

**STATUS REPORT  
ON  
HARTLINE STUDY GROUP**

**Presented to  
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS**

**February 1, 2006**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### Overview

- A lot has been accomplished.
- The Study Group will be able to accomplish its mission.
- The BOCC will have recommendations in April.

### Timetable

- Study Group has been meeting weekly since November 18
- Four weeks lost to Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and flu bug
- Study Group will still finish by mid- March instead of mid-February

### Public Involvement

- No one excluded from the process
- Between 20 and 35 people have attended every meeting
- Multiple opportunities for public comment at each meeting
- Web site updated weekly with all agendas, minutes and public notices
- Email updates weekly to 44 organizations and individuals

### Methodology

- Study Group and HARTline mission statements read at the start of each meeting
- Every topic supported with documents, maps and statistics
- The experts in each topic are invited to explain programs, answer questions and identify issues.
- 23 organizations have made presentations or distributed information to Study Group so far
- 15 broad topic areas have been studied and discussed

### What have we learned so far?

- HARTline governance is a key issue
- Specific promises were made to voters to obtain funding when HARTline was created
- HARTline's charter is based on membership
- The Study Group is evaluating what safeguards, if any, were put in place to ensure the integrity of the initial referendum and the relationship between funding and service levels for each member
- All other issues seems to stem from this fundamental issue

### Conclusion

- The Study Group will be able to answer each question in its mission statement as assigned by the BOCC
- The Study Group is finishing its data gathering and starting its analysis and recommendation phase
- The Study Group will complete its work in mid-March
- Final recommendations will be presented to the BOCC in April

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### Overview

The HARTline Study Group has been meeting weekly since November 18, with only a few interruptions for holidays and schedule conflicts. Member attendance and participation has been enthusiastic. Public attendance has also been strong. The Study Group is already having a positive impact on unincorporated county transit service. The final recommendations will be significant. The Study Group is planning to finish its work in mid-March and make a presentation to the BOCC in April.

### Timetable

The Study Group set an aggressive, weekly, meeting schedule for itself to complete the assigned task. The BOCC established a 90 day timeframe for the Study Group. Even though there was a delay in appointments to the Study Group and interruptions for the holidays, the Study Group is on track to finish its work within 90 working days which will be mid-March, 2006. Soon thereafter the Study Group will deliver findings to the BOCC and make a presentation, hopefully at an April BOCC meeting.

### Public involvement

The Study Group adopted a formal policy to include public participation throughout its meetings. The meeting chairman can recognize questions and comments from anyone in attendance at any time. This has led to longer meetings but the resulting discussions are engaged and thorough. The end result is full participation by persons who were initially fearful of exclusion from the process.

In addition, a Study Group web page was created as part of the County website. The Study Group's meeting schedule, membership assignments, agendas, public notices, minutes and key documentation are available via the Internet to anyone and everyone, 24 hours a day.

An email distribution list was created to notify all interested organizations and individuals of every meeting and agenda topic. This list currently contains 44 organizations and individuals who receive weekly updates on the Study Group. The Study Group's incoming emails indicate that many of those individuals forward the Study Group's notices to a much wider audience on a regular basis.

### Study Group Methodology

The Study Group's mission statement and HARTline mission statement are read at the beginning of each meeting. The Study Group formed two subcommittees, one to consider financial issues and one to consider service issues. These subcommittees are finishing their work in early February.

The Study Group's work is based on documentation. Every topic is introduced with factual material, statistics, maps and other hard data. The Study Group seeks input from staff of HARTline and other agencies to explain programs, answer questions, and identify issues. HARTline staff has, in particular, been gracious with their time in attending every meeting, providing documentation and presenting material.

To date, the following organizations have made presentations, distributed material and/or participated in discussions: HARTline finance, planning, operations, and paratransit departments; Hillsborough Planning Commission executive team, and Planning Commission research and economic department; Hillsborough County Sunshine Line; Hillsborough County Attorney's Office; Plant City community development department, Hillsborough County budget department; Metropolitan Planning Organization; Hillsborough County ADA Liaison; Hillsborough County Planning and Growth Management; South Shore Roundtable; Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce; Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council; and Tampa Downtown Partnership. In addition numerous other organizations provided position statements and/ or research to be considered by the Study Group. Among them were Hillsborough Community College; Center for Urban Transportation Research; Florida Department of Transportation; Plant City Chamber of Commerce; Hillsborough Advocates for Improved Transit; Coalition 4 Responsible Growth; and Florida Air & Surface Transportation Association FASTA and several community activists. Input from other organizations is still being sought.

Among the topics considered so far were: HARTline Charter and authorizing legislation; amount and quality of transit service provided in unincorporated county; job and population growth trends in unincorporated county; methodology used to allocate service among HARTline members; outreach methods used by HARTline to determine community and rider input and preferences; referendum intent and subsequent history of service; basis of federal and state funding; tangible and intangible benefits of transit; ADA legal requirements and community needs; HARTline management's view of who its customer is and the services it provides; public perception of bus service, size of buses and ridership usage; components of HARTline budget and cost trends; other communities' approaches and solutions to equity, efficiency and funding issues; future transit needs in unincorporated county both funded and unfunded; options for raising revenues other than taxes.

#### Preliminary Consensus

It is clear that there will be significant findings and recommendations coming out of this project. The recommendations will cover service delivery, finance, budgeting and governance. A significant discovery so far is the documentation that exists about HARTline's initial beginnings and the referendum that created the current funding stream and structure. The Study Group is evaluating the issue of governance and what, if any, safeguards were put in place to ensure the integrity of the initial referendum and the relationship between the level of services and funding. The subcommittees are reviewing both tangible and intangible benefits to HARTline. The Services subcommittee has placed emphasis on service delivery in each of HARTline's product lines, particular attention was given to the relationship between the County's Sunshine Line and HARTline paratransit.

The most significant finding thus far is that the overall community has a genuine interest in improving public transportation. Many of the recommendations that will be presented at the conclusion of this process will come directly from the participation of the community.

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Conclusion

The Study Group will be able to address each question in its mission statement as assigned by the BOCC. The Study Group is nearing the end of its data gathering and issue investigation phase and beginning its analysis and finalization phase. The Study Group will be able to complete its work in mid-March and present final recommendations to the BOCC in April.

Attachments:

- Study Group Mission Statement
- Brandon News Article of Study Group Progress
- History of County Funding of HARTline
- Selected Pages from Study Group Web Page