



# Tampa Bay Regional Collaboration Committee Regional Transportation Planning Roundtable Minutes

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September 10, 2012  
11:30 a.m.

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## Committee Members Present:

Commissioner Larry Bustle, Chair  
Commissioner Victor Crist, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Neil Brickfield  
Commissioner Bill Dodson  
Mr. Robert Kersteen  
Commissioner Jack Mariano  
Council Member Janice Miller  
Mayor Bob Minning  
Councilman Wengay Newton  
Mr. Andy Nunez  
Mr. Tim Schock

## Committee Members Absent:

Council Member Doreen DiPolito  
Ms. Barbara Sheen Todd

## Staff:

Manny Pumariega, Executive Director  
Avera Wynne, Planning Director  
Wren Krahl, Director of Administration/Public Information  
Don Conn, TBRPC Legal Counsel  
Jessica Lunsford, TBRPC  
Brady Smith, TBRPC

## Others:

Juan Flores  
Commissioner Scott Black  
Mike Howe  
Beth Alden

The TBRCC meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Approve the minutes from the June 18, 2012 meeting. (Nunez/Schock)
2. **Mission of the Regional Collaboration Committee** - Chair Bustle

The mission of the Regional Collaboration Committee (RCC) is to develop a process for assessing opportunities to collaborate on regional endeavors within the Tampa Bay area.

Anticipated outcomes is a *Findings and Recommendations Report*. The report will identify and recommend regional assets and activities that the committee determines could significantly benefit from improved regional collaboration. When feasible, specific steps to collaboration will be identified. Otherwise, the issue will be identified for action by the appropriate stakeholders. The report will be distributed to the Governor, Bay Area Legislative Delegation, local governments, and other appropriate stakeholders. The Committee will address issues in a roundtable format at a separate time from council meetings with Stakeholders, RCC members, interested council members, and interested parties in attendance. The six issues currently scheduled to be addressed by year end are: Seaports; Airports; Sports; Area Branding; Transportation; and Health Insurance. The ultimate goal of this committee is to improve the quality of life and services for the citizens of Tampa Bay by creating a more cooperative community.

3. **Presentations:**

Don Skelton, Secretary, FDOT District 7: State Transportation Planning

There are about a little under 120,000 centerline miles of highway in the State of Florida, less than 10% of those are actually owned by the FDOT. But even owning less than 10% and being responsible for that, the state system actually carries 50% of the traffic throughout the state and 68% of the truck traffic. Local roads are comprised by 107 centerline miles. Public transit throughout the state - there are 28 urban fixed-route systems. One commuter rail system that is operating and one commuter rail system that is under construction. Private sector rail, a little under 2800 rail miles. 14 deep water seaports. 3500 miles of intra-coastal inland routes, 19 commercial airports, 27 military installations, and 2 space ports. What does that mean to District 7? Well District 7 has a little over 14,000 centerline miles of which 1,000 are owned by DOT. We also talked about the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). What that is, is a sub-set of all these transportation facilities that the State of Florida has identified as what carries the most amount of traffic, freight, the most significant passengers, freight from airports, seaports, etc. and these are facilities where we need to make the most investment in because that's where you are going to get the biggest bang for your buck. When you are talking about enhancing the economy of the State of Florida, there's not enough resources to handle everything so you have to make some strategic decisions. In our area the SIS on the highway side is the interstate system, Gandy Boulevard between 275 and the Selmon Expressway, the Veterans Suncoast, U.S. 19 is on the SIS. The Port of Tampa is on the SIS, Tampa International Airport as is the Greyhound Terminal in downtown Tampa.

The decision making framework comes from two sides, one is state/federal and also it's a bottoms up approach at the local level. MPOs, local governments. Every entity has certain objectives that they are trying to meet. The state and federal have objectives and policies and framework to live within, the local governments have those same objectives and policies and the two collaborate and that's where you determine the projects that you move forward with and try to implement.

At the federal level there are policies set out. Mat 21 is the latest federal authorization bill that's moving ahead for progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was signed a little over a month ago and is a 27 month bill so it will take us through 2014, two years from this October. Within the federal legislation there are different parts of the code of federal regulations entitles that cover the different modes. Title 23 identifies all of the parameters that you have to satisfy to use federal funding for highways. Title 49 identifies all of the parameters for transit, aviation, motor

vehicles, etc. Fitting within all of those we must be compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Any product that we do must satisfy those federal regulations and be processed within NEPA as well as aspects of the clean air act. We have to be able to comply with all these federal regulations to be able to use federal monies that come to the State of Florida. Also these regulations are there to ensure that both from a statewide perspective and the MPO perspective that the process is linked to the objectives that are set out in those authorization bills of MAT 21.

