



Board Meeting Summary & Action Sheet

October 11, 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

The Forward Pinellas Board held this public meeting in person on October 11, 2023, at 1 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

The board approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Creating a Tampa Bay Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group voted to recommend the adoption of the MOU on creating a Tampa Bay Area Regional MPO serving the urban areas of Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas County. The MOU establishes a framework for addressing key considerations of how a regional organization would work and effectively build upon the current county-based responsibilities according to federal and state laws. The TMA Leadership Group is asking the three MPOs to adopt the MOU as a basis for a report due to the Governor and Florida Legislature by December 31, 2023.

The board elected to retain its current slate of officers on the Executive Committee for 2024.

- Commissioner Janet Long, Chair
- Mayor Julie Bujalski, Vice Chair
- Councilmember Gina Driscoll, Secretary
- Councilmember David Allbritton, Treasurer

The board approved two amendments to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program.

Kelsey Olinger, representing the Florida Department of Transportation, presented amendments to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 TIP:

- Amendment # 1 – SR 60/Gulf to Bay Blvd. at Old Coachman Rd. This amendment is adding funds for the construction of an enhanced at-grade crossing of the Pinellas Trail Loop at the intersection.
- Amendment # 2 – Pinellas Trail Loop Coast to Coast (C2C) Wayfinding. This amendment seeks to add construction funds for the first segment of a Trail wayfinding project along the Pinellas Trail Loop.

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

- Case CW 23-10 – A request from Pinellas County to amend 171.6-acres of property from Residential Low Medium, Residential Medium, Office, Public/Semi-Public, Retail & Services, Employment, and Target Employment Center to Multimodal Corridor & Target Employment Center. The Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Plan includes various recommendations for improving the Community Redevelopment Area. One such recommendation is the adoption of form-based districts to guide development and improve the character of the community. This amendment would facilitate future redevelopment projects that will provide additional housing opportunities for Pinellas County residents and commercial support services.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Dave Eggers inquired if the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Advisory Committee has weighed in on the amendment. Scott Swearingen, Long Range Planning Manager for Pinellas County, noted the CRA Advisory Committee has had ongoing involvement and confirmed there is no opposition.

Florida Department of Transportation staff provided an update on Skinner Boulevard.

FDOT staff, Brian Hunter, provided an overview of the complete streets concept plan for Skinner Boulevard (SR 580) in the City of Dunedin. The project plan includes:

- A lane reduction from four to two lanes between Alt. 19/Broadway and Oak St.
- Roundabouts at Douglas Ave. and Highland Ave.
- 10' sidewalks connecting to the Pinellas Trail
- On-street parking/bus bays and wide bicycle lanes
- A permanent pedestrian crossing signal at the Pinellas Trail
- New mast arm signal at Bass Blvd./Main St.
- Raised medians

Discussion:

- Commissioner Dave Eggers requested the breakdown on the costs for the three partners. MPO directed funds were \$1.5 million, carbon reduction funds \$1.3 million, City of Dunedin approximately \$4.5 million. Mayor Julie Bujalski noted the City of Dunedin will also be paying for undergrounding overhead utilities along the corridor, in addition to these funds.
- Commission Eggers inquired if there is any cause for concern over parallel parking near slowing traffic with the reduced number of lanes, and requested clarification on how the trail crossing at the roundabout at Douglas will work with the red/green light.

- Brian Hunter noted they are not concerned regarding parallel parking because the speed limit has been lowered to 25 mph and there will be 12-ft travel lane and 7-ft bike lane, which provides enough space for vehicles to go around.
- Regarding the trail crossing, the plan is to keep it until the roundabout is constructed. Then, they will observe and make changes as needed.
- Mayor Julie Bujalski stressed the importance of the roundabout to keep traffic moving and for safety. A new brewery will be put in at the intersection and there will likely be an increase in pedestrian traffic. She also expressed her satisfaction that the Trail crossing signal will remain in place. Anecdotally, prior to the signal going in, local businesses would send notification of close-call accidents, and there has been a significant reduction in such notifications since the signal has been installed.

Florida Department of Transportation staff provided an update on SR 679 Pinellas Bayway Cycle Track.

Emmeth Duran, District Traffic Safety Engineer for FDOT, shared initial operational observations about the SR 679 Pinellas Bayway Cycle Track. The original plan was to create a shared use path, but based on feedback it is now a two-way cycle track which provides traffic separators between traffic and bicyclists. Thus far, good traffic yielding behavior and no bicycle to car conflicts have been observed and recorded.

