



# REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

Spring, 2004

NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA MPO CHAIRS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

**West central Florida's Metropolitan Planning Organizations' Chairs Coordinating Committee is updating its Long Range Transportation Plan. The process takes a regional approach to needs and funding priorities. This is your plan, and you are encouraged to participate.**

## REGIONAL TRAVEL CONTRIBUTES TO CONGESTION IN WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA

The percentage of work trips crossing county lines increased for every county in the region between 1990 and 2000, and will continue to increase through 2025. Just since 1990, regional traffic resulted in an increase of more than 75,000 vehicle trips per day, enough to require 10 lanes of new freeway.

According to a new research report by the Brookings Institution, effective solutions to congestion require coordination of transportation improvements with land use planning on the regional or metropolitan level. That is one of the reasons Congress established individual MPOs to oversee surface transportation planning in major metropolitan areas.

There are six MPOs (TPO) in west central Florida. The Chairs Coordinating Committee brings to the table these agencies, along with the Department of Transportation, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, four regional planning councils, transit providers, and the business community, to provide a regional approach to transportation planning.

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING..

### YOU TALK, WE'LL LISTEN!

If you have ideas about how transportation should be improved in west central Florida, the Chairs Coordinating Committee and your Metropolitan Planning Organization want to hear from you.

As a part of the transportation planning process, your Metropolitan Planning Organization (or in Polk County, Transportation Planning Organization) seeks input from local citizens about transportation needs, including highways, public transportation, multi-use trails, seaports and airports, etc. Because needs typically exceed available revenue, public input is essential for assisting MPOs in their task of establishing transportation funding priorities.

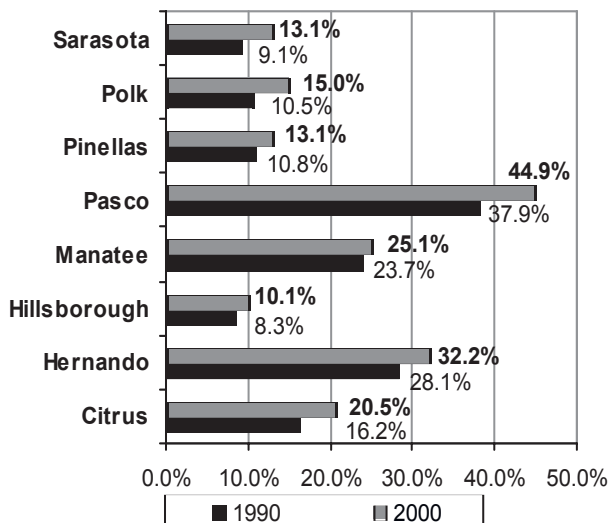
It sounds complex, but it's actually similar to the process many people use to buy a car. They begin by developing a mental list of wants and needs. But if a car that satisfies all these requirements is too costly, there may be a need to prioritize or eliminate non-essential features that have a high price tag. Hopefully, this process leads to the selection of the best car within a limited budget.

The metropolitan transportation planning process, itself, is nothing new. It has been in place since the seventies when MPOs were established. What's different this time is that greater emphasis is placed on regional and statewide facilities. As a result, the entire west central region of Florida, an area that consists of eight counties including Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota will produce a plan through its regional planning organization, the Chairs Coordinating Committee.

Transportation planning agencies in this region encourage you to identify transportation priorities for your own county and the region. Then you are encouraged to take one more step -

(Continued on page 4.)

Work Trips Crossing County Lines - 1990 and 2000\*



\*U.S. Census Bureau

Read page 2 to hear about your neighbors' transportation priorities.



Citizens are encouraged to contribute their ideas for improving regional transportation via mail, email, phone or public involvement workshops. Go to [ccctransportation.org](http://ccctransportation.org) for a schedule of workshops in your area.

## What are your regional transportation priority issues?

We posed this question to citizens throughout Florida's eight-county, west central region. Their responses touched on a variety of transportation issues.

Some respondents cited a need to improve the regional transportation infrastructure through congestion mitigation, roadway building or widening, for example. Others called for regionwide coordination or expansion of existing MPO/TPO networks and programs, such as trails or transit. All responses collected will be used as input to plan a safe and efficient transportation system that provides mobility options and enhances economic development.

