

**JOINT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – MEETING OF AUGUST 31, 2004**

The Joint Citizens Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, August 31, 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, Emily Rogers Coeyman, Karl Guenther, Mort Sherman

OTHERS PRESENT

Beth Alden – Hillsborough County MPO
Jim Byers – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
Whit Blanton – Renaissance Planning Group
Jerry Camellas – Florida Dept. of Transportation
Karen Cunningham – Pinellas County MPO
Bill Jonson – City of Clearwater Council
Laurie Potier-Brown – PBS&J
Lee Royal – Florida Dept. of Transportation
Ramon Solis – Pinellas County MPO
Gena Torres – Hillsborough County MPO

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Allen, acting as chairman, called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Mr. Sherman moved to approve the minutes of June 8, 2004. Ms. Coeyman seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with 6 votes.
--

IV. FUNDING POLICY FOR STRATEGIC INTER-MODAL SYSTEM

Lee Royal of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) gave an update on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). The state legislature approved the SIS this year. The system will be an integrated network of transportation corridors with seamless connections. It will include existing and emerging highway corridors, rail corridors, and waterways. Currently, the High Speed Rail is considered part of the SIS.

The SIS will have transportation hubs. The hubs in District 7 include Tampa International Airport, the Port of Tampa, the Greyhound Bus Terminal in Tampa, and the proposed rail stations.

The FDOT Secretary will be approving the criteria for SIS connectors on August 31, 2004. The connectors to the hubs in District 7 would include I-4, I-275, roads to the Port of Tampa, and the Lee Roy Selmon Expressway.

When the Transportation Outreach Program (TOPS) was discontinued, \$100 million became available, and the FDOT submitted a list of connector projects to receive those funds. Four projects in the Tampa area received funding. Those projects are the design of the I-4 connector and three intersection improvements on U.S.41. The intersection improvements will facilitate turn movements for trucks. The projects were selected because they will help connect to a hub, promote goods movement, and support the goals of the SIS.

The new fifth year of the Work Program will include SIS components. A long-term plan will be developed also. Future tasks include the adoption of the connectors, developing a strategic plan, and continuing public information efforts. On October 15, the FDOT will post the strategic plan on its website. A hard copy can be prepared upon request. Final adoption of the Work Program is scheduled for December 31.

The 2004 legislature allocated at least 50% of new flexible highway funds to the SIS. A minimum of \$100 million, the former TOPS money, will go toward SIS. The \$100 million has been focused on connectors; and projects were selected based on readiness to be implemented, linkage to their hubs, and meeting the goals of the SIS.

There have been strategic changes in the FDOT's funding policy. Now, 75% of the DOT's funds will go to the SIS, and 25% will go to significant regional facilities. The Department expects to commence that policy in the new fifth year. Funding that is not affected would be urban attributable funding, special federal discretionary funding such as XU, transportation enhancements, congestion mitigation funding, and transit requirement funding.

Mr. Sherman asked if security risks were considered or identified when selecting the hubs and connectors. Ms. Royal responded that the effort was on how to connect the hubs and how these connections would facilitate moving goods. There was no special security evaluation in that process.

Information about the SIS is available on the FDOT website. Ms. Royal will provide hard copies upon request.

V. REGIONAL COST AFFORDABLE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Whit Blanton of Renaissance Planning Group made a presentation re the Regional Cost Affordable Long Range Transportation Plan. Renaissance is working with the CCC's staff directors and technical review team to prepare the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan for 2025.

The Cost Affordable Plan is strategic and is tied to available funding. There is not a lot of money available. The unknowns are caused by the federal transportation reauthorization, which has not occurred, and the state's change in funding policy.

Mr. Blanton reviewed the roadway and transportation projects that reflect the Regional Needs Assessment project priorities. Renaissance has worked with the technical review team, staff

directors, transit agencies, and the FDOT to prioritize those projects for the Cost Affordable Plan. The next step is to get the CCC to endorse and document the plan.

