

**HARTLINE STUDY GROUP MEETING**  
**Friday, March 3, 2006 9:05 AM**  
**601 E. Kennedy Blvd, 26<sup>th</sup> floor, Conference Room B**  
**Tampa, FL 33602**

Members Present (5)

Brian Blair, Chair  
Norbert Gobin  
Kathy Harris  
Carlton Lewis  
Barbara Merritt

Staff members Present

John Dausman, Study Group Consultant  
Christine Beck, HC County Atty's Office  
Ned Baier, HC PIng & Growth Mgmt  
Sandra Sroka, HC ADA Liason  
Debbie Ward, HARTline  
Mary Shavalier, HARTline  
Patricia Morrison, secretarial support

Members Absent (2)

Chelsea Bridges  
Brian Delamer

Others Present

Gloria Mills  
Ted Hull  
Bridget Chromwell, Atty

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Brian Blair, chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am. 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 and the HARTline mission statement.

Approval of minutes of February 24, 2006 meeting

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

Sandra Sroka spoke on her own behalf on one of the recommendations about performing a joint cost benefit analysis to determine if Sunshine Line and HARTline paratransit should merge. She said she thought the study was a good idea, but she was concerned about using private providers for ADA services. She commented that taxi service in Hillsborough County is poor and the worst in the country that she has ever tried to use in terms of getting an accessible cab.

She said she would be extremely concerned if we ended up with anything that was similar in terms of the philosophy and the manner in which the owners that operate that system could conceivably operate a Sunshine line or a paratransit line which is specifically catering to older individuals, vulnerable individuals or people with disabilities. She cautioned against service limited to private providers for people with disabilities who need reliable service.

Gloria Mills stated that her comments were very similar to Sandra Sroka's. She commented on discussions about privatizing and about joining the paratransit that HARTline provides with the Sunshine Line. She said she was a member of the Transportation Disadvantage Commission for Hillsborough County for about ten years, and noted that the Sunshine Line made a lot of improvements. When the "Americans with Disability's Act" was passed in 1990, HARTline did not operate ADA transportation; it was operated by the county, but because the county had hour and a half windows, that means that a person can be picked-up as early as an hour and a half before the actual time to be picked-up or an hour and a half after. She said all those things have been cleared up now. She expressed a fear about people who go to work and if they are late two or three times, then you lose your job because the employer is not going to be sympathetic to that. She said that when considering uniting HARTline ADA and Sunshine Line, we need to be careful that the transportation is going to be quality transportation that helps people who are trying to pick-up by their own boot straps rather than putting them in a position where they are going to try to do something and they are going to be knocked down. She also commented on a previous private organization from Atlanta called Argenbright. She said she was not against privatization, since she owned her own business. But this particular company hired low cost cabs that were not interested in doing a quality job. And therefore, the people who were using Argenbright were late or were not picked-up. One lady she remembered was taken to the wrong place and a lady in a wheel chair was left there at 7:30 at night by herself and the doctors had already closed hours before that.

Kathy Harris recommended modification to the recommendation where it says "but privately operated" to say "or" so that the meaning includes a review to look at all the different options.

Brian Blair recommended county oversight in contracting out to private companies. He said the option to look at merging was a good idea, but he did not want to do it without county oversight. He added that it is very important in any business if you hire a firm to come in and audit your business, there is going to be someone in that business that is going to be held accountable.

Kathy Harris asked Sandra Sroka where she had traveled that the public transportation system was best for people with disabilities, what community?

Sandra Sroka stated that largely they were the larger cities like Chicago and Boston where there are accessible cabs that you don't have to reserve well in advance. Just this week there were several people from Washington coming to Tampa, several people with disabilities, who called to make arrangements for a cab to pick them up from the airport and were told by United or Yellow Cab that they would have to have a week wait to be able to reserve a cab. So basically, Tampa has no accessible cab service.

Brian Blair stated he would address that at the next PTC meeting.

Gloria Mills commented that Hillsborough is the only county in Florida with a PTC. She added that in her opinion, it does not make things better it make things worse.

Brian Blair commented that was a legislative issue where we have been mandated to have public transportation commission oversight. It is basically put these for protection of the citizens.

