

HB 251/SB 506
Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Authority

The following are areas of concern regarding these RTA bills as they are presented. These are serious issues that if not corrected before a final vote, will perpetuate a bill that will not be in the public's best interest:

1. **THERE IS NO IDENTIFIED FUNDING SOURCE FOR THIS AUTHORITY** - we have many of these that have been shelved due to lack of funding. Rep. Galvano in Infrastructure Committee in the House said that they were going to ask for appropriations of \$150,000-200,000. Legislators that have a RTA in their district balked at this since none of the other RTA's set up in the state were given state start-up money. How are they going to pay for the executive director (that could easily eat up \$150,000) and for the regional transportation plan itself? There is a buy in required by each local jurisdiction in all the other RTA's set up in the state.
2. **THE DOT WILL BE STAFFING THIS AUTHORITY** - FDOT has proven its focus is on expressway/road building. This is not the type of staffing we need to move forward with transit. The main focus of this authority will be on roads once again. Rep. Galvano in above committee meeting also made reference to the "beltway" as a project. **SO THE BELTWAY APPEARS TO BE THE AGENDA BEING PUSHED BY THE PARTNERSHIP.** Please note that Joe Smith of the Tampa Bay Partnership has publicly admitted his son has 400+ acres along that beltway path in eastern Hillsborough County time and time again. Polk County commission sees this for what it is and refuses to be part of the RTA.
3. **THERE IS NO LINK BETWEEN LAND PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING** - this will result again in a status quo sprawled development pattern (see Suncoast Parkway and I-75 in South Florida). There must be land planning by the local governments directly coordinated with the transportation planning for this to be successful. If the direction of each of the local comp plans is consistently part of the transportation planning, then we should not be allowing sprawl with any road or transportation modality in rural service areas. This would create limited accesses and development focused in nodes rather than the helter skelter pattern occurring today. The only connection to comp plans consistency right now is in language **AFTER** the master plan has been completed and adopted.
4. **THERE IS NO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLANNING** - there is one sentence in the bills that "engage the public in support of regional multimodal transportation improvements. " Note that this is a

sales job by the authority to gain support for its plan AFTER the master plan has been approved. There are no hearings or meetings or any public process set up in any of the jurisdictions during the creation of the master plan - the closest we will get to public participation is an advisory committee.

5. **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE PUBLIC WILL GIVE UP THEIR RIGHTS TO SUE IN A CIVIL COURT** - "The adoption of the mater plan by the authority is not a rule subject to the rulemaking procedures of Chapter 120." This is EXACTLY what we did with Tampa Bay Water. The "water wars" were costing Hillsborough County \$1 million/year in legal fees. Since the formation of Tampa Bay Water, and because there is no legal recourse to the courts, Hillsborough County now spends close to \$20 million/year to defend ourselves against Tampa Bay Water. Are we willing to spend another \$20 million/year to protect ourselves from a transportation authority as well? **This is the perfect situation for cramming the beltway down Hillsborough County's throats.**

After researching other RTAs in the state - **NONE HAS THIS PROVISION IN ITS LEGISLATION**. As a matter of fact, the South Florida RTA explicitly prohibits any expansion of the transportation plan by its authority unless they have approval of the county commission in the subject jurisdiction. This exemption is the reason why you don't see the next issue in the bill...

6. **THERE IS NO WAY TO ENFORCE OR IMPLEMENT THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN** - a plan is to be completed by July of 2009. Since all jurisdictions should have been working with this authority for consistency with their comp plans for this two-year visioning transportation plan WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, then to **mandate comp plan compliance** by each jurisdiction is not unreasonable. Without mandating all local comp plans incorporate and reflect its section of this plan in their comprehensive plans once completed, one jurisdiction will be able to throw a monkey wrench into the works. However, the monkey wrench is actually being reduced to a paper clip when our Chapter 120 rights don't exist.

7. **THERE IS NO ACCOUNTABILIT Y OR AUDITING REQUIRED OF THIS AUTHORITY** - that means there is no checks and balances to how this authority works or spends money. Again, I refer to Tampa Bay Water - they have fought an audit by OPPAGA for the past few years because no accountability to the public is written into the legislation.

8. **A DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS NEEDS TO BE INSTITUTED ON LOCAL COMP PLAN ISSUES AND THE FORMULATION OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN** - this is the way to reduce any Chapter 120 challenges. A medication process should be a requisite before any Chapter 120 action can be taken.