

**PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MINUTES – MEETING OF OCTOBER 8, 2014**

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, created by the State of Florida in accordance with Title 23 United States Code, Section 134 and Chapter 339.175 Florida Statutes, met in regular session on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 in the chambers of the Pinellas County Commission, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

- Karen Seel – *Chairman* – Board of County Commissioners
- David Archie – *Vice Chairman* – Mayor, City of Tarpon Springs representing Tarpon Springs/Oldsmar/Safety Harbor
- Harriet Crozier – *Secretary* – Commissioner, City of Largo
- John Morroni – *Treasurer* – Board of County Commissioners
- Sandra Bradbury – Mayor, City of Pinellas Park
- David Eggers – Mayor, City of Dunedin (arrived 1:13 p.m.)
- Doreen Hock-DiPolito – Vice Mayor, Councilmember, City of Clearwater
- Jim Kennedy – Councilman, City of St. Petersburg
- Cookie Kennedy – Commissioner, City of Indian Rocks Beach, representing the beach communities of Belleair Beach, Belleair Shore, Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, Madeira Beach, North Redington Beach, Treasure Island, Redington Beach, Redington Shores, St. Pete Beach
- Wengay Newton – Councilman, City of St. Petersburg
- Kevin Piccarreto – Commissioner, Town of Belleair, representing the in land communities of Belleair, Belleair Bluffs, Gulfport, Kenneth City, Seminole, South Pasadena
- Ken Welch – Board of County Commissioners
- Ming Gao, non-voting advisory – (representing the Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation District 7)

MEMBERS ABSENT

- Julie Bujalski – Commissioner, City of Dunedin, representing PSTA

OTHERS PRESENT

- Sarah Ward – MPO Interim Executive Director
- Al Bartolotta – Pinellas County MPO
- David Sadowsky – County Attorney's Office
- Chelsea Hardy – County Attorney's Office
- Ming Gao – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- Lee Royal – Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- Bob Bray – City of Pinellas Park
- Paul Bertels – City of Clearwater
- Evan Mory – City of St. Petersburg
- Tom Whalen – City of St. Petersburg
- Gina Harvey – Pinellas County DEI
- Vivian Peters – Citizen
- Bill Jonson – City of Clearwater
- Brad Miller – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)
- Jim Green – Care-Ride
- Mark Bayer – FDA
- Brian Smith – BPAC Chairman
- Chelsea Favero – Pinellas County MPO
- Carolyn Kuntz – MPO Recorder

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Karen Seel called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Councilman Newton performed the invocation and Mayor Archie led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens who came forward to speak.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of September 10, 2014
- B. Approval of Invoice
 - 1. Tindale-Oliver and Associates
 - 2. TBARTA (CCC Services)
 - 3. PPC for MPO Share of Copier
- C. Approval of MPO Staff Services Agreement With Pinellas County Planning and Development Services
- D. Approval of Intergovernmental Coordination and Review Joint Participation Agreement
- E. Approval of Amendment No. 4 to HART Agreement
- F. Approval of CCC Interlocal Agreement
- G. Approval of Pedestrian Safety Awareness Week
- H. Approval of MPO Operating Procedures
- I. Approval of Committee Appointment (BPAC – Becky Afonso North County)
- J. Approval of MPO Director Compensation
- K. Approval of 2013 Crash Data Report

Chairman Seel removed Item J (Approval of MPO Director Compensation) from the Consent Agenda to be discussed separately. Regarding the 2013 Crash Data Report, Ms. Ward indicated the MPO will receive a presentation at a future meeting.

Commissioner Morroni moved, Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito seconded, and motion carried to approve Items A thru I and Item K of the Consent Agenda (Vote 11-0).

