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HARTLINE STUDY GROUP MEETING
Friday, February 24, 2006, 1:15 PM
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 26th floor, Conference Room B
Tampa, FL 33602

Members Present (6)

Brian Blair, chair
Chelsea Bridges
Norbert Gobin
Kathy Harris
Carlton Lewis
Barbara Merritt

Staff Members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant
Sam Hamilton, HC County Atty's Office
Ned Baier, HC Plng & Growth Mgmt
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liaison
Ray Miller, HARTline
Mary Shavalier, HARTline
Vanessa Williams, secretarial support

Members Absent (1)

Brian Delamer

Others Present

Ed Mierzejewski (CUTR)
Ralph Hughes
Gloria Mills
Marilyn Smith
Neil Cosentino

Mike McCoy (ATU 1593)
Branden Sherpe
Ted Hull
(WMNF reporter)
Conrad Smith

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Brian Blair, chair, called the meeting to order at about 1:21 pm. After introducing himself, Commissioner Blair asked each Study Group member and attendee to introduce themselves.

Mission Statements

Norbert Gobin read the HARTline Study Group mission statement.
Barbara Merritt read the HARTline mission statement.

Approval of minutes of February 3 and February 10, 2006 meetings

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

Public Comment

Marilyn Smith commented on the difficulties of starting the HARTline Study Group project and a prior proposal that excluded researching new information. She commented on the hard work of the Study Group members and open solicitation of public input. She said that she was pleased with the group's

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progress but cautioned the members to keep in mind that public transit will always be subsidized.

Open Discussion of Subcommittee Recommendations

John Dausman referred to revised drafts of the service subcommittee and finance subcommittee recommendations that were distributed in advance of the meeting. He asked if there were any comments or corrections to the subcommittee recommendations. None were heard.

Kathy Harris recommended that a list of all suggestions from the public be tallied from prior meetings for the Study Group to consider.

John Dausman responded that the secretarial temp to the Study Group was in the process of creating such a list and that it should be ready for the Study Group's next meeting. Mr. Dausman commented that he had received some phone comments that the list of recommendations was long and somewhat unfocused. He suggested that the recommendations could be grouped into three categories which were 1) move more people, 2) cut costs, 3) increase equity. He distributed a handout that described HARTline service changes between 2005 and 2006. He described the individual routes that changed. He noted that only a few routes were impacted, but, overall, the City of Tampa received more additional service, 73,000 revenue miles, than the unincorporated county, 50,000 additional revenue miles, even though funding from both the county and city had increased about the same amount. He suggested that the group might want to prioritize some of its recommendations so that the major issues are emphasized.

Kathy Harris referred to the Study Group mission statement and recommended that the Study Group work towards its final recommendations by answering the questions posed in the mission statement. She recommended a simple final report that presents the answers to the county commission in very clear fashion.

Brian Blair concurred that the Study Group has received adequate documentation to clearly state what county taxpayers are getting for their money.

Norbert Gobin distributed a handout that presented his recommendations. He commented that he believed that the most important service subcommittee recommendation was the one that concluded that member jurisdictions and communities should have a role in setting the ground rules for service. He said he believed that the county was not getting an equitable share of transit service. He concluded that the finance subcommittee recommendation to set aside 100 percent of the unincorporated ad valorem increase until equity was achieved was therefore the Study Group's highest priority recommendation.

Barbara Merritt asked Mr. Gobin what services he was including in his assessment that the county was not getting its equitable share.

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Norbert Gobin responded that he was including the full range of services.

Brian Blair commended HARTline staff's responsiveness to Study Group questions. He commented that he believed that the dialog between Study Group members and HARTline staff had already had a positive impact on county transit service. He asked Ray Miller if he agreed.

Ray Miller responded affirmatively that through several channels of communication, the members of the HARTline Board of Directors had become attuned to the goals of the Study Group.

