



SUNSHINE CITIZENS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Group Rallies to Stop Toll Lanes on Interstate Highways

Organization petitions MPO Board in StopTBX action

Tampa, Fla., November 9, 2015 – For the second time, residents of Tampa will rally and attend the Metropolitan Planning Organization Board meeting, Tuesday, November 10, 5:30 p.m., at the Hillsborough Fredrick B. Karl County Center (601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa). As part of an ongoing grassroots effort, Sunshine Citizens, in coalition with neighborhood associations, citizens and local business leaders, will attend the meeting to voice ongoing concerns and opposition to the Tampa Bay Express (TBX) highway widening project.

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 Program (TIP).

Previously, the group led a record-breaking attendance of 425 people at the August 4, 2015 MPO meeting. Expected turn out is at least double that amount on Tuesday, November 10.

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. The group has also appeared on radio and television shows to educate the public about the TBX plan, and its negative impacts on the culture, economy, quality of life, and future growth of the Tampa Bay region.

This second major action reflects 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.

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

After repeated appeals to move the board meetings to evening times rather than during the work day, the MPO board chair agreed to an evening time for the November meeting so that more of the public can attend. 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.

“We will continue to appear before MPO, with 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 a funding commitment to transit for our transportation needs, and we will be unrelenting in pursuing these goals.”

To demonstrate the need for multi modal transportation and opposition to the TBX plan, Sunshine Citizens is working with several groups to drive participation. The public is encouraged to address the board during public comments, where each participant is allowed 3 minutes to speak on record to the board. The public is encouraged to join the rally 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/876579382449892/>

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 alliance 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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