



**FORWARD
PINELLAS**

Integrating Land Use & Transportation

Orientation Manual

This manual is also available online at bit.ly/fporientation

About Us

This manual serves as an orientation resource and guide for our Forward Pinellas board and advisory committee members. You will learn the primary functions and work products of Forward Pinellas and its relationship to other transportation and government agencies.

In addition, the manual provides information on the makeup of Forward Pinellas and our goals, objectives and policies.

Who We Are

Forward Pinellas is an independent land use and transportation planning agency. We provide a countywide forum for transportation and land use decisions affecting the communities of Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region.

Forward Pinellas serves a dual role as the countywide land use and transportation planning agency, operating as both the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) resulting from a merger of the two agencies in 2014.

In its role as the PPC, Forward Pinellas is governed by a [special act of the State Legislature](#) (Chapter

2012-245, Laws of Florida) and the Pinellas County Charter. It is tasked with providing policy advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, in its role as the Countywide Planning Authority. Its primary role is to develop and maintain a Countywide Land Use Plan.

As the MPO, Forward Pinellas operates in accordance with [Federal Law](#) and [Florida Statutes](#) to establish transportation priorities for federal and state funding. MPOs are required by federal law in urbanized areas with 50,000 or more people. The Pinellas MPO was established in 1977 following the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1974. We develop plans, policies and priorities that guide local decision-making on transportation issues. Florida has 27 MPOs representing both individual counties and broader regions throughout the state.

Our Governing Board

Forward Pinellas is governed by a board of [13 elected officials](#) representing communities throughout Pinellas County. These officials represent municipal governments, the Board of County Commissioners and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. Our board meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. in the County



Courthouse fifth floor assembly room, 315 Court Street, Clearwater.

Forward Pinellas Board Officers

Forward Pinellas Board officers consist of a chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer. The chair presides at meetings, workshops and public hearings and directs the preparation of the agendas for meetings and hearings. The vice chair takes on the duties of the chair in their absence. The secretary maintains official records and performs other duties as assigned. The treasurer assists in the development of our annual budget, signs all checks on behalf of Forward Pinellas and exercises authority over any additional financial matters as assigned.

The board also appoints three representatives to the [Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area \(TMA\) Leadership Group](#), one representative to the [Florida MPO Advisory Council](#), and one representative to the [Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority \(TBARTA\) Chairs Coordinating Committee](#).

Our Executive Director

The powers and duties of the executive director include the coordination of all agency activities, the preparation of the budget, the administration of all contracts and grant programs, the oversight and direction of the Forward Pinellas staff and the preparation of plans, studies and other related materials authorized by the board. Whit Blanton has



served as the executive director of Forward Pinellas since 2015.

Our Advisory Committees

Our [eight advisory committees](#) represent a diverse mix of both citizens, elected officials and technical staff from our local government partners. These committees review items related to transportation and land use, providing recommendations that help shape our plans, policies and programs. Some committees have attendance requirements, about which there is more information on the website.

Florida's Sunshine Law Requirements

Whether you are a new Forward Pinellas board member or a member of one of its advisory committees, it's important to know how [Florida's Sunshine Law](#) requirements affect you. The focus of the law is to ensure that meetings of "covered bodies," including Forward Pinellas and its advisory committees, are open to the public at all times. As a reference, please see [this broad overview of the Sunshine Law](#) from the Pinellas County Attorney.

If you have additional questions about the Sunshine Law, please contact Forward Pinellas staff. [Robert Feigel](#) is responsible for public records requests.

Our Staff

The Forward Pinellas staff includes 18 members whose roles encompass planning and more. We welcome hearing from you if you have suggestions, questions, or concerns. You can find a [staff directory](#) on our website.



Our Responsibilities & Work Products

Forward Pinellas serves several key functions. Under the special act authorizing the planning council, we are charged with maintaining a countywide land use plan, offering technical planning assistance to local governments and providing a forum for intergovernmental coordination on a variety of issues.

The planning council also provides advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, which is authorized by the county charter to act as the Countywide Planning Authority.

Forward Pinellas develops and adopts a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Five Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Congestion Management Process and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for Pinellas County in response to federal requirements.

In addition, a central element in our MPO's planning program is public involvement. Federal law requires an active citizen participation process that allows ample opportunity for public input on MPO plans and programs throughout their development and which is outlined through the Forward Pinellas Public Participation Plan (PPP). Public input received by Forward Pinellas through this process must be adequately addressed and reflected in its planning documents.

