



Are your employees experiencing transportation problems?

If the answer is yes, call on the UNTI to help solve those problems. The UNTI in conjunction with Bay Area Commuter Services can produce Zip Code Analysis maps to show if vanpools are a viable option for your employees. The UNTI can also explain the tax benefits of subsidizing vanpools and other transportation alternatives that can improve your company's bottom line.

St. Petersburg to Temple Terrace Vanpool Needs Riders

The UNTI is seeking riders for a vanpool which travels from St. Petersburg to Temple Terrace. Three riders are needed to complete this eight-passenger van. The work hours are from 7am to 4pm. For more information, contact either the UNTI at 974-9799 or Bay Area Commuter Services at 282-8200.

UNTI's Next Board Meeting

The next UNTI Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 5 at 8am at the Center for Urban Transportation Research. All UNTI Board Meetings are open to the public.

What is the UNTI?

The University North Transportation Initiative (UNTI) is a public-private partnership that provides a forum to address the transportation needs of the University North area.

The University North is the name given to a major destination area in Hillsborough County. It contains a high concentration of employment and commercial activity where traffic congestion occurs. University North is the area generally bounded by Busch Blvd. to the south, I-75 to the east, 22nd Street to the west and Bruce B. Downs Blvd. to the north.

The UNTI's main goals are to:

- Reduce traffic congestion,
- Reduce the need for parking, and
- Promote public transit and the use of alternative modes of transportation.

If you are interested in joining the UNTI, attending one of our meetings, or learning about the services we offer, please contact the UNTI at (813) 974-9799.

You can visit our website at:

www.commuterservices.com



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University North Transportation Initiative
A Public-Private Partnership

Transportation Information Service

This newsletter was created to inform, update, and educate members of the University North Transportation Initiative and the public on local mobility issues, projects, and developments.

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East-West Connector Update

According to URS Greiner, the construction of the proposed East-West Connector Road is justified. The road, which would connect New Tampa Boulevard with I-275, is necessary to reduce the congestion on Bruce B. Downs Boulevard (BBD). Currently, BBD is the only route available to carry residents of New Tampa and Pasco County to I-75 and I-275. However, the consultants' feasibility study concluded that the road may not be able to pay for itself as a toll road. The feasibility study states that the road would lose money with a 50-cent toll. A toll of 75 cents would raise a total of \$5.6 million over the next 30 years and a \$1 would raise approximately \$9 million in the same time period.

As a result, the likelihood of the road paying for itself is small due to the estimated costs of construction. Although there are no firm estimates on the total cost of the proposed connector road, projections vary from \$30 million to \$63 million if it were constructed today, and as high as \$94 million, if built in 2010. Councilman Shawn Harrison believes that the study is inconclusive due to inferior data collection techniques and thinks that safety issues and increasing traffic congestion dictate the need for the road, which has been on the city's comprehensive plan since 1989.

It is important to note that other road projects are planned that will help reduce congestion on BBD. For example, there are plans to widen BBD to six lanes, a fly-over ramp is being designed to increase the flow of traffic onto I-75 from BBD, and SR 56 to the north will open in 2002.

Congestion Management Study of Fletcher Avenue

Anyone who commutes to the University North, and specifically the University of South Florida (USF), is well aware of the traffic congestion along Fletcher Avenue.

A Congestion Management Study (CMS) is a federally mandated process under the current federal transportation act known as TEA-21. The process calls for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to study ways to mitigate traffic congestion on major roadways. Our local MPO chose three corridors to study: Hillsborough Avenue, Busch Boulevard, and Fletcher Avenue.

Parsons Transportation Group (PTG) has been hired to conduct the CMS on Fletcher Avenue, and is in the process of collecting traffic data. According to John Hendrickson of PTG, seven intersections will be the focus of the study. Based on the study's findings, the MPO will then select 5 of those intersections to be added to the transportation work plan.

John Hendrickson also stated that PTG will investigate the application of several transportation demand management (TDM) techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion. These include:

- Institutional changes, such as flex time, staggered work hours, and modified work weeks;
- Short distance alternatives, such as walking, bicycling, and shuttle buses; and
- Long distance alternatives, such as transit, carpooling and vanpooling.

Look for CMS follow-ups in future TIS Updates!

Improving Bicycling in the University North

Two groups are currently looking at ways to improve bicycling in the University North. The first is Hillsborough Trails, Inc., which is working to reserve right-of-way along the Tampa Bypass Canal for an off-road bicycle trail. The property is under the control of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). Upon completion, the total trail length will be just over 12 miles. The north end of the trail will connect to the BBD bike trail via Flatwoods and the Morris Bridge bike facilities. The trail will also connect to bike facilities and the sports complex in Temple Terrace. The trail will extend south to McKay Bay and connect to a City of Tampa trail proposed to go around the bay. For further information, please contact Jim Hartnett, President of Hillsborough Trails at **977-5554**.

The second group includes representatives from the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County, the University of South Florida, the UNTI and the MPO. The focus of this work group is to investigate ways of improving bicycle access to the University of South Florida. At the initial meeting, the group decided to focus on three main corridors:

- 46th Street: bike lanes and intersection improvements at Fletcher Avenue;
- 50th Street: bike lanes both north and south of Fowler Avenue; and
- A suggested route from Temple Terrace to USF: most likely making use of Whiteway, Bougainvillea, and 50th Street.

For more information or to provide input, please contact the UNTI at 974-9799.