

YOU ASK, WE ANSWER



The long range transportation plan (LRTP) notes that Pinellas County does not have space to widen roads so it is important to build transit infrastructure. But the plan leaves transit infrastructure unfunded. Why is there this disconnect?

The long range transportation plan (LRTP) includes funding for all modes of transportation but does not put much emphasis on the local funds that are used by the transit agency (PSTA) for operating the transit service. Admittedly, the long range plan is more focused on the distribution of state and federal funds, of which \$1.5M is set aside for transit capital costs each year throughout the life of the LRTP (currently 2050).

That \$1.5M is about 10% of the federal dollars available annually to fund projects prioritized by the MPO. The other 90% of the federal funds go to bike and pedestrian projects, technology upgrades and grants to local governments for their own transportation priorities. These funds could also go to transit projects, as we do an annual call for projects and competitively evaluate projects.

The federal funds are not a large pot of funding, but they are the most flexible in terms of the types of projects they can fund. State funds, which make up the vast majority of the funds in the LRTP, are more regulated in Florida and much of the time cannot be spent on transit projects. Hence the apparent disconnect between policy and reality.

As an agency, we try to use our most flexible funds on projects that do not strictly involve road widening, so that we can help meet the community's various mobility needs with the funds that are available to us.