

**HARTLINE STUDY GROUP
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
Friday, January 27, 2006, 9:00 AM
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 26th floor, Conference Room B
Tampa, FL 33602**

Subcommittee Members Present (3)

Kathy Harris, chair
Brian Delamer
Barbara Merritt

Others Members Present (1)

Norbert Gobin

Subcommittee Members Absent (0)

Others Present

Gloria Mills
Pierre Mathurin
Neil Cosentino

Staff Members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant
Christine Beck, HC County Atty's Office
Ned Baier, HC Plng & Growth Mgmt
Beth Alden, Planning Commission
Debbie Ward, HARTline
Mary Shavalier, HARTline
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liaison
Sam Hamilton, HC County Atty's Office
Ray Chiaramonte, Planning Comm.
Manny Pumariega, Regional Plng. Cncl.
Chris Smith, Tampa Chamber
Karen Kress, Downtown Partnership

Marilyn Smith
Heather Berger-Kile
Denise Layne

Welcome and Introductions

Kathy Harris, subcommittee chair, called the meeting to order at about 9:07am. She congratulated Study Group member Brian Delamer for his appointment to the HARTline Board of Directors. After introducing herself, Ms. Harris asked each Study Group member and attendee to introduce themselves.

Approval of minutes of January 6, 2006 meeting

Kathy Harris asked for comments and corrections to the January 6 meeting minutes that were previously distributed. Hearing none, Barbara Merritt moved, and Brian Delamer seconded, a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Mission Statements

Norbert Gobin read the HARTline Study Group mission statement.
Brian Delamer read the HARTline mission statement.

Public Comment

Sandra Sroka reported on the newly formed HARTline Accessibility Committee. She said that the first meeting focused on brainstorming topics for further consideration, which resulted in a list of 26 items. She highlighted several of those issues as pertinent to the Study Group's finance subcommittee work. As examples, she mentioned a recommendation to identify a dedicated funding stream to pay for ADA repairs and compliance issues, a need to build ADA accessibility features into the early stages of every project, and a need to calculate how much money would be needed to make all HARTline stops ADA compliant. She reported that the Accessibility Committee would meet weekly for about a month to finalize its list of issues.

Denise Layne spoke on behalf of Coalition 4 Responsible Growth and distributed a handout. She discussed proposals for developing transportation partnerships with other counties similar to the current U-Pass program between HARTline and USF. She also quoted a California example. She added that developers are not opposed to contributing funding to partnerships. She commented that her group will have recommendations in May or June.

Pierre Mathurin spoke on behalf of HAFIT (Hillsborough Advocates for Improved Transit). He referred to HARTline route performance statistics that had been distributed at a prior Study Group meeting. He noted that most routes have experienced ridership increases. He highlighted large ridership increases in routes 6, 37 and 57 which serve county areas. He concluded from this information that service improvements lead to increased ridership. He reported that Hillsborough County has 4,100 lane miles of roads which equals 7 square miles of land mass covered by roads. He commented that transit service helps control this consumption of space.

Marilyn Smith spoke about her breathing disability and a situation that occurred at the HARTline Accessibility Committee that resulted in her removal from that meeting. She expressed concern about lack of open access to the Accessibility Committee. She also commented that this Study Group should keep in mind that all transit agencies need government subsidies, even in dense population areas like Tokyo. She recommended that the Study Group must focus on real funding for real solutions to real needs.

Neil Cosentino spoke on behalf of his think tank, FASTA. He reported that FASTA is developing a regional solution to transportation issues that involves communities and HARTline. He referred to existing legislation that created the local rail authority and suggested that it could be broadened to cover bus transit. He requested time on a future agenda to present his organization's solutions.

Brian Delamer moved to schedule a presentation by Mr. Costentino. After discussion, the subcommittee decided that Mr. Costentino's topic should be heard by the whole study group and that the finance subcommittee would make such a recommendation to the whole group.

