



2019 POLICY & LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Transportation

Every day, thousands of Pinellas County residents travel to other counties for work, shopping and recreation. Conversely, thousands of people from other counties come into Pinellas each day for the same reasons. The transportation system internal to Pinellas County is part of a larger regional multimodal transportation system serving the Tampa Bay area. Regional connections in Pinellas serve a vital role for business, tourism and the mobility of the county's residents and goods. The regional connections in Pinellas are critical for all modes of travel, including personal vehicles, freight, public transportation, multiuse trails and waterborne transportation.

The most current effort to address Tampa Bay's regional transit challenge is the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan. This plan builds on decades of planning – there have been more than 55 transportation plans and studies completed by Tampa Bay area agencies over the past 30+ years. The purpose of the plan is to identify 3 things: projects that have the greatest potential to be funded and implemented, projects that are the most forward thinking and make the best use of technology, and projects that best serve our region today while supporting tomorrow's growth. A successful plan will result in a catalyst project that has public support and can be implemented, outline follow on projects that can be completed following the 'catalyst' project and allow the region to effectively tackle the questions of who owns the project and how it will be paid for.

In Pinellas County, our Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Forward Pinellas has identified the major transportation needs for our communities and develops a Long Range Transportation Plan every 5 years to account for changes in growth patterns, socio-economic trends, and mobility needs for the future.

The Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates for the development of multimodal transportation options, such as bus rapid transit, waterborne transportation, road infrastructure, and development of emerging technologies to build a regional system that can solve today's congestion problems and is ready for the challenges of the coming decades.

Action: We urge the Legislature to provide state funding for regional transportation projects in the Tampa Bay area as identified by the regional agencies charged with developing transportation solutions – specifically the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (TMA), the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA), and the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Forward Pinellas.

Useful Resources:

http://tbrregionaltransit.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/RTFP_Step3_Update_2018.03.23_2UP.pdf

<http://www.tbarta.com/en/regional-priorities/about/regional-priorities>

<http://forwardpinellas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TIP1819.pdf>



Affordable Housing

The William E. Sadowski Act in 1992 that created a dedicated source of revenue for housing from a portion of documentary stamp taxes on the transfer of real estate. Supported by a coalition of interest groups, including home builders and Realtors®, this landmark legislation provided both the funding mechanism for state and local programs, as well as a flexible, but accountable framework for local programs to operate.

The dedicated revenue comes from:

- A 10-cent increase to the documentary stamp tax paid on the transfer of real estate, which began in August 1992; and
- A re-allocation of 10 cents of existing documentary stamp tax revenues from general revenue to the affordable housing trust funds, which began in July 1995.

Approximately 30 percent of these revenues flow into the State Housing Trust Fund and 70 percent flow into the Local Government Housing Trust Fund. The 2005 Legislature adopted a cap restricting the amount of revenue that may flow into the Trust Funds to \$243 million per year, with a mechanism for a small increase over time. The cap went into effect July 1, 2007. At this time, all of Florida Housing's state funds are appropriated through the Trust Funds created by the Sadowski Act; no appropriations are made to us from general revenue.

Sadowski Act funds support several state and local programs that operate alongside federal housing programs. Key programs include the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program, which receives approximately two-thirds of the funding; the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program, which receives about 20 percent of the funding, and other programs, including the Predevelopment Loan Program (PLP), the Homeownership Assistance Program (HAP), the Affordable Housing Guarantee Program, and the Catalyst Training and Technical Assistance Program. Sadowski funds also support homeless housing programs administered by the Florida Department of Children and Families, compliance monitoring for the SHIP Program, the Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse and the Affordable Housing Study Commission.

Between the crash of 2008 and up until 2017, the Sadowski Fund generated \$1.87 billion, and the Florida Legislature appropriated \$1.3 billion of that and used it for "tax cuts" and other pet projects. This year, the Legislature sucked up the funds again, this time using \$400 million of them for "hardening" our schools following the Parkland school shooting.

In Pinellas County, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is about \$1014 per month. To afford rent and utilities on that apartment, a household must earn \$3,380 per month to avoid paying more than 30% of their income on housing. That means an hourly wage of \$19.50, assuming 40 hours per week and 52 weeks a year. Minimum wage in Florida is \$8.10 an hour. PSTA bus operators start at \$15 per hour. Tourism industry workers often make much less. We are quickly approaching a scenario where the people who do the day-to-day work that we all rely on here in Pinellas County, cannot themselves afford to live in Pinellas County, hence the ever-increasing traffic congestion and worker shortage.

Action: Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates for the allocation of the full amount of the dedicated documentary tax revenues for state and local affordable housing programs as mandated by the Sadowski Act of 1992.

