

Chapter 6: Public Input Results

During this evaluation period the MPO continued to bolster current ways and determine new avenues to have meaningful input. Comments were received from a variety of sources, ranging from mobile and desktop devices to phone calls and letters. The MPO attempted to respond to all requests for information and questions in a timely manner. When appropriate, the MPO staff recommended that implementing agencies work closely with affected stakeholders to address specific needs or concerns associated with future projects.

Extensive public outreach efforts conducted for major initiatives and studies during 2016 and 2017 were designed to seek the public's input early and continuously. Public and stakeholder involvement was crucial in identifying issues, developing goals and objectives, proposing alternatives, and prioritizing strategies. These efforts are to maximize the likelihood that final products have broad community support when brought to the MPO for adoption, and reduce the likelihood that plans and studies need to undertake extensive revisions. Some of the highlights of public input in the MPO's initiatives and studies are summarized below.

Major MPO projects with substantial public input

Vision Zero

Setting a goal of reducing the number of severe crashes in Hillsborough County to zero, the staff of the MPO along with a coalition of over 25 partners spanning the public and private sectors hosted four workshops and multiple supporting events to create a Vision Zero Action Plan between 2016 and 2017. Hillsborough's Vision Zero began as a grassroots effort by local roadway safety advocates, led by Walk Bike Tampa, who pushed for adoption of Vision Zero resolutions after the death of a Chamberlain High School student who was killed by a car when walking to school.



Public input was sought through an interactive safety concerns Wikimapia on the Vision Zero landing page, which has generated over 400 comments as of August 2017. Wikimapia allows users to add points to a map and describe those points, which are then visible to anyone else who visits that map. Public-identified hotspots show issues of unsafe driving, missing bicycle facilities and sidewalks, and unsafe speeds in areas throughout the county. Additional input was sought through feedback at workshops and a "share your story" feature online and in printed materials. Vision Zero had a presence at over 40 events hosted or attended by the MPO between 2016 and 2017, and staff distributed thousands of promotional and informational materials created to spread word about the initiative.

Vision Zero builds on and supports existing collaborations and citizen-led initiatives, such as the Paint the Intersection program which encourages communities to install traffic-calming murals at intersections and the School Safety Program which brings together FDOT, Hillsborough County, the MPO, Hillsborough County School Board, and Hillsborough County's cities to perform road safety audits and identify safety strategies around schools. Vision Zero is coordinated with existing safe streets groups such as the Hillsborough Community Traffic Safety Team, Bike Walk Tampa Bay, and Walk Bike Tampa.

Between October 2016 and August 2017, the Vision Zero coalition hosted four public workshops to develop goals and actions for four action tracks. The *Paint Saves Lives* track pursued low-cost short-term investments in retrofitting and providing pop-up treatments for some of the highest-need corridors and intersections. *One Message, Many Voices* developed public education strategies and determined effective mediums for implementing those strategies. The *Consistent and Fair* track pursued community-level education and engineering to reduce dangerous behavior by all road users. The *Future Will Not Be Like the Past* track pursued changing professional culture that tends to perpetuate problems in the building of new roads and developments. The public, public officials, and representatives from the coalition attended Vision Zero's four workshops to contribute to these action tracks and receive input from a diverse range of road users. The Vision Zero Action Plan, developed in 2017, features strategies and measures of success developed at the four workshop sessions.

To support the initiative, MPO staff participated in several public events related to Vision Zero. Staff participated in the May 2017 Ride of Silence in Curtis Hixon Park, honoring bicyclists who have been killed on roadways and bringing awareness to prevent future accidents. A Walk of Silence in October 2017 took a pedestrian focus, honoring Alexis Miranda and other pedestrian victims of traffic violence. Action Plan presentations to the Plant City Commission, City-County Planning Commission, Hillsborough MPO, Tampa City Council, City of Plant City, Bloomingdale Homeowners' Association, Hillsborough County School Board, and FDOT District 7 offices permitted opportunities for additional public comment.

Brandon Corridors & Mixed-Use Centers Pilot Project

A collaboration between the Planning Commission and MPO, the Brandon Corridors & Mixed-Use Centers Pilot Project attracted hundreds of public comments and survey responses between late 2016 and 2017.

The purpose of the study was to coordinate land use and transportation planning along major corridors in the Brandon Study Area. In early 2017 community stakeholders were invited to participate in a survey to identify development patterns and rank mobility concerns within the Brandon Study Area, which acquired over 700 responses. These surveys revealed that the community preferred compact urban centers in the northwest of the study area along Brandon Boulevard, with connected urban centers elsewhere. Five community meetings followed, with two focused on the business community and three on the community at large. The final community engagement meeting on



October 30, 2017 attracted 125 residents, business owners, and interested parties. The public was also given opportunity to comment on the final study at any of the seven committee presentations held at the County Center Building in downtown Tampa, which are scheduled at various times and days throughout the week to enable maximum opportunities for public attendance.

