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**HARTLINE STUDY GROUP
Service Subcommittee Meeting
Friday, February 3, 2006, 9:00 AM
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 26th floor, Conference Room B
Tampa, FL 33602**

Subcommittee Members Present (4)

Brian Blair, chair
Chelsea Bridges
Norbert Gobin
Carlton Lewis

Staff Members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant
Christine Beck, County Atty's Office
Ned Baier, HC Plng. & Growth Mgt.
Mary Shavalier, HARTline
Ray Chiaramonte, Planning Comm.
Beth Alden, Planning Commission
Jim Hosler, Planning Commission
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liaison

Others Members Present (1)

Barbara Merritt

Subcommittee Members Absent (0)

Others Present

Gloria Mills
Pierre Mathurin
Allison Yeh
Felice Rivers

Marilyn Smith
Sheryl Brown
Terrance Neal
Lisa Silve

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Brian Blair, subcommittee chair, called the meeting to order at about 9:09 am. After introducing himself, he asked Study Group members and attendees to introduce themselves.

Mission Statements

Norbert Gobin read the HARTline Study Group mission statement and the HARTline mission statement.

Approval of Minutes, January 13, 2006 meeting

Brian Blair called for comments and corrections to the draft minutes of the January 13 meeting which were distributed prior to the meeting. Hearing none, Chelsea Bridges moved and Barbara Merritt seconded approval of the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Gloria Mills reported on the progress of HARTline's newly formed accessibility committee. She said that the group had held two meetings and was making progress in paring down the list of action recommendation that will go to the HARTline Board of Directors. On a separate topic, she recommended that the Study Group try to determine the percentage of ad valorem taxes generated in

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urban areas of the county that have sufficient density to support traditional transit.

Pierre Mathurin reported that HARTline bus ridership increased 9.1 percent in December and that this number was 24.7 percent above five years ago. He called for a ten percent increase in service miles to provide more night and weekend service. He believed that this increase could be done at a cost of less than \$5 million per year.

Brian Blair asked how growth in ridership at HARTline correlates to growth in population.

Pierre Mathurin responded that he believed that ridership had grown more than population growth during the same 5 year period.

Ray Chiaramonte referred to his comments during the previous week's meeting about the benefits of transit. He said he wanted to clarify that he did not mean to imply that the City of Tampa was the only growth area, but that the county was growing as well. He added that national statistics indicate Tampa has the third highest influx of daytime workers right after Washington and Atlanta. He said it was important to understand the interaction between the city and the county.

Briefing on County Commission Presentation February 1, 2006

John Dausman referred to the Study Group Status Report that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting and presented to the Hillsborough Commission on February 1. He reviewed the topics that were covered in the status report.

Brian Blair read the statement that he presented to the BOCC . He added that the commission accepted the report and was supportive of the Study Group's work. He noted that the Study Group is scheduled to present its findings to the county commission in April.

Follow Up Discussion of Demographic Trends

Jim Hosler, Planning Commission staff, introduced the topic by commenting that employment and population trends drive future need for services. He referred to the county's jurisdictional boundaries and noted that they are not exactly the same as utility service boundaries and that the conflict between the two sometimes leads to land development problems. He referred to a handout that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting that summarized population and job numbers into four broad areas of the county which were 1) south of the Alafia, 2) northeast Hillsborough, 3) northwest Hillsborough and 4) central municipal areas of Tampa and Temple Terrace. He reviewed job and population numbers in the four areas for 2005 and a projection for 2025. He also reviewed the share of growth that is projected to occur in each area. He noted that population is currently about evenly split between municipal areas 31%,

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northeast Hillsborough 34% and northwest Hillsborough 29% with the remainder 6% south of the Alafia. He compared that to current jobs distribution of 51% in the municipal areas, 25% in northeast Hillsborough and 21% in northwest Hillsborough with the remaining 3% south of the Alafia. He referred to another chart that compared land mass by jurisdiction to population and jobs. He said that, in total, the unincorporated area has 86% of the land area, 66% of the population and 46% of the jobs.

Norbert Gobin asked about how the estimates are developed.

