

February 27, 2023

Commissioners,

We are writing in support of the MacDill Air Force Base Commuter Ferry on behalf of the Tampa Bay business community and the civilian and military personnel who commute daily to and from MacDill Air Force Base.

The Tampa Bay business community has long supported viable transportation options for military families, including a ferry connection to MacDill. We are proud to maintain dialogue with the Base and continuously hear that transportation improvements are one of the areas we, as a community, can best support our installation.

We also have been advised by MacDill leadership that housing and transportation are intricately tied together, with military families located further away from MacDill to find housing they can afford. Available data indicates that over 60% of MacDill's 15,000 employees now reside in South Hillsborough County, with a shift of approximately 35% of the overall population from the Brandon area to South County over the past decade. This population shift is continuing as new military families choose to locate to places such as Waterset, MiraBay, and Summerfield.

Due to service men and women living farther from MacDill, families face longer and more arduous commutes. We must identify alternative transportation options to support these personnel commuting to the Base while addressing congestion relief on thoroughfares in Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa. It is why the MacDill commuter ferry is such an important project and why in this regard, leadership on Base has consistently expressed support for the proposed South Hillsborough County and MacDill commuter ferry connection. Survey results show that 90% of the south county residents who participated in the MacDill Air Force Base ridership survey indicated they would use the ferry. The MacDill Air Force Base Commuter Ferry will also provide a robust on-base transit system to connect personnel to their final destination. It will be free to all federal employees on the Base, a benefit for military members and the community as we reduce congestion and stress on infrastructure.

Because of the importance of this project to MacDill's mission, the United States Air Force is the lead federal agency responsible for securing the necessary environmental permits under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970.

We remain committed to all transportation options for all commuters – military and civilian, and we respectfully ask that you provide the direction and leadership necessary to make this public-private partnership a reality. Such leadership is vital to our county's thousands of military families.

Sincerely,