Open Discussion on What We've Learned So Far

Kathy Harris introduced this topic by acknowledging the wide range of discussion topics and significant number of presenters who participated in past meetings. She specifically mentioned the presentations by the Hillsborough County Attorney's office, HARTline budget staff, HARTline planning staff, Hillsborough County budget staff and Planning and Growth Management staff as providing insightful information and guidance. She identified HARTline governance issues as an underlying theme of much of this material. She called on subcommittee members to present their points of view of what they have learned so far.

Norbert Gobin referred to the ad valorem and service distribution maps that were distributed during the first Study Group's first meeting that indicated county taxpayers were paying 62 percent of the ad valorem revenue to HARTline but those taxpayers receive only 38 percent of the bus service in return. He also referred to a written response from HARTline management that indicated that consideration of who pays for service is not a factor in determining who gets service. He questioned the effectiveness of oversight by the HART Board in this and other issues. He commented that he was told Kings Point residents in Sun City Center ride free. He asked if this was the case. He also raised the question from an earlier meeting whether there are differential pay rates for A and B bus driver categories. He noted that HARTline staff had given conflicting information on this topic. He concluded that all these issues raise a question of whether HARTline statements can be trusted at face value. He also noted that the Study Group has already had a positive impact on county service just by raising these types of questions.

Barbara Merritt expressed concern about a lack of ADA programs for express routes such as discount fares. She also expressed concern about the number of route changes over the past five years that HARTline staff documented at a prior meeting. She added that the amount of turnover reported at a prior meeting and employee morale issues were also troubling. She said she was disheartened by this week's cancellation of the Pasco County park and ride site for the brand new express routes. She asked what happened there. With this issue in mind, she questioned what could be expected from neighboring jurisdictions if there is a regional move to transit governance.

Brian Delamer commented that mass transit services help facilitate commerce and that the flow of dollars spent by mass transit riders from county to city help facilitate commerce. He said that this flow of commerce creates benefits to county citizens greater than just bus service miles in the county. He mentioned

emissions credits and reduced congestion on roads as examples of these benefits. He added that he believed that there needs to be plan to provide space for infrastructure in the future. As an example, he described how rail and electric rights-of-way were obtained by the railroads and utilities many years ago. He recommended that a similar approach be taken to provide for future mass transit needs.

Kathy Harris said that she believed that HARTline lacked an entrepreneurial spirit. She added that such a spirit must be built and she solicited recommendations on how to get it. She referred to Plant City's bus service as an example where vehicles needed for one purpose (paratransit and backup spare) could be cleverly utilized to serve additional markets while still fulfilling the initial need.

Brian Delamer referred to Denise Layne's list of supportive organizations as an example of the concentration of entrepreneurship in Tampa Bay. He enumerated HARTline's corporate goals of quality of service, safety, efficiency and productivity. He commented on the lack of data documenting true flows of riders and commerce.

Open Discussion on Tangible and Intangible Benefits of Transit

Kathy Harris introduced the topic by asking if anyone present knew of or had lived in places where no public transit existed.

Denise Layne commented that Sumter County has no public transit nor does Floral City in Citrus County.

Neil Costentino commented that Hardee County has no public transit.

Norbert Gobin said that he grew up in an Alabama county that had no public transit and he hitchhiked to school.

Kathy Harris inquired of the group as to whether these experiences, when compared to living in a community with transit service, led anyone to draw conclusions about the benefits of transit.

Brian Delamer suggested that a brainstorming approach to gathering ideas would be beneficial. He offered to note all ideas on the white board and outlined ground rules for a brainstorming session. These were accepted by the group.

Norbert Gobin commented that he receives a dollar savings from transit by using employer subsidized bus passes and a reduction in auto insurance costs. He said that an intangible benefit is less stress by avoiding driving stress.

Neil Costentino suggested that the availability of transit contributes to a sense of community.

Ray Chiaramonte, Planning Commission deputy director, expressed a concern about the city/county approach in the Study Group assignment. He commented how he uses transit in a number of ways that enhances his quality of life as an unincorporated county resident. He explained how he benefits from the streetcar by using it as an entertainment option for guests. He added that reduced wear and depreciation on a car helped reduce the frequency of purchase. He summarized that the greatest benefit of transit for many people is an increase in transportation choices. He also commented on how the streetcar influenced development patterns in the Channelside District.