Jim Hosler responded that population numbers come from the Census and that jobs data comes from private data bases. He described issues involved with interpreting data from employers with multiple locations and the process of distributing job data by geography.

Mr. Hosler continued with his presentation with a description of pie charts in the handout that summarized land area, population and employment by jurisdiction. He noted that by 2025 the unincorporated area will have the majority of jobs in the county; right now City of Tampa has 48%, unincorporated county has 46%, and the remainder being in Plant City and Temple Terrace.

Norbert asked why the population data provided at the beginning of the Study Group project was slightly different than the data distributed today.

Jim Hosler responded that there might be a difference in base year. He continued with a description of a map of census tracts that highlighted where the concentrations of people are located. He pointed out concentrations of population in northwest Hillsborough, New Tampa, central Tampa, south Tampa, Brandon, south Brandon and I-75 corridor. He noted that the jobs map resembled the population map because jobs follow where people go since much of our employment serves the local population. After reviewing the data for 2005, Mr. Hosler reviewed maps with projections of population and jobs for 2025. He explained that the census tracts are ranked into quintiles and that the colors on the map relate to how many people and jobs fall into the top fifth, next fifth and so on. He commented that the Westshore area is the largest commercial district in the state and that it includes land in both the city and county. He also noted that there was still significant vacant land in developed areas for future job growth. He mentioned the Telecom Park area as a good example. He noted that south county has significant permitting for future commercial and job growth.

Mr. Hosler continued with an explanation of maps that identify the census tracts that are projected to grow the most in both population and jobs by 2025. He pointed out concentrations of both jobs and people are expected to occur in Brandon, south of the Alafia, Westchase, northwest Hillsborough, New Tampa, Westshore area, and downtown Tampa.

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Mr. Hosler finished his presentation with two maps, one for 2005 and one for 2025, that overlaid density of population and jobs on top of the existing transit system. He explained that the highlighted census tracts were segregated by two tiers. He said that tier one, the darkest color, identified those areas where there were at least seven households per acre or 8 jobs per acre, and that tier two, a lighter color, identified those areas where there were at least three households per acre or four jobs per acre. He explained that these tiers conformed to standards for those areas most likely to support transit service and that these maps were part of a current effort to update the unincorporated county transportation element of Hillsborough County's Comprehensive Plan. He noted that the 2005 map shows that there are dense areas of the unincorporated county now, particularly in Brandon. He also pointed out areas in Town 'N Country, north Hillsborough and Carrollwood that currently meet the definition of transit supportive area. He noted that the 2025 map projects many more areas with high density including all of Brandon, Town 'N Country, New Tampa, and north Hillsborough.

Mr. Hosler summarized that the data indicates that there are unincorporated county areas that can be served now by transit and many more areas in the future. He commented that there is an economic link between significant growth in the core areas and suburban growth because core growth will provide the economic foundation and profits to support growth in the unincorporated areas. He added that growth south of the Alafia will occur in a different timeline because job growth has not yet occurred to support the population that already located there. He said that he expects to see such a trend start soon because the people are already there to support it.

Chelsea Bridges asked if media reports of high growth in the Oldsmar area was supported by the data.

Jim Hosler answered yes and added that growth there is responding to the same forces as the Hillsborough pattern.

Brian Blair asked how many distinct communities existed in Hillsborough County.

Jim Hosler responded that there were more than 100 in Tampa alone and that there were between 600 and 800 communities in the whole county. He added that there is no clear definition of what make a "community." He added that the census uses a "census designated place" concept.

Brian Blair asked if the 2025 map included the recently approved FishHawk DRI.

Jim Hosler said no, not until this coming December's revisions. He explained the difficulty of projecting population during a building boom like we have experienced the past few years because a significant percentage of homes are being purchased for investment not homesteading.

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Norbert Gobin commented that the maps indicated that the FishHawk area was not transit supportive and asked if his reading of the map was correct.

Jim Hosler responded that the color indicates that the FishHawk area is a transitional area, but the bottom line answer is, the area is not currently transit supportive.

Norbert Gobin described the growth of express bus ridership and the new service just implemented. He noted that the maps indicate that the FishHawk area is not transit supportive, but he described successful current and new service being provided.

