



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – MARCH 4, 2015**

The Legislative Committee of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors held a meeting in the Auditorium at PSTA Headquarters at 9:30 AM on this date. The purpose of the meeting was to receive an update from Gray Robinson, to approve the February 4, 2015 meeting minutes, and recommend the 2015 Federal Legislative Agenda. The following members were present:

Darden Rice, Committee Chairperson
Doug Bevis
Ben Diamond
Pat Gerard

Absent

Wengay Newton

Also Present:

Brad Miller, CEO
Robert Stuart, Gray Robinson (via conference call)
Bill Jonson, PSTA Board Member
PSTA Staff Members

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Rice opened the meeting at 9:31 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Stuart reported on the activities in Tallahassee. He said that the Pinellas County contingent and PSTA trip to Tallahassee is March 25th and indicated that he will book meetings with the delegation members of the Legislature that are important to the funding priority.

He commented on the \$1.5 million appropriation for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and reported that Gray Robinson is working closely with Representative Peters, Representative Rouson, and Mr. Miller to ensure that the request is appropriate. He noted that Senator Latvala encouraged Mr. Miller to present the merits of the \$1.5 million request. He indicated that on the Regional priority, Gray Robinson is continuing to work with the Bay Area delegation and the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) on coordinating the efforts on the farebox project.

In response to Committee Chair Rice's question about how many agencies are asking for BRT pilot projects, Mr. Stuart replied that he will get that answer from staff today. Mr. Miller expressed his opinion that asking Legislature for \$1-2 million instead of the full \$13.5 million might be a better option. He said that Senator Latvala agreed that would be a good strategy. Mr. Miller also mentioned that Representative Peters showed concern regarding the route of the Central Avenue BRT. Mr. Stuart indicated that he would speak to her on the issue.

ACTION ITEMS

February 4, 2015 Meeting Minutes – Mr. Diamond made a motion, seconded by Ms. Gerard to approve the minutes. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

2015 Federal Legislative Agenda – Mr. Miller explained that the number one priority is to restore levels of bus funding in Congress to the pre-MAP-21 level of \$984 million. He commented that the current MAP-21 is expiring on May 31st and indicated that he is attending a meeting on March 5th with Congressman Jolly and Congresswoman Caster in D.C. to discuss. He added that the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has made MAP-21 their number one priority.

Ms. Gerard expressed her concern about discussing BRT with the delegates before going to the PSTA Board first. Mr. Miller responded that the BRT is a state priority that was approved at the February 25th Board meeting. This is only being brought up as an information item for the Legislature.

Committee Chair Rice recommended two changes to the hand-out: 1) spell out PSTA, and 2) change the picture of the stadium to a picture of the beaches. The Committee also suggested adding language referencing that \$8 million is needed due to the fact that over the next six years, PSTA will need to replace 130 buses. Ms. Gerard suggested adding the cost of a bus, and Mr. Bevis recommended adding what percentage 130 buses is of PSTA's fleet. No action took place.

INFORMATION ITEM

Federal Lobbyist – Mr. Miller indicated that in previous Legislative Committee meetings, it was discussed whether or not PSTA should secure the services of a federal lobbyist. He explained that Gray Robinson is PSTA's state lobbyist. Mr. Miller is recommending that the Authority launch a procurement for a federal lobbyist and present those results to the Committee. The Committee agreed.

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

Mr. Miller stated that the Tampa Bay Chamber trip to Tallahassee is March 25-26. Chairperson Jonson and Mr. Newton will accompany Mr. Miller right after the Board meeting on March 25th. Ms. Gerard, Mr. Bevis, and Janet Long will also be in Tallahassee. Ms. Gerard requested an agenda of meetings/dinners. Mr. Diamond stated his belief that it would be helpful to have a one-page information sheet for the BRT project.

Mr. Miller said after the Board sent a letter to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the Express Lanes study on the Howard Frankland Bridge, Paul Steinman, FDOT District Secretary, requested a meeting with Chairperson Jonson, Mr. Miller, and Debbie Hunt, FDOT's Transportation Director of Development. Mr. Miller stated that PSTA is asking for toll revenue to pay for the bus operations, and if the express lanes are not extended all the way to downtown St. Petersburg, explore shoulder running for the buses. Mr. Miller reported that FDOT is open to the requests and would be willing to give PSTA a presentation when their shoulder running study is complete. Mr. Miller said that Ms. Hunt recommended that PSTA get onto the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) priorities list for the BRT along with the state priority list.

Mr. Miller reported that April 9th is the Stand Up For Transportation Day which is a national awareness day sponsored by APTA. They have asked for transit systems and MPO's to create events with their congressional delegation to raise awareness locally to try to pressure Congress to pass a long-term sustainable transportation authorization bill by May 31st. Mr. Miller indicated that Congressman Jolly is confirmed to participate in an event on the morning of the 9th.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM. The next Legislative Committee meeting will be held on April 8th at 10:00 AM.