

**HILLSBOROUGH AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MAJOR PROJECTS AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, October 5, 2009 at 8:30 AM
HART Administrative Office, 1201 East 7th Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605**

Board Members Present (6)

Wallace Bowers
John Byczek
Councilmember Ron Govin
Alison Hewitt
Dave Mechanik
Dr. Steven Polzin

Staff Members Present

David Armijo
Sarah Buerkle
Sylvia Castillo
Joe Escobedo
James Fogarty
Philip Hale
Mary Lou Maynes
Brenda Mowen
Lena Petit
Bob Potts
Mary Shavalier
Deb Tamargo

Others Present

Ned Baier
Leo Auger
Ted Jackovics
Clark Jordan-Holmes, JJH

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sign-in sheets are attached.

Meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m.

Commissioner Rose Ferlita requested that her memorandum of absence be read into the record. It stated that she is chairperson of the Energy Initiative Group and must attend a previously scheduled event and apologizes for any inconvenience her absence may have caused.

Mr. Bowers arrived at 8:36 a.m.

Chairperson Hewitt read into the record Mr. York's e-mail informing the Board that he will be absent due to a scheduling conflict. Mr. York requested that his comments be read into the record: "After reviewing information in the HART board packet, I am very enthused with this service. It appears this will be an excellent new way to fill a need in areas that are underserved. Recent surveys informed us that some of the lowest areas of support of the sales tax are in the south county and hopefully this new Flex Service will help get HART's name out there to the residents so they can form some sort of brand recognition."

Chairperson Hewitt welcomed attendees to the committee meeting and referred to the July 20, 2009 Major Projects Committee meeting minutes provided in the packet.

INFORMATION ITEM

HARTFlex Service

Mr. Joe Escobedo presented the staff's proposal to implement the new Flex service in the eastern part of the county that incorporates underserved areas such as Brandon, Seffner, Ruskin, Wimauma and Sun City Center. He noted that the first proposed route serves the Brandon and Valrico areas; it is 13.8 miles and hits a lot of key community-based destinations. Mr. Escobedo said the Seffner route is 11.4 miles and serves the areas major locations. He reported that the 12.5-mile Ruskin route services the Iron Gate apartments, HCC and the regional services center, and interlines with another proposed route that will serve Sun City Center and Wimauma. Mr. Escobedo noted that the Sun City Center/Wimauma route is 14.6 miles and is planned to go to major community centers which would generate a lot of passengers. Mr. Escobedo continued by saying that one vehicle per each route would be required, with a total number of four vehicles and two spares. He indicated that in the future staff will be requesting the HART Board's authorization to purchase the vehicles. Mr. Escobedo then explained that the routes will have multiple time points in each service area; individuals who live in a ¾ mile buffer area for each route will be able to call a dedicated phone line from 7 days to 3 hours before a requested pick-up time. He indicated that vehicles would deviate from the routes for scheduled pick-ups and return to these locations. Mr. Escobedo remarked that subscription service will be available to customers who use the system at least three times a week. He noted that the current fare for the pilot program will be \$1.00 for the first six months, and that senior fare will be \$.50. Mr. Escobedo indicated that the hours of service will be Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays. He mentioned that during the first year of operations there is an estimated budget of \$1.3 million that will include 21 full-time and part-time employees, maintenance, operations and other expenses. Mr. Escobedo said that staff will be requesting the Board's authorization to purchase vehicles at the October 19 Board meeting, and from October to December the operation procedures and marketing materials will be developed.

Dr. Polzin asked for comment on the decision to introduce a new type of service when HART is experiencing financial constraints.

Mr. Armijo responded that two years ago there was a plan to provide this service, but revenue losses delayed its implementation. He said resources are now available due to savings of \$1 million plus after a number of organizational changes and cost reductions that improved efficiency. Mr. Armijo remarked that the timing of the project seems to work well, with the express routes ridership up nine percent from last year's record-breaking total. He stated that staff is aware of a potential shortfall in the FY2011 budget, however is optimistic that it could be resolved in advance.

Dr. Polzin expressed concern that other service might suffer to continue Flex service.

Mr. Armijo replied that staff will continue to look for ways to save. He noted that one example is signing a multi-month fuel contract. He noted that this will allow HART to save tremendous amounts of money, which will help balance the budget. Mr. Armijo said that HART has also not drawn upon any of the reserves in the past two to three years. He then commented that Flex service will give HART presence in the areas it has not been servicing in the past.

Dr. Polzin asked what kind of vehicles would be used for this service and if they would be funded by a capital grant.

Mr. Escobedo replied that cut-away vehicles will be used for Flex service and that they will be purchased with paratransit funds.

Dr. Polzin noted that since it is a premium service, the proposed fare structure should be only temporary.

Mr. Bowers commented that the service to the Brandon and Valrico areas will cover many school zones which will allow many students to participate in extra-curricular activities for which schools do not provide transportation.

Mr. Armijo suggested that the Board evaluate HART's fare structure on an annual basis.

Mr. Govin asked if patrons would be required to pay a fare difference if they transfer from a Flex to a regular route.

Mr. Escobedo answered that patrons would have to pay the fare difference.

Dr. Polzin commented that the hours of operation on the weekends are generous and would allow people to commute to their jobs. He said the routes need to be consistent with the established local routes.

Mr. Mechanik asked why HART does not have any contractual agreements with the local school districts to provide after-school transportation like other areas of the country have established.