Sandra Sroka commented that the PTC gave out more licenses to do business recently which is a good thing. Basically for a long time it was just Yellow Cab and United Cab and they are both owned by the same people.

Barbara Merritt asked Sandra Sroka, which Florida cities had good taxi service.

Sandra Sroka commented she hasn't traveled around Florida recently. It was a little bit better down in the Ft. Lauderdale, south Florida area. You still had to call some in advance but that was a number of years ago, not like today, but you could still get one.

Kathy Harris commented she was familiar with the Broward system that is run by a private company where the government helped provide the early infrastructure for the accessible cab system. She mentioned that Broward settled a big case dealing with ADA and mass transit this week. She asked that these news reports be distributed to the Study Group.

John Dausman asked for feedback on neighboring counties versions of Sunshine Line and their version of ADA which are completely different than we have.

Gloria Mills commented that she believed Orlando and LYNX to be one of the best in Florida.

Kathy Harris commented on her sister's experience in a wheel chair and that there is always such a fear of loosing the minimal service you have right now. And that fear will sometimes keep people from going to the next level. She said anything that we are recommending is to improve the system overall, but particularly for people who depend on the system and have disabilities. She

added that we want to look forward and make improvements without fear and feeling confident that we can maintain at least what we have now.

Pierre Mathurin distributed a document to the Study Group that was an update on some of the other areas around the country and what they are doing. He mentioned what is going on in Gainesville, Jacksonville, Milwaukee, Tucson and West Palm Beach.

### Open Discussion of HARTline Governance Issues

John Dausman commented on the handouts referencing a CUTR Study of Organizational Structure. The handout showed just the Florida Transit Agencies. He said he made calls on the governments that have independent authorities. Pinellas and Hillsborough seem to be very similar in multiple jurisdictions on their board. Jacksonville is a single entity, all the members are appointed by two people alone, the mayor of Jacksonville/Duvall and the Governor. There is no jurisdictional dispute. The most relevant example was LYNX in Orlando because they faced the very issues we are talking about ten years ago, and wrangled over how you build equity in the system. For the last ten years they have been doing a system that says equity means service provided in each community and you pay for the service you get. The formula included fixed route hours, actual ADA trips from the prior years and administrative costs allocated by population of 50 cents per population. And therefore, an assessment is made of each of its members based on the sum of those three factors. Even with this model, municipalities debate the accuracy of how cost is allocated. The question still exists, whether the model is more precise than the previous funding structure. The previous structure ten years ago was, once a year, go to each jurisdiction and beg for the money. So this model by inter local agreement was developed. He recommended a focus on instilling the entrepreneurial spirit not just as an overused catch word, but specifically providing service in new ways, controlling cost in new ways, developing revenues in new ways. He asked can those three things be done with moral suasion alone and called for the Study Group to think about what governance changes might be wise to instill that entrepreneurial spirit for those service, cost and revenue approaches.

Kathy Harris recommended looking at how the system is run; it's not about the money and not the service but the governance, the governance was causing the problems with the money and with the service. She felt that way for a couple of reasons:

- 1) There is no way to determine who the HARTline board is accountable to as a membership jurisdictional board although each of the members is appointed by the city, county or governor. The HARTline board as a board that is not accountable to anyone. When there is no accountability (particularly when using taxpayer dollars) then you have an equation that leads to finance issues and service issues.

2) The HARTline membership structure does not resemble normal membership groups like the "Y" where a member pays for the services they take advantage of or a member of a sorority where everyone in the sorority pays the same thing. The system that is set up with HARTline does not follow a membership structure whether you are either paying for a particular thing or service or everyone is paying for the same thing. In this case, the "everyone" would be the three jurisdictions that are members.

3) Plant City determined they could develop a feeder system at less cost than HARTline, so then Temple Terrace will figure that out shortly too. And then what you have left is the unincorporated areas and the City of Tampa. The amount of money the City of Tampa puts into is not even enough to maintain the system in Tampa. And so the HARTline system rests on the backs of the unincorporated areas. And as this county continues to grow, the unincorporated area is only going to get bigger. The problem, is the cost to maintain the system without any improvements.

Debbie Ward distributed a handout showing HARTline's funding needed over the next five years to maintain the current system.

