

**JOINT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – MEETING OF MARCH 23, 2004**

The Joint Citizens Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, March 23, 2004 at 4:00 P.M. in the Board Room of Clearwater Christian College, 3400 Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard, Clearwater, Florida

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

***Hillsborough County*** – Tom Aderhold, Brian Ross

***Pinellas County*** – Ned Allen, Karl Guenther, Mort Sherman

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Beth Alden – Hillsborough County MPO

Whit Blanton – Renaissance Planning Group

James Byers – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority

Holly Carapella – Hillsborough County MPO

Karen Demeria – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Linda Everett - Pinellas County MPO

Hugh Pascoe – Hernando County MPO, Chairs Coordinating Committee

Lee Royal – Florida Department of Transportation, District 7

Ramon Solis – Pinellas County MPO

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Allen, acting as chairman, called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m..

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves. Holly Carapella has replaced Rich Clarendon as the staff liaison for the Hillsborough County MPO.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

<p><b><i>ACTION:</i></b> A motion to approve the minutes of December 2, 2003 carried unanimously, with four (4) votes in favor. Mr. Guenther was not present at this time.</p>
--

Mr. Allen followed up on several items about which the committee had requested more information. These items were the Pasco County inter-modal projects and the surety bond related to the high-speed rail. There was no information on these items.

**IV. REGIONAL LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Hugh Pascoe of the Hernando County MPO reported that the various tasks that are part of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan update have been divided among the counties. The Hernando County MPO, with the assistance of Renaissance Planning Group, is providing the project management function for the update. Whit Blanton of Renaissance Planning Group gave a PowerPoint presentation on that group's activities.

The Needs Assessment presents all the jobs that need to be done in the region along with their solutions. The Assessment will be presented to the CCC for further evaluation. Projects will be selected for the work plan.

Renaissance is working on the Regional LRTP Needs Assessment with all the MPOs in the West Central Florida region. The MPOs are building on the last regional LRTP, which was developed from the bottom to the top. This time, there will be a top-down approach. There will be a unique regional needs assessment analysis and a unique prioritization, and that approach will drive the development of individual MPO plan updates. The regional needs assessment will integrate the highway and transit modes, will look at strategies applicable to each corridor, and will determine what combinations work effectively. The regional needs assessment will also balance regional needs with local needs.

To date, completed tasks include summarizing existing trends; screening different corridors for the most appropriate improvement strategies; and agreeing on regional transportation goals, which were approved by the Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC). Renaissance is now determining viable strategies. When that task is complete, the consultant will evaluate improvement packages and alternatives. Then, the CCC will be asked to endorse a preferred alternative or system plan and to prioritize the specific projects that reflect that plan.

Mr. Blanton said that in identifying regional needs, they have done traffic forecasts for the year 2025 and have identified ten key travel corridors. A map showing the regional roadways was distributed to the committee. They are now determining viable strategies for transportation improvement in the corridors and will evaluate different improvement packages and alternatives. Then they will ask the CCC to endorse a specific system plan.

Economic trends along the major traffic corridors were discussed. Hillsborough County still has the most jobs, but Pinellas County is creating jobs faster than the other counties in the region, many of them in the medical technology sector. Polk County is adding industrial jobs.

In Pinellas County, the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority has re-oriented its service toward commuter traffic. The next level for them and other counties is inter-county service and making regional connections. The transit companies are oriented to making regional transit more viable.

In the Manatee/Sarasota corridor, there will be growth. Premium bus rapid transit is a viable strategy to connect to job centers in the north. That MPO has worked out a way to improve transit because it can't widen roads. Their other focus on transit is water taxis and service to hotels and beaches.

Lakeland is dealing with increasing congestion on I-4 and Route 98

At the next Joint CAC meeting, the committee will receive an evaluation of the alternative strategies for solving the various traffic problems. The Regional Cost Affordable plan will be presented to the CCC in September 2004.

Three different models have been used for different regional analyses. They are comparable, but they differ in data. The Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Analysis Model is the biggest and the most up-to-date.

