275 from 38th Avenue North up to, and across, the Howard Frankland bridge. This project is part of the 'Moving Florida Forward' transportation funding announcement made in September of this year.

Discussion:

- Tristen Brockwell provided a public comment to express his concern over this project eliminating the future ability to construct light rail in the I-275 right-of-way.
- Sharon Calvert provided a public comment to express her support of the project.
- Forward Pinellas staff, Rob Feigel, shared that the motion was passed in support at the Citizens Advisory Committee by a 15-6 margin.
- Councilmember Richie Floyd inquired if the bridge will be hardened to support a future light rail. FDOT staff, Justin Hall, clarified that the express lanes being built now are where the light rail would be in the future, should it come to fruition. The rail would sit where the express lane currently sits, and the 1990 bridge would then need to be widened to accommodate the express lanes. More noise walls will also be installed along neighborhoods.
- Commissioner Scott requested more detail on the widening of the 1990 bridge. Justin Hall said it can be widened in place and the bridge is not due to be replaced until around 2050.

The board unanimously approved the Fall Update of the FY2023/24-2027/28 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

Every fall, Forward Pinellas updates the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include the most recent transportation work programs of the various local governments in the county. Forward Pinellas staff, Ariane Martins, presented the Fall Update document to the board. The Fall Update document includes work program tables of the various local governments, the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Grant Program allocations, and the Pinellas County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and budget.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Eric Gerard inquired if a sidewalk construction project on Indian Rocks Road is locked in. Mona Gabriel from Pinellas County Public Works answered that it is in final stages of

design and will start construction in 2024. He also inquired if the Highland Avenue improvement project design, from Belleair Road to East Bay Drive, is solidified or if input for alterations can still be provided. Mona noted she will follow up with the City of Largo.

- Commissioner Eggers inquired if the East Lake Road PD&E will still allow for alternatives to be brought forward. Mona confirmed this is correct. He then asked where the funding for the Dunedin Causeway is coming from. Mona noted they are submitting applications for federal funds.
- Commissioner Eggers also inquired about SR 580 eastbound at US19, particularly if there is a way to dedicate right lane in certain hours to be turn only, such as during rush hours, as traffic backs all the way up to Belcher Road. Justin Hall with FDOT said he can investigate this option. Whit Blanton noted the SR 580 corridor study results could help provide a direction and will be available shortly.

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

- Case DA 23-01 – A request from the City of St. Petersburg to amend 17.91 acres of property located at the northwest corner of Gandy Boulevard and I-275 from Activity Center to Activity Center designation. Under the existing Development Agreement, the multifamily residential units cannot be occupied until the third of three industrial buildings is complete, which has been delayed and is now currently estimated to be late 2024 to early 2025. The proposed amendment to the Development Agreement will allow for the vast majority of the originally anticipated industrial uses and the multifamily residential units to be occupied shortly after the late 2023 anticipated completion date.

The board appointed the following board members to the TMA Leadership Group, SCTPA, and MPOAC Committees.

- TMA Leadership Group: Commissioner Janet Long, Commissioner Dave Eggers, Councilmember Gina Driscoll
- SCTPA: Councilmember Driscoll
- MPOAC: Commissioner Eggers (primary), Councilmember Jarrod Buchman (alternate), and Councilor Chris Burke (alternate)

Whit Blanton noted there is a provision in place which allows for any board member to provide a vote if the elected members are unable to attend the TMA Leadership Group meetings.

Forward Pinellas staff presented the Countywide Trends and Conditions Report.

Rob Feigel presented Forward Pinellas' Countywide Trends and Conditions Report which provides a high-level, annual snapshot of the county's transportation system. The report serves as a tool to evaluate progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the Advantage Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan.

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

The board approved the Housing Action Plan in July 2023. Beginning this month, the board will receive bimonthly briefings about projects that implement the plan's goals, as well as reports from our partner communities and input from stakeholders in the community. Linda Fisher provided this month's briefing, which included a review of implementation priorities within the next 1-2 years, including the creation of a coordinated media strategy, mapping and analysis tools, and a regulatory toolkit.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Eggers requested guidance on how to control and monitor accessory dwellings from becoming Airbnb units, such as implementing longer term leases. Mayor Julie Bujalski seconded this is an issue in Dunedin.
- Commissioner Scott requested a look into the inventory of previously approved affordable housing, such as from 20 years ago, to ensure they remain affordable.
- Commissioner Gerard requested attention be paid to senior housing security.
- Councilor Chris Burke noted he would like a periodic snapshot of data including figures such as housing units available, projected unit growth, and vacancy rates.
- Richie Floyd added he would also like to see construction information in the data snapshots.

