



## East Tampa Community Conversation Meeting Summary

### **In-Person**

**Tuesday, April 19, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.**  
C. Blythe Andrews, Jr. Public Library  
2607 E. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

### **Virtual/Online**

**Thursday, April 21, 2022**  
Go-To-Meeting

FDOT hosted two open, conversation-style meetings with the East Tampa community to gather input and answer questions about current and planned improvements in their community. The in-person meeting was held on April 19, 2022, and the format featured a series of roundtable discussions focused on topics of interest to the community including:

- Arterial and City Improvement Projects (FDOT/City of Tampa)
- Landscaping and Aesthetic Enhancements for FDOT arterial projects (FDOT)
- DTI Project and MSE Wall Hardscape Aesthetics and Wall Movement (FDOT)
- I-275 Corridor Improvements and Construction (FDOT)

As participants arrived at the meeting, they were randomly shown to one of the four group tables (one table per topic). Following a welcome and presentation, FDOT staff, City of Tampa and consultants facilitated four, 20-minute roundtable discussions. The facilitators used handouts and maps to help guide the conversation and to support open dialogue. These are posted on the Tampa Bay Next website and include:

- Presentation
- Arterial and City Improvement Projects
  - East Tampa CRA Boundaries Map
  - Arterial Projects Map
- Landscaping and Aesthetic Enhancements for FDOT Arterial Projects
  - CRA boundaries map
  - Arterial projects map
  - Aesthetic Options Rendering
- Downtown Tampa Interchange Aesthetics and Landscaping
  - Retaining Wall Aesthetic Options along north side of I-4
  - Aesthetics Enhancement – Trail Alignment
  - Concept Plan
  - Operational Improvements Map
- I-275 Corridor Improvements and Construction
  - Concept Plan
  - Underpass Aesthetics Renderings

Each table also had a scribe that took detailed notes to document the discussions. At the end of each session, attendees rotated to a new table, so they were able to provide input and gather information on all four topics.

The virtual meeting was held on April 21, 2022. Following a welcome and presentation, FDOT staff, City of Tampa, and consultants facilitated conversations focused on the same topics that were discussed on April 19, 2022. The same handouts and materials were also available. Because of the small audience, there was no need to break into small groups. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback verbally and via the chat feature of GoToMeeting.

The meetings were held in accordance with the Civil Right Act of 1964. Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. There were 28 participants at the in-person meeting and 4 participants during the virtual/online meeting. The following notes summarize the roundtable and the on-line meeting discussions.

**General Topics:**

- Discussions on FDOT and City of Tampa arterial roadway projects, FDOT interstate projects, and aesthetic enhancements in the East Tampa community. Residents shared feedback and asked questions on the material presented and provided additional input with FDOT and the City of Tampa staff on transportation improvements.

**Reoccurring comments:**

- Nebraska Avenue – safety concerns, better lighting on both sides of the road, better lighting at underpasses
- Restripe crosswalks
- Flooding – Lake Avenue and 40<sup>th</sup> Street south of Hillsborough Avenue were identified as major flood areas
- Better access on/off interstates and safety features at bottom of ramps
- More landscaping on East Hillsborough Ave in medians and possibly in ROW along road in front of businesses
- Traffic at 40<sup>th</sup> Street south of Hillsborough Avenue is backing up due to reduction of lanes. Traffic is diverting onto neighborhood roads. Request to make 40<sup>th</sup> St three lanes again.
- Improve lighting on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard between 29<sup>th</sup> Street and 40<sup>th</sup> Street
- Request lighting on the trail as part of I-275/I-4 Safety and Operational Improvements Project
- Increase frequency of clean up and trash removal in East Tampa
- Roundabout 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to Hillsborough Avenue – requested landscaping in center
- More Art – murals, local artists
- Brick X pattern for the I-275/I-4 Safety and Operational Improvements Project retaining wall
- Continue Community Engagement

