

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES – MEETING OF JULY 13, 2005**

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, created by the State of Florida in accordance with Title 23 Section 134 United States Code and Chapter 339 Florida Statutes, met in regular session on Wednesday, July 13, 2005 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Members Present

Karen Seel, Chair – Board of County Commissioners
Richard Kriseman, Vice Chair – City of St. Petersburg Council
Chris Arbutine – Mayor, City of Belleair Bluffs, representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
John Doglione – Mayor, City of Dunedin
Ronnie Duncan – Board of County Commissioners
Pat Gerard – City of Largo Commission
Jay Lasita – City of St. Petersburg Council
William Mischler – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
Jim Ronecker – City of Oldsmar Council, representing Oldsmar, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs
Don Skelton, *ex officio* – Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Members Absent

Frank Hibbard – Mayor, City of Clearwater
Robert Stewart – Board of County Commissioners

Others Present

Brian Smith – MPO Executive Director
Sarah Ward – MPO Transportation Planning Administrator
Ned Allen – St. Petersburg, MPO Citizens Advisory Committee
Kwame Arhin – Federal Highway Administration, Florida District
Brian Beaty – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Christine Carvalho – Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
Bob Clifford – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Rick Eggers – City of Pinellas Park
David Sadowsky – Pinellas County Attorney's Office
Courtney Orr – Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
Peter Yauch – Pinellas County Public Works
Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder
Harriet McKay – MPO Staff Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Karen Seel called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Mayor Mischler gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

At this time, Chair Seel welcomed Don Skelton, newly-appointed Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, District 7.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There was no citizen comment.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of June 8, 2005**
- B. Approval of Invoices**
 - 1. TEI**
 - 2. Tindale-Oliver & Associates**
 - 3. Renaissance Planning Group**
- C. Approval of Amendment No. 3 to HNTB (formerly TEI) GPC Contract**
- D. Approval of Printing of Trail Guides**
- E. Approval of Joint Certification Statement**

ACTION: Commissioner Gerard moved to approve the consent agenda, Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

V. MPO CERTIFICATION REPORT

Kwame Arhin of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the triennial review by the FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area (TMA). The TMA is comprised of Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco Counties. Hernando County is not part of the TMA but voluntarily participates in the review.

Mr. Arhin reviewed the purpose of the certification review; the major certification review requirements; and the certification process. A site visit to Pinellas County took place on January 18-19, 2005. A report summarizing the federal agencies' findings was submitted to the MPO on March 31. The findings consisted of noteworthy practices, recommendations, and corrective actions. Today's presentation of the findings to the MPO board represented the "closeout" phase of the certification process.

The MPO was commended for six noteworthy practices. They were: 1) a website for disseminating information; 2) leadership in the development of bike and pedestrian trails; 3) the development of livable communities supported by alternative transportation systems; 4) strategies for addressing congestion; 5) the effective use of committees; and 6) improved data collection and reporting processes.

The FHWA and FTA made four recommendations to the MPO to improve its general planning process. They concerned: 1) the membership of the Citizens Advisory Committee; 2) the methodology used to select priority projects for the TIP; 3) the process used to identify goods movements; and 4) developing a process for addressing Title VI complaints.

The FHWA and FTA took no corrective actions.

Mr. Arhin reported that as a result of the triennial review, the FHWA and FTA had determined that the transportation planning process for the Pinellas County MPO is certified as meeting the requirements of 23 USC 134 and 23 CFR 450.334(d). The certification will remain in effect until May 31, 2008.

Chair Seel asked if there were a specific methodology that the MPO should use to select TIP priorities and what process the MPO should use to address Title VI complaints. Mr. Arhin responded that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) needs more detail. The commentary from the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) can be expanded in the TIP. The MPO has a good priority list, and the public should know this after reading the TIP. Examples of what other MPOs have done can be provided by Mr. Arhin.

Councilmember Lasita asked Mr. Arhin to elaborate on the CAC recommendation. Mr. Arhin responded that when the agencies reviewed the general population and the minority population of the county and compared that data with CAC representation, they found that the minority representation on the CAC was not the same percentage as the minority population of the county. The review process combined all the minorities into one.

Staff will return with a report on how to respond to the four recommendations.

Chair Seel thanked Mr. Arhin for the report and the staff for its work. She encouraged board members to attend a CAC meeting. Staff will provide the board with a meeting schedule.

