

**Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project**  
**St. Petersburg, Florida**  
**Small Starts Project Development**  
**(Rating Assigned November 2017)**

Summary Description	
<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Bus Rapid Transit 11 Miles, 17 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$41.36 Million
<b>Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$20.36 Million (49.2%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2020):</b>	\$3.77 Million
<b>Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):</b>	5,400 Daily Linked Trips
<b>Overall Project Rating:</b>	Medium-High
<b>Project Justification Rating:</b>	Medium
<b>Local Financial Commitment Rating:</b>	High

**Project Description:** The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), in coordination with the Florida Department of Transportation, the City of St. Petersburg, and other regional stakeholders, plan to construct a bus rapid transit (BRT) line from downtown St. Petersburg to St. Pete Beach via the Central Avenue corridor. The proposed project includes six miles of exclusive bus lanes, transit signal priority, and the purchase of nine branded articulated hybrid buses. The service is planned to operate every 15 minutes during daytime hours on weekdays, every 30 minutes on weekday evenings, and every 15 to 30 minutes on weekends.

**Project Purpose:** The Central Avenue corridor serves multiple travel markets, including work, healthcare, education, community access, entertainment, and tourism. The project is expected to improve transit accessibility within downtown St. Petersburg and provide more frequent mobility options between downtown St. Petersburg and the Gulf Beaches area. The corridor currently has five local bus routes, but no direct transit service linking central St. Petersburg with attractions to the west. Additionally, bus travel times are slowed by automobile congestion and the absence of transit signal priority or any other preferential treatments. PSTA expects the project to enhance the corridor's economic development.

**Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:** The project was adopted into the region's fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in February 2016. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in May 2016. PSTA selected their locally preferred alternatives in January 2017. PSTA completed the environmental review process with receipt of a Documented Categorical Exclusion in August 2017. PSTA anticipates receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in October 2018, and the start of revenue operations in June 2020.

## Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
<b>Federal:</b> Section 5309 Small Starts	\$20.36	49.2%
<b>State:</b> Florida State New Starts Program	\$9.50	23.0%
Florida Department of Transportation Design Grant	\$1.00	2.4%
<b>Local:</b> PSTA Ad Valorem (Local Property Tax)	\$5.00	12.1%
City of St. Petersburg Tax Increment Financing Proceeds or Local Government Capital	\$4.00	9.7%
City of St. Pete Beach Ad Valorem (Local Property Tax)	\$1.50	3.6%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$41.36</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**NOTE:** The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

**Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project**  
**St. Petersburg, Florida**  
**Small Starts Project Development**  
**(Rating Assigned November 2017)**

***LAND USE RATING: Medium***

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- Average population density across all station areas is 4,341 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating. Total employment served is 49,355, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. The central business district average daily parking cost ranges from \$12.00-\$13.50, rating Medium-High. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 3.19, which corresponds to a High rating.
- Downtown St. Petersburg has a mix of uses, including restaurants, hotels, green space, office buildings, retail, and residences. West of downtown, surface parking lots, single-family residences, and big box retail are prevalent. Through South Pasadena, the corridor includes parks, retail, restaurants, and surface parking lots. The southern portion, through St. Pete Beach, includes mid-rise beach resorts, beach clubs, and public beach access parking, as well as retail and single-family residences.
- In Downtown St. Petersburg, developments have short setbacks, sidewalks, and landscaping. First Avenues North and South, along which the BRT will run parallel to Central Avenue, have consistent set-back sidewalks and ADA ramps, but few marked crossings. In South Pasadena and in St. Pete Beach, sidewalks are consistently present on both sides of the road and signalized intersections include marked crossings with ADA ramps; however, blocks are extremely long with few marked mid-block crossings.

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-Low***

**Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-Low**

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* St. Petersburg has plans and policies that support designating an activity center along Central Avenue, supporting transit-oriented development, increasing densities, improving pedestrian facilities, and increasing parking rates in Downtown. The cities of South Pasadena and St. Pete Beach have minimal to no transit-supportive plans and policies.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Within St. Petersburg and St. Pete Beach, permitted densities along the corridor generally range from medium to high. Residential areas generally are low density. Permitted densities in South Pasadena range from moderate in commercial areas to high for residential zones covered by a Planned Redevelopment overlay zone.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Some outreach around transit-supportive development has occurred regionally and in the St. Petersburg portion of the corridor. Pinellas County and St. Petersburg have financial and regulatory incentives to encourage transit-supportive development, such as credits and floor area ratio bonuses for transit and pedestrian amenities. Information on incentives for St. Pete Beach and South Pasadena was not provided.

**Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-Low**

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Renderings for new developments within or near Downtown St. Petersburg show transit-supportive densities, short setbacks, and pedestrian infrastructure. Information for the rest of the corridor was not provided.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Vacant land is scattered throughout the corridor, with greater concentrations on the eastern half where transit-supportive zoning has been implemented. The corridor is growing, but at a slower rate than the region.

**Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-Low**

- Affordable housing supply and needs were assessed for the South St. Petersburg Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), which covers most of the corridor in St. Petersburg. The CRA directs 40 percent of tax increment financing revenues to the development of affordable and market-rate housing within the CRA. Habitat for Humanity has invested \$2.9 million in the CRA. St. Petersburg and St. Pete Beach provide density bonuses to developers for affordable housing.

**PSTA CENTRAL AVENUE BRT  
PROJECT LOCATION AND LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

**ST. PETERSBURG FLORIDA**