**In-Person Summary**

**Table 1: Arterial and City Improvement Projects (FDOT/City of Tampa staff facilitated)**

The discussion about arterial and City of Tampa improvement projects was focused primarily on major roads in the East Tampa Community such as Hillsborough Avenue, Nebraska Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, I-275 underpasses, 50<sup>th</sup>/56<sup>th</sup> Street, Lake Avenue, and 40<sup>th</sup> Street. Bicycle and Pedestrian safety were main topics including the community’s desire for better lighting, sidewalks,

crosswalks with flashing lights and refuge islands. Discussion about roundabouts was robust regarding operations and education, as well as input to add sidewalks near roundabouts. Additionally, participants were in favor of new traffic signals being installed and requested dedicated turn signals on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to Nebraska Avenue, and on 12<sup>th</sup> Street to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. There was full discussion regarding flooding on 40<sup>th</sup> Street north of Hillsborough Avenue and the need to clean and repave Lake Avenue. Additional landscaping was requested along Hillsborough Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to bring a sense of place. Suggestions were made to improve safety at the interstate on and off ramps as well as to prevent wrong way driving. There was some concern about homeless people moving from underpasses to other areas including between 15<sup>th</sup> Street to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.

- Restripe crosswalks
- Recommend keeping roundabouts off of 50<sup>th</sup>/56<sup>th</sup> Street
- Lighting – Better lighting on both sides of Nebraska Avenue and at underpasses
- Upgrade sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks with flashing lights and refuge islands on Nebraska Avenue
- Improve lighting on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard between 29<sup>th</sup> Street and 40<sup>th</sup> Street
- Wider sidewalks on Osborne Avenue, Chelsea Street, Hillsborough Avenue, and Dr. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Better access on and off/of interstates
- 40<sup>th</sup> Street - Traffic on 40<sup>th</sup> Street south of Hillsborough Avenue is backing up due to reduction of lanes. Traffic is diverting onto neighborhood roads. Request to make 40<sup>th</sup> Street three lanes again.
- Safety and crashes are a concern on East Hillsborough Avenue
- Like roundabouts – consider sidewalks near roundabouts
- Education about roundabouts – people do not know how to drive through roundabouts
- Mass Transit – Bus stop distance to far – need additional stops
- Too much attention is given to bicycle/pedestrians
- Like the traffic signal at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Would like a dedicated left turn signal at WB Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to Nebraska Avenue
- Discussion of future traffic safety study on Hillsborough Avenue
- Would like to see cycle track extend to Hillsborough to access shopping
- Nebraska Avenue south of Waters Avenue/Busch Boulevard (Sulfur Springs to Downtown) needs to be more pedestrian friendly
- Entrance onto and exits off the interstate – concern for safety. Cut off bike/pedestrian and does not address local concerns. Consider mass transportation, not so much focus on the aesthetics.
- Install traffic signals 12<sup>th</sup> St at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard for trucks trying to get on Nebraska Avenue and the interstate
- Support for traffic lights instead of roundabouts
- Need sidewalk repairs along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Nebraska Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a critical pedestrian focal point, widen sidewalks on the west side and south side of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue (connect to emerging neighborhoods)
- Business access on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard issue (3109 E Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard) it is a historic house so there is no driveway
- Would like to see more landscaping on Hillsborough Avenue
- Storm drainage in East Tampa needs improvements. 40<sup>th</sup> Street south of Hillsborough Avenue - floods

- Consider green systems for landscaping
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Blvd and 50<sup>th</sup> St (Chelsea St) near cemetery should be more pronounced. Need landscaping, people should know that it is a side street.
- Lake Avenue – needs to be cleaned up and repaved
- 40<sup>th</sup> Street south of Hillsborough Avenue - drainage is an issue for businesses on Osborne Avenue and 40<sup>th</sup> Street
- Need more sidewalks – Hanna Avenue to Hillsborough Avenue
- Concerned about homeless moving from underpasses to other areas including between 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street

**Table 2 - Landscaping and Aesthetic Enhancements for FDOT arterial projects (FDOT staff facilitated)**

The discussions around landscaping and aesthetic enhancements for FDOT arterial projects centered around support for additional roadway landscaping, retention pond aesthetics, median landscaping, tree upkeep, and public art. Participants would like to see additional maintenance along the roadways including more frequent trash pickup, enhanced maintaining for the existing landscaping/trees, and restriping of crosswalks to improve safety.