Brian Blair reviewed past discussions of selected topics, including HARTline's high legal costs, county subsidy of downtown Tampa circulators, streetcar financial risks and the City of Tampa's use of tax increment finance districts (TIFs) in downtown and Channelside. He expressed a concern that issues like these drain money that was needed to provide local service to new population centers and to the area's largest population center, Westshore. He asked for clarification of the recommendation to devote increases in ad valorem revenues to expand county bus service.

Kathy Harris described the intent of finance subcommittee recommendation number two. She explained that the recommendation was to devote 100 percent of increases from unincorporated ad valorem above 2006 levels to expansion and improvement of unincorporated county transit services. She continued that this rule should be followed until promises made during the original referendum are met. She concluded that this recommendation was meant to cause the HARTline Board of Directors to focus on basic issues of membership and governance. She noted that HARTline management has viewed the transit system as a whole without much attention to membership issues and, as a result, there was emphasis on maintaining the core system and increasing service in the center city without adequate attention to the needs of county areas that provide most of the funding.

Brian Blair referred to the previous week's discussion of how the downtown Tampa circulator service was largely subsidized by county ad valorem. He emphasized that this is an equity issue that needed to be addressed.

Kathy Harris added that the Study Group knows what was promised to the voters during the original referendum. She noted that after a first referendum failed, promises were made to voters and that a second referendum passed. She added that five specific promises were made according to research provided the County Attorney's office. The Study Group has determined that those promises were not fulfilled and that meeting those promises are a starting point to continued county participation in HARTline.

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Brian Blair asked Kathy Harris whether her views on the governance issue included a necessity to change the HARTline charter.

Kathy Harris responded that the county commission's authority is limited because the county is only one member of HARTline. She noted that the county currently appoints a majority of the members on the HARTline Board but added that the history of membership indicates that majority membership does not necessarily result in equitable service allocation. She concluded that the current governance structure may have to change to bring about some of the recommendations under consideration by the Study Group.

Brian Blair referred to the original county commission discussion that raised the possibility of a referendum. He noted that the referendum option was not endorsed by the county commission but that the mission of the Study Group included developing options up to that point.

Carlton Lewis expressed a concern about how the recommendation to reserve 100 percent of unincorporated ad valorem growth to improve county service might be applied in real life. He used a common household example of the difficulty of sticking to a budget plan when there are unexpected expenses. He asked if there might be a need to establish a base line and withhold some of the increased ad valorem funds until certain progress goals are met.

Kathy Harris responded that, at the beginning, acceptance of the Study Group recommendations by HARTline would likely have to be voluntary.

Carlton Lewis responded that this seemed equivalent to asking someone else to go on a diet. He expressed doubt about the likelihood of success of such a request.

Chelsea Bridges asked whether the designation of county ad valorem increases to improve county service would be long term.

Norbert Gobin commented that the current recommendation suggests that a 5 to 10 year period will be needed.

Kathy Harris added that such a rule would have to stay in place until such time as HARTline can demonstrate that the promises made in the original referendum were met.

Ralph Hughes suggested that the Study Group did not have to worry about how the recommendations should be implemented. He noted that the Study Group will address its recommendations to the county commission. He added that it will be the county commission's job to decide what measures it wants to take to implement the recommendations.

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Carlton Lewis concurred that the Study Group should focus on the specific recommendations the group wants to make.

Kathy Harris responded that the Study Group's mission statement asks the Study Group for options on how to implement the recommendations.

Norbert Gobin said that finance subcommittee recommendation number two was the backbone of the Study Group recommendations. He referred to the two charts that were distributed at the beginning of the Study Group project that indicated the disparity between who pays and who receives service. He concluded that until this disparity is reduced, no real progress would be made.

Brian Blair called for a motion to adopt the ad valorem recommendation.

Kathy Harris moved, and Chelsea Bridges seconded, a motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to set aside 100 percent of increases in ad valorem tax dollars above the 2006 base line from the unincorporated county area for expansion or increased service in the unincorporated area for a period of time until parity is reached.

The motion passed unanimously.

Gloria Mills asked if it was legal for the County to require HARTline to do this motion. She added that her question was not intended to draw into doubt the necessity or importance of bringing some equity to service allocation, just whether the county had the right to require such an action.

