March 24, 2020

Dear Policy Committee,

This letter addresses issues concerning the study requested by FDOT as part of the TBNEXT “reset.”

Firstly, the study supporting TBNEXT indicates a direct physical impact on nearly all CRAs. Secondly, the study is forecasting a trickledown effect from newer neighborhoods that are outside of the CRAs and that will rely on the interstate system and does not account for local impacts within the CRAs.

We must remember that CRAs expire; any perceived benefits from the interstate will take years completion of their projects and plans to generate, which may jeopardize additional funding to the CRAs, which may include their projects and plans. This is important, because the study neglects to address known economic and market changes that influence the true value and cost of the interstate and impacts to our neighborhoods.

The SEIS Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis has indicated local impacts to CRAs cannot be determined under TranSight, a program used to craft this analysis. CRAs require more resources, not just due to neighborhood age but also to the cumulative effects of previous Redlining, Urban Renewal, Interstate Construction, and Interstate Operational Improvements. Neighborhoods under CRA never had a chance to undo these effects. Allowing more interstate construction to lord over local roads as part of a skewed study will significantly reduce any attempts to help the neighborhoods that have been adversely affected.

Under the TBNEXT Impact Analysis, there have been no attempts to assess impacted neighborhoods in CRAs if the interstate not run through them. From the start of the analysis, CRAs are placed at a disadvantage against other non-CRA neighborhoods that will receive such benefits as new surface road connections under TBNEXT, like the Westshore Area. Any impacts to CRAs is a tangential, non-direct economic effect based on a rough research hypothesis that states “large highway project exercises indirect effects on property values through growth in the economy as increased demand for new homes and office space spur further investment in Hillsborough County’s capital stock. Increases in capital stock manifest in new buildings and added value to existing properties.” CRAs only benefit from local tax revenue. To count on revenue from distant, newer, or planned neighborhoods over older blighted ones next to the interstates is an extremely far-reaching conclusion. Even if CRAs were to benefit from the supposed trickledown effect of interstate projects, economic returns would take years—if not decades—since these are longer-term construction projects. And, under this study, TBNEXT is presented in a “perfect world” where such known variables as gas prices and the job market are permanently and economically static. CRA life spans are time-sensitive since they will sunset before accurate data can be compiled about Interstate Operational Improvements. Has our CRA seen tens of millions due to the several Interstate Operational Improvements over the decades? Due to tight budgets, the answer is a resounding no.

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1 The Tampa Bay Regional Council. Tampa Interstate Study (TIS) Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS): Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis (Final).
2 The Tampa Bay Regional Council. Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis. 43 and 51.
This report states: “premium [property & market gains] sometimes disappears when the property is along a frontage road during construction and after project opening with continual noise and air pollution, or when the property is further away and the access premium fades”. As such, under TBNEXT, there will not be any significant plans to restore or improve previously impacted neighborhoods. The looming “carmageddon” proposed by FDOT for 2045 as a preventative measure bleeds 29,000 cars into Ybor City and East Tampa. The excess traffic will exacerbate known health issues that are currently identified as critical by the Planning Commission and need to be addressed beyond mitigation practices. Reasonable and responsible transportation planners should ask, “Does FDOT expect the county to do nothing but provide service for cars until 2045?”

The City of Tampa is on the tier of investing $300 million towards Streetcar expansion and our county, possibly several hundred million more towards CSX and BRT. If we take into account FDOT’s predictions, as well as the possibility of reducing Tampa’s car-centric culture with increasing transportation options, the various TBNEXT studies that pitch a non-volatile marketplace, static socio-economic projects, and zero transit only meet the bare minimum of resolving environmental justice concerns.

Under No Further Action, “financial firms are less sensitive to increases to local congestion and are therefore unlikely to move from Downtown.” The proximity of financial and other firms to urban neighborhoods in CRAs is critical. Some CRAs are seeing growth with such businesses. We need to preserve these and other such opportunities for jobs what have a huge potential to provide financial and professional advancement for diverse communities.

It is important to note that developments are using existing parking facilities in Ybor and that there is more than one way to enter Ybor from main arterials. Despite the Preferred Alternative (Option E) seeming less disruptive than the original TBX plans, the potential health and operational effects on Ybor City would be extremely detrimental.

TBNEXT does not account for local impacts; it only presents a trickledown effect from bon-CRA neighborhoods that rely on the interstate system.

