



Board Meeting
Friday, October 21, 2022 – 10:00 AM
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
3201 Scherer Drive
St. Petersburg, FL 33716

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Starkey called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM

PRESENT

Commissioner Kathryn Starkey
Commissioner Rene Flowers
Commissioner Janet Long
Mr. Jim Holton
Mayor Ken Welch
Commissioner Jeff Holcomb
Commissioner Kimberly Overman
Councilmember Lynn Hurtak
Commissioner Pat Kemp (virtual)
Ms. Nicole Mills
Mr. Ming Gao
Mr. David Green, Executive Director
Ms. Jennifer Cowan, Legal Counsel
TBARTA Staff

ABSENT

Commissioner Reggie Bellamy
Mr. Cliff Manuel

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ron Weaver:

As a lawyer who does not do family law, I have heard words today I seldom like to hear, which family lawyers hear too often. Words like attorneys and money and lack of money and differences of vision and differences of place and differences of certainty where they ought to be. I would rather see this region's congestion relief and its attention to its disabled who need transportation. The area's unification with respect to what each of you build, connecting valiantly with the other as much in the physical way as in the mindset to avoid a family law situation here where the legislature or the money should drive what you do. Whether you meet in a free space together voluntarily to solve the regions desperate transportation problems, I would urge you, whether you get a dollar or you get a hundred million dollars from the legislature or respective governments, that you meet voluntarily in some free space and that you meet in order to find solutions. So that your governments when they do something can garner the guidance from the other governments, "what would happen if you built that bridge?" My first land use hearing was fifty years ago in North Florida and at the end of a county deciding whether to fund a bridge or not, someone said at the end what if the other county does not pay its half? The county members said we will burn it down and that is exactly what he said in the North Florida county. I do not think we need to burn down anything we have built together. I do not think we need to quit trying together,

whether the legislature is in for a dollar or a hundred million dollars, and whether or not you have to pay to meet somewhere or get an independent executive director or staff, a staff of five or a staff of one hundred. I think you need to bind together. Raise it when you go to your respective fundings and your respective asphalt and your respective rail and your respective future, especially when you are disabled and those who most need you to attend to their needs. I think you need to look at that hard question and whether or not, perhaps, you find a way to convene, share your vision and then share where your vision meets up with the rest of those in the region. We kids are in the back seat watching mom and dad and we do not like the words money, and we do not like lawyers, and we do not like the words uncertainty about each others plans, future, funding opportunities, unless we do it together in the front seat. Because we 4.1 million people affected directly today by you desperately in need of representation, we have enough problems in the front seat. This region has too much at stake with 4.1 million people. We need you to figure out how you can figure out this region's transportation problems.

TBARTA also received public comment via email from Andrew Morris Planner/GIS Technician for Madeira Beach Florida:

TBARTA Governing Board,

There are examples of shared-use rail corridors that have intercity passenger rail, commuter rail, freight trains, and rail transit within the same right-of-way. Two examples that could be applicable to the Tampa Bay Metro Area are in San Diego and in Northern Virginia. In San Diego, the San Diego Trolley operates on dedicated tracks next to the LOSSAN Corridor. The LOSSAN Corridor has State-Supported Amtrak service, COASTER Commuter Rail, and BNSF freight trains sharing the same tracks. The recently completed San Diego Pathing Study recommended various improvements to the LOSSAN Corridor to expand passenger rail and freight rail capacity. In Northern Virginia, the Washington Metro operates on dedicated tracks next to CSX freight trains, State-Supported and Long-Distance Amtrak trains, and VRE Commuter Rail. VDOT through their Transforming Rail in Virginia Program is expanding capacity for both passenger rail and freight rail by building additional passenger rail tracks within the existing right-of-way. A combination of right-of-way from I-275, I-4, and CSX will be needed to build out passenger rail and rail transit in the Tampa Bay Metro Area. Will CSX be transparent and cooperative with TBARTA?

San Diego Pathing Study: Pathing Study Final Report

<https://voiceofoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/San-Diego-Pathing-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

The San Diego Trolley

<https://www.sdmts.com/transit-services/trolley>

Transforming Rail in Virginia

<https://transformingrailva.com/>

Transforming Rail in Virginia Phase 1 & 2 Improvements and Highlights Map

https://transformingrailva.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Phase_1_2_Highlights_V3.pdf

Best Regards,

Andrew Morris

Andrew Morris

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CSX Update presented by Craig Camuso, Regional Vice President State Government Relations

CSX operates with about 3000 employees and is headquartered in Jacksonville. CSX operates about 2400 track miles from Jacksonville to Tampa and then across and down into the eastern coast and into the Miami area. CSX is also involved in two commuter rail operations: Tri-Rail in Miami and SunRail in Orlando. In reference to the comments about Virginia, once Virginia was able to ensure that CSX could move freight at capacity than their plans for commuter rail exploded. CSX does work with commuter and passenger rail partners. There is growth at the Port of Tampa and CSX is growing with it. We do see growth potential in the area and just had a huge sales meeting to expand operations for growth. One of the things we are trying to do is grow the business in Florida. We bring a lot of trains to Florida however we do not bring a lot of things out of Florida. The growth of the population of Georgia and Florida is going to exceed the populations of New York and New Jersey. There is going to be a lot of growth coming to the area and the things we provide to the area are important. We need to have a plan from the Hillsborough area of what you are looking to do so we can comment on it. There are four pillars CSX looks at specifically for passenger rail:

- Must be safe – CSX wants to ensure the safety of passenger and freight trains
- Ensure capacity – freight must move efficiently
- Available funding
- Indemnity for CSX, which was taken care of with SunRail – if there is an accident on the line and something happens to the passenger train, we want to make sure we are not sued, providing we are not at fault in some way.

Commissioner Overman commented Hillsborough County is huge (1,000 square miles) and I have spent many times looking at the footprint you have in Hillsborough County. I have always been curious about how we could not figure this out and yet we are still here. I do realize there is an opportunity to find partnership and there has to be momentum across all of us to have that dialogue. I would love to have a more working relationship in that planning process so there is not a misunderstanding or an opportunity to fail. I am very eager to have a conversation. Mr. Camuso responded that has been a challenge for me personally because you have various organizations, and it is hard to know who is in charge given the number of agencies. I would suggest that FDOT be the go-to place for studies because they have done them before.

Commissioner Long commented I find your remarks absolutely refreshing. My question is I would like to know what the condition of your tracks is and who maintains them? Mr. Camuso answered we have our own maintenance department, and the tracks are owned by CSX, and we are putting money back into them. The railroad industry is the most capital-intensive industry in the nation. About 18 to 19 cents of every dollar go back to the tracks. Our capital investment in Florida is over \$104 million dollars. The condition of the tracks is good overall. If there is a specific area, I would be happy to look into that but the tracks are inspected on a routine basis. I feel very confident in the condition of the tracks overall.

Commissioner Long stated my concern also is your indemnification policy. Am I correct in assuming that our local counties and our governments would be totally responsible for accidents in regard to something happening on the tracks? Mr. Camuso responded if it is the fault of the railroad then the railroad is responsible. What we want to avoid is something that is not the fault of the railroad. For example, a passenger train wheel breaks and there is a tragedy. We don't believe we should be held liable for that. If it's the railroad's fault then, obviously, the railroad accepts that responsibility but if something happens that is deemed not the fault of the railroad then that is where the indemnification comes in.

Commissioner Long asked as it relates to your freight, does the passenger rail run on the same track as freight? Mr. Camuso responded, yes it can. You have different standards for tracks that run passenger and freight. The rail would have to be upgraded to accommodate passenger rail.

Commissioner Long asked if it is true that CSX has no interest in leasing the tracks. Mr. Camuso responded it is a case-by-case basis. Right now, the answer is no because of the potential for freight growth. We were in a sell everything mode then we were in a buy everything mode. Right now, we are in a growth mode. However, we would need to see a plan before we can comment on specifics.

Commissioner Starkey asked if the state of Virginia participates in the VRE or just the regions. Mr. Camuso responded the state participates and is very active. When we talk about very sophisticated DOTs, I point to three: FDOT, NCDOT, and VDOT. Their legislature appropriated funds, they are very active in pursuing federal grants, and their locals are involved as well. Commissioner Starkey asked if they own the line or lease it. Mr. Camuso responded I would have to get back to you on that.

