

CCC ACTIONS FOR 2002:

Adopted a Regional Long Range Transportation Plan.

Amended the 2025 Cost Affordable Regional Long Range Highway Plan to add Phase II of the Suncoast Parkway, which extends from the current terminus at U.S. 98 into Citrus County.

Endorsed the SR688/I-275 Transit Study for the addition of premium transit service from mid-Pinellas County to downtown Tampa.

Endorsed the Sarasota/Manatee County MPO's Long Range Transit Plan

Launched a website at cccmobility.org.

Endorsed draft legislation to restructure and modify the name of the CCC.

CCC ADOPTS LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Do you ever wonder how planners and engineers develop and communicate their visions for future transportation improvements? The answer can be found in the 2025 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. The plan analyzes the future transportation needs of residents in this eight county region, listing data and maps for transportation improvement projects. The plan is available on the web at cccmobility.org.

CCC LAUNCHES WEBSITE

As an outgrowth of its public involvement efforts, the Chairs Coordinating Committee established a new website. The site will be updated regularly with current, regional transportation planning documents. It will also provide links to county MPOs and to local transit systems. Citizens will have opportunities to learn about transportation issues and to provide input. Visit the website at cccmobility.org.

WHAT IS THE CCC?

The Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) of west central Florida is made up of MPO officials representing Pasco, Hernando, Hillsborough, Sarasota/Manatee Polk and Pinellas counties. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretaries Districts 1 and 7, the Florida Turnpike District, and the Regional Planning Councils are also represented on the CCC in a non-voting capacity.

The CCC meets quarterly to develop regional transportation solutions to a wide variety of transportation problems. Topics include road construction priorities, traffic congestion management, air quality, mass transit, goods movement, land use, pedestrian and bicycle issues, trails, etc.

The CCC develops a Regional Long Range Transportation Plan, and it oversees the conflict resolution process. For more information and a complete list of members visit the website at cccmobility.org.

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Chairs Coordinating Committee
www.cccmobility.org



NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA MPO CHAIRS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

LIKE MOST OTHER MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES, WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA COUNTIES FACE A DIFFICULT TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM - TRAFFIC CONGESTION. MASS TRANSIT ENHANCEMENTS ARE SEEN AS ONE ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARD FINDING A SOLUTION.

Simply put, there are too many cars vying for space on America's roadways, and too little land and financial resources to keep up with the demands of our rapidly expanding, highly mobile population. Today's transportation planners are looking at mass transit enhancements as a critical element in solving this nation's congestion problems. In our own region, refocusing attention on mass transit has resulted in innovative projects, some of which have applications that cross city and county.

MPO PLANS INCLUDE FOCUS ON REGIONAL TRANSIT

Before the turn of the century, it wasn't unusual to complete an entire lifetime without crossing county borders. Today, people cross county lines daily to work, shop, attend school or to participate in events.

To accommodate this mobility trend, and to address traffic congestion problems, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) throughout Florida are working together to expand their focus beyond the limits of their respective counties. Before the end of this decade this region will see an increasing number of transit routes or "networks" that take passengers directly to their destinations, crossing counties as one, single route or connecting with other bus routes. Some of these connections are already in operation today.

For example, Manatee and Sarasota counties have inter-county bus connections at the airport. Farther north, a Pasco County Public Transit (PCPT) connects with Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) bus routes, following a path that begins in Pasco and ends in Tarpon Springs. In Pinellas/Hillsborough Counties, special work-hour transit routes operated by Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) take commuters across the Gandy Bridge, while HARTline commuters cross the Courtney-Campbell Causeway from Tampa to Pinellas County via S.R.60. These routes are all outgrowths of cooperative planning efforts between CCC member MPOs and their respective

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RAIL PROJECTS ON A "FAST TRACK" FOR THIS REGION

If history repeats itself, the rail might once again have an important influence on the development of this Florida region - probably not as strong an influence as in the 1870s, when the railroad literally changed the Florida landscape from wilderness to thriving communities, but important to Florida's future nonetheless.

