

DRAFT MINUTES

**HARTLINE STUDY GROUP  
Service Subcommittee Meeting  
Friday, January 13, 2006, 9:00 AM  
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 26<sup>th</sup> floor, Conference Room B  
Tampa, FL 33602**

Subcommittee Members Present (3)

Norbert Gobin, acting chair  
Chelsea Bridges  
Carlton Lewis

Others Members Present (1)

Barbara Merritt

Staff Members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant  
Christine Beck, County Atty's Office  
Edgar Martinez, Sunshine Line  
Beth Alden, Planning Commission  
Steve Roberts, HARTline  
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liaison  
Lauren Skiver, HARTline  
David Rogoff, HC Health & Soc. Servc.  
Mike Fazio, HC HSS Accountant  
Jack Kroll, HC Health & Fin. Servc.  
Jim McDaniel, Plant City Comm. Dev.

Subcommittee Members Absent (1)

Brian Blair, chair (sick today)

Others Present

Gloria Mills  
Ted Hull  
Ralph Hughes  
Steve Byrd  
Allison Yeh

Mary Ann Stiles  
Sheryl Brown  
Neil Cosentino  
William Schnell  
Denise Layne

Welcome and Introductions

John Dausman, Study Group consultant, announced that Commissioner Brian Blair, subcommittee chair, was ill this morning and that Norbert Gobin had volunteered to chair the meeting. Mr. Gobin called the meeting to order at about 9:08am. After introducing himself, he asked Study Group members and public to introduce themselves.

Mission Statement

Barbara Merritt read the HARTline mission statement.

Chelsea Bridges read the HARTline Study Group mission statement.

Approval of Minutes, December 16, 2005

Norbert Gobin called for comments and corrections to the draft minutes of the December 16 meeting which was distributed prior to the meeting. Hearing no comments, Barbara Merritt moved approval of the minutes. Chelsea Bridges seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## DRAFT MINUTES

John Dausman described the numerous handouts distributed at the beginning of the meeting and indicated which items related to the topics on today's agenda.

### Public Comment

Sandra Sroka, Hillsborough County ADA Liaison, described the problems that disabled citizens experience when changes and cuts in transit service are made. She noted that service availability, hours of operation and number of stops all impact disabled patrons, often disproportionately when cuts are made.

Steve Byrd introduced himself as a resident of St. Petersburg. He commented on one of the handouts provided at the beginning of the meeting regarding route statistics. He noted that some of the ridership statistics were very low and asked if there were other ways to provide service at lower cost. He mentioned vans as a possible alternative.

Neil Costentino summarized the strategy of the think tank organization he represents. He commented that the FASTA organization strategy ranges from a regional approach to transportation on the big picture end down to individual community services. As an example of an individual community solution, he described the Community Bus System (CBS) approach based on a franchisee/franchiser proposal.

Ralph Hughes read a position paper into the record. He referred to the list of HARTline salaried positions that was distributed at the January 6 Study Group meeting. He commented that the previously reported 300 bus operator jobs added to the salaried jobs on the list still leave approximately 225 positions unaccounted for in HARTline's total employment of about 600. He suggested that savings could be achieved by consolidation within several departments. He identified HARTline's accounting, network systems, human resources, risk and maintenance as candidate departments for streamlining. He also noted that 11 new salaried positions had been added between 2000 and 2005 and that there seemed to be duplication of roles in some areas, particularly finance and public relations.

John Dausman indicated that the Study Group had not been provided information about the number of mechanics and first line supervisors at HARTline which comprised a significant portion of the unspecified positions mentioned by Mr. Hughes. Mr. Dausman asked Steve Roberts to give a rough estimate of those positions.

Steve Roberts responded with an indication of the number of mechanics, road supervisors, dispatchers and maintenance supervisors which totaled about 140 positions.

## DRAFT MINUTES

Bill Schnell drew attention to information in HARTline's budget document that describes all the agency's currently authorized positions. He also provided data from Delaware Transit, which was Ray Miller's former employer, that indicated many fewer management positions.

### Overview of Hillsborough County Sunshine Line Service

Edgar Martinez, manager of Hillsborough County's Sunshine Line transit service, referred to a handout issued at the beginning of the meeting. He presented an overview of Sunshine Line's revenues and program costs which amount to about \$6.6 million per year. He explained that the largest expense component is salary and fringe costs of about \$3.5 million per year, and the second largest expense is the purchase of HARTline bus passes for eligible clients. He noted that in 2005, Sunshine Line purchased \$1.1 million in bus passes from HARTline. Mr. Martinez also provided an overview of Sunshine Line's fleet which consists of 66 vans that are operated by 59 drivers. He stated that Sunshine Line provided 156,000 trips to 2,400 clients that qualify for door-to-door service. In addition, about 8,400 residents obtained bus passes through the Sunshine Line's programs. Mr. Martinez explained that the overall cost of providing its service in 2005 was \$51.43 per vehicle hour.

