



## Policy Positions – 2020

Adopted (October 9, 2019)

**SUPPORT URBAN AGRICULTURE.** Local governments are discouraged from allowing urban agriculture because the Florida Right to Farm Act (Section 823.14, Florida Statutes) exempts commercial farms from most local land development regulation. This protects rural farms from encroaching suburban development, a necessary and beneficial purpose. However, the statute is broadly written and so applies to commercial farms in urban areas, which bring value to communities from a health, economic development and affordability standpoint, and where reasonable regulation is required to protect adjacent development. **Forward Pinellas supports promoting healthy communities through urban agriculture with local land development regulations that protect existing urban development.**

**PROTECT TRUST FUNDS.** Trust funds such as the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and the State Transportation Trust Fund are established with a clear purpose. These trust funds should be protected and not subject to transfers to the Budget Stabilization Fund and the General Revenue Fund. **Forward Pinellas specifically supports protecting funding intended for affordable housing and other specific purposes from being transferred to other sources.**

### **SUPPORT FLEXIBLE AND SUSTAINED TRANSPORTATION FUNDING.**

- Taxes on fuel are a primary source of transportation funding for local governments. Increasing fuel efficiency, more electric vehicles in the fleet, and rising roadway maintenance and operating costs are placing pressure on local governments to search for additional funding. Local fuel taxes are not indexed to the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation, as state fuel taxes are, and therefore, revenues are declining at a faster rate. **Forward Pinellas supports the Legislature permitting the indexing of local fuel taxes for inflation to better keep pace with transportation needs like it has done for state fuel tax revenues.**
- The Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) receives the vast majority of state transportation funding. As our highway network continues to mature in urban areas like Pinellas County, and reaches a point where expansion is not a feasible or affordable option, **Forward Pinellas supports increased flexibility for SIS funds for premium or express transit operating on the SIS roadway, but not necessarily on its own fixed guideway, to enhance mobility on the SIS.** This is consistent with the legislative position of the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council.
- The other primary state transportation funding program is the Other Arterials (OA) program, which is limited to funding projects that add capacity to the state highway network. **Forward Pinellas supports additional flexibility of Other Arterials program funds to enable urban corridor improvements that strengthen the safety and multimodal accessibility of the state highway system.** This would also include expanding OA funding for parallel, non-state roadways that support the state highway system.

- The Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) is a valuable transportation funding mechanism based on state and local participation through regional collaboration. Forward Pinellas believes in fostering stronger regional transportation planning and decision-making and **supports sustained funding of \$250 million per year for the TRIP program** as a way to strengthen regional partnerships to improve mobility.

**STOP DISTRACTED DRIVING.** Distracted driving poses a threat to the safety of motorists and non-motorized users. Forward Pinellas is committed to a Vision Zero initiative to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways. Between 2015 and 2018, 33 fatalities and 577 incapacitating injuries happened in Pinellas County related to distracted driving crashes (Crash Data Management System). **Forward Pinellas supports legislation that expands upon the adopted Texting While Driving law by prohibiting distracted driving by addressing the use of wireless communications devices with clear definitions and clarification on what it means to be stationary and operating.**

**MAINTAIN MPO AUTHORITY FOR APPORTIONMENT STRUCTURE.** State-mandated changes to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are a recurring concern to Forward Pinellas and other MPOs statewide. **Forward Pinellas opposes one-size-fits all changes that would usurp local authority to determine the most appropriate structure of MPOs consistent with federal law and consultation with the Governor.**

**SUPPORT HOME RULE.** Florida is a diverse state characterized by unique communities. Pinellas County is an example of that with its many downtowns, beach communities and neighborhoods. Home rule allows local governments to align the values of a community to its ordinances and other governing elements. **Forward Pinellas supports home rule and opposes bills that erode the ability of local governments to reflect the wishes and desires of their communities.**