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** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tampa, Florida, June 16, 2017 –

On Wednesday, June 14, Governor Rick Scott signed Senate Bill 1672, changing the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority into the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) serving five counties, which includes Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, Hillsborough, and Manatee. The changes, detailed below, take effect on July 1, 2017.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jack Latvala, and co-sponsored by Sens. Bill Galvano, Darrell Rouson, and Dana Young, is a refocus of TBARTA's purpose and its designated service area, shifting from a 25-year long-range transportation master plan for seven counties to a 10-year regional transit development plan for five counties. Prior to the next legislative session, which convenes on January 9, 2018, TBARTA must produce and present to the Legislature a plan to develop a regional transit development plan, which will integrate the individual transit development plans of participant counties, and prioritize regionally significant transit projects and facilities for investment.

The bill also changes the composition of the TBARTA Board, reducing its size from 15 voting members to 13. Previously, the board included a county commissioner from each of the seven counties, the mayor or their designee from the three largest municipalities, a representative of the TBARTA MPOs Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC), four gubernatorial appointees, and the Secretaries from the Florida Department of Transportation Districts 1 and 7 as non-voting advisors.

The new board keeps the same basic structure, but reduces municipal representation to the two largest cities, which now must be filled by the Mayor, and excludes the CCC member, though the CCC will remain a part of TBARTA. Added are one member each from the HART and PSTA governing boards, and the requirement that gubernatorial members reside within the counties of the Authority. New board members must be appointed within 45-days of the bill's enactment, and are expected to be in place for the next scheduled board meeting on August 25, 2017.

Additional changes and requirements included in the TBARTA bill are as follows:

- * Legal authority to receive and disburse federal funds to support an intercounty project or an intracounty capital project that exists in a single county within the designated region
- * Evaluation of the abolishment, continuance, modification, or establishment of authority committees by the new Board prior to the 2018 legislative session
- * A majority vote of each MPO serving the county or counties being served and the approval by an act of the Legislature prior to action regarding state funding of commuter rail, heavy rail transit, or light rail transit
- * Completion of an independent, third party feasibility study for any project of commuter rail, heavy rail transit, or light rail transit, and submission to the Governor, the Senate President, the House Speaker, and the board of county commissioners of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties before proceeding with the development of the project and before any related contract is issued

For more information about TBARTA and the TBARTA legislation, contact Michael Case, TBARTA Principal Planner and Project Manager, at Michael.Case@tbarta.com (<mailto:Michael.Case@tbarta.com>)