Jim Hosler responded that the methodology did not have a way to measure or include consideration of factors like commuter preferences or difficulty of the commute drive. He acknowledged that such considerations were important in determining transit service viability.

Norbert Gobin questioned the methodology for designating areas as transit supportive.

Mary Shavalier responded that the term “transit supportive area” refers to local fixed-route service. She added that express service has a different standard that included population density as low as 4 households per acre.

Beth Alden described various concepts of defining transit service areas and added that threshold standards depend on the type of service. She added that the state of Florida creates the thresholds.

Ned Baier commented that the maps are not intended to define what type of service is appropriate.

Gloria Mills asked if there were any annexations in the works that might impact the forecasts presented today. She also asked if such annexations would be positive for transit.

Jim Hosler responded that the outlook for annexations varies by jurisdiction. He said that he was not aware of significant annexations on the horizon for the City of Tampa. He added that Temple Terrace is likely to annex areas in the direction of the bypass canal and US 301 and that Plant City is likely to annex more area in northeast county. He added, in response to Ms. Mills’ second question, that cities are better at encouraging density which might possibly encourage transit more than the current boundaries.

Open Discussion of Issues and Conclusions Drawn

John Dausman distributed a handout that summarized all the topics discussed so far in service subcommittee meetings. He also referred to a handout and chart of route statistics that identified the portion of each HARTline route that served

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unincorporated county. He noted that the routes were grouped by eight general areas of the county which were USF area, Carrollwood, Town 'N Country, Netpark/east Tampa, Brandon/Palm River, Sefner/Mango, south county, and City of Tampa. He pointed out that number of trips per day can be used as an indication of frequency of service. He explained that routes that have 60 or more trips per day equates to service every 30 minutes or better, that routes with 40 to 50 trips per day equates to service every 45 minutes which is the system wide average, and routes with 30 or less trips per day equates to hourly service or worse. He noted that express routes were not included in the calculations even though they appear on the data sheets. He pointed out that the USF area receives the best coverage and service of anywhere in the system because that area benefits from coverage by HARTline's oldest, core routes. He added that an area like Carrollwood receives half the service level of the USF area and the south county receives the least and worst service. He pointed out the many routes do not provide weekend service but that south county is the only area that does not have any connection to the rest of the transit system on weekends. He explained the number of bus revenue miles that currently are provided in each area. He noted that all of Brandon receives about the same amount of service, 478,000 revenue miles, as the USF area even though Brandon area is significantly larger. He added that the unincorporated county receives 37 percent of all HARTline service. He also noted that recent changes were implemented by HARTline that reduced service as well as increasing it. He said that it was not clear that the amount of transit service in unincorporated county was growing at all.

Mary Shavalier replied that she would research the issue of whether there were more or less unincorporated service miles in the 2006 budget compared to 2005.

Beth Alden asked if the "transit emphasis" corridor program included Netpark.

Mary Shavalier responded yes and described the goals of the transit emphasis corridor program.

Norbert Gobin commented on an outreach effort currently on HARTline's website and expressed concern about the ability to obtain valid input. He added that after a previous effort to survey riders about a year ago, there was no presentation of the results, just an announcement of service changes. He commented that he was the sole public to attend a Brandon library meeting regarding HARTline's Vision 2016 project. He referred to the cancellation of a county bus stop on the 23X express route as an example where changes were made abruptly without adequate justification. He concluded that HARTline needed to show more respect for riders.

Carlton Lewis asked whether the 23X situation was due to lack of staff follow up and attention to facts or more the case of a vocal rider bringing publicity to an individual situation.

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Brian Blair explained the background of a previous audit of Temple Terrace service and HARTline's position that the 23X served only Temple Terrace so that HARTline could assign the route's cost solely to Temple Terrace. He expressed a belief that there was a political motivation to HARTline's decision to cancel the county bus stops, not one based on a cost/benefit analysis.

Mary Shavalier responded that the assignment of cost of the 23X was related to a prior study for Temple Terrace but that the stop elimination occurred later.

Ned Baier asked John Dausman if the route data led to any conclusions about how to evaluate route efficiency and how to determine some measure of return on investment.