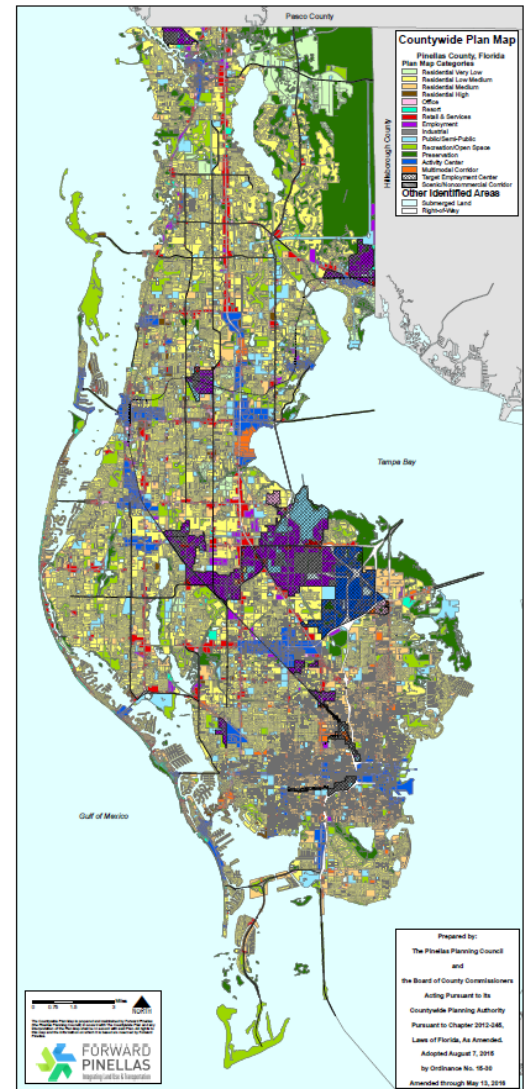
Forward Pinellas also develops area, corridor, and modal plans to create a vision that guides future planning and funding priorities, including an Intelligent Transportation (ITS) Master Plan, Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, and others.

Countywide Land Use Plan

The [Countywide Plan](#) (CWP) for Pinellas County guides land use planning among the county's 25 local governments. Closely coordinated with the Long Range Transportation Plan, the CWP directs higher-density redevelopment into activity centers and multimodal corridors that can support a variety of transportation modes, while preserving and enhancing the character of established neighborhoods.

It also protects land needed to support employment, helping to keep high-wage jobs in our community.

The CWP includes three major components: Strategies that provide the policy basis for the entire plan; Rules regulating implementation and amendment of the CWP Land Use Map; and Map, which stipulates that all local government land use plans must be consistent with the CWP map.



Click the image for the full-sized map

Long Range Transportation Plan

The [Long Range Transportation Plan](#) (LRTP) defines the county's future transportation network and addresses roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation needs and policies over the next 20 years. Pinellas County needs the LRTP as a requirement to receive state and federal funding for transportation projects.

It outlines a plan for how transportation investments will be made through the next 20 years, identifying and prioritizing transportation projects for funding based on the established goals in the

adopted plan. We develop the LRTP every five years to account for the latest growth patterns, socioeconomic trends and mobility needs for the future.

To prepare and implement the LRTP, Forward Pinellas coordinates with local government partners, other long-range transportation plans throughout the Tampa Bay region, and with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Transit Development Plan and the Countywide Plan (CWP).

Transportation Improvement Program

The [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIP) provides a five-year schedule for transportation-related state and local projects that are necessary to meet LRTP goals and objectives. Although inclusion of a project within the TIP is not a guarantee that a project will be funded or constructed, projects scheduled within the TIP during this time frame have a reasonable expectation of being funded. The TIP allows Forward Pinellas to influence the state funding cycle in a continual manner, starting with our funding priority list at the local level.

The annual TIP development cycle is conveyed in

the graphic below. The TIP development involves our advisory committees, the Forward Pinellas board, and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), insuring that citizens, planners, MPO staff, and the elected officials serving on the board all have input on the final outcome.

A final version of the TIP is presented to the Forward Pinellas Board for adoption each summer and is then sent to FDOT. The TIP is amended as necessary throughout the year to reflect various changes to federal and state funded projects. Proposed amendments are reviewed by the advisory committees prior to board action.

