

Board Meeting Summary & Action Sheet

September 14, 2022

*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 September 14, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building.

The board approved the Urban Design Services Pilot Program Project Recommendations

Forward Pinellas Planner Nousheen Rahman provided project recommendations for the Urban Design Services Pilot Program for 2022-2023. In March 2022, the Forward Pinellas Board approved the scope of services, fee estimate, and interlocal agreement with Pinellas County for this jointly-funded pilot program. Forward Pinellas then issued a call for projects to our various local governments, which required the submission of a letter of interest by those interested in receiving funds for a local project. Forward Pinellas has also worked with the urban design consultant, S&ME, who created the scopes for each local project proposal. The Forward Pinellas Board approved funding for the following projects submitted by the City of Clearwater and the Pinellas County Department of Housing & Community Development:

- The City of Clearwater is in the process of establishing a new Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in the North Greenwood area. The city seeks to utilize the pilot program for design recommendations within the North Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue corridor, which is the historic heart of the community, with redevelopment and increased economic activity as priorities in the corridor. The City of Clearwater has also expressed its intent to commit \$25,000 of local funds to assist in covering the project's costs.
- Pinellas County has identified a need for urban design and architectural guidance for proposed developments to ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood context. The following tasks describe the urban design services Pinellas County wishes to utilize under the pilot program:
 - General site plan guidance, which has a significant opportunity for urban design improvements and has the potential for shaping the pedestrian and/or public realm; site plan guidance for affordable housing developments with the intent to improve design aesthetics and compatibility with neighboring residential areas; and site plan guidance for areas such as Downtown Palm Harbor, where a recently adopted form-based code is applicable.

The board approved the Strategic Intermodal System Cost Feasible Plan Development

The Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) is a system of transportation corridors and hubs that are designated by the state to be of strategic importance for the movement of goods and people. Every five years, the state develops the SIS Long Range Plan, which is FDOT's desired list of transportation projects for the strategically important corridors between now and 2050.

The SIS proposed projects in Pinellas County are:

- I-275 from 54th Ave S to Gandy Blvd. - add lanes and lane continuity improvements
- Gandy Blvd. east of 4th Street – add lanes, construct an overpass at Brighton Bay, and replace the bridge
- SR 686/Roosevelt Blvd. – connection from the Gateway Express to Roosevelt/MLK/9th Street
- US19 – construct interchanges at Tampa, Nebraska, Klosterman and Tarpon Ave; Alderman Road was left off the project list

Forward Pinellas staff provided suggested comments on the SIS Cost Feasible Plan for board review (a draft of the letter was provided in the agenda packet).

Commissioner Eggers inquired as to what improvements were being considered given that since the overpass at Tarpon Ave is no longer in the LRTP and staff is recommending keeping it out going forward. Mr. Blanton responded that the City of Tarpon Springs objected to the overpass itself, not other mobility or capacity improvements, as they objected to the bifurcation of their community. The next LRTP will provide clarity on future projects for this segment of US 19.

Commissioner Seel inquired as to whether Forward Pinellas should be recommending changing or removing projects, and if doing so would impact future available funding. Mr. Blanton noted that the MPO does not have that much leverage with the SIS in ensuring the scope of the projects reflects the desires of the local communities because the SIS is ultimately decided by Tallahassee. The inclusion of a project in the agency's Long Range Plan is the only leverage Forward Pinellas has concerning the nature of the SIS improvements. He clarified that the intent of the letter of comments is not to have any money shifted away from local priority projects, but to make sure the agency does its due diligence to fully investigate all options. Commissioner Seel recommended that such flexibility and retention of funding for whatever is ultimately decided for US 19 be clarified in the letter before finalizing it.

Building upon a citizen's request from several months ago, Commissioner Merz inquired if there were other options for the span of the Howard Frankland Bridge that is to be dismantled/discarded upon completion of the replacement bridge. He feels there are some good uses for retaining it, for walking, biking and fishing, for example, citing the fishing pier on the old Sunshine Skyway bridge.

Commissioner Eggers inquired about maintenance cost estimates for retaining the span.

