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November 12, 2015

Ms. Therese W. McMillan, Acting Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
East Building
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. McMillan,

On behalf of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to encourage you to approve the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority's (PSTA's) request to enter Small Starts Project Development for the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. The proposed project, located primarily within St. Petersburg, is along one of the Pinellas County's busiest transit corridors. It would be a tremendous boost to our economy, industry, and quality of life while also serving as a vision of what preferred transit service could be throughout our community.

The Central Avenue corridor links many of our strong, traditional neighborhoods with several key commercial districts, our world-famous beach communities, and our Downtown core. Accordingly, the City of St. Petersburg remains steadfast in its dedication to the continued investment along the corridor as it is a primary urban redevelopment focus area that spans the entire width of St. Petersburg. Its success is vital to our chamber members and sustained economic growth.

Our city leaders are offering the exclusive use of a motor vehicle lane to the BRT on city-owned streets of First Avenue North and First Avenue South during the peak hours as required to provide the premium service that is expected of Bus Rapid Transit. The City will also work to provide enhanced pedestrian connections along the corridor to ensure user friendly access for the city's 252,372 residents and the nearly six million visitors to Pinellas County each year.

For many years now our city and county have struggled to meet the demands for improved transit service. This project would have a major impact on helping to meet that growing demand. It provides a hefty return on investment that leverages the considerable outlay the City has made in the Central Avenue corridor. Therefore, we are proud to partner with the City of St. Petersburg and PSTA on this project, and look forward to the successful implementation of BRT for the residents and visitors of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County.

Sincerely,

Chris Steinocher
President/ CEO
St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce

Cc: PSTA CEO, Brad Miller, FTA Region IV Administrator, Yvette Taylor