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TBARTA Board Accepts and Approves Regional Transit Feasibility Plan, Advance 41-Mile Catalyst Project into PD&E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TAMPA, Fla. (Nov. 16) – At its regularly scheduled November meeting, the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) Governing Board voted to accept and approve the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan (RTFP) and advance the recommended 41-mile Rubber Tire Rapid Transit Catalyst Project into its next phase, where the details of its design will be developed, and environmental impacts evaluated. In May of this year, TBARTA executed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART), as well as its transit agency and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) partners, to become the primary recipient of the RTFP and responsible for its implementation.

Scott Pringle, senior supervising planner of WSP, presented the plan to the board and proposed next steps, starting with a Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) study for the entire 41-mile corridor, beginning in St. Petersburg and traveling up I-275 in dedicated or managed lanes with stops in downtown Tampa, the Westshore District, University of South Florida, and Wesley Chapel. The PD&E is anticipated to take between 18 and 24 months and will cover details of the project design, including how much of it will run in dedicated lanes, the station locations, opportunities for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and phasing strategies for implementation.

“Seizing the opportunity to leverage concurrent investment in the interstate system has been paramount to making a project of this magnitude financially feasible,” said Jim Holton, TBARTA Chairman. “I commend the board for moving this forward as an excellent first step in realizing the vision for regional transit in Tampa Bay, and as a part of this process, TBARTA will continue to push for dedicated lanes, whether along the shoulders or median, along as much of the corridor as possible.”

TBARTA hosted the Tampa Bay Transit Forum on July 20, 2018, at the Tampa Hotel Marriot to facilitate a region-wide discussion to gather ideas on how to best advance implementing a regional transit system in Tampa Bay and received broad support from the public, as well as local and state elected officials on moving the catalyst project identified in the plan forward. In that meeting, Florida Senate President Designate Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton) emphasized the need for Tampa Bay to capitalize on its opportunity to begin a transit revolution while also making way for future technologies that would require a designated right-of-way. “With this [41-Mile Rubber Tire Rapid Transit Catalyst Project] we can move from mode to mode at whatever level very shortly we’ll be using... to move people en masse.”

“We’re excited about the needed and enhanced connectivity this project could provide to Tampa Bay residents, workers and visitors to our region,” said David Green, TBARTA Executive Director. “For an interstate like I-275, where approximately 200,000 vehicles travel daily, a robust transit service could have a significant and almost immediate impact, reducing congestion by up 20,000 vehicles, and eventually more as connections are made to the system.” Last month, the TBARTA Board selected Green, former CEO of the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC), to lead the agency. During his time with GRTC, the agency completed construction of a 7.6-mile Bus Rapid Transit line, branded Pulse. Green was also key in securing a \$24.9 million US Department of Transportation TIGER Grant for the project.

For more information about TBARTA and the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan (RTFP), contact Michael Case, TBARTA principal planner, at michael.case@tbarta.com or 813-282-8200.

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TBARTA was created to plan and develop a multimodal transportation system that will connect five counties of the Tampa Bay region – Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas. For more information, visit www.TBARTA.com.