Brian Blair commented that the county commission will have to deal with how to implement recommendations.

Norbert Gobin commented that he felt the most important action the Study Group could take had been done with this motion.

John Dausman referred to discussions during the service subcommittee and finance subcommittee meetings that emphasized the need to look for new alternatives for providing service, including contracting, partnerships and consideration of privatization. He summarized the intent of prior discussions as seeking to do more things for less money by introducing new ideas that cost less money per unit and serve non-core areas more efficiently. He asked if Study Group members wanted to make a motion along those lines.

Brian Blair asked Mr. Dausman to describe the findings of his research regarding alternative ways to serve smaller communities.

John Dausman provided an overview of how Pinellas County's MPO and Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) provide TD (transportation disadvantaged)

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service and ADA transit service through a brokered system of multiple private providers including schedulers, taxis and van companies. He noted that according to the information provided to him, neither the Pinellas MPO nor PSTA operate their own van fleets for these services, but only use private providers. He also described the small transit service operated by the City of Gulfport in south Pinellas. He explained that Gulfport owns a small fleet of three vehicles operated by two drivers and a dispatcher who provide door-to-door service anywhere in the city limits for anyone over the age of 55 regardless of economic situation or disability. He added that this service has a budget of about \$165,000 a year and that the cost works out to about \$12 per trip. He compared this to the HARTline circulator service in Sun City Center that provides a similar flex service at about \$20 per trip. He commented that the Gulfport service had been in existence since the late 1960's.

Kathy Harris commented that the RFP (contracting) issue addressed a specific promise made to voters during the original referendum. She continued that there were specific promises to create new service serving Brandon, Sun City Center and USF areas. She noted that HARTline's plans for new service are largely unfunded and, therefore putting out an RFP for these services would solicit cheaper ways to serve the need.

Brian Blair asked how many communities in the country use private providers.

John Dausman responded that he did not have a tally; however he added that the top six private providers serve several hundred communities and that one of those companies had a client base of 100 communities.

Brian Blair commented he believed that including the private sector was an important part of serving more people efficiently. He offered a motion to achieve that goal as follows: "That HARTline advise all private sector entities in our county, state and/or nation that it welcomes qualified entities to contact HARTline and offer to submit a bid to provide vehicular mass transit in any or all areas of Hillsborough County."

Barbara Merritt asked who would develop such an RFP. She asked if it would only be HARTline involved in developing the RFP language.

Ralph Hughes commented that the motion, as presented, does not specifically require an RFP, just an invitation for ideas.

Ray Miller commented that there were "tons" of issues involved in privatization. He said that a major issue was federal labor laws. But he acknowledged that privatization can be done and is done around the country. He advised the Study Group to consider the complexities of such an effort before making a specific recommendation.

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Marilyn Smith commented that there was a difference between management and “rubber on the road.” She recommended focusing on streamlining the management of HARTline. She added that the costs of bus drivers were not significant issues in the Study Group discussions.

Brian Blair responded that he supported protecting the jobs of the bus drivers. He referred to prior discussions where it was reported that the management of transit agencies was contracted to private entities without altering existing labor union agreements or working arrangements.

Mike McCoy, ATU local 1593 president, commented that whenever privatization happens, the cost falls on the backs of drivers. He said that it is common for \$18 per hour jobs to fall to \$9 per hour when privatization occurs. He added that if the offer to protect workers is serious, he recommended building that protection into an RFP.

Brian Blair reiterated his commitment not to oppose protecting drivers in any privatization effort.

Ralph Hughes disagreed with Mr. McCoy’s position that workers would likely be hurt by including the private sector. He noted that the drivers are essential to success of any contract. He cautioned that placing restrictive language in an RFP may discourage private entities from bidding.

Carlton Lewis described the similarity of this issue to that of social service agencies that routinely contract with private providers. He noted that those contracts include an oversight component called quality assurance (QA) to make sure that the private provider is held accountable for performance of contract requirements. He added that if such QA provisions are properly included in the contract language, then including the private sector is desirable.

