

**Email from Beth Alden, AICP
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County Metropolitan Planning Organization for Transportation**

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Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2009 3:49 PM

Subject: Light Rail Response from Ken Hagan Part 2

Commissioner Hagan's office asked staff to respond to your questions 1 and 4-10. We understand he responded to your questions 2 and 3. The following responses are provided by staff of the MPO and HART. If you have further questions, you may contact me or Mary Shavalier, HART Planning Chief.

1. The proposed 56-mile rail system in the MPO's draft Long Range Transportation Plan (please see www.mpo2035.org) is currently estimated to cost about \$4 billion (in \$2009).

4. Federal grants are anticipated to be received gradually as segments of the system are built. Future-year funding is estimated in future-year dollars, at about \$2 billion in federal "New Starts" grants through 2035. Congress has not indicated that funding for transit is likely to be drastically reduced in the upcoming transportation spending reauthorization bill.

5. Annual operating and maintenance costs for the rail system are estimated at about \$75 million per year (in \$2009).

6. The federal government provides annual funding to transit agencies through the urbanized area formula program (Section 5307). The funding can be used for capital projects, which includes maintenance. The funding is distributed by a formula that reflects the amount of transit service operated, as well as the population and density of the area. At present, HART receives approximately \$ 11.5 million in Section 5307 funding each year. If transit service is expanded, additional federal revenues are anticipated. This is subject to the federal government continuing to fund transit at current levels.

7. Funding for annual maintenance and upkeep of the system would be provided by a combination of funding sources, including ad valorem funds, sale tax revenues, passenger fares, state and federal funding.

8. HART currently carries approximately 12 million passenger trips annually. HART's action plan to increase ridership includes undertaking additional marketing, monitoring service and adjusting service levels to reflect ridership demand, implementing improvements to make it easier to use transit, including shelters, ticket and pass vending machines, and developing partnerships with other groups to market and promote transit. In addition, new services are being developed to serve new markets. These include new flex routes in suburban areas, new express routes served by park and ride lots, and MetroRapid service on key travel corridors with improvements to speed up service and make it easier for passengers to use transit. More details on these services can be found on HART's website - www.gohart.org

9. We have not yet prepared a ridership forecast for the latest draft of the proposed rail system, but will be able to provide that by the end of December. As a point of reference, our earlier forecasts for a 25-mile, "U" shaped rail line connecting the USF area, Downtown Tampa, and Westshore Business District to Tampa International Airport and nearby suburbs could have 24 thousand riders on a typical weekday in 2035 (approximately 980 daily boardings per mile). For comparison, Phoenix's East Valley LRT was forecast at approximately 1300 riders per mile on a typical weekday, and Charlotte's Blue Line LRT at 950. Both of these rail corridors are located in areas of similar population density to Tampa, and both have surpassed their ridership forecasts. In fact, Phoenix averaged about 2100 riders per mile on weekdays in October 2009, an increase of 57% above the initial forecast. Ridership forecasts are based on technical models that consider the locations of households, jobs, major attractors such as shopping centers, colleges and airports, and congestion on roads.

10. Fares will be determined at the time that the first rail segment is constructed. Typically, farebox revenues cover about 20%-40% of rail operational costs.

For further background on the rail planning and funding proposed for Hillsborough, I will attach a summary of answers to frequently asked questions about the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Best regards,

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