



Dear Councilmember,

Thank you for your commitment to our great city of St. Petersburg. We recognize your continued leadership and commitment to making our city a great place to live, work, and play – particularly for young professionals.

As the Executive Board of the St. Petersburg Young Professionals, we write you today to express our support for PSTA's proposed Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. As you may know, the Central Avenue corridor has some of the highest transit ridership in the region and is currently served by the Central Avenue Trolley which provides local service along Central Avenue. PSTA's proposed Central Avenue BRT project will offer express service with limited stops, increased frequency, and premium amenities. We acknowledge that bus rapid transit delivers rail-like reliability and frequency with the flexibility and cost advantages of bus service.

As young professionals, we understand that there is a growing demand for car-free living due to the cost savings, lower environmental impact, and health benefits. A recent study from AAA listed the annual cost of owning and maintaining a car at nearly \$9,000.¹ With increasing rent and home prices in St. Petersburg, we see lowering transportation costs as one way to keep St. Pete affordable and we believe premium transportation projects like the Central Avenue BRT project offer one way for people to cut down on those costs.

Additionally, encouraging projects like the Central Avenue BRT align with the City's Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP) which lists increased access to transit as a way for us to reach our sustainability and resiliency goals. And as a built-out city, increased transit usage also allows us to increase the capacity of our roads without need for expansion or widening.

The revitalization of Downtown St. Pete has been widely noted and we believe the Central Avenue BRT project offers the potential for redevelopment and job creation along other parts of the Central Avenue corridor. According to a 2015 study by the National Institute for Transportation and Communities², bus rapid transit lines in other cities often attracted a higher share of new office and residential development and areas along BRT routes saw outpaced job gains compared to areas without

¹ <https://newsroom.aaa.com/auto/your-driving-costs/>

² <https://t4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/national-study-of-brt-development-outcomes-11-30-15.pdf>

BRT. We believe the Central Avenue BRT project has the potential to spur economic development along the Central Avenue corridor that will benefit the surrounding neighborhoods and business districts.

Because of these reasons, the St. Petersburg Young Professionals Executive Board has unanimously voted to join other organizations such as the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership, Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber, and the Central Avenue Business District in supporting PSTA's Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project. We hope you will join us in supporting this crucial project and continue working hard to build on our city's recent successes. Thank you again for your commitment to the City of St. Petersburg.

Sincerely,

Lauren Ellis

Chair of St. Petersburg Young Professionals

The following individuals unanimously approve this motion to support PSTA's proposed Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project:

SPYP 2019 Executive Board

Lauren Ellis - Chair

Brandon Dysard - Programing Chair

Brooks Wallington - Immediate Past Chair

Patricia Clynes - Finance Chair

Anthony Close - Advocacy Chair

Scott Foelgner - Leadership Round Table Chair

Jess Duxstad - Events Chair

Danny Hernandez - Membership Chair

Michelle Olson - Community Service Chair

Crystal Hochmuller - Marketing Chair

Jerell Puyot - Networking Chair

Brittany Ranew - Annual Celebration Chair

Lawerence Parker - Diversity and Inclusion Chair

CC:

Kevin Thibault, Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation

David Gwynn, District Secretary of Transportation, FDOT District 7

Brad Miller, CEO of Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority