



## Task Force Splits Bond On Roads, Transit

By LAURA KINSLER The Tampa Tribune

Published: May 8, 2007

TAMPA - County Commissioner Ken Hagan thought he might have to defend his recommendation that Hillsborough County allocate \$10 million of a future transportation bond to help Tampa with some of its road projects.

However, the county's Transportation Task Force, which is divvying up the \$500 million pot, approved the plan with nary a comment. The vote would have been unanimous, but for a few members who abstained from voting.

As it turned out, all the debate took place Monday morning in a flurry of e-mail messages between former County Commissioner Ed Turanchik and members of the task force.

Turanchik, one of the region's most devout light-rail proponents, accused the group of squandering a chance to utilize the bond to start a rail system in Hillsborough County.

"There needs to be a serious community discussion about this," Turanchik said in a telephone interview. "No one even knows this is going on. A half a billion dollars is a big deal and we shouldn't fritter it away on a series of tiny little projects."

He said the money could be used to leverage \$1.5 billion in matching federal funds for light rail. Of the nine largest counties in Florida, Hillsborough spends the least amount of money per capita on transit.

"I am so tired of seeing our tax dollars go to fund transit projects in other communities because of the lack of local matching dollars," said Turanchik, who did not attend the meeting.

The task force instead voted to split the \$500 million equally, with half going to road projects. The remaining \$250 million would be used for transit, intersection improvements, right-of-way acquisition and traffic management.

Hagan said he had not seen the Turanchik e-mail. He defended the group's recommendations, saying they met the objective, which was to come up with a list of projects that could be accomplished in five years.

"This bond includes \$30 million for right-of-way acquisition for light rail," he said.

The Tampa projects include the final phase of Cross Creek Boulevard and the highway overpass connecting New Tampa Boulevard to Tampa Palms. Hagan said he also would recommend the county contribute to Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio's top transportation priority, 40th Street.

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