

Tampa Bay Partnership
Position Statement on: Federal Economic Stimulus Package
January 2009

The Tampa Bay Partnership applauds and fully supports the new administration and all of our national leaders for being proactive and focused on our economy and creating jobs. Here in Tampa Bay we have calculated that we would need to create more than 50,000 new jobs to return us to a 5 percent unemployment rate, or what is considered a healthy economy. Like many in our region, we are hopeful that federal economic stimulus funds can be utilized to create many of these new jobs.

The Tampa Bay Partnership is focusing the regional approach for the federal economic stimulus package in three steps. First, we have outlined policy principles we feel any stimulus package needs to include to ensure it will have a positive and immediate impact on our regional economy. Second, we have used these principles to analyze a Tampa Bay list of projects, which was created from project lists developed by many of the regional entities local and county government. This list includes 556 projects totaling \$6.1 billion, and it continues to grow. From this list, we have begun to identify examples of projects that will have lasting and meaningful impacts on our regional economy as well as fit into the federal legislation guidelines. Our third step is to analyze the federal legislation and, using our principles, create a federal advocacy strategy for Tampa Bay.

While we believe these are the first steps to understand the economic stimulus package and start to advocate for Tampa Bay projects, we do not believe these are the only steps in this ever changing process. We continue to monitor the progress in Washington DC and on the state level and provide appropriate guidance and information to our regional partners.

Step 1: Establish Policy Principles

Principle 1: Make real investments into our economy.

Tampa Bay needs real investments into projects that will create not only immediate jobs, but also create the jobs of the future. Placing priority on projects that will create immediate construction jobs today to build the innovation, research and education centers of the future accomplishes immediate results with long-term impacts.

Principle 2: Fix what is broken and then invest in transit.

Transportation infrastructure needs are a top priority in Tampa Bay and make up 60 percent of the requests in our region. Infrastructure investments should be focused on repairing our highway infrastructure first and then focused on projects that improve our transit options and have a high economic impact.

Principle 3: Train our current and future workforce.

Investments in workforce training programs and education infrastructure will ensure unemployed workers transition to new jobs and new industries, allow existing workers to be more productive, and strengthen the talent pool for the nation's long-term viability.

Principle 4: Create jobs and adhere to the "shovel ready" guidelines.

While we support all of the 351 projects that were submitted for our regional list, we understand the importance of creating results by maximizing the federal stimulus funding and support efforts to prioritize federal dollars toward projects that are truly "shovel ready."

Step 2: Identify examples of Regional Projects that fit Policy Principles and Federal Legislation

(Included are a sampling of some of these regional projects.)

Principle 1: Make real investments into our economy.

- Moffitt Cancer Center's McKinley Campus request for \$371 million to build a new LEED certified research, clinical and administrative center. The initial construction phase of this project is estimated to create 3,000 direct and indirect jobs. Once completed, the center will employ 1,200 researchers at an average wage of \$100,000 plus.
- Schools Districts have requested millions in funding to repair and upgrade existing schools and to construct new schools. For example, Polk County request \$70 million and Hillsborough County requested \$225 million. These requests are great examples of projects that create jobs now, through construction and maintenance projects, but also preserve and create education facilities to ensure our students are prepared to enter the workforce.

Principle 2: Fix what is broken and then invest in transit.

- Transit projects including, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Agency's \$25 million request to build a Bus Rapid Transit Line (BRT) along Central Avenue in St. Petersburg. Sarasota County's \$1.2 million request for transfer stations and Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART)'s request to extend the TECO Line Streetcar and a North-South BRT route, will all provide critical transit infrastructure that enhances our region's alternative transportation systems and contributes to a clean and energy-independent community.
- I-4 Cross-town Connector Project has been a top regional priority for decades and is an essential infrastructure project that will reroute truck traffic from the Port of Tampa directly to the highways and out of downtown Tampa. This project was timed to facilitate the expansion of the Port infrastructure to accommodate market growth which will flow from the Panama Canal expansion in 2014. This project costs approximately \$450 million and will allow our region to leverage another \$650 million in investments as well as secure the long-term growth of the Port of Tampa. According to a 2005 impact study, the Port of Tampa is a major economic driver which contributes nearly \$8 billion to Tampa Bay's economy and is responsible for over 96,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Principle 3: Train our current and future workforce.

- University of South Florida Polytechnic Campus' request for \$155 million will leverage substantial state and private funding to build a new high tech campus in Polk County that will develop new degree programs in five areas: applied health sciences; mathematics and science education; business and entrepreneurship; manufacturing engineering and technology; and information technology.

Principle 4: Create jobs and adhere to the "shovel-ready" guidelines.

- Of the transportation construction projects, the projects proposed within the Tampa Bay region by the State Department of Transportation equal \$1 billion and have been extremely well vetted to ensure they are true "shovel-ready" projects that have either already gone to bid or could go to bid within the next three months.
- I-4 Cross-town Connector Project could be ready to go to bid by the summer of 2009 and construction starting shortly thereafter.

Step 3: A Plan for Federal Advocacy

We have also reviewed the recently released economic stimulus legislation, titled the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (*version released on January 21st, 2009*) and are making the following recommendations to that legislation based on our policy principles.

Recommendation: Focus on projects with high job creation potential and support accountability.

We are concerned that not all the projects in this legislation are projects that would typically result in significant job creation such as procurement-only projects or funding the analog-digital transition coupon program. While these are necessary investments, they are not projects that will directly create jobs. We encourage this package to stay focused on job creation and address these important needs in separate legislation.

We also support the strong accountability standards created in this legislation including the oversight board and specific language that will quickly reallocate dollars that are not being spent. We encourage the federal government to partner with regional economic development entities to monitor projects on the ground and help to establish future project criteria through regional economic blueprints and benchmarking.

Recommendation: Support funding for construction of economic centers of excellence.

We applaud the effort to fund construction costs for research centers and universities. They are key economic drivers that will produce both short and long term employment.

Recommendation: Increase infrastructure spending specifically for transit.

Infrastructure spending only accounts for 16% or \$90 billion in the proposed \$550 billion of spending. Of that \$90 billion dedicated to infrastructure, only 10% is allocated to transit projects or less than 2% of the entire proposed spending. We are concerned about this low percentage of funding for infrastructure and transit. We urge that this sector of spending receive a higher priority as this bill is reviewed.

Recommendation: Support strong education funding.

We applaud the large investment this new legislation is directing toward education, science and technology to not only fund construction and repair of buildings but also to invest in teachers, students (through higher education grants) and workforce education (which is allocated \$4 billion alone.) We urge that these education provisions are kept in this legislation and ultimately approved.

Recommendation: Support Medicaid funding.

Health care investments will immediately create and preserve jobs in the state while ensuring that families receive affordable medical care. Currently, the legislation designates \$4.3 billion in Medicaid funding to Florida. We urge that this funding is approved to protect our vital health care jobs and the 2.2 million Floridians who rely on Medicaid.

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