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## **Regional Transit Feasibility Plan moves forward to identify “catalyst project” in the Tampa Bay area**

**Tampa Bay, FL, March 6, 2017** – There has been no shortage of transit studies in the Tampa Bay area in recent years. In fact, over the past 30 years, more than 55 plans and studies for transit have been conducted by Tampa Bay area agencies.

But the question remains: How can we turn planning into projects? Answering this question is the goal of the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan.

Creation of the plan started in November 2016, with a review of those 55 previous plans. After that work is complete, the process will move into creating a plan for a regional transit network, culminating in recommendations for improvements that address needs in the community and have a solid chance of getting funding.

The ultimate goal: identify the top transit corridors in the Tampa Bay region, while determining one “catalyst project” that would be eligible for federal funding and could be implemented first.

The plan is being funded by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and is being administered by the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART).

“Our mission is to create a ‘route map’ to implementation,” said Katharine Eagan, Chief Executive Officer of HART, the agency administering the plan. “The result, we hope, will be a catalyst project that’s the first of many projects that will be competitive for federal funding, forward thinking, and makes the best use of today’s technology.”

The Tampa Bay region is defined for this plan as the urbanized areas of Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties.

The Regional Transit Feasibility Plan will be conducted in two phases. The first phase consists of a year of technical analysis to identify the most competitive projects. During the first year, the milestones will include identifying the most promising corridors for transit, then identifying what type of transit mode can best serve those corridors, and finally, determining which projects could potentially be implemented first.

The starting point for the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan is the adopted county and regional Long Range Transportation Plans and the more than 50 plans and studies completed by Tampa Bay area agencies over the past 30-plus years. The step-by-step process will then determine which projects are the most competitive for implementation.

During phase one, public involvement will be heavily focused on digital communication (website, online surveys, social media, and e-communication) but will also offer many in-person opportunities to get engaged (community workshops, small group meetings, and a stakeholder working group).

Phase two will involve vetting and refining plans for those specific projects to make sure the catalyst project selected is the best project for the region and is supported by the community. During phase two, a wide range of communication tools will be utilized, including public meetings, workshops, special events, the website, social media, town halls, and regional transit forums.

“The simplest way to describe what it takes to build a premium transit project is by answering the following three questions: *What is the project? How is it funded? And who is responsible for building and maintaining it?*” Eagan said. “During this plan, we will be addressing the first question and identifying possible next steps so the region can move forward with answering questions two and three.”

To learn more about the Regional Transit Feasibility Plan, and to participate in our transit preference survey, visit the project website at [www.tbregionaltransit.com](http://www.tbregionaltransit.com).

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