

# Regional Transit Assessment

## FINAL REPORT



PREPARED FOR:

Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan  
Planning Organizaion

PREPARED BY:



RENAISSANCE PLANNING GROUP

September 2004

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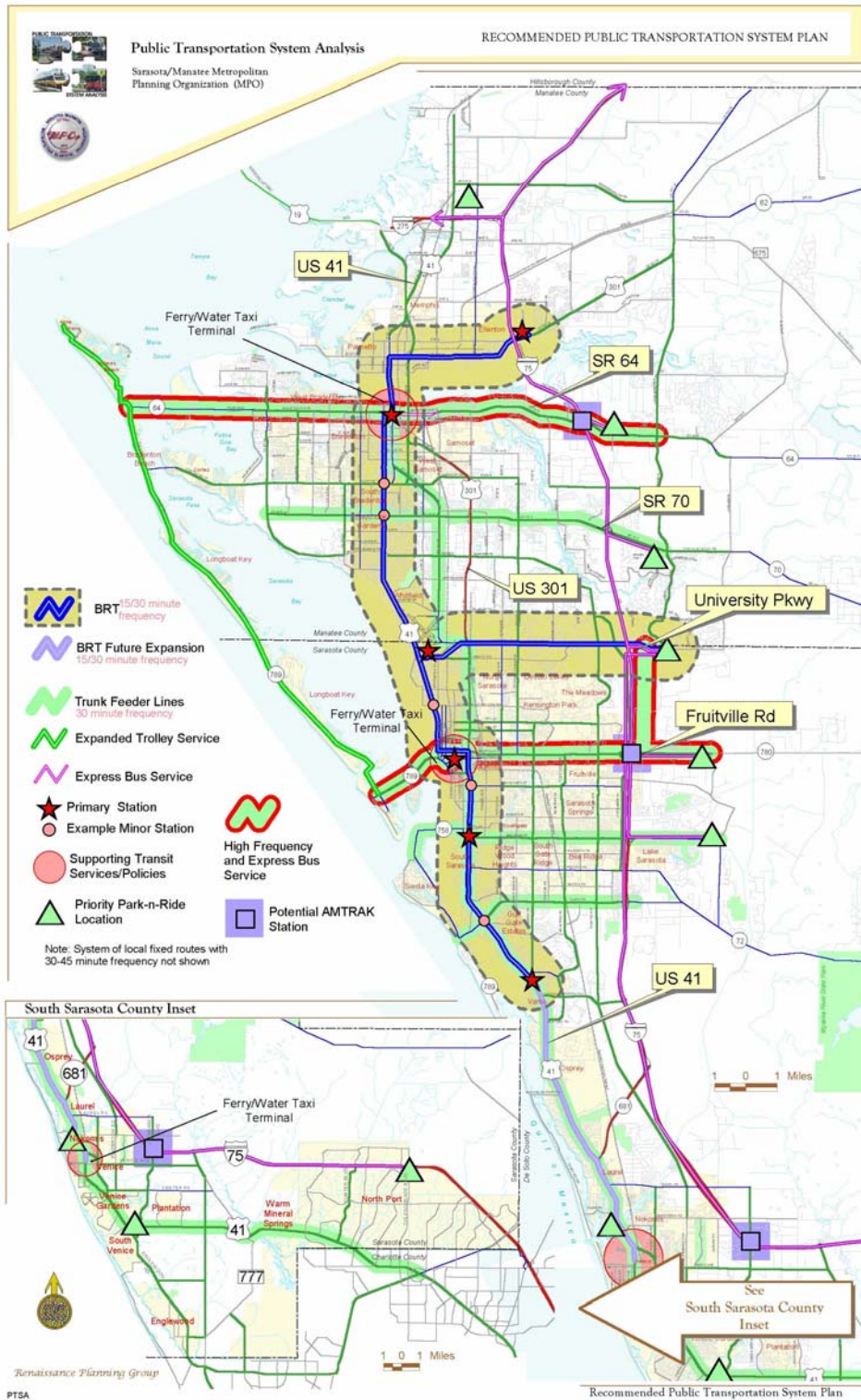
## **SARASOTA/MANATEE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY ASSESSMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION AND STUDY CONTEXT**

In 2002, the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) adopted by unanimous vote an ambitious and comprehensive long range plan for improving public transportation service in the region. The Public Transportation System Analysis (PTSA) outlined a “Best Bus” service concept that refocused transit service in the region to provide improved inter- and intra-county connections, more frequent service and longer operating periods on major corridors, and a gradual evolution towards distinctive, high quality Bus Rapid Transit service within the US 41 corridor and selected major east-west roadways. The plan sought to make transit more competitive with other travel options so that it would attract a greater share of residents, visitors and workers who do not, or cannot, use public transportation today. The MPO initiated the PTSA and approved its ultimate long-range plan with the clear recognition that rising congestion levels could not be solved through a single-minded program of widening and building new roads. Figure 1 presents the approved PTSA long range transit plan.



Figure 1: Adopted 2025 Public Transportation System Plan





Most of the recommendations in the PTSA long-range plan are not financially feasible for the MPO and the two public transportation providers in Manatee and Sarasota Counties. In a time of rising operating costs and relatively flat revenues for transit, neither county is in a financial position to implement the full recommendations of the PTSA. Even gradual service improvements, particularly in Sarasota County, are a major challenge in the current operating and policy environment. The PTSA recognized this challenge by calling for the eventual creation of a Regional Transit Authority that would provide the institutional and financial means to achieve the desired service improvement objectives through a dedicated, recurring revenue source that would be used to leverage state and federal assistance.

Within that context, this report presents a range of options and provides guidance for consideration by the Sarasota/Manatee MPO and its partners for the creation of a governance structure for regional public transportation service. At issue is whether and how the two existing systems can evolve to more effectively meet the growing inter-county transportation needs and the desire to improve transit service throughout the region. This assessment is part of the implementation plan outlined in the Public Transportation System Analysis final report, which was adopted by the MPO as the transit element of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The findings and recommendations in this assessment have been coordinated with the staff of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) and Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT).

For purposes of this report, the region is defined as Manatee and Sarasota Counties, although the findings presented in this document also pertain to potential inclusion of Charlotte County in the future. That is consistent with the scope and findings of the PTSA. As reported by the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO staff, there has been an increase in discussion about the need for transit connections with Sarasota County. In addition, because the 2004 Florida Legislature has added Manatee and Sarasota Counties to the Tampa Bay Commuter Transit Authority and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO is part of the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee, there is also a larger regional context to consider. In fact, the West Central Florida Regional Long Range Transportation Plan currently under development includes a regional transit element that envisions express bus, bus rapid transit and possibly other forms of public transportation service linking Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties.

This report is the culmination of several months of analysis of current public transit operations and their organizational structure, meetings with transit staff and review of alternative governance structures for transit systems elsewhere in Florida and the country. An interim technical memorandum was prepared earlier this year that outlined the range of options and processes for establishing a regional transit system. That document is incorporated into this final report.