Mr. Armijo replied that historically HART has been limited by charter regulations. He noted that congressional regulations prevent HART from providing a separate service for schools, although stops are allowed to be at school sites.

Mr. John Byczek arrived at 9:00AM.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

New Starts Project Update

Mr. Auger outlined the purpose and need of the project to address the mobility needs of the county's growing population and provide a range of mobility choices. He noted that population and employment density are important in comparing the measurements of need. Mr. Auger reported that a significant growth in employment is projected from 2006 to 2035; 81 percent growth in population density is projected, with 77 percent growth in employment in the study area. He said that 43 percent of all trips in the county are either to, from or within the study corridor, which puts the agency in a good position to move forward. Mr. Auger stated that staff is trying to achieve three major goals: to promote sensible and sustainable growth patterns, to provide a cost-effective and efficient transportation investment strategy, and to enhance the quality of life within the study area. He stated

that to date there have been approximately 30 public meetings and discussions for the Alternative Analysis, including three public workshops in September as well as additional coordination with all the partners involved. Mr. Auger announced that the study website has been established at www.gohartaa.org. He indicated that public input resulted in the creation of the spaghetti map with all suggested alignments. Mr. Auger then spoke about the three-part screening process: the problem/purpose and need statement, goals, objectives and criteria development, development of the long list of alternatives, and the Tier One initial screening. He said the Tier Two screening looks at a lot more criteria and gets very specific and consistent with what HART needs to submit for the New Starts project process for the final analysis of the alignment selected. Mr. Auger stated that at the October 19 Board meeting, the Board will be asked to approve the alignments to go into the next stage of the screening process based upon the costs because there are different costs based upon the different corridors.

Dr. Polzin stated that he is excited and enthused to see the range of options that are here, and that one of the challenges of the project is giving proper attention to the details. He noted that success or failure of the project is embedded in the detail of the work. Dr. Polzin also encouraged staff to look at other options for connection with the downtown convention center, the aquarium, Channelside and even the major downtown buildings. He also said he was intrigued by the changes for the 2035 projected population and employment data.

Mr. Auger continued by stating that on July 29, 2009, the FTA changed its weighing criteria with 80 percent of the weighing now being mobility and cost effectiveness, land use, and economic development, each at 20 percent; and a 10 percent weighing each for operating efficiencies and environmental benefits. He noted that the weight changing has allowed more properties nationally to qualify for federal funding which will create more competition for HART. Mr. Auger stated that the FTA is looking for adopted plans and polices which need to be in place, including limits on parking, transit supportive densities and past performance in implementation, such as the streetcar. He indicated that the best opportunity to increase the project's rating is to show legally binding framework in station areas, record success and the framework for success. Mr. Auger stated that when HART goes into the preliminary engineering stage of the process, staff needs to have station area plans well underway, TOD zoning recommendations moving along, implementation tools identified, work underway with developers and have supportive development proposals for some stations. He noted that the keys to TOD success are getting the planning right, applying the power of partnerships, planning a district, ensuring HART is market driven, which is the most important, and designing it for the pedestrian. Mr. Auger said HART staff met with the FTA on August 25 and 26 to discuss the model and analysis.

Mr. David Mechanik left at 10:00AM.

HART Rapid Transit Investment Plan

Ms. Shavaliere spoke about HART's challenges to secure more funding to get where it needs to be with the enhanced revenue plan. She said the timeline for critical steps has recently changed and a plan has been developed to address the needs for the countywide program. Ms. Shavaliere explained that it will enhance the existing service, extend service to new areas, and introduce new service types, such as the Flex route service, and will ultimately move people faster to get where they need to go to make transit

a better choice. She noted that the service is trying to connect people from activity centers to their destinations and bring service to suburban areas. Ms. Shavaliere stated that new local routes that include Brandon, South County, East County and the Northwest Hillsborough corridor would feed twelve areas within the county and provide services in the Plant City area. She remarked that if HART wants to get Plant City to support the sales tax referendum, it has to provide services to that region. Ms. Shavaliere said that 11 new express routes are a part of the strategy to serve the suburban areas from New Tampa to South County. She presented the maps with the proposed Bus Rapid Transit corridors, North-South, East-West, Dale Mabry/Himes, SR 60/Brandon, and USF to New Tampa.

Dr. Polzin noted that Brandon is a premium corridor. He commented that Brandon should be considered a second priority for introduction of Bus Rapid Transit service.

Ms. Shavaliere continued by describing the revenue assumptions for collections from sales tax, ad valorem tax, federal and state capital funding, and fare revenue. She spoke about additional funding scenarios that include $\frac{1}{2}$ cent for transit and $\frac{3}{4}$ cent for transit over the course of 30 years, and dropping it to $\frac{1}{2}$ cent thereafter. Ms. Shavaliere noted that both scenarios are now being analyzed and finalized. She also stated that the timeline on the critical steps is being finalized, with the review with the County scheduled for October 6, 2009. Ms. Shavaliere said that the County TTF makes its recommendations on projects and funding on October 12, and that on October 19, the HART Board will be requested to pass a motion in support of the referendum. She indicated that on November 4, the BOCC will consider the referendum recommendations, and if approved, a sales tax referendum would be held in November of 2010 and the sales tax collection would begin in January 2011.

Mr. Bowers commented that it is important to receive and include public input from the Brandon area.

Mr. Armijo stated that outreach is scheduled with other chambers in the future, including Brandon. He said a lot of communication is needed for the community to move this process along.

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.