

Hurricane Evacuation

Several of the roadways in the Gateway Area are considered by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council to be critical emergency evacuation links, including the Roosevelt Boulevard/Gandy Boulevard/4th Street North intersection, and all northbound I-275 ramps. Critical links are considered to be already congested road segments that will need to carry a high number of evacuating vehicles. Several of the major roads in the Gateway Area serve as a specific evacuation route, but almost all are subject to flooding due to low elevations, according to the Tampa Bay Hurricane Evacuation Study 2000, prepared by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. The evacuation routes in the Gateway Area not only need to move significant traffic volumes eastward from the County's west coast, but they also need to allow for internal traffic as residents move around to get supplies, seek shelter, and get home from work to prepare for the storm. Consequently, development and redevelopment in the Gateway Area must recognize the countywide importance of the Area's roadways during an evacuation emergency.

Pinellas Mobility Initiative – Guideway and Bus Rapid Transit Considerations

In addition to planning for roadway improvements, the MPO has been exploring the feasibility of premium transit services including an elevated guideway (monorail), enhanced express bus service, trolleys, etc. to enhance the public transportation opportunities in the Area. Federal approval of the "new starts" application for the elevated guideway, completed in July of 2003, remains pending. Most recently, plans for the Area are focusing on the near-term feasibility of implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The Area might also provide an ideal location for testing a "Looper" bus/trolley system to move people around the Gateway Area and/or to and from the adjacent residential areas. Similar trolley circulators are being looked at in other parts of the County.

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)

The PSTA recognized the mid-County Gateway Area as the County's major employment area in their Mid Range Transit Plan in 1998, and the significance of the Area was reaffirmed during their 2004 visioning process. This has resulted in several new route enhancements designed to better serve Gateway Area commuters. For example, the PSTA extended Route 58 to serve County Road 296 east of US Highway 19 as well as the Carillon DRI. The route continues onto Roosevelt Boulevard, providing service to Gateway Mall. Route 11 is scheduled to be extended northward from Park Side Mall to mid-county via Gateway Center and 28th Street within the next fiscal year. This route currently serves the Rubin-ICOT Center on Ulmerton Road and 58 Street north of Ulmerton Road to Whitney Road. Also scheduled in 2004 is the introduction of express service on US Highway 19, tentatively planned to extend from Countryside Mall in Clearwater to Central Plaza in St. Petersburg, along with later evening service for Routes 19 (US Highway 19), 52 (Roosevelt Boulevard/49th Street/Ulmerton Road) and 59 (Ulmerton Road/49th Street/9th Street). One of the most

recent and most innovative improvements, which came online in August 2003, is the new premium/luxury coach service providing commuter service to the Ulmerton Road area, Interstate 275 and then crossing Tampa Bay to downtown Tampa. Existing PSTA routes and bus stops are depicted on **Figure 5**, and are evident in relation to major employers, including the various DRIs. Recently, PSTA has expressed interest in using a portion of the area completed by the recent acquisition of the Speedway property for a Cross-Bay terminal and the County is already considering co-locating several transportation alternatives in this location to create an intermodal transportation “hub.”

Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) and Associated Roadway Improvements

Several DRIs are located in the Gateway Area. DRIs are required to mitigate the impacts of their development on the roadway system through construction of road improvements or by contributing to improvements implemented by State and local agencies. Most of the DRIs in the area have already fulfilled their transportation related requirements. DRIs with outstanding transportation-related obligations include St. Petersburg’s Gateway Areawide DRI and the Gateway Center DRI located in the cities of St. Petersburg and Pinellas Park. Development orders for both projects require contributions to transportation improvements in the Area, including improvements to Ulmerton Road, Gandy Boulevard, Roosevelt Boulevard and 28th Street.

Summary of Transportation Plans

Clearly, in addition to roadway improvements, plans for major investment in non-traditional and high-speed transportation modes are being discussed, and perhaps opportunities might even exist in certain areas to integrate bicycles safely into the mix of transportation options in the Gateway Area.