This report is organized into two primary sections: 1) a review of the issues, cost considerations and other factors influencing the decision to create a regional transit authority, and 2) a review of potential organizational structures and examples, and procedural steps necessary for its creation. A summary and conclusions section completes this report.



## **OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES**

Establishing a special district for public transportation, in particular the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) or similar structure, for Sarasota County and Manatee County is a logical step toward improved regional transit coordination. Such mechanisms are increasingly popular statewide and in the U.S. as a way to finance transit service and overcome jurisdictional barriers to service delivery, operations and equity. However, it is not required for improved regional coordination, which can occur through interlocal agreement and basic service coordination. If an RTA or equivalent is created for the two counties and an adequate financing structure in place, efficiencies in the overall system, including operations, enhanced service delivery and marketing, can be achieved.

## **INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Several factors are driving the discussion for improved or consolidated regional transit. First, there is a perception in the community that public transportation is fractured and does not adequately serve the growing demand for inter-county and cross-county travel. The two systems have different philosophies of service provision (e.g., market segments, routing), and the degree to which transit is viewed in either county as a mobility option for people other than the transit dependent is unclear. The service integration of the Manatee and Sarasota systems has been limited over the last two decades to transfers at the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport and short route segments operating on either side of the county line. This structure can cause lengthy delays for people transferring between the two systems to reach destinations in either county.

Second, there is a concern that the budgetary constraints of operating within county government with its competing demands, and relatively flat revenues dedicated to transit in light of rising operating costs hampers the ability of either system to expand service. Despite an increasing property tax base, the basic core funding for transit operations in either county has not increased markedly in years. This is an emerging concern because of the growth trends in the region pushing development toward the east and extreme south, where there is a limited transportation network and escalating traffic congestion.

From a governance perspective, the most innovative and successful transit agencies typically have a direct line of authority between the transit agency director and a governing board of elected or appointed officials. Most often, there is an executive director who reports to a governing board comprised of the elected representatives from member local governments who contribute financially toward system operations. In some cases, such as Lynx in Orlando, the governing board includes as its voting member the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation. This line of authority is important because it gives the transit authority the ability to rapidly respond to challenges and opportunities with a great deal of flexibility. It also creates a strong sense of accountability and visibility for system performance. However, it can sometime create a situation



where actions taken by members of the authority are not consistently supported by actions of the member local governments.

From an operations and fiscal impact standpoint, there are a number of influencing factors to consider. The two systems function differently in terms of maintenance, with SCAT performing its own bus repairs while MCAT has maintenance provided by the Manatee County public works facility. Combining maintenance facilities may allow for marginal cost savings; however, a satellite maintenance facility would likely still be needed in Manatee County to support basic maintenance and minimize deadheading of buses to and from the start of their routes. SCAT's drivers and mechanics are unionized, unlike MCAT's employees. From a consolidation perspective, this situation requires a detailed review and possible re-negotiation of the collective bargaining agreement consistent with federal law and union participation. The lack of overlapping service or routes precludes major cost savings from consolidation. Presumably, even with consolidation, the route network would remain largely in place for at least an initial period.

From a funding standpoint, some form of consistent and dedicated revenue for transit operations and administration would be needed to offset the loss of general revenue currently provided by the two counties. While it is certainly possible for the counties to continue providing an annual funding allocation to a regional authority, the lack of a stable funding source would leave the system vulnerable to periodic budget cuts and dependent on county or municipal allocations. Having a dedicated local funding source is a critical element in providing the local match needed for grants or federal assistance, and provides a degree of freedom to plan, budget and implement service with greater flexibility and predictability.

One value of providing a new dedicated funding source for transit is that it would largely relieve the two counties of the financial burden of operating and maintaining a bus fleet. The counties would be able to use the money currently allocated for transit toward other necessary public purposes or even reduce property tax collections accordingly. That has been the case in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties, which no longer fund transit operations out of general revenue. Based on 2002 fixed route operating budgets, there would be a savings of about \$3.0 million per year in Manatee County, and \$5.2 million per year in Sarasota County. This savings in local government budgets would allow for additional flexibility in meeting the growing needs of both counties, while better responding to the challenges of providing a public transportation system that adequately serves the area's needs. For example, some counties have used dedicated taxing streams for transit to expand their ability to leverage needed resources from other agencies.

An important consideration, though not as critical as other decision factors, is the relationship of transportation and land use in the decision-making process. One risk of creating a regional transit authority separate from the two counties is the further separation of transportation and land use policy. Communities are working throughout the U.S. to better integrate land use with transportation, and on the surface, it appears that creation of a regional agency focused exclusively on transit operations (without land use authority) may run counter to that goal. The argument is



that such integration is difficult enough to achieve already when the Board of County Commissioners sets policy and approves plans for land use and transportation, why make it more difficult by separating the two?

That argument can be addressed in several ways. First, land use and transportation integration is largely regional in nature, thus requiring a broad perspective and context. An existing agency like the Sarasota/Manatee MPO, along with a potential regional transit authority, certainly would have the responsibility for creating a regional vision for land use and transportation, and working with the counties and municipalities to make it a reality. Second, based on the experience of other regions, having an outside, regional perspective may actually help local government partners focus on integrating land use and transportation policies. A regional transit authority may also be in better posture to help implement transit services that are made to enhance land use policies/decisions, because of its financial standing. Other regional systems have been successful because they are less restrained in doing joint projects with private enterprise. Third, the issue is fundamentally about money, not coordination and consistency. It is much easier to develop interlocal agreements and joint development review procedures between agencies than it is to fund public transportation operations to provide a level of service consistent with land use patterns and redevelopment initiatives. Finally, there is no clear evidence that any one governance structure results in better land use and transportation decision-making. In fact, having a regional authority, such as Lynx in Orlando, HARTline in Hillsborough County or the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, means that transit is “at the table” as a partner when decisions are made, which is not necessarily the case when transit is operating as a department or division within a large local government bureaucracy.

Finally, there is a significant public relations and marketing element to the creation of a regional transit authority or entity. There is a lot of uncertainty and hesitation associated with creating another level of government, particularly if it involves taxing authority and threatens a substantial departure from the status quo. The MPO and its members should not underestimate the public relations and marketing campaign needed to successfully create an independent authority for transit. A related potential serious pitfall to avoid is the failure to identify service enhancements tied to creation of an independent authority. In places such as South Florida where transit governance has changed, there has been a major initiative to upgrade service in substantial ways to demonstrate return on investment to the general public (and patrons). Other communities have used property tax rebates as incentives to taxpayers for approval of a new assessment.

Given those key issues and observations, it is reasonable to expect only very limited cost savings, if any, to the taxpayer from consolidation of the Manatee and Sarasota transit agencies into a single entity. While there may be more flexibility created within the county budgets if a dedicated revenue source for transit is created, this is mainly a shift in costs and funding from one entity to another. Therefore, the reasons to create such a structure should stem primarily from a genuine desire to deliver improved service, consistent with the adopted PTSA, and the commitment to an



expanded regional network of routes that will result in a greater share of the traveling public using the system.

## KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

While a regional authority would raise the visibility of public transportation service in the two counties and provide for more regional delivery of service, it would entail a major public awareness campaign and change the unique identities of the respective systems currently in operation.

In building consensus for an RTA, the MPO's Public Transportation Task Force should consider the following issues:

- The conditions that each municipality would place on supporting an RTA;
- Public involvement regarding the creation of the RTA;
- Consensus building between affected municipalities regarding equitable funding participation and service levels; and
- Exploring the right mix of funding options (e.g., special assessment, member fees, sales or gas tax, etc.) to ensure a consistent, dedicated revenue source to ensure adequate service levels, operating expense and maintenance.

The primary advantages of creating a regional transit authority pertain to the ability to create an organization with representation and service that is multi-jurisdictional and provides for a long-term stable funding source for future service expansion that achieves the goals of the PTSA. With greater visibility, there is likely to be an additional benefit of greater public accountability of the transit system. However, as mentioned above, the creation of a regional authority may mean less direct accountability and authority for all members of the Board of County Commissioners over a particular local service issue. In addition, primary disadvantages of an independent authority include the possibility of municipalities opting out of an authority and the requirement of a referendum in order to establish dedicated funding from local taxes. If jurisdictions opt out of an authority, there is an immediate complication for the provision of services within that jurisdiction and the needs of an overall regional transit network.

The following section presents a summary of observations related to potential cost savings associated with transit consolidation by topic.



## **TRANSIT OPERATIONS**

### **SERVICE PROVISION (DRIVERS)**

- With virtually no overlap in existing service, there would not appear to be any obvious savings from a merger in terms of existing transit services.
- A regional authority with a unified operation would provide one means of providing through service between the counties, but not the only means.

### **DISPATCH**

- If service were to be unified into one garage, there could be some savings in terms of dispatching, but this would need to be weighed against the likely increase in deadhead costs (the time it takes for a bus to travel from the garage to the beginning or ending of its route in another county).

### **ROAD SUPERVISION**

- There are economies of scale possible here, but it depends on how much road supervision is provided now. Often, systems of this size provide very little road supervision. A larger system could provide the justification for more supervision and this could result in a more reliable service.

### **PARATRANSIT (INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES)**

- ADA costs could increase if longer through routes are provided, but this could be offset if the combined system would result in the need for fewer peak vehicles. This would require a more detailed analysis to determine exactly how these costs and activities may be affected.
- Dispatching and order-taking for paratransit services is an area where cost savings are likely.
- There are several options for how to handle the TD situation and reconcile differences in the two programs. This could include someone other than the transit system being the TD coordinator.

### **VEHICLE MAINTENANCE**

- Sarasota is in control of its own fleet maintenance; Manatee is not. Presumably, consolidation would equalize how maintenance is handled and provide more responsive maintenance and operations in both counties.



- Ratio of vehicles to mechanics is a basic measure of maintenance efficiency. Assuming that both systems are fairly equal in terms of their efficiency (this is likely given that they have the same type of vehicle and neither has a particularly old fleet), there would only be marginal economies of scale to be achieved through a merger.
- A key consideration would be whether it would make sense to consolidate operations into one garage. Overhead costs (including facility costs and things like parts inventories) and maintenance management/supervision costs could be reduced. As noted above, these savings would need to be weighed against increased deadhead costs.
- Small to medium systems usually only do preventive maintenance and light repairs in-house, while outsourcing major repairs and unit rebuilds (engines, transmissions, etc.) Impacts of consolidation depend on current practices.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **MARKETING**

- Economies of scale could be expected here. A larger system could justify a larger unified marketing budget that could get “more bang for the buck.” It is highly unlikely that there would be a reduction in marketing costs, but that those marketing efforts would be more efficient.
- A major consideration is that creation of new transit agency for the two counties would take a tremendous initial marketing effort compared with existing efforts. It does not make much strategic sense to unveil a new regional system without service improvements. The political leadership in the community will need to explain the purpose of the consolidation to the public and justify it based on such factors as improvements in service and/or cost efficiency. Furthermore, given the importance of having a dedicated funding source, it is possible the initial marketing effort will be needed to obtain voter approval of transit consolidation if it involves creating a special district.
- A unified web site, one process for producing timetables and promotional materials would be ultimately more efficient and cost effective, but initial marketing efforts would be more expensive.

### **FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING**

- Having a single system would probably provide a cost saving here, but impact on the counties would need to be figured in. This relates to the situation where a county employee might split his or her time on transit and non-transit work.



- Grant work would also come under this area and would represent an area with some economy of scale if there were only one system.
- The Sarasota/Bradenton Urban Area is already one entity as far as the federal process is concerned. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) gives one allocation for the area, which is divided locally between the two counties. The FTA would likely appreciate consolidating the National Transit Database reports into one, and the FDOT would favor consolidation of the two Transit Development Plans and Block Grants.

### ***PERSONNEL AND HIRING***

- Perhaps the biggest issue is the ability to hire drivers and staff without dealing with countywide personnel directives, such as hiring freezes. There have been several instances in Florida and elsewhere in the country where a grant was approved, but the system could not hire drivers to perform the service, or even hire a contractor, because of countywide budget decisions. This can be very limiting in systems that are in an expansion mode.

### ***PLANNING***

- Another area that would provide some opportunity for savings if the transit service planning for both counties were combined.

### ***SUMMARY OF CONSOLIDATION ISSUES AND OPTIONS***

Based on the above discussion, Table 1, Transit Issues and Options, presents options for consideration by the MPO and its partners in the potential formation of a regional transit entity. The table lists issues that need to be addressed in further detail if a particular course of action is chosen.



Table 1: Transit Issues and Options

OPTION	ISSUES
<p>1. Regional Authority covering all of both counties.</p>	<p>The Sarasota/Bradenton Urban Area is already one entity as far as the federal process is concerned. FTA gives one allocation for the area, which is divided locally. The FTA would appreciate consolidating the National Transit Database reports into one, and FDOT would not have a problem with consolidation of the Transit Development Plans and the Block Grants.</p> <p>A thorough cost and revenue audit is needed to determine ultimate fiscal impacts.</p> <p>Revenue potential of new taxes versus potential loss of existing county funding. Will it be equitable? Will it cover potential service expansion, such as is being discussed on Longboat Key and along US 41? Will it enable system growth to achieve PTSA objectives?</p> <p>Detailed administrative review needed to determine cost saving potential from combining administrative functions. Must be weighed against impacts on counties where there are currently shared responsibilities (someone splitting time between transit and non-transit functions).</p> <p>If taxes are levied over entire region, what service expectations will there be in the lower density areas, and what will be the cost of such service?</p> <p>Wage and salary differentials need to be accounted for.</p> <p>Determination of potential 13-C implications (federal laws relating to collective bargaining among union and non-union workers).</p>