Karen Kress commented that transit enables citizens to chose a lifestyle not requiring a car.

Manny Pumariega, Regional Planning Council Executive Director, described his perspective growing up locally from age ten. He observed that this area developed with cars, unlike many northern areas. He added that the area is now maturing with cars and learning about alternatives like transit. He described the regional roundtable effort on transportation that is currently underway at the TBRPC (Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council). He also noted that the Florida Department of Transportation is conducting an assessment of regional transit needs. He seconded the call for entrepreneurial spirit in solving transportation problems. He said that entrepreneurial approaches introduce new technologies to solve problems. He identified a need to better document where clusters of employees are and commuting patterns. He commented that the traditional hub and spoke concept does not serve the needs of a group of residents, say in Fish Hawk Ranch, who work in the Westshore area for example. He recommended flexibility in bus routing and scheduling.

Chris Smith, Greater Tampa Chamber government affairs VP, commented on cooperative partnerships that currently exist between some universities and government such as Gainesville and Tallahassee. He noted that such partnerships help reduce the need for parking structures and better traffic safety for students.

Denise Layne commented that an intangible benefit of transit is mobility for a segment of the population that doesn't have any other choice. She added that if transit is applied properly, it leads to better community planning and better growth management. She commented on a community indicator system used by USF and suggested that HARTline needed a similar indicator system. She also commented on the inflow of people into employment centers in the City of Tampa.

Ned Baier commented on the air quality benefits of transit that can be measured. He added that certain types of services are eligible for federal funding categories, but the benefits to the environment must be documented.

Mary Shavalier, HARTline planning director, described a situation in Marietta, Georgia where use of federal dollars for road construction was denied because the area could not demonstrate a plan to achieve minimum air quality requirements.

Beth Alden, Metropolitan Planning Organization, explained how the air quality standards work and that planning strategies are geared toward ensuring that annual emissions levels in three categories do not exceed 1990 level over the next twenty years.

Brian Delamer asked if there was a dollar value per car removed from the road.

Ned Baier explained that the real issue is credibility of the data.

Marilyn Smith referred to the I-75 corridor plan and how level's of service have deteriorated because the community did not follow its own plans, primarily because businesses did not locate in nodes. She added that there is insufficient emphasis on working where you live. She commented that this is a requirement for circulator buses to be effective. She called for less roads and more innovation.

Ned Baier acknowledged that transit service was minimal in many parts of the county.

Brian Delamer referred to the Study Group mission to develop a cost/benefit analysis of county membership in HARTline. He expressed a belief that the question was not whether transit was worth the current one-half mill ad valorem tax but what the benefits are that county taxpayers receive in return.

Neil Cosentino summarized the issue as more mobility for less money.

Ned Baier commented that in large cities, transit is not viewed as a subsidy but as an investment. He added that roads and airports also receive subsidies but they are viewed by many as investments.

Ray Chiaramonte commented that there is a daytime population shift into the city which needs to be considered in the equation.

Kathy Harris responded by noting the governance of HARTline based on jurisdiction membership.

Ray Chiaramonte responded that the focus should be on whole community. He said that many county areas are bedroom communities to city employment centers.

Norbert Gobin asked if Mr. Chiaramonte considered the Tampa the center of the universe.

Ray Chiaramonte replied that he considered Tampa the center of Hillsborough County and the center of Tampa Bay.

Kathy Harris commented on the building of a BMW automotive plant in rural South Carolina and how that community was willing to invest in transit to provide solutions to get people to work. She concluded that transit helps build community perspective of itself. She noted that the future of our county lies in places like Valrico, Plant City and Ruskin, not Tampa, because that's where the land is. She also addressed the types of industries coming to Tampa who typically don't look to be in an environment like downtown Tampa. She described her experience with the biomedical industry and its link to USF as an example. She also noted that it is impossible to get from Valrico to her job in new Tampa on a bus. She also described her sister's ability to use transit in both New York City and Columbia, South Carolina. She concluded that focusing on what HARTline's current bus system is today would not do justice to the potential of what our community can become.

