



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – AUGUST 5, 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 updates from Congressman Jolly and Gray Robinson, to approve the July 13, 2015 meeting minutes, and recommend PSTA's 2016 State and Federal Legislative agendas. The following members were present:

Darden Rice, Committee Chairperson
Ben Diamond, Committee Vice-Chair
Doug Bevis
Pat Gerard
Wengay Newton

Also Present:

Brad Miller, CEO
Bill Jonson, PSTA Board Member
Janet Long, PSTA Board Member
Alan Zimmet, General Counsel
Harry Glenn, Van Scoyoc
Chris Dawson, Gray Robinson
Congressman Jolly (via conference call)
Jen Nawrocki, Legislative Director, Congressman Jolly's Office (via conference call)
Alan Suskey, Suskey Consulting (via conference call)
Robert Stuart, Gray Robinson (via conference call)
Steve Palmer, Van Scoyoc (via conference call)
PSTA Staff Members
Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Rice opened the meeting at 9:30 AM.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Update from Congressman Jolly – Committee Chair Rice thanked the Congressman for his letter to Bill Shuster, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure requesting improved bus funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Congressman Jolly gave the Committee an update on what has been happening in Congress on the Transportation Bill and explained the two vehicles for transportation: 1) the Annual Appropriations which is discretionary, and 2) the Multi-year Authorization Bill, which is a long-term Transportation Bill that has historically been a six-year bill. Congressman Jolly said in the House, there is \$350 million for New Starts, but only \$30 million in the Senate, adding that the funding is reversed for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program, which has \$500 million in the Senate and \$100 million in the House. Congressman Jolly reported that on the multi-year side, the Senate recently passed a multi-year Transportation Bill, but the House only passed a five month bill. He spoke of the declining revenue from the Federal Fuel Tax which creates a shortfall of \$13-\$15 billion a year out of a \$50 billion program, and described possible avenues to increase revenue to fund the multi-year Highway Bill.

Congressman Jolly responded to the Committee's questions about the long-term and short-term bills. Ms. Long asked what PSTA could do to help the Congressman, and he suggested that PSTA impress upon the delegation the importance of a long-term six-year bill and to get the Transportation Annual Appropriations Bill increased as soon as possible. Congressman Jolly also suggested that PSTA make its interest known in the New Starts funding for the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. In response to Committee Chair Rice's question about the Small Starts application for the Central Avenue BRT project, Congressman Jolly suggested that PSTA include that in their line items after the agency determines the funding level. Once that has been determined, PSTA is to deliver that to him and the rest of the delegation so that they can advocate on the agency's behalf.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEMS

2016 PSTA Federal Legislative Agenda – Committee Chair Rice indicated that there are two priorities on the Federal Legislative Agenda: 1) increase in Bus Discretionary

Funding, and 2) 2016 FTA Small Starts application for the Central Avenue BRT project. Mr. Miller suggested adding a third priority which is an increase over current funding for the TIGER Grant funding. The importance of working with the other entities in the Tampa Bay region to prioritize projects was also discussed. Mr. Miller indicated that the Transportation Management Area (TMA) which includes the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), developed their top ten priority list which includes PSTA's projects.

Mr. Newton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Diamond to add the third federal priority: Support the restoration of the TIGER Grant funding to the \$500 million level, and add verbiage that states PSTA's support for additional funding. Mr. Diamond commented that the priorities should be expanded to include dollar amounts and timeframes. Committee Chair Rice asked Mr. Miller to include that for Board approval with a Legislative Committee review before the August 26th Board meeting; Mr. Glenn and Mr. Palmer offered their assistance in drafting the document for Board approval. It was also suggested that some members of the Legislative Committee travel to Washington, D.C. to present the priorities in late September or early October. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

2016 PSTA State Legislative Agenda – Mr. Miller stated that he and HART's CEO are drafting a federal letter to Senator Latvala to demonstrate that the agencies are working collaboratively as a region. He reviewed PSTA's three Legislative priorities: 1) Central Avenue BRT Pilot Project, 2) Clearwater Beach to Tampa International Airport (TIA) Express Route Pilot Project, and 3) Tampa Bay Regional Transit Fare Collection.

Mr. Miller reported that both Senators Brandes and Latvala said that they would be supportive of the BRT project and would join PSTA in a meeting with FDOT's Secretary of Transportation to ask for a \$1 million grant for the final design. Mr. Miller said staff has also been working with FDOT to identify new technology for this project in the hopes that it becomes eligible for pilot project funding.

Mr. Miller explained that the Clearwater Beach to TIA project is an operating project which would require operational funds of \$2 million per year to support. He said the Legislature could help in supporting this project by asking FDOT to provide PSTA with an operating grant. Mr. Miller stated that Congressman Latvala suggested sending a Pinellas Legislative letter signed by the delegation to FDOT's Secretary of Transportation.

Mr. Miller indicated that PSTA has been applying for TIGER funding for the Tampa Bay Regional Transit Fare Collection project and HART has agreed to continue to seek support from the State as well.

Mr. Suskey indicated that Senator Brandes has agreed to join PSTA in a meeting with FDOT to discuss the Central Avenue BRT project. Ms. Long stated that at the County Commission meeting, there was discussion about the bed tax money and carving out a piece to address some tourist-related transit solutions. She indicated that there are many stakeholders interested in moving people from TIA to the beaches. Mr. Miller stated that staff has been working with David Downing from Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater and they are very supportive, in addition to working with the Clearwater Beach Chamber and other beach chambers. Committee Chair Rice suggested creating a detailed packet of information on the two priorities.

[Mr. Zimmet entered the meeting at 10:46 AM.]

Mr. Newton made a motion, seconded by Ms. Gerard to recommend approval of the 2016 State Legislative agenda. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stuart thanked staff for all their work in getting ready for the early session and said he believes PSTA is well positioned to move forward with the Legislature. He also spoke of a policy issue happening in Central Florida where Congressman Mica is pushing for more privatization and Board reorganization for LYNX. Mr. Stuart reported that he will closely track this issue. Mr. Diamond reiterated his suggestion that Gray Robinson write a short strategy memo for each priority for the August 26th Board meeting. In response to Committee Chair Rice's question about the timing of the Pinellas delegation letter to FDOT on the Clearwater BRT project, Mr. Miller replied that the letter will be drafted soon.

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

PSTA/HART Joint Legislative Agenda – Mr. Miller stated because the Legislative Committee approved the State and Federal Legislative priorities, they will be presented to the Board on August 26th. He said that the Executive Committees of PSTA and HART are meeting on August 31st. Mr. Miller explained that HART is also working on their Legislative priorities and at the August 31st meeting, these projects will be discussed to see if any could be combined as well as other collaborative efforts.

ACTION ITEM

July 13, 2015 Meeting Minutes – Mr. Newton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Diamond to approve the minutes as amended. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:51 AM. The next Legislative Committee meeting will be held on September 2nd at 9:30 AM.