



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
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**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES – JANUARY 21, 2015**

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The Planning Committee of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors held a meeting in the Auditorium at PSTA Headquarters at 10:30 AM on this date. The purpose of this meeting was to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2014 Planning Committee, to approve the nomination of new Committee officers, to present Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) bus in express lanes, to review the fare collection survey results, and to present the revised PSTA financial forecast development.

Members Present:

Julie Bujalski  
Janet Long  
Bill Jonson  
Darden Rice  
Ken Welch

Members Absent:

Mark Deighton  
Patricia Johnson

Also Present:

Brad Miller, CEO  
PSTA Staff Members

**CALL TO ORDER**

Committee Chair Bujalski opened the meeting at 10:48 AM.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

## ACTION ITEMS

Committee Officers - Mr. Miller reviewed the PSTA Committee Rules and Regulations which require Committee Officers be identified every two years. Ms. Long made a motion, seconded by Mr. Welch, to nominate Ms. Bujalski to serve as Chair for another year. Seeing no other nominations for Chair, the Committee voted unanimously to accept the nomination.

Ms. Long also motioned, seconded by Mr. Welch, to nominate Ms. Rice to serve as Vice Chair for the Committee. Seeing no other nominations for Vice Chair, the Committee voted unanimously to accept the nomination.

November 19, 2014 Meeting Minutes – Ms. Long made a motion, seconded by Mr. Welch to approve the minutes of the November 19th meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

## INFORMATION ITEMS

FDOT Bus in Express Lanes – Scott Pringle of Jacobs Engineering Group gave a presentation on behalf of the FDOT. FDOT is currently looking at implementing toll express lanes and options to accommodate public transportation in these planned express lanes.

Mr. Pringle told the Committee that FDOT is looking for ways to optimize the express lanes for multi-modal transit service and has conducted a feasibility study to identify various factors.

The feasibility study outlined three major objectives:

- Where are the stations?
- What is the most feasible way to operate the express service across the region?
- What are the specific plans for operation (costs, etc.)

Generally, the express service will follow the I-275 corridor from Pasco, to Hillsborough, to Pinellas County. Station locations identified for the express bus in express lanes service include:

- Wesley Chapel
- University of South Florida (USF) area
- Downtown Tampa
- Westshore

- Gateway area in St. Petersburg

Several possibilities were identified to operate the service:

- Hours of operation (5:30 am until 10:30 pm on weekdays) with 15 minute frequency in peak hours
- Hours of operation (5:30 am until 10:30 pm on weekdays) with 30 minute frequency in peak hours
- High frequency service only available during peak hours

Some options for facilitating express lanes are as follows:

- Bus Only Lanes
- Queue Jumps
- Signal Priority

FDOT is planning on engaging the public by holding a series of workshops, distributing materials and reaching out to Boards and Committees, agencies, and the community. Some of these agencies include:

- Greater Tampa Chamber
- New North Transportation Alliance
- St. Petersburg Chamber
- Tampa Bay Partnership
- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC)
- Tampa Downtown Partnership
- Tampa International Airport (TIA)
- Westshore Alliance

The Committee was concerned that a dedicated lane for the express bus from the Gateway area to St. Petersburg was not included in the plans. The FDOT project manager, Sara Hall was present at the meeting and informed the Committee that a public comment portal was available on the project web site at [www.tampabayexpress.com](http://www.tampabayexpress.com) and that the Committee could submit their opinions and comments about the plans. Instead, Mr. Welch made a motion, seconded by Ms. Long for the Committee to prepare a statement of concerns from the Planning Committee to be presented to the Board regarding the importance of express lanes, particularly from the Gateway area to St. Petersburg. There were no public comments. The motion passed unanimously.

Fare Collection Survey Results – In the interest of time, the Planning Committee did not address the subject of Fare Collection Survey results.

Revised PSTA Financial Forecast Development – Mr. Miller presented PSTA’s financial forecast going forward. The forecast was presented to the Finance Committee and will be presented to the Transit Riders Advisory Committee (TRAC), Legislative Committee, and Board of Directors.

In light of the Greenlight Pinellas referendum not passing, PSTA will make changes in some of the current policies to ensure a sustainable financial future. A facilitated workshop is scheduled for February 18, 2015 to allow PSTA staff and Board members to collaborate on future plans. Additional workshops may be scheduled.

PSTA is examining the No New Revenue Scenario which was developed two years ago as part of the Community Bus Plan. The Scenario concentrates service and funds on the higher ridership corridors by eliminating or reducing other routes so those resources can be used on higher ridership routes. Routes would be streamlined allowing for some faster service. The conversion to the New No Revenue Scenario will lower overall service by approximately 25%.

Staff is also looking at other ideas to save administrative costs without cutting service. This would be challenging however. The conclusion of past studies by McCollom (2013) and KPMG and ABBG (2014) have already shown that PSTA is running lean and only \$75,000 to \$100,000 can be saved in this area. Benchmarking studies show that PSTA rated “Best in Class” in operating costs.

Although PSTA will experience a deficit in the operating budget, current savings can balance the operating budget until FY2018 without changing any existing service. However, reserves will be exhausted.

The capital budget presents more of a challenge. In the past, bus fleet replacement funding was supplemented by significant Congressional earmarks. Without these funds as readily available, PSTA will need to seek other sources. Additionally, if no policy changes are made, PSTA will realize a \$40 million deficit within 3 years. Mr. Miller suggested recommendations to reduce the projected deficit by enacting new policies:

- Move to a “smoothed-out” bus replacement policy whereby PSTA replaces a given amount of buses each year over time, keeping the annual purchases consistent.
- Extend useful life of buses from 12 years (the Federal limit) to 15 years.

- Contract out express services to Tampa such as the 100X and 300X routes. This would eliminate the replacement of over-the-road coaches when they reach their maturity.
- Discontinue Hybrid-Electric bus purchases.
- Use all contingency funds from Capital Grants for buses.

Mr. Miller also suggested additional opportunities to mitigate cuts in service:

- Maximize the PSTA property tax from .73% to .75% generating about \$970,000 per year.
- Contract out and increase bus advertising, potentially increasing revenue from \$200,000 to \$500,000.
- Develop a fare increase plan beginning in FY2016 which includes a steady regular increase, ultimately generating \$1.3 million annually.
- Reduce the cost of administration generating \$100,000.
- Seek Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) allocated Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds or other funds for bus replacements, with an annual request of \$8 million.
- Advocate for bus funding at the federal level.

Mr. Welch suggested that staff also consider taking advantage of other local funding options such as local option fuel tax, using the \$0.05 of additional fuel tax that the county can levy. Mr. Miller suggested that state legislators may be less interested in helping PSTA out of its fiscal deficit, but rather are interested in helping PSTA with incremental new services and expansion, such as Clearwater Beach to airport Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Central Avenue BRT, I-275 Express Lanes, and Nights/Weekends frequency improvements.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:46 PM.

**The next Planning Committee meeting will be held on March 20, 2015 at 10:30 AM.**