

Regional Transit Roundtable Recap
Wednesday, August 29, 2007
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Welcome

Agenda Item #1 – Ms. Deborah Kynes - TBRPC Vice-Chair, PSTA Chair

Ms. Kynes welcomed the participants to the roundtable and had the attendees introduce themselves to the group (9:10 a.m.)

Agenda Item #2 – Identifying Potential Transit Riders

After being introduced by Mr. Manny Pumariega, Mr. Marshall Flynn with TBRPC went on to present a possible methodology for using fine level data for identifying potential transit riders. Mr. Flynn explained the need for more detailed origin to destination data and how this is often difficult to obtain.

Mr. Flynn began with a brief discussion of the currently available coarse level of detail data and some early attempts to incorporate finer data in California. He went on to explain the potential for using the United States Postal Service Zip Code + 4 dataset as a base to identify residential locations and the corresponding places of employment for those residents. Mr. Flynn described and displayed the process by which he was able to take the USPS Zip Code + 4 GIS line file and convert these to points and polygons.

Overall, Mr. Flynn and Mr. Pumariega see this level of data as a potential tool in identifying promising neighborhoods to serve with transit service. The key will be to establish a mechanism to collect this data (Zip Code + 4) from employers to assist in targeting their employees based on the commuting patterns.

Some questions followed this presentation including concerns of possible issues with privacy law and establishment of a pilot program. Mr. Flynn stated that privacy concerns are of great importance here but that he feels the level of detail may not be too great as to compromise privacy but may still substantially help to increase transit planning capabilities. Additionally, it was stated that this presentation only represents a first step in looking into using this type of data and it will take some more steps and investigation before this type of analysis will be able to be completed on a normal basis.

Agenda Item #3 – “Transit Working Group” Concepts for Regional Transit

Pinellas County Commissioner Ronnie Duncan and Mr. Brian Smith with the Pinellas County MPO presented the initiatives identified by the Regional Transit Work Group. This group comprised originally of 38 elected officials during their first meeting in February and since has included staff level groups to identify connectivity initiatives within the region.

Commissioner Duncan explained the first steps of this working group including the compilation of the individual MPO transit plans to identify their overlap and potential for regional connectivity. He also stated the importance of this group and its identified initiatives as complimentary to the recently established Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA).

Following Commissioner Duncan’s introductory comments, Mr. Brian Smith explained the process the working group used to establish their initiatives/proposals. Mr. Smith stated that the group looked at the individual MPO transit plans, key corridor projects, and the corridors identified in the Strategic Regional Transit Needs Assessment (SRTNA) recently completed by FDOT.

Mr. Smith said that the first priority for the group was a regional rail connection between St Petersburg and Tampa. The map also includes current rail lines that make sense as potential connections but the group kept in mind that most of the rail lines are currently being using for freight movement. Mr. Smith explained that the other types of connections identified included ferry service between Bradenton, St

Pete, Tampa, and Apollo Beach and additional enhanced transit connections. These ideas displayed on the map were approved by the group and continue to move forward as potential projects.

Mr. Ned Baier added that Hillsborough County is currently completing a project that is reviewing all of the previous water taxi and ferry service studies that have been done in the region.

Mr. Smith closed by saying that the Transit Working Group may convene again later this year and that each forum such as the Working Group and the Regional Transit Roundtable have value to the transit discussion because they include a wide variety of attendees and incorporate diverse stakeholders and their views.

Agenda Item #4 – Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) Update

Florida Department of Transportation District 7 Secretary Don Skelton provided an update on the establishment and first meeting of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA).

Secretary Skelton stated that the first meeting, held last week, was mostly organizational in nature and included much legal discussion over establishment of bylaws, etc. Secretary Skelton explained that the master plan, to be completed by August 2009, will be using the recently completed Strategic Regional Transit Needs Assessment (SRTNA) as its basis. This plan will move towards a PD&E type plan that will then be eligible for FTA funding.

The next TBARTA meeting is scheduled for September 21st.

