



Two eastbound lanes of I-4 have reopened following a morning tanker accident which had the lanes closed.

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A sneak peek at the future of transit in the Bay area

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HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY (Bay News 9) -- More than 43 years from now, there could be a connector between downtown St. Pete and downtown Tampa.

That's the hope of the Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which unveiled a new study Monday called "Transit concept for 2050."

Planners say traffic in the year 2050 will be unbearable without a comprehensive public transit system.

The MPO previewed a power point presentation showing a three-pronged public transit system using locomotive powered commuter rail, electric light rail and rapid transit buses.

MPO Director Lucie Ayer said a public transit system that's both efficient and affordable will offer commuters choices.

"Maybe you'll take an express bus that might connect you to your destination," Ayer said. "Or you may hop on a light rail to get to St. Petersburg. And you won't have to drive anymore if you don't want to."

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Planners say one thing a public transit system will have to do in the future will be to connect downtown St. Petersburg with downtown Tampa. They say once the Bay area's two largest cities are connected, other cities like Brooksville, Lakeland and Bradenton will eventually be tied in.

Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio said that type of connection between urban centers is sorely lacking today.

"If we can erase those jurisdictional lines, we would find, and we already know how many trips go across the two counties every single day," Iorio said. "We really need to start treating it as one customer service base."

Iorio said efficient public transit means freedom of movement for it's customers.

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