



## Meeting Looks At Transit Choices

By **GEORGE WILKENS** The Tampa Tribune

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TEMPLE TERRACE - To make mass transit appealing to the masses, it must be efficient, speedy and inexpensive, agreed most participants at a Monday meeting led by planners.

The Transit Choices Study focus group meeting held in Temple Terrace, the fourth of eight scheduled in Hillsborough County, solicits opinions about values important to the public and how they relate to transportation.

The yearlong joint process of the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization and Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission will re-evaluate the mass-transit portion of the county's long-term transportation plan.

"We're trying to get a sense of the pulse of the community," said Whit Blanton, vice president of Renaissance Planning Group, a consultant assisting with the project.

Sharp increases in the costs of road-building materials and fuel have planners reassessing mass transit.

Temple Terrace Estates retiree Doris Sempert, among two dozen focus group participants, questioned why billions of dollars should be spent on public transit used by so few.

Blanton said the solution is to "make it fit" the lifestyle and community. Any increase in public transit use reduces congestion, he added.

In breakout group discussions, some said mass transit must be easily accessible to all, especially the growing population of elderly.

"It should be frequent, it should be speedy and it should be cost-effective," said participant Ralph Bosek, Temple Terrace's community services director.

Bosek presented maps showing that 3,669 University of South Florida students or employees live within a mile of the Temple Terrace city limits. More would take public transportation if it were speedy, he said, as it would also save parking fees and reduce campus congestion.

Participants also agreed there must be continued emphasis on facilities serving pedestrians and bicyclists, and that Temple Terrace maintain a small-town quality of life.

A January workshop will be scheduled to summarize comments of all eight focus groups. For a schedule of remaining focus groups, click on the "MPO News" link at [www.hillsboroughmpo.org](http://www.hillsboroughmpo.org).

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