Planning Priorities and Budgets

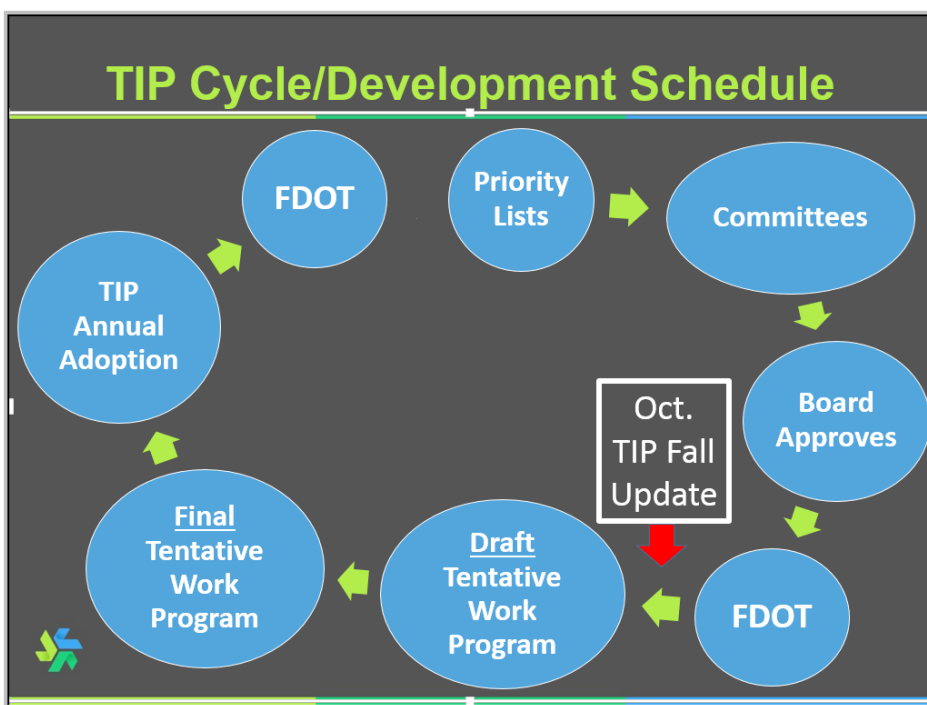
The [Unified Planning Work Program](#) (UPWP) identifies planning priorities and activities for the MPO as well as the associated budget. The UPWP covers a two year period based on the state fiscal year, July 1 to June 30.

The PPC prepares its budget beginning in March of each year for adoption by the Board of County Commissioners prior to the fiscal year beginning October 1.

Congestion Management Process

Forward Pinellas employs a [congestion management process](#) (CMP) to identify and respond to problems of traffic congestion caused by bottleneck or backlogged conditions as well as non-recurring resulting from crashes, emergencies or special events. Both contribute to delays that cost people time and money.

Congestion management strategies provide lower cost alternatives to major capital investments that are considered in identifying improvements necessary to address roadway congestion.



Our Focus on the Future



SPOTlight Focus Areas

In 2015, the board created a recurring program that would guide Forward Pinellas in the planning process: “Strategic Planning & Operations Topics,” or SPOTlight Pinellas. The board selected three [SPOTlight emphasis areas](#) – US 19, Beach Access, and the Gateway/Mid-County area. These emphasis areas will be central to our planning efforts over the upcoming two-year period.

The SPOTlight initiative seeks to leverage partnerships and resources to foster economic opportunity, sustainable growth and a safe multi-modal transportation system. Every few years, the board will decide which topics to designate as SPOTlight areas.

Regional Transportation

The transportation system internal to Pinellas County is part of a larger regional, multimodal system serving the Tampa Bay area. Because of the high volume of cross-county travel, Forward Pinellas coordinates extensively with our partners across the region.

[The Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area \(TMA\) Leadership Group](#) includes elected officials from Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties’ MPO boards. The group provides a forum for the

Tampa Bay metropolitan area to speak with one voice in discussions of regional transportation issues and resources. The TMA Leadership Group helps coordinate regional transportation plans and programs and includes representatives from [PSTA](#), [HART](#), [FDOT](#), [TBARTA](#), and [TBRPC](#).

Focusing on the broader region, the [Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority \(TBARTA\)](#) is tasked with developing and implementing a Regional Transit Development Plan for the West Central Florida region consisting of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties. The agency is governed by a board of elected officials

and appointed members from around the region. TBARTA also supports the regional Joint Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), which is made up of citizen representatives.

[The TBARTA West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee \(CCC\)](#) also serves the West Central Florida area, which also includes Polk County. The CCC provides a forum for coordinating transportation planning, and prioritizing roadway and trail projects while ensuring a consistent approach among the member agencies. These agencies include the area’s MPOs and regional planning councils, FDOT Districts 1 and 7, and Florida Turnpike Enterprise. TBARTA is also represented on the CCC in a non-voting capacity.

A Unified Vision

The defining role of Forward Pinellas is bringing land use and transportation planning efforts together into an integrated whole, from our long-range vision to the policy, funding, and technical activities that implement it.

Our goal is to develop better regional, countywide and local transportation choices that attract jobs, give people the opportunity to fulfill their goals, and strengthen our existing communities in ways that respect their values and vision.