Mr. Martinez continued with a description of issues regarding the replacement of vehicles which are currently bunched too heavily in specific years. He also referred to a portion of the handout that enumerated proposals for improving service to clients, primarily through closer coordination of services with HARTline paratransit. He noted that only four Sunshine Drivers work on Saturday. He concluded with a description of some of the problems experienced by clients who had to transition from Medicaid coverage to Medicare coverage as part of the new federal prescription drug program.

Barbara Merritt asked if Sunshine Line drivers are required to have Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL) like drivers of the large buses.

Edgar Martinez responded that a CDL is not required because the vehicle sizes in the Sunshine Line fleet are below the threshold for CDL requirements.

Lauren Skiver, HARTline Paratransit and Customer Service Director, added that HARTline paratransit van drivers are not required to have CDL's either.

Chelsea Bridges asked how many times Sunshine Line must deny service at the time requested because of capacity limitations.

Edgar Martinez responded that about 1,100 denials were made for all of 2005.

Norbert Gobin asked both Sunshine Line and HARTline to confirm that there was a move away from side-facing seats in new van and bus purchases. Both Edgar Martinez and Steve Roberts confirmed that this was the case.

## DRAFT MINUTES

### Overview of HARTPlus Paratransit Service

Lauren Skiver introduced herself and referred to a handout issued at the beginning of the meeting. She commented on major differences between HARTline paratransit and Sunshine Line. She stated that the regulatory requirements are different, such as the federal requirement that HARTline cannot deny trips for next day service to any eligible patron who wants it. Ms. Skiver described the paratransit fleet of 24 vans which are operated by 30 drivers. She stated that HARTPlus provided about 49,000 trips during fiscal 2005 including personal care attendants and companions. She noted that HARTline's service does not lend itself to arranging group trips, unlike Sunshine Line. She added that federal regulations require HARTPlus hours of operation to at least match local bus routes, consequently HARTPlus provides much more weekend and night service than Sunshine Line, however the same regulations do not require HARTline to provide paratransit service in connection with express routes.

Norbert Gobin asked if HARTline could voluntarily offer paratransit service in connection with express routes.

Lauren Skiver responded affirmatively but added that the main obstacle is budgetary.

Norbert Gobin asked where the three-quarter mile from local service rule came from.

Lauren Skiver responded that the availability of paratransit service within three-quarter miles of local bus service is a federally mandated minimum; however the rule could be made more generous if funding were available.

Ms. Skiver reviewed budget data for HARTline's paratransit service which totals about \$1.9 million for 2006. She explained that Hillsborough County Share-a-Van (former name of Sunshine Line) provided the service before October 2002. She noted that currently there are about 36 positions assigned to HARTline's paratransit operations.

Steve Roberts explained that the cost per hour figures presented by Ms. Skiver do not include depreciation.

Norbert Gobin asked if HARTline tries to track the needs of express riders who are disabled.

Lauren Skiver responded that because of HIPA laws, HARTline only knows of express rider needs for ADA accommodations only if voluntarily noted by the rider.

Barbara Merritt asked if the number of riders using discount fares could be tracked using the farebox.

## DRAFT MINUTES

Steve Roberts responded that there is a key on fareboxes to register discount fares paid (in cash), but since there is not a discount category on express services, the key is deactivated during the time that vehicles run an express route.

Bill Schnell asked if the cost and budget data presented today was based on full cost allocation.

John Dausman responded that the Study Group's request for a presentation did not make that specific request. He noted that, except for depreciation allocation, it appeared that Sunshine Line's cost data and HARTPlus' cost data were prepared on the same basis. He said that neither entity is charged for the use of staff departments such as payroll, purchasing, accounts receivable, etc. He added that he would request a depreciation cost number from HARTline to be directly comparable to the Sunshine Line number given today.

Ralph Hughes referred to a comment made by Edgar Martinez that a review of Sunshine Line costs is being conducted by the Hillsborough County. He asked who was conducting the review.

David Rogoff, Director of Health and Social Services, responded that the County's internal performance auditor, Kathy Mathews, was conducting the review. He added that the department's operations are also audited at the end of each fiscal year by the County's external auditor.