Regarding Item J, Chairman Seel reported that the Executive Committee had earlier discussed the objective of unifying the MPO and PPC Boards and make them totally independent of County government. In addition, the intent was to make the Director independent. Concerning the car allowance included in the Director's compensation, Chairman Seel noted that the County policies do not allow for a car allowance; therefore, she emphasized this was not setting a precedent for other County employees to receive a car allowance. As the MPO becomes independent of the County, there was agreement by the Executive Committee that Sarah Ward would be compensated for her travel within the area served by FDOT District VII and that she would be paid out of the MPO's operating funds. The County will continue to pay the MPO employees' salaries through the last payroll in December of 2014. The request is to approve compensation for Sarah Ward, which includes \$200 a month for car allowance based on her average travel for the last year and a cell phone stipend of \$65 per month consistent with the County's policy.

At 1:13 p.m., Mayor Eggers arrived

Commissioner Piccarreto moved, Mayor Bradbury seconded, and motion carried to approve Item J of the Consent Agenda (Vote 12-0).

V. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

A. Proposed Amendment to the FY 2014/15 – 2018/19 Transportation Improvement Program

Ms. Ward provided a lead-in and asked Mr. Smith to come forward to provide brief comments regarding the Coast-to-Coast Trail.

Brian Smith, BPAC Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, provided a brief overview of the project. The Foundation developed a map that shows a series of trail connectors for the entire State of Florida. The Coast-to-Coast Trail extends from the Pinellas Trail through Orlando and over to the Cape Canaveral area, which is a 270-mile corridor with 14 existing trails and 7 gaps. Another trail called the Northeast Corridor connects to the Coast-to-Coast Trail through Jacksonville up to Maine. Another connector goes south from the Pinellas Trail to Naples. He described the gap at Keystone going east into Pasco County. Last year, the Legislature approved an apportionment of \$50 million for completion of the gaps; however, it was vetoed by the Governor. This year, the Legislature approved an allocation of \$15.9 million and the Governor approved it. This funding source will be used to construct the Pinellas County portion of the gap at Keystone and Brooker Creek.

****During Mr. Smith's overview, Commissioner Welch left at 1:21 and returned at 1:25 p.m.****

Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito thanked Mr. Smith for going to Washington DC with her for a debriefing regarding the TIGER grant application. Although Pinellas County was not awarded funds this year, they received high praises for the connectivity and they were encouraged to apply again next year for the TIGER grant. She asked what the schedule is for construction on the Starkey Gap; whereas, Mr. Smith responded this fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito noted that she has been asked what the schedule is for the Courtney Campbell Trail. Lee Royal, FDOT, responded that construction has begun on the Courtney Campbell Trail and it will take approximately 1 ½ years to complete. She will keep the MPO staff updated on the progress so that information can be passed on to the MPO members.

Ms. Royal then presented the Coast-to-Coast Trail Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment. This is a design/build project. The request for bids will be sent out this year. FDOT will have a better idea of the schedule once they receive the bids and have identified the contractor. She will keep the MPO staff updated on the progress. FDOT has set aside \$4.3 million this fiscal year for construction of this gap. The section in Pasco County is moving forward with design. Duke Energy requested additional design work before they entered into an easement agreement. Hernando County completed a study on S.R. 54 that included a shared use trail so they are moving forward into design. FDOT is requesting approval of the TIP amendment.

Some discussion followed.

Upon call for public comment, no one came forward; therefore, the public hearing was closed.

Councilman Jim Kennedy moved, Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito seconded, and motion carried to approve the TIP amendment by roll call vote (Vote 12-0).

Chairman Seel thanked Brian Smith and Barbara Hoffman, as well as the MPO staff, for their effort regarding this project. Commissioner Morroni wanted to personally thank Barbara Hoffman for her hard work and he appreciated Brian Smith's volunteer work.

VI. PRESENTATION AND/OR ACTION ITEMS

A. U.S. 19 Pilot Study – Pedestrian Access Measures and Corridor Study

Ms. Ward provided lead-in remarks. Mr. Bartolotta provided a brief overview of the U.S. 19 effort. He noted the section of U.S. 19 that is under construction from Whitney Road to Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard has created impacts to transit users in this area. Two of PSTA's most heavily used transit stops are located near the intersection of Harn Boulevard that results in significant pedestrian crossing activity. FDOT has installed signage along this section that directs bus passengers to bus stops located near the intersections and crosswalks. However, the impacts of construction in this area underscore the larger issue that is associated with the interchanges being built along U.S. 19. Recognizing these safety issues, MPO staff is working with its partner agencies to develop immediate and long-term solutions. They are in the process of finalizing a Scope of Services for a study of the U.S. 19 corridor from East Bay Drive to Klosterman Road in Tarpon Springs. The purpose of the study is to improve connectivity and provide safe mobility options for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as transit users and buses within this corridor. The study will incorporate the other studies and road safety audits that have been conducted for this corridor. The consultant for this effort has begun preliminary work, including data collection and looking at similar corridors elsewhere.

