

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Turn Out Tampa to Stop Toll Lanes on Interstate Highways**

Organization petitions MPO Board in StopTBX action

Tampa, Fla., August 3, 2015 – Sunshine Citizens, a non-partisan grassroots Tampa Bay area advocacy group representing thousands of citizens fighting for smarter growth and transit solutions, announces a major action: Turn Out Tampa- Stop TBX, aimed at thwarting the Tampa Bay Express project (TBX). Concerned citizens will rally and attend the Metropolitan Planning Organization Board meeting, Tuesday, August 4, 5:30 p.m., at the Hillsborough Fredrick B. Karl County Center (601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa).

Together with a coalition of like-minded advocacy groups, neighborhood associations and business owners, the group is mobilizing concerned citizens to petition the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Hillsborough County to remove the Florida Department of Transportation's TBX project from the five-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

As part of their ongoing outreach and efforts to educate Tampa Bay area residents about the negative impacts of the TBX project, the group has organized hundreds of citizens to bike, ride the bus and attend the board meeting.

This major action represents the growing movement of concerned residents that want the MPO to remove TBX from the TIP and slow down FDOT's acceleration of the project, to allow for more time for community participation and input about how the area moves forward with regional transportation. The group recently co-hosted with several organizations a community town hall educational forum that drew over 250 attendees to learn about the plan, and its negative impacts on the culture, economy, quality of life, and future growth of the Tampa Region.

“At a projected cost of \$9 billion, FDOT's TBX plan introduces variable rate toll lanes to Tampa's interstate highways. The plan does not provide HOV (high occupancy vehicle) lanes, or dedicated funding for transit planning, expanding current HART bus service or plans for light rail,” said Chris Vela, president of Sunshine Citizens. “This plan creates a highway that is only for outlying area commuters, as access to and from these lanes doesn't exist

within Tampa. It eliminates exits and cuts off access to downtown, punishing nearby urban core neighborhoods by isolating them and destroying irreplaceable historic assets.”

The group already expects well over 200 attendees to the MPO board meeting August 4, and the county has moved the meeting from smaller rooms to the Board of County Commissioners Chambers, to try to accommodate expected turnout. Attendees will address the board during public comments, as this is the only means they have to address the project- it will not be brought to referendum or public vote.

To demonstrate the need for multi modal transportation and opposition to the TBX plan, Sunshine Citizens will Turn Out Tampa to Stop TBX in several ways:

### **Turn Out Tampa – Stop TBX**

#### **Bike Ride Out to MPO Board Meeting**

Tuesday, August 4, 2015, 4:30 p.m. meet, Ride out 4:45 p.m.

This guided group ride will start in Seminole Heights at Vélo Champ (6112 N. Central Ave., Tampa) and proceed to the Hillsborough Fredrick B. Karl County Center to attend the MPO Board Meeting. Because the county does not offer bicycle parking at the county center, Tampa Bike Valet will provide safe, secure parking for participants. Sponsored by Vélo Champ.

Get more info and RSVP online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/822583321196696/>

#### **Bus Ride to MPO Board Meeting**

Tuesday, August 4, 2015, 4 p.m.

Gather at The Independent (5016 N. Florida Ave., Tampa) to join the group and enjoy this beloved Seminole Heights biergarten. The group will then board the HART #1 Line bus and travel to the Marion Transfer station, where we will walk to the county center. Bring \$4 for roundtrip fare, an umbrella and comfortable walking shoes. Parking available at the Independent and Family Dollar.

Get more info and RSVP online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/403416266520963/>

The public is encouraged to join these activities via bicycle and bus travel, as well as to drive to the meeting (parking available at the County Center Public Parking garage at 319 N. Pierce Street or metered spaces in downtown Tampa).

**Get more info and RSVP for the Turn Out Tampa – StopTBX action at:**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1610571485863385/>

“We want the MPO to hear our clear and loud call to remove the TBX project from the TIP and the long term plan. It is wrong for Tampa, disregards countywide needs to finish regional connections and will not relieve congestion,” said Vela. “The citizens of this region are calling on our elected officials to work with us and find a better way forward that does not destroy irreplaceable community assets. We want and have expressed in numerous county studies that we prioritize transit and multi modal transportation ahead of road widening and tolls. We need more viable economic modeling and a funding commitment to transit for our transportation needs.”

#### **About the StopTBX Action**

Launched following the June 12 Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) board meeting, the StopTBX Action has successfully and rapidly grown. Drawing interest, support and media attention from all over the Tampa Bay area, the action is the first of many steps a concerned group of residents has launched. The action is in direct response to and opposition of the FDOT’s Tampa Bay Express project, which will drastically widen I-275, decimate the Tampa urban core and substantially harm efforts for true multi modal transportation and economic growth in Tampa Bay.

Website: [www.stoptbx.com](http://www.stoptbx.com)

#### **About Sunshine Citizens**

Sunshine Citizens is a non-partisan, grassroots advocacy group focused on smarter growth and transit solutions. We are actively building coalitions of like-minded groups, citizens and local leaders in Tampa Bay who share our vision for better choices, smarter growth and positive economic development for our area.

Website: [www.sunshinecitizens.com](http://www.sunshinecitizens.com)

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