



# TRANSIT CENTER

## Regional Transit Study Looks at Big Picture

Last year, the Interstate Highway System turned 50 years old. In looking towards the next 50 years, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) envisions a balanced transportation system that includes effective regional mass transit. FDOT's recently released *Strategic Regional Transit Needs Assessment (SRTNA)* identifies key connections in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties. The study analyzed how people move around the region and the amount of congestion expected by 2050. A public survey was included to measure transit awareness and perceptions. The study identifies key regional connections (below) that serve the greatest needs. The success of the regional transit system will depend on a network of feeder routes and transit-oriented land development. The *MPO Transit Study* will identify opportunities for local feeder routes and state-local partnerships in regional corridors. For more info on SRTNA, email inquiries to [fdot.srtna@c-b.com](mailto:fdot.srtna@c-b.com) or visit <http://fdot-srtna.c-b.com>.

## Transit Experts Tell Leaders Development Follows Rail

Community and business leaders convened for the first meeting of the MPO Transit Study Leadership Team at the Tampa Port Authority on February 16th to discuss Bay Area transit improvements and hear lessons learned from an expert panel. Speakers emphasized that strong public participation will help build an efficient and effective transit system.

Cal Marsella, General Manager of the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD), spoke about how planning a successful regional transit system for an eight county area supported growth, sustainability and economic development.



G.B. Arrington, Vice President of Parsons Brinckerhoff PlaceMaking, shared how Portland set out to reshape itself as a new American city by linking transit to land use and livability. "We wanted to grow up, not out; so, we invested in better transit and land use," said Arrington. "Now, we're the number one destination in the USA for college educated 25 year olds, because of the quality of life in Portland."

"Quality of service is critical, even if the cost is higher," said Doug Allen, Executive Vice President of Dallas Area Rapid Transit. (Dallas area transit and land use investments are pictured left & below.)

View all of the Leadership Team expert panel presentations under 'meetings & events' at [www.mpotransit.org](http://www.mpotransit.org).



Leaders listen to lessons learned by other regions (below).

**"This is a non-partisan issue that advances regional mobility & economic development. There are two primary ways to achieve smart growth & livable communities. You can get there by legislating it, or by making the right infrastructure decisions. With a transit investment, smart growth happens because it makes sense to developers. Just like development follows highway, development follows rail."**

- Cal Marsella



# Citizens Create Their Vision for the Future of Transit in Hillsborough County

In March, the MPO invited citizens to consider all of the possibilities, and take a hands-on role in planning the transit system that they want to see. Two large, heavily promoted workshops were held at the Florida State Fairgrounds on the 13th. Also, business and community organizations hosted workshops during the month. In all, about 223 participants weighed in on the design of a better transit system for Hillsborough County by playing the 'Transit Scenarios Game' on 'game board' maps of quadrants of the County. Grouped around the large maps, participants identified activity centers by adding brightly colored sticky dots. With lengths of ribbon, they connected the dots, envisioning commuter rail, streetcar, bus rapid transit and other types of enhanced transit services. After identifying individual transit needs and desires, participants came to consensus. Clear transit needs and opportunities emerged, such as:



**Major Urban Centers** including Downtown Tampa, Westshore District/ Airport, Brandon & the USF Area

**Growing Activity Centers** including Citrus Park, South Tampa, Plant City, NetPark, New Tampa, the Port of Tampa, and an emerging gateway in the Big Bend Rd area of SouthShore; major shopping and other attractions outside Downtown Tampa including the Florida State Fairgrounds/ Ford Ampitheater/ Seminole Casino, Busch Gardens & Raymond James Stadium

**Major Transit Corridors** recognizing Downtown Tampa as a major regional & county center, with major transit corridors in the direction of:

- Westshore District/ Airport & points west to St. Petersburg
- Carrollwood, Town & Country/ Westchase & points west into Pinellas County
- USF Area & points through Pasco County to Brooksville in Hernando County
- Brandon, Plant City & points east to Orlando • SouthShore & points south to Sarasota

**Multi-Modal Connections** to transit including bus feeder routes, bus rapid transit & other enhanced bus services, local circulator buses, and bicycle & pedestrian facilities