The key issues are to: a) Make sure regional corridors have adequate capacity to meet future growth; b) preserve that capacity through a network ; c) provide more travel choices in those corridors; d) ensure that projects fit and work together regionally; and e) ensure that investments are strategic.

To develop the Cost Affordable Plan, the participants started with the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) as a basis, which is a core element of the SIS. The DOT has identified the funding and a cost affordable FIHS plan. The FIHS and SIS are the only true regional pots of money. Everything else is allocated to the MPOs, who will decide their use.

Some projects have gone through PD&E. Costs were developed for every project in the Needs Assessment.

Highway projects were given a technical ranking based on system performance. A comparable ranking on the transit sides was not possible because the tools and information weren't available.

A subjective evaluation was done with all the MPOs, FDOT, and transit providers on all highway and transit projects to select the high priority projects. Consensus projects were identified. Mr. Solis noted that the technical committee members ranked projects within and without the urban area. Tried to eliminate parochialism and came up with set of good regional priorities.

The SIS will get \$100 million. There is no other regional funding source for non-SIS facilities. There will be unfunded needs. MPOs allocated available revenues they had to other regional projects. There are several pots of funding such as other arterial, transportation management, and intermodal funds.

Local municipalities have the flexibility to use their local funds. In Pinellas County, the MPO has made assumptions about local funding sources that can be used particularly for transit. Those assumptions are the extension of the "Penny for Pinellas" surtax, and the countywide transit surtax. Those two sources alone will cover much of the county's transit needs. Other counties in the region have not made assumptions about their funding sources.

Mr. Aderhold said that there is a need for safe pedestrian pass-through crossings on busy roads near commercial centers. He explained how they could be designed. This is being advocated in Hillsborough County. Committee discussion followed.

Transit will play a big part in dealing with the mobility problem. The plan assumes that the Pinellas Mobility Initiative is cost affordable. It includes elements of PSTA's Bus Rapid Transit initiative, the High Speed Rail, connections from Pinellas County to Hillsborough County, and express bus corridors. Costs have been developed.

Ms. Rogers said that direct, and fast connections between Hillsborough and Pinellas County are very important, particularly for the tourism business. Also, the monorail on the Howard Frankland Bridge would be important to solving transportation problems.

ACTION: Mr. Aderhold moved: *a) That the Joint CAC recommend approval of the Regional Cost Affordable LRTP; and b) That the Chairs Coordinating Committee, as an integral component of the Regional LRTP, develop grade-separated pedestrian malls/pass-throughs, located in high pedestrian traffic sites, that would allow unobstructed pedestrian movement between each side of four+-lane roadways. Such pedestrian malls would be placed under the road surface; preferably have a minimum of 200' horizontal clearance; have a height clearance sufficient only for pedestrians, merchant trams, and bicycle riders, but not for road-worthy vehicles; and be located at mid-block and not at intersections. Such malls would have specific application at concentrated retail/office/light commercial sites such as regional shopping centers and regional activity centers.* Mr. Sherman seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with six votes.

Information about the Regional Cost Affordable Long Range Transportation Plan may be found on the web at www.ccctransportion.org.

VI. TAMPA BAY INTERMODAL CENTERS STUDY

Jerry Camellas of FDOT gave an overview of the status of Tampa Bay Intermodal Centers Study. As part of the SIS, there is a component for intermodal centers. A study was undertaken to look at the Tampa Bay area in District 7 in this regard. The goal is to accommodate different modes of transit from pedestrian traffic to the high-speed rail within these intermodal centers.

A study team was made up of representatives from local governments, MPOs, transit agencies, the airports, and seaports. The study team identified project goals including mobility accessibility, plan conformity, site flexibility, safety and security, and environmental suitability. They then discussed the size of such a facility. The team looked at the largest type of sites because they would accommodate the greatest number of modes.

The study team looked at two types of sites. The first is built at grade level and could accommodate the necessary large footprint, approximately 12 acres. The second is built vertically to accommodate elevators. It would need 3.5 acres and a minimum height of 77 feet.