Input from the public participation process had a significant impact on the final recommendations of the study. Stakeholder and business input for more frequent bus service, road widenings, intersection and pedestrian safety improvements, and better or new connections were directly adopted into final recommendations. An initial suggestion for a reversible lane along Bloomingdale Avenue was met with concern from the business community about safety for all users and the loss of ability to make left hand turns during peak hours, and was ultimately removed from the final series of recommendations in lieu of improvements to key intersections along Bloomingdale Ave.

Bullard Parkway Complete Streets Study

The Bullard Parkway Complete Streets Study was conducted in 2017 and sought to identify alternative options for all users of Bullard Parkway from 56th Street N to Morris Bridge Road. The study team conducted workshops and meetings with City of Temple Terrace staff and City Council, Hillsborough County staff, Hillsborough MPO staff, and residents and business owners in Temple Terrace.



These meetings and workshops, along with recorded comments collected throughout the study period, identified a list of improvement needs such as additional bicycle infrastructure along Woodard Bridge, wider bike lanes with more regular trash removal, and lowering speed limits from 78th Street to Woodard Bridge. Additional public recommendations for intersection changes at Riverchase Drive and golf cart usage along Bullard Parkway were considered within this project as well.

Tampa Bay Express and Tampa Bay NEXT Projects

From 2016-2017, FDOT continued work on a traffic management concept via dynamically-tolled express lanes to reduce congestion on I-275 and I-4. Initially called Tampa Bay Express (TBX), FDOT re-launched this initiative as Tampa Bay NEXT in 2017 due to calls for a more collaborative and transparent conversation about the project at the regional and community levels. This reset came with a re-consideration of dynamic express lanes along with other mobility concepts for I-275 and I-4 including a beltway, boulevard conversion, and elevated and reversible lanes.



The MPO participated in ten TBX community engagement meetings during the first half of 2016, drawing in participants from neighborhoods located within TBX study boundaries. Engagement continued in 2017 with additional community meetings as well as MPO attendance at FDOT's community working group events, held twice for each of six impacted community areas identified by FDOT.

The MPO ensured that citizens had a variety of ways to submit public comment about the TIP hearings, including the TBX (in 2016) and Tampa Bay NEXT (in 2017) projects. Individuals could submit public comments to the MPO Facebook page, via a phone call, in emails to MPO members, at public workshop meetings, and in-person at the public TIP meeting. Turnout at the 2016 TIP hearing, when measured by attendance, number of comments submitted, and number of public speakers, was the highest of any MPO Board meeting in recent history. Numerous organizations arose around TBX and participated, including Sunshine Citizens, the StopTBX coalition, Transit Now Tampa Bay, and YesTBX.

As part of the appendix to the TIP documents adopted in 2016 and 2017, MPO staff performed a content analysis of emailed and in-person comments made at the respective TIP hearings. Of the 281 emailed comments submitted in 2016, 205 (73%) of the comments were in support and 70 (25%) were opposed. The remaining six emails (2%) were miscellaneous comments that did not express approval or disapproval for TBX. While these numbers suggest significant support for the then-TBX project, the analysis revealed that 76% of those supportive comments were templated responses. Of the 70 comments opposed, only 13% were templated. A content analysis of comments made at the June 22, 2016 public hearing revealed that, of 132 speakers, 39 (29.5%) supported TBX, 67 disapproved of TBX (51%), and 26 (19.5%) comments were neutral or critiqued the project but stopped short of outright approving or disapproving of the project.

In contrast, emailed comments leading up to the 2017 TIP hearing revealed a much more equal split in support (13) and disapproval (12). MPO staff continued to review the sentiment and themes of public comments at the 2017 public hearing, where there was significantly more disapproval for the project (45 speakers) than support for the project (10 speakers).

Among comments received, there were widely divergent reports of project costs, and a lack of public comments on specific phases. The analysis suggested that this missing information might be indicative of an uninformed public, or a public which lacks access to information about the project. Though collaboration with FDOT, such as the Citizens Academy online video series and the aforementioned regional workshops, both agencies have attempted to better communicate the estimated project costs, phases of the project, and clarify the roles of participants in the process.

The MPO Board voted 12-4 in 2016 to approve the 2016/2017-2020/2021 TIP, with the following conditions on inclusion of TBX:

- A structure of continued communication and feedback whereby FDOT officials regularly update the board on TBX, answer questions, and provide updates on mitigation efforts, community engagement, and status of the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study.
- A presentation from FDOT on the Re-evaluation Study to the MPO prior to a Public Hearing in Spring 2017 to include considerations and commitments that FDOT is prepared to make, including toll lanes review, design elements, and formation of a community work

group, and that the document will remain open after the public hearing for a 14-day comment period to be followed by FDOT's assessment of the public comments and input from the MPO, then finalizing the document before it is submitted for approval.