**Cross-County Connections** east/west across Hillsborough County and links between the major transit corridors

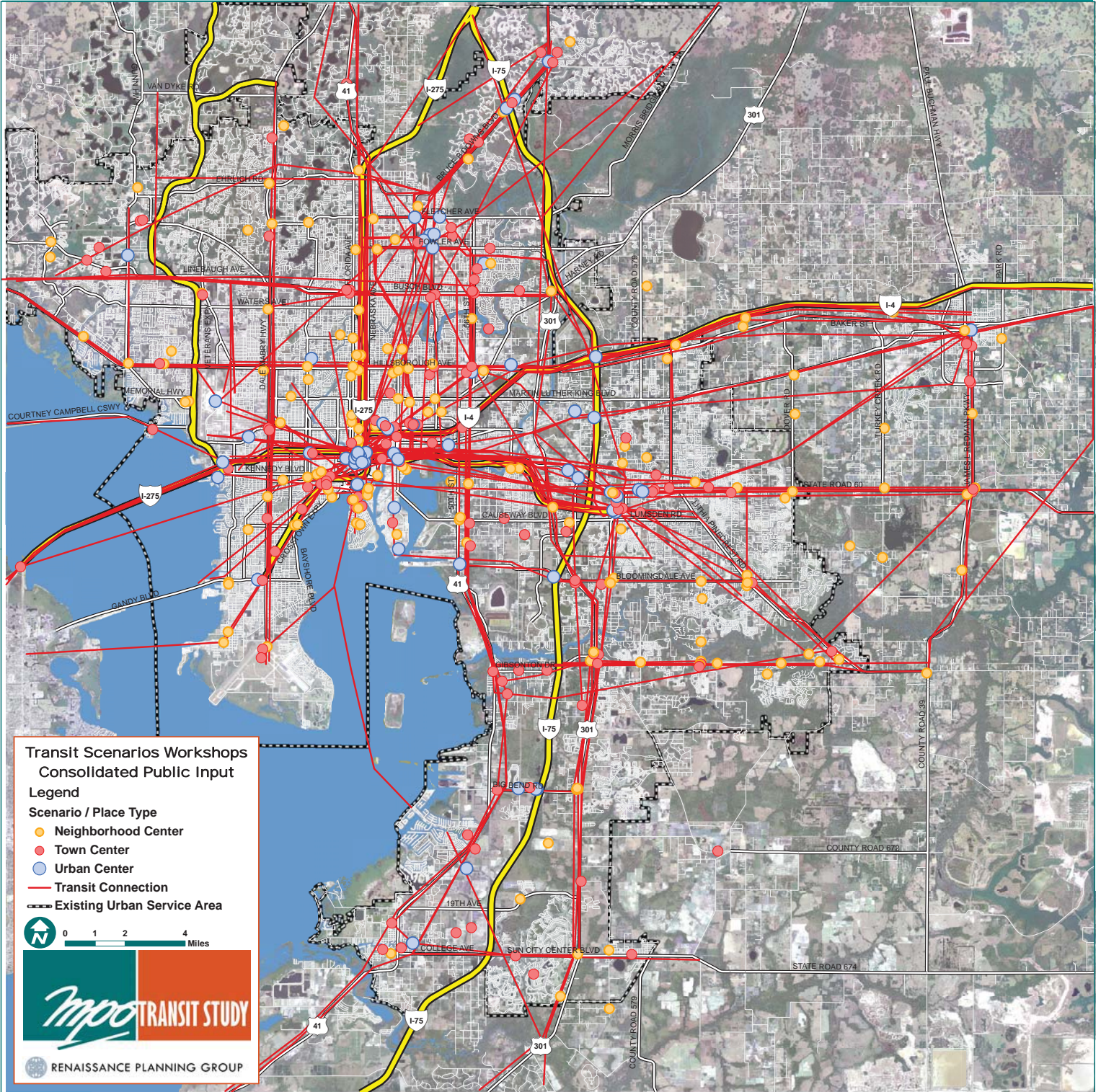
**Regional Connections** within the greater metropolitan Bay Area counties in West Central Florida and to Orlando



# Connecting Destinations

Workshop participants identified activity centers, connected them with transit lines, and envisioned the growth of urban, town and neighborhood centers in the future. The map below consolidates the 23 Transit Scenarios developed by the March workshops and 'home game' participants.

*Business & civic groups took time out of their busy schedules to host Transit Scenario Workshops. Pictured here is a workshop hosted by Greater Tampa Chamber member, AACSB International.*





## Measuring Success

At eight county-wide public focus groups last winter, citizens and business people told us what's important to them. We've come up with ways to measure how well transportation choices support these values. This summer, we'll be crunching the numbers to see how well transit improvements stack up. For more information on the *MPO Transit Study's* values, vision and guiding concepts, contact Project Manager **Alan Steinbeck, AICP**, at **813/273-3774 x336** or [steinbecka@plancom.org](mailto:steinbecka@plancom.org).

