

FORWARD PINELLAS

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July 22, 2019

Mr. Brad Miller, CEO
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
3201 Scherer Drive
St. Petersburg, Florida 33716

RE: Letter of Support for Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project

Dear Mr. Miller:

I would like to take this opportunity to affirm the strong support of Forward Pinellas for the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. As the metropolitan planning organization for Pinellas County, we have this project ranked among the top transportation projects in the county because we recognize that fast, frequent and reliable transit service brings value for equitable economic opportunity.

The Central Avenue corridor is one of the fastest growing areas of Pinellas County, with redevelopment and infill development moving from downtown St. Petersburg westward. In the last five to 10 years, the Edge and Grand Central Districts along Central Avenue have become desirable destinations for the arts, local retail, distinctive culture and housing in a walkable, accessible part of the community. We expect this trend to continue, and the advent of the BRT project will help guide growth and redevelopment in a sustainable, environmentally friendly and affordable manner.

In addition to the City of St. Petersburg, the cities of South Pasadena and St. Pete Beach have prepared redevelopment plans that seek to bring desired redevelopment in a scale that fits the character of those communities. Census data show that more than 80 percent of workers in St. Pete Beach – a major tourism destination – live elsewhere, with about half of those coming from St. Petersburg, accessible via the planned BRT service. The project will provide improved travel time reliability in the corridor while enhancing redevelopment prospects and providing increased economic opportunity for workers.

The Central Avenue BRT project is a regionally significant project that would provide a catalyst for further transit development in Pinellas County and throughout Tampa Bay. Ultimately, it will serve as a foundation for improved transit service connections north into Clearwater, our Gateway employment district and Hillsborough County, where travelers arriving at Tampa International Airport will want express connections to St. Petersburg and the beaches. Developing fast, reliable transit service that can serve as a model for future transit development sets an important precedent.

We applaud PSTA's efforts to work with the cities along the corridor to address their concerns and needs. Please let me know how Forward Pinellas can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Whit Blanton, FAICP
Executive Director