Kathy Harris recommended an implementation of a system that can be accountable, find parity and to maintain a system without tax increases.

Kathy Harris stated the problem as a membership system that has no accountability to anyone. She questioned what impact the Study Group will have on the HARTline board when they are not accountable to the BOCC or to the City of Tampa or not accountable to the City of Temple Terrace or not accountable to the governor. No one of those jurisdictions can have any real impact on the outcome of what they did. Without doing one thing to change the system, every year it is going to cost more and more just to maintain the system. And that cost will fall essentially to the unincorporated area.

Brian Blair commented the reason that the Study Group project was brought forward by one of the commissioners was to put a referendum on the ballot asking the unincorporated area whether or not they wanted to pay property tax for HARTline service. He believed that if that was put on the ballot that people would want to save that half mill on their property tax. He said we have an obligation to make sure there is parity, improve the service, and improve the ridership. Some of the recommendations that this Study Group has already discussed have been implemented by HARTline. He believed that it will wind up as a choice to work together cohesively, and implement what we decide is going to be the best thing whether it's a change in governance that will help fix things that we are talking about right now, or if not, then, he could see four votes that

would ask to put on the ballot a referendum of not paying the half mil which would be detrimental to the bus system.

Kathy Harris commented that she thought that might be the wrong question for the voters. If you want to have a mass transit system the question may be better focused in terms of how the system should be structured, where the accountability should fall? She said let's assume that the unincorporated area took the approach that Plant City did, and say, well okay, we'll take our funding and we will build a feeder system into the downtown system and we will even give a little money to maintain the downtown system. The unincorporated area could do that, they could do it very well because they have a lot of money to do it. So the question is not about the money as much is it about the governance. How can the incorporated area have a real hand in how the system runs. And therefore, feel more confident in their tax dollars being used in a system that is a countywide system.

Carlton Lewis commented on the prognosis that HARTline would run out of money in five years. He commented on how agencies can take on a life of their own and without a public outcry, there is not going to be a significant change because it's like a large gey ball rolling down the hill sucking up our finances, our people, our resources, our services and we are not going to stop this ball unless we have a public outcry. And the only way we are going to have a public outcry is if people become aware of what the situation really is. As for the members, they are not willing to cooperate and embrace one another with a warm hug; we see that it's not happening with the trolley system downtown. He commented that he believed the HARTline board and the people that run HARTline are listening. They are trying to make it within the powers of the agency. He said that he doesn't see the gloom and doom, it's going to be subsidized ad infinitum, but as far as parity is concerned, he doesn't see parity as equality. It means basically fair. He referred to the YMCA there are also people that go there that receive the services at reduced rates because they are subsidized. So until such time the unincorporated people and the other partners come together, he said he doesn't think that we can do a whole lot to change it, but we can work from the inside with the people in the HARTline. He expressed there's not going to be a great dynamic change anytime soon because there is not sufficient outcry.

Brian Blair commented on a report last week that showed that the county services just dropped again in relation to the city.

Barbara Merritt commented on increasing community awareness.

John Dausman commented that there was not a reduction in total revenue miles but County revenue miles went up by about 50,000, the city revenue miles went up 73,000 for equal contributions.

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Norbert Gobin asked about the LYNX handout and asked if they are using the same model as we are as far as ad valorem taxes?

John Dausman commented no.

Kathy Harris commented that HARTline's current plan has \$119 million dollars in unfunded needs in that plan. That's the gloom and doom. There needs to be a question that addresses the structure and how you want to run a county wide mass transit system and what is the best structure to make that happen.

Brian Blair agreed.

Carlton Lewis commented that an agency needs to be more accountable to the public, the public is the only one that can raise their voices and make changes and bring about new laws. He added if we want to make people on the HARTline board elected public officials then we will have accountability.

John Dausman commented that the founders of HARTline apparently anticipated this very issue. HARTline's existing charter has provisions if the referendum did not pass. It says that in case the referendum does not pass, then the proposed budgets for each fiscal year will describe the method or formula for equitably allocating among the members, the operating, planning and capital cost of the authority. And then a paragraph later, it says with the same beginning language, that prior approval of each budget must be obtained from the member jurisdictions. He posed the question of changing the charter to the county attorney's office.