OPTION	ISSUES
	<p>Maintenance facility. The fact that Manatee’s transit maintenance is performed in a county public works facility needs to be accounted for. Can the authority lease space; will a new facility be needed; or can maintenance be consolidated in SCAT facility?</p> <p>How much room for expansion is there? If a new facility is called for, a location study will be needed.</p> <p>Is there potential for cost saving from combining of routes? Unlikely to save much, if any.</p> <p>Vehicle fleets appear to be compatible. Will there be any constraints on transferring title to new entity?</p> <p>Fare structure differential would need to be addressed.</p> <p>ADA policies would need to be made consistent.</p> <p>What would the impact be on the TD program? Would the authority take over this responsibility and what changes would be needed as a result of current differences in approach?</p>
<p>2. Regional Authority covering the urbanized portions of both counties.</p> <p>The boundaries could be determined by the enabling legislation or individual municipalities could be given the option of joining. A combination of the two is also possible.</p>	<p>The issues are primarily the same as in the above scenario with certain differences:</p> <p>The tax base would be different, but the issue of service expectations in the lower density areas would not be as significant.</p> <p>Provision of TD service and other human services transportation in non-authority areas would need to be addressed.</p>



OPTION	ISSUES
<p>3. Exercise of existing authority powers by SCAT with status quo in Manatee.</p>	<p>Need to weigh potential revenue from taxing authority versus potential loss of county funding.</p> <p>Unlikely to be major administrative, maintenance, or operational issues.</p> <p>If additional revenue is raised and service is expanded, it appears that there is adequate capacity at the maintenance facility.</p> <p>Through service between the two counties would need to be accomplished through an inter-local agreement. SCAT could expand service into Manatee under such an agreement or there could be a joint operating agreement. SCAT and Manatee could operate an individual route jointly. Fare differential and ADA impacts would need to be addressed.</p>
<p>4. Separate authority in each county.</p>	<p>This would result in each county having taxing authority for transit.</p> <p>Each authority could levy a different amount to reflect their priorities – one might fund only a slight expansion while the other might be more aggressive.</p> <p>Potential loss of county funding would need to be considered.</p> <p>No major administrative issues, depending upon the nature of the authorities created.</p> <p>Through service between the two counties would need to be accomplished through an inter-local agreement. SCAT could expand service into Manatee under such an agreement or there could be a joint operating agreement. SCAT and the Manatee authority could jointly</p>



OPTION	ISSUES
	operate an individual route. Fare differential and ADA impacts would need to be addressed.
<p>5. Special purpose authority with responsibility for planning and funding with operational authority remaining with existing entities. Geographic area could include all of both counties or just the urbanized areas.</p>	<p>This would be a mini version of the Chicago RTA or the new regional authority they are trying to create in Detroit.</p> <p>Authority would have no operational or maintenance responsibilities.</p> <p>Setting priorities for allocation of funds can be a challenge. If one special purpose authority collects revenues and allocates it to providers within each county, how are priorities established?</p> <p>Various options exist:</p> <p>Authority could levy taxes or simply be a conduit for state and federal funding with local funding responsibility remaining with counties.</p> <p>If this entity has taxing authority, then the issue of the loss of county funds would need to be addressed.</p> <p>Authority would determine service levels and contract with SCAT and Manatee for the provision of those services.</p> <p>13-C and certain administrative issues could be avoided.</p> <p>Tax rates and service levels could differ by county.</p> <p>Authority could contract for through or coordinated services between the two counties.</p>



OPTION	ISSUES
<p>6. Status quo for both counties.</p>	<p>No basic organizational or administrative changes.</p> <p>Desire for improved service coordination and through service can be achieved even without a major change in governance.</p> <p>Manatee’s schedules will eventually need to be reassessed. The lack of recovery time will eventually lead to less reliable service and increased costs even with no service expansion as congestion worsens. A service coordination initiative would provide a good context within which to accomplish this.</p> <p>Through service on US 41 or other corridors could be accomplished via an inter-local agreement. Likewise for minor service extensions across the county line.</p> <p>One county or the other could be responsible for the service or there could be a joint operation – either route swapping or multiple carriers operating an individual route.</p> <p>Fare policies and ADA impacts need to be assessed.</p> <p>13-C should not be an issue under this scenario, but a detailed determination needs to be made. Likewise, a determination needs to be made as to whether mixing union and non-union operated service will cause any friction.</p>



## **GOVERNANCE OPTIONS AND PROCEDURES**

Building upon the information presented in Table 1, this section examines the options for creation of a regional public transportation entity, and the process, advantages, and disadvantages associated with each. Specifically, this section presents the following information:

- Overview of transit governance options in Florida;
- Procedural steps for creating a transit entity with examples; and
- Description of Manatee and Sarasota Counties' transit service goals.

The following paragraphs describe in more detail the potential institutional arrangements for transit governance, with Florida case study examples. Public transportation entities typically operate in Florida through one of four main governance structures. These structures are described below. Each structure has its own set of advantages and disadvantages, which are outlined in Table 2, located at the end of this report. Appendix A of this report also provides a summary of transit statistics and the governance structure for various systems in Florida.

## **GOVERNMENT**

In the government model, the transit system operates as a department or division within a local government entity, such as a county, city, or MPO. Actual management and operations responsibilities are handled directly by County staff and/or contracted out to a private firm. Smaller counties with limited in-house staff resources typically contract out transit operations. Larger counties under this structure tend to retain most or all transit service duties, or contract with a private, for-profit management company. Sarasota and Manatee Counties each have their own transit entity on the county level. MCAT is a unit of county government, whereas SCAT has created its own transportation authority, which operates from the County's Public Works department. One option for maintaining the County governance structure is to establish an MSTU, described below.

### ***MUNICIPAL SERVICES TAXING UNIT (MSTU)***

One tool for government funding is a Municipal Services Taxing Unit. A MSTU is a specific taxing unit established and adopted through a city or county ordinance which derives a specific benefit, for which a levy is imposed to defray part or all of the cost of providing that benefit. Example applications include streetlights, streetscape projects and other public works projects that benefit a relatively narrow constituency. The use of MSTU for transit is a relatively rare phenomenon, but may be used to define an area with a relatively higher level of service, such as a circulator route in a



campus or regional activity center setting. An advantage of an MSTU is that the full cost of the service can be amortized over time and levied in a relatively small amount on the property taxes of only those affected for a period of years. A MSTU does not need to follow municipal boundaries, and is comparable to a “user fee.”

An MSTU addresses funding for transit but ultimately not governance. An MSTU can be effectuated through interlocal agreement between the county and its municipalities; however, the County is ultimately responsible for administering the MSTU funds. An MSTU has the same disadvantages as creation of an authority because the affected municipalities still must agree to the millage assessment and no local government can exceed the 10-millage maximum established by state law. Therefore, in some cases there can be municipalities that would like to participate in the MSTU but cannot because the maximum millage rate would be exceeded.

The statutory authority for the creation of an MSTU is provided in Ch. 125.01(q) of the Florida Statutes. The Chapter authorizes counties to establish municipal service taxing or benefit units for any part or all of the unincorporated area of the county. Approval of an MSTU is subject to the consent by ordinance of the governing body of the affected municipality. Lee County and LeeTran are currently considering a dedicated MSTU, which is described below.