It is important to note that CRAs collect TIF revenue, which cannot be collected beyond Tampa’s city limits. State-owned properties, such as vacant land on hold for future highway projects, is detrimental to CRA budgets. And, given the history of our local streets being repurposed for the interstate because of FDOT’s questionable engineering, the proposed 14th and 15th street exits are being lobbied as a future relief point for the Downtown Interchange. Even with traffic counts four times less than what FDOT is proposing, areas near these exits exhibit substantial health, safety, and environmental hardships (Exhibits A-C & O-Q). It is difficult to see how an increased concentration of cars, recklessly routed in this area, would resolve such issues. Crash maps near similar interstate exits show concentrations of traffic accidents on 21st and 22nd streets and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (Exhibit D). Even with recent operational improvements—and with road diets, bike lanes, and sharrows—most crashes consistently occur on the interstate. On Exhibit E, note the concentration of crashes at the Howard and Armenia Avenue exits. In the case of Ybor City and East Tampa, the crashes are actually occurring on the North of I-4, which contradicts the demand that FDOT is forecasting in Ybor or South of I-4 to justify the 14th and 15th street exits. Further, on non-interstate facilities and roads, we see the most crashes throughout the county and city (refer to The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration visualization on fatal crashes, Exhibits F-G). We also still see an abundance of pedestrian fatalities logged by Smart Growth America (Exhibit H). Without

question the most fatal crashes are at-large on surface roads, including roads that serve the interstate BUT not on the actual interstate.

In these reports, three fatal accidents on the Interchange were due to driver error and behavior, including wrong way drivers, pedestrian traffic on the Interchange, and barricade crashes while the rest were actually before the Interchange on I-275⁴.

FDOT’s attempts to add retention areas and other human-made “natural” environments near the Downtown Interchange have a limited effect on our car-generated Heat Island. Looking at the heat map prepared as Exhibit J, it is obvious that excess heat is generated from the Downtown Interchange and also around other interchanges with very active exits. Additionally, the Downtown Interchange is too tall. The proposed effectiveness of sound walls is mitigated by this height. As such, urban neighborhoods will continue to be impacted by both the generation of heat, traffic, and noise along these proposed exits.

During an Ybor City Development Corporation Infrastructure Committee Meeting, Ybor CRA II (located within the immediate vicinity of the DTI) was presented as a high-poverty area in Ybor City. Under the Tampa Interstate Study, which is driving TBNext, 1,014 properties would need to be acquired. Of those 1,014 total properties, 890 have been acquired in Ybor City, Tampa Heights, and West Tampa.⁵ Because there is no guarantee that proposed FDOT improvements will be final, FDOT should offer long-term leases or real estate sales to fill vacant/unused properties with housing and businesses that fit within the historic context of Ybor City. FDOT is already leasing successful community-oriented properties in Tampa Heights through the City of Tampa. To my knowledge, there have not been any discussions to seek additional opportunities such as these close to Downtown post-TBNext. There also has not been any confirmation from FDOT that TBNext is the final process of TIS.

FDOT is design for a ultimate count of 29,000 cars per day exiting/using 14th and 15th street (Exhibit C) and Nuccio Parkway. This is in spite of current traffic counts under 7,500 cars. Here, it is important to note that Nuccio Parkway was never an original road in Ybor City and that it was created during the mid-1970s and early-1980s (Exhibit M & N) as a distributor in Ybor City. It now averages 12.5 crashes per mile (Exhibit K). This proposed exit has always been FDOT’s go-to for reliving the burden the Interchange’s poor performance by shifting their problems onto local streets. Even FDOT’s more recent exit improvements on Howard and Armenia have led to disastrous results (Exhibit E).

With the stoplights at the 14th and 15th street access, traffic will backup along the ramp next to 12th avenue. This is typically seen at any FDOT exit with a traffic signal. Such operation conflicts with the Sociocultural Effects Evaluation comment that “improving traffic flow also reduces the time vehicles spend idling, which generally produces the maximum emissions per unit time.”⁶ Caustic air particulates are not only detrimental to the health of residents but also to the health of their properties. If we consider the Health Atlas Maps, it is difficult to see how these exits could ever improve environmental health conditions and blight in neighborhoods along the Interchange and I-4 (Exhibit O-Q).

