

HARTLINE STUDY GROUP
Service Subcommittee Meeting
Friday, December 2, 2005, 9:00 AM
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 26th floor, Conference Room A
Tampa, FL 33602

Subcommittee Members Present (4)

Commissioner Brian Blair, chair
Chelsea Bridges
Norbert Gobin
Carlton Lewis

Others Members Present (2)

Brian Delamer
Kathy Harris

Subcommittee Members Absent (0)

none

Others Present

Gloria Mills
Pierre Mathurin
Shirley Vereen
Ralph Hughes
Neil Cosentino

Staff Members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant
Christine Beck, County Atty's Office
Ned Baier, HC PIng & Growth Mgmt
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liaison
Beth Alden, Planning Commission
Steve Roberts, HARTline
Bob Potts, HARTline

Marilyn Smith
Mary Ann Ulrey
Ed Mierzejewski
Carl Warren Sr.
Bill Varian

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Brian Blair, service subcommittee chair, called the meeting to order at about 9:07am. After introducing himself, he asked each Study Group member to introduce themselves.

Mission Statement

Carlton Lewis read the HARTline Study Group mission statement.

Public Comment

Neil Cosentino recommended that the subcommittee concentrate on solutions rather than problems. He mentioned an example of leasing buses to a private operator in Delaware. He described his group's franchisee/franchiser proposal. He also expressed a need for a regional transit system and requested a blog be initiated that citizens could contribute to as part of the Study Group's web page.

Pierre Mathurin introduced himself as vice-chair of Hillsborough Advocates for Improved Transit. He commented that HARTline's routes shut down too early to serve evening events such as NHL and NBA events. He referenced Charlotte, NC as an example that provides service to 1 AM.

Gloria Mills introduced herself as the president of Hillsborough Advocates for Improved Transit. She recommended that the subcommittee focus on service that is achievable. She commented that cab fares from downtown Tampa events can be cost prohibitive to areas like Brandon. She recommended a focus on programs that target getting some people off the road, like drinkers at sports events, rather than attempting to get everybody off the road.

Mary Ann Ulrey introduced herself as a representative of DACCA. She described the history and working relationship between DACCA and Hillsborough County. She described the need for transit services at their facility on East Columbus Drive to serve program participants, particularly pregnant women, who must find and keep jobs while participating in the residential treatment program. She said that efforts to get transit stops near the facility have not been successful.

Carl Warren introduced himself as chair of DACCA's public safety committee. He commented on past HARTline management's spending practices. He suggested that HARTline use more mini buses and pursue privatization of some services.

Shirley Vereen announced that the express stop near 56th Street and Sligh Ave. had been reinstated for Route 23X. She thanked the subcommittee for the opportunity to raise this issue at previous meetings during public comment.

Sandra Sroka introduced herself as Hillsborough County's ADA Liaison. She suggested that the needs of the disabled have many dimensions. She recommended including consideration of both geographic location and hours of service as necessary components to promote independence and providing for everyday needs.

Ralph Hughes commented that the Study Group's focus on the unincorporated area was sensible in light of the County Commission's role as the provider of "city" services in the unincorporated area. He asked HARTline staff to identify what the real costs are of running HARTline. He commented that HARTline documents reported a wide range of costs. He distributed a handout that indicated that Plant City operates its bus services at \$40 per hour which was well below the numbers quoted by HARTline. He recommended that HARTline bid out services when there are viable private providers.

Marilyn Smith commented that HARTline management is unchanged below the level of executive director. She expressed concern that ADA issues were not being addressed by HARTline management. She stated that bus drivers were not the problem. She commented that the bus system needed to cover more locations, especially south county. She expressed a belief that privatization would not improve the system unless management were privatized.

Staff Presentation on Service Coverage

John Dausman described a package of information that was distributed in advance of the meeting. This information included background information on three questions: 1) What bus service is currently provided in the unincorporated area, 2) What the growth and density forecasts are for population and jobs in the unincorporated area, and 3) What HARTline's projections are for future transit services in the unincorporated area.

Mr. Dausman distributed a handout of route maps and schedules and a summary document that listed routes that served the unincorporated county. The route maps indicated the portion of each route that runs in the unincorporated area and included with each map was a schedule of frequency of service, hours of service and service by day of the week. Mr. Dausman drew attention to the wide disparity between the availability and extent of service among different areas of the unincorporated county. A detailed description was presented of two examples demonstrating the disparity. The best was Route 2, Nebraska Avenue with every-15 minute service plus weekend service for a portion of the university area near Bearss and 22nd St. The worst was Route 31 which serves south county and Brandon. This service runs every hour-and-a half to two hours with no weekend service. The summary sheet indicated that a majority of the county service has bus frequency from every 45 minutes to one hour between buses.

Mr. Dausman announced that Jim Hosler of Planning Commission staff would attend the next service subcommittee meeting, December 16, to explain the population growth and job growth trends that were summarized on maps included with the reading material for the meeting. Mr. Dausman suggested that the current service maps and the growth projections were intended to highlight the need for a methodology to prioritize demands for transit service in relation to the communities that pay for it through their taxes.

Kathy Harris asked that a formal statement be requested of HARTline that defines the range of services that HARTline provides. In addition, she requested that HARTline indicate which of those services are provided inside the City of Tampa and which services are provided to unincorporated county areas.