Additionally, the MPO Board requested additional information for making informed decisions in future years, including:

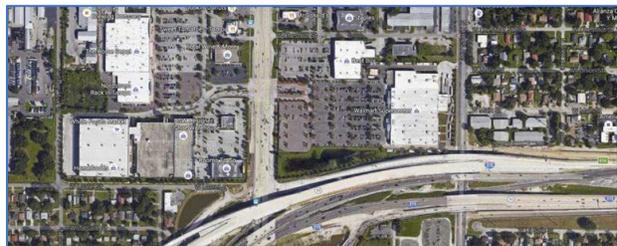
- A final study and report on human impacts and how to pay for replacing them, including a parcel map of all homes, apartments, and businesses, noting those that are considered affordable housing and how they are affected by the project.
- A final neighborhood mitigation plan for displaced residents and businesses, including design elements.
- Completed environmental impact studies for each segment, including the I-275/I-4 PD&E re-evaluation study.
- Traffic and revenue studies that would analyze and provide justification for toll lanes.
- Report on the FDOT-sponsored premium transit study conducted by HART, to include consideration of the CSX-owned rail corridors.
- Status updates on the Federal Civil Rights investigation of the TBX project.
- Losses to the City of Tampa in ad valorem tax revenue using FDOT's most recent right-of-way acquisition map.
- Cost of operations and maintenance of any community impact mitigation treatments associated with TBX.
- Impact to air quality resulting from TBX prior to any MPO Board vote on funding for TBX segments 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The 2017/2018-2021/2022 TIP was adopted by a vote of 12 to 3 in June 2017.

In 2017, FDOT began a series of Tampa Bay NEXT Community Working Groups for six segments of the Tampa Bay region. The MPO participated in these events by presenting the MPO's role and answering questions from the public. The Community Working Groups continue to meet to discuss the Tampa Bay NEXT process in 2018.

Dale Mabry Pedestrian Overpass Technical Feasibility Analysis

In 2017 the MPO studied the potential for a pedestrian overpass along Dale Mabry Highway crossing I-275. Developing several alternatives, the agency approached the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Civic Association and the MPO's committees to assist with assessing the alternatives. This input combined with technical analysis to ultimately recommend a connection directly south of I-275.

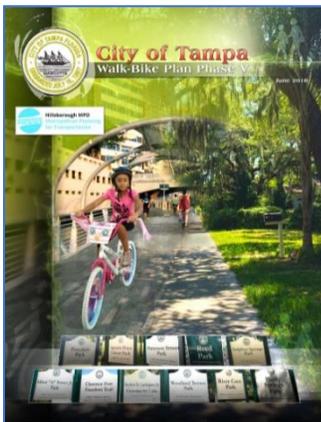
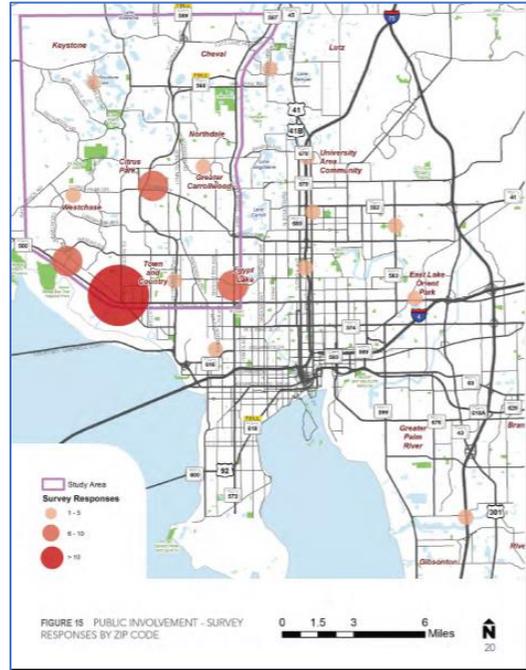


Northwest Hillsborough County Transit Study

A collaboration between HART and the MPO, the purpose of the Northwest Hillsborough County Transit Study was to evaluate transit service and characteristics in Northwest Hillsborough County and develop service improvements to tie into HART's 2017 Transit Development Plan update. The public was engaged through outreach at the Northwest Transfer Center, Town 'n' Country Library, and Bravo! Supermarket, fliers left at libraries, HART staff engagement with passengers along study routes, and a link to the survey posted on the MPO's website as well as sent to neighborhood associations and community groups within the area. This survey yielded 88 responses among respondents who are generally regular transit users.