Ms. Ward indicated that MPO staff will email the maps to the MPO members. PSTA performed an analysis of U.S. 19 and Harn Boulevard since it's a more immediate concern with the closure of Harn Boulevard. PSTA looked at various options to assist the transit users; however, most of the options weren't feasible. The best option for the short term is for transit users who wish to go southbound to take a northbound bus and then take another bus to go southbound. The School District staff at the Technical Coordinating Committee indicated they had a number of school buses in this area due to the apartment complexes so they will also be a stakeholder in this effort. As part of the study, they will be looking at the current land use as well as future land use. Ms. Ward added that they are looking at the feasibility of a pedestrian overpass at Harn Boulevard and U.S. 19 to accommodate the transit riders, as well as the pedestrians and bicyclists trying to cross U.S. 19 in this area.

Regarding the circulator PSTA looked at for Harn and U.S. 19, Mr. Brad Miller came forward to respond. Mr. Miller responded that pedestrians living in an apartment complex are crossing the east side of the road to access the Hess Station on the west side of the road and then back across to their apartment. Mr. Miller added that the pedestrians will change their travel habits as to what is easiest for them. There are signs in the area notifying the transit users to take a northbound bus and then use the crosswalk to get to the southbound bus stop.

****During Mr. Miller's response, Commissioner Piccarreto left at 1:46 and returned at 1:48 p.m.****

In response to comments, Chairman Seel noted there was a meeting at PSTA regarding this issue that they need to be prepared for the pedestrians and transit users. She reminded everyone that, several years ago, Mark Fenton walked the U.S. 19 corridor and Gulf Boulevard corridor along with several MPO members and staff regarding safety initiatives. She indicated that they have been highlighting the issues all along, however, they need solutions.

Commissioner Welch added that, with the passage of the Greenlight referendum, there will be other issues that will need to be dealt with and they will need to figure out how to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, which is the basis for this study. PSTA has committed to being a partner in order to identify solutions.

Mr. Miller added that PSTA is working closely with FDOT, especially since Bus Rapid Transit is part of the Greenlight Plan. PSTA needs to provide input earlier in the process to make sure transit is incorporated into the design and all these concerns are worked out in advance of construction.

Ms. Ward indicated they have met with FDOT to provide input on the design for Curlew Road and U.S. 19, with the idea that they can be applied as FDOT moves forward with other locations along U.S. 19 in the future. Ms. Ward added the MPO needs to prioritize funding that can be used for additional improvements in the U.S. 19 corridor. The MPO staff had previously recommended that the MPO allocate a portion of the Surface Transportation Project (STP) funds that can be used for safety and operational improvement projects. Also, Ms. Ward indicated that the MPO had previously approved a recommendation to keep the improvements for U.S. 19 within the 200-foot right-of-way in order to keep the costs from being so high. The consultant has been asked to look at case studies in the U.S., as well as other countries, in order to identify innovative solutions to address these issues. She noted the long-term solution is to look at viable land use along the corridor with the idea of locating residential and pedestrian activity at the interchanges instead of mid-block to alleviate the mid-block crossings.

Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito asked whether the problem with Harn Boulevard and U.S. 19 is that there isn't enough right-of-way to provide a circulatory bus and bus stop. Ms. Ward responded that she would bring back more details but FDOT has been working with the City of Clearwater to look at options.

Bill Jonson, City of Clearwater Councilman, came forward and asked that all counts, not just those at signalized intersections, be collected and taken into account before the design is complete at Curlew Road. He added that pedestrians are crossing U.S. 19 at Harn Boulevard to also access the recreation center and not just for transit or the Hess Station.