From the state perspective we also have principals and guidelines that we are governed by. We have performance criteria that we have established and are monitored by the Florida Transportation Commission. They monitor the DOT and set up certain guidelines. Some of those are ensuring that we protect the investments that we already made. We've invested a lot of money in the infrastructure that exists. It doesn't make sense to let that infrastructure go to waste. Our first priorities are making sure that we preserve the infrastructure and maintain that infrastructure both from routine maintenance, making sure that the roadsides are uncluttered and are able to serve the public as well as from the perspective of making sure pavements are in good condition. We have performance criteria that requires that 80% of our pavements at all times are in good condition. That's why our resurfacing program, every year we look at our pavement assessments and derive how much money we will put aside in our program and resource plan. Bridges, we have policies that establish that within 6 years of being identified as structurally deficient we must either replace that structure or repair it such that it is structurally sufficient. How does that play in a national level of perspective? Early on when we were talking federal re-authorizations, Florida stood to get penalized with some of the discussions that were going on nationally about pumping more money and taking off the top money and putting it into bridges and structures nationwide because of those conditions. What you would be doing is penalizing a state that the best policies have been using in our regular annual allocation to preserve those structures. You look nationally and I think Florida is number two nationally in the number of bridges that are actually deficient. I believe Idaho may be number one. You don't want to reward some states that have been ignoring a ticket item which are structures versus a state that has been progressive in setting up objectives that meet that. We also have objectives on capacity that says any new money that comes, whether the legislature identifies a new funding source or any increase in revenue that we see through normal traditional resources, at least 50% of that gets added to our work program and must be spent on that SIS. Those are valuable assets and we need to protect and make sure that we are moving the bulk of people and goods throughout the state. We also have policies that require a minimum of 15% of our state revenue is used for public transportation. All of those things go into our process every year as we are allocating projects and resources for our work program.

On an annual basis as we build our 5 year work program we also have to report to the Florida Transportation Commission on stability. It is a commitment and it's about the state agency integrity when we publish a 5 year work program. We take that very seriously. Any project that moves out or gets deferred from that program, we have to report on that every year to the Commission. I stand up and say, our stability is "x" percent and I'm happy to say that overall our stability, not counting outside influences, is routinely above 95% stable in our 5 year work program.

Policy Framework - we are overall launching our Florida Transportation Plan. In 2010 we

approved the 2060 Florida Transportation Plan, looking out 50 years. This is the first time the state has done that. We thought we needed to assess the horizons because to truly make decisions along the way you need to be looking far enough out that you have plans on where you are heading. That translates into our transportation planning performance report which is more of a 5-10 year horizon. We have an executive team that is comprised of all of district secretaries. There are seven geographic district secretaries and the turnpike is the 8<sup>th</sup> district. We meet once a month and that team makes the decisions on an annual basis based on where we are with our performance reports. We make decisions as to how we allocate funds and what programs we need to put either more money in to, we have some big structures that are coming up and we need to allocate more resources to. Example of that, this last year we looked at our pavement conditions and saw that we were actually above 90% of our pavements. Therefore we think we may be putting a little too much resource into our resurfacing program and we scaled that back to the performance criteria we talked about - 80%. What does that mean? That means there will be more money available for capacity type projects. That program of resource planning translates into the five year work program which we submit to the legislature every year. The legislature then works that five year work program into the budgeting process, presents that budget to the Governor, the Governor then uses line item veto for various things and generally our work program doesn't get hit. There are some proviso language items that we end up taking out of our program and every July 1<sup>st</sup> we adopt that work program and the process starts all over again.

Investment decisions - our main purpose is to maintain the work programs. Stability. Make sure that we keep the projects that we committed to the public in our five year work program. Identifying safety and security issues, one of the main objectives of our transportation plan. Preservation, maintenance, and operations - we are going to protect those investments that we made over the years first. Then we will get the mobility capacity improvements and that's where you get district allocations. After we've taken care of those things at a statewide basis that we need to for the overall transportation system, the rest will get allocated down to the districts and then we work within our MPOs to develop and implement the five year work program and prepare our statewide transportation plans.

From a performance monitoring and established goals and plans, development those financial policies that feed into our program resource plan, we then translate that into a five year work program, develop our production plans, and deliver that program and then monitor the performance on an annual basis. That keeps feeding the cycle. Based on that performance we will identify the resources needed to keep the transportation funded and operating.

The Florida Transportation Plan is Florida's Long Range Transportation Plan. It's to 2060. It's a Plan for all of Florida. It's not just the Department of Transportation. It was a collaborative effort. A lot of stakeholders were involved in putting together the 2060 plan which provides policy framework for the program and resource of the state's expenditures and identifies those limitation strategies that we want for intelligent transportation systems. Freight, logistics - you had the presentation earlier from Juan Flores. We brought in to the DOT because freight and logistics becomes important to the economy of the State of Florida and investments in ports and other modes.

From the local level, MPOs are established and defined in federal regulations. Defined for urbanized areas with more than 50,000 residents. Their responsibilities are to develop long range

transportation plans, and a five year transportation improvement program is required by statute to submit the priorities to the DOT prior to October 1<sup>st</sup>. We are in that cycle right now. In fact, tomorrow the Hillsborough MPO will be addressing their priority list to submit to the Department. Hernando County, Pasco County as well. Pinellas County will do that Wednesday. There are currently 26 MPOs in the State of Florida. Florida is a little bit unique in that way in that we have more MPOs than any other state. To give you an example of that, in the State of Texas MPO boundaries can't touch one another. We have a lot of contiguous MPOs that are adjacent to each other and in the State of Texas they don't. There are some MPOs nationally that are multi-state. We actually have one here in Florida - a Florida Alabama Transportation Planning Organization in the panhandle.

