



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 18, 2017

Committee Chair Gerard called the October 18, 2017 Planning Committee meeting to order at 10:45 AM. Members present: Joe Barkley, Bill Jonson and John Tornga. Absent were: Darden Rice and Patricia Johnson. Also present were: Brad Miller, CEO; PSTA staff members, and members of the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

PRESENTATIONS

Regional Transportation Planning – Whit Blanton of Forward Pinellas presented an overview of regional transit planning in Tampa Bay. Mr. Blanton stressed the challenges involved in keeping pace with the planning, decision-making, and funding for transit projects when there are so many organizations involved. Transportation decisions are under the direction of several organizations including Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in Pinellas, Pasco and Hillsborough counties, the Transportation Management Leadership (TMA) Group, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Federal Government. Mr. Blanton reviewed the ongoing regional planning efforts underway in the Tampa Bay area including Tampa Bay NEXT, and the Regional Transit Feasibility Study. He stated that Tampa Bay would benefit from a regional express bus service, a light rail initiative to connect Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, and a strategy to make our counties “walk” friendly. Mr. Barkley commented that this regional effort is vital to the economic viability of Tampa Bay in order to attract companies such as Amazon, who are currently looking for headquarter locations.

ACTION ITEMS

August 16, 2017 Meeting Minutes – Mr. Jonson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Barkley to approve the minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

2018 Meeting Schedule – The Committee reviewed the 2018 meeting calendar. Mr. Barkley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jonson, to approve the schedule. Motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Ridership Trend Analysis - Mr. Miller shared the latest PSTA ridership statistics comparing FY2017 to FY2016, showing a 7.5% loss in total rides. He explained the downturn in ridership is a transit agency trend across the nation, due to lower gas prices, a rise in car sales, an improving economy, and more affordable transit alternatives such as Uber and Lyft. Mr. Miller stressed that PSTA may have to consider lowering fares and investing in service adjustments to support core routes to raise revenue in the future. Despite the downturn, the following two segments, the Demand Response Service (DART) and Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) programs show increase in ridership.

2018 Service Adjustment Process – Cassandra Borchers said the service adjustment process, which occurs three times a year, includes fine-tuning routes and improving on-time efficiencies. Ms. Borchers shared research and statistics on two routes, the 444 and the 58. The 444 is historically the least productive and most expensive route and will be recommended for elimination. Through surveys, town hall meetings and on-board notices, the few riders of the 444 will be offered an alternative such as Direct Connect for their commute. Ms. Borchers presented the proposed changes to route 58, which would be to add one more trip at the end of the route. This extra trip would accommodate a substantial number of working class riders who need the extra route to be able to ride PSTA home from their workplace. The committee had questions related to when the adjustments would take place and if legal notices are required before such changes take effect.

Transportation Disadvantaged Late Shift Update – Heather Sobush, Manager of Planning, reported on the continued success of the TD Late Shift pilot program. The pilot started in July, 2016 with a mobility enhancement grant from the state of Florida. The program provides TD riders with up to 23 free rides on Uber, United Taxi, or Care Ride from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM to and from work. The pilot has been a huge success and PSTA was awarded a second grant. Ms. Sobush explained in order to sustain the program, a new price structure of \$20 for a TD monthly bus pass, 25 free Late Shift rides and 1 urgent TD trip will be introduced in January. Brad reiterated that PSTA will ask the TD Commission to continue funding this program, but staff is prepared to fund the program 100% in the event the commission discontinues funding.

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

The Committee was provided with a list of upcoming meeting subjects.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM. The next Planning Committee meeting will be held on Monday, November 13th at 10:30 AM.