VI. I-275/SKYWAY BRIDGE RENAMING

By act of the 2005 Florida Legislature, two segments of I-275 in Pinellas County were renamed. The segment that extends from the Howard Frankland Bridge to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge has been designated the "St. Petersburg Parkway/William C. Cramer Memorial Highway." The segment from Sunshine Skyway Bridge over Tampa Bay has been designated the "Bob Graham/Sunshine Skyway Bridge."

In order to proceed with the erection of road markers, resolutions in support of the honorary designations are needed from the affected government agencies. The road segment of I-275 is within Pinellas County and the City of St. Petersburg. The approach to the bridge is within Pinellas County.

Mayor Doglione asked what affect this might have on the county's effort to give roads a single name. Mayor Arbutine said that this might add confusion to the road name issue in the county. Councilmember Lasita said that the City of St. Petersburg supports the resolution.

Commissioner Duncan asked if there are criteria for renaming a road. Secretary Skelton responded that this kind legislation occurs every year. The road will still be known as I-275. Suitable markers will designate the specified sections as they are listed in the resolution. Councilmember Kriseman said that these moves are made to honor people and shouldn't add to the confusion.

Secretary Skelton said that the signs won't interfere with the direction signs for drivers. The DOT is directed to put "suitable" markers in appropriate locations where they won't conflict with informational signs.

ACTION: Councilmember Lasita moved to recommend concurrence with the new designations for I-275 and the Skyway Bridge. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

The Board of County Commissioners will take final action at end of month on the interstate designation.

VII. REPLACEMENT OF DUNEDIN ENHANCEMENT PROJECT ON PRIORITY LIST

The MPO's current Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program priority list of projects shows a sidewalk project on Palm Boulevard in the City of Dunedin. The city has proposed swapping this project for a sidewalk project on Lexington Street. The Lexington Street project would help to provide a safe walk for students who will be attending a new elementary school scheduled for completion in 2006. The estimated cost of the Lexington Street project is \$75,000.

Mayor Doglione said that the Palm Boulevard area is a more adult area, while the Lexington Street area will be frequented by many students. A youth activity center is also in the Lexington Street area. The mayor asked that the Lexington Street project be upgraded from Priority 2 to Priority 1.

Ms. Ward said that in September, the MPO will be reviewing all the priority lists in order to give the FDOT some direction for building the work program for next fall. The advisory committees will have reviewed the priority lists in August. This will be the opportunity to change project priorities. Staff will work with the FDOT to determine when funding would become available.

Ms. Ward also said that the CMAQ projects that remain in the program going forward would remain on the list until completed. The staff has not talked specifically about moving CMAQ projects to the TE list if they qualify for enhancement funds. Staff may need to make new applications in the next several months. A number of projects that still need funding remain. However, not all of the CMAQ projects would qualify for TE funding. Ms. Ward noted that the only projects on the CMAQ list are trails. The sidewalks were moved to the TD list.

MOTION: Mayor Doglione moved to approve the City of Dunedin request to substitute the Lexington Street project for the Palm Boulevard project. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

Mayor Doglione said that the Lexington Street area is a neighborhood with many children who will be going to the elementary school and the middle school. The city has worked with the school board to accommodate a sidewalk within the school property and create safe walking routes.

VOTE ON MOTION: The motion carried.

Chair Seel said that as all of the projects are reviewed, safety should be the primary criterion. Pedestrian and biking accidents are happening with greater frequency in the county.

VIII. TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

A. GPTMS Reimbursement for Ryan White Care Act Transportation

Greater Pinellas Transportation Management Services (GPTMS), a privately-owned company, manages Pinellas County's Transportation Disadvantaged Program by overseeing the customer application process, scheduling clients' trips, and paying the transportation providers. Another part of GPTMS' responsibility is to handle requests from the Hillsborough County Health and Social Services Department for HIV patients, whose transportation costs are funded through the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. Hillsborough County administers the Ryan White program.