Kathy Harris commented that long term protection of the drivers depends on making HARTline viable and sustainable. She said that doing things differently will be required to handle future needs; otherwise the system will go bankrupt. She referred to how airports are a combination of government oversight and private providers. She noted that pilots work for the airlines, not the government. She added that there are 70,000 building permits in the pipeline for the county. She doubted that HARTline was prepared to serve the resulting population under its current business model.

Kathy Harris seconded Brian Blair’s motion for discussion but added that she preferred that the recommendation be less open ended.

Brian Blair asked what portion of the motion was a concern to Ms. Harris.

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Kathy Harris responded that she was concerned that the current motion allowed too much wiggle room that might result in no real change. She recommended requiring the inclusion of the private sector as part of the basic system. She proposed alternate wording for the motion: "Recommend that the BOCC request that HARTline initiate a structured system or process for including the private sector."

Brian Blair responded that he believed the core mission of the Study Group was to develop recommendations on how to achieve parity of service to funding and to serve as many people with the dollars that we have. He added that he didn't think seeking bids on the current structure would be detrimental because it would be comparing apples to apples. He said that he had a second motion to address the issue of getting more service with existing dollars.

Brian Blair presented a second motion: "Recommend that the BOCC issue an RFP for a performance audit of HARTline to be conducted by an entity with vast experience in conducting performance audits of mass transit systems consisting of vehicular units."

Gloria Mills asked if HARTline would be made to pay for that audit.

Brian Blair responded that the county commission would probably pay for the audit.

Chelsea Bridges asked if anything new would be learned from such an audit beyond what the Study Group has already determined or that existing information has indicated is likely true.

Brian Blair described the existing internal performance audit function at the county. He said that millions of dollars had already been saved with this approach. He added that the goal of a performance audit is to develop specific recommendations to implement.

Ralph Hughes commented that HARTline's management team should welcome such specific recommendations.

Carlton Lewis recommended that any "found dollars" from a performance audit be allocated to increasing county service equity issue in addition to the ad valorem motion adopted earlier in the meeting.

Norbert Gobin returned to Brian Blair's first motion and commented that he favored finance subcommittee recommendation number three as including Commissioner Blair's intent in a more comprehensive fashion.

Kathy Harris asked what the current HARTline operating budget was.

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Ray Miller responded that the operating budget was about \$50 million and the capital budget was about \$15 million. He noted that the capital budget varies widely from year to year depending on projects undertaken and funding available.

Kathy Harris posed a hypothetical question that if performance audit savings were able to achieve a 20 percent savings of annual operating cost, about \$10 million per year, what would that \$10 million buy in terms of service?

Ray Miller responded that HARTline's full costs including depreciation were previously reported to be about \$83 per hour so that number divided into \$10 million would provide a lot of service. He cautioned that there are some complicating factors such as obtaining the equipment to run the extra service.

Brian Blair endorsed including finance subcommittee recommendation number three with his motion. **He revised his motion as follows: "That HARTline advise all private sector entities in our county, state and/or nation that it welcomes qualified entities to contact HARTline and offer to submit a bid to provide vehicular mass transit in any or all areas of Hillsborough County. In addition, the HARTline Board should immediately develop an RFP for private feeder service in the Brandon/Valrico/Riverview Area, the USF area, Southshore area, and the Town & Country/Citrus Park area connecting to the main bus routes. HARTLINE operations can also compete in the RFP process, but the review committee must be non-HARTline employees if HARTline competes. The BOCC should encourage HARTline to cultivate local businesses and local communities as partners in developing these feeder services.**

Kathy Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Brian Blair repeated his motion to call for a performance audit as follows: "Recommend that the BOCC issue an RFP for a performance audit of HARTline to be conducted by an entity with vast experience in conducting performance audits of mass transit systems consisting of vehicular units."

Kathy Harris seconded the motion.

