

MPO Public Opinion Survey Results

In our last newsletter we mentioned that 1,000 households in Hillsborough County would be surveyed for feedback on perceptions of transportation issues and solutions. Selected responses from the survey relating to mobility, traffic perceptions, system improvements, bicycle usage, and bus transit are as follows:

- 75% of the county population believes that traffic conditions in Hillsborough County have gotten worse over the past five years and 74% of the county population believes that traffic conditions will continue to worsen over the next ten years.
- When asked how to increase bus usage, 64% suggested bus stops close to their residence and destinations, 60% said 15 minute headways, 56% said offer more direct routes with no transfers, and 55% suggested offering service earlier in the morning and later at night.
- 70% of residents agreed that in order to increase bicycle usage as a viable mode, bike trails should be separated from the roadway.
- Areas rated by more than half of residents to be of the strongest importance for the long-range transportation plan are as follows:
 - ◆ Traffic Flow (61%)
 - ◆ Traffic Calming (59%)
 - ◆ Noise, Pollution (55%)
 - ◆ Driver Warning Systems (55%)
 - ◆ Airport Access (52%)
 - ◆ Truck Routes (51%)

Legislative News

In its fiscal year 2002 budget proposal, submitted to Congress on April 9th, the Bush Administration proposed to fund the federal transit program at \$6.7 billion. This proposal represents a 7.8% increase for transit compared with only a 4% increase in proposed spending overall. The increase in the transit budget represents a growing sentiment toward the use of dependable public transportation, especially in the form of new urban bus and rail transit systems. It recognizes the importance of transit in easing roadway congestion, reducing air pollution, and providing increased accessibility to jobs, schools, healthcare and social services.

The budget proposal also makes several changes to the transit program, including lower federal match requirements on certain transit grants, and a new distribution of funds for Job Access Programs.

Other changes proposed for the highway program include allocating \$45 million for innovative transportation solutions for people with disabilities and \$100 million to community agencies to promote alternative forms of transportation.

Transit Use Increasing

For the first time since World War II, growth in Americans' bus and train use is outpacing growth in driving. According to the American Public Transportation Association, public transportation grew by 3.5 percent in 2000. This growth is attributable to the economy, expansion of service, higher levels of investment by federal, state and local sources, and enhanced customer service.

Hillsborough County Update Information

- The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is looking at increasing its transportation spending budget by \$10 million per year, for the 2-year period. This is in addition to its existing budget (approximately \$100 million), but over half of that spending is to maintain the existing roadways. The remaining budget will go to a variety of non-capacity improvements, such as intersection improvements, signalization projects, sidewalks, and other amenities.
- The Board is also reviewing its funding of HARTline, which has been about \$2 million per year towards operations. With existing funding constraints, this level may be harder to sustain. A discussion with this issue and a presentation by HART Executive Director, Sharon Dent, will be made on **April 25th at 3:30** to the BOCC.
- The County is currently in the process of selecting its consultant for the PD&E Study for the widening of Bruce B. Downs (entire 6-laning). The City of Tampa will begin the process of selecting its consultant for the PD&E Study on the East-West Road in the summer. Typically these studies can last anywhere from 18 months to 2-years.
- The County and City are both providing revenue estimates and projections to the MPO as they develop the update of the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan. The Needs Plan will be finalized by **June**, and the Cost-Affordable Plan will likely be completed by **September**. The Plan will likely be adopted by the MPO Board by late November, and by law must be adopted by the end of December.



UNTI COMMUNITY NEWS

New Tampa Residents to Run for County Commission

New Tampa resident Jim Davison has expressed interest in running for the District 2 seat that Jim Norman will vacate. Davison, a republican, and also a member of the New Tampa Transportation Task Force, said he decided to run in hopes of giving New Tampa a “greater voice in countywide issues, particularly transportation.” In the past, Davison has advocated new road projects to reduce congestion on Bruce B. Downs; he is also supportive of the alternative travel options supported by UNTI, such as increased carpooling, vanpools, transit, and staggered work hours to alleviate congestion.

Did You Know?

In Florida the bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle. Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadway, and must obey the same traffic laws as the operators of other vehicles. These laws include stopping for stop signs and red lights, riding with the flow of traffic, using lights at night and yielding the right-of-way when entering a roadway. It is the responsibility of both bicyclists and motorists to **SHARE THE ROAD!**

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 Boulevard to the south, I-75 to the east, 22nd Street to the west and Bruce B. Downs to the north.

The UNTI’s main goals are to:

- **Reduce traffic congestion,**
- **Improve air quality, and**
- **Promote alternative commute modes, such as carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bicycling or walking.**



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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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