Regarding reimbursement for the Ryan White clients, Hillsborough County Health and Social Services reimburses the Pinellas County MPO, and the MPO then reimburses GPTMS. In order to streamline this procedure and send payment directly to GPTMS, the MPO must formally approve this arrangement. Staff recommended that the MPO approve this new procedure.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to approve the new reimbursement procedure, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

B. Selection of Ambulatory Providers and Contract Approval

Last May, the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) conducted a Request for Qualification (RFQ) process to select non-emergency ambulatory providers to serve under contract to provide services to the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. In response, three taxi companies submitted proposals. They were BATS Taxi, Clearwater Yellow Cab, and United Cab. The RFQ review committee recommended to the LCB that all three companies be given a contract with the MPO effective August 1, 2005. At their meeting on June 28, the LCB voted to approve that recommendation and forward it to the MPO.

ACTION: Councilmember Kriseman moved to approve the LCB's recommendation for providers. Mayor Doglione seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

C. Contract Renewals

Contracts for Transportation Disadvantaged services between the MPO and Neighborly Care Network, Pinellas Association for Retarded Children, and Upper Pinellas Association for Retarded Citizens, the wheelchair providers, and the coordinated agencies will expire on July 31. At its meeting on June 28, the Local Coordinating Board approved recommending to the MPO that these contracts be renewed for the period August 1, 2005 to July 31, 2006.

Tri-County services will no longer be provided, so that rate schedule has been removed from the contracts. Staff will check to see how these clients will be served in the future.

ACTION: Councilmember Lasita moved to renew the TD contracts as recommended, Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

D. 2005/2006 Proposed Funding Allocations

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged allocated \$1,685,303 in trip/equipment grant funding and \$35,573 in planning grant funding to Pinellas County for FY 2005/2006. For several years, the trip/equipment grant money has been divided among the brokered system, which is managed by Greater Pinellas Transportation Management Services (GPTMS), and four non-profit organizations. Those four organizations are Pinellas Association for Retarded Children, the Upper Pinellas Association for Retarded Citizens, Neighborly Care Network, and the Watson Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. At its meeting on June 28, the LCB recommended dividing the money among all these agencies as it had in 2004/2005, giving the extra money to the brokered system. A table showing the recommended allocations to the agencies was included with meeting materials.

The total allocation for 2006/2007 will probably be less next year, returning to 2004/2005 levels. Therefore, the LCB decided not to give the agencies more money this year because they did not want to commit to a higher revenue level and then reduce it the following year. It was noted that GPTMS operates based on the fluctuations of demand and is more capable of handling the variables of changing finances than are the provider agencies. It was also noted that any of these agencies can get rides for its clients through the brokered system.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to approve the allocations for 205/2006. Commissioner Gerard seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

E. Federal Poverty Guidelines

The Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program uses 200% of the Federal Poverty Level Household Income Guidelines to qualify individuals for TD Program services. These figures are based on the publication of annual household incomes by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The incomes are converted to monthly figures that are presented to the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) each year for review. The guidelines are adopted every year.

The 2005 monthly income chart to be used for the qualification of individuals for TD Program services was included with meeting materials. At their meeting on June 28, LCB approved these guidelines.

ACTION: Commissioner Gerard moved approval of the guidelines for 2005, Mayor Mischler seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

IX. TRANSPORTATION LEVEL OF SERVICE/CONCURRENCY REVIEW

Mr. Smith updated the board regarding Level of Service (LOS) procedures. Level of Service measurement is becoming more and more discussed during review of projects for transportation and development. Per the new state act, SB 360, the MPO must review its concurrency procedures and LOS procedures.

Mr. Smith reviewed the history and evolution of how LOS has been measured and graded. Now, with the new act, what has been legislated is not a letter grade based on speed but rather the volume to capacity. The factors of measurement include the number of lanes, the curb cuts, the

number of traffic signals, and other factors influencing the capacity of the road. Volume is added to those factors, and a rating is determined.

Over the next several months, staff, the committees, and consultants will be working to put all those factors together to create one procedure. Currently, there are several methods used throughout the county to measure LOS. Additionally, this system will be used under concurrency. The goal is to preserve the LOS. Using other modes of travel will assist this. This effort will be going on throughout the state. When the method has been finalized, its adoption will be a policy decision by elected officials with the assistance of technical personnel. This will then come before the MPO and one system will be used throughout the county.

X. BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC) RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Motion on Countdown Signal at Curlew Road/Alternate 19/Pinellas Trail

At its June meeting, the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) passed a motion regarding a pedestrian countdown signal at Curlew Road/Alternate 19/Pinellas Trail. This type of signal tells pedestrians and motorists how much time is left for the pedestrian to cross the road before the signal changes. The committee noted that the signal would be beneficial to the pedestrian with a side benefit that vehicles would be more deferential to the pedestrians because they know how much time the pedestrians still need to get through the crosswalk. Also, the BAC observed that at the crossing, the pedestrians crossing north-south and those going across Alt. 19 did not need the button to activate the walk sign. However, the pedestrians crossing east-west in the crosswalk needed the button for activation. The BAC recommended that the FDOT be consistent throughout the intersection and make all the signals automatic.

Mayor Doglione noted that this is the most heavily used crossover point because of people coming off the trail and going west to the causeway.

*At 1:54 p.m., Councilmember Lasita left.

Mayor Doglione said that there is a sidewalk on the north side of Curlew Road, and pedestrian activity will increase. If it becomes fully automatic on all four legs of the crosswalk, that would be acceptable. Every time the signal changes, there would be an automatic pedestrian crossing.

*At 1:56 p.m., Councilmember Lasita returned.

Councilmember Kriseman supported the recommendation, noting that these signals have been well received in St. Petersburg because it makes it easier for the pedestrian to cross an intersection. Several board members agreed that countdown signals that start with the walk signal would be the best signal for this intersection. They suggested that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) allow the county to install countdowns that begin at the start of the signal change.

Secretary Skelton said that this issue has been raised in passed. Those signals starting countdown at the change in signal are not in compliance with regulations. The State of Florida will remain in compliance.

Peter Yauch of Pinellas County Public Works explained how pedestrians signals have been established in the county. The countdown signals start at the beginning of flashing “don’t walk” and the flashing “don’t walk” interval is the same length of time all the time during the day. The walk interval can vary by time of day. That presents a technology problem because the countdown signal modules are connected to the wires that controlled the old pedestrian signals, so there is no intelligence to know what the control is going to do. It just retimes cycle after cycle. It knows what flashing “don’t walk” is. If you rewired intersections that have new controller equipment, which to Mr. Yauch’s knowledge, doesn’t exist, or have the signals operate in fixed time, so that they are not responsive to changes in traffic demand, then you could time from the beginning of “walk”. However, there is an unknown in this that the hardware can’t provide at this time.

Mr. Yauch elaborated on his remarks. The signals are tied to how long the green time is for the vehicles. On a main street, the walk could be on 60 seconds, and then you have 15-20 seconds of flashing-don’t walk. Or, in the middle of the night, when you have a short cycling, it could be only 25 seconds of walk, or even 7 seconds of walk. There is a lot of variation on walk interval. The flashing “don’t walk” time is timed for someone leaving the curb on one side, walking at a typical speed, and getting across to the far side during flashing “don’t walk.” It’s a clearance interval, the yellow follows that, and then the red comes on before any conflicting movements are issued.

Secretary Skelton said that the “don’t walk” is covering the amount of time it takes to cover the entire intersection. The “walk” is dependent on how much green time there is. If you have a green time of 60 seconds, then you’re going to have a walk that could be 35 seconds long.

Mr. Yauch said that the alternative would be to say that the walk time is always 7 seconds, so you’d have a short walk, a flashing “don’t walk”, and then a long time to wait to cross the street even while there are no conflicting movements. The signal would stay green, but there would be no pedestrian movement.

ACTION: Commissioner Gerard moved to approve the BAC recommendation, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

B. Motion on Proposed Pedestrian-Activated Signal at Tarpon Ave. and Safford Ave.

Tarpon Springs has a major resurfacing project on Tarpon Avenue. There are a number of initiatives trying to improve the intersection of Tarpon Avenue and Safford Avenue. The Pinellas Trail crosses it, and vehicular traffic is active. It is difficult for pedestrians and trail users to cross the road here. Tarpon springs was receptive to the idea of working with the BAC on signalization but said that this is primarily a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) responsibility because Tarpon Avenue is a state road. The city said that the BAC should first contact the state.

Regarding the conditions at the intersection, the BAC noted that pedestrians and trail users have to go so far into the intersection to see around parked cars that they are at risk. The BAC feels that the characteristics of this intersection justify a pedestrian-activated signal because of the visibility problems there. Traffic is active, and there is little reaction time for pedestrians. The BAC recommend that the FDOT make an evaluation of a pedestrian-activated, signalized crossing. Other attempts to make it a safe crossing are not adequate.