Mike McCoy suggested that communities of similar size to Hillsborough County be used in the performance audit for comparison purposes. He noted that in past efforts, HARTline was compared to pay rates at transit entities in communities that are not relevant to our situation. Mr. McCoy added that he had a list of comparisons that he would provide to the Study Group for inclusion in the performance audit discussion.

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Brian Blair responded that he welcomed the list and that the “vast experience” clause would handle the concern about choosing an audit firm that could make fair comparisons.

Ralph Hughes commented that the community comparison section of a performance audit is a small part of the whole project. He added that the core purpose of a performance audit is looking at what HARTline does and how HARTline does it, not a peer analysis.

Gloria Mills asked if HARTline had ever had a performance audit.

Ralph Hughes responded that HARTline had a number of financial audits but not a performance audit.

Ray Miller commented that he had been told that a performance audit of HARTline was conducted by KPMG in 1998.

Ralph Hughes responded that the KPMG audit was more of a compliance audit than a performance audit.

John Dausman commented that the original intent of the KPMG audit, paid for by the county, was a performance audit. He noted that there was considerable controversy at the time as to whether the resulting audit adhered to the intent.

Marilyn Smith commented that the county did not receive any value from the KPMG audit.

Brian Blair called for a vote on the pending motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Norbert Gobin asked if the remaining points on the finance and service subcommittees would be considered by the group for formal action.

John Dausman responded that he would prepare a list of the remaining items for the Study Group to consider at the next meeting.

Ralph Hughes raised the issue of HARTline’s legal expense levels that was discussed at a prior meeting. He commented that \$1.4 million of attorney’s fees in a two year period was excessive. He recommended that the Study Group pass a motion to recommend that the HARTline Board to take a hard look at legal expenses and bring them back in line. He added that the current discussion by the HARTline Board of hiring in-house counsel will not solve the problem because the largest component of HARTline’s attorney’s fees is their own general counsel.

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Brian Blair referred to an RFP that HARTline is developing to take bids for a new general counsel. He noted that the current counsel is not a HARTline employee but is a private attorney hired under contract.

Ray Miller described the variety of legal needs that HARTline has. He explained that the RFP will include a “menu” of services for legal firms to bid on.

Kathy Harris asked if there will be an in-house counsel.

Ray Miller responded that he doesn’t know yet. He described the current system of outside general counsel and outside labor counsel, both reporting to the HARTline Board.

Kathy Harris asked how this arrangement will change under the new RFP.

Ray Miller responded that it might not change. He added that he will need HART Board action to change it.

Kathy Harris asked what the current rate was for general counsel.

Ray Miller responded that he did not know the number by memory, but that it was in excess of \$100 per hour.

Kathy Harris commented that a different approach was needed if a different outcome was desired.

Carlton Lewis commented on a prior discussion in the service subcommittee that advertising revenues could help develop and maintain more shelters. He referred to a JC’s bench in a ditch that was of no use to riders.

Ray Miller responded that the JC bench program is independent of HARTline. He added that the broader issue of using advertising on shelters as a method of maintaining them is used in many locations around the county. He said that he supported this concept but added that the City of Tampa has a policy against allowing advertising on shelters.

Marilyn Smith commented that the JC organization must get permits like anyone else to locate benches in the public right of way. She recommended that code enforcement get involved in the issue raised by Mr. Lewis.

Kathy Harris asked Ray Miller to describe HARTline’s short and long term revenue growth goals.

Ray Miller responded that a recent action was to allow exterior advertising on a much larger percentage of the fleet. He said that an RFP is currently on the street to accomplish that. He noted that partnerships do not come free and they

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often involve consequences related to expectations of both parties, administration costs and changes to the system. He commented that fares are planned to increase at regular intervals. He added that other revenue opportunities are restricted by the limited amount of transit service provided.

Kathy Harris asked about developing more on-demand trip services.

Ray Miller described current problems in providing service in the Southshore area and discussions with the communities located there to develop new ideas for service with the resources currently spent there.

Carlton Lewis asked about other ideas for developing more revenue.

