

Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway
Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC)

MINUTES

Regular Meeting at
URS Corporation
7th Floor Board Room
7650 West Courtney Campbell Causeway
Tampa, FL

June 15, 2012

10:00 a.m.

Attending:

Councilman Bill Jonson, Clearwater City Council
Jessica Lunsford, Senior Planner, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
Linda Saul-Sena, Livable Tampa Round Table
C. J. Reynolds, University of South Florida
Shirley Pearsall, URS Landscape Planner
Susan J. Miller, Bicycle/Pedestrian Planner, Pinellas County MPO
Holly East, Commissioner Kevin Beckner's Office, Hillsborough County BOCC
Ron Gregory, Vice President, URS Corporation
Felicia Leonard, Administrative Support Manager, City of Clearwater Parks & Recreation
Karla Price, City of Tampa Parks & Recreation
Ken Cowart, Friendship Trail Bridge
Chris Weber, Westshore Alliance

Ms. Saul-Sena reported that last night the Tampa City Council had a private plan amendment before them to allow parking next to the river, which, when she was on the Council years ago, they disallowed it. After hearing that their staff recommended "no," even though the Planning Commission recommended "yes," they were encouraged to do what previous Councils had done, and they voted not to allow it.

Mr. Ken Cowart introduced himself as one of the authors of the plan for the Friendship Trail Bridge, and he is here at the request of Ms. Saul-Sena to give a brief presentation on what they are doing and where they are with their proposal. He told the group they have titled the proposal "A Vision Beyond Demolition" because so far the vision for the Bridge has been solely demolition. This all began when an architect came to him and asked that he review the structural engineering reports on the Friendship Trail Bridge. Mr. Cowart stated he found issues with the reports primarily because they did not study the center part, the hump, at all, and secondly, because that portion of the bridge is constructed differently than the lower span approaches. Their proposal is such that they are not disagreeing that there are structural problems with the bridge, because there are, and their proposal is just to take that out, just remove the structural issues that are there, which are primarily the low span approaches. He showed a profile of the bridge with the hump, and the low span approaches because of how low they were constructed above the water table and because it was the first time they were using first tension concrete in Florida and they didn't know how to build it properly. Their proposal

is to basically take those parts off, execute the demolition contract that American Bridge has to remove those sections and then come back and rebuild those bottom sections with something that is more reminiscent of a linear park. There are 252 of those low span approaches, and their idea is come in, originally they were talking about a metal bridge, but since then they have had some other engineers recommend concrete which will actually last approximately 75 years, as opposed to the currently planned 30 years, and it will be easier to obtain approval from FDOT. They are proposing creating a series of different spans that will offer different types of amenities throughout the walkway. Most of the 252 spans are going to be a simple, 16 foot wide trail, similar to what is being done with the Courtney Campbell. Intermixed will be shade pavilions, outcroppings so people can stop and enjoy views of the bay, little areas for vendor kiosks off to the side, fishing piers and locations for kayak and boat slips. This is what they proposed to the commissioners and the draft plan was submitted to them on May 7 and they were supposed to vote on it on June 6, but they delayed the vote. He feels this is a good sign because it indicates they are taking the proposal very seriously. The commissioners have hired an engineering firm, E. C. Driver, and they found a lot of issues with the plan, which has opened a lot of dialogue to discuss it. E. C. Driver's conclusion was that their plan of transformation is better than their own previous estimates for repair, which was \$50 million. Mr. Cowart told the group that right now their estimate is \$13 million to rebuild the low span approaches for 75 years and \$5 million to demolish the bad parts, and then added on to that will be another \$5 million for all of the amenity structures. So basically, they are right around a \$20 million private sector investment with a \$5 million public sector investment for the demolition. Monies are already allotted through Hillsborough and Pinellas County for the demolition of the bridge. On June 27 the Hillsborough County commissioners will be voting. Whenever the Friendship Trail Bridge was originally deeded over, Hillsborough County took the lead and when demolition was an option Hillsborough County took the lead on sending out the RFP and Pinellas County gave Hillsborough its \$2.5 million for their decision.

Ms. Saul-Sena explained the reason she wanted to bring this presentation to the CAC was because this would be like a sister bridge and she thought the CAC would want to support that initiative. She didn't see it as a competitor for funds, but as a more compelling reason to make this area an ecotourism destination, particularly for walkers, bike riders, etc. Ms. Saul-Sena indicated what she would like the CAC to consider as a group is a vote of support for this which she could then bring to the county commission meeting on the 27th. It won't cost anything and it's saying the CAC believes it is worth pursuing. They will have to raise the money and do all the leg work and the CAC is saying it's a sister effort that encourages people to think about the beauty of our waterways. In the long run it will make marketing even more attractive because there would be two ways to cross the bay.

Councilman Jonson interrupted at this point to ask if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Gregory moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Saul-Sena. The minutes of the May 18, 2012 meeting were approved unanimously.