Mr. Hughes questioned why a performance auditor would be doing this work.

### Overview of Plant City Transit Service

Jim McDaniel, Plant City Community Development Director, introduced himself and distributed a handout of Plant City's Strawberry Connector ridership and fare revenues. He described an evaluation of transit service providers that was conducted by Plant City in 2004 and 2005 that led to Plant City taking over bus service itself. He explained that HARTline had provided the service but the cost of paying HARTline for driver and vehicle time to and from the Tampa maintenance facility each day was significant. He noted that there were not any service concerns about how HARTline performed, just cost issues.

Mr. McDaniel continued his presentation with a description of the private vendor bids Plant City obtained. He said that Plant City decided to operate the service itself at an original target cost of \$40 to \$45 per vehicle hour. He said budgeted cost for 2006 is closer to \$62 per hour, but that includes a fourth vehicle and driver that have not been added yet. He reviewed the ridership data by noting a significant drop in ridership from three years ago and that elimination of Saturday service in October 2004 may have been a significant factor.

John Dausman asked Mr. McDaniel to describe the manner that Plant City uses its back-up van and supervisor to serve community needs.

## DRAFT MINUTES

Jim McDaniel explained that only two vehicles and drivers are required to run the fixed route service. He added that a third vehicle was purchased and a supervisor hired who also serves as a driver for paratransit needs, lunch breaks, and backup to the regular drivers in case of illness or other disruptions. He noted that these demands left significant time to develop group trips. He described Plant City's program to use spare capacity to provide nursing home trips to locations other than the doctor, for pre-K trips, especially summer field trips, and for extended hour trips to provide opportunities to get to work. He concluded that this program was successful enough to lead to the plan to add another vehicle and driver in the current budget as mentioned earlier.

Barbara Merritt asked if there were any connecting points between the Strawberry Connector service and HARTline bus service.

Jim McDaniel responded that only HARTline's 28X express connects physically to a Plant City location, but only for another week, and the service hours don't overlap.

Neil Costentino asked about allocation of costs in Plant City's budget.

Jim McDaniel responded that Plant City administrative staff functions such as purchasing and payroll are not charged back to the transit service budget, just direct costs.

Ralph Hughes commented on the increase in budgeted costs to the original estimate.

Bill Schnell asked what HARTline charged at the time Plant City assumed the service.

Jim McDaniel responded that HARTline charged \$56.50 per vehicle hour but added that travel cost from the HARTline maintenance facility at the beginning and end of each day were added at the same rate, which amounts to a significant percentage of the cost.

### Review of Recent Developments to Express Routes 25X and 27X

Norbert Gobin described notices of bus stop eliminations that appeared over the holiday period for express routes 25X and 27X. He circulated a photo of one of the notices and commented that there appeared to be short notice to the public of the bus stop eliminations which affected many stops. He explained the situation of one particular disabled rider who spoke to the HARTline Board of Directors earlier in the month about not being about to drive to a Park n' Ride.

Steve Roberts distributed a handout that summarized rider comments about the announced express route changes. He explained that the stop elimination was done strictly by the numbers.

## DRAFT MINUTES

Norbert Gobin responded that HARTline's method does not factor in health and safety issues such as the needs of the disabled.

Lauren Skiver commented that HARTline cannot legally ask questions about disabilities.

### Revised Meeting Schedule

John Dausman referenced a revised meeting schedule that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting. He commented that the service subcommittee only had one meeting remaining and he suggested that committee members should begin formulating their preliminary conclusions and recommendations to the whole Study Group.

### Public Comment

Barbara Merritt circulated a flyer that she obtained on HARTline buses announcing a fare increase on January 22. She noted the lack of color and graphics to differentiate the flyer from regular route schedules. She commented that announcements like this need to be more prominent.

Steve Roberts agreed that the announcement needed to be more prominent.

Gloria Mills commented that there are differences in the paratransit services provided by HARTline and Sunshine Line. She noted that HARTline cannot issue service denials under ADA rules and that the three-quarter mile rule could be enlarged if funds were available. She agreed with the position that express routes should have discounts and accommodations for the disabled.

Denise Layne spoke on behalf of the Coalition for Responsible Growth. She said that there used to be bus service in the Lutz area but that it was deleted for lack of riders. She recommended regional proposals that included shared funding. She noted that the HARTline charter includes provisions for additional members and recommended that the Study Group endorse a regional effort. She suggested that new growth management law may provide a source for funding this.

Norbert Gobin adjourned the meeting at about 10:49 am.