Mr. Sherman noted that several Pinellas County CAC members have been urging double-decking of roads and that it would be beneficial for committed express travel.

Mr. Ross said that the area along the Hillsborough/Pinellas boundary between Route 54 and Hillsborough/Tampa Road seems to be “falling between the cracks” of the corridors. This is a growing area, and the residents are looking for an east/west road, that will improve connectivity.

The committee discussed the importance of land use planning and acquiring right-of-way before it makes a project too expensive to pursue. Mr. Solis said that the Florida Department of Transportation is trying to keep a balance on that issue. It was noted that the counties do the land use planning, not the FDOT.

Mr. Sherman said that the Needs Assessment would benefit from providing guidelines for prioritizing projects and determining when a project becomes cost-prohibitive.

**ACTION:** Mr. Aderhold moved that the Joint CAC recommend that the CCC endorse the Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. The motion was seconded, and it carried unanimously with the following vote: Yes = 5, No = 0, Abstain = 0.

## **V. LEGISLATION REGARDING MPOs**

### **A. State**

#### **1. Draft Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) – Regional/Rural Legislation**

Lee Royal of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Strategic Transportation Investment Policy (STIP). This is the Department’s proposed legislation addressing transportation policy issues, initiatives, and funding. Earlier in the year, the Department had workshops focusing on interconnectivities and funding of the Strategic Inter-modal System (SIS), a statewide system of facilities. A copy of the presentation was included with meeting materials.

There are \$8 billion planned for SIS projects within the District 7 area, and \$30 billion to cover statewide needs.

One of the STIP initiatives is the Regional Incentive Grant Program (RIGP). Ms. Royal noted that the west central region of Florida, lead by the CCC, is ahead of other regions for prioritization of regional facilities. The CCC has a list of prioritized regional projects.

Ms. Royal explained the funding proposals for the SIS and the RIGP. Under SIS, the state would receive 75% of new flexible money, which is new federal money. The RIGP would receive 25% of new flexible money. Funds from the TOP program would be reallocated to these programs, and TOP would be repealed. Regionally, the local option gas tax would be part of the funding formula.

Mr. Solis provided an update to the proposed legislation. Currently, 62% of the new capacity funding goes to the SIS and Florida Interstate Highway System (FIHS). The House passed a bill that reduces the FDOT’s proposed 75% of capacity funding for the SIS to

about 68%. The rest could be passed to other programs. From the MPOAC's perspective, this is a positive action. The Senate must still act on this.

Mr. Allen asked whether a county that imposes a higher local option gas tax to raise funds is treated more favorably to obtain state and federal funding. Ms. Royal responded that when a county wants to initiate a project in partnership with the FDOT, the Department wants to know if the county has money of its own for participation in the project. That is the local match. The source of the county's funds does not matter.

Mr. Solis reported that Pinellas County has been treated favorably in advancing its improvement priorities because the county has participated with FDOT in funding state roads with local revenue. Also, Pinellas County has aggressively pursued getting funds from Congress. Therefore, in this scenario, Pinellas is well positioned to receive SIS funding in the future.

Mr. Solis asked Ms. Royal to explain the 20% general revenue service charge allocation to TRIP and the 80% general revenue service charge allocation to RIGP. Ms. Royal responded that currently, 7% of the local option fuel tax revenue goes to general revenue, and a portion of that comes to the FDOT as the County Incentive Grant Program. The FDOT proposes that those monies be returned to the counties.

Ms. Carapella made the amendments available to the committee.

## **2. FTC Proposed Legislation**

The Florida Transportation Commission (FTC) had proposed reorganizing and regionalizing MPOs. Ms. Carapella gave a PowerPoint presentation about the recommendations of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations Advisory Council concerning the FTC's Regional Assessment Report.

The bill is tabled in the Florida Senate. A draft bill is in the Florida House committee, and the current version is toned down from December's version. The phrase "revocation of MPOs" has been removed. The committee is talking about a more cooperative process between the state and the MPOs. There is still talk about regionalization.

