

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2015

Sunshine Citizens Statement

Regarding the approval of Tampa Bay Express, Line item 33 - Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

Tampa, Fla.- August 5, 2015 - Today, Sunshine Citizens released the following statement:

“In response to the approval and inclusion of Line item 33, Tampa Bay Express project at the August 4, 2015 Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization Board Meeting, Sunshine Citizens remains committed to petitioning local transportation officials to remove the current iteration of Tampa Bay Express- both starter project and master plan - from the Transportation Improvement Plan.

Tampa Bay Express destroys irreplaceable assets and communities, induces more congestion with a sole focus on single occupancy vehicle traffic, and introduces variable rate toll lanes to federal interstate highways. It is the wrong plan for moving our region forward and toward positive economic growth and prosperity.

We are heartened by the tremendous response and direct action from across the region, which has clearly stated they do not want Tampa Bay Express to be implemented. For more than two hours people provided public comment in opposition to TBX and over 425 people attended the public hearing on August 4, 2015, as part of the successful Turn Out Tampa to Stop TBX action.

The movement in opposition to Tampa Bay Express is growing, organizing and actively pursuing all means necessary to prevent this exorbitantly over-priced, destructive and road widening-only focused plan from being implemented.

While it was encouraging to see Les Miller, Chairman of the MPO Board and Hillsborough County Commissioner, take a public stand and require FDOT meet certain conditions and we thank him for this action, we would like to see more influence exerted by the MPO in their position as the entity charged by law and responsible for establishing a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for Hillsborough County. How will these conditions be met, and who will oversee that FDOT is following through on the chairman's requirements?

Per their website, the MPO is charged with being "committed to meaningful public engagement throughout the transportation process", and "responsible for establishing priorities to meet short-term (next 5 years) and long-term (20+ years) multi-modal transportation needs." (1)

The process thus far has been severely lacking in proper procedure in committee, oversight, and active outreach to and participation by communities directly, negatively impacted by the proposed highway expansion project.

We disagree with the FDOT assertion that transit alternatives must be delayed, pushed further out and wait as \$9 billion is put into only one project focused on tolling highways, at the expense of sound planning principles that include comprehensive transit.

There are many inconsistencies, cryptic numbers and false statements from FDOT and the MPO board meeting revealed more of them.

We encourage the MPO to continue advancing the positive initiatives they have put forth in response to public input, and within their own award-winning Imagine2040 plan.(2) The dedicated professional planning staff at the Planning Commission and the MPO understands the charge from citizens and know what needs to be implemented for the future of our region- as their own comprehensive plan spells out. We refer you to Chapters 1-3 of the Tampa Comprehensive plan. (3)

Sunshine Citizens remains committed to education, outreach and organization of the residents of the city, county and region who have

already stated they prioritize a commitment to planning, funding and development that focuses on safe, walkable complete streets, addressing and fixing existing infrastructure issues, and committing to multi modal transportation that increases choices beyond single occupancy vehicle travel.(4) We would like to see the multi-billion dollar investment TBX represents instead be invested in many other projects with far greater potential and return on investment outcomes.

In conjunction with a growing coalition of neighborhood associations, business owners, residents and related advocacy groups, Sunshine Citizens will continue to actively advocate for our vision of better choices, smarter growth and positive economic development for our area.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue and cooperation from our transportation planning authorities as to how we can work together to accomplish these goals.

Sources/Links:

- (1) <http://www.planhillsborough.org/mpo-board/>
- (2) <http://www.planhillsborough.org/imagine2040/>
- (3) <http://www.planhillsborough.org/tampa-comprehensive-plan/>
- (4) <http://www.planhillsborough.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2040-LRTP-Final-Full-report.pdf>

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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

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.

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