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From the Jacksonville Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/2020/03/27/tampa-bay-area-transit-agencies-work-to-get-bus.html>

Tampa Bay area transit agencies work to get bus rapid transit moving

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Bus rapid transit is a catchphrase local leaders use in looking toward addressing the Tampa Bay area's dire needs for more reliable options.

BRT is a way to deliver faster and more reliable commute times for passengers by having expedient travel times, on-level boarding and traffic signal communication. Tampa Bay currently has three major BRT studies taking place.

41-mile BRT for Interstate 275

The Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority is evaluating highway BRT, which is a substitute for commuter rail. It will stretch 41 miles from Wesley Chapel to St. Petersburg and will operate on Interstate 275. It might dip off the interstate in some parts to go to certain stations but it will go back onto the interstate. TBARTA is expecting there to be 12 to 13 stations.

"We met with land use folks, transit operators in the three counties and talked through all station locations and trimmed it down to 12 to 13, with the 13th one potentially being in the Heights area," TBARTA CEO and President [David Green](#) said.

With the construction of a new Howard Frankland Bridge, connecting Tampa and St. Petersburg, the bridge would have express lanes to support future rail transit or BRT.

TBARTA will hold a series of station planning meetings in March to get further input and educate the public.

The project is reportedly estimated to cost \$400 million or more to build and would be funded by state grants and other sources.

BRT for the Nebraska-Fowler corridor

The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority has wanted to explore BRT for its busiest corridor since mid-2019.

Two of HART's busiest and most popular local bus routes are Route 1, located on Florida Avenue, and the MetroRapid on Nebraska Avenue. These routes, along with other local routes that connect downtown Tampa and the [University of South Florida](#) Tampa campus, are the focus of HART's Tampa Arterial BRT Study.

HART officials believe the bustling area needs transit service that is timely and reliable to improve connectivity for east-west routes that cross the USF to downtown Tampa corridor. They envision the frequency being 15 minutes or less.

"Think about the corridors we are looking at, Florida and Nebraska are parallel on either side, cover a lot of same ground and have similar characteristics. Fowler is our only east-west one ... it was just a matter of what we would do with it," said [Joel Rey](#), principal, vice president and director of transportation and transit solutions at [Tindale Oliver](#), which is working on the project. He explained that HART would also look at biking and walking areas in that corridor.

The project plans show that the BRT system would incorporate an exclusive median lane and also be in mixed traffic along the 12-mile route.



PSTA

2. Signs of transit life: It may just be an environmental impact report to the feds, but the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority is closer to evolving Bus Rapid Transit. For a region desperate to evolve its transit offerings, details of the BRT cross county route and a plan to begin service are encouraging. <http://bizj.us/1p52na>

The buses will have level boarding at stations so those in wheelchairs have easier and faster accessibility. There may also be ticket vending via kiosks at stations and the buses may be equipped with signal prioritization to help reduce travel time.

Central Avenue BRT in Pinellas County

The controversial Central Avenue BRT is a 10.3-mile rapid transit connection between downtown St. Petersburg, the city of South Pasadena and the city of St. Pete Beach. PSTA is calling this service a BRT project due to speedy frequency compared to typical buses, having its own lane and having a limited number of stops.

The route follows a north-south alignment on State Road 699 along the Gulf beaches before turning east along Pasadena Avenue. The route will utilize the existing one-way pair of roadways along 1st Avenues north and south from State Road 693 to downtown St. Petersburg. It will then travel along Third and Fourth streets within downtown to the easterly route terminus at Station No. 32 located at the USF St. Petersburg campus.

The project has been controversial in the St. Pete Beach and Pasadena communities as there were concerns about bus size, stops and the idea that BRT would bring more congestion to the area.

PSTA has made efforts to address concerns and replaced plans for 60-foot buses with 40-foot buses. Also, instead of the proposed Don CeSar resort location as the end-of-the-line stop, which would have been station No. 1, PSTA said it will move it to the county parking beach access on St. Pete Beach.

The service is anticipated to be begin in 2020-21.

The city of St. Pete, the Florida Department of Transportation and PSTA are working together on the project.

Veronica Brezina-Smith

Reporter

Tampa Bay Business Journal