The team identified activity centers where these sites could go. They picked five centers as the most feasible. They are: 1) Downtown St. Petersburg; 2) the Gateway District (Pinellas County); 3) Downtown Tampa; 4) the Westshore Business District (Hillsborough County); and, 5) the USF area (Hillsborough County).

The team examined 53 sites, and ten sites ranked very high.

In the University of South Florida area are the Circuit City/Service Merchandise site, currently vacant, and a site belonging to USF/Tampa General Hospital. These two sites could accommodate rail transportation.

The Downtown Tampa area has two sites. One is on the light rail system, is near the proposed High Speed Rail alignment, has some vacant land, and has mixed use industrial buildings. The other site is north of the Marion Transit Center and has been identified as a High Speed Rail station.

In Westshore, two sites were identified. One is the campus of Jefferson High School. A co-mingling of their property with the intermodal center was suggested. The other site is close to Tampa International Airport.

In the Gateway, there are two sites. One is the FDOT maintenance facility along Ulmerton. The other is the Speedway property, recently purchased by the FDOT. Pinellas County's proposed light rail system would run close to both of these facilities. The PSTA transit facility is in the area.

In Downtown St. Petersburg, Tropicana Field is a possible site for an intermodal center. The other site is the City's maintenance facility, a large area near the interchange.

The public comment period will close on September 4-5, the feasibility study will be finalized, and then a PD&E study will begin. This should take one year. The environmental documents should be finalized in November 2005. Preliminary design money has been identified for June 2005.

The Regional Long Range Plan includes these intermodal centers as part of its Needs Assessment. The cost for these centers can be determined after the completion of the PD&E.

Ms. Royal clarified that the Florida Transportation Plan is a long-range plan that is an outgrowth of the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan. In that 2025 LRTP, the FDOT committed to developing a SIS. This has been in process for 3- years now. The High Speed Rail came out of separate legislation and a constitutional amendment.

VII. COURTNEY CAMPBELL SCENIC HIGHWAY

Council member Bill Jonson of the City of Clearwater gave an overview of the effort to designate the Courtney Campbell Causeway as a Florida Scenic Highway. This is an effort of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, the cities of Tampa and Clearwater, and civic organizations, who have formed a group called the Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG). The effort was started several years ago, and the Causeway would be the first roadway in District 7 to be designated a Scenic Highway. Once designated, this road would be eligible for grants for improvement; and it would provide positive publicity for the Tampa Bay area. The CAG is interested in speaking to any interested groups to promote this effort. The committee viewed a brief video about the Causeway.

There are two beaches along the Causeway, a trail, and a boat launch ramp. There will be a kiosk in the boat ramp area that will give information on the estuary and the natural wildlife in the area. There may also be a low-powered radio station giving information on the area. It was noted that a traffic signal is being installed at the west end of the Causeway near the entrance to Clearwater Christian College.

A management plan has been completed. It consists of a vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies. Both the Hillsborough and the Pinellas MPOs have given this effort their approvals.

Mr. Allen asked if a bike trail would eventually cross the bridge to connect the two counties. He noted that Ms. Royal of FDOT had advised the Pinellas County CAC that the Causeway is a state highway and that a trail could not go over the bridge. Mr. Jonson said that a trail is in the

Tentative Regional Trail/Pedestrian Plan but that it's not funded. A goal is to complete the trail system across the Causeway.

Mr. Jonson asked for Joint CAC support in the form of a letter to his group. The letter would be put in a file and sent to Tallahassee.

ACTION: Mr. Sherman moved that the Joint CAC encourage the completion of the process to designate the Courtney Campbell Causeway as a Florida Scenic Highway and write a letter regarding same. The motion was seconded, and it carried unanimously.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Included with meeting materials for the committee's information was an article entitled, "Fate of Highway Bill Remains Unclear as Lawmakers Extend Funding to September", which appeared in *CQ Weekly – Transportation and Infrastructure* on July 24, 2004. The article discussed the TEA-21 reauthorization.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.