

## Costs to Drive Continue to Soar

Most Americans spend more money on driving than they spend on health care, food, or education. In *Driven to Spend*, the Surface Transportation Policy Project reports that 98% of individual transportation spending is on the purchase, operation, and maintenance of automobiles. The STPP also reports that transportation is becoming an ever-increasing proportion of an average family's expenses. The proportion of spending varies however, even within similarly sized metropolitan regions, from 14-22% per household. In the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metro Area, for instance, transportation expenditures averaged \$5,864 per household in 1998, or 17.8% of overall household expenses. When the STPP undertook to discover why the fluctuations existed, two factors emerged which seem to correlate: access to transportation and sprawling development patterns.

Sprawling land uses in areas with limited access to transit services (bus or rail), increases the dependency on automobile usage. The study found that in places where roads tend to dominate the transportation system, personal costs are higher. The study concludes that the average American family living in a highly sprawling area ends up paying nearly \$1,300 more for transportation expenses per year.

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### **NOTICE: I-275 Lane Closures**

One lane will be closed in each direction on I-275 from 9pm to 6am Monday-Friday nights from Busch Boulevard to north of US 41

Additional partial lane closures along Busch Boulevard between Nebraska and Florida Avenues may cause minor delays

## Suncoast Parkway Opens

The Florida Department of Transportation, Turnpike District, held a grand opening ceremony on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate the opening of the Suncoast Parkway from the Veterans Expressway in Hillsborough County to State Road 50 (Cortez Blvd) in Hernando County. The new facility was officially opened to traffic on Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup>. The 42-mile, limited access toll road runs in a north/south direction, which will ultimately provide a connection between the Veterans Expressway in Hillsborough County and U.S. 98 in northern Hernando County. As originally planned the Suncoast Parkway from S.R. 50 to U.S. 98 is scheduled to open in summer, 2001.

The Parkway is expected to cut travel times for most motorists, while offering drivers a scenic, environmentally friendly, limited-access facility.



### Suncoast Bike Trail

Parallel to the new Suncoast Parkway is the 32-mile Suncoast Trail, which will provide an alternative route for safe bicycle and pedestrian commuting for local residents and also serve as a recreational facility for the region. The Trail will serve as an important link between the Upper Tampa Bay and Pinellas Trails in the south to the Cross Florida Greenway to the north. All local crossroad intersections will be appropriately signed and marked for pedestrian crossing; State Roads 52 and 54 will also have pedestrian crosswalk signals. A pedestrian bridge over State Road 50 will be constructed in 2000-2001 with federal funding.

## Temple Terrace Seeks New Transit Options

Staff members from the City Manager's office will be meeting with researchers at the Center for Urban Transportation Research this month, to explore transit options for Temple Terrace. In response to concerns that arose at a recent Temple Terrace City Council meeting about limited transit services in the municipality, elected officials directed staff to investigate other options.

Councilman Frank Chillura has proposed a Temple Terrace shuttle would serve the city more comprehensively than existing HARTline services. Councilman Jerry King also stressed that connectivity to existing HARTline services would be essential, to ensure that local residents would have improved, and not restricted, transit services throughout the region.

The Tampa Tribune reported that in 1997, five percent of HART's 32,000 daily passengers originate or are destined for Temple Terrace; the City's cost for the service is \$450,000 annually. A comparative assessment of the costs to develop, operate, and maintain an alternate transit service will be conducted by the City's staffers. A new ridership study being conducted by HARTline for Temple Terrace is expected to be available mid-April.

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### FDOT Releases 5-Year Plan

The Florida Department of Transportation recently released its 5-year work plan for upcoming transportation projects. The plan includes various transportation improvements, ranging from road widenings to construction of bicycle facilities, to funding for commuter assistance programs. The plan must be adopted by July, and will be submitted to state lawmakers when the Legislature reconvenes, March 6<sup>th</sup>.



## **UNTI COMMUNITY NEWS**

### **USF to Tackle Parking**

Demand for parking continues to beguile the students and staff of USF, while the Director of Parking & Transportation Services strives to develop new solutions. The Department's director recently proposed four different options for the future of parking on Campus. Solutions range from construction of parking garages, at one end, to promotion of alternative modes, at the other.

A common debate among campus dwellers is how to balance the demand for parking with the reluctance to pay higher fees to park. In lieu of building five additional parking garages, which are more expensive than surface lots and would result in increased parking fees, Parking Services will consider ways to increase ridership on the University's shuttle system, encourage bicycling, and promote carpooling to campus.

As USF's Tampa Campus continues to grow, plans are to concentrate academic and residential building on the interior of the campus and channel vehicular access to the periphery. The goal is to foster a more livable interior campus community, with widespread pedestrian access and decreased automobile traffic through the core.

### **MPO to Seek Public Opinions on Transportation**

The Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization plans to conduct a public opinion poll in early February. Approximately 1,000 households are expected to be contacted randomly by telephone, to solicit feedback on transportation. The survey data will be one mechanism for assessing the transportation needs facing the County, as the MPO begins to draft the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan. The survey is part of Phase II of the planning process: Needs Assessment. The Phase I: Goals, was completed last month. Phase III: Prioritization, will commence at the end of the summer. Florida law requires the region to adopt a 20-year transportation plan, which is then updated every five years. Hillsborough's plan update must be approved by December, 2001.

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#### **What is UNTI?**

The University North Transportation seeks to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality through the promotion of 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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