### **LeeTran**

LeeTran, currently operated by Lee County, is considering a series of long-term governance structures, including the creation of an authority and the creation of a MSTU that would be assessed to property owners in urbanized areas to support transit services within those communities. LeeTran is currently consulting with the County and municipalities in the region regarding the assessment of an MSTU. While this measure is an interim step in securing additional, dedicated funding for transit, it still does not address the ownership of transit among all jurisdictions in the region. Therefore, both LeeTran and Lee County have to be open to negotiating the specific needs of municipalities in order to build consensus for a dedicated MSTU.

Lee County government has a Municipal Services Taxing/Benefit Unit (MSTBU) Office within the Division of Public Resources. This program assists citizens in the unincorporated areas of Lee County to organize and create special improvement units for the purpose of obtaining specific services, which are beyond the core level of services, as provided by the County. Services include such capital projects as road paving and drainage, canal/channel dredging, and building sidewalks, as well as operations and maintenance projects such as streetlights, landscaping, security patrols, and beautification, etc. Property owners contribute to their special improvement unit annually either on their tax bill or through a special billing from the MSTBU office.



## SPECIAL DISTRICT

A Special District is a unit of special purpose government, and typically has its own taxing authority as well as the power to manage, own, operate, construct, and finance basic capital infrastructure, facilities, and services. The Florida Statutes provide for the establishment of a Special District with the authority to bond and levy taxes. Special districts are common in Florida and provide specialized services that may include soil and water, sewer, housing, community redevelopment, or fire protection. There are several transportation-related special districts, including some that provide and fund public transit systems.

In Florida, Special Districts are created by a special act, local ordinance, or a legislative act, and may encompass more than one county. To gain state recognition, a Special District must report to the Florida Department of Community Affairs with the following information:

- Creation document and map (e.g., resolution);
- Designated registered agent and office;
- Regular public meeting schedule;
- Annual budget, financial, and financial audit report, and
- Bond and public facilities reports.

Special districts are classified as “dependent” or “independent.” A dependent special district has one or more of the following characteristics:

- The governing body is identical to the governing body of a single municipality or county;
- The governing body is appointed by the governing body of a single municipality or county;
- The governing body members are subject to removal at will by the single municipality of county;
- The budget requires approval by the single municipality or county, and
- The budget can be vetoed by the municipality or county.

A special district is independent if it meets none of the above criteria or if it encompasses more than one county. In the case of Sarasota and Manatee Counties, a special district would have to be independent.



Sarasota and Manatee Counties currently have several of their own special districts. Among Manatee County's special districts are parks and recreation improvement, community fire control and rescue, community development and redevelopment, downtown development, housing, library, and mosquito control. Similarly, Sarasota County special districts include community development and redevelopment, solid waste, parks and recreation, housing, library, and mosquito control. Sarasota and Manatee Counties share one special district, the Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority, which operates the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. The Authority was initially created in 1941 and has continuously evolved as an organization. In 2000, the voters of Sarasota and Manatee Counties approved legislation that changed the Airport Authority selection process from public election of an eight-member commission to a six-member commission appointed by the Governor.

The following paragraphs describe examples of transit agencies created through a special district.

### **Lakeland Area Mass Transit District**

The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District was created through a Polk County Ordinance and is operated as a special district with the power to administer an ad valorem tax. The Polk County Public Transportation System Analysis, which was prepared in 2003, recommended that Polk County begin to move toward establishing a countywide Regional Transportation Authority by 2008, citing the following opportunities:

- Reduced costs due to reduction in duplicative services (e.g., administrative, maintenance, etc.);
- Opportunity to expand to other parts of the county that are currently not served by transit;
- A single board of directors will result in a streamlined decision-making process;
- Local governments and funding partners will have an expanded opportunity for direct representation; and
- Enhanced potential for a long-term and stable funding source to support countywide or regional transit service with designation of a special tax district.

### **Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)**

PSTA is an independent transit agency formed in 1984 from the merger of two systems serving the Cities of St. Petersburg and Clearwater. In addition to passenger fares, funding is through federal, state, and local sources, including a dedicated ad valorem tax of up to .75 mills. Governed by an 11 member Board of Directors, PSTA serves most of the unincorporated area and 19 of the county's 24 municipalities. In addition, service on the Suncoast Beach Trolley is provided under



contract to the City of St. Pete Beach and Treasure Island. PSTA is responsible primarily for fixed route bus service, complementary ADA service, and commuter (express) bus service. There is currently discussion of expanding PSTA as a countywide special district and giving it additional authority to build and operate a rail system.

### **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES (RTA)**

There are several options for creating special districts with more specific powers and authorities. As described above in *Special Districts*, regional transportation authorities can also be dependent or independent. A dependent authority has the same powers as an independent authority, except its board and budget are governed by a single local government (city, county or state). That option is not applicable to the issue of regional transit consolidation in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. However, an independent authority can be created in one of two ways: through state enabling legislation or through local government action; both operate as their own public entity, potentially having taxing and bonding authority.

The fundamental difference between the two types of independent authorities is in the manner by which they are created. Municipalities may create authorities at the local level (Chapter 163, F.S.), whereas authorities created at the state level require a legislative amendment to Chapter 343 of the Florida Statutes. The following paragraphs describe the procedures, and advantages and disadvantages of these two options.

#### **STATE-CREATED REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

Under this system, the transit system is operated by an independent agency with its own Board of Directors. Such an authority operates within a single county with several municipalities or within multiple counties. It typically operates with both a dedicated funding source (such as a portion of the local sales tax) as well as voluntary funding and representation from the local governments and municipalities within its jurisdiction (e.g., Hillsborough Area Regional Transit; Sarasota County Area Transit).

Transit systems work best when their governance structure and subsequent funding structure are customized to fit the needs and politics of the municipalities participating in the system. For example, if the system is designed to levy a property tax, the tax should be substantial enough to cover the costs. If the tax is too low, it may be difficult to raise it depending on the local politics. When the governance structure for each transportation entity in Florida was established, the powers and abilities of each were created differently. For example, some transportation entities have the power to levy a tax, while others do not. Similarly, some entities may issue bonds, while others do not. Therefore, each governance structure, while the same in form and function, each has its own unique internal differences as well.

An amendment to Chapter 343 of the Florida Statutes is needed to create an independent authority. Should an independent authority choose to operate as a special tax district and levy an ad valorem



tax, a majority approval of the county commission or equivalent body, and a majority referendum of the affected area, is necessary.

Florida examples of independent authorities include South Florida RTA – formerly Tri-Rail - (Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties) and Lynx (Orange, Seminole, and Osceola Counties). Neither Authority has a dedicated funding source of its own (e.g., ad valorem or gas tax). These RTAs are described below. Table 3, located at the end of this report, supplements this section and contains a list of several public transportation providers in Florida, and their corresponding statutory authority and description.