Regional coordination that occurs - there are seven of the 26 MPOs in the state that are multi-county. One of those is multi-state as mentioned above. We also have coordination groups that develop joint plans. In our area we have the West Central Florida Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC). The Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) and we will hear from them later today. Regional transportation areas that are eligible for transportation regional incentive program (TRIP) funds. The program that the state has put together to incentivise investing in regionally significant transportation facilities where the state will put up a match up to 50% of the project with local match if you are addressing a facility that is of regional significance. So if you start talking about regional collaboration, that's where the rubber starts to hit the road. You have a unified set of priorities for a region it makes funding decisions and investment decisions from that TRIP program much more straight forward. Regional Planning Councils, convene entities. It goes beyond just transportation. The RPC is involved with a lot of things. Transportation is just one of those key components. You are the convener of the region. The representative on the TBRPC are representing more than just one small area. You come together to talk about what's a common good for this region and that makes it stronger. We also are participants in the Regional Visioning initiatives such as the One Bay initiative that took place in the Tampa Bay area. Local governments adopt comprehensive plans that identify future land uses that build and affect the transportation system and that the transportation must support. They adopt the level of service standards. Pasco County has identified the mobility fee. Again, trying to identify how to work with the growth of Florida while recognizing the transportation system that must serve that growth. Counties that are in non MPO areas, they develop their priorities and in our case its Citrus County for District 7. They submit their priorities to us. Ironically in the last census there is an urbanized area, Homosassa Springs, Crystal River, that is now going to be a part of a MPO. Having discussions with seeing if they can merge with the Hernando MPO because again, we are talking regionally and coming together regionally is much more powerful than having another independent MPO.

Beth Alden, Assistant Director, Hillsborough MPO: Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (CCC)

The CCC coordinates transportation. The Chairs of the MPOs for central Florida have been getting together since the early 1990s, starting with Hillsborough and Pinellas, on a regular basis to look at those major cross-county traffic flows and if we are doing a good job meeting those needs. We have a large geographic area to serve. For those of you who have been in the part of Florida over the last couple of decades have seen how we have evolved from a bunch of urban centers to a really inter-linked network of communities. We still have a lot of needs that have to do with our urban centers but we have to figure out how to overlay that with those connections

that need to be made across jurisdictional boundaries as well. What's working for you right now is you have a group of people in each of your communities in urban centers who all know each other really well through this CCC process. Not only do our board members get together four times a year, but the staff members get together every two weeks. Not just the MPO staff, but the District 1 and District 7 staff spend their time in this process, TBARTA participates in that, and our RPC staff participates as well. When a challenge comes up like the Port of Manatee connector project, for example, its important that we have a good connection from the Port of Manatee over to I75. How does that change development patterns in that part of our region? And is that a decision that's being made in Manatee County, does it affect Hillsborough County? Does it affect the community plans in Hillsborough County? It also means that when we have something going on in New Tampa like would everyone be connected across the Hillsborough/Pasco line? We can at least say we have a mechanism to work with each other. There is a process in place right now that's lead by Pasco MPO but Hillsborough is participating to look at how do we make those connections work so they work for the neighborhoods that are there and we are also able to accommodate the traffic.

We have an existing Regional Long Range Transportation Plan that is adopted by the MPO CCC and shows all the cost affordable transportation projects that are considered regionally significant. Out of this comes a prioritization process that informs decisions that are made at each MPO level and decisions that go forward to District 7 and District 1 about priorities. What can we do better in terms of our priorities? We would like to improve the priority setting process and we would like more feedback on as well. Secretary Skelton mentioned the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) which is a 50/50 state local match program. It came out of the 2005 Growth Management legislation. It does require that there be an interlocal agreement among the different local governments that adopt the priorities. The CCC had an interlocal agreement in place and was ready to move forward with identifying priorities for the update. Some of the projects that have been funded out of TRIP using this 50/50 match are: Bruce B. Downs capacity improvement, ITS improvements on major corridors in Pinellas, a number of things in the Sarasota/Manatee area. Where did these priorities come from? They come out of that Regional Long Range Transportation Plan, they also come out of a technical scoring process that looks at road management, regionalism, and the availability of local match and this list is reviewed every year. The CCC region consists of Citrus to Sarasota and east to Polk. The priorities for TRIP funding in both District 1 and District 7 for the next funding cycle were provided within the presentation. There will be a hearing to adopt these priorities on Friday.

The CCC also does priorities for regional multi-use trails. That's for consideration in the state's enhancement grant program. Priorities are broken out by District 1 and District 7 and they are set by looking at, do they make good regional connections, do they promote longer distance trips. Some of the things that have been funded in the past are the Suncoast Trail and the Courtney Campbell Causeway Trail. We built concurrently with District 7 the resurfacing project out on the Courtney Campbell. The list and map of the priorities for this year are within the presentation.