Christine Beck commented the charter can only be changed by the HARTline board of directors then it has to be ratified by the governing legislative bodies of each member.

Barbara Merritt noted that everything was created under general law and asked if there would have to be a bill that goes through to change that?

Christine Beck stated not if you could get the HARTline board to agree by a vote and then have it ratified by the members without a referendum.

John Dausman recommended putting each member much more in control of the finances they are providing and the services they get back.

Carlton Lewis stated that it's setting up a template for a possible riff.

Kathy Harris recommended that the Study Group put together as a recommendation to deal with governance issues and have it further studied maybe by CUTR, since they have done some preliminary work, to review the current system. She said she did not have the answer but that it is something

that needs to be further reviewed by an outside agency that has some knowledge of government and operations of systems. There are many models. She recommended against leaving an adversarial system in tact. She said we want to have a system that in the end is a system that has accountability to the people who are paying for it, is committed to the mission to provide the service and has a funding stream that is not subject to political issues.

Brian Blair agreed.

Barbara Merrit commented on the recommendation to have the BOCC and the HARTline board to jointly hire a consultant to perform a cost benefit analysis to determine if HARTline governance should change.

Kathy Harris offered to come up with the language for the next meeting and to send it out in advance so that everyone could review it and then be prepared to vote on it at the next meeting.

John Dausman cautioned against recommendation to hire more consultants. The county commission asked this group to identify the real problem. What should we do about it?

Kathy Harris stated that the Study Group is going to be in a position to say that in the course of 120 days, we have done a lot of work. We have so much documentation about service and finance and now governance. Given our limited time frame, we have been able to come up with some recommendations but there are some steps that must be taken. Maybe we do not need to dictate how those next steps need to be taken. She said she didn't come here believing that we would give them a blueprint on how to make the system work well and they would just do it.

Brian Blair stated we wouldn't be here if there wasn't a problem.

Mary Shavalier commented on the sub allocations within Orlando vs. Orange County. Orlando has a three county system and Tampa has a one county system. It is more of a challenge to look at a system in one county alone and saying unincorporated areas you have this need and the city has this need because of the data of our travel patterns.

Brian Blair stated that he thought Westshore is the largest center in the county.

Mary Shavalier stated that Westshore is the largest within the City of Tampa, but downtown is the most concentrated.

Kathy Harris stated that she pays taxes on a county system even though she never uses a park because she gets to have a say through her vote about the provision of services. She doesn't feel she has that same relationship as it

relates to the money spent for HARTline. Once you feel like you really have a say in something, even if it isn't going your way all the time, you still feel more supportive of that situation. In HARTline, the steps between the voter committing money to the system and the outcome, is too blurred and too far.

Mary Shavalier stated that HARTline has to get better at talking about this. She noted that residents of Valrico cannot get door to door service along a local route because the development patterns are not there but we have to look for other strategies to try to serve these areas.

Brian Blair commented that Jim Hostler did an outstanding job at showing where the density is growing in the county, the way the densities have grown in the unincorporated area. Therefore, there is a larger demand and it may be a different type of demand. Those citizens may be coming into Tampa. That's not the problem; the problem is there is not enough service, parity or equity for them such as circulator routes or service to other areas that are becoming denser in the county.

Mary Shavalier stated that she agreed that there are challenges out there and HARTline has to look at trying to serve county residents.

#### Taxes Models - Funding Streams

Gloria Mills had a question for John Dausman about the average ad valorem tax that a person actually pays for HARTline. She added that she never sees an amount over \$100 that they are paying for one year to pay for this service.

Norbert Gobin commented on the morning's paper that included a break out of all the houses throughout the county showing the percent increase at 41% increase in one area, and they show the average sale of homes in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range so a \$200,000 house out in Lithia means that they are contributing \$100 to HARTline.

Brian Blair commented that the newest figure for median home cost in Hillsborough County now is about \$255,000.

John Dausman answered he did not specifically calculate that number because the focus of the group is the issue of any disparity of service between center city and suburbs. This issue was that we have identified whole communities that all paid a \$100 house and have yet to see the first service or very little service. You could make the argument that a \$100 a home is not a lot, and they should be happy with that. The issue is trust, in other words, if more funding is needed and a community did not get any bus service for 20 years, why would they ever vote to raise it.