### **Central Florida RTA (Lynx)**

Lynx was created in the early 1990s with the merger of two existing transit entities – Tri-County Transit and the Commuter Rail Authority. The two entities merged and formed an independent RTA for the purposes of rail planning. Since 1972, all three counties have worked together to provide regional public transit. Funding for Lynx is provided through federal, state, and local sources, but through annual budget allocations from its funding local members to achieve local match requirements for state and federal funds. Lynx uses a formula that it applies to each member county, and must renew their budget contribution each year. The Lynx board is comprised of elected officials from the three counties and several of the largest municipalities (e.g., Orlando), independent of the MPO and other organizations.

### **South Florida RTA**

In addition to its bond authority, each county served by Tri-Rail must dedicate \$2.67 million to Tri-Rail annually. This municipal level funding may come from each county's share of the ninth-cent fuel tax, the local option fuel tax, or any other source of local gas taxes or other non-federal funds available to the counties. The existing Tri-Rail, however, is evolving into a new, larger entity. In June 2003, the Governor signed into law legislation creating the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority. With the creation of this new Authority, South Florida hopes to move towards a regional multi-modal transportation system with the goal of alleviating road congestion and providing residents and visitors with the ability to move easily throughout Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. This initiative was spearheaded by South Florida business leaders, and brings together all transit authorities and agencies that are within a three-MPO jurisdiction. This new RTA does not have any taxing authority.

### **LOCALLY-CREATED REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes outlines the procedures for two or more contiguous counties, municipalities, other political subdivisions, or combinations thereof to establish a RTA. Under Chapter 163, municipalities are empowered to convene a charter committee to develop a charter under which a new RTA may be created and operated.



The charter committee should consist of appointees of the relevant municipalities based on population (e.g., county, city, town, etc.). In the case of Sarasota and Manatee Counties, each County should appoint one representative for the first 100,000 in population, minus the population of any participating municipality. The committee would then prepare the RTA charter, containing the following elements:

- The formula for representation and voting;
- Limitations on the RTA powers;
- Duration of the authority and the method by which it may be terminated or withdrawn from by any participating member;
- The manner by which members will provide financial support and formulas for allocating capital and costs; budgeting procedures, and
- Any other matters agreed on by the committee.

The completed charter and all subsequent amendments must then be filed with the Department of State, at which time the RTA is to be activated and legally constituted. The Governor should be notified when this action is taken, and has 20 days to appoint two members to the RTA. Within 25 days of filing the charter, each municipality shall appoint its director or directors.

Subsequent to the RTA activation, contiguous counties or municipalities may become members with the same benefits as initial members upon approval of a majority vote. After an RTA has been in place for one year, municipalities with a population of less than 50,000 may be admitted as fully participating members with three-fourths vote of the Board of Directors.

Should an RTA choose to operate as a special tax district and levy an ad valorem tax, a majority approval of the county commission or equivalent body, and a majority referendum of the affected area, is necessary.

In summary, the procedure to establish a RTA is as follows:

Step #1: Agree to establish a Charter Committee;

Step #2: Appoint Committee members, based on population formula;

Step #3: Prepare RTA charter, including all required elements outlined in Ch. 163, Section 567;

Step #4: Submit charter to the Department of State;

Step #5: Notify Governor of RTA establishment; and



Step #6: Create Board of Directors, including two Governor appointees.

### **Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART)**

HART is an example of an RTA designated pursuant to Chapter 163. It services all of unincorporated Hillsborough County, as well as the cities of Tampa and Temple Terrace. An 11-member Board of Directors governs HART; five members are appointed by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, three by the City of Tampa, one by the City of Temple Terrace, and two by the Governor. HART has the powers to issue bonds and levy an ad valorem tax.

### **TRANSIT SERVICE GOALS IN SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTIES**

As described in the introduction to this report, the MPO has established a long-range vision for improving public transportation in Sarasota and Manatee Counties through the Public Transportation System Analysis. Over the years, both counties have addressed transit in different ways, including a time some 20 years ago when there was one privately operated transit provider serving both counties. Since that time, both systems have expanded and reduced service, with little or no consistent program or mission. The PTSA was intended to provide a strong regional context and perspective for transit service to meet the area's growing needs into the future. At the current time, the two systems appear to be heading in different directions, with Manatee more focused on service expansion and growth, and Sarasota in a retraction mode due to funding constraints and rising operating costs.

What follows is a brief summary of the current goals that guide the delivery of transit service in the region.

### **TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

As described in the section below, both Sarasota and Manatee Counties' Transit Development Plans emphasize goals of accessible and efficient public transportation.

#### **SARASOTA COUNTY**

Sarasota County outlined several goals and objectives through its 2003-2007 Transit Development Plan (TDP). The TDP highlighted the following goals and objectives for the County's transit system:

- Accessible and appropriate public transportation
- Serve transit dependent residents as the highest priority;



- Support economic development, and
- Meet the County's neighborhood initiative goals.
- Effective and efficient transit service
- Provide reliable, convenient, and safe transit service, and
- Ensure financially feasible transit service.

### **MANATEE COUNTY**

Manatee County's Transit Development Plan also identified goals for its transit system in its Manatee County Area Transit TDP 1999-2003. The goals are as follows:

- Develop an effective public transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people throughout, internal and external to Manatee County;
- Provide new and maximize the use of existing quality passenger amenities to enhance bus service and attract discretionary riders;
- Coordinate the transit system and its improvements with transportation planning efforts of all government entities;
- Provide a transit system that is, to the extent possible, financially feasible by securing adequate funding, and
- Establish a proactive public involvement process.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS (PTSA)**

Sarasota and Manatee Counties each operate individual transit systems at the County level. Currently, Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) and Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) operate bus service that offers connection points at two locations: 1) Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport and 2) the Goodwill on 15th Street (old U.S. 301) in south Manatee County near the Airport. Despite the common location, the schedules are not coordinated, and passengers sometime must wait up to one hour for transfers. Both counties recognize the need for better and more frequent connectivity between the two systems. The MPO's PTSA Report findings reveal that there are many issues to address between the regional transportation needs of both counties. The PTSA recommends the eventual establishment of an inter-county authority as a long-term goal.



In the interim, the PTSA recommends several intermediate steps that both counties can accomplish leading up to the establishment of an inter-county entity:

1. Improve connectivity between the two systems;
2. Develop an inter-local agreement that establishes responsibility for the implementation of continuous service within the U.S. 41 corridor between Sarasota and Bradenton;
3. Develop an inter-local agreement that would cover vehicle procurement, facilities development, maintenance, operations and sources and uses of funds needed for regional service; and
4. Develop the governance framework by which the inter-county authority would operate.

It is common for counties in Florida to enter into interlocal agreements with other counties, municipalities, or government entities (e.g., school board, cities) to provide services. Sarasota and Manatee County currently have a joint airport authority, the Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority, which was established by an interlocal agreement.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Establishing a special district for public transportation, in particular the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) for Sarasota and Manatee Counties, is a logical next step toward improved regional transit coordination. Furthermore, it can provide the principal means to achieve the long-range plan for transit service improvements, as articulated through the Public Transportation System Analysis, adopted unanimously by the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization in 2002. The chief value of an RTA is its ability to provide a stable funding source, fiscal independence, increased visibility and a consistent policy direction for delivery of public transportation services.

