

EXECUTIVE FILE

## Raymond Chiaramonte's 40 years of planning influence is everywhere

Alexis Muellner, Editor  
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### Ramond A. Chiaramonte

- **Name, title:** [Ramond A. Chiaramonte](#), executive director, Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority
- **First paid job:** Age 17, working for the telephone company as a draftsman in 1967
- **Prior:** Planning Commission/Metropolitan Planning Organization director
- **Media:** Initiated, created, co-produced and hosted 70 episodes of “Beyond Today,” a government access TV show
- **Education:** Bachelor's from [University of South Florida](#), 1982, social and behavioral science; customized curriculum in American studies, political science and public administration, urban and regional planning, urban anthropology
- **Florida roots:** Sicilian ancestors came to Tampa in 1895
- **Favorite business lunch:** Miguel's, The Columbia Restaurant, Goody Goody and Ulele
- **Family:** Married, two kids, four grandchildren, lots of nephews
- **What he likes to sing:** Sings the crooner classics from Frank Sinatra to Michael Bublé
- **His other passion:** Classic cars, specifically 1960s Chevrolets



Ramond Chiaramonte, executive director, Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority  
COURTESY PHOTO

**Why Ray is a big deal:** *In 1971, Ray loaded a '58 Impala and left Chicago to settle permanently in Tampa. Over more than four decades, he has become a champion for strategic and thoughtful planning in the region, and an innovator in historic preservation, urban service boundaries, design, comprehensive planning, sustainable communities, new urbanism and transportation. He's been in his current role for two years. Ray's planning influence can be seen in far reaches of Hillsborough County, from Davis Islands, to Temple Terrace to Kennedy Boulevard. In downtime, Ray sings at parties and events, a provision he added to his TBARTA contract.*

**After so many years in civic service, you could have quit. Why take on TBARTA?** I am attracted to challenges. I thought I was going to retire but when this came open, I thought, gee, I feel like I know what to do to fix this agency. I couldn't resist applying for the job and I have to tell you it was rough because they didn't have an executive director for eight months when I got there and I got through that period. Now I'm in the period of, now where do we go? Let's blast ahead.

**What's daily life been like in the lead role?** TBARTA is a very interesting place to work. We are a small but very active agency. My days have been spent meeting with legislators and talking about what we've accomplished in the last couple of years. We are trying to build up our vanpool program. We facilitated a big trail summit in January that included the 11 counties on the west coast to create this vision for regional trail. I'd say the biggest challenge of my day is keeping the elected officials of the region understanding that we are in fact a region.

**There's an important premium transit study in the works. Are you hopeful?** By 2018 or 2019 we'll have an idea of where we are going. I think they will look at all the studies that have been done in the past and take out the things that make sense and focus on those. We do have some opportunities and existing assets. Our rail lines for CSX are underutilized, compared to Orlando's where they did SunRail, and they could easily be converted into some kind of commuter rail at much less cost than light rail. The only place I see light rail might be from downtown Tampa to the airport and maybe eventually across to Pinellas County where you don't have any existing rail now. That could be served with express buses in the interim.

*Alexis Muellner is Editor of the Tampa Bay Business Journal.*