Commissioner Flowers commented a large portion of the rail has been built over because of growth and development. When Pinellas County built and expanded the Pinellas trail, I don't recall Pinellas ever purchasing or leasing those tracks from CSX. Do you know where you are with that because in looking at moving persons from Downtown St. Pete and going along that route, that would be a great possibility to utilize those rails. I am asking if those rails were sold or leased because I don't recall that occurring? Mr. Camuso responded I don't know the answer to that but could find out more information. In the 20 years that I have been here we are constantly changing policy to fit where we're going as a company. We've sold property to various states and now we would love to get it back. Once we sell land we don't get it back, which is another reason we are tough to deal with when it comes to our property.

Commissioner Starkey commented we have the abandoned corridor in our county, which we are putting a trail on top of although we have sold some of the abandoned rail corridor on the courthouse steps. I will tell you that CSX does own little parcels of land in my district, in people's backyards that I would love to talk to you about one day. Mr. Camuso responded you are right because we have sold things over the years. CSX has been in existence for 200 years. There are little properties on tax records that we don't realize are non-operating properties.

Mr. Holton commented what I am hearing today is there are a lot of great opportunities available in the Tampa Bay area. The proper venue in my opinion would be FDOT, City of Tampa, or Hillsborough County. I think that is where the focus should be instead of TBARTA. FDOT is best equipped to deal with this complex issue. Mr. Camuso responded with all due respect when we talk to FDOT we are not starting over. FDOT works with us. We talk with FDOT and the various districts on a daily basis.

Commissioner Kemp commented I have been involved in this discussion for a long time. I have been extraordinarily interested for years in the capacity to do passenger rail. What you have said about what you want to understand or know about a project, I understand. I appreciate you coming forward.

Mr. Gao commented I am glad you can convey the message clearly to everyone here in the region. I want to make sure the state's message is clear. We are in support of any passenger rail effort as long as the four pillars are followed and funding is available. The state is actively developing a statewide rail plan that includes passenger rail and we always look for opportunities to partner with the locals but, again, it needs to be planned, funding needs to be in place, and it needs to be safe, and indemnified. These are all important things to consider.

Commissioner Starkey asked if we don't own the rail line, do we not get any state money? Is it true that FDOT cannot participate if the line is not owned? Mr. Gao responded no, it does not mean that FDOT

will not participate. I think what we are looking for is a feasible plan that has local funding. We will look into all options but at the end of the day we need to have a plan in place with funding on both the capital side and long-term operations. This is important to CSX as well because of all the investment. You need to have a long-term funding commitment. Without that it is difficult to go to Tallahassee and ask for funding and for the district to support it. We need to see commitment from the locals.

Commissioner Overman commented in looking at the state rail plan update and the state freight plan I don't see where rail is included in the state freight plan. Once these plan updates are done perhaps that will give a clearer picture for the locals and FDOT, and guidance on what is possible. I think there are opportunities for conversations, recognizing that the planning does need to be done and, clearly, the state would be the catalyst for acting as the planning and funding agent. When speaking of transit, it does require state, local, and federal funding is that correct? Mr. Camuso responded yes, that is correct. My experience is you have to have buy in from everyone and commitment from the locals and being able to maintain that going forward. You have your preliminary engineering or your study costs, then building costs, and then your operating costs when it comes to passenger rail.

Mayor Welch commented on the issue of planning and lack of funding. The message I have always received from CSX was they were not interested and that is why we don't have a plan. How much of the Pinellas/Hillsborough Corridor going through Oldsmar and going down to Clearwater is active for freight? Mr. Camuso responded, in terms of number of trains daily, I would need to get the specifics for you. Mayor Welch asked is that a single rail track? Mr. Camuso responded yes. Mayor Welch asked so you would have the same issues you had with Tri-Rail? Mr. Camuso responded yes, I would assume that would be the case if we got to that point. Mayor Welch asked when you talk about passenger rail are you speaking of commuter rail or higher frequency light rail? Mr. Camuso answered I refer to passenger rail. I am talking about just running people on a train. I would have to defer to another expert as I am not knowledgeable about the specifics.

