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**“Yes, better transit could make a difference in my life.”**

Tampa, FL, January 19, 2007 – The Hillsborough County MPO announced the results of the first phase of its Transit Choices Study. Eight community workshops around the county identified community needs and core values. Participants included citizens from Lutz, South Shore, Temple Terrace, Brandon, Town & Country, East Tampa, West Tampa, and Plant City.

To citizens in Lutz and South Shore, both rapidly developing areas, maintaining quality of life means preserving open space and the community’s heritage. Transit could connect to park & rides, linking small towns like historic Lutz and Ruskin, incentivizing small town development rather than urban sprawl. In Temple Terrace, Brandon, and Town & Country, a major concern was the reliability and predictability of travel times. With their morning commute varying 30 - 60 minutes or more each day depending on road conditions, residents would prefer to spend less time in their vehicles and spend more quality time with their loved ones. Residents of East Tampa, West Tampa, and Plant City would like to see a reinvestment in their communities that would help stabilize local businesses, increase the number of local jobs, and provide a more walkable and bike-able community with connections to parks and better transportation options both locally and regionally.

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The purpose of this transit study is to assess transit service needs and to meet those needs in both long and short term plans. “Our goal is to produce a comprehensive transportation plan that includes not only road, sidewalk and trail improvements, but also a transit network that provides the cost-efficient technologies to give people options to get where they want and need to be,” said Councilman Shawn Harrison, MPO Chair. “We encourage the public to participate throughout the planning process, so that the plan will provide the connectivity that people are telling us they want.” Next steps of the transit study will include a countywide public workshop this spring, at which citizens will be able to participate in interactive exercises in order to build community consensus and stimulate dialogue on various transit scenarios.

The Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) strives to meet transportation demands by developing comprehensive plans to support the mobility needs and economic development of the community. The MPO is a transportation policy making board comprised of representatives from local governments and transportation agencies that fosters community revitalization by enhancing community quality of life and promoting public transportation.

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