This year we are doing something new and different, which is to go beyond just the types of projects for which there is some already identified funding source. We are aware that we have some major challenges and how do we try to attract maybe federal discretionary funding, maybe we could work with the state to help look at public/private partnership opportunities. What are the nature initiatives that need attention in our region? This in particular is something that I would like your comments on today and your questions because where we are going with this is

pulling together a very preliminary draft list of what we think are priorities. Looking at particular highway facilities, particular types of improvements, and looking at mobility, safety, and economic development. What we are going to do is put out a draft list and circulate it for public discussion with the goal of creating something that everyone can agree on.

A map called “High Priority Major Transportation Initiatives” was distributed. On the back of the map is a list that says *draft for circulation, comment, and endorsement*. The CCC Board is going to look at this on Friday for preliminary review, giving the OK to take it out on the road and talk about it. We would like your feedback. Is this the list, does it need changes, and can we all agree on the list? Things on the list are: I75 - lets get it to at least 6 general purpose lanes through the entire length of our region, from Hernando all the way to Sarasota. Managed lanes - TBARTA Express Bus Routes. Managed lanes - if we look at tolls as a potential funding source. We have an opportunity to work with the Department to accelerate a project like that. Similar type of strategy on I4 coming over to I275 in downtown Tampa and coming over to Pinellas County. The Howard Franklin Bridge replacement and doing that with a transit envelope. U.S. 19, controlled access and overpasses and incorporating Express Bus Service. In Pasco, east/west, S.R.54 corridor that goes over to 56 on the east end. Managed lanes with transit. In Sarasota/Manatee the U.S. 41 connecting the urban centers in that area. Multi-modal, transit and pedestrian improvements. The Suncoast Parkway corridor - additional lanes at the southern end where it is extremely congested and also extending it further north so we can start making those connections further north. We have several major transit improvements. The Pinellas Alternatives Analysis. A new concept coming north from Hillsborough that we are calling the CSX Corridor Hybrid Rail. I4 Rail. Is it possible to extend Sun Rail farther to the west?

On September 14 the CCC will consider approving the draft for circulation, comment and endorsement. Presentations and discussions will take place with TBARTA, MPO Boards, Regional Planning Councils, Tampa Bay Partnership, and other interested parties. What’s really important is that we, as a group, come up with something that we all feel we can get behind. The big challenge we have is funding. Meeting the needs that are out there, these are not inexpensive projects. We have to think creatively and out of the box and we have to be working with each other to make these projects happen.

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Bob Clifford, Executive Director, TBARTA: Regional Transportation Issues and Challenges

We are an entity like TBRPC, a regional entity, and the challenges that go with that in many people’s eyes when you mention the word “regional” - that scares some folks. Particularly when you talk about transportation. Transportation issues is always about money. It’s all about the funding. Local, state, and federal and the private sector. One of the real challenges that we’ve been looking at from TBARTA’s perspective is that the picture is very bleak coming up in the next 10-15 years at the local, state, and federal level. We have to find other ways for funding transportation and have the public understand how important it is from an economic perspective and how expensive it is. Both big picture projects that are costly and timely but also looking at short term solutions. What can you do in the interim that maybe a 10-15-20 year improvement, but that’s an improvement that you were able to get at a much lower cost. That also ties in with the issue from a funding perspective, there’s a clear enhanced focus on the issue of regional. It’s about partnering, leveraging and looking at things from a regional perspective. You heard Secretary Skelton and Ms. Alden talk about the different programs, leveraging dollars at the regional level, looking at those limited dollars that are out there, and looking at projects that are important to a region and not to just one locality. That’s another challenge for us all as we look

out into the future. We are in competition everyday for the usual funding. Our competitors are the Orlando region, they've been very successful recently with the issue of funding from a transportation perspective. South Florida has always been pretty successful, and now we are seeing a challenge from Jacksonville. Part of the challenges with that issue of being competitive is the issue of understanding what our priorities are and collectively and consistently advocating for those priorities. Some of you may have heard Secretary Skelton before, when he has made a statement that you can't have ten number one projects. There can only be one #1 project. Being able to have that consistent message is important. The issue of parochialism - we have a lot of different issues and a lot of different entities. One of the unique things we have about this region is many of our entities, mine included, were created in state statute. That's not necessarily the case for other entities in other parts of the state. We have to address that and we have to deal with it and look at the issues of working together and get away from the usual turf. What we are seeing in this difficult economic time, there's really been a challenge of clarity of vision. What is the vision? Where are we going from a transportation perspective? What are we trying to accomplish?