### Guiding Concept: *Mobility*

#### What we've heard...

'... want more quality time with family & friends ...'  
'... need more reliable travel times ...'

#### How do we measure success ?

- Reducing average travel times
- Improving average travel speeds
- Increasing frequency of transit service
- Increasing non-auto trips

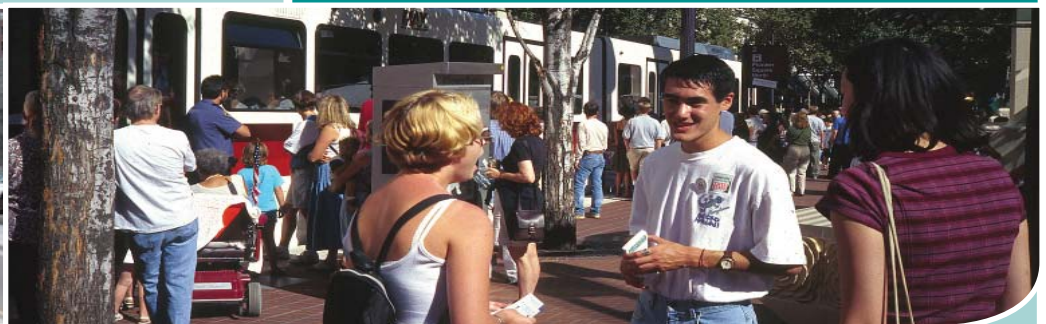
### Guiding Concept: *Land Use*

#### What we've heard...

'I need goods, services & jobs to be more accessible.'  
'... grow our small towns, but maintain their character ...'

#### How do we measure success ?

- Increasing residences near transit
- Increasing # of jobs near transit
- Increasing affordable housing near transit
- Increasing community facilities & services near transit



### Guiding Concept: *Environment*

#### What we've heard...

'Stop the sprawl & save some open space.'  
'Traffic is polluting our air.'

#### How do we measure success ?

- Improving air quality
- Reducing fuel consumption
- Decreasing acres of wetlands impacted
- Increasing open space preservation
- Reducing auto crashes

### Guiding Concept: *Economic Vitality*

#### What we've heard...

'I need access to jobs & services, especially if I don't or can't drive.'  
'Won't traffic gridlock choke the economy?'

#### How do we measure success ?

- Decreasing delays that increase costs of labor & goods movement
- Maximizing public service allocations over a smaller area
- Property values & job growth increasing within transit oriented development

## Business Community Resolves to Support Improved Transit

The Tampa Downtown Partnership, Westshore Alliance and New North Transportation Alliance jointly passed a Transit Resolution in March recognizing the need for a significantly improved transportation system for the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County and the greater Tampa Bay region. These business organizations represent the major employment and activity centers in Hillsborough County today. "This is an economic development issue just as much as a transportation issue," said Fred Dobbins, Chair of the Tampa Downtown Partnership. "In order to maintain our competitiveness in attracting businesses and qualified employees, we need to provide multiple ways for people to get around. It is imperative that the business community understand the importance of getting this right." The joint resolution supports options like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), high occupancy lanes for BRT (and other high-occupancy vehicles), light rail, commuter rail and circulator systems with aggressive pursuit of new revenue sources to support this vision. The resolution also supports the concept of regionalized transportation and the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission's December 2006 position in favor of planning for mass transit.

## Bay Area Gets A Reality Check

More than 300 local developers, professional planners, corporate executives, environmentalists, non-profits, and government officials (including 49 elected officials from 7 County Commissions and 45 cities) gathered on May 18th at the Tampa Convention Center to participate in Reality Check Tampa Bay. Created by the Urban Land Institute, the exercise was designed to discuss, analyze and develop alternative regional growth scenarios. It used grids overlaid on 32 maps as the base for planning growth. Participants placed 408 red and 1,015 yellow Lego pieces to represent expected growth in jobs and homes, respectively, by 2050. Ribbons were used to denote roads or public transportation. Three top goals emerged from Reality Check Tampa Bay: Create a fast, seamless transportation system using cars, buses and rail. Cluster live-work-play neighborhoods and transit hubs. Preserve Florida's trademark beaches, swamps and woods. For more information, visit: [www.realitychecktampabay.org](http://www.realitychecktampabay.org).