Ray Miller responded that federal regulations restrict what can be charged for certain categories of fares such as ADA. He also noted that federal legislation prevents HARTline from doing charter services except under very limited circumstances.

Kathy Harris responded that she believe that among the current services being provided for ADA service, on-demand service and charters there is a lot of room to develop a more entrepreneurial spirit at HARTline.

Ray Miller agreed.

Open Discussion of HARTline Governance Issues

Kathy Harris recommended that the governance discussion be postponed until the next meeting given that insufficient time remained at today's meeting to do the topic justice.

Barbara Merritt seconded the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Kathy Harris asked that everyone look at the subcommittee recommendations to see which ones can be achieved under the current governance rules of HARTline and which ones would require a governance change.

Presentation of FASTA proposal

Neil Cosentino referred to a handout that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting. He described his group's community based system (CBS) proposal for transit. He likened a cell phone to a bus stop in his group's proposal. He noted that technology will allow everyone with a cell phone to obtain all the information they need to know to access transportation under his proposal. He explained that his priority is to expand and improve bus service without increasing cost. He compared that to the current situation and to other models. He described new

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methods of pricing and used the airline model of seat pricing as an example. He said that his group's proposal is based on a franchisee/franchiser concept that uses current ad valorem contributions from each community as the public funding source. Other revenues would have to be raised by the franchisee. He concluded that each community system would have to be chartered.

Carlton Lewis asked Mr. Cosentino to elaborate on a statement regarding research regarding HOV lanes. He asked what the findings were on how HOV lanes would benefit transit usage.

Neil Cosentino responded that a member of the FASTA group provided the research but that FASTA did not conduct its own research. He noted that more research is needed. He added that the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) should be asked to provide more assistance on issues like this.

Kathy Harris commented that CUTR is currently under contract to HARTline to provide this assistance.

Brian Blair noted that Mr. Cosentino's proposal is based on cell phone access and asked what percentage of bus riders did not have a cell phone.

Gloria Mills provided a guess that about 25 percent of riders don't have a cell phone. But she added that a more important consideration is one of the FASTA proposals for raising revenue by "selling seats". She commented that she believed most riders would not be able to buy a seat under that concept.

Mary Shavalier commented that HARTline is actively searching for new methods of providing service including some of the ones mentioned by Mr. Cosentino.

Kathy Harris asked Ray Miller what the increase in cost would be over the next five years of operating the existing transit system if no service changes were made.

Ray Miller responded that he would have his staff answer the question at the next meeting. He added that the current rate of cost increases is about 3 percent per year.

Final Public Comment

Ed Mierzejewski, CUTR director, advised caution in selecting measures of effectiveness to evaluate the value of transit service to unincorporated county residents. He noted that someone who rides on the county transit routes also benefits from the existence of route miles inside the city. He commented that attention paid to achieving productivity will be at odds with extending service in less productive areas which are generally located in the unincorporated county.

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He spoke to the recommendation to determine the percentage of residents within one-quarter mile of transit routes. He observed that the same standard should not be applied to all areas because many fewer residents live within a quarter-mile radius in less dense areas than in central areas. He mentioned walled subdivisions as an example of development that is difficult for transit to serve. He concluded that the county commission could influence this trend.

Chelsea Bridges left the meeting at about 3:18 pm.

Carlton Lewis referred to livable community concepts such as small town centers as a feature being adopted around the county to counter the walled subdivision mentality described by Mr. Mierzejewski.

Norbert Gobin commented on a prior service subcommittee discussion about HARTline's definition of express service that limited the number of stops allowed for pickups. He added that HARTline could improve access to transit by adding stops at subdivision entrances rather than limiting access to park and ride lots only. He reiterated his prior position that communities are entitled to know what their return on investment is for the ad valorem they pay into HARTline.

Kathy Harris asked what a good measure of effectiveness would be.

Ed Mierzejewski responded that CUTR had conducted a study on this topic about five years ago and that the study determined that many factors had to be taken into account. He added that the study showed there was not a single best measure because allocating transit service was often a balancing act between competing measures.