- Shade trees for pedestrians along the roadway
- Colorful trees
- Landscaping in medians on Hillsborough Avenue
- Retention pond aesthetics – walking paths, benches, water features
- Better maintenance of trees on Lake Avenue
- Incorporate large artwork on Hillsborough Ave underpass
- Improve lighting on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Vintage lighting and landscaping
- Restripe crosswalks
- Improve sight distance for the Hillsborough Avenue and Nebraska Avenue intersection
- Vertical structure in East Tampa that can be seen from the interstate as you enter East Tampa
- Wider sidewalks along Nebraska Avenue
- Legacy walls, more history
- Local artists and local themed art
- Decorative trash cans
- Murals on E Hillsborough Avenue
- Increase frequency of clean up and trash removal
- Chess area to gather – suggest Lake Ave and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Improve drainage along Lake Avenue and between 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street

**Table 3 – Downtown Tampa Interchange Project and Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) Wall Hardscape Aesthetics and Wall Movement (FDOT staff facilitated)**

Robust discussion around the Downtown Tampa Interchange took place, which included unanimous support of the Brick X pattern for the retaining wall panels along I-4. Group discussion also included identifying opportunities for improvements to landscaping, community spaces and the addition of art to enhance the community feel. Concerns were discussed about impacts and the desire to not purchase right-of-way. Additionally, participants asked about opportunities to build affordable housing on vacant properties. A question was asked if the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Street ramp would alleviate backups. It was discussed now the improvements would support traffic on the interstate and the mobility of users on

the local roadway network. Traffic signals planned as part of the Downtown Tampa Interchange project and will be installed at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

- Brick X Pattern retaining wall panels– unanimous
- Concern about 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Street ramp – will it alleviate backups
- Likes Columbus Drive improvements “feels like a community”
- Do not purchase right-of-way
- Find opportunities to build affordable housing on vacant properties
- Dog park, family-oriented park with lighting, skate park, exercise equipment
- Historical markers, artwork, photos, recognize past before the interstate was built
- Art (Pelicans, Palm Fronds) infused into wall
- Landscaping
- Preserve Grand Oak trees
- Colorful blooming trees in community area, tropical nature

#### **Table 4 - I-275 Corridor Improvements and Construction (FDOT/City of Tampa staff facilitated)**

The discussion around the I-275 Corridor Improvements and Construction was diverse and included comments regarding landscaping, art, and aesthetics. Attendees asked that construction sites are clean during and after construction. Other ideas discussed to improve the community included bringing back the 40<sup>th</sup> Street exit from I-4 and additional DBE/MBE opportunities for construction projects. FDOT projects do include DBE/MBE goals and information can be shared on how to do business with FDOT.

- Keep brick in Ybor City – “Protect the feel of Ybor”
- Would like to see City art in underpasses
- Disappointed there are no “grand” aesthetics
- Improve landscaping
- Clean construction sites during and after construction
- Return 40<sup>th</sup> Street exit
- Would like more DBE/MBE opportunities

#### **Virtual/Online**

##### **Topic 1: Arterial and City Improvement Projects (FDOT/City of Tampa staff facilitated)**

Discussions around arterial and City improvement projects were centered around building partnerships and funding. Residents would like to see improvements to landscaping and stormwater. They also inquired how to find funding and if decisions are policy-based how best to share information with residents. There were discussions of the use of technology such as an app to report and track areas that need maintenance or problems with FDOT and City of Tampa facilities.

- Better partnership with residents regarding landscaping and stormwater improvements. Would like to see partnerships to build retaining walls or landscaping to assist with erosion control. Can FDOT fund landscaping at a private business or residential lawn that supports or enhances the landscaping FDOT is putting in? Is there another way to do this than acquire ROW? Community engagement/partnership to solve these challenges. (Example: Residents or businesses don’t want lawn to erode but do not have the funds to fix or maintain. Can FDOT assist, and the

resident or business can maintain?) If the challenge is legal or policy based, then let the public know so that they use their voice to drive change on these policies.

- Idea of “See, Click, Fix”, a way for the public to take pictures, videos to show areas that need maintenance or problem areas. Develop app or QR codes to catalogue citizens input about roadway and safety improvements. Keep in a database. For app maintenance to identify the coordinates. Streetwise app may address this, it can link with utility or city manager with easy interface: collects information on roadways that need improvements. The app should have a mechanism to report back and show the public what the outcome was. Feedback channel.
- It was identified that there is a Smart and Connected Communities, grant that addresses civic engagement, and partnership to improve roadways. FDOT able to participate?

