

## Ready for rail

By JANET ZINK

Published April 2, 2007

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TAMPA - Mass transit and downtown development dominated Mayor Pam Iorio's speech Sunday after she took the oath of office for a second term as Tampa's chief executive.

Iorio emphasized that city leaders "must not waste a day" in laying the groundwork for a rail system.

"Are there risk and obstacles to overcome? Yes. But we must take the lead," she said.

The city needs to update its land use plan to identify the best routes for rail and locations for transit hubs, she said, and adjust its transportation impact fee to include funding for public transportation.

As soon as a plan is developed, a referendum on a way to pay for rail needs to go to voters, she said.

"I believe they will respond in a positive way," she said.

Iorio also talked about the transformation of downtown Tampa into a residential neighborhood, calling the Riverwalk that will link residential, recreational and cultural sites along the river a "key" to that shift.

"This project will enliven downtown as no other single project can," she said.

Iorio also said in the next four years she'll push to expand the use of reclaimed water to lessen dependence on drinkable water for lawn watering.

Tampa's seven City Council members also were sworn in Sunday, with Gwen Miller, John Dingfelder, and Linda Saul-Sena returning for four more years; Charlie Miranda returning after a four-year absence; and Mary Mulhern, Joseph Caetano, and former County Commissioner Tom Scott taking their seats.

After the ceremony, the council held its first meeting, and elected Miller as chair for a fourth year. Miller immediately appointed three council members - Mulhern, Miranda and Caetano - to the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization, a transportation policy group.

Mass transit, including rail, is a top priority for Mulhern. But Caetano is lukewarm on the issue.

"I'm not against it totally," he said. "But it's something that needs a lot of study."

He predicted a referendum wouldn't be ready to go to the voters for five years.

Miller said she appointed Caetano to the board because he's familiar with New Tampa transportation issues. When told

Caetano's not a huge supporter of rail, Miller said, "We'll change him."

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