

THE PLANNING COUNCIL AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR PINELLAS COUNTY

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on October 13, 2021 at 1 p.m. in the Magnolia Room at Pinellas County Cooperative Extension.

The board unanimously approved the Scope of Services for the Target Employment Industrial Land Study

The board approved the Scope of Services for Forward Pinellas' new Target Employment Industrial Land Study (TEILS). The goal of the study is to ascertain whether the current supply of land that could accommodate target employment in the county is sufficient to fulfill the needs of existing and potential target employers over the next 20 years, and identify the most effective strategies to achieve that goal. The study is an update of a prior study in 2008 that set a policy framework for Pinellas County to preserve industrial and employment land.

- Commissioner Merz clarified with Mr. Rodney Chatman, Forward Pinellas Planning Division Manager, that the consultants chosen for this scope will have a host of skill sets, services, and previous experiences to ensure a significant depth of proficiency in specific areas of interest in regards to each component of the study.
- Commissioner Merz added, and Mr. Chatman agreed, that staff should work with educational organizations and the Pinellas Economic Development Center to perform analysis and find solutions to enhance employee skill sets.
- Commissioner Gerard noted that staff should collaborate with the ARK Innovation Center, an incubator coming to the City of St. Petersburg focusing on entrepreneurs, to ensure we include their vision for the future of Pinellas.
- Commissioner Eggers agreed with Commissioner Merz and Commissioner Gerard, noting that we need to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure we bring forward programs to fill the needs we have today and in the future.
- Councilmember Gabbard clarified with Mr. Chatman that the study is looking at best practices to provide a balance in regards to competing interests.
- Chair Rice expressed her support for this study and the importance for us to determine changes in industry. She clarified with Mr. Chatman that a significant part of this study includes a Stakeholder Engagement Plan to ensure all stakeholders are involved and there is a broad representation of Pinellas County. In addition, Mr. Chatman noted the budget for this study is \$250,000.
- Commissioner Seel supported the idea of creating a steering committee and requested staff ensure Pinellas County's inclusion in this committee.

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

The board approved amendments to the TIP requested by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to include design funding for the following lane continuity improvements and express lane projects:

- I-275/SR 93 from N of 54th Ave S to I-375: \$5,601,000 is being added to the TIP to design lane continuity improvements and noise walls along the corridor.
- I-275 (SR 93) from N of I-375 to 54th Ave N: \$4,701,000 is being added to the TIP to design lane continuity improvements and two express lanes in each direction along the corridor.
- 54th Ave N to N of 4th St N: \$5,601,000 is being added to the TIP to design an additional express lane along the project corridor in each direction. One express lane in each direction is already under construction as a part of the Gateway Expressway project.

The board unanimously approved the composition of the 2022 Nominating Committee

Each year the Forward Pinellas Board votes to elect a chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. Those positions comprise the board's Executive Committee. With the current chair leaving Forward Pinellas due to term limits and several other board seats turning over with new members, Chair Rice, Commissioner Gerard, and Commissioner Noble agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee to form a recommendation for a slate of officers for election at the November board meeting.

The board unanimously approved the 2022 Legislative Priorities List

The board unanimously approved legislative priorities recommended by the Legislative Committee based on the August Legislative Workshop, including more flexible transportation funding programs for large urban areas; a targeted and collaborative approach to safety; keeping communities strong and independent while working to solve bigger challenges, such as affordable housing, together; and ensuring Florida's resilient future.

- Mayor Buljalski echoed that flexibility of funding is paramount for the future of Pinellas County.

The board heard a presentation from Mr. Dave Sobush with the Tampa Bay Partnership

Mr. Dave Sobush, Director of Policy and Research with the Tampa Bay Partnership presented on a recent study they've completed regarding how different transit investment scenarios improve accessibility of jobs for Tampa Bay residents. While not a specific component of federal or state grant funding, the Partnership believes that job access should be a consideration alongside ridership and cost-effectiveness as agencies contemplate the funding of transit investments.

- Mr. Blanton expressed gratitude for the Partnership's advocacy for the region and inquired how the private sector has responded to this study.
- Mr. Sobush said that there have been positive responses as the study speaks to the positive aspect in jobs access no matter who or where you are. This study highlights a critical step to improving the economy and prosperity of our residents. Mr. Sobush highlighted that Forward Pinellas can count on the Partnership's continued advocacy for regional funding and transit solutions.

- Commissioner Long clarified with Mr. Sobush that there are benefits and detriments for requesting a referendum to support transportation funding. If Hillsborough County plans to do the same and the proposals are too dissimilar, the message of one could reflect negatively on the other.
- Mayor Buljalski expressed that in regard to access to jobs, housing and tourism, she believes Pinellas County is behind and there is nothing more important than getting a funding source for transportation today and not five years from now.
- Commissioner Eggers believes that there is a disconnect from what we are talking about and what residents experience and would like to see us do a better job telling the story and communicating with our community.
- Chair Rice agreed with Commissioner Eggers and would like to find ways for the CEOs of our community's businesses to interact with our community so people can hear everyday issues and truly understand the importance of the struggles our businesses are facing, especially in regard to job access and transit.
- Commissioner Allbritton echoed the importance of transit to all aspects of our community, noting that it is up to us to communicate this effectively.

The board heard a presentation from FDOT on the safety priority project at Alt US 19 and 5th Ave N

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) presented on a safety priority project at Alt US 19/5th Ave N. They are evaluating repurposing a lane from west of 16th St N to Dr MLK Jr St N to add a two-way separated bicycle path, connecting the existing network of separated bicycle lanes on Dr MLK Jr St N to a potential future rail-trail shared use path west of 16th St N. The benefits of this project include an increase in safety for people walking and biking by decreasing speeds and providing additional mobility access.

- Chair Rice expressed her support for this project and noted that St. Anthony's Hospital is also in favor. She clarified with staff that part of this project will look at how to make the intersection of Dr. MLK Jr. St. and 5th Avenue N. less confusing to drivers.
- Commissioner Eggers clarified that FDOT will be asking for a letter of support for this project at a future board meeting.

SPOTlight Updates

- The Cross Bay Ferry officially made its return to St. Petersburg in October 2021. Pinellas County officials agreed to provide funds allowing the vessel to run for the next four years. Forward Pinellas is working with Pinellas County administration to create a system plan for the region that provides permanent year-round service and equally benefits residents county-wide.
- The Waterborne Transportation Committee is creating a phased implementation strategy, contingent on finding local sources of funding, for water transit service. Recommendations will be presented at the December committee meeting and to the Forward Pinellas Board in February 2022. Staff would incorporate this strategy as an amendment to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

- Honeymoon Island State Park is incorporating potential water taxi service into their management plan, opening opportunities for state funding. They have also committed to expand the entrance at the park with a dedicated bike/pedestrian entrance, supporting the countywide and regional trail network, and more automobile capacity. Safety improvements and a lane expansion for Curlew & Alt 19 is being accelerated to accommodate future traffic growth. In addition, an Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) along the Dunedin Causeway is currently undergoing design and will provide real-time information to notify motorists of delays and whether the park is closed due to parking capacity constraints.
- The Gateway Partnership Meeting produced an excellent roundtable discussion identifying how partners are making the Gateway Master Plan a reality. FDOT is offering funds for Forward Pinellas to develop commute alternatives with employers as part of a transportation management organization.
- Forward Pinellas staff will begin an Investment Corridor Study in spring 2022. Work is underway to identify one out of the nine investment corridors to develop a plan to facilitate more frequent, higher speed transit service, walkable redevelopment around transit stations, and redevelopment to encourage housing that is affordable.

Other Items

- PSTA is looking for funding resources to replace 60 buses with electric busses. In addition, PSTA has opened applications for their Transit Riders Advisory Committee.
- TBARTA is leading a corridor study to evaluate rapid transit in the US 19 corridor between the Gateway area and SR 52 in Pasco County.
- TMA Leadership Group is hosting a workshop on December 10, 2021 with FDOT, TBARTA, the SCTPA and all transit agencies in the region to discuss the potential use of CSX tracks and other rail lines to develop a policy framework and system plan for how we could have a connected transit network.
- The board approved the continuation of a proposed amendment to the Countywide Plan Map for the City of St. Petersburg to the next Forward Pinellas Board Meeting on November 10, 2021. The board also approved a continuance of an Oldsmar proposed amendment to a future meeting to be determined.
- Forward Pinellas is supporting the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance with its letter to the Legislative Delegation and social media campaign to express concern with previously proposed legislation to further regulate or prohibit the placement and function of Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFBs). The legislation may return this Session and Forward Pinellas is seeking to bring more awareness to the effectiveness of these safety devices. Such bills could actually make pedestrians crossings less safe, even though the purported intent behind them is to improve safety.
- Forward Pinellas honored Veatrice Farrell and Heather Richardson as Vision Zero Heroes, for their commitment to safe streets throughout Pinellas, sponsored by the Gulf Coast Safe Streets Summit.

- The Forward Pinellas Citizens Advisory Committee commended local enforcement organizations for their pro-active efforts in support of the Vision Zero goal and looks forward to continued enforcement and coordination efforts in the future.
- Forward Pinellas is celebrating Community Planning Month in collaboration with the American Planning Association by highlighting the community conversations happening throughout Pinellas about planners and the work that transforms our neighborhoods. Get involved by following our social media and using the hashtag #CommunityConversations.

**Action Sheet
October 13, 2021**

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

- **Community Planning Month Recognized**
Following an introduction by the Executive Director and an outline of activities planned by staff to celebrate Community Planning Month, the board voted to recognize October as Community Planning Month. (vote: 12-0)
- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 12-0)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the September 8, 2021 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
- **Approval of Amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
Following a presentation by Jensen Hackett of FDOT, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved three amendments to the TIP. (roll call vote: 12-0)
- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**
Two cases were continued to future meeting dates:
 1. CW 21-13 – City of St. Petersburg was continued to November 10th (vote: 12-0)
 2. CW 21-14 – City of Oldsmar was continued indefinitely (vote: 12-0)
- **Approval of Scope of Services for Target Employment Industrial Land Study**
Following a presentation by Rodney Chatman of Forward Pinellas, the board approved the scope of services to update the Target Employment Industrial Land Study (TEILS) and authorized staff to select a consultant. (vote: 12-0)
- **Establishment of a Nominating Committee Discussion**
Following a brief discussion, the board opted to form a Nominating Committee which will be tasked with creating a recommendation for the full board concerning its slate of officers for 2022. The Nominating Committee members include Councilmember Bonnie Noble, Commissioner Pat Gerard and Councilmember Darden Rice. (vote: 12-0)
- **Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee Update**
Following a review by the Executive Director, the board approved its legislative priorities for 2022. (vote: 12-0)