Justin Hall with FDOT addressed the board, sharing that the maintenance costs for the bridge span are increasing each year, and \$10 to \$20 million is currently being spent every two to three years for that maintenance. In addition, the environmental analysis for the current construction project was predicated on the removal of the span, and if retained, the study would need to be done again for federal approval. Finally, the contractor for the project already has the equipment on site to demolish the span. He stated that retaining the span is not financially feasible.

Commissioner Seel made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to sign the Letter of Comments on the SIS Cost Feasible Plan, with the suggested changes to preserve funding for the US19 corridor projects and for adjusting the language to reflect we are still in the process of planning the future design and some flexibility is needed in that regard. Commissioner Eggers seconded the motion.

The board recognized the service of Commissioner Karen Seel

This was Commissioner Seel's final meeting representing the Board of County Commissioners on the Forward Pinellas Board. Whit Blanton and Mayor Kennedy presented her with a gift from the Forward Pinellas Board. It was also announced that Commissioner Seel will be receiving a prestigious award for Outstanding Elected Official Leadership from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) for her two decades of service on the Pinellas MPO. Board members expressed their sincere admiration, appreciation, and well wishes for her retirement.

The board recommended approval of three amendments to the Countywide Plan Map

- The board recommended approval of three amendments:
 - A request from Pinellas County to amend the property at 6464 54th Avenue North from Residential Medium to Residential High to construct additional multifamily dwelling units on the subject property, which would require an increase in density from what is currently allowed under the Residential Medium category. (12-0)
 - A request from Pinellas County to amend the property at 3205 US Alternate 19 North from Residential Low Medium to Office as amending these 0.13 acres of property to the Office category will result in a consistent land use designation for the entirety of the property. (12-0)
 - A request from the City of Clearwater to amend the property at 905 S. Highland Avenue from Office to Public/Semi-Public to allow for the property owners to build a YMCA facility for social/public and/or educational services. (12-0)

SPOTlight Updates

- Staff has been working with the Town of Indian Shores and FDOT to construct a sidewalk for a two-mile stretch of Gulf Boulevard. The town's preferred design concept requires a five-foot easement to construct the full sidewalk, which will also help alleviate flooding issues. The right-of-way estimate is approximately \$25 million, with the construction costs estimated at \$15 million. As this roadway is not on the high-injury road network, FDOT and Forward Pinellas believe this was not a cost-efficient use of funding. FDOT did present to the Town other options that are less intrusive in terms of right-of-way. A meeting and workshop are planned with the Town of Indian Shores and FDOT to further discuss strategies and options to reduce the cost to a more manageable level.
- Forward Pinellas met with the Gateway Business Council about the potential formation of a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) that would engage the business community in working with employers and employees to define transportation needs and commute options in that area. The Business Council was receptive to the idea and a survey will be launched to the employers in the area to find out their needs and to determine if forming a TMO is the right strategy for addressing those transportation needs. The St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce has indicated its interest in supporting the TMO.
- The Alt. 19 Investment Corridor Transition Plan is being rebranded as Advantage Alt. 19: Investing in People and Places. Public workshops will be held on both October 26, 2022, in Largo from 5:00 – 7:00 pm, location is still to be determined, and at the Seminole campus of St. Petersburg College. The dates for the latter workshops are still being finalized.

- The three MPOs serving the core Tampa Bay region and TBARTA recently held a meeting with Amtrak officials to determine their interest in developing rail transportation alternatives in Tampa Bay. Amtrak has an interest in the I-4 corridor, especially the connection possibility of the metro Orlando SunRail network to Lakeland, where Amtrak could then provide service from Lakeland to Tampa's Union Station. The TMA leadership group will be meeting on September 23, 2022, where interest will be gauged in further exploring this potential partnership with possible state support for future passenger rail service.
- The Forward Pinellas Board approved a millage increase for the FY 23 budget at its August meeting. However, a unanimous vote from the Board of County Commissioners was required for its approval but was not obtained. The millage approved by the BCC at its first public hearing on September 8th was 0.0210, which results in a \$274,000 deficit in relation to revenues, but gives the agency a \$350,000 fund balance moving into FY 24. This was a preliminary vote with the final BCC vote to be held on September 22, 2022.