Kathy Harris asked for an answer to Gloria Mills question by the next meeting.

Gloria Mills commented that this has nothing to do with jurisdictions, as much as it has to do with how much is the person paying and we've seen the value of homes go up in the last ten years by triple and quadruple. She asked if we should have a different taxation that doesn't just tax homeowners.

Kathy Harris commented that the healthcare funding stream generates \$90 to \$100 million dollars a year to serve 20 thousand people. So if you compare that tax stream and the number of people that are served to the HARTline tax stream and the number of people that are served it shows a very interesting picture and both of them are services that are valuable to the people of the community but the money is generated in a totally different way.

Debbie Ward commented on what Commissioner Blair said about the average home being \$225,000, that's a \$115 a year with a homestead exemption.

Brian Blair commented that's good information and we could certainly determine the average number.

Kathy Harris expressed a personal belief that the funding stream should not be based on property tax.

Brian Blair stated that's legislative.

Kathy Harris stated there is both a legal and financial reason why the funding stream is not the correct one. But that's another other study group.

Barbara Merritt suggested looking at recommendation number 21. "HARTline needs to develop a customer orientation towards tax payers. Taxpayers need to know what they are getting for there dollar, this includes intangible benefits as well as bus miles. The service allocation process should be formalized which could go to the government to include: 1) multiple considerations, including input from ridership, 2) gate to the community, 3) funding of the jurisdiction, 4) evaluation of service against efficiency standards. This is not an endorsement to run a bus". She added you can explain something to someone why it's a benefit, people will pay for it. We've done it over and over again, e.g. "Pennies for Potholes."

## MOTIONS

Norbert Gobin made a motion to adopt item 21 and Barbara Merritt seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Brian Blair commented that if the Study Group goes to the BOCC with all of these recommendations it's going to be hard to get support. He suggested condensing them to a few firm recommendations. The detailed recommendations could be

included as back up material within the report. He added, the board is not going to sit and vote on each one of these.

Kathy Harris recommended a motion to consolidate to 10 recommendations to be submitted to BOCC.

John Dausman recommended adopting motions that say “the main message must address governance, must build into the system new ways of doing things and move more people.”

Kathy Harris commented that the Study Group can answer the questions in the Mission Statement and put these recommendations into the questions that are in our mission. Some of them may be options to accomplish these recommendations; some of them will deal with the cost benefit analysis. Once you start putting them into context of these questions, then it’s really not a big list.

Brian Blair commented that we’ve passed 3 or 4 motions that we feel would encompass all of the recommendations in order to give the board a choice of which direction they want to head in. The list of recommendations would be back up material to whatever the motion was. Send the report to them and give them time to digest this before the actual board meeting so that each BOCC member has an opportunity to read what we have done and see how this group and the citizens here have been working so hard. But it has to be clear and concise and in no more than 4 recommendations, otherwise it’s going to get lost.

Kathy Harris commented that if we are in agreement on our overall direction and concepts and then have our consultant look at how we are going to fashion this into a report. She offered to help with that process.

Norbert Gobin stated he agreed that 4 major recommendations would be the desired result. But he suggested the Study Group go through the list of 29 recommendations quickly and cull it out or consolidate and let the consultant use this as the basis for the wrap up.

Kathy Harris asked Norbert Gobin to lead that discussion.

### 29 CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. No objections, accept as a recommendation.
2. Modification of wording of defining “non-traditional” rider and consolidate.  
Kathy Harris recommended defining “non-traditional.”  
John Dausman recommended rewriting and accepting as a recommendation.
3. Consolidate with number 2.
4. Observation/comment, not a recommendation.
5. Consolidate 5 and 6.
6. No objections.