John Dausman replied that the route data was only half the equation and that ridership usage had to be factored in. He referred to the ridership data by route that was distributed at a prior meeting with a summary included in today's handout. He agreed that ridership on the cancelled route 57LX was very poor and that a change was warranted. He suggested that the issue for the Study Group was to develop suggestions on how service should be reallocated in situations like this. He added that, from his perspective, a key issue is whether there is an obligation to try to develop an alternative service for the area generating the tax funds when the existing service is cancelled. He also commented that the Study Group may wish to address whether terms like "transit supportive area" are detrimental to encouraging new ideas for service.

Carlton Lewis referred to his earlier question and asked for further clarification on whether HARTline did adequate follow up on the 23X situation. He asked specifically, did HARTline have a process to handle this type of complaint and, if so, was the process followed?

Norbert Gobin described the responses that were given by HARTline staff at various times. He summarized one response as "the riders didn't want the stop" and another time "the stop interfered with the performance of the route." He referred to policy standards that HARTline has issued in the past and concluded that neither justification adhered to those policies. Therefore his conclusion was, yes HARTline had a policy, but no, it was not followed in this instance.

Brian Blair asked if riders had to check the Internet to learn of route and service schedule changes.

Mary Shavalier responded that stringent new procedures were put in place after the 23X incident that ensure there will be greater outreach to riders and greater advance notice of changes. She added that this notice will occur on buses, transit centers and stops, not just website.

Sandra Sroka commented that she received communications on one particular service issue regarding a rider with a disability and knew that it had been

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resolved ultimately in a way that was acceptable to the rider. She commented that she was a participant in a HARTline project that was considering the creation of a separate complaint line to better handle issues like the ones being raised.

Chelsea Bridges left the meeting at about 10:30am.

Barbara Merritt commented on the difficulties that county riders encounter when they use the local route system to commute to work. She noted that most trips involve a connection between at least one route and another. When the connection is between a route that only runs once every 45 minutes or an hour, it is common to have to wait up to 45 minutes at the connection point which makes the commute unreasonably long. She relayed a recent experience where one rider was two hours late for work because of a missed connection and that this resulted in docked time. She concluded that smooth and fast connections needed as much attention as well as route frequency.

Mary Shavalier described a current project at HARTline to install a new ITS communication system on buses that will help address some of the communication problems for connections.

Carlton Lewis agreed with Ms. Merritt's comments about the seriousness of the missed bus and missed connection problem.

Ned Baier commented on the need to develop successful routes. He noted that the Study Group effort will come to naught if a bunch of county routes fail in the future.

Mary Shavalier commented on work being done to identify travel patterns. She also noted how difficult it was to get community input, such as the poorly attended meeting that Norbert Gobin referenced earlier.

Ned Baier asked if the development of the 24X was successful because of grass roots support.

Norbert Gobin described the process that HARTline used to develop the new 24X express that serves the FishHawk Ranch area. He noted that the route had been in development for well over a year.

Mary Shavalier concurred by adding that HARTline had applied for state grant money for this route in 2004 and had been turned down.

Norbert Gobin commented that HARTline's process had improved but there was still a long way to go. He described the difficulties that occur whenever there is a change in driver. He explained how HARTline's initial proposal after gathering rider input to develop the 24X did not seem reflect rider interest or any reasonable service proposal. He described how the initial proposal involved taking all express riders to the Marion Transit Center to transfer to a limited

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express to Britton Plaza to catch a local route to MacDill. He noted that the community supported the new service once it finally met a community need. He concluded that the route development process still has a long way to go.

John Dausman referred to the surprise announcement by HARTline of bus stop cancellations on routes 25X and 27X during the holidays that occurred without input from riders or adequate justification of the change. He suggested that the Study Group might want to address the issue of who gets to define what express service is and whether that definition should change from community to community depending on need.

Ned Baier commented that the express route in Lutz has several local stops at the beginning of the route. He asked if HARTline had a policy on what defines an express route.

Mary Shavalier responded that HARTline changed its policy recently to prevent the 25X stop elimination issue from occurring again. She added that community input is important and that community input will be obtained every time before future changes are made to routes. She also commented on the difficulty of creating park and ride lots because businesses resist them due to insurance cost and liability issues.