Following Secretary Skelton's presentation some discussion occurred that mostly focused on the importance of the local transit agencies connecting up with a regional system and the significant amount of public outreach that will be necessary in the upcoming years to get a regional transit system in place.

Agenda Item #5 - Once Around the Table/Additional Discussion

Following the formal presentations, Ms. Kynes requested that the region's transit agency representatives give a brief update to the group on recent activities and other news related to their agency.

Transit agencies

HARTline (Hillsborough) – they have appointed a new executive director, Mr. David Armijo; are receiving \$40 million for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and park & ride lots (Nebraska Ave and Hillsborough Ave corridors); spending approximately \$10 million in ITS for buses to improve the system and upgrade the technology (this is 20% complete and should be finished in the next 12 months); and HART has received federal funding for 2 studies that will be useful for BRT and rail planning; a transit on board ridership study and a travel delay study.

PCPT (Pasco) – they have experienced a significant increase in ridership and should reach 1 million rider this year; have their GPS/AVL system now in place; and they are currently working on a 10-year transit development study.

MCAT (Manatee) – they have planned an Anna Maria to Sarasota beach trolley with 30 minute service that will be beginning soon (FDOT funded); a new transit center will be built in Palmetto near the old DeSoto mall; also looking at a potential new downtown Bradenton transit center; and they have installed approximately 30 new bus shelters this year.

PSTA (Pinellas) – they have also experienced continued ridership increases; commuter routes have risen 20%; bikes on buses is up 40%; finishing installation of APC on the buses for passenger counts; and their search is still continuing for a new executive director and the new director should be in place by the end of the year

SCAT (Sarasota) – they continue to complete/implement projects with MCAT; and Route 99 now continues from Bradenton to Sarasota without transfers at the county line.

After the briefs, provided by the region's transit agencies, Ms. Kynes asked for any additional questions or comments from the group.

Ms. Jan Parham shared with the group that Polk County is underway with establishment of the Polk Transit Authority and that they are looking for any guidance the region may have on coming up with bylaws, etc in the establishment of such an authority.

Mr. Bob Herrington announced that Sarasota has submitted a Small Starts application for a BRT route in Sarasota.

Ms. Sandi Moody with Bay Area Commuter Services shared with the group the details of this year's Commuter Choices Week which is scheduled for October 1-5. BACS is holding numerous events during that week and is trying to significantly increase participation in this initiative. Additional information is available on the BACS website.

Mr. Bill Jonson raised a concern with a recent PSTA ridership survey and how difficult it was to collect responses from the businesses in the area. He feels that the TBARTA effort may be able to better reach out to business leaders and to collect their input.

Lastly, Mr. Ken Hoyt offered to share some transit agency data analyzed over a 10-year period for those in the audience who would like to stay for a little while following the meeting.

Ms. Kynes adjourned the roundtable (10:55 a.m.).

List of Attendees

Ned Baier – Hillsborough County Growth Management
Jim Byers – PSTA
Mike Carroll – PCPT
Ronnie Duncan – Pinellas County Commission
Cassandra Ecker – Carter & Burgess
Becky Hayes – MCAT
Bob Herrington – Sarasota/Manatee MPO
Ken Hoyt – Citizen
R.B. Johnson – PSTA, Indian Rocks Beach
Nadine Jones – Aviation Authority
Bill Jonson – PSTA, City of Clearwater
Deborah Kynes – City of Dunedin, PSTA Chair, TBRPC Vice-Chair
Jack Mariano – Pasco County, TBRPC
Elaine McCloud – City of Tampa
Greg Miller – TBRPC
Sandi Moody – BACS
Jan Parham – FDOT
David Persaud – HART CFO
Manny Pumariaga – TBRPC
Mary Shavalier – HART
Don Skelton – FDOT District 7 Secretary
Brian Smith – Pinellas County MPO
Joe Smith – Tampa Bay Partnership
Doug Uden – Pasco County MPO
Jim Van Pelt – Sarasota/Manatee MPO
Tammy Vrana – Renaissance Planning
Thelma Williams – PCPT
Avera Wynne – TBRPC
Allison Yeh – Hillsborough County MPO