We hope that these ideas will make you think about your own regional transportation priorities. Better still - go one more step and communicate your ideas to your local MPO or to the CCC. Contact information is on page 4.



**Transit Route Expansion** - Residential and commercial development creates needs for new bus routes. Improving mass transportation is the number one priority for this region. Frank Reuss, Sarasota,

Community Activist, Governmental Liaison of Sarasota Homes Assoc., Past Chair Sarasota/Manatee Citizen Advisory Committee to the MPO



**Dedicated Transit Lanes** - I travel throughout the region in my job and I see a lot of congestion. I believe mass transit is the solution. Dedicated bus lanes would make buses run faster and schedules

more dependable. As a result, people would be more inclined to use the bus. Patricia Yunk, Clearwater, Analyst, U.S. Department of Labor



**"Humanized" Approach to Regional Planning** -

Our forefathers instinctively started with the large scale and worked to the small scale. Today's transportation planners start with the small - the automobile - and build cities around it. Meanwhile, our automobile culture keeps adding more lanes and more traffic. ("Build it and they will come."). Speed bumps transfer problems to other areas. Sprawl does not pay for itself. The automobile has faded as a symbol of freedom as commuters find themselves imprisoned in metal boxes in traffic jams. Is this "quality of life?" When we as a region place the automobile in perspective and re-learn the humanist lessons of our forefathers, we can begin to create compact, mixed use, walkable communities that people actually care about. Our region needs places designed for people, not machines. Grant Rimbey, Hillsborough, Architect and President of "Citizens for the Revitalization of Temple Terrace" and "Temple Terrace Historical Inc."



**Improving Roadway Design** - Protection of the environment and air quality with travel safety and a minimum of delay are the most important issues. True roundabouts would help accomplish this, establishing a regional priority of protecting air quality, lowering mortality in accidents, protecting pedestrians and cyclists, calming traffic, saving fuel, and adding beauty to intersections that are becoming polluting eyesores. Kafi Benz, Sarasota, Member of Sarasota/Manatee MPO Citizen

Advisory Committee and Community Leader



**Road Widening** - People in Citrus County talk about two priorities. One is making U.S. HWY 19 wider. The other is extending the Nature Coast (Suncoast) Parkway into our county. Elaine Burr, Homasassa, Realtor



**Multi-modal Transportation** - Cycling, skating and pedestrian accommodations should be given the same priority as the automobile. We already have the wheels turning, (a regional plan). The next objective should be to interconnect. Bud Bradley,

President, Raymow Construction Company, Oldsmar



**Access to Airports** - Our local Citrus Connection connects most Polk cities, but if I want to go to the airport in Tampa or Orlando, I almost fear getting on I-4. I would like an alternate road route to Tampa, Orlando, East Coast. I most certainly would use a

high speed rail, if I could get it, but it's hard to change people's mindsets about their cars. The Polk Parkway is a help, although the tolls are costly. Becky Abel, Lakeland, Administrative Assistant for Lakeland Downtown Development Authority



**Affects of Rerouting on Local Business** - In the future I'd like to see more alternatives explored before rerouting a road away from an established business area. Cheaper solutions - additional parking, for example - could possibly alleviate congestion with lower cost and less impact on existing businesses.

Sarah Caudell, Clearwater, owner, Browns Coins



**Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety** - Future planning should ensure that the safety issues of bicyclists and pedestrians are given greater regard. As bicyclists and pedestrians are often the most vulnerable users

of our region's roadways, we should recognize that their safety is tantamount. Phyllis Pacyna Fleming, Planner, Davis Islands, Tampa



**Access for the Disabled** - We should be aware of those who can't drive themselves from place to place. This is a growing segment of our population and a huge human resource. We (physically disabled) have issues of transferring between transit systems

across the region, and transferring between transit and para-transit systems regionwide. Leonard Plotkin, Tampa, member of the Hillsborough MPO Citizens Advisory Committee and Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board



**Visioning** - Too often, transportation improvements cannot be constructed, due to inadequate planning in the past. We must realistically plan and balance our future transportation needs with future land use but

also take into consideration the social and economic factors that relate to our quality of life. Unfortunately we often find ourselves in the difficult position of compromising our needs based on what is socially and cost feasible. David Sessions, Sarasota, Commercial Builder and Owner of General Construction, current Chair Sarasota/Manatee MPO Citizen

