



MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

June 16, 2020

Jim Holton, Board Chairman
Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority
4350 West Cypress Street, Suite 700
Tampa, FL 33607

Re: Envision 2030 Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP)

Mr. Holton,

The Manatee County Government (MCG) staff recently completed a review of the draft Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) Envision 2030 Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP). While we appreciate the effort TBARTA has undertaken to begin to identify regional network needs, the draft plan raises some key concerns for MCG.

Major Areas of Concern

Several policy and funding recommendations that were in the draft RTDP were identified as having negative effects on MCG's ability to operate and fund quality transit services. These concerns were reviewed by the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners (hereafter "the Board") on June 16, 2020, as part of a regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Board's major concerns and objections are as follows:

- 1. TBARTA's proposed take-over of any regional services that MCG currently operates and funds, including the Skyway ConneXion and potentially the Route 99.** These are services that the Board initiated and continues to fund and operate locally. It is inappropriate for TBARTA to advocate and plan for the takeover of services that are developed, operated, funded at the local level, especially without prior discussion with local officials.
- 2. Relinquishing Designated Recipient status to TBARTA would cause MCG to lose direct control of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding decisions to a regional board structure/decision-making process that is not representative of local community needs.**
- 3. Funding redistribution that diminishes current funding for Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) is counter-productive. Specifically, TBARTA's proposed taking of 10-percent of State Transit Block Grant and associated Local Match Funding away from the MCG.** This is not a viable alternative, as such a reduction in funding would require MCG to reduce existing local and/or regional bus services to fund TBARTA activities. There is no "added value" with such an alternative.

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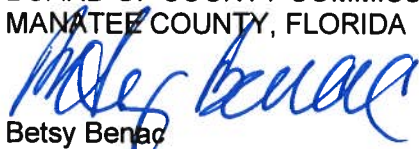
Recommendations

Moving forward, the Board recommends that TBARTA pivot strategically toward the pursuit of new Federal and State funding resources that benefit existing local transit providers. The securing of new funding for MCG's service improvement priorities such as the Skyway ConneXion (I-275 corridor) and Route 99 (US Highway 41 corridor) offer two examples of where new regional funding sources could significantly benefit both Manatee County and the overall region.

It is our hope that there will be more discussions with TBARTA regarding new/enhanced funding sources that potentially benefit both local and regional public transit service enhancements.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA



Betsy Benac
Chairperson

Cc: Reggie Bellamy, Manatee County Commissioner/TBARTA Board Representative
Cheri Coryea, County Administrator
David Green, Executive Director, TBARTA
Chad Butzow, Director, Manatee County Public Works Department.
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