Norbert Gobin presented his conclusions to the service subcommittee. He stated that the HARTline model for express routes has significant deficiencies which were 1) the current policy limit of a maximum of three park and ride stops on an express prevents an express from having stops along the route to pick up riders at large subdivision entrances, 2) elimination of local (walk up) stops to make the route more efficient does not make any provision for rider disabilities that prevent the rider from driving to a park and ride lot 3) the model assumes that time is lost even when there is no rider to pick up, which is false, 4) riders should not be allowed to vote to eliminate smaller stops because all homeowners pay the ad valorem and thus all riders are equal.

Barbara Merritt commented that there was an express years ago that covered some of the same area as the new FishHawk express.

Norbert Gobin explained a current situation where riders on the new express route oppose stops along Boyette Road. He believes this kind of action is bad policy.

Mary Shavalier agreed with the spirit of the comments. She noted that safety concerns regarding pedestrians crossing multilane roads might be an example where there is a valid reason to not allow stops.

Barbara Merritt added that the same safety concerns exist on local routes. She added that it is not realistic to eliminate stops on major roads. She called for an

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emphasis on traffic signal synchronization and control to give adequate time to safely cross major thoroughfares.

Mary Shavalier responded that HARTline is encouraging both the City of Tampa and the county to provide traffic signal synchronization to enhance bus vehicle flow and pedestrian safety. She commented that there is significant opposition in the bureaucracy to this.

Norbert Gobin concurred with the safety concerns being expressed. He noted that in some locations the designated crosswalks are not safe because so many drivers run red lights.

Beth Alden concurred that the issue of pedestrian safety is a county wide problem. She mentioned the Busch Blvd. project as an example of a partnership effort of government, community and businesses to try to address the issue.

Carlton Lewis commented that during the time he has served on the Study Group, he heard from citizens who were concerned about the amount of trash and debris that occurs at bus stops. He noted that there was a lack of receptacles at these locations and suggested that the Study Group should include trash control as a priority in its recommendations.

Mary Shavalier responded that this topic could be linked with prior discussions about privatization and contracting. She described efforts of other communities that contract out the construction and maintenance of shelters in exchange for advertising rights.

Brian Blair expressed support for this concept.

Norbert Gobin referred to a response from HARTline at a previous meeting on how HARTline allocates service. He noted that nowhere in the response does HARTline link service with who pays for it. He also noted that HARTline's charter is based upon membership and funded by ad valorem assessments on member jurisdictions. He recommended that those paying taxes should be involved in planning service even if that results in more costly or less efficient service. He emphasized, however, that he was not endorsing empty buses.

Brian Blair asked Mr. Gobin if his recommendation was meant to address membership rights.

Carlton Lewis asked if membership rights referred to the three jurisdictions City of Tampa, unincorporated county and Temple Terrace.

Norbert Gobin responded yes to both questions.

Ned Baier commented that he supported the linking of service imbalance with acknowledgement of a need to avoid empty buses and failed services.

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Open Discussion of Recommendation to Whole Study Group

John Dausman began the discussion by offering to the Study Group a suggestion that much of the discussion centered around four themes which were 1) community and rider input, is it really integrated into the service allocation process in a convincing way, 2) once a rider is on the bus should that rider or group of riders be able to keep others off the bus, i.e. what are the rules that define what an express service is or what local service is and should that definition vary between communities, 3) what is the basic definition of service, are terms like “transit supportive area” detrimental to encouraging development of transit in all areas, and 4) how do you integrate the community, who is paying for service, into the service allocation process.

Brian Blair commented that he wanted to maximize the value received from dollars that we have, not cut service. He noted that the county has four internal performance auditors that to date saved the county about \$20 million. He suggested that the Study Group recommend that HARTline hire an outside company that has done bus system performance audits to identify areas for efficiency improvements.

Carlton Lewis asked whether there was a legal aspect to the fourth issue mentioned by John Dausman which concerned establishing a link between service allocation and who pays for the service.

John Dausman responded yes, governance issues are an area that the Study Group will take up when it meets as a whole. He added that there may be some things that can be accomplished within the existing legal structure and there may be some things that require a governance change.