The board recognized Ron Wolfson as the outgoing Pinellas Trail Security Task Force Chair following his retirement from the St. Petersburg Police Department.

SPOTlight Update

- Executive Director Whit Blanton provided the following updates:
 - Forward Pinellas received notification from FDOT that the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) will be receiving an award totaling \$655,000, to be spent within a three-year timeframe. The grant will cover waterborne transportation operational costs and requires a 50/50 match. The source of the local match needs to be determined. Funds will be available for FY25, starting July 1st of 2024.
 - Next spring, Forward Pinellas and FDOT will be conducting outreach with the communities of Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs regarding the future of US 19 North. The Palm Harbor business community has previously expressed concerns over loss of visibility due to planned modifications to interchanges. Forward Pinellas will be planning one-on-one meetings with elected officials, commissions, and neighborhoods and local business meetings to discuss options.

Other Items

- Reminder: There is no December Board meeting. The next Board meeting is January 2024.
- PSTA Report
 - PSTA was named the Most Outstanding Agency of the Year by both the American and Florida Public Transportation Associations.
 - A presentation on Transit Oriented Development around the SunRunner noted more than 75 development projects have been tracked in the corridor with a development value estimated at \$7.5 billion.
- Regional Activities Report: Executive Director Whit Blanton shared that the regional MPO report is under final review and will be submitted to the Legislature by the end of the year. It contains much of the same content as the memorandum of understanding (MOU) as well as prospective funding options.
- Legislative Update
 - A proposed change to Senate Bill 250 would take Pinellas County out of group of counties within 100 miles of landfall of Hurricane Ian who could not propose any burdensome regulations. This would allow multiple planning initiatives under development to go forward.
 - Senator Hooper has filed Senate Bill 266 which would place a cap on percentage of state transportation trust funds that go to public transit projects. To not be subject to the cap, counties would need a super-majority vote from the county commission. Whit will prepare a letter, for the board's review, to be sent expressing concern over the cap.
- Executive Director Whit Blanton took a Brightline Tour, travelling with the Tampa Bay Partnership, including a look at the Miami-Dade station and transit-oriented development in West Palm Beach. The train reaches 125 miles per hour and is privately run.
- Public Comment:
 - David Ballard Geddis Jr. expressed his concerns over water supply and regulation codes.
 - Sharon Calvert expressed her concerns over points of ingress/egress at the Tierra Verde Cycle Track and questioned the vetting process of the 34th Street lane elimination project. Whit Blanton provided an overview of the various public input opportunities conducted for both projects (i.e., each public meeting contains a public comment section).
 - Mike Eisner from Tarpon Springs requested more money be budgeted towards ensuring the safety of children going to and from school, such as increased lighting and motion detecting flashing lights at intersections.

Action Sheet
November 8, 2023

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

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 11-0)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the October 11, 2023 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval of 2024 Board and Committees Meeting Schedules
 - D. Acceptance of Planners Advisory Committee (PAC) Roster for 2024
 - E. Countywide Plan Map Annual Update – Official Acceptance
 - F. Acceptance of Quarter Four Financial Report and Budget Amendment(s)
 - G. Approval of Scope and Fee for Advantage Pinellas Financial Resources Projections
 - H. Approval of Scope and Fee for the Gateway Commute Options Assessment and Employee/Employer Survey

- **Proposed Amendment(s) to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
Following an explanation of the amendment(s) by Ariane Martins, Forward Pinellas staff, and a public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the amendment(s) to the TIP. (roll call vote: 11-0)

- **Fall Update of the FY 2023/24-2027/28 TIP**
Following a presentation by Ariane Martins, Forward Pinellas staff, and a public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the Fall Update of the TIP. (roll call vote: 11-0)

- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
Following a presentation by Emma Wennick, Forward Pinellas staff, and public hearing, one case was recommended for approval:
 - 1. DA 23-01 – City of St. Petersburg (vote: 11-0)

- **Draft Tentative Work Program**
Following a presentation by Brian Hunter, FDOT, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved a letter of comments to be sent to FDOT on the Draft Tentative Work Program. (vote: 11-0)

- **TMA Leadership Group, SCTPA and MPOAC Committee Appointments**
The board made committee appointments for 2024:

The TMA Leadership Group representatives will remain the same to include Commissioner

Eggers, Commissioner Long and Councilmember Gina Driscoll.
The SCTPA representative will continue to be Councilmember Gina Driscoll.
Any board member may serve as an alternate as needed. (vote: 11-0)

The MPOAC representative will continue to be Commissioner Eggers with Councilmember Buchman and Councilor Burke as alternates. (vote: 11-0)