7. Consolidate 7 into 2 and 3.
8. No objections. Accepted as a recommendation.
9. Adopted. Recommend modification of wording to add "separate."
10. Adopted.
11. Recommend modification of wording to include "staffing levels" and combine 10 and 11.
12. Consolidate with 9.
13. Consolidate with 9. Comment, not a recommendation.
14. Recommend modification of wording to change "but" to "or" and add "proposed .... Government oversight." Wording should reflect "all".
15. Comment, not a recommendation.
16. Comment, not a recommendation.
17. Recommend policy on standing on buses used on express highways current safety concerns are not with the people, but the vehicle (buses).
18. Comment, not a recommendation.
19. Consolidate with 15 and 16 as comment.
20. Adopted. Recommend modification of wording to define "Parity."
21. Adopted.
22. No objections. Recommendation.
23. Recommendation.
24. Recommendation (open). Define "match," proportionally. Modify to shorten wording and write accurately.
25. Modify to shorten request and definition. Recommendation  
Kathy Harris stated that 25 and 26 gets into accountability issues.
26. Shorten wording, move detail to comments.  
Kathy Harris stated that people do not have enough access to the system.
27. Modify wording as a recommendation.

Carlton Lewis recommended analysis for quarter mile gaps in service and no service.

Kathy Harris commented that if you don't have a map or something that tells you how far the people are from the system, and that is updated regularly, then it is difficult to know what you are planning for or how you are planning.

John Dausman recommended service change based on data, density, and travel patterns.

28. Combine with 29 as a recommendation.
29. Combine with 28 as a recommendation.

Brian Blair asked the group if a statement should be added about financial risk of the street car.

John Dausman commented that the risk of total shut-down was reported to be \$33.5 million dollars owed the federal government. Partial shut-down is scaled

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back from that. HARTline alone is at risk of the consequences. The contract doesn't talk about what happens if it shuts down.

John Dausman commented that the contract should state what happens if the system shuts down.

Kathy Harris stated that HARTline exists on unincorporated dollars. The street car should recognize as a risk to all the members of HARTline, the City of Tampa is not solely paying for service, but the unincorporated area pays because all members in HARTline share the risks.

John Dausman asked if the street car assets could be turned over to the city.

Mary Shavalier said this could be done with Federal Transit Administration participation and approval.

Gloria Ward stated that HARTline has an internal audit going on through an outside agency looking at how we are funding that system and if we are recovering all of our cost through the contract with THS.

Ned Blaier commented that citizen appointees often view issues very differently from elected officials and this contributes to the lack of cohesive positions on the HARTline Board.

Norbert Gobin said that 80 to 90% of the riders on the MacDill expresses, get government subsidiary. The other 10% pay out of pocket. There are a lot more people who would ride if they had some other encouragement. The other encouragement would be to provide a military discount through the exchange outlet. Also the handicapped who ride expresses don't get a discount. HARTline turned down this proposal for lack of money. So his recommendation is the BOCC should encourage HART board to consider a military discount of 20% for individual purchases of tickets from the MacDill ticket outlet. The discount would be reevaluated each year. If the buses aren't full, why not try something different. This would be something to try out.

Kathy Harris supported that.

John Dausman stated a motion to cover this would be presented next Friday, encourage HART to take a broader view of revenue.

Brian Blair asked Debbie Ward if HARTline would be concerned that the existing riders would take more advantage of the discount than new riders, therefore, revenues would be reduced.

Debbie Ward commented that there is an existing fare structure but HARTline is in the process of marketing to new organizations and to companies to get them

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to purchase passes and then give it to their employees either free or at some discount.

Norbert Gobin commented he was recommending a limited trial so that HARTline would have some room to work out the details.

Carlton Lewis recommended a military discount apply county-wide.

Brian Blair recommended encouraging ridership growth by marketing, for example, a “kids ride free” program. He added that the discussion is a comment not a recommendation.

Kath Harris stated that we can bring it up not in terms of a recommendation, but maybe in the terms of our discussions with problems related to the governance.

Brian Blair asked about the impact of the rubber-tired trolleys used in downtown Tampa.

John Dausman commented that Commissioner Blair was talking about the buses that looked like street cars but they are buses and the downtown service that has a subsidy of \$578,000 a year which is largely paid for by county ad valorem.

Brian Blair asked the county attorney’s office to review the street car documents for risks to the county.

Brian Blair commented that the Study Group has its last action meeting next Friday.

John Dausman commented the Study Group will meet March 24 to discuss the draft report and, if approved, the report will be presented to the county commission on April 5 or soon after that.

Brian Blair adjourned the meeting at about 11:12 am.