Some things TBARTA is looking at a little differently. As Ms. Alden mentioned, we are working with partners that are already out there. Working more effectively and more efficiently. Working with the CCC. Two entities that have similar type activities, how about we work together, use the same data, put stuff out at the same time. Have the same conversation with the public. That's not the way it has been in the past. We need to be doing that. I think that's a message we need to continue. Seaports should be doing the same thing. Airports should be doing the same thing. The entire freight industry. All of that's a part of the overall effort, having those folks that have commonality working together and being consistent in that message using the same information, using the same time frames, talking to the public collectively and consistently. Something that we really see very effectively and very consistently. The other challenge is that there is a lot of stuff out there when you talk about transportation. And it becomes very confusing after a while. We all use all these terms and we've seen this in the past. What's the difference between high speed rail to light rail to commuter rail? What's Bus Rapid Transit? We live in a world of acronyms. We believe the public understands what these things are but they don't. All they specifically want to know is how do I get from here to there? I really don't care what entity is involved. From a transportation perspective jurisdictional boundaries don't matter, you just want to get there. So, how do you address that?

One issue that we are working on is the issue of having a regional transportation resource. There are all sorts of entities out there that provide different types of resources, whether they are on the planning side of things, the implementation side of things, or they actually provide the resource. They provide a ride. One thing that we have done partnering with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and actually this came out of the Veterans Administration, one of the real challenges we have for veterans in the region is the issue of mobility, being able to provide them that mobility to where they need to get to. They don't know who to even call or to find out information about what to do. We are embarking on the effort. One of the things TBARTA is going to do is to partner with the crisis center folks. Have a public sector TBARTA partner with a non-profit entity to help them in that dissemination of information. Somewhere that people can call and find out information on how to get to where they need to be. We aren't just focusing on veterans, it's for everybody. Then turn it into a broader transportation resource. Also, along those same lines, we are all aware of the Republican National Convention (RNC). One of the real challenges was the issue of transportation and understanding what it meant to folks and how it was going to affect them. One of the things that was there was a lot of good information, but it

was in different places. You had the RNC folks with their stuff, DOT had there stuff, City of Tampa had there stuff, HART had its information. All we did was put it all together and put it in one place. We didn't generate the data, we just collected it. What's been interesting to us is how incredibly popular that became. Now what we are asking, why aren't we doing this regionally? We know where transportation or traffic hot spots are around the entire region. Why don't we put that information out there in one place? Providing that resource for people to get information because that's what they are looking for.

We need a more forceful presence in the halls of Tallahassee and in Washington. One of the things we've consistently heard from those folks is, what does this region want? What are you looking for? Where are you going? The issue of regional projects, that's critical, what Ms. Alden was talking about. Whether that's the list, whether its less than that, more than that, that's something that we continually get asked. The FDOT Secretary came to our Board and had that very message. Dream big and tell us what you want. We have to come to the table with money in hand, not can you give us \$10 and we will go find \$5. It's we have \$5, can you give us \$10. That's critical in terms of being able to leverage dollars. Really being able to put us in that position to be able to respond to things that none of us have even thought about. One of the things that has been different that we've all seen as part of transportation and technology are these things, and how critically important they've become. They're starting to affect us from a transportation perspective. How can you use this to buy a bus pass? How can you get this information on this to tell me where I go and what I do from an informational perspective? I don't think any of us foresaw this five years ago in terms of what we are doing from a transportation perspective and the challenge we have to the fact that transportation takes so long. So are the things we see. The thing we have been focused on most right now is the issue of, we have got to find ways to engage the private sector in the delivery of transportation. There is money to be made, we are seeing it in other parts of the state, but that means you have to give up a little of the control and you have to be willing to pay for some things. But there are opportunities from a private sector perspective in terms of delivering transportation projects, transportation services, transportation facilities. That's something we are pursuing full speed because frankly in this region we are a little behind other parts of the state.

Jennifer Stults, Intermodal Systems Dev't Mgr., FDOT District 1: Coordination in south Tampa Bay area, District 1 projects affecting Tampa Bay

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There are a lot of interesting things going on and District 1 is in a unique position in terms of the Tampa Bay area. We have Polk County which both Tampa and Orlando like to lay claim to. There is a lot of coordination up and down the I4 corridor because certainly the freight movement, which is one of the things I'm going to talk about today, is regional. They don't stop at county borders. They go all over the state and all over the country. We participate with the Sarasota/Manatee MPO CCC. There is always coordination going on in this region and its always productive. The more partners you have when you go after big projects and big money the better your chances.

We have the Polk Rail Study, which is going to public workshop starting tonight (September 10<sup>th</sup>) and throughout the week so you are going to get a sneak peak at this information. Basically the focus of this is freight. It will not preclude passenger rail, but the TPO and others have asked us not to do anything to prevent them from connecting up to the Sun Rail and to Tampa. This is not a passenger study, it would not be something that would go to FTA, it would ultimately be more of a federal railroad administration type of project if it continues to move forward.