## Joint Transit Open House

On May 22nd, the MPO and Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) hosted a Transit Open House at the Loretta Ingraham Center in Westshore to showcase long and short term transit needs and opportunities for Hillsborough County. Dozens of citizens spoke to MPO and HART planners, viewed presentations, filled out surveys, and participated in discussion regarding the MPO Transit Study and HART's study to implement Bus Rapid Transit within the next three years. (picture at right)

## MPO Transit Study Needs & Opportunities

The *MPO Transit Study* began in Fall 2006 to identify long range needs to improve mobility, economic vitality and quality of life within Hillsborough County. Community values focus groups were held throughout the county, and by Spring 2007, transit connections were being identified and discussed at a series of transit scenarios meetings, workshops and planning exercises. The results are in and are summarized on the *MPO Transit Needs & Opportunities Map* (see next page). The transit technologies represented on the *Transit Needs & Opportunities Map* include regional rail, light rail and premium bus. Applications of these various modes in specific locations on the map are based on the suitability and development potential.

### Regional/ Commuter Rail (red lines)

*Regional & commuter connections from a longer distance to the urban core, such as Plant City to Downtown Tampa & points beyond Hillsborough County. Likely to be heavy rail corridors with new or existing tracks to minimize travel time & maximize ridership, include commuter park & ride lots, bus feeder services & circulators. Station area development would include amenities for commuters with easy access to housing & job opportunities to maximize the transit investment.*

### Light Rail (blue lines)

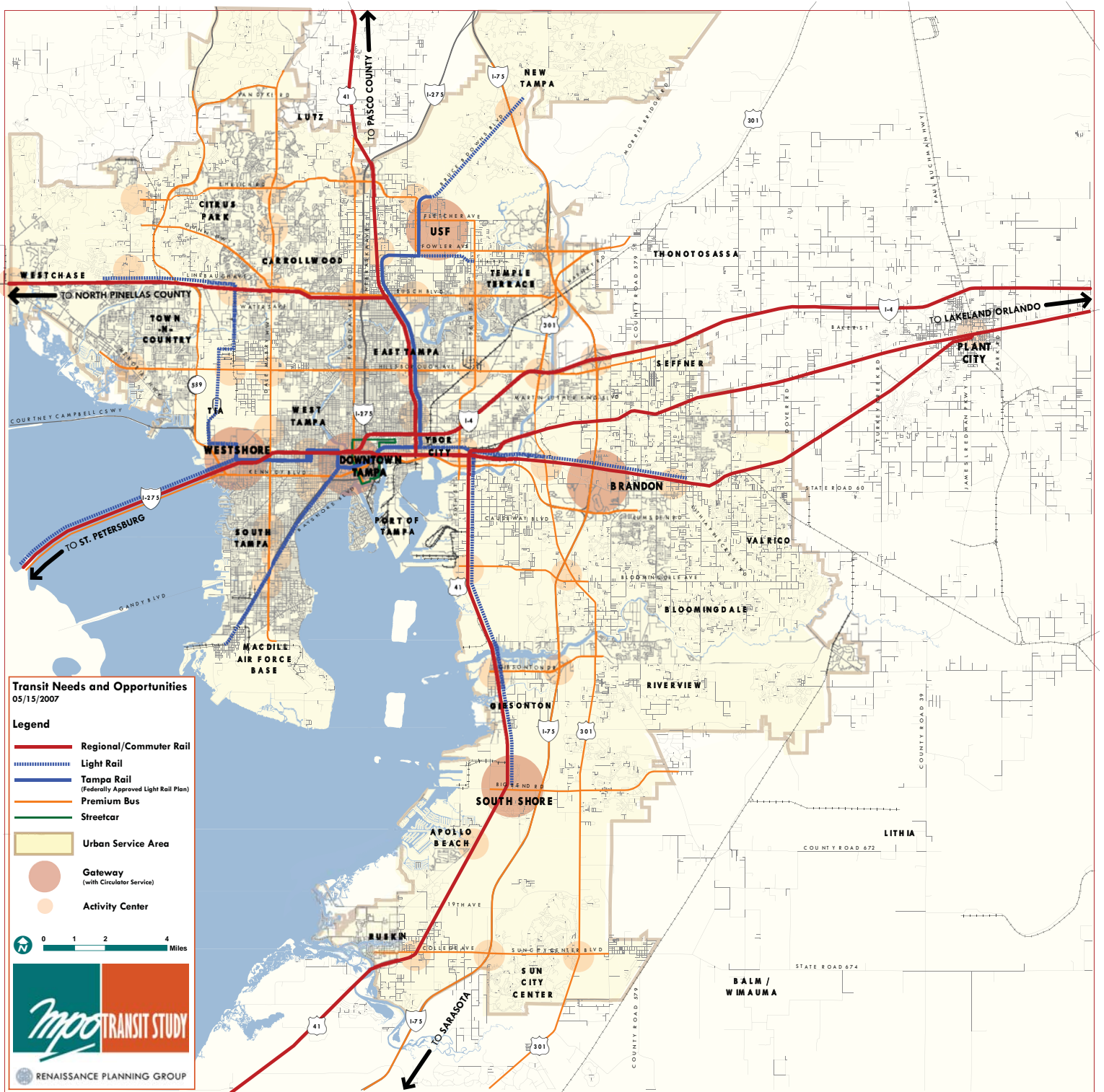
*Continuous, first-rate connections within the urban core & corridors, including links to major gateways (USF, Brandon, Westshore, etc.) that serve well as multi-modal transportation & regional activity centers, building on the high concentration of jobs & housing in the area. Stations closer than regional rail with enhanced parking facilities, bus feeders, circulators & other station development.*