**Tell us about your regional transportation priorities. See page 4 to find out how.**



**Public Safety and Law Enforcement** - Planning should support Florida Highway Patrols' campaign to prevent crashes, injuries and death on highways in the Sunshine State. During a recent aggressive driving safety campaign entitled "Operation Safe Ride", FHP cited over 663 aggressive drivers, made 55 DUI arrests, arrested 17 reckless drivers, and issued over 9,133 citations for speeding, following too closely, improper passing, and other violations. Trooper L. E. Coggins, Jr., Public Affairs Officer - Florida Highway Patrol Troop C (Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, and Polk counties)



**Signal System Improvements** - Traffic has become terrible on U.S. HWY 19 between Pasco and (south) Pinellas. But people are not ready to give up their cars. Mass transit doesn't always work for all of the elderly, and road building and expansion aren't practical because of the cost. My priority would be a coordinated signal system that moves traffic more efficiently. Ray Neri, St. Petersburg, President of Lealman Community Association



**Air Quality** - In the coming years, on-road vehicle traffic will be the largest generator of air pollution. April 2004 marks the end of federal air quality planning mandates in the Tampa Bay Area. No longer will air quality be a major consideration in the development of transportation plans. The burden of reducing transportation-related air pollution rests in coordinated regional planning by the state's MPOs and includes a multi-modal travel approach that emphasizes ridesharing to reduce single-occupant vehicles. Reginald Sanford, Air Quality Planner, Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County



**Access for the Elderly** - Effective January 4, 2004, all drivers 80 years or older were required to pass a vision test to renew their drivers license. As a result, many who are already limited to driving only short distances are becoming totally dependent upon others for transportation. The impact of this law, coupled with the rapid growth in the oldest of our aged population, will create additional transportation demands for communities and the region. Francine Ward, Brooksville, member of the Elder Affairs Advisory Council and Director of Programs & Operations, Mid Florida Community Services, Inc.

**Roadway Building and Expansion to Meet Future Needs-** The Tampa Bay region's population and economy are expanding, with 735,000 new residents by 2015. Freight and passenger transportation demand will continue to rise. Anticipating future growth, The Partnership has identified five priority projects. These are: U.S. HWY 19/Bayside Bridge/I-275 Connection in Pinellas County; Interstate 4/Crosstown Expressway Connection in Hillsborough County; I-75 Expansion to six lanes in Sarasota, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties; U.S. HWY 27 Improvements in Polk County; and S.R. 70 Improvements in Manatee County. - The Tampa Bay Partnership (a CEO-led regional economic development organization representing Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties)

**Neighborhood and Historical Preservation** - Three generations of my family lived in Ybor City (Tampa), and I, personally, have been involved in the restoration of the Italian Club. We need to make certain that plans for Interstate 4 expansion never again destroy this unique neighborhood, its historic buildings or its culture. Rose Tambuzzo Barbie, Tampa, retired teacher



**Employment and Economic Opportunity** - Lack of transportation is the second largest barrier (adequate, affordable childcare being the first) many of our consumers face in trying to get and keep a job. The existing transit system affords our consumers with only a limited area for traveling to and from work, which also limits their employment opportunities. Phyllis Burch, Tampa, Job Developer, The Centre for Women



**Rail System** - Americans are addicted to car travel, but commuting is becoming increasingly expensive. The only real alternative to automobile travel that I can see is a system of commuter trains supplemented by parking lots and connecting buses. This approach would work for commuters and tourists. Bill Weiskopf, Lutz, owner of Weiskopf Travel in New Port Richey

**Suncoast Parkway Extension** - The leading regional transportation issue for Citrus County is the study for the extension of the Suncoast Parkway. Whether this road is built and what route it takes will have a major influence on projected traffic flows and on the county's 25 year transportation plan. Gary Maidhof, Director of Development Services, Citrus County



**Access for Non-English Speaking Workers** - It's become harder to get a drivers license since 9/11. Migrant workers depend heavily on the mass transit system. Many are employed in construction, agriculture and tourism. They travel between Pinellas and Pasco counties, Tampa, Plant City, Lakeland, Ruskin and Wimauma. One trip involves several transfers, and for those who lack English language skills, this is complicated. The Bikes on Buses program is very valuable. William Guillermo Farias, Clearwater Police Hispanic Liaison Officer