⁴ Ibid., 31.
⁵ Florida Department of Transportation. Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Tampa Interstate Study Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement I-275 from Howard Frankland Bridge to North of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and I-4 from I-275 to East of 50th Street with New Alignment from I-4 South to the Existing Selmon Expressway and Improvements to the Selmon Expressway from the Kennedy Boulevard Overpass East to Maydell Drive Work Program Segment # 258337-2 Segments 1A, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, and 3C May 2019. IV
⁶ Ibid., iii.
While this is a high-level overview of some of the concerns regarding TBNEXT, it is important to note that FDOT has been aggressively pursuing these exits by going door-to-door in neighborhoods and holding meetings with delayed notifications. East Tampa and Ybor City have never exclusively asked for the 14th and 15th street exits. As witnessed in the last East Tampa meeting, questioning FDOT about these exits leads their staff to put the public on the spot unfairly for figuring out the Interchange’s traffic woes. As of last week, FDOT had failed to provide any supporting studies in advance of the Preferred Alternative for the public to digest. This preferred alternative was released in October 2019. It is unbelievable that the public is expected to go over maps that are physically larger than a person and are expected to read through thousands of pages of supporting documents during a short hearing. Ultimately, the studies have revealed no benefit to our CRAs. They have only regarded our CRA neighborhoods as “resilient” but have not provided any resolutions to get back from FDOT what is has done to them in previous operation “improvements.”

Respectfully,

Chris Vela
924 1/2 E 11th Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33605
Exhibit A
Traffic Fatalities in Crashes Involving Speed, 2016

10,291 (27.2%) of 37,806 Total Fatalities were Speeding-Related

Exhibit G
Exhibit H
AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

SEVERE CRASH CORRIDORS

Aggressive driving is one of the most common factors in severe crashes. Aggressive driving encompasses a range of driver behavior that include:

- Failure to yield right-of-way
- Failure to keep in proper lane
- Followed too closely
- Ran red light
- Ran stop sign
- Improper passing
- Exceeded posted speed
- Disregarded other road markings
- Operated vehicle in erratic, reckless, or aggravated manner
- Disregarded other traffic sign

There are certain corridors in the county where these behaviors comprising aggressive driving are more pronounced. Law enforcement efforts focused on these corridors could help to reduce these dangerous driver behaviors.

The top 20 corridors that experienced the highest number of severe crashes per mile in which aggressive driving was a factor are shown in the map to the right.

TOP 20 SEVERE CRASH CORRIDORS:
SEVERE CRASHES WITH AGGRESSIVE DRIVING AS A FACTOR

1. Avenida Republica De Cuba from Nuccio Parkway to Columbus Dr - (0.24 miles)
   3 crashes (12.5 crashes per mile)
2. Gibsonton Dr/Boyette Rd from I-75 to Balm Riverview - (2.33 miles)
   25 crashes (10.73 crashes per mile)
3. Columbus Dr from 19th Ave to 50th St - (0.59 miles)
   6 crashes (10.17 crashes per mile)
4. Meridian St from Channelside Dr to Twiggs St - (0.6 miles)
   6 crashes (10 crashes per mile)
5. Florida Ave from Waters Ave to Linebaugh Ave - (1.01 miles)
   10 crashes (9.9 crashes per mile)
6. 78th St from Causeway Blvd to Palm River Rd - (1.26 miles)
   12 crashes (9.52 crashes per mile)
7. SR 60 from US 301 to Dover Rd - (8.45 miles)
   75 crashes (8.88 crashes per mile)
8. Lynn Turner from Gunn Hwy to Ehrlich Rd - (1.51 miles)
   13 crashes (8.61 crashes per mile)
9. Big Bend Rd from US 41 to US 301 - (3.07 miles)
   26 crashes (8.47 crashes per mile)
10. Gunn Hwy from Casey Rd to Dale Mabry Overpass - (1.07 miles)
    9 crashes (8.41 crashes per mile)
A high-level presentation on low demand to I-4 and around Ybor.

TRAFFIC COUNTS ARE TAKING FROM:
https://tdaappsprod.dot.state.fl.us/fto/
-3% of daily traffic.
7.6% increase, 400 more cars over 4 years.
Only a 11.6% increase, or 3,500 cars over 4 years.
12.8% increase, 500 more cars in over 4 years.
9% increase, 600 more cars in over 4 years.
8% increase,
600 more cars in
over 4 years.