### **Topic 2: Landscaping and Aesthetic Enhancements Along Arterial Roads (FDOT staff facilitated)**

The discussion on landscaping and aesthetic enhancements included looking for opportunities to add landscaping along different roadways, around bus shelter areas, on concrete medians and in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street roundabout. The facilitators discussed that the roundabout is maintained by the East Tampa CRA and a commitment was made by the CRA to investigate opportunities to enhance existing landscaping. Concern over the green spine limits was expressed and the community would like to see it extended to Hillsborough Avenue to allow for better access to businesses and overall north/south connectivity for bicyclists.

- Landscaping opportunities the FDOT is looking into. Design is underway. Convert painted medians to raised medians. Hillsborough Ave. – In some locations there could be landscaping challenges on concrete medians with sight line and space.
- Need to talk to Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) about more bus shelters (and larger) along Hillsborough Avenue.
- Integrate trees around the bus shelter areas, nature-based solutions.
- Interested in who maintains landscaping after FDOT installs
- Roundabout on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street is the gateway into East Tampa and needs enhanced landscaping and lighting. A suggestion was made to add an Obelisk in the middle of the roundabout with landscaping. The roundabout is maintained by the East Tampa CRA. Cedrick McCray, CRA, will investigate if there is an opportunity to improve current landscaping and use better live plants. There are many heavy trucks using 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to go to Downtown Tampa, Port Tampa Bay, and Ybor City. It has increased traffic and there is no enforcement.
- Environmental Justice funding evaluations, a question was raised to look at why the Green Spine does not make it to the street where East Tampa has spent quite a bit of money. Also consider why the trail does not take people to Hillsborough Avenue where they can access fresh groceries from the Sanwa Farmers Market and access other businesses.

### **Topic 3: Downtown Tampa Interchange (I-275/I-4) Safety and Operational (FDOT staff facilitated)**

The discussion about the future Downtown Tampa Interchange included questions about coordination with Hillsborough County and the need for the project. Secretary Gwynn shared information about addressing safety and crashes while minimizing the need for right-of-way. Secretary Gwynn also shared maintaining access into East Tampa was important. Questions were asked regarding properties purchased and the possibility to repurpose properties for future enhanced community spaces/facilities. It was suggested that community workshops should take place to determine community space use and participants should be diverse and paid for their time. The Downtown Interchange Project does include three community spaces and FDOT has been engaged the community through neighborhood meetings

to obtain feedback on the best uses for these spaces. The addition of trail lighting was expressed along with the suggestion of aesthetic treatments and art to bring in connection to history of the area.

- Was the DTI coordinated with the Hillsborough County Master Plan? Yes, Secretary Gwynn explained the process and DTI. Minimize the need for right-of-way, while still addressing safety and crashes. The community had a strong desire to maintain access into East Tampa at Floribraska Avenue and DTI allows traffic to access to/from 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Streets and 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> Streets in East Tampa.
- What about properties FDOT has already purchased along DTI that FDOT may not need for the project? Transition these properties to community assets and a vacant parcel. Is FDOT responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of these future enhanced community spaces/facilities?
- Repurpose properties, either open green spaces, or other community assets such as 3 on 3 basketball courts, dog parks etc. Trail ties all properties together for people.
- Lighting needed for trail. This is included in the DTI project plans and the trail lighting was coordinated with the City of Tampa.
- FDOT should hold workshops in those spaces, pay community persons to develop those workshops, cover different demographics (age groups). Do something that makes people part of the project from the beginning. Properties lost so how can FDOT bring the community into the space to engage with these future improvements? Community driven initiative, local jobs, opportunities to bring community history into the space (artists etc.). Need more collaboration, pay individuals from the community to give their expertise when attending these workshops
- Underpass at 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South in St Pete is a good example of how the community was brought in and the connection to the local history.

#### **Topic 4: I-275 Corridor Improvements**

- No comments, questions, or concerns noted.

### **Next Steps**

This meeting summary is available on-line at: [www.tampabaynext.com](http://www.tampabaynext.com). FDOT is reviewing the feedback and is working to identify how feedback received can be incorporated into future projects. Additionally, FDOT will continue to engage with the community and anticipates a bi-annual meeting with East Tampa in Fall 2022.