The State of Florida is planning a rail system that will eventually link all its major urban areas. The Florida High Speed Rail Project, as it is commonly called, is the result of voters' approval of an amendment to Florida's constitution in November 2000 calling for high speed ground transportation operating in excess of 120 miles per hour. The first leg of the rail project, from Orlando to Tampa, could begin building next year, and could be operational by 2007. The cost will be anywhere from \$1.2 billion to more than \$6 billion, depending on speed capability and technical design. Plans are to use private money to operate the train, and some public money to build the train, which has been the case with every kind of transportation to date, including highways, bus systems, airports and seaports.

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Several new rail projects in the planning phase could strongly influence this region's transportation future.

Suncoast Trail Receives Awards

The Suncoast Trail, a 42-mile pedestrian/bicycle trail adjacent to the Suncoast Parkway, has been named a "Millennium Trail" by the White House Millennium Council and a "National Recreation Trail" by the Department of Interior's National Park Service. The trail is owned by the Florida Department of Transportation and is operated and maintained by the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties' Parks and Recreation Departments. Construction began in summer, 2002 on a new segment in Hernando County, which will be opened in two phases.

The CCC was instrumental in securing funding for trail construction and in facilitating the operating agreements. Websites are at www.floridasturnpike.com, and www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com.

FOCUS ON REGIONAL... (Continued from page 1)

transit authorities. (The Pinellas/Hillsborough route grew out of a jointly funded feasibility study.)

Decisions to expand mass-transit seem deceptively simple. After all, mass transit certainly isn't a new concept for this region, and intercounty transit was even more common fifty years ago than today. But modern transportation planning methods require broader vision to ensure that new solutions accomplish goals in a cost effective, environmentally sensitive manner. That is why Sarasota-Manatee's MPO recently conducted a transit study that identified a need for more competitive travel times along major corridors, greatly improved fixed route bus service, vanpooling programs, and transfer stations. The report went on to recommend tailoring services to provide more direct, frequent service on major roads. Long range transit goals recommended for both counties included plans for consolidation of the two transit programs, Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) and Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT).

Presently, Polk and Hernando counties' transit systems do not have connections outside their respective counties, but their potential for such linkages makes them important players in the long range, regional transit planning process.

An important goal for future transit planning will be to find ways to influence drivers of single passenger cars to take the bus instead. The first of these programs will begin in 2003, when an additional Tampa/Pinellas route offered by PSTA will provide "premium" service via the Howard Frankland Bridge. Upscale commuter amenities such as upholstered seats and media connections will enhance service and save travel time.

As the population of west central Florida continues to grow, the area is rapidly moving toward a regionalized transit approach that will rely even more heavily on cooperation between MPOs and their related transit agencies. Fortunately, in this region, the process has already begun.

ATTENTION EMPLOYERS/COMMUTERS

Learn about commute options including carpool and vanpool. Contact Bay Area Commuter Services at 813-229-2695, or on the web at www.tampabay.commuter.com.

Number/Percentage of Workers Commuting to Jobs Outside Their County of Residence

(U.S. Census 2000 data)

Citrus	7,799	20.5%
Hernando	13,915	32.2%
Hillsborough	47,617	10.1%
Manatee	27,823	25.1%
Pasco	59,040	44.9%
Pinellas	54,751	13.1%
Polk	30,378	15%
Sarasota	17,344	13.1%

BIKES TAKE THE BUS

With support from area bus transit systems and local MPOs, many residents are now biking to work. Available in Pasco, Polk, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, Pinellas and Hernando Counties, the new on-board, front-mount bicycle racks permit passengers to hang their bikes, retrieving them at their destination. In Pasco, Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, transit authorities provide an additional travel incentive - a single bicycle pass permits continuous travel throughout all three counties.



Studies in Hillsborough County show that bicyclists are willing to travel up to 3 miles to a bus stop, as opposed to the typical 1/4 mile for walkers. Bicyclist Marc Hanger describes the system as "easy to use, once you know a few basics." A mandatory 15 minute

program taught him to exit by the front door after notifying the driver, in order to avoid losing his bike. Marc believes that the program will become increasingly popular, especially on bad-weather days.

In Pinellas County, funds to purchase the racks were secured by the MPO.