Mr. Gao commented to your initial question Madam Chair about if we do not own the track, FDOT will not participate. I think the comment we made previously that if we are not purchasing the track, the state probably will not take the lead role in negotiating. It would be up to the locals to talk to CSX about leasing the track because FDOT will not be in a conversation about leasing. Leasing is a commitment of the local agency that is operating the rail.

Commissioner Long made a motion to stop this conversation and turn it over to the MPOs and FDOT for a recommendation. Motion seconded by Mr. Holton.

Mayor Welch asked what are we here for? If we are talking regional transit, I have not heard anything that we have talked about that could have more of an impact than turning this into commuter or passenger rail given all those hurdles. I just think if the MPO is the place for this to be, this speaks to the base question of why are we here? Commissioner Long responded you were not here for the discussion we had at the Finance and Policy meetings earlier. If we had a recommendation about which way to go, we might be in a better position, but we don't have a recommendation.

Mr. Green commented I want to remind the Board regarding previous comments about the TMAs request for TBARTA to conduct an assessment of the corridor, we did initiate a procurement. We received proposals and interviewed a consultant earlier this week. I have not met with Mr. Burns, who oversaw the procurement, about requesting a cost proposal from the consultant yet but the opportunity to conduct the assessment of the corridor still exists if the Board wants to do so.

Motion made by Mr. Holton to table the discussion for further discussion. Seconded by Commissioner Long. Motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMSApproval of August and September Board Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Overman to approve the August and September Board Meeting Minutes together. Seconded by Councilmember Hurtak. Motion passed unanimously.

Title VI Plan Update

The Title VI Plan was approved by the Board in 2018 and requires periodic updates. Most notably, it names Ken Boden as our Title VI officer.

Motion made by Commissioner Overman to approve the Title VI Plan Update. Seconded by Commissioner Long. Motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTSCitizens Advisory Committee Report by Bill Roberts

The CAC met this month and received a report on the Aerial Gondola study. The CAC passed a resolution, which is included in packet. The congestion problem will not go away and some organization is going to have to take action. I would urge you to think carefully about your next steps.

PRESENTATIONSUS19 RRT Feasibility Study by Eric Heinz, WSP

Several scenarios were studied for feasibility and the latest alternative for consideration is Express Bus service as opposed to BRT service, which would focus on one single route, have a terminus at SR 52 and operate to Gateway. The operating plan includes two options: an all-day service and peak-hour-only service. It would require 6 vehicles, have 30-minute headways and 15 stops. Premium features such as transit signal priority and queue jumps were removed to improve capital costs. The Express Bus alternative is Phase 1 of a plan to allow the US 19 corridor to mature and develop ridership. Phase 2 would be Scenario A, which includes TSP, queue jumps, medium investment stations, and bus-on-shoulder. The long-term vision is to seek opportunities to implement fixed guideway options along the corridor. Next steps are to present to the MPOs, coordinate the Phase 1 Express Bus alternative, and incorporate the longer-term phases in to LRTPs.

Pinellas County Aerial Gondola Feasibility Study presented by Steve Dorau & Steven Dale, SCJ Alliance

The purpose of the study was to address the following: 1) Are aerial gondolas well suited to serve the Tampa Bay Area? 2) Are there suitable alignments to serve Clearwater/St. Petersburg? 3) Are the routes technically feasible? 4) Are the projects financially viable? 5) Is the public at large supportive of the projects? The study found the purpose and need of the project after speaking with numerous stakeholders: to create a singular, unified economic district, alleviate congestion on the causeway, and improve employee access to the beach. Secondary purposes include convenient access to the aquarium, Coachman Park, and Downtown Clearwater. The study found there are suitable alignments for the project in Clearwater. The center line of the system generally follows the bike trail that runs along the causeway because that area has already been disturbed. Estimated capital costs are \$124-\$184 million

and include the gondola system, towers and foundations, and stations and foundations. Estimated O&M costs are \$10 million. The study concluded the following: aerial gondolas are well suited to the Tampa Bay area, suitable alignments do exist, the routes are technically feasible, the project is financially viable (if costs are controlled), and the public is supportive of the project.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Starkey adjourned the meeting at 12:19 PM.

****NEXT BOARD MEETING****
November 18, 2022, 10:00 AM
West Pasco Government Center
8731 Citizens Drive
New Port Richey FL 34654