

MPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee

The Turnpike's amendment to widen the Veterans Expressway was presented and discussed at the BPAC meeting of September 13, 2006. The BPAC voted to support the amendment but decided to write a letter to the Turnpike District expressing their concern that the project fell short of serious consideration of multi-modal travel. All roadway projects, including limited access, should have transit, high occupancy vehicle lanes and multi-use trails included early in the design stage. The Turnpike representative explained that a study of a possible trail along the corridor was conducted, but due to limitations on how turnpike bond proceeds could be used, a multi-use trail was not included.

MPO's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed the proposed amendment for the Veterans Expressway at their September 13th meeting and approved a motion to forward the amendment to the MPO Board with a recommendation for approval.

MPO's Policy Committee

The MPO's Policy Committee considered the proposed LRTP amendment at its meeting on September 19, 2006. Following the presentation by the Turnpike representative and after viewing the video of the proposed widening project on the Veterans Expressway, the Policy Committee passed a motion to forward the amendment to the full MPO Board for consideration. Some members of the Policy Committee expressed concern that the "preferred option" was to make the Veterans Expressway an electronic toll only facility. There was concern that some people could not afford the cost of the SunPass transponder and that visitors and people using rental cars would not be able to use the toll road. The Turnpike representative responded that several new technologies are being looked at, including a low cost transponder that can be sold through vending machines for use by visitors and "real time" reporting of toll charges that would allow rental car agencies to add the toll charges to the car rental charges.

MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

On September 18th, the TAC saw a video and heard a presentation by the Turnpike Enterprise on the proposed LRTP Amendment to show the Veterans Expressway from the Anderson Ramp to the Suncoast Parkway as an 8 lane freeway in the MPO's 2025 Cost Affordable Plan. The amendment also includes an interchange with the Suncoast

Parkway and Lutz Lake Fern Rd. The Turnpike representative stated that these improvements will be financed through bonds that will be repaid through the collections of tolls. The TAC passed a motion to forward the Amendment to the MPO Board for approval.

Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board Design Review Subcommittee

The Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board's Design Review Subcommittee met on September 13, 2006 to review the widening of SR 589 - Veterans Expressway from Memorial Highway to Van dyke Road.

The Subcommittee generally supports the MPO amending the Veterans Expressway Project with the following comments:

- 1) All Turnpike Enterprise publications should include information on toll-paying accommodations for persons with disabilities who use hand control devices for driving vehicles. This will increase awareness of travel options for those with disabilities who drive on expressway authority toll roads.
- 2) Support the proposed Trail Feasibility Study conducted in conjunction with the PD&E Study to connect the Upper Tampa Bay Trail along the project limits of the Veterans Expressway widening.
- 3) Noise abatement measures need to coincide with roadway construction and both must be financially feasible for the project to proceed.
- 4) Issues of safe crossing at interchanges with heavy pedestrian traffic needs to be addressed. Mitigation measures such as pedestrian activated beacons, count down signals, audible or alternative signals, high contrast cross walks, speed tables, and adequate lighting should be considered.
- 5) Mass Transit options should be included in the plan including short term options (Express, HOV, and BRT lanes) and long term rail options with a minimum twenty year time frame.