

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Betty S. Carlin, Director of Communications
(813) 872-2811
bcarlin@tampabay.org

TAMPA BAY PARTNERSHIP ISSUES POSITION STATEMENT ON CENTRAL FLORIDA COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT

TAMPA BAY, FL (December 10, 2008) –The Tampa Bay Partnership today issued a position statement expressing support for the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project.

The statement reads in part, “The Tampa Bay Partnership fully supports the completion of the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project. We feel strongly that working through the remaining issues is an urgent matter that will provide for an inclusive and unified voice for bringing commuter rail to Central Florida.”

“From an economic point of view, we feel strongly that investing in projects such as the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project is exactly what our government should be spending money on to re-ignite our economy,” said Stuart Rogel, President and CEO of the Tampa Bay Partnership. “Transit projects, like this one and the ones we are planning in Tampa Bay, are key to the economy of the future. They provide green alternatives that allow people to get to their jobs efficiently and cheaply. National trends indicate that these projects have a high rate of return for the investment and not only create jobs in the construction phase but make communities more attractive for the jobs of the future.

“This project provides the state with a unique opportunity to jump-start transit efforts with the addition of 61 miles of commuter rail within Central Florida,” added Rogel.

The Tampa Bay Partnership will be supporting and participating in the Regional Summit on Connectivity, convened by the City of Lakeland, and will work with all stakeholders to address the remaining issues prior to the start of the upcoming legislative session.

About Tampa Bay Partnership:

The Tampa Bay Partnership is the regional organization that brings the communities of Tampa Bay together to accelerate life’s possibilities through advocacy, marketing, research and leadership. Founded in 1994, the Tampa Bay Partnership provides regional economic development for the metro areas of Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Lakeland, and Bradenton/Sarasota/Venice and the counties of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota.

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4300 W. Cypress St., Suite 250 Tampa Bay, Florida 33607
phone: 813-878-2208 fax: 813-872-9356
www.TampaBay.org

***Position Statement on
The Central Florida Commuter Rail Project
December 2008***

The Tampa Bay Partnership fully supports the completion of the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project. We feel strongly that working through the remaining issues is an urgent matter that will provide for an inclusive and unified voice for bringing commuter rail to Central Florida.

The Partnership has worked diligently to understand the issues, convene groups and find common ground for progress. Our guiding principles have been clear and steadfast – think regionally by collaborating with our Super-Region Partners, facilitate open and direct dialog among stakeholders, focus on the quality of life along with our economic well-being, and finally, to think long-term.

The Partnership also knows how important the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project is to the success of TBARTA and to the future of a state-wide multi-modal transportation system.

We fully endorse the current process to achieve agreement from all stakeholders on the following:

- Support for Commuter Rail. Providing transit alternatives to move residents and visitors efficiently and effectively within and between regions is essential to our economy as well as to building connectivity within our state.
- Support for the Integrated Logistics Center. Developing critical infrastructure for our region's important logistics and distribution industry is important to support our growing population and to increase our international opportunities.
- Support for Developing and Connecting our City Centers. Investing in building and connecting our city centers through multi-modal options is a key economic development objective that is essential to offer the high quality-of-life that will attract and retain the talented workforce that our region needs. We look forward to exploring long-term solutions and funding options that reroute freight rail traffic out of the downtown cores and help to facilitate connectivity within and between regions.

We all share the same core beliefs about our future and how our regions are stronger together. This is why the Tampa Bay Partnership will continue to pledge its support for the process that successfully brings the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project to completion. The Tampa Bay Partnership will be supporting and participating in the Regional Summit on Connectivity, convened by the City of Lakeland, and will work with all stakeholders to address the remaining issues prior to the start of the upcoming legislative session.