Ms. Holly East, Commissioner Kevin Beckner's Legislative Aide, said the vote, as they understand it right now, because the draft agency won't come out until this afternoon, is that the vote that is happening on the 27th is going to be on the demolition contract. She and Ms. Saul-Sena have spoken, and she had an opportunity to speak with the commissioner, and ideally, what he would like for this committee to do is to appear and do a short update presentation of the CAC's current status. She has gone ahead and reserved a spot on the commission agenda if the CAC is willing to do this. Ms. East added that they can control the agenda to the point that the vote on the demolition contract could immediately follow the CAC's presentation. Commissioner Beckner's idea is for the CAC to put together a Power Point presentation, she has some specific things he would like the committee to say and she realizes the group was not planning on coming before the

commission quite this soon, but with the Sunshine Laws they have no idea where any of the votes are on this. The Commissioner feels if the CAC can do a short presentation and have, preferably, Ms. Saul-Sena close with a summary that surprises everybody by saying "...and we support the Friendship Trail Bridge because of ecotourism," then Mr. Cowart could come and do a quick update, so the whole Power Point would be ten minutes. It would be an act of surprise, but because the CAC has done such a great job on the Courtney Campbell bridge, Commissioner Beckner is thinking it might inspire the commissioners to think it's possible. And, really, all you are asking for, as he understands it, is an eight-month delay to get a feasibility study, that's all they're asking for, they're not asking to build the bridge. Once the bridge is gone, the opportunity is gone, if they sign the demolition contract, and there is a lot of internal pressure to sign that contract. Ms. East said she feels this is a great strategy that will provide for sister bridges, and it gives the CAC an opportunity to blow its own horn on what they have been able to accomplish on the bridge.

The question was asked if FDOT's position on this is known. Mr. Cowart replied the FDOT gave the bridge over to Hillsborough and Pinellas County, and since that time no word has come from them, although they have been asked for their support and their opinions. They have been quiet on the subject because it is not a vehicular roadway, and so, in their opinion, it's not an issue. He stated that the trail is being designed toward FDOT standards and their only request, thus far, is that it be enabled for emergency use vehicles. Mr. Cowart pointed out that the hump was never studied, which is why they are requesting the eight-month delay to do a feasibility study. He feels it would not be diligent to not have an engineer study the hump and make sure that it is, in fact, sound. If the study proves that the hump is gone, then the opportunity is lost. Currently, the bridge is leased by Hillsborough and Pinellas County. As soon as the entire bridge is demolished, all of that land goes back to FDOT.

Councilman Jonson asked if the Regional Trail Network included both bridges, and Ms. Miller replied that, yes, it does. Mr. Cowart added that this is actually the bridge of the Friendship Trail. There is a Friendship Trail that runs through south Tampa and this is the bridge portion that connects to Progress Energy on the other side. Ms. Miller reported that the analysis of the Parks and Trails Report that was created in April 2012, which no one has seen as yet except for the MPO and the Planning Commission, will be presented to the MPO in July. Ms. Saul-Sena suggested it should also be brought to Livable Roadways. Mr. Gregory indicated that Chris Weber from the Westshore Alliance brought up the issue about making sure they are not asking FDOT to fund any of this process. The concern is that the projects on the Courtney Campbell are fully funded at this point and any idea of moving for any reason, e.g., setting aside or backing into or anything related to these projects would probably end them. He added that they are at the eleventh hour on Courtney Campbell, and they are only waiting to start these projects until after the Republican National Convention.

Mr. Gregory made a motion that the CAC support the Friendship Trail Bridge project, seconded by Ms. Saul-Sena. After discussion, the motion passed with two abstentions.

Ms. Saul-Sena stated she would take responsibility for getting the participants and the presentation ready, and she will send out a draft to everybody of what is going to be said to be sure everyone agrees with the copy. She asked who else might be available to attend. Councilman Jonson indicated he was committed to another meeting on that day. Ms. Saul-Sena said she would like to have someone from Pinellas County to address regional cooperation. Ms. Miller expressed how much she loves the Friendship Trail Bridge and she was really crushed when they closed it, but she wanted to explain why she abstained from the voting. Basically, she is here representing Commissioner Karen Seel, and the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners has already voted, and they voted to go ahead with the demolition. Mr. Cowart indicated that the Pinellas BOCC voted on June 2. There is currently \$4.2 million that has been allocated toward the demolition. The demolition

bid came back at \$5.5 million, and it was requested that Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties ante up another half million dollars. Pinellas County's vote was to come after Hillsborough's, but then Hillsborough voted to delay it, but Pinellas never voted to delay theirs, so they went ahead with the vote to move forward with the half million dollars. Commissioners Welch and Brickfield have spoken in favor of they are doing, and Commissioner Welch stated in the meeting that it was a procedural vote simply to allocate the funds and they are taking a back seat to see what Hillsborough does before they vote. Mr. Gregory reminded everyone that the intent was to come back later and make a presentation about the amenities master plan with representatives from both the cities and private sector and say this is the plan we want to move forward with and start going to the MPOs and cities and counties, because eventually, after the trail is constructed, that's when you're going to need these amenities to be installed. So the whole plan was to develop an amenities master plan so people could adopt sections that belonged to them and fit it to their planning process. It's just meant to be a guidepost for everyone. You have to start somewhere with a master plan or you can't get any funds allocated, so the CAC's purpose is really to get the ball rolling on minor things like bike racks, drinking water, toilets, etc. Ms. East thought this is a great piece of the presentation to the commissioners, because it will set them up for the CAC to come back, and let them know this is coming because they are moving into their budgeting cycle. This is another reason Commissioner Beckner thought that this will not harm the CAC as long as it is strategically handled. Mr. Gregory pointed out that there none of those amenities in the Courtney Campbell plan because it is strictly a construction project of the trail itself and the bridge took every dollar they had in order to do that. We have to come back and add the amenities.

1. Conceptual Amenity Plan for CCSH

Ms. Pearsall presented some copies representing some other projects that the cities of Tampa and Clearwater are doing. These are just beginning ideas of some kinds of things that have become standard. It is important to have a holistic theme before getting into any specifics on what type of bike racks, benches, etc. That theme needs to be something that represents the region, something that is public art, so that this trail has a higher profile other than just getting some benches or shelters out there. What they have talked about so far is having the theme general enough that creativity isn't limited over the long haul, but having it specific enough to figure out funding. The smaller elements, i.e., the furnishings, are extremely important because somebody is going to have to maintain all of these things. What they have done so far is open up the dialogue and start collecting information, some of which came from FDOT. They haven't gotten the electronic files as yet to know what the construction plans actually look like because they will need to know where there is space to put something. Mr. Gregory explained that there are two design files, the concept design files, which is the PD&E study that FDOT did, and there is also the current construction that is going on out there. The resurfacing job is from the Hillsborough County line over to Ben T. Davis Beach, actually over to Rocky Point. It says the resurfacing project includes trail segment "X." They are building part of the trail during the resurfacing project, and also some sidewalk work. They have a master plan with the PD&E study that went from the Pinellas County side to Ben T. Davis Beach, and they are building along Ben T. Davis Beach now, and that will also include making the tidal gate crossing, adding a sidewalk on the north side all the way down to the intersection. They have been listening to all the comments the CAC has made throughout the process and they have incorporated them. The department should be complimented openly regarding their embracing of these ideas. The design/build project is going to be let as soon as the next fiscal year arrives. He added that the projects in Pinellas County, from the county line back, they are going to be bid separately in Pinellas County and Clearwater. They are not design/build, so they are going to follow a little bit, but they are funded. Ms. Leonard reported the 30 percent plans are due to them in August. She mentioned that they had a successful theme design charette in Clearwater for a piece of public art, and that had to do with a large

piece of sculpture they will be putting along the waterfront at Coachman Park. There were a lot of different stakeholders from the Coast Guard all across the board. Through the design charette process they came up with a theme that, by consensus, was good for everybody, and that theme was called Safe Harbor. For them, specifically, that theme represented the history of the site and was also applicable to environmental resources, e.g., the animals and the flora, and also to the Coast Guard interest in having a safe harbor. She thought, if they have time in developing the amenities plan, and they don't have funding, it might be worth the effort to hold a design charette and then that way they could guide what the applications look like based on public input, or stakeholder input, just to get an equal design across the whole Courtney Campbell, and that way it would also help the CAC complete the goals in the Courtney Campbell Annual Report because of increased public involvement. Everyone seemed to think this is a good idea. Ms. Leonard said she could put together a plan on how to accomplish it. Mr. Gregory suggested they determine a place to have a meeting that would encompass both sides. Ms. Leonard thought they will have to hold two meetings because a lot of folks are reluctant to travel across the bridge at night. Ms. Reynolds suggested tapping the student body within the School of Architecture and Community Design at USF to help with the design charette, because they will have an opportunity to learn and it would benefit both sides. Ms. Leonard agreed that they could help in that capacity. She oversees the public art program and after they develop themes they then have a national call to artists and they can receive approximately 200 applications all with different interpretations of the chosen theme. Mr. Gregory pointed out that at some point they are going to want to look at sponsorships, as well. There could possibly be corporate sponsors for segments of the trail in the sense of amenities. Discussion began regarding holding a meeting dealing with the subject of the amenities. Mr. Gregory suggested that Ms. Pearsall, Ms. Leonard and Ms. Price meet to begin working on some of the basic parameters of the amenities.

Councilman Jonson reiterated that Ms. Pearsall, Ms. Leonard and Ms. Price are going to get together to work on the outline for the charette. Mr. Gregory added that they will secure the electronic files as soon as they can.

2. Annual Report Draft

Councilman Jonson indicated that the report is due October 1, 2012. He said he and Ms. Lunsford thought they can probably look for approval on this at the August meeting. If any committee member has comments or feels something else should be included, please say so. Ms. Saul-Sena reported that the City of Tampa is getting more serious about bike trails, and if they have she will send information regarding that. She also added they can talk about the improvements at Ben T. Davis Beach.

There will not be a meeting in July, so the next meeting will be the third Friday in August. There being no further business, Councilman Jonson adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting: Friday, August 17, 2012 in the URS conference room at 10:00 a.m.