Ned Baier commented that there may not be an adopted policy by the HARTline Board of Directors regarding how service allocation is done. He added that three years from now, success of the Study Group effort will be measured by the service on the street in the unincorporated county and whether it works or not.

John Dausman explained the background of the management response from Ray Miller regarding service allocation that was mentioned earlier by Norbert Gobin. Mr. Dausman noted that HARTline’s Comprehensive Operational Analysis project (COA) was based on the principle of putting resources where the greatest ridership return would be achieved. He explained that, by definition, this approach does not take into account community need and source of funding. He suggested that the mission of the Study Group is to determine if additional criteria should be used to allocate service.

Ned Baier agreed that the community may decide that there is a need for some services that do not perform as well in a statistic like farebox recovery but meet other valuable goals.

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Sandra Sroka recommended that the service allocation recommendation be broader in concept. She suggested that the recommendation read “HARTline needs to formalize its service allocation process to include input from riders, etc, etc.” She suggested that a number of dimensions, yet to be determined, need to be formally included in a stated policy on service allocation.

Barbara Merritt added ADA issues to the list of inputs on service allocation. She commented that alternatives to buses may be appropriate for some areas, such as vans that service both paratransit and regular riders. She also recommended that Sunshine Line and HART paratransit work more closely together to pool and augment each other’s services.

Brian Blair asked if there were any current consideration of combination of Sunshine Line and HARTline paratransit.

Mary Shavalier responded that while federal regulations place restrictions on what HARTline must provide, the discussion of coordination and augmenting services is encouraged by grant sources, especially federal. She mentioned a new “freedom” program that may encourage more coordination between transit ADA and transportation disadvantaged services.

John Dausman suggested that service to the ADA community and lack of it is important enough to create a fifth topic.

Sandra Sroka responded that if such a topic is specifically added to the list, that it should be broadly states such as “disability transit issues and concerns need to be a formal part of the service allocation process.” She referenced the current effort at HARTline regarding accessibility as moving in this direction.

Norbert Gobin commented that he believed that federal regulations are being used too often as excuses for not doing something. He recommended that barriers between service definitions (express vs. local) should not be there.

Mary Shavalier responded that federal regulations apply to non-rush hour service and those are the only services where discounts for seniors and the disabled are mandated.

Sandra Sroka added that federal regulations only establish a minimum. She commented that they should not be taken as a maximum.

Norbert Gobin recommended taking a broad view of value. He explained that sometimes the value of something is not limited to the immediate cost. He commented on past base closure efforts and the manner in which the community looked at the total value of having a military base. He recommended that similar thinking should be used in determining the value of everything from express service to ADA discounts.

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Sandra Sroka endorsed the concept that freedom of choice is a goal for ADA services.

Brian Blair suggested that all five service subcommittee recommendations could be built into a performance audit scope of work.

Carlton Lewis recommended that the internal performance audit idea be taken up by the whole group. He endorsed the proposal as an excellent idea.

Brian Blair accepted that suggestion.

Barbara Merritt asked if the HARTline Board could seek funding in the upcoming legislative session for some of the ideas discussed today.

Brian Blair commented that the current legislative agenda is already set so achieving something this year would be difficult.

Mary Shavalier added that HARTline's application to the new "Trips" grant program was turned down.

Ned Baier gave an explanation of the growth management funds that Barbara Merritt made reference to and commented on the role of the county MPO in the allocation process.

Carlton Lewis made a motion to adopt the five broad recommendation areas as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

John Dausman explained that he would reduce the five recommendation topics to a written summary and circulate it for the whole Study Group meeting on February 24. He noted that the subcommittee would have an opportunity to revise or approve the written version then.

Mary Shavalier commented on the difficulty of obtaining community input, especially from new service areas, about what type of service to provide. She asked for suggestions on how HARTline could do more effective outreach.

Barbara Merritt mentioned the county's Town Hall meeting series and suggested that HARTline have a table at those events.

Closing Public Comment

Beth Alden commented that ad valorem revenue is only one piece of the funding pie for HARTline operations.

Brian Blair adjourned the meeting at about 11:25 am.