**Regional Network and Arterials** - Polk County has many highways of statewide and regional significance. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested to improve this regional network with the widening of Interstate 4 and portions of U.S. HWY 27. We need to complete this investment to meet the growing demands associated with the regional movement of people, goods and services. A similar investment is needed for urban arterials, which provide a critical link between our urban areas and the regional road network. Commissioner Jack Myers, Polk TPO Chairman



**Travel Alternatives** - County lines are becoming increasingly blurred. My job focuses on reliable, accessible bus service. But I am acutely aware that without a well planned road system, pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, and other transportation components, we cannot achieve the level of mobility necessary to sustain growth, mitigate congestion, promote our economy and reduce pollution. Mike Carroll, Transportation Manager, Pasco County Public Transportation.

## WE'LL LISTEN (continued from page 1)

communicate your ideas to the appropriate transportation agency. For people living in Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota counties, the appropriate transportation planning agency is your county's MPO or TPO. You can transmit your ideas by email, telephone call or letter, or by attending a public workshop. Web and mail addresses for your MPO/TPO can be found in the green box at the bottom of this page.

If you prefer, you may send your survey and comments directly to the Chairs Coordinating Committee using the [ccctransportation.org](http://ccctransportation.org) website. (MPOs will share responses with the CCC, and vice versa.)

The CCC plans to approve the regional LRTP in September, but the process is actually ongoing. Updates are made periodically and your input is always encouraged.

### THE LRTP IN YOUR COUNTY

In addition to the regional plan, counties have their individual Long Range Transportation Plans. Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties are currently in the process of developing their counties' local Long Range Transportation Plans. Public involvement is encouraged. For details, call them or go to their websites. Contact information is at the bottom of this page.

4

#### Hernando County MPO

20 N. Main ST, Rm 262  
Brooksville, FL 34601  
(352)754-4057  
[www.hernandocounty.us/mpo](http://www.hernandocounty.us/mpo)

#### Hillsborough County MPO

601 E. Kennedy ST, 18th Floor  
Tampa, FL 33602  
813-272-5940  
[www.hillsboroughmpo.org](http://www.hillsboroughmpo.org)

#### Pasco County MPO

7530 Little RD  
New Port Richey, FL 34654  
727-847-8140  
[www.pascocountyfl.net/menu/index/mpoindex.htm](http://www.pascocountyfl.net/menu/index/mpoindex.htm)

#### Pinellas County MPO

600 Cleveland ST, Suite 750  
Clearwater, FL 33755  
(727) 464-8200  
[www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/](http://www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/)

#### Polk County TPO

P.O. Box 9005, Drawer TS05  
Bartow, FL 33831  
(863) 534-6486  
[http://www.polkcounty.net/county\\_of\\_fices/tpo/](http://www.polkcounty.net/county_of_fices/tpo/)

#### Sarasota/Manatee County MPO

7632 15th ST E  
Sarasota, FL 34234  
(941)359-5772  
[www.sarasota-manateempo.org](http://www.sarasota-manateempo.org)

Visit the CCC website at  
[www.ccctransportation.org](http://www.ccctransportation.org).



Chairs Coordinating  
Committee  
[ccctransportation.org](http://ccctransportation.org)

## CCC WEB ADDRESS CHANGED

The Chairs Coordinating Committee regional transportation planning website is now at [ccctransportation.org](http://ccctransportation.org). The site provides an easy way to find an updated Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. You will also be able to learn about times and locations for regional and local public involvement workshops.

### WHAT IS THE CCC?

*The Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) of west central Florida is made up of MPO officials from Pasco, Hernando, Hillsborough, Sarasota/Manatee, Polk and Pinellas counties. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretaries for Districts 1 and 7, the Florida Turnpike Enterprise, Citrus County and the Regional Planning Councils are represented as non-voting members.*

*The CCC meets quarterly to develop regional transportation solutions to a 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 funding priorities and oversees the conflict resolution process. For more information and a complete list of members visit the website at [ccctransportation.org](http://ccctransportation.org).*