June 14, 2016

Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization  
ATTN: Board of Directors  
PO Box 1110  
Tampa, FL 33601-1110

Dear Members of the Hillsborough County MPO,

As the business leaders of Tampa Bay, we are working to build a dynamic and safe community for our companies, our thousands of employees and their families. We recognize that you have a major decision to make on June 22, and we are writing to express our support of the Florida Department of Transportation’s Tampa Bay Express (TBX) project, which we believe is critically important to the future of our region.

As we see it, you have the ability to either: (1) vote "No," which would effectively reject the $3.3 billion in state and federal funds scheduled to be spent here on comprehensive transportation infrastructure, or (2) vote "Yes," and continue to work with FDOT to ensure that they design, engineer and ultimately build TBX to the maximum benefit of our community.

We strongly encourage you to vote "Yes."

The transportation challenge in Tampa Bay is turning into a crisis, particularly as our population is projected to increase by 650,000 new residents in the next 10 years. TBX provides a long-planned opportunity to spend real money on real solutions.

TBX is the result of two decades of long-range transportation planning, and has been subject to continual reevaluation. The MPO voted to support the project in 2009, and again in 2014. TBX will rebuild the Downtown and Westshore interchanges along Interstate 275; provide express lanes on Interstate 275 and Interstate 4 that can be used, free of charge, by public transit and school buses; and reconstruct the Howard Frankland bridge with the ability to support a light rail system. The result: reduced congestion by fixing traffic bottlenecks, increased capacity by adding traffic lanes and express bus options, and the creation of a viable foundation for future transit options.

Threatening this project are opponents who argue that no new roads should be built in Tampa Bay. Instead, they propose we focus exclusively on transit, which has prohibited any true compromise from taking place in this debate. Most transportation experts agree, however, that the solution to our transportation challenges will require a multi-modal approach, with a robust combination of roads, buses, and some type of rail technology. TBX, thankfully, represents committed dollars to help us solve a major piece of the transportation needs puzzle and, importantly, does NOT require a tax increase or the identification of a new revenue stream.

To be sure, the neighborhoods directly impacted by the proposed TBX footprint have voiced some legitimate concerns, as is usually the case with a project of this scope. While a more effective communications and outreach effort might have alleviated some of these issues, this is not a reason for the MPO to reject TBX outright. It’s an opportunity for you to work with FDOT to ensure these concerns are resolved in a thoughtful and deliberate manner moving forward, and that the affected residents and businesses are treated fairly and compensated appropriately and by law.
By voting “Yes” on June 22, this process is allowed to continue and the issues can be resolved. You will still have the opportunity to weigh in on TBX at multiple points in the coming years, before the project is actually put out to contract for construction.

Those of us who have signed this letter are highly concerned when we hear that some of you are prepared to prematurely reject TBX. Are you really prepared to turn away $3.3 billion in state and federal funds, and send them instead to Orlando, Jacksonville or South Florida? Are you prepared to send a message far and wide that Tampa Bay isn't interested in fixing its dysfunctional interchanges, adding capacity or easing congestion on its highways? Are you prepared to endorse an ideological anti-road agenda, without local, state or federal funding on the immediate horizon to support alternative transit options?

We encourage the MPO to demonstrate its leadership with a more rational and reasonable approach, by moving this project forward, in its entirety, and keeping TBX in its five-year work plan. There's plenty of work still to be done, if we are willing to work together for our community.

Thank you for your consideration, and on behalf of our employees who live, work, play and want to stay here, please VOTE YES for Tampa Bay.

Sincerely,

George Adams  
President, Electric Supply, Inc.

Carlos Alfonso  
CEO, Alfonso Architects  
CEO, Alliant Partners

Lee Arnold  
Executive Chairman and CEO, Colliers International Florida

Barney Barnett  
Vice Chairman, Publix Super Markets Inc.

Dick Beard  
President and Owner, R.A. Beard & Co.

Alan Bomstein  
CEO, Creative Contractors, Inc.

John Brabson  
President and CEO (Ret.), Lykes Insurance

Allen Brinkman  
Chairman, President and CEO, SunTrust Bank Florida

Jim Burkhart  
President and CEO, Tampa General Hospital

Ronald J. Campbell, CCIM  
Principal and CFO, Seminole Financial Services

Michael Carrere  
CEO (Ret.), Lykes Bros. Inc.  
General Partner, Carrere Capital LLLP

Bryan Glazer  
Co-Chairman, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Blake Casper  
CEO, Caspers Company

Bart Catmull  
President and COO, Sagicor Life Insurance

Brett Couch  
Regional President (East Region), Regions

Jim Dean  
President, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay

Don DeFosset  
Founder and Principal, The DJD Group

Thomas L. Dempsey  
Chairman and CEO, Saddlebrook Resorts, Inc.

Dan Doyle, Jr.  
CEO, Dex Imaging

Thomas L. duPont  
Chairman and Publisher, duPont Publishing, Inc.

Katie Duty  
Managing Principal, HDR Engineering

Sam Ellison  
Chairman, EWI Construction

Jim Ferman  
President and CEO, Ferman Motor Car Company

Richard Gonzmart  
President, Columbia Restaurant Group
Steve Griggs  
CEO, Tampa Bay Lightning

Gary Harrod  
Managing Partner, Harrod Properties

Oscar Horton  
President and CEO, Sun State International Trucks, LLC

Steve Raney  
President and CEO, Raymond James Bank

Thomas A. James  
Executive Chairman, Raymond James Financial

Tom Regner  
President, Franklin Templeton Investments

Gordon Johnson  
President, Highway Safety Devices

Larry Richey  
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Ken Jones  
Founder and CEO, Third Lake Capital

Gary Sasso  
President and CEO, Carlton Fields

Brian Lamb  
President, Fifth Third Bank (North Florida)

Kathleen Shanahan  
Chair, Uretek Holdings, Inc.

Rhea Law  
Chair, Florida Offices, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney

Craig Sher  
Executive Chairman, The Sembler Company

David Lewis  
CEO, UnitedHealthcare of Florida, Inc.

Barry Shevlin  
CEO, Vology

Sandy MacKinnon  
Founder, CEO and Owner, MacKinnon Equipment

Byron Shinn  
President and Managing Partner, Shinn & Co

Allan Martin  
Chairman, Atlantic Merchant Capital Investors

Matt Silverman  
President of Baseball Operations, Tampa Bay Rays

Ray J. McCraw, Jr.  
Regional Chairman and President (Ret.), Wachovia Tampa Bay

Liz Smith  
Chairman and CEO, Bloomin’ Brands

Stephen Mitchell  
Senior Partner, Squire Patton Boggs

Chris Sullivan  
Partner, MVP Holdings

Larry Morgan  
Chairman and CEO, Morgan Auto Group

Chuck Sykes  
President and CEO, Sykes Enterprises, Inc.

Hal Mullis  
President, Trenam

John Sykes  
Chairman Emeritus, Sykes Enterprises, Inc.

Les Muma  
Chairman and CEO (Ret.), Fiserv Inc.

Stewart Turley  
Chairman and CEO (Ret.), Eckerd Corp.

Tom Pepin  
President and CEO, Pepin Distributing Company

Jeff Vinik  
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Lou Plasencia  
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Melanie Williams  
SVP and General Manager (Florida Region), Frontier Communications

David Pizzo  
Market President, West Florida Region, Florida Blue

Dan Woodward  
Vice President-Tampa, Highwood Properties

cc:  Jim Boxold, Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation
     Paul Steinman, District Seven Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation