

## Older Transportation News

Since local initiatives now are at the selection phase Sky Train is working to educate the political and consultant groups world wide:

**We have been asked to submit information on our superior qualities to 16 groups world wide, and have done so as of July 1999.**

Railway Gazette International (9/97).  
from an article on modes of transportation

While the subject of unconventional modes of transport in Germany, we were intrigued by news that residents in Wuppertal have great affection for their Schwebebahn, the upside down light rail line hanging from spectacular steel arches astride the River Wupper and downtown streets. So attached are they that they would like preservation orders slapped on the stations rather than have them rebuilt in modern style to handle more passengers.

January 15, 1998 ***Clearwater Gazette & Beach Views A Sky Train For Clearwater Beach?*** by Anne McKay Garris "Fun public transportation to and from Clearwater Beach" has been the recommendation of successive planning studies and, at last week's meeting. the board of directors of the Clearwater Beach Association heard, for the first time, about the possibility of a Sky Train from Downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach. The first one was built in Germany in 1901, and representatives of a group who want to build a Sky Train for Clearwater Beach showed videos of the operation in Germany and designs of their version. They told the CBA directors that the search is on for a location to build a demonstration model of some sort of

January 29, 1998 ***Clearwater Gazette & Beach Views Sky Train And Alternate Modes Of Transportation*** by Richard J. Baler, P.E.

Public Works Administrator Clearwater An interesting article was published in the Clearwater Gazette & Beach Views recently about the possibility of a Sky Train connecting Downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach. The article was based on a presentation by a Sky Train representative to the Clearwater Beach Association and the City Staff. The City of Clearwater Public Works staff has looked into Sky Train and various other alternatives for the movement of people between the beach and downtown. One alternative is to add support structure for a people mover, light rail, or other mass transit system to the new Memorial Causeway Bridge. From the overall studies it appears that it is more cost effective to allow for a future mass transit system to be built on an adjacent but separate structure than on the new bridge. Factors to be considered are anticipated number of riders, the results of the presently underway Pinellas County Countywide major-improvement study being done for the MPO, and whether or not the existing Memorial Causeway Bridge is kept. As part of the "One City. One Future" redevelopment plan, the concept of which was approved by a 5-0 commission vote on 1-23-98, retaining the old bridge for pedestrian, bicycle, and low volume vehicle traffic use is to be looked at closely. Over the next few months. Should the existing bridge stay, then the objective would be to get people from the beach to downtown via the old bridge. Ideas being discussed include trolleys, bike trails, etc. Much more information about the costs and features of the Sky Train are needed before it can be evaluated as an alternative. If it is decided not to keep the old bridge, then along with the ideas

"non-highway transportation" somewhere in Pinellas County. It is believed that the demonstration project would be largely funded by Federal Funds. In fact, according to the Transportation Planning Administrator of Pinellas County, a request has already been sent to Congress asking for a grant to do a demonstration project of some sort either to Clearwater Beach or to the stadium in St. Petersburg. The issue died at the end of last year's congressional session, but there is hope to revive it. (The Fed.'s, however, have, typically, demanded that the committee look at other places in Pinellas County before proceeding, thus setting the whole thing back at least two years.) The project has been under discussion by a Major Investment Study Committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Pinellas County. With a target date of 2005 to 2010, the time schedule for a demonstration project would begin some time in 1999. One of the reasons Clearwater Beach was chosen as one of the two possible project locations was the proposed new bridge, the design of which could be accommodated to include a track for unique public transportation. Makers of the Sky Train say their design could run on a track suspended under the bridge and then moving out across the Causeway. One of the more desirable features of the Sky Train is the overhead track which leaves the passengers enjoying the view ahead without the interference of the track in front of them, such as you have with the Disney World train. It is by no means sure that the Sky Train would be the vehicle of choice when the time comes to choose as there would have to be the usual studies and bid process before a particular choice is made. But the people of Clearwater Beach who would like to see this "fun public transportation" to our community are indebted to the Sky Train promoters for bringing to us the information that this possibility is "in the works" and that, if we want to see it here

above, the provision of a Water Taxi service could be considered to get pedestrians across the harbor to downtown. This method has an aesthetic and recreational appeal to many. When the Clearwater Pass Bridge was under construction, a Water Taxi service was provided and attracted a lot of riders for the "enjoyment" of the ride as well as a source of transit. In closing the City Public Works Administration staff recognizes the need for an ultimate alternate source of transportation other than vehicular transportation. Of particular note will be the results of the study, currently being performed for the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning organization (MPO). The results of that study will be available in late 1998 and will tell us a lot about the feasibility of Sky Train or Some other mass transit alternative for this particular location.

These benefits provide strong motivation to complete a new bridge as soon as possible. However, we are concerned that building a bridge now will not address the true needs of our residents and visitors, and may divert funds from other much-needed projects.

*St Pete Times June 4, 1998 continued*  
First, a new bridge alone will not improve the traffic situation, particularly during peak season. This is because the primary traffic bottle-neck occurs at the entrance to the beach itself, at Pier 60 Boulevard and Mandalay Avenue. Any increase in the efficiency of moving people from the mainland to the beach will have no effect on this problem or the related traffic backups along the Memorial Causeway. Tens of thousands of motorists come to the beach daily to vie for fewer than 3,000 parking spaces. The traffic and parking improvements slated for Clearwater Beach itself, currently under review by the city staff, must be in place before the

instead of somewhere else, we need to begin to work towards that goal. The CBA Board voted unanimously to appoint a committee to investigate the subject of a demonstration project of "non-highway public transportation~ to Clearwater Beach. Anyone wishing to participate on the committee is asked to call CBA president .Jay Keyes at 813-461-1747. (Editor's note: You must be a member of the CBA to work on a committee but that is easily remedied by a \$15 membership fee.)

*St Petersburg Times* JUNE 4, 1998  
GUEST COLUMN **Other projects can precede bridge** by Chris Bartholomew

The board of directors of the Clearwater Beach Association wishes to express its thanks to the Clearwater City Commission and staff for their efforts to promote redevelopment of our community in the "One City. One Future" plan.

It is our desire as a organization to assist the city wherever possible to achieve these goals.

The Penny for Pinellas tax approved last year represents the majority of funding for redevelopment projects. The largest single proposed allocation of Penny for Pinellas funds is \$20-million to construct a new high-span bridge to replace the drawbridge between the mainland and Clearwater Beach.

The benefits of constructing a new bridge include eliminating the traffic backups associated with operating the drawbridge, replacing the high-maintenance design (which costs taxpayers approximately \$200,000 each year to maintain), providing safer access for pedestrians, and potentially accommodating a much-needed public transportation system. The new bridge also will provide a focal point to tie our communities together.

JUNE 26, 1998 *St Petersburg Times* **Amenities inflate**

advantages of a new bridge can be realized.

**Second, although mass transit has been discussed, no provision exists in the current bridge design for supplementing traffic capacity with mass-transit services. In the interest of cost and efficiency, it seems that any long-range goals for reducing vehicular traffic to the beaches should incorporate some flexibility for a future mass transportation system.**

Third, and possibly most important, is the fact that the bridge will cost city taxpayers almost \$20-million in limited Penny for Pinellas funds (in addition to more than \$20-million from the Department of Transportation and county government. Postponement of bridge construction would provide the opportunity for additional enhancements to water quality, emergency services, flood control and recreation for other areas of Clearwater.

In summary, we agree that a new high-span bridge is an important step in the long-term plan to revitalize our city. However, we also think that a bridge alone will not solve the beach traffic problem. It is a matter of priorities and timing. We do not think a bridge has to be built now at the cost of compromise and sacrifice of other projects that would benefit so many Clearwater residents. -- **Chris Bartholomew, a member of the Clearwater Beach Association, wrote this on behalf of the association's board of directors. He lives in Clearwater Beach.**

by ANITA KUMAR

The city wants the bridge to be an attraction by itself, like the Sunshine Skyway, and one of the centerpieces in Clearwater's redevelopment. It may have uniquely shaped supports, lights that cast shadows on the bridge and water, and a standout color, such as coral, to represent Florida's sunset.

Commissioners want to build a bridge to replace the 35-year-old drawbridge with a taller fixed-span bridge that will allow boats to pass underneath, eliminating

## Clearwater bridge's cost by ANITA KUMAR

CLEARWATER - In 1997, the City Commission first approved building a bridge to the beach for \$26-million to \$32-million.

Now, one year later, the cost has soared to \$45-million.

So what has changed?

The project will cost millions of dollars more because the city plans to add decorative features, such as distinctive lighting and signs, take out a loan for the project and include design costs not originally in the budget.

Rich Baier, public works administrator said construction of the bridge and property purchases will cost about what the city anticipated, \$32-million. But the cost now includes:

- \* Improving Cleveland and Pierce streets and Osceola Avenue
- \* Making the bridge accessible to mass transit in the future.
- \* Building a 9 1/2 foot wide pedestrian trail.
- \* Painting the bridge coral.
- \* Adding pedestrian outlooks.
- \* Building support beams farther apart so the bridge will be more open and people downtown or at the beach will have a better view.

Last week, two commissioners questioned whether the city should still pay for the bridge as cost has escalated. "There was a time when the bridge was in the twenties," Commissioner Bob Clark said. "It's sprung out of control. We're dealing here with a \$50-million bridge." Despite Clark's plea, the commission voted 3-2 to build the bridge with \$13-million from the state and \$10-million from Pinellas County. The other choice was to wait for the state to replace Memorial Causeway in 2018.

Baier said the city is working with a

traffic tie-ups. They picked a slightly new route that would veer south along Pierce Street and branch off at Court and Chestnut streets. Design work will begin next month and the bridge, about a half a mile in length, is expected to be completed in 2002. The city will hold a public hearing at the end of July to hear residents' comments about the bridge. In the fall, commissioners will decide which amenities they want. Baier said the city staff was being overly cautious and putting every possible cost into the total estimate so that the city has enough money to complete the project.

Commissioners already have planned to spend at least another \$15-million from the next decade of Penny for Pine! as sales tax to ease traffic problems to and from the bridge in downtown and the beach.

### Projected costs of Memorial

Causeway Clearwater plans to spend about \$45-million to design and build a fixed-span Memorial Causeway bridge. City staff has tentatively estimated the project will cost about \$46.6-million, but plans to trim at least \$1.6-million.

- \* Basic bridge structure: \$32.7-million\*
- \* Alternative beam plan: \$3-million
- \* Amenities: \$1.5-million
- \* Design: \$3.8-million
- \* Loan: \$5.6-million

**Total:** \$46.6-million

\*Includes construction, property purchases, downtown road changes and a 5 percent contingency.

### TIMES · SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1998 *Commuter rail system tops ideas to lessen traffic woes*

CLEARWATER-- In the future, will everyone in Pinellas County ride a train? Getting around Pinellas in the next century will likely involve some sort of rail system connecting St. Petersburg to points north, say county planners who are in the middle of a major transportation study.

As traffic grows and options shrink,

\$45-million budget. He said the staff plans to trim the \$46.6-million now estimated for the project by at least \$.6-million.

"They've added a lot of those amenities," said Bill Wadsworth, senior vice president at HDR Engineering, the company designing the bridge. "As (the bridge) has gone up in stature, the city wanted to add more of those things."

there will have to be a mixed approach to easing traffic problems, said Planning Director Brian Smith.

There likely will be a blend of monorail or a light rail system with improvements to the bus system and pedestrian and bicycle paths, Smith said.