Gloria Mills commented that mass transit allows citizens to lead healthier lives by getting cars off the road and assisting air quality attainment.

Neil Cosentino commented that transit service is a community benefit that helps our community to compete with other communities for jobs, business relocations and tourism.

Mary Shavalier commented that transit's greatest benefit is giving someone the opportunity to take a job.

Ned Bair commented that HARTline is a sizeable employer and that the organization's direct spending of a \$60 million budget and its employees' spending in the community has a positive impact.

Barbara Merritt commented that partnerships with business can help fund some bus routes.

Debbie Ward commented that land values are influence by how valuable the community is perceived and transit is a component to that perception.

Marilyn Smith responded that land values directly impact ad valorem collections. She added that an area needing to be addressed at HARTline is an inequity in the dollars spent at HARTline for management versus the dollars that go to pay bus drivers.

Ray Chiaramonte noted that central city Tampa grew by 50,000 people over the last 20 years. He acknowledged that there are multiple “wheels” not just one center. He commented that a number of communities have built or are developing rail such as Birmingham, Alabama and that, as a result, our community competitiveness is threatened.

Many Pumariega commented on the looming retirement of the baby boomer generation. He added that transit will become an increasingly important demand of this segment of the population.

Denise Layne recommended a Study Group focus on how we can get maximum benefit with what we have. She noted that Hillsborough is a suburban community and will largely remain so. She stated the challenge is to make the most of places like Brandon and Valrico as they are and to concentrate on a way for people to get the basic necessities of life.

Brian Delamer suggested that the Study Group must focus on whether the unincorporated tax base is getting value for their investment. He suggested putting dollar values to the items on the benefits list.

Ned Baier agreed that several agencies like the Tampa Bay Partnership, Tampa International Airport and Tampa Port Authority have recently undertaken “community benefit” identification efforts. But he believed that achieving a number at this time was beyond the scope and resources of the Study Group.

Norbert Gobin summarized his thoughts about the Study Group mission. He didn't believe there was county support for a sales tax for transit. He also noted that HARTline management indicated that consideration of who pays for service is not taken into account in service allocation decisions. He recommended that HARTline divest the electric streetcar, that communities must be included in future planning decisions and that communities must get something for their tax money. He noted that he was not endorsing empty buses. He added that transit service in unincorporated county has expanded less than inside the City of Tampa. Therefore he recommended a freeze on expansion of Tampa transit service until balance is achieved. He posed the question, is the county getting its fair share? His assessment is no.

Karen Kress recommended a focus on the concept of investment similar to the manner in which all tax payers pay for schools regardless of whether they have

children or not. She referred to large amounts of transportation money available and spent. She suggested that transit can be a larger portion of that spending.

Kathy Harris commented that New York City transit is neither pretty nor clean, but it is cheap and convenient. She noted that for many county residents, HARTline transit is not convenient. She added that county tax payers want to see some return on their money. She concluded that there can be more benefit and better benefit from HARTline.

Chris Smith referred to a focus on retail centers when Seattle developed its transit plans. He said that transit usage in the retail core is free and costs more as the system radiates out.

Denise Layne referred to the history of the Tampa city bus line that ended in bankruptcy. She said that the whole purpose of HARTline was to connect the county and Temple Terrace to Tampa. She concluded that the dynamics of individual communities must be considered in planning transit.

Kathy Harris referred to a small community she lived in that had a transit service run by an independent operator that connected with the larger transit system.

Mary Shavalier found bus schedules from 25 years ago and prepared a map that compared original service to today.

John Dausman reported on comments provided by Hillsborough Community College Brandon campus president, Carlos Soto that were supportive of expanding transit service in growth areas of the county. He noted a need to serve the student community traveling between campuses and the needs of children of the migrant farm labor community.

Kathy Harris announced that a presentation of the Study Group's progress would be made to the Hillsborough County Commission on February 1. She adjourned the meeting at about 10:45 am.