An RTA is not required for improved regional coordination, which can occur through interlocal agreement and basic service coordination. In fact, such efforts are already occurring for improved transit between the two counties now. Its value is principally in its ability to raise sufficient, recurring revenues to undertake ambitious service expansion plans, and thus afford both counties the flexibility of using current general revenue for other purposes (or to return it to taxpayers, if desired).

If an RTA is created for the two counties and the correct financing mechanisms are in place, efficiencies in the overall system can be found and transit service can be well-organized, effectively marketed, and seamlessly serve the two counties and their member municipalities, consistent with TDP goals and the PTSA report findings. The lack of service overlap limits the potential money to



be saved from consolidation, but an authority independent of general county government would afford greater fiscal flexibility and autonomy to pursue transit service goals.

The following steps should be considered in proceeding with the establishment of an RTA for Sarasota and Manatee Counties:

1. Address and build consensus on the following issues:
  - The conditions that each municipality would place on supporting an RTA;
  - The approach to public involvement regarding the creation of the RTA;
  - Need for consensus between affected municipalities regarding funding participation and service levels; and
  - The appropriate mix of funding options (e.g., MSTU, special assessment, member fees, etc.) to ensure a consistent, dedicated revenue source to help build an understanding of the long-term implications for each mix.
2. Develop a conceptual service and marketing plan for outreach to municipalities, voters, etc.
3. Formulate a governance plan for voting and funding.
4. Build support through community awareness and public involvement:
  - Build consensus among local elected officials through a series of forums; and
  - Assess level of support in the community.
5. Address all pending administrative issues, including union concurrence; legal due diligence for preferred framework; agreement on capital facilities/maintenance responsibilities; marketing game plan; fare structure; and ADA and TD program administration.
6. Obtain necessary approvals from municipalities and/or voters, and the state legislature.
7. Implement the marketing plan and roll out the new service in annual phases.

In summary, while it is reasonable to expect only limited cost savings from consolidation of Manatee and Sarasota transit operations into a single entity, there are financial incentives if consolidation is done right. If the objective is to achieve the vision of improved local and regional transit service outlined in the adopted Public Transportation System Analysis (PTSA), the formation of a Regional Transit Authority would help establish a dedicated local revenue source necessary to fund system improvements. Creating a local dedicated revenue source (whether



through such mechanisms as a sales, ad valorem or gas tax) would provide greater financial flexibility on the part of both Manatee and Sarasota County, more autonomy for the transit operator(s), and help leverage other sources of revenue to grow the funding pie.

Given the ebb and flow of transit service in the two counties, in which over the last two decades there has not been a sustained effort to promote and enhance transit services on a system-wide basis, it is unlikely the MPO and its partners can achieve the stated objectives of the PTSA without a stable revenue source and fiscal independence a transit authority would afford. Assuming that the goal is to implement a greater level of transit service to improve regional and local mobility given road building constraints, establishing a special district for public transportation makes financial sense if it includes the funding mechanism.

Creation of an independent transit authority with a consistent, dedicated funding source has the benefit of streamlining transit operations, increasing system visibility and flexibility, and expanding service consistent with overall mobility, livability and land use goals. With a dedicated transit funding source in place, both counties would be able to reallocate (or return) general revenue funds currently used for transit operations, thus saving money at the county level. However, there will not be a significant overall cost savings, per se, by creating a regional transit authority. Rather, because of a lack of service overlap, the costs for operating transit would be shifted from the two counties to a special authority. Any marginal cost savings realized through administration and maintenance consolidation will likely be offset by the need for marketing and promoting the system, and enhancing transit service. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the primary advantage of creating a regional transit authority is to improve service and make transit more of a solution to regional mobility needs.

Table 2: Advantages/Disadvantages of Transit Governance Structure

TRANSIT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	EXAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards elected by citizens</li> <li>Access to larger taxing and revenue sources</li> <li>Economies of scale with administrative and maintenance functions</li> <li>Can be more responsive to public demand in the budgeting process</li> <li>Ability to tailor service goals to city/county objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can get lost in County government and may not be a priority</li> <li>Must compete for resources</li> <li>Funding not necessarily dedicated or stable</li> <li>Municipalities may choose to not participate in funding</li> <li>Potential lack of visibility for marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee Tran, MCAT</li> </ul>



**Table 2: Advantages/Disadvantages of Transit Governance Structure**

<b>TRANSIT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit is the single focus</li> <li>Manage transit services across multiple jurisdictions</li> <li>May be an independent taxing authority with stable local funding source</li> <li>Special authorities are viewed as non-politically freestanding entities in the sense that they are not usually targets of continuous, intense political controversy</li> <li>They have the potential of greater administrative flexibility in hiring, firing and taxing</li> <li>Greater ability to promote and market transit</li> <li>Clear budgetary lines of control/authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires state enabling legislation</li> <li>Requires referendum</li> <li>Municipalities may choose to not participate in authority</li> <li>Many authorities are required to find their own funding sources and must compete with general-purpose governments for the same tax sources. Ironically, this can cause an authority to be more dependent on their creating government(s)</li> <li>Levying a dedicated tax source in a multiple county setting may be difficult because each county has its own characteristics, philosophies, and tax structures.</li> <li>May lose some local control with gubernatorial appointees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lynx, South Florida RTA, Tampa Bay Commuter Rail Authority</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Transportation Authority (Ch. 163, F.S.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same as above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited flexibility as process defined in Florida Statutes</li> <li>Municipalities may choose not to participate in authority</li> <li>Levying a dedicated tax source in a multiple county setting may be difficult because each county has its own characteristics, philosophies, and tax structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HART, SCAT</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special District (Ch. 125, F.S.)</li> <li>(Note: a two-county special district must be an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special districts focus costs only on those benefiting from the special district's service.</li> <li>They operate to serve a special public purpose.</li> <li>They serve a specific function by providing essential services to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited flexibility as process defined in Florida Statutes</li> <li>Municipalities may choose not to participate in authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority; Lakeland Area Mass Transit District</li> </ul>



**Table 2: Advantages/Disadvantages of Transit Governance Structure**

TRANSIT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	EXAMPLES
independent special district)	<p>residents and property, and generate revenue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They can manage, own, operate, construct, and finance basic capital infrastructure, facilities, and services.</li> <li>• May have appointed or elected boards.</li> </ul>		