CSX is shifting their freight from the “A” line to the “S” line in part because they are moving to the Winter Haven Logistics Center that is under construction right now. This is a part of a long term business plan. You may recall several years back there was some concern in Polk County about all the added freight traffic. The Department, at that time, did a study and came up with eight alternatives and the legislature directed us to continue to study this issue. Relocating rail is not a cheap venture, it is something that the private entity, in this case CSX, would have to sign off on. There are potential environmental impacts. There are some challenges. Cost not being the least of it. A billion dollars just to put it in perspective is more than our District’s annual work program budget. This could be one mega project gobbling up the budget for the year, and then some. I think when you get to that order of magnitude you are looking at federal NEPA which previous speakers touched on. When you get into a federal NEPA level of things with this dollar amount, if you are lucky maybe you can get something done in ten years. Usually it takes decades. That’s really not going to solve our problem because I don’t see it being operational in the spring of 2014. We were legislatively mandated to have the study in 18 months so that really wasn’t going to work. One of the things we are looking at, we are going to continue to evaluate these alternatives. Two of them go east of the Green Swamp, five come around into the Tampa Bay area and touch several of the Council’s counties and swing around south of town. At the end of the day they all have to rejoin the “S” line at some point. It also means that the existing one would go away. There are customers on the existing line and it takes federal action to approve that, and those customers are not going to probably find that acceptable. This is really what addresses the through trips - the longer haul trips. I mentioned its expensive and will take time. Something that we are looking at in this study are some shorter term options so we will continue to evaluate. This will be an additional railroad line option. They will also have some traffic on the “A” line because they do have customers on the “A” line. They will have freight windows on the “A” line that will operate during time frames but basically our mission was to look at those three trains to see if we could work them around the urban areas in Polk.

The other factor is CSX would have to approve this. This isn’t something we can impose on them because they are protected by federal interstate commerce laws. If there is a fatal flaw with any of these, that would be one of them. If CSX says there is no way we can operate, its going to cost us too much money, that alternative is not acceptable to us. We have to work with our private partners in this project. Currently there are some improvements being made on the “S” line.

Some of the common issues for all of the relocations - environmental - may shift the impacts to the other communities. You may have heard the Lakeland Mayor say its not his intent to stick it to another city so that is why we are looking at a county wide study in the hopes that everyone can come to a consensus. As part of the efforts the last couple of years between the studies we went through our efficient transportation decision making process and we reached out to agencies, including in the Tampa Bay area to comment on issues because some of the alignments swing over this way. We were able to identify community impacts, environmental impacts and costs, property acquisition and some of the options might increase operations and maintenance cost for CSX which could be an issue.

There are 5 steps in the current study and we are between step one and step two, the first round of workshops. The first workshop is September 10 at the Lakeland Center. Because the study is so massive we are holding the same meeting three times, in different locations. We still have a long way to go but some of the early start projects could be diverted. In other words, some of the smaller, quicker, less expensive projects we can spin off and go ahead and start doing those. They may not require federal action. Examples were provided. The public outreach and

workshops that were mentioned, we also have a Stakeholders Task Force which is a technical group. Local staff and staff from other agencies have joined together with their expertise. We also have the Mayor's Council which is the group where elected officials have been invited. We try to vet anything that is going to public workshop through this group so we know ahead of time if there is an issue, what we can anticipate, what might need to be fixed. There is also an environmental advisory group. In terms of the short term concepts some of the things we are looking at are quiet zones, noise abatement, geometric track improvements, grade separations, rail signal preemptions. Quiet zones are a program from the Railroad Administration. Local communities can apply for these and get approval. Typically the cost is to the local community as opposed to the railroad. Sometimes there is a trade off with road crossings. It wouldn't be a guaranteed silent zone but it can cut down on the horn blowing when safety improvements are made. Geometric track improvements - there is an opportunity to potentially reconstruct a "Y" which would allow CSXs trains to come in to downtown Lakeland at a higher rate of speed. There would be some travel time savings for them, but there is also an interest to the community because it means you will be sitting and waiting for that train to go for less amount of time at the gate. Grade separations include roadways and bicycle/pedestrian for safety. The locals asked us to look at the option of trenching. Basically there would be an entire grade separation of the rail, underground to the road level. There would be maintenance costs associated in order to keep this pumped out from water. When you have utilities underground it can be very expensive. Rail signal preemptions is an ITS option. The way things are set up now traffic backs up when the train goes through. What some of the ITS improvements can do with the signal is when it senses a train is coming it flushes all the traffic out so there is less backup. This is an easy thing to do and a lot of communities want to have ITS type treatments. They want to have their signals coordinated.

#### 4. **Questions and Answers:**

Question to Ms. Stults: Your map of where this is going does not include Pinellas County. Why isn't Pinellas included? Why consider an urban area going underground when you could do an elevated train?

Answer: I think it was probably that the map scale was already so large and none of the alignments were going to swing into Pinellas. We may have elevations where there are grade separations, so whether the rail goes over the road, the road goes over the rail, those are the things we will be evaluating at the key locations. We looked at the underground because that was an option that the local community asked us to look at. I think some of the challenges with the elevated are federal factors such as the controlling grade and what that means is you can't have more than a certain percentage of change in elevation because you don't want to have a roller coaster, especially with a heavy freight train. This is freight rail. It's not passenger rail. There are a lot of differences.