Language still exists that would empower the governor to appoint committee members. This is not favored by the MPOAC.

Mr. Solis reported that the FTC had commissioned the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) to study this proposal. The objective was to find out if the MPOs that are independent of general-purpose governments are working as efficiently as MPOs working under a government authority. The findings were that the majority of the independent MPOs are more efficient than the government-associated MPOs. It appears that is what the FDOT is pursuing. There is still a provision in the proposed legislation that all MPOs must be independent agencies by January 1, 2008.

It was noted that in District 7, the Hillsborough County MPO is independent of the county government. Independent MPOs are funded directly by the FDOT with planning monies. The Hernando, Pasco, and Pinellas MPOs have service agreements with their respective counties. Pinellas County pays for all the services and gets reimbursed from the FDOT. The idea behind all this is that no individual local government would influence the decisions

of the MPO. The legislation states that an MPO can increase its membership to include appointed members. Staffing would be independent.

## **B. Federal**

### **1. TEA-21 Reauthorization**

Congress had to reauthorize the current TEA-21 legislation by February 29 or it would expire. They did not reauthorize TEA-21, but the deadline for doing so was extended to May 1.

The Senate has passed a \$318 billion bill for the reauthorization. The House is working on its version, and their draft bill is closer to the \$275 billion range that the president favors.

## **VI. OUTER BELTWAY PROPOSAL**

Lee Royal reported that the Florida Department of Transportation is developing a scope for the work that will be done by the consultant for Hillsborough County's proposed outer beltway. They anticipate that it will be completed within the next several weeks. They have made a commitment to have a draft ready by the April 2 meeting of the Chairs Coordinating Committee.

This is a feasibility study, so it is unknown at this time how far the beltway will extend. Mr. Aderhold noted that the Hillsborough County Corridor Study has already identified partial right-of-way. It runs east of Brandon, between Brandon and Lakeland.

## **VII. REGIONAL UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM FY 2004/05**

Ramon Solis reported that MPO staffs are working with the Florida Department of Transportation to develop the Unified Planning Work Program for FY 2004/05. They will identify planning needs for all the different transportation modes. This is a requirement of the federal agencies in order for the region to be funded with federal revenue

Two of the important projects supported by UPWP funding are the Regional Needs Assessment and the Regional Congestion Management System. We participate in the regional ITS system, and each of the MPOs allocates funds. The county contributions to these programs over one year are as follows: \$108,000 from Hillsborough; \$43,000 from Pinellas; \$24,000 from Hernando; \$13,000 from Pasco County.

Not all of these expenses for regional tasks are reflected in that funding because there are tasks that are not covered by these funds. For instance, participation by staff of individual MPOs in the regional process may have been paid out of funding for non-regional tasks. Much of the participation of the staff directors on regional activities for the CCC may also be paid from administrative funding of individual MPOs, and not necessarily from planning dollars.

Holly Carapella noted several updates to the Section 5.0 Regional Planning Task of the UPWP handout.

**VIII. PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2004**

The Joint CAC tries to meet ten days before the Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC). This year, the CCC will meet on June 11, September 10, and possibly December 10. Staff will select the best date for the next Joint CAC meeting and mail a notice to members.

**IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

Beth Alden of the Hillsborough MPO staff distributed flyers prepared by Renaissance Planning Group for the Regional Transportation Summit. This summit is an outreach event targeted toward the business community. It has been set up and facilitated by Renaissance Planning Group under its contract with the Chairs Coordinate Committee. An electronic version of the flyer can be e-mailed.

Mr. Aderhold suggested that Ned Baier of Hillsborough County staff give a presentation to the Joint CAC on that county's corridor plan in order to acquaint the committee with the strategies and methodologies as well as the outer beltway proposal. Staff will work to add this item to a future meeting agenda.

Mr. Sherman reported that near the Performing Arts Center in downtown Tampa, the signage is insufficient to keep cars from going down a non-paved railroad track right-of-way. A sign will cost about \$100, and the railroad won't pay for it.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.