Useful Resources:

<http://www.sadovskicoalition.org/about/>

<https://www.myclearwater.com/home/showdocument?id=2273>

<https://nlihc.org/gap/2016/fl>

Contact: Darryl Henderson, VP Government Affairs
Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce
727.461.0011 ext. 222
dhenderson@clearwaterflorida.org



Workforce Development

There are a growing number of open job opportunities in Clearwater and throughout Pinellas County. Many businesses are having difficulties finding qualified individuals to fill open positions. However, as the unemployment rate continues to decline, businesses are having trouble even finding people to apply.

There are critical shortages of qualified workers in the industrial and manufacturing trades, and not enough programs or funding to make up the difference.

A couple of months ago, St. Petersburg College hosting a Business Leaders' Convening at several of their campuses around the county, the purpose being to have the conversation with business about the state of workforce development in Pinellas County. One by one, business leaders told the college that there aren't enough skilled-trade workers to fill the current gap, and that they're having trouble attracting talent to the area due to cost of living and public transportation concerns.

Workforce development strategies will most effectively serve employers and residents if the programs are aligned with labor market areas in the region, and operate in a comprehensive, integrated and streamlined manner.

Action: The Clearwater Regional Chamber urges our Legislative Delegation to provide the funding and support for the ongoing effort to prepare our citizens for the workplace of tomorrow.

Useful Resources:

<https://www.pcsb.org/cms/lib/FL01903687/Centricity/domain/270/2018%20legislative%20platforms/Legislative%20Platform%202018.pdf>

<http://fsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Proposed-2018-Legislative-and-Federal-Platforms.pdf>

<https://www.launchcode.org/>



2019 TOP PRIORITIES

Red Tide

Red Tide is a naturally occurring phenomenon of a higher-than-normal concentration of a microscopic alga called *Karenia brevis*, which in low levels is relatively harmless. In elevated levels of concentration, however, red tide can produce a toxin that may cause respiratory issues, as well as kill fish and other marine life.

This past fall, the Mote Marine Laboratory established the Red Tide Institute. With The Andrew and Judith Economos Charitable Foundation as its Founding Donor, the Institute will be an innovation hub of intensive research and development focused exclusively on advancing promising technologies for controlling and mitigating red tide impacts toward practical application. The Institute will also leverage other red tide-related research by Mote and its partners at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and other organizations.

This fall, the State of Florida announced a \$2.2-million investment to advance mitigation science at multiple institutions, including Mote's novel mitigation technologies such as its ozone treatment system pilot tested for dead-end canals hit hard by red tide, and using a new clay formula for red tide mitigation, a Mote partnership with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, University of South Florida and FWC.

However, decades of history reveal that public attention and funding usually decline after red tide blooms subside, as Mote Magazine reported in its December 2017 feature "Red tide: How to be ready." The feature called for not only steady public and private support for red tide research and monitoring — including during non-bloom times — but also to embrace a vision to do more by establishing a new, independent Harmful Algal Bloom Center designed to channel science and technology development into creation and deployment of innovative tools and methods to stem bloom impacts.

The Pinellas County Environmental Management group works together with groups like the Florida Marine Research Institute, the University of South Florida College of Marine Science, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Southeast Regional Office, and the United States Coast Guard St. Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center. During the most recent Red Tide crisis during the fall of 2018, it was the cooperation and collaboration between these agencies that helped mitigate the effects of Red Tide. **We urge the Legislature to increase funding to these agencies for the specific purpose of conducting scientific research into the mitigation and prevention of Red Tide.**

Tourism is the number one economic driver for the state of Florida overall, and for Pinellas County in particular. VISIT FLORIDA estimates that record 116.5 million visitors traveled to Florida in 2017, an increase of 3.6 percent over the previous year. This number breaks down to 102.3 million domestic visitors, 10.7 million overseas visitors and 3.5 million Canadian visitors coming to the Sunshine State. Clearwater Beach was named the 2018 Travelers' Choice Number One Beach in the U.S.

As of the end of September 2018, 40 Pinellas County businesses reported more than \$128 million in losses. By the time the Governor issued an emergency order providing funds to help clean up water and bring back tourists in mid-August, much of the damage had already been done. The importance of supporting red tide mitigation and prevention efforts cannot be overstated.

Action: We urge the Legislature to continue and increase its funding of scientific research related to red tide mitigation and prevention.

Useful Resources:

<https://start1.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/red-tide-mitigation.pdf>

<https://myfwc.com/research/red-tide/>

<https://mote.org/news/article/mote-launches-red-tide-institute-for-mitigation-and-control-thanks-to-found>

<https://www2.whoi.edu/site/andersonlab/current-projects/florida-clay-mitigation/>