Discussion:

- Commissioner Scott requested clarification regarding conflict points. Emmeth detailed there were existing conflict points due to driveway entrances and if the design had been for one-way bicycle traffic, instead of two-way, this would equate to more conflict points due to bicyclists having to cross two lanes of traffic going northbound plus an additional two lanes southbound to access the one-way bicycle lanes in between the stretches of shared use paths.
- Commissioner Eggers inquired if bicyclists had to yield to cars entering/exiting driveways in the original design. Emmeth shared that any traffic on the Bayway has the right of way, as was the case before. There is no stop sign for walkers and bikers.
- Commissioner Eggers furthered that a significant challenge will be getting people used to the new pattern.
- Whit Blanton shared there is a similar configuration on Druid Rd in Clearwater. It is a two-way shared use path where people driving cars have to look in both directions when pulling out of their driveways.

SPOTlight Update

- Executive Director Whit Blanton shared that the Waterborne Transportation Committee met with chambers of commerce of St. Petersburg and the Beaches regarding how to better engage the business community and expand waterborne transportation. St Pete is looking

at bringing in the Urban Land Institute panel to advise on possible expansion of the Cross Bay Ferry and permanent dockage for it. The Beaches chamber requested more data and analysis supporting the demand for waterborne transportation to discern if it would be of benefit to these communities.

- In May, the Waterborne Transportation Committee recommended submittal of a grant application to FDOT for a service development grant to fund water ferry service operations. Forward Pinellas received notification from FDOT that 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 operational costs and requires a 50/50 match; thus, the source of the local match needs to be determined. Grant funds will go to PSTA and the work will be coordinated through the Waterborne Committee. Funds will be available for FY25, starting July 1st of 2024.

Other Items

- The Pinellas Planning Council FY24 Budget was approved by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners as the board voted.
- Forward Pinellas requested of the board to reach out to their represented communities to promote the Advantage Pinellas Participation Challenge. The Participation Challenge, a gamification platform, has been launched for the Advantage Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan to encourage public input on the plan. It is available at: www.advantagepinellas2050.org.
- PSTA Report
 - The PSTA Board adopted two resolutions to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 Final Millage rate of 0.7500 and the Fiscal Year 2024 Final Budget. With these votes, PSTA avoids most service reductions that were originally presented to the public.
 - PSTA was honored as Outstanding Public Transit System in the mid-size agency category at the American Public Transportation Association Transform Conference.
 - PSTA has also been awarded the State of Florida Transit System of the Year Award from the Florida Public Transit Association.
- Regional Activities Report
 - Executive Director Whit Blanton shared discussion points from the TMA Leadership Group meeting including changes made to the MOU for the Regional MPO to remove language the City of Tampa had added that would give opportunity for the largest city in each county to weigh in on the MOU. Additionally, different cost scenarios were discussed.
 - FDOT has awarded construction funding for I-275 between 4th Street North and 38th Avenue North, a priority project with regional significance, for Fiscal Year 2025.
 - Whit Blanton will be engaging in a tour of the new Orlando-Miami Brightline and will report back on the experience.
- Public Comment: David Ballard Geddis Jr. expressed his concern over water supply.

Action Sheet

October 10, 2023

At its October 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 September 13, 2023 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval of Consultant Selection and Scope and Fee for Request for Proposals (RFP) #23-0899 Crash Data, Traffic Counts, and Level of Service Database
 - D. Approval of Consultant Selection and Scope and Fee for Request for Proposals (RFP) #23-0930 Auditing Services

- **Proposed Amendments to the FY 2023/24-2027/28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
Following a presentation by Kelsey Olinger, FDOT, and a public hearing, the board, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization, approved the amendments to 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. CW 23-10 – Pinellas County (vote: 11-0)

- **Memorandum of Understanding for Creating a Tampa Bay Regional MPO**
Following a brief overview of the item by the Executive Director, the board approved the memorandum of understanding for execution once approved by the other two MPOs. (vote: 11-0)

- **Establishment of Nominating Committee Discussion**
Following introduction of the item by the Executive Director, the board elected to retain its existing slate of officers for the Executive Committee for 2024. (vote: 11-0)