B. Modification and Amendment Procedure for the Long Range Transportation Plan

Ms. Ward indicated that the MPO staff is documenting in writing the procedures for what constitutes an amendment or modification to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The procedures have been agreed to by FDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. A modification to the LRTP would be considered a minor change and would require a less administrative process in terms of a public hearing. The process includes a timeframe for how long it would take for an amendment to the LRTP. The MPO staff is recommending approval of the procedures and they would be added as an appendix to the LRTP.

Commissioner Cookie Kennedy moved, Commissioner Welch seconded, and motion carried to approve the procedures (Vote 12-0).

C. MPOAC Institute Follow-Up

Ms. Ward indicated that three MPO members attended the Weekend Institute in 2014 and this agenda item is to provide them an opportunity to report on their participation. A flyer was included in the members' folder to provide a summary of topics that would be covered in 2015. The dates for 2015 have not yet been scheduled.

Vice Mayor Hock-DiPolito reported that the MPOAC Weekend Institute provided a clear understanding of the authority and responsibility for the MPOs, as well as the funding.

Councilman Jim Kennedy reported that the Institute provided a historical perspective as to how they emerged as an MPO, as well as the correlation between federal funding and local input. He encouraged the other members to attend, noting it was beneficial to receive this level of understanding and training.

Commissioner Crozier reported that the historical information they received at the beginning helped explain how they became an MPO. She noted it provided a good opportunity for networking and that they learned the challenges of other areas. She also encouraged other members to attend.

Ms. Ward added that it is a weekend event and that MPO staff will provide the dates for 2015 as soon as they become available. There are two dates scheduled, with one in Orlando and one in Tampa. Initially, two members are allowed to attend from each MPO; however, if other MPOs don't fill their slots, then other members can attend. Upon query whether PSTA members could attend, Ms. Ward responded that the Weekend Institute is limited to MPO members because the MPO pays for the facilitators; however, she noted they occasionally offer an abbreviated version at the Association of Counties and the League of Cities.

D. Committee Recommendation – Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Advisory Committee

• **ITS Map Amendment**

Ms. Ward briefly explained this is a proposal from the City of St. Petersburg to add roadways in the downtown area to the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Map and that the ITS Committee recommended approval at their last meeting. The ITS Map will be incorporated into the 2040 LRTP.

Councilman Jim Kennedy moved, Commissioner Morroni seconded, and motion carried to approve the ITS Map amendment for inclusion in the 2040 LRTP (Vote 12-0).

VII. REPORTS/UPDATE

A. PSTA Activities Report

Brad Miller, PSTA, thanked the MPO members who participated in calling people, attending e-townhall meetings, and other outreach opportunities. PSTA set another record last fiscal year and ridership for September continued to increase for the 4th month in a row.

Commissioner Cookie Kennedy indicated that Mr. Miller was presenting the Greenlight Plan at the October 29 BIG-C meeting, which will be held at the Belleair Beach City Hall (444 Causeway Boulevard) at 9:00 a.m. and that everyone is welcomed to attend.

Councilman Jim Kennedy thanked Mr. Miller for hosting the e-townhall meetings that educated people regarding Greenlight Pinellas. The range went from the 30% range to the 60% range that people were educated and informed about Greenlight Pinellas.

Commissioner Welch noted this was the last MPO meeting before the November 4 election and thanked the MPO and PPC members, as well as FDOT and PSTA staff, for their partnership in this effort.

B. Director's Report

Ms. Ward reported that they had the debriefing on Monday with the U.S. DOT officials on the TIGER Grant. Although they were not awarded funding this time, they received a lot of positive feedback on their application and that it was in the highly-recommended category. The U.S. DOT official encouraged them to resubmit their application in the future if there is another opportunity. Ms. Ward participated in a Summit with FDOT District staff and others in the area to discuss the Coast-to-Coast Trail and how it could be marketed in the future as a State tourist attraction, including signage. The Summit was held in the City of Winter Garden, and they talked about how it has spurred economical development in their area. Ms. Ward attended a regional workshop last week in Tampa where they discussed the formation of the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group and how they set the priorities. She provided the presentation on the TMA, along with assistance from staff of the other MPOs who were in attendance. There will be another session in Charlotte, North Carolina, in December this year and the Pinellas MPO staff has been invited to participate to share with the other MPOs in that region information regarding the Tampa Bay TMA Leadership Group.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Stakeholder and Public Outreach Report

Chairman Seel noted information is included in the agenda packet.