Respondents to the survey favored an extension of Route 34 to Oldsmar, supported increased frequency along Route 16, were generally supportive of improvements along Route 61 LX, were favorable toward a new route on Ehrlich Road and Bearss Avenue, and supported first mile and last mile service. These results were incorporated into the report's recommendations, listed below.

- Route 34 Increased Frequency and Extension to Oldsmar
- Route 16 Increase from 40-minute to 30-minute Headways
- Route 61 LX Realignment and Expansion to Pasco County
- New route on Ehrlich Road/Bearss Avenue

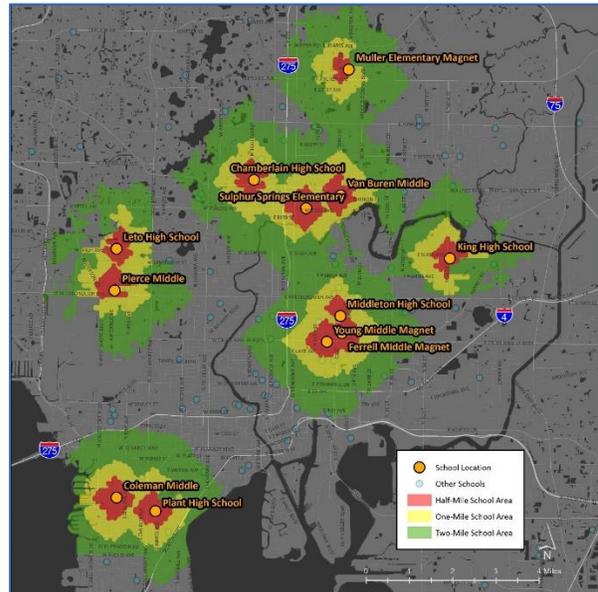


Walk-Bike Plan for the City of Tampa Phase V

Walk-Bike Phase V continued work begun in Phase III to develop a continuous perimeter trail linking downtown Tampa to eleven Tampa neighborhoods as well as the Hillsborough River. This study was unique among the MPO's 2016-2017 studies as it was community-initiated, with the ten-neighborhood Green Artery Team providing much of the original support for the study. The MPO continued its public outreach efforts during and following the study phase, presenting trail options for public consideration. Walk-Bike Plan Phase V ultimately produced a continuous trail map based on user input and technical viability.

School Transportation Safety Study

The MPO began a School Safety Study in 2017 to identify and prioritize school areas in need of multimodal safety reviews. This study was preceded by a Getting to School Survey, which was distributed by the Hillsborough County School District to almost 200,000 households with school-aged children. The survey sought to determine demographics, aspects of the student's commute, interest in commuting offerings, and student requests. The results of this survey, combined with other data such as the locations of Communities of Concern, school-area pedestrian and bicycle crash history, and the number of students residing in the area, helped to inform priorities for multimodal safety reviews. This study ultimately produced a list of ten school areas for further review, and input from parents, principals and school administrators. Field reviews and recommendations for safety improvements will be forthcoming in 2018.



Innovation Gateway Concept Plan

Between 2016 and 2017, the MPO worked alongside Innovation Place to refine visions for makeovers of the Fowler Avenue/I-275 and Busch Boulevard/I-275 interchanges into Innovation Gateways. In Phase I, the MPO developed preliminary design concepts for themed gateway statements at the intersections which communicated a sense of entry and innovation. Tasks in this phase involved brainstorming with the Innovation Alliance Board and Innovation District Master Plan Joint Planning Group Technical Committee, coordination with the FDOT District 7 Design Engineer related to the Community Aesthetic Features permit, preparing preliminary concepts for each interchange, developing a Preliminary Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate, and producing a final report.

The second phase of the Innovation Gateway Concept Plan sought to refine design concepts for the themed gateway statements. A public meeting was held in April 2017 in conjunction with presentations on the Fowler Avenue Streetscape project, where a sticker board allowed the public to vote on which 4 of the eleven enhancements they felt would be a priority for these interchanges. These sticker boards were also made available to the MPO's BPAC, CAC, TAC, and LRC committees at their May 2017 meetings, the Innovation Place Advisory Board, and at the University Area Community Development Corporation's Community Safety Action Plan Kick-Off event in June 2017. This public feedback culminated in a series of planned enhancements for the interchanges, including:

- Underbridge LED lighting
- Pedestrian lighting
- Enhanced crosswalks
- Public art
- Structural gateway elements

- Retaining walls and associated landscaping (at the I-275/Fowler interchange)
- Relocated/replaced CSX fence and associated art panels (at the I-275/Busch interchange)
- Extensive landscaping (at the I-275/Busch interchange)