Source: Lee Tran and the Florida Special District Handbook

**Table 3: Public Transportation Providers in Florida**

ORGANIZATION	JURISDICTION	CREATION DOCUMENT	STATUTORY AUTHORITY	STATUTORY DESCRIPTION	BOND AUTHORITY?	PRIMARY LOCAL REVENUE SOURCE
<b>Central Florida RTA (LYNX)</b>	Orange, Osceola, Seminole	Ch. 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 98, 99, 385, 2000-266, L.O.F. (1989)	Ch. 343, Part II, F.S.	Independent RTA	Yes	Fees
<b>East Volusia Transportation District</b>	Volusia	Co. Ord. #73-14 (1973)	s. 189.4041, F.S.	Special District - Dependent	Yes	Ad Valorem
<b>Hillsborough County Public Transportation Commission</b>	Hillsborough	Ch. 2001-299, L.O.F. (1983)	s. 189.404, F.S.	Special District	No	Fees
<b>Hillsborough Transit Authority</b>	Hillsborough	County Resolution (2/29/80)	s.163.565, F.S.	Interlocal Agreement	Yes	Ad Valorem
<b>Lakeland Area Mass Transit District</b>	Polk	Co. Ord. #80-13	S. 125.01 (5), F.S.	Special District	Yes	Ad Valorem
<b>Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority</b>	Pinellas	Ch. 70-907; 94-433, L.O.F. (1970)	s. 125.01 (5), F.S.	Special District	No	Ad Valorem



<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>CREATION DOCUMENT</b>	<b>STATUTORY AUTHORITY</b>	<b>STATUTORY DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BOND AUTHORITY?</b>	<b>PRIMARY LOCAL REVENUE SOURCE</b>
<b>South Florida RTA (formerly Tri-Rail)</b>	Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach	s. 343.51, F.S.; Ch. 2003-159, L.O.F.	Ch. 343, F.S.	Independent RTA	Yes	Fees
<b>Tampa Bay Commuter Rail Authority</b>	Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk	Ch. 343, Part III, F.S. (1990)	Ch. 343, F.S.	Independent RTA	Yes	Assessments



## APPENDIX A

Appendix A - Organizational Structure of Florida Transit Agencies

Transit Agency	Governance Structure	Line of Authority	Service Area Pop.*	Annual Operating Costs for Fixed Routes*	Bus Fleet Size*	# Fixed Routes**	Passengers/ Revenue Mile*	Passengers/ Revenue Hour*	Primary local revenue source
Central Florida RTA (LYNX)	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Executive Director reports to board	1,434,033	\$58,830,333	236	64	1.64	22.93	Participating municipalities and three counties
Hillsborough County Area Regional Transit Authority	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Executive Director reports to board	578,252	\$29,916,472	153	49	1.42	17.66	Ad valorem
Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (Citrus Connection)	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Board consists of 3 members from the City Commission and 2 from County BCC	110,000	\$3,278,235	24	13	1.14	18.61	Ad valorem
Panama City (Bay Town Trolley)	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Executive Director reports to board	132,419	\$262,428	6	6	0.44	7.67	Purchase of Service Contracts
Jacksonville Transportation Authority	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Executive Director reports to board	882,295	\$35,070,071	174	44	1.00	15.89	Ad valorem
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)	Independent agency with appointed board of directors	Executive Director reports to elected board	862,076	\$29,897,671	163	43	1.00	14.68	Ad valorem
Gainesville Regional Transit System	Unit of Municipal Government	Public Works/ City Manager	140,000	\$9,462,631	72	27	3.35	38.02	University of Florida, Local Gas Tax
SunTran (Ocala)	Unit of Municipal Government	Director reports to Transportation Planning Organization board	67,908	\$862,355	9	6	0.10	2.06	City and County - General Revenue (60 and 40 percent respectively)
TALTRAN (Tallahassee)	Unit of Municipal Government	Reports to Assistant City Manager	156,703	\$8,759,320	49	34	2.44	28.71	City -General Revenue
Brevard County Transit (Space Coast Area Transit)	Unit of County Government	Director Reports to the Assistant County Manager	499,180	\$2,604,025	27	14	0.54	9.60	Gas Tax
Broward County Transit	Unit of County Government	County Community Services Department	1,623,018	\$63,678,305	275	41	2.49	33.88	County -General Revenue, Gas Tax

\*Source: 2002 National Transit Database

Appendix A - Organizational Structure of Florida Transit Agencies

Transit Agency	Governance Structure	Line of Authority	Service Area Pop.*	Annual Operating Costs for Fixed Routes*	Bus Fleet Size*	# Fixed Routes**	Passengers/ Revenue Mile*	Passengers/ Revenue Hour*	Primary local revenue source
Escambia County Area Transit	Unit of County Government	County Administrator/ County Commissioners (contract management)	294,410	\$5,307,933	30	29	1.11	14.87	County and City 60/40 interlocal agreement (General Revenue)
Lee County Transit	Unit of County Government	Reports to County Manager	440,888	\$8,263,434	44	17	0.74	12.03	County- General Revenue
<b>Manatee County</b>	<b>Unit of County Government</b>	<b>Community Services/ County Administrator</b>	<b>278,144</b>	<b>\$2,999,841</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>16.86</b>	<b>County- General Revenue</b>
Martin County	Unit of County Government	Council on Aging reports to county transportation planner, who reports to county administrator. Are moving towards an RTA with St. Lucie County.	270,774		3	3	NA	NA	Gas Tax
Miami-Dade Transit	Unit of County Government	Director reports to County Manager	1,900,000	\$164,278,071	653	94	2.41	30.30	Ad valorem, Sales Tax
Okaloosa County Transit	Unit of County Government	Non profit that reports to County	170,498		10	3	0.32	3.47	General revenue, tourist development funds for summer routes
Palm Beach County (Palm Tran)	Unit of County Government	Executive Director reports to County Administrator	908,485	\$27,088,782	106	33	0.99	16.24	County- General Revenue, Gas tax
Pasco County Public Transportation	Unit of County Government	Community Services Department/ County Administrator	362,658	\$1,431,528	14	11	0.58	10.48	County -General Revenue
<b>Sarasota County Area Transit</b>	<b>Unit of County Government</b>	<b>Public Works/ County Administrator</b>	<b>308,043</b>	<b>\$5,273,545</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>14.73</b>	<b>County -General Revenue</b>

\*Source: 2002 National Transit Database

Appendix A - Organizational Structure of Florida Transit Agencies

Transit Agency	Governance Structure	Line of Authority	Service Area Pop.*	Annual Operating Costs for Fixed Routes*	Bus Fleet Size*	# Fixed Routes**	Passengers/ Revenue Mile*	Passengers/ Revenue Hour*	Primary local revenue source
St. Lucie County Transit	Unit of County Government	See Martin County	202,000	\$40,348	3	1	0.07	1.06	None (soon to have a Municipal Special District Unit)
Volusia County (VOTRAN)	Unit of County Government	Run by private contractor. Capital assets owned by County. Contract renewed periodically.	443,343	\$8,207,067	46	26	0.41	14.27	Gas Tax
Winter Haven Area Transit	Unit of County Government	Reports to County Manager but also works with cities and County policy board. (Agency is moving towards consolidation with Citrus Connection)	86,427		9	9	0.85	12.89	County and City - General Revenue
<b>Average for governmental agencies</b>			<b>479,558</b>	<b>\$20,550,479</b>	<b>81.76</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>16.22</b>	
<b>Average for independent agencies</b>			<b>666,513</b>	<b>\$26,209,202</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>16.24</b>	

\*Source: 2002 National Transit Database