

## **HARTLINE STUDY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Recommend that the HARTline Board set aside 100 percent of increases in [HARTline] ad valorem tax dollars from the unincorporated county area above the 2006 base line for expansion or increased service in the unincorporated area for a period of time until such time as HARTline provides a report to the BOCC satisfying the promises made to unincorporated residents who approved the ad valorem tax for HARTline.
2. Recommend that HARTline Board adopt a “customer service” orientation toward tax payers. Tax payers need to know what they are getting for their dollar. This includes intangible benefits as well as bus miles. The service allocation process should be formalized to include multiple considerations including input from ridership, needs of community, input from funding jurisdiction, and evaluation of service against efficiency standards. This is not an endorsement for empty buses but a challenge to provide service to those areas deemed inefficient under existing guidelines.
3. Recommend 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/Carrollwood/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.
4. 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. The independent firm should identify opportunities to achieve savings, including an analysis of staffing levels and salary and benefits. The salary and benefits analysis should also investigate and make recommendations about linking compensation of appropriate staff to success in accomplishing targets, for example linking compensation of grant writer(s) to new grants achieved.

## **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendations to the BOCC**

5. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board submit their annual budgets to each elected body of member jurisdiction for review and comment 30 days before approving.
6. BOCC appointments to the HARTline Board should reside in the unincorporated area, however sometimes BOCC Board members live in the City of Tampa but are elected by unincorporated residents. Preference should be given to BOCC members who live in the unincorporated area and then to those who represent a majority of the unincorporated area.
7. The BOCC should not provide any subsidy funding to HARTLINE unless equitably matched by the other member jurisdictions or used solely in the unincorporated area on a project to expand or improve service in the unincorporated area. County ad valorem and subsidy funding should not be used for specialized services in municipal jurisdictions unless specifically approved by the BOCC.
8. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board provide a plan of action for how they will shift their emphasis from moving more vehicles to moving more people and achieve that within the next two years. HARTline must change its philosophy to an entrepreneurial one which aggressively seeks partnerships with private companies and communities. Mass transit should emulate the port and airport which are largely operated by multiple private entities with a government oversight component.
9. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board and BOCC jointly perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine if the Sunshine Line and HART paratransit should be merged and/or government owned (BOCC or HARTline) or privately operated with government oversight. The cost/benefit analysis should also look at increasing and strengthening the on demand trip program overall.
10. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board provide the BOCC a report outlining the distribution of federal block grant funds received by HARTline and explain why Hillsborough County's share is less than Pinellas County and explain why the allocation of the increase is not consistent with population growth.
11. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board distribute grant funds within the HARTline system between the three member jurisdictions based on a formula that includes population, growth in population and the amount of local matching funds contributed by the member jurisdiction. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board provide a report that describes how federal and state block grant

funds are spent by HARTline in each member jurisdiction. If the HARTline Board wants to spend more of grant funds in a member jurisdiction than they contribute or than their population growth dictates then the HARTline Board must get prior approval from all member jurisdiction governing boards.

12. The BOCC should request that the HARTline Board prepare a report on how best to achieve equitable coverage in each member jurisdiction and indicate what would it cost and what the barriers are. The report should also show what percentage of residents, by member jurisdiction, live within a quarter-mile of a transit route and what percentage of residents, by member jurisdiction, live within a quarter-mile of a transit bus stop.
13. The BOCC should encourage HARTline to cultivate local businesses and local communities as partners in developing these feeder services.
14. The BOCC and the HARTline Board should jointly hire a consultant to determine if HARTLINE governance should change, if HARTline funding (ad valorem tax) should be changed and, if so, how, and review the economic activities of HARTline to determine if HARTline's mission, goals and objectives could be met more efficiently if the service was government owned but privately operated. The City of Tampa and the City of Temple Terrace may also want to participate. The study should investigate how member jurisdictions and communities can participate in setting the ground rules and definitions. For example, definitions like "transit supportive area" and "minimum density" are misleading because they relate to a specific type of service (local fixed route bus) and they imply that some areas are not ready or worthy of transit service. This discourages development of other solutions.

### **Recommendations to the HARTline Board of Directors**

15. HARTline should adopt a policy that definitions of service (local, express, on-demand) should vary by situation and need. For example, fixed route does not always mean bus, express does not always mean Park N' Ride, and van does not always mean ADA. An express route can look like a local route at the beginning of the route.
16. The transit system must be made more convenient for choice riders, higher income riders and other targeted groups as an essential part of planning transit services. HARTline should offer new services and amenities, such as "on demand" transit that is expanded beyond traditional paratransit trips, which appeal to riders that have a choice in transportation. HARTline should be encouraged to offer discount programs to groups of riders, such as a military discount sold through base outlets. HARTline should be encouraged to invest in "free days" on a regular basis to encourage choice riders to give the bus system a try.

17. HARTline must integrate rider input into the service allocation process in a more convincing manner. There are plenty of surveys. But there are too many service changes, too many changes that take riders by surprise, changes that are contrary to earlier promises and changes that are rescinded right after implementation. This indicates a transit organization not attuned to its customer(s). However one group of riders should not be able to shut out service to others. Requests to eliminate the stops between “A and B” must be avoided. The disabled community, elderly citizens, youth, and service in suburban areas need to be part of the whole planning and service allocation process, not pigeonholed by minimum federal mandates.
18. HARTline must focus on basic convenience and safety issues in its core system. HARTline must develop a plan to make all bus stops ADA accessible and provide more shelters. HARTline should develop a policy on how and when to provide additional capacity on buses with standing room only riders, especially expresses.
19. HARTline must cultivate organizations that are willing to partner with HARTline in financial support for both the core and feeder systems.
20. The HARTline Board should undertake a study whether to privatize the management of the core system. The HARTline Board should 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.