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TBARTA Board Holds Vision Workshop; Develops Action Plan to Renew Agency Purpose and Implement Regional Transit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAMPA, Fla. (Dec. 12) – On Friday, Dec. 8, the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) Governing Board held a vision workshop to renew its purpose, mission, goals, and guiding principles, and established an action plan to refocus the agency's mission to bring regional transit service to Tampa Bay.

The workshop, led by John Kaliski of Cambridge Systematics, started with discussion on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the new TBARTA. Highlights from the discussion and board input included:

- The key strengths of TBARTA are having legislative and business community support for its new mission, and a strong and experienced board that is driven to make the agency successful;
- Areas of weakness covered the lack of a dedicated and sustainable funding source to support the operation of new services, and the limited impacts of prior regional planning efforts in advancing transit;
- There are opportunities for the agency with its new statutory power to receive and disburse federal funding, as well as working with the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group, and other partners, to become the agency that receives, adopts and implements the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan (RTFP), scheduled to be complete in late 2018 (link: <http://tbregionaltransit.com/>); and;
- Threats to the agency concerned the complexity of developing and maintaining a clear regional vision across the numerous of agencies involved in planning, and, keeping up with rapid changes in technology.

Board members followed on these points with an action plan that builds upon those strengths and opportunities, rectifies weaknesses, and mitigates threats. The following priorities were established to take place within the next two years:

1. Adopt and begin implementing the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan;
2. Develop and adopt the TBARTA Regional Transit Development Plan;
3. Pursue legislative funding requests to meet near-term needs, while working to identify and obtain longer-term dedicated capital and operational funding; and,
4. Conduct a search for a new executive director and build organizational capacity to meet future needs.

In discussing the job description and selection process for new leadership, Ramond Chiaramonte, executive director since early 2015, informed the board that he would not be

applying for the updated position, but that completing his contract until February of 2019 would be important to shepherd the agency into its new role. Jim Holton, TBARTA board chairman, agreed and added that “through Ray’s leadership and hard work, TBARTA has already made much progress in setting the stage for moving regional transit forward.” He continued that “we appreciate Ray’s tenure with us and for agreeing to serve in the role as we make our transition to becoming the region’s leader in transit.”

The workshop was intended to address the Florida Legislature’s structural refocus of TBARTA from the Transportation to Transit Authority earlier this year. In addition to the name change, the number of counties in its designated area was reduced from seven to five, its board membership reorganized, and requirement to develop and update a regional transportation master plan changed to developing a Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP) covering Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, Hillsborough, and Manatee Counties. Prior to commencing the workshop, the board reviewed and approved the plan to produce the RTDP and to submit it to the Florida Senate President and Speaker of the House prior to the beginning of the 2018 legislative session.

“I’m gratified to see all stakeholders coming together in this effort and starting to speak with one voice in advocating for regional transit,” said Holton.

For more information about TBARTA and the results of the December Board workshop, contact Michael Case, 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.