

**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
2035 PLAN REVISIT – INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP
SEPTEMBER 21, 2012 1:30 P.M.
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CENTER, 601 E. KENNEDY BLVD.
18th FLOOR BOARD ROOM
MEETING SUMMARY**

Attendees:

Chelsea Favero	Pinellas MPO
Sean McGinnis	Hillsborough EPC
Lynda Crescentini	HART
Randy Stribling	HART
Lee Royal	FDOT
Bob Lasher	PSTA
Vivian Bacca	U-CAN
Heather Sobush	Pinellas MPO
Bill Roberts	Commercial Realtors
Jeff Rogo	NAIOP
Mike Williams	Hillsborough County Public Works
Chris Weber	Westshore Alliance
Calvin Thornton	City of Tampa
Bob Frey	Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority
Charles Stephenson	City of Temple Terrace
Brad Parrish	City of Temple Terrace

Staff:

Beth Alden	Hillsborough MPO
Ray Chiaramonte	Hillsborough MPO
Rich Clarendon	Hillsborough MPO
Katie Habgood	Jacobs/ MPO consultant
Ben Kelly	The Kenney Group/MPO consultant
Scott Pringle	Jacobs/ MPO consultant
Jennifer Straw	Jacobs/ MPO consultant

Presentation:

Beth Alden welcomed everyone and gave a brief background of the study. Jennifer Straw presented a summary of the best practices and national referenda trends research and the research into lower cost options for premium transit, and Ben Kelly presented results of the statistically valid telephone survey.

Questions/comments from Interagency Working Group (IWG) participants:

Lower Cost Premium Transit Options

Question/Comment:

In the SunRail example (referring to FDOT purchase of CSX rail lines and associated costs), how was concern from the community addressed regarding the noise to run the service?

Response:

For the SunRail project, "quiet zones" were created and additional mitigation factors were agreed upon to address the issues.

Question/Comment:

"Bare bones" service might reduce ridership because access would be limited.

Response:

This is a trade-off that must be considered when implementing service. Conversely, capacity on single-track infrastructure restricts the potential of reducing frequencies to less than 15 minutes (14 minutes or fewer between trains) during peak hours, while double-track infrastructure has more flexibility of increasing capacity and frequencies.

Question/Comment:

How many freight trains use the existing tracks? There is a study underway by the Port of Tampa in which they are trying to increase train traffic.

Response:

There are few trains on the study lines, between one and five trains daily, and therefore adding passenger service with temporal separation should have a minimal impact. Many of the trains that access the Port of Tampa use the rail line to the east of the line being considered. Consultant staff will look into the study for the Port of Tampa.

Question/Comment:

Is there enough right-of-way under Interstate 4 and the Selmon Expressway to accommodate double-tracked infrastructure?

Response:

That level of detail has not been considered for this stage of the study, however Consultant Staff will try to confirm. In general, double-tracking does require more right-of-way which contributes to a higher total cost, but there is a savings in right-of-way needs when comparing light rail that requires a track separate from freight tracks, to hybrid rail running on existing tracks.

Question/Comment:

How does this lower cost option and its operating costs compare to the potential revenue sources discussed in Phase II?

Response:

Sales tax revenues are anticipated to be \$93 million per year for ½-cent, or \$187 million per year 1-cent. The preliminary costs of the hybrid rail are anticipated to range from \$157-400 million to build, and \$8-21 million per year to operate.

Question/Comment:

What the next steps are for this lower cost concept?

Response:

If the IWG agrees, the concept can go before the MPO Board for endorsement and further study will be conducted.

Question/Comment:

How does this project fit into other regional plans such as HART's or TBARTA's plans?

Response:

This project involves entities and interests beyond Hillsborough County. Some of the projects under consideration in adjacent communities can be integrated, such as the Pinellas AA. The method of propulsion, whether electric or diesel, does not impact the ability to use different technologies. Instead, track gauge is the factor that must be coordinated to allow seamless connections across county lines. Policy coordination is also required between counties and agencies.

Question/Comment:

What jurisdictions does the potential hybrid rail line touch?

Response:

The 12-mile line is completely within the City of Tampa.

Question/Comment:

Who ensures that the technical standards are met consistently across the region?

Response:

Freight rail already operates under technical standards, and passenger rail service would need to comply with it.

Question/Comment:

Will the project require a time-consuming and costly Alternatives Analysis (AA)?

Response:

An AA is required when Federal funds are used. If a referendum secures a dedicated funding source, Federal funds, along with the requirements and process, can be avoided.

Question/Comment:

The alignment being discussed is not new, and, in fact, has been part of discussions for 25 years.

Response:

A Record of Decision confirming this alignment as the Locally Preferred Alternative was registered in 2002.

Question/Comment:

Might this service compete with the Nebraska Avenue BRT service to be operated by HART which already has committed funds? Additionally, there is a possibly unsustainable concentration of services in this geographic area. What about considering connections to Citrus Park or Brandon instead, since there are rail lines already in place?

Response:

This alignment and service has the highest ridership routes serve this area, and has a high number of jobs at either end of the route as it connects dense destinations. Because there is an existing, lightly-used rail line, the cost to build can remain low. Additionally, the LRTP 2035 model showed complementing premium bus and light rails caused all transit modes to perform better. This region under-invests in transit, and therefore even a large increase in service will not reach the levels to which other communities invest.

Question/Comment:

Has rail service between Downtown Tampa and Tampa International Airport been considered?

Response:

There is no existing rail line between these two destinations, therefore capital costs would be significantly higher, and the length of time spent constructing the service would be much longer. This is a higher-level sketch plan to determine the project's political feasibility, but it's important to locate it where it will be successful, where there are existing riders, and where it will serve the people in the community. However, this study will also include potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) within the I-275 managed lanes between Downtown and the airport.

Question/Comment:

This should be part of regional plans and all projects of this scale, whether hybrid rail or BRT, take time and can be customized.

Question/Comment:

The route considered for hybrid rail line connects large residential areas and follows existing commuter movements.

Question/Comment:

A demonstration rail line anywhere in the region would benefit the entire region so that people would understand the benefits and would help to move other projects forward. The first one needs to be successful.

Public Opinion Survey Results

Question/Comment:

The appetite for taxes may be related to the perception of how people feel the general “direction” of the county is heading.

Response:

That may be an indicator of the potential willingness of residents to approve a new tax.