

DRAFT

April 29, 2015

The Honorable James Kennedy, Chair
Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
310 Court Street
Clearwater, Florida 33756

RE: Revised Request for Prioritization of Public Transit Capital Projects

Dear Chair Kennedy,

Thank you for recently receiving information regarding PSTA's attempts to sustain its bus replacement plans and the potential for a partnership with the Pinellas MPO to consider adding bus replacement funds to the MPO's Surface Transportation Program (STP) Prioritization list. On behalf of the PSTA Board, PSTA's request has been significantly revised.

New Request: Multimodal Project Prioritization

We now recommend, not a specific funding request, but a request to be included in a new collaborative process by which the MPO's historic list of highway priority projects for a single funding source, federal STP funds, be expanded to a more comprehensive prioritization process. The new process would consider all transportation projects, regardless of mode, and all potential funding, including STP, TIGER, state Trust Fund or other program. The PSTA would be permitted to actively participate in the priority setting process and ultimately, the process would be expanded to include regional priorities, collaborating with the Transportation Management Area to prioritize Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco multimodal projects.

This type of multimodal prioritization we are recommending is also recommended by the Florida Department of Transportation, and several of your own MPO Committees.

Change in PSTA's Plans

The PSTA Board has agreed to a new deliberative process to provide the needed leadership for a sustainable "path forward" for public transportation services in Pinellas County. One of the principals of this planning effort is for PSTA to first consider all cost reduction and revenue options within its own authority. This includes using built-up transit funding reserves, set aside previously for the Greenlight Pinellas implementation and other purposes, for the next several years of needed bus

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replacement needs. Using reserves eliminates the immediate need for federal STP funds for bus replacements as was previously thought. This more deliberate strategy will allow planning time for both the MPO and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to set new priorities and coordinate funding needs for existing transportation projects in the DOT's Work Program. Once PSTA's one-time reserve funds are depleted, a coordinated MPO/PSTA/Regional prioritization process will allow PSTA bus replacements and other transportation priorities to be identified and funded without affecting existing programmed projects.

PSTA's Priorities

For your information, PSTA's priorities that we hope to coordinate with the Pinellas MPO's new multimodal prioritization process include the following projects:

1. **Central Avenue Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Capital Funding**
2. **Sustainable Annual Bus Replacement Funding**
3. **Clearwater Beach to Tampa Airport Express Bus Service.**
4. **I-275 Express Lane Express Bus Service – St. Petersburg to TIA/Tampa**
5. **Tampa Bay Regional Fare Collection Technology**
6. **Clearwater Transit Center Replacement**

The PSTA Board sincerely appreciates the decades-long coordination we have enjoyed with the Pinellas MPO and looks forward to an even closer relationship as we move our County's transportation system ahead together.

Sincerely,

William C. Jonson
PSTA Board Chairperson

cc: PSTA Board
Pinellas MPO Board
Pinellas County Commission
Witt Blanton, Pinellas MPO Future Executive Director
Paul Steinman, District Secretary, FDOT District Seven
Debbie Hunt, Director of Transportation, FDOT District Seven