Other Items

- Forward Pinellas welcomed the new staff members:
 - Ariane Martins, Planner, joins us from Texas A&M University. She will be assisting Chelsea Favero on the new 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan.
 - Dana Santos, Communications and Outreach Specialist, comes to us from the University of Pennsylvania.
 - Cris Smith, Accounting Services Coordinator, joins us from Pinellas County Utilities. She will be working with grants management and assisting with finances at the federal and state level.
 - Kaitlyn Neiman, University of South Florida Intern, is an Urban and Regional Planning graduate student.
- PSTA Activities
 - Paul Levesque, PSTA's ASCE Master Transit Bus Technician, was selected by Florida's Public Transportation Association as the State of Florida's Technician of the Year. He will be honored at the Florida Public Transportation Association's annual conference.
 - The SunRunner will begin service on October 21, 2022.
 - PSTA's community Bus Plan will provide the technical basis for the development of capital operating priorities. A consultant will be procured providing considerable public engagement with an onboard rider survey. The effort and outcomes will also be consistent with the Advantage Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan.
 - Councilmember Allbritton shared his appreciation and congratulations for PSTA receiving the \$20 million grant from the federal government for the Intermodal Center and thanked Forward Pinellas for its support, which is a big win for the City of Clearwater, PSTA and the region. Mr. Blanton thanked the City of Clearwater City Council for its support in helping to make this happen. Commissioner Seel shared that Councilmember Allbritton was quite the leader in making sure this went through.
- The Forward Pinellas Legislative Committee will begin meeting in October and board members were selected to serve on the committee in preparation for and throughout the upcoming legislative session. Councilmember Brandi Gabbard, Councilmember Patti Reed, Commissioner Dave Eggers, and Councilmember David Allbritton volunteered to serve and were approved by the board. An additional member is needed, and this open opportunity will be offered to new members joining the board in October or January.

- Mayor Julie Buljaski inquired as to an update on the Waterborne Transportation Plan. The County Administrator feels the amount requested for County funding is not in line with what he feels the county's obligation should be. He wants to see private dollars invested first. Mayor Buljaski feels there should be another Waterborne Transportation Committee meeting to develop a strategy. Commissioner Eggers agrees and feels there needs to be a deeper dive into this. A workshop was suggested.
- Public Comment:
 - Gail Conroy addressed the board over a great concern about the pesticide poisons being used by maintenance workers and their negative effects on the bee population.
 - Park Chapman also sent in an email that was read regarding recent pedestrian and bicycle tragedies in the county, asking what happened to the slogan, "wear white at night or carry a light" and has asked Forward Pinellas to think about promoting this slogan.

Action Sheet September 14, 2022

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

- **Consent Agenda** (vote: 12-0)
Approved to include the following:
 - A. Approval of Minutes of the August 10, 2022 Meeting
 - B. Approval of Committee Appointments
 - C. Approval of Scopes, Fees and Agreements for the St. Pete Beach and Treasure Island Gulf Boulevard Safety Studies.
 - D. Approval of Complete Streets Interlocal Agreement with the City of St. Pete Beach
 - E. Approval of Amendments to Corridor Enhancement Grant Agreement with the City of St. Petersburg
 - F. Cancellation of December Public Hearings and Repurpose Board Meeting to a Workshop
 - G. Approval of Scope and Fees for Development of Socioeconomic Data Projections

- **Countywide Plan Map Amendment(s)**

Three cases were approved:

1. CW 22-18 – Pinellas County (vote: 12-0)
2. CW 22-19 – Pinellas County (vote: 12-0)
3. CW 22-20 – City of Clearwater (vote: 12-0)

- **The board approved the Urban Design Services Pilot Program**

Following a presentation by Nousheen Rahman, Forward Pinellas staff, the board approved the projects for the Urban Design Services Pilot Program. (vote: 12-0)

- **The board approved the Strategic Intermodal System Cost Feasible Plan Development**

Following a presentation by Chelsea Favero, Forward Pinellas staff, the board authorized staff to send Forward Pinellas letter of comments on the Strategic Intermodal System District 7 Cost Feasible Plan to the Department of Transportation. (vote: 12-0)

- **The board nominated and confirmed members to the Legislative Committee**

Following discussion by Whit Blanton, Forward Pinellas staff, the board nominated and confirmed member appointments to the Legislative committee. (vote: 12-0)