### Premium Bus (gold lines)

*Continuous, rapid bus service connections within the urban core & corridors with longer destination enhanced commuter express uses. Stations closer than light rail with limited stops along major corridors or as cross-county connections between regional centers (i.e. USF to Brandon). On dedicated or shared roadways, service likely includes enhanced travel information displays, bus feeders & circulators.*

Technical analysis of these technologies will occur in the next phase of the of the *MPO Transit Study*.





Commuter Rail



Light Rail



Premium Bus/ BRT



# Your views on transit needs & opportunities... (Continued from back cover.)

5. What factors into your decision of whether or not to use transit in lieu of driving your personal vehicle? Circle all that apply.

- a. Traffic congestion
- b. Concerns about the environment/ air pollution
- c. Rising costs of gasoline
- d. Saving time/ ability to multi-task during my commute
- e. Parking costs
- f. I don't have access to a car.
- g. I can't drive.
- h. Energy independence for our country
- i. It's more relaxing than driving.
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is it important to you to be able to access destinations outside Hillsborough County via transit? Circle one. YES NO

If so, please list the other counties or destinations: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What other comments do you have regarding the MPO Transit Study? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**

Please detach this page & follow the instructions on the reverse side to return this survey to the MPO.



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**Your views on transit needs & opportunities**... Please read *The Transit Center* and take this brief survey on **your personal transit needs and desires**. Detach the entire back page of this newsletter. (Make sure to fill out both sides of the survey card!) Then, fold the page in half with this side on the inside and the business reply mailer on the outside. Use clear tape to tape the edges closed, and simply drop it in the mail. No postage required. Electronic copies of this newsletter and survey can be downloaded at [www.hillsboroughmpo.org](http://www.hillsboroughmpo.org) or [www.mpotransit.org](http://www.mpotransit.org). Electronic copies can be emailed to [mpo@plancom.org](mailto:mpo@plancom.org), or printed and faxed to **813/301-7172**. Remember, **we can't make plans without you!**

1. For which types of trips do you currently use transit (bus, circulator, streetcar)? Circle all that apply.
  - a. Work
  - b. School
  - c. Shopping
  - d. Entertainment
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If a **premium transit system** (including convenient options like Bus Rapid Transit, light rail & commuter/ regional rail) were in place and readily available, for which purpose would you consider using this premium transit system?
  - a. Work
  - b. School
  - c. Shopping
  - d. Entertainment
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How often would you use a **premium transit system** (including convenient options like Bus Rapid Transit, light rail & commuter/ regional rail) if it were in place and readily available in Hillsborough County? Circle the one that most closely fits your expected usage.
  - a. Daily or most weekdays
  - b. A few times per week
  - c. A few times per month
  - d. Once in a while
  
4. What transit amenities would increase your likelihood, or be a necessity, for you to use a **premium transit system**? Circle all that apply.
  - a. Better sidewalk connections
  - b. Bike facilities (lanes/ racks/ on board)
  - c. Parking facilities (free *Park & Ride* lots)
  - d. Safe shelters/ stations
  - e. Bus & circulator connections
  - f. Being able to live in a transit oriented development
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_