Brian Blair asked Robert Potts, HARTline general manager of Planning, Development and Marketing, to obtain a reply to the request from Kathy Harris.

Robert Potts indicated he would supply the response at the Study Group's next meeting (December 9).

Norbert Gobin commented that a history of route changes and expansion in the unincorporated county would be helpful. He mentioned Route 31 as an example where the route has a long history, but service frequency and hours are very low compared to growth in the surrounding areas. The current maps present a static picture.

Brian Blair asked about how HARTline defines the concept of peak hour service.

Robert Potts answered that peak hour service is intended to serve the needs of commuters Monday through Friday.

Brian Blair asked whether route ridership is taken into account in assigning the size of bus to each route.

Robert Potts responded that core routes that have heaviest ridership are assigned 40 foot length buses. Some routes with smaller ridership are considered small bus routes which are candidates for 30 foot length buses, for example.

Brian Blair asked if have been any recent surveys of the Riverview and Apollo Beach areas to determine demand for transit services.

Robert Potts explained that HART was just beginning a series of community meetings called the 2016 Vision plan. He added that all areas of the county will be surveyed as part of that project.

Carlton Lewis asked how timely any of this information would be given the tight timeline for the Study Group to do its work.

Robert Potts responded that most of the Vision 2016 survey work would be completed by June 2006.

Gloria Mills and Pierre Mathurin commented that the summary sheet of routes serving the county was missing some routes. Mr. Mathurin provided a list at the end of the meeting.

Norbert Gobin recommended more attention be given to identifying demand for circulator buses as unincorporated communities grow. He observed there is a need to support better transit access to Hillsborough Community College (HCC) branches and University of South Florida (USF). He commented that years ago there was a direct route from Bloomingdale to USF; now there is none. He also commented on the dramatic growth in some portions of the county, particularly in south county. He drew a connection between the property taxes these developments pay compared to the projections in the HART Transit Development Plan (TDP) that indicate little funding was available for new service over the coming ten years. He doubted the accuracy of that projection in light of the dramatic growth that is underway.

Mr. Gobin also distributed a handout addressing safety issues on buses. He recommended a focus on reducing passenger injuries of all types, not reduction in bus collisions as indicated by current HARTline goals.

Kathy Harris referred to the list of services shown in HART's Transit Development Plan. She requested that, as part of her earlier request, HARTline explain in detail how each service is provided to unincorporated county areas versus the cities. She also asked if HARTline is looking at more than routes for possible restructuring.

Robert Potts responded that all topics were open for evaluation in the 2016 Vision Plan project. He said that a community based shuttle for Brandon was under consideration as well as more neighborhood feeder circulators and expanded use of van pools.

Chelsea Bridges asked if there were enough buses and bus drivers to support expanded service.

Steve Roberts, HARTline General Manager of Operations, responded that HARTline had sufficient staff and vehicles for current service. Enhancements that extend services for longer hours or more days of the week do not generally require more buses; however additional hours add to work load and require hiring additional people. He added that more frequent service usually requires more vehicles and more drivers. He commented that federal law allows a 20 percent spare ratio of vehicles purchased with federal funds; so there is some limited availability of additional vehicles.

Kathy Harris asked HARTline staff what efforts are under way to expand revenues.

Robert Potts answered that a fare increase was planned for January 2006.

Kathy Harris asked if other efforts to raise revenue were being considered other than tax increases and fare increases. She recommended diversifying HART's revenue stream.

Carlton Lewis commented on the gentrification process of inner neighborhoods that pushes poorer residents to many of the areas shown on the Planning Commission charts as projected for higher density and higher growth in unincorporated county. He commented that the HARTline circulator in his neighborhood was not welcomed by residents at first, but now it is seen as valuable. He also commented that residents often mention large buses as inappropriate for neighborhoods. He also mentioned the negative public perception that occurs when residents see empty buses at the ends of routes even though there may be good ridership in the main portion of the route that the residents are not aware of. He asked that HARTline provide hard data on capacity utilization to answer such criticisms.

Brian Blair stated that he supported all ideas that will provide the most service for the least dollars. He also mentioned the impact that transfers between buses during a single trip have on ridership counts. He asked whether HARTline had

done recent surveys to measure the impact of transfers in overall ridership numbers.

Steve Roberts commented that origin/destination surveys are used to measure the transfer issue. He said that a study in Temple Terrace was the only recent survey of this type.

Kathy Harris asked if all buses originate from a single point to begin daily service.

Steve Roberts responded that HART's maintenance facility on 21st Ave. is the sole origin point currently. He also discussed the cost and coordination implications of multiple service locations.

Kathy Harris asked HARTline to provide the cost difference between running big buses, small buses and vans.

Steve Roberts replied that HART will prepare a response to this question.

Norbert Gobin commented that he has heard various HARTline staff use the phrase "every time people step on an express bus, we lose money." He doubted the accuracy of this statement specifically for the 25X route because of the high number of monthly passes purchased.

Robert Potts commented that 25X operating costs still exceed the fares contributed to that route.

John Dausman summarized the major issues that Study Group members highlighted for further discussion at future meetings.

Old Business

Brian Blair asked John Dausman to review a question raised at the previous meeting regarding the method of determining the number of director positions assigned to each HARTline member jurisdiction.

John Dausman reviewed the rules based on population as provided by HART's charter.

Kathy Harris thanked HARTline staff representatives for attending and actively participating in the meeting.

Brian Blair adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:45 AM.