SERVICES FOR TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED

All counties in this region offer special, low-cost, transportation services to residents who qualify as "transportation disadvantaged." The term applies to people whose income or physical disability severely limits access to transportation. The State of Florida funds "TD" programs and defines income guidelines. In addition, transit agencies provide special services to disabled people, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Counties typically combine vans, minibuses, or taxicabs to provide services. In counties that have public transit programs, bus passes permit additional transportation opportunities for non-disabled travelers.

To learn more, or to apply, contact your county's MPO/TPO, listed on page four of this newsletter.

TROLLEYS COMBINE TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT

In a tourist-based economy, there is no rule that says mass transportation can't be an attraction in itself. In fact, the success of the new trolley routes in Manatee, Polk, Hillsborough, Pinellas and Sarasota counties suggests the opposite.

In Manatee County, passengers can board the Island Trolley to travel between Anna Maria Island, Holmes Beach, and Bradenton Beach. Sarasota trolleys permit the traveler to visit Lido Beach, or to tour the area's downtown cultural centers. Lakeland's Downtown Citrus Trolley provides patrons with access to nearby shops, restaurants and offices.

In Pinellas County, tourists can hop on a Suncoast Beach Trolley at Clearwater Beach, travel to St. Pete Beach, or take one of the additional connections to downtown St. Petersburg or to Tyrone Mall. A CMAQ grant obtained by Pinellas MPO funds vehicles and service for four years.

While other cities use rubber tired, trolley-look vehicles, Tampa alone uses "real" electric trolleys operating on tracks. The recently completed phase, a 2.3 mile line connecting Ybor City, Channelside and downtown Tampa, officially opened in October. Additional phases are planned.

Trolley projects in this region have proven to be a popular, adaptable means of short distance transportation. Their open-air, casual atmosphere is well suited to Florida's climate and life style.

RAIL PROJECTS... (Continued from page 1)

The second phase of the rail project will run from Tampa to St. Petersburg, and could become operational in 2009. The final phase will link Orlando and Miami in 2010-2011. When complete, twenty Florida cities will be connected. The CCC is developing a plan for integrating this project into the existing regional transportation structure. For a current report on this project, go to www.floridahighspeedrail.org on the web.

"Light rail" or "elevated guideway" projects could also become a reality in Tampa and Pinellas County within ten years. The first phase of a study conducted by HARTline (Tampa transit) and the Hillsborough MPO has identified a preferred route location, technology, etc. The proposed rail system would connect downtown Tampa with the University of South Florida, Hyde Park, West Tampa, and the Westshore Business District. The selection has been incorporated into the Long Range Transportation Plan, and the environmental impact study was accepted by the federal government. For details go to www.tamparail.com.

Pinellas County is studying an elevated guideway system. Beginning at SR 60 in Clearwater, the route connects with US 19, the St.Petersburg/Clearwater Airport (where a connection with the Florida High Speed Rail is planned), then moves on to I-275, reaching its final destination in Downtown St. Petersburg. The current phase of this project looks at funding sources, public/private partnerships, and technology selection (monorail, light rail, and elevated people mover). For a look at Pinellas County's study, go to www.pinellasmobility.com.

MASS TRANSIT - A REGIONAL HISTORY

In the late 1800s, wood burning locomotives brought freight and passengers to this terminal in Hudson (circa 1890).



At the turn of the century, open air trolleys were a common sight in cities like St. Petersburg.



By 1919, a bus line provided service from Tampa to Lakeland.



The Bee Line Ferry service carried passengers and autos from the tip of Pinellas County to Manatee County across the Tampa Bay (1946).



Today, Tampa's new trolleys resurrect the electric streetcars that traveled its downtown from early 1900s to 1946.



HERNANDO COUNTY BEGINS TRANSIT SERVICES

In November, Hernando County's new transit program was initiated, with regularly scheduled buses operating on three routes in Spring Hill and Brooksville. The service permits deviations from route in order to pick up and drop off patrons closer to their homes or destinations. (Limitations will exist to prevent delays in schedule.) The web page is at www.hernandobus.com, or you may call (352) 754-4057 or (352) 754-4444 for information.