ACTION: Mayor Mischler moved to approve the BAC’s recommendation, Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

There was no news about the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This bill expired in 2003 and has been extended eight times, most recently to July 19. There remains disagreement about the spending level for the surface transportation program.

XII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

A. Citizens Advisory Committee

The CAC has four vacancies. No appointments were made. Chair Seel reported that she had sent a letter to the municipalities asking for nominations to the CAC but has received no responses. She urged that board members attend a CAC meeting and asked for their help in filling these vacancies.

B. Bicycle Advisory Committee

ACTION: Councilmember Kriseman moved to reappoint Steve Doherty to the BAC as a representative of Clearwater. Commissioner Duncan seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

C. Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee

ACTION: Mayor Doglione moved to appoint Terry Harding to the PTAC as a representative of AAA. Councilmember Lasita seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

D. Technical Coordinating Committee

ACTION: Commissioner Gerard moved to appoint Jerry Paradise to the TCC as the City of Oldsmar representative. Councilmember Kriseman seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

XIII. PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY ACTIVITIES

The PSTA’s board of directors met on June 22, 2005, and the minutes were included with meeting materials. Mayor Arbutine noted that the PSTA extended its five-year inter-county bus pass program with HARTLine.

The PSTA is looking at the trolley program in downtown Clearwater. During the summertime, there are minor traffic bottlenecks, so revisions should correct that.

The PSTA had its first budget hearing workshop. It appears that there will be no increase in the millage rate this year for the PSTA this year.

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Joint Chairs Coordinating Committee

The CCC met on June 10, 2005 at the Brooker Creek Education Center in Tarpon Springs. The agenda was included with meeting materials. Chair Seel will forward to the board copies of rail transit reports received at that meeting.

B. Correspondence

A citizen wrote to the county administrator regarding doing a safety campaign about road rage. The citizen suggested a logo, and Chair Seel will forward it to the community traffic safety team for their consideration. The county's public communications director will also look at it. Chair Seel said that it would be incumbent on the MPO to be pro-active for pedestrian and cyclist safety. With the board's agreement, she asked staff to start working on this.

C. Other

Mayor Mischler asked Secretary Skelton about the lighting on the approaches to the Skyway Bridge. He said that it is very dark, and this could be a security problem as well as a safety problem. Secretary Skelton responded that the bridge has significant security.

Mayor Mischler reported that at the U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in Chicago in June, there was a discussion about funding for mag-lev systems. They learned that there are no federal funds for this type of mass transit system. The mayor noted the very high cost of this system has prevented Seattle from proceeding with a plan to extend its existing system.

Chair Seel said that Phoenix is in the process of adding a rail system, and their costs are one and a half times the cost presented in a referendum. Mayor Mischler said that Las Vegas is not getting the ridership it expected.

Mayor Doglione said that the MPO has spent time, energy, and money on this program and it must decide what it's going to do. Otherwise, the issue will vegetate, and the MPO will be back where it was some 20 years ago, talking about how to enhance transit in Pinellas County and West Central Florida. The MPO shouldn't compare West Coast costs to Pinellas County costs. The problems of these areas don't convince him the county will have the same problems. Nevertheless, the MPO must make some kind of decision.

Councilmember Lasita said that this information needs to be in the public domain. Also, there must be a place where such a system is working relative to budget, and it would be good to have that information. He said that the board should give the voters the numbers and see where they stand. The county ought to be a neutral and objective source of information, both pro and con. He noted that the move currently seems to be toward bus rapid transit. His goal would be to get an initiative before the voters, ideally in November 2008.

Mayor Mischler agreed that it is time to go to the voters and also to make a decision. Also, the MPO should not continue to spend money on consultants.

Mr. Smith said that in September, a report will be coming to the board through the PMI Steering Committee.

Chair Seel said that in her opinion, the prices are not realistic now because they were based on prices for steel and concrete that existed before recent escalations.

Mayor Mischler noted that the MPO had been counting heavily on federal funding, which is no longer there.

Chair Seel said that the MPO has \$3 million coming to it, and part of it would be to try to get Bus Rapid Transit going. There has been discussion among Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco Counties about working together in the transit area.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Karen Williams Seel, Chair