B. Committee Vacancies

Chairman Seel thanked John Doran for his service on the CAC, noting he had to resign due to his other volunteer commitments. She noted the various vacancies on the CAC and asked the members to help fill those vacancies.

C. Other

Chairman Seel requested volunteers to serve on a Nominating Committee to develop a slate of officers to serve for 2015, with the Nominating Committee meeting on Wednesday, November 12, at 12:30 p.m. The following indicated their willingness to serve on the Nominating Committee:

- Karen Seel
- Doreen Hock-DiPolito
- Harriet Crozier
- Kevin Piccarreto

Chairman Seel then reported on the Executive Committee meeting held earlier that morning. The Executive Committee strongly supports Sarah Ward and Mike Crawford and the job they are performing as Interim Executive Directors; however, based on a number of factors including the sentiment of the City Managers, the Executive Committee recommended moving forward with hiring a single Executive Director for the MPO and PPC. Once the MPO and PPC Boards approve that direction, Chairman Seel will move forward with the process of hiring a single Executive Director, looking at the budgets to determine what funds might be available.

Commissioner Morroni moved and Mayor Archie seconded a motion for Commissioner Seel to begin moving forward with the process to hire an Executive Director.

Upon query by Commissioner Welch as to the rationale for moving forward in this direction, Chairman Seel responded the reasons include a single contact and a fresh perspective to consolidate the two groups. Chairman Seel added that the Executive Committee emphasized its desire to support both Sarah and Mike in continuing with the MPO and PPC due to their expertise and knowledge.

Mayor Bradbury noted that they are two separate entities and that there wouldn't be just one meeting. Chairman Seel responded that the two staffs would merge together.

Chairman Seel reminded everyone that, five years ago, it was the intent that the MPO and PPC would be independent and that the transportation and land use planning would be merged together. There was discussion that other MPOs have merged transportation and land use together and there other MPOs that desire to merge the two together. Commissioner Cookie Kennedy noted that several of the members are moving forward hesitantly because there needs to be closure and this is the approach that needs to happen. Mayor Bradbury responded that the two boards need to work together but there is a disconnect between the two.

Councilman Jim Kennedy asked about budgeting for an Executive Director. Chairman Seel responded the MPO should be able to cover the budget due to the savings from a position that was recently vacated (although it will be filled) and the amount already included in the PPC budget for an executive director. Chairman Seel indicated she would come back with additional information.

Mayor Archie indicated he was trying to figure out what has changed since there are two competent people who are going through a transition process. He was convinced that two Executive Directors was the correct direction; however, he has been listening to everyone's input. The two boards initially envisioned there would be a single director; however, because Sarah and Mike are both very competent individuals, it was decided to go in the direction of two directors. Mayor Archie noted he is still digesting the information but feels that maybe this is an opportunity to see if the unification will work and bring the two groups together. The board members appreciate both Sarah and Mike's efforts and want them to remain a part of the process as the process moves forward. He feels the hiring of a single director is a way to move forward. Mayor Archie added that both Sarah and Mike are welcome to apply for the Executive Director position.

Councilman Newton left at 2:32 p.m. and returned at 2:34 p.m.

Mayor Eggers wanted to make sure the City Managers understood this hiring a single Executive Director wasn't an efficiency move to replace Sarah and Mike. Chairman Seel responded that the City Managers understood that; however, the Special Act was changed to indicate an independent Executive Director and that was the direction everyone was comfortable with.

Following discussion, ***the motion carried to direct Chairman Seel to begin the process of hiring a Single Executive Director (Vote 12-0).***

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Karen Seel, Chairman