Question: How do you coordinate funding and who gets the last shot at saying yes, this is number one?

Answer: In terms of basic funding, all of the federal and state funding flows through the FDOT Works Program. We do the coordination with the MPO, and with TBARTA. First and foremost, it's about priorities. That's where coordination

steps in. The statewide level, we have some objectives and there are some statewide priorities and regional movements and that's where the SIS comes in for some of your interstate type projects. It's about talking together and determining where those priorities are and as long as you are consistent and have the same priority, that decision becomes very easy. There are five counties in District 7 and every one of them has a different number one priority. It becomes important to say we have to come together and say what the number one project is.

Question: We heard a lot about coordination, communication, collaboration, and setting priorities, and funding. Would anyone like to comment or talk about consolidation opportunities?

TBARTA Response: It's something that TBARTA has talked about. It certainly is an area that we believe at the very least needs a factual discussion. There's the effort going on right now directed by the legislature looking at HART and PSTA. There's the issue of the MPO designation process. It happens every ten years and that's been a discussion point of do we merge or consolidate the MPOs or not? Secretary Skelton made the point of you having another MPO in this region, Citrus. I'm involved in that as part of TBARTA and we've heard very loud and clear from DOT to not create another new MPO but have them partner with an existing MPO and become a joint MPO. They are open to that suggestion. I would tell you something TBARTA has talked about, and I'm sure you have all talked about, it's the same issue of two airports seven miles apart from each other. Two seaports which are 20 miles apart competing with each other. I can tell you when we raised this up at TBARTA it becomes about "turf." It is a little different when we talk about consolidation. We compare ourselves to Orlando. They have a three county MPO and a four county transit agency. The difference is many of their entities were not created the same way as our entities. 30-40 years ago our entities got created in law, in statute, as independent separate entities and it is very challenging to change that. We look at it as, if you have that opportunity you should move forward with it and put facts on the table. The only other opportunity is to collaborate better and do the things we've been talking about. At the very least on the planning side, with priorities. We have to even be in the game at the statewide level for funding. We have to come together and say, these are the priorities. We have to say the same thing and that's something we haven't been doing.

MPO Response: From the MPOs point of view we need to look at the facts and the tradeoffs. We are going through that process now of looking at the re-designation of the MPOs and probably will be asked by the DOT to consider whether merging is appropriate. Some of the things we are talking about in Hillsborough is the level at which decisions are made about the transportation investments in a particular community. It comes back to all transportation investment decisions are local. Where are those decisions being made? Are they being made by an organization that covers 4,000 sq. miles and several million people or are they getting made by a board that is able to hear from them individually? That doesn't mean that we should not be paying attention to those major cross-jurisdictional travel

flows. We have to make this work for our economy. Where is that voice for our citizens? And where are they being heard? Pinellas is in a very different position with its incorporated municipalities than Hillsborough is. Hillsborough has three incorporated municipalities. Pinellas has one local elected representative for each 6,700 residents. Hillsborough has one for every 53,000 of its residents. The level of representation is very different between Hillsborough and Pinellas. The Hillsborough MPO does some of that customized planning for the local communities within Hillsborough that isn't being done by a city Council. There's no City Council of Apollo Beach, Ruskin, Sun City Center, or Town and Country, Citrus Park, Carrollwood or Brandon. We have many communities that all need a voice and they need some input into the decision making process. How does that happen? There is language in the state law that says, there should be to the extent feasible one organization or organized area unless the urbanized area is sufficiently large and complex. So the question is, is our urbanized area sufficiently large and complex? That's a position that the MPO boards in coordination with the Governor will have to make.

Question: Getting back to the basic issue of MPOs and consolidation, what we need to figure out is how decisions being made in other MPOs are affecting other MPOs. We need to know and understand those decisions and have them accounted for. You do not have to consolidate them all together in order to make that happen.

Answer: It becomes significant to separate out the levels of decisions. However, every decision isn't at the local level. You have some decisions that are bigger and you need a bigger scope in looking at those decisions. It becomes separating out whatever decision and who makes those decisions and how do you get the collaboration. The decisions that are made in Pinellas County affect Hillsborough. Decisions in Hillsborough affect Pinellas. They need to be there. There are decisions within Hillsborough that don't affect Pinellas. It becomes separating out what those decisions are.

Question to Mr. Flores: You mentioned California in your presentation - what are some of the hindrances or the pros and cons of that many MPOs trying to get things done?

Answer: As it relates to coordination, streamline freight plan. There are about 6 or 7 of these MPOs, TPOs doing these metro plans. Orlando, Jacksonville and Miami are doing one. Southeast Palm Beach, and Broward are doing a southeast regional plan and then work at the state level with DOT and all of us looking at that. As it relates to the planning what's the partnership with the MPO, TPO - how do we coordinate from the smaller district regional level and pump it up to the state level and have a comprehensive freight plan that will be pushing the envelope. From all modes of transportation. I'm a freight guy. I'm an intermodal guy.

Question: Can you discuss the grade level of the Howard Franklin span and the bottleneck in Tampa?