Kathy Harris asked for further clarification on what benefits county residents received from a center city bus system beyond the route miles they receive in their own community.

Ed Mierzejewski replied that the benefits were a strong central business district, cultural amenities such as the performing arts center and the hockey arena and, most importantly, a system that generates jobs that the entire population can access.

Kathy Harris commented that it had been very difficult to obtain from HARTline a clear definition of the benefits of the existing transit system to unincorporated residents that were in addition to route miles serving the county. She added that she believed that it would be to HARTline's credit if it could be more specific about those benefits. She continued that she believed the question needs to shift from having a bus stop in front of more suburban locations to providing more alternatives to county residents.

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Brian Blair referred to Planning Commission maps from a prior meeting that identified job growth centers in multiple locations in the county, not just downtown Tampa. He added that the projections indicate that the distribution of major business centers will be even more diverse in the future. He noted that Westshore was identified as the largest business center in the state, but he questioned how well the transit system has adapted to serve it. He concluded that measuring return on investment is essential. He referred to a recent effort by the County's Environment Protection Commission (EPC) to quantify its ROI as an example of how an organization that doesn't seem to have easily quantifiable ROI can, nevertheless, accomplish the task.

Mike McCoy noted that transit service in Hillsborough County is complicated by natural factors like having only 4 places to cross the Hillsborough River within the city. He also referred to discussions about effectiveness measures like cost per seat mile compared to the \$83 per hour cost of providing service. He noted that riders don't care about any of those things. He suggested that the real goal of HARTline is to get people where they want to go as quickly and conveniently as possible. He added that the majority of HARTline routes serve downtown Tampa even though Tampa's largest business center is Westshore. He also noted that the availability of cheap and/or free parking is a major detriment to expanded transit usage.

Ray Miller thanked the Study Group for the large amount of effort invested. He referred to the three themes mentioned by John Dausman at the beginning of the meeting of more service, less cost and greater equity. He commented that, of the three, equity was the most difficult and asked for help to achieve this goal. He commented that current land use policies are not favorable to transit, but he added that the Study Group has the ear of the county commission and could address that issue.

Brian Blair commented that the current land development process includes review and comment by HARTline staff.

Conrad Smith identified himself as a bus rider and that experience as a rider is very important to developing ideas for improving the system. He asked the group to "promote real examples" such as placing stops that reflect the natural "paths" of where people walk. He said there was a need for creative marketing to reach new groups. He praised HARTline's recent Gasparilla service as an example of creative marketing to get people who don't normally use transit to give it a try. He said that the best advice to anyone is to "ride the bus." He suggested creating promotional days such as "kids ride free on Saturday."

Brian Blair commented on seeing Mr. Smith traveling Dale Mabry Blvd. in his wheelchair next to traffic in an area that had no sidewalk. He added that the investment in marketing was wise if it can be measured by return on advertising

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dollars. He referred to HARTline's current radio campaign on 970 and hoped that a return on investment could be measured from that effort.

Norbert Gobin commented that riders liked the free Tribune newspapers that were distributed on new routes. He asked why the WIFI service did not seem to work on the Brandon expresses.

Ray Miller responded that WIFI was offered only on the New Tampa expresses as a trial amenity.

Kathy Harris noted that it is always easier to be creative when there is a pot of money to work with, but in HARTline's case there aren't enough efficiencies to be created, or enough fares to be raised, to solve HARTline's service issues because of what it costs just to maintain the system as it is constructed now. She added that growth demands of the unincorporated area for more service compound this problem. She concluded that a paradigm shift was needed to handle the future.

Brian Blair asked if HARTline could consider a sliding scale of fares to take into account rider income and service provided to generate more revenues.

John Dausman referred to research studies obtained from CUTR that investigated most of the approaches discussed by the Study Group. He noted that a wide variety of alternatives to structuring and providing transit service were in use around the country. He added that the successful ones had one common theme which was that success depends on the quality of implementation. He concluded that local involvement and local commitment appeared essential.

Brian Blair adjourned the meeting at about 3:40 pm.