Answer: The Howard Franklin is on the transportation capacity issue. The issue is not the

bridge itself. It's when you get to either side, and certainly on the Tampa side it constricts because you have two lanes that actually go under the bridge and one lane that goes to the airport and so from northbound you have a lot of bottlenecks. It's not the bridge itself. What we are talking about having to replace is the older portion of the Howard Franklin - its over 50 years old. It's not necessarily because you don't have enough lanes on the bridge itself.

Question: Would collaboration help with those 5 or 10 number ones for funding?

Answer: An example of years past- The Tampa Airport Interchange project, who does that affect? When we were talking about funding that project there was a push from the Pinellas County saying, that's not in Pinellas County. Why do that? Yes, when you look at those interchanges or the I-4/275 interchange people coming in and out of Pinellas County go through those restriction points. Yet it wasn't geographically located in Pinellas County so it became an issue. That's the argument you have to get off the table. You have to say, this is best for this region. That's collaboration.

Question: One issue is that we need to go into negotiations with money in our pocket, where are the funding opportunities?

TBARTA Response: The reality for funding is about leveraging. You have to have money and its no longer "we'll get the money if you give us this." There are plenty of examples. Many of the entities here have done a good job of leveraging. What we are challenged with looking forward into the future is the funding at the local level, the way its currently structured, because it is not enough. Gas taxes are really difficult and a dying source of revenue. So its what are the other sources and I don't know what the answer is. Being creative is certainly one of them. There's some good examples. Pasco has done some good things creatively. How well it will work we will have to see. As we are looking into the future that picture is not positive for funding because maintenance and operations take up more and more of the pie, just as they do at the local governments. For additional capacity you have to find another way to fund it.

FDOT Response: One such source involves a lot of important things, but it can be as simplistic as accepting the fact that new capacity is going to be a toll. You don't have to have tolls, but without it you won't have the project either. Because that becomes a funding source and that leverages more transportation resource because the gas tax revenues are going to continue to go down if the President is successful in having the café standards doubled in the next 15 years without any adjustment to the gas tax, you've just lost half of your funding.

Question: Is there a choice to pick what you want- toll road or an increase in sales tax or the gas tax?

Response: There's no one single source. You've got to look at maximizing your leverage and looking at all sources of revenues. There is a whole lot more need than any sales tax or tolls combined can fund. It becomes a fundamental decision, is

infrastructure important to the economy or is it not? If its important to the economy, tough decisions have to be made to invest it at the right level.

Sarasota/Manatee MPO: We launched about two years ago a MPO Advisory Revenue Study Committee because of this very issue, declining and collapsing of gas taxes, shrinking dollars. We identified 55 potential revenue sources. and now we have shrunk that down to our top five. We are having discussions with the legislatures right now to hopefully get some introduction in the Florida legislature. I'd like to come back to the Regional Planning Council at some point and give you an introduction to some of those options out there. Some were obvious. Two cents a year in gas tax increase for the next five years, raised ten cents, raised \$1 billion a year for the next ten years. The most frightening part of the study is that if you look at it historically over the last decade we have lost on the value of our dollars investment in transportation over \$10 billion in the state of Florida alone.

The one thing about MPO consolidation- the original purpose of MPOs when they were created in 1960 by Congress was to be that local voice on transportation decision making. That's to overcome what was happening in our nation with the federal or state government coming down and just starting to build a road without any local input. That's why we were created.

Question: Regarding airports and bus transit- Were you referring to inter-airport transit, transfers between Tampa International and St. Pete/Clearwater, or were you referring to more destinations from downtown locations to those various airports?

Answer: St. Pete/Clearwater and Tampa International are two airports that are seven miles apart but at times compete for the same service. Same thing with the seaports. There are times they compete and the reality is we shouldn't be competing within the region against each other. We should be competing against other regions in other states. It's competition for funding.

Question: Is there a potential for a busing service from downtown and urban areas to the airports and to various airports in the region in order to meet those needs to drive both tourism, commerce, business, etc. to drive it towards the convention centers in Tampa and to Sarasota and St. Pete to the beaches?

TBARTA Response: The issue of, particularly visitors get here and they want to know what type of public transportation can they catch to go to the beaches, downtown, the convention center, etc. The response is frankly very little. That's certainly an area that we've heard loud and clear and just from a public sector perspective. But that's something we've been talking to the state about - is this a private sector opportunity with maybe

the state seeding something.

Question: Are there any areas that you see where the RPC can help facilitate that?

TBARTA Response: I certainly think so as we get a little further with something concrete. We are going up to Tallahassee to talk with FDOT a little more about that. We really see the issue of airports to beaches as being one, and then you have the issue of turf. Because you have the issue of the requirement of the local transit agencies by law, they are the ones who provide the service. There are some issues there we have to resolve.

5. **Wrap-up:**

Chair Bustle:

I think we have a lot of good questions to ponder as we try to come up with findings and recommendations. Thank you for speaking.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

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Larry Bustle, Chair

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Lori Denman, Admin. Assistant