

ARC COMMITTEE MEETING FOLLOW-UP

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE March 12, 2015 Meeting Notes

Voting Members Present:

Commissioner Tim Lee, Chair
Commissioner Buzz Ahrens
Mr. Fred Daniels
Commissioner Charlotte Nash
Commissioner Tom Worthan

Non-Voting Members Present:

Mr. Christopher Tomlinson
Commissioner Jeff Turner
Mr. Doug Hooker
Mr. Keith Parker
Commissioner David Austin
Ms. Carol Comer

Voting Members Absent:

Mr. Kerry Armstrong
Mr. Clark Boddie
Mr. Sonny Deriso
Commissioner John Eaves
Interim CEO Lee May
Mayor Kasim Reed

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Mr. Dan Moody
Commissioner Richard Oden
Commissioner Pete Amos
Commissioner Bob Blackburn
Commissioner Keith Ellis
Commissioner Chipper Gardner
Commissioner Pat Graham
Commissioner Kevin Little
Commissioner Tommy Smith
Jonathan Lewis (City of Atlanta)
Commissioner Charles Oddo
Ms. Crystal Odum-Ford

Actions Taken:

A quorum was not present, and the meeting was held for informational purposes. There were no comments given from the public.

1. Welcome, Chair's comments:

Chairman Lee welcomed everyone to the Regional Transit Committee meeting. No quorum, no public comment.

2. FTA 5307/5311 Process Discussion

Mr. Kofi Wakhisi presented an update on transit funding issues for rural transit systems. These issues are a result of changes to the urbanized area boundary as a result of the previous US Census. These changes happen after an area meets certain urban densities, and then they are reclassified as urbanized. Many of the communities that are being reclassified as “urbanized” through the Census still have demand response services. Demand response services are funded by federal and local match, or 5311 formula funding from the federal government. When a community becomes “urbanized” they are then eligible for 5307 transit funds instead of 5311 transit funds. The 5307 formula funding (fixed route transit) is slightly different than the 5311 formula funding in that a smaller percentage of these federal funds can be spent on operations. This requires the region and individual communities to evaluate how best to help transition.

Ms. Crystal Odum-Ford from GDOT gave remarks about this change, and GDOT’s efforts to ease the pain for communities transitioning from rural to urbanized. There are currently 114 rural transit operators across the State of Georgia. GDOT is working on a complex issue in trying to maximize funding to rural transit agencies, and trying to maintain or improve upon their funding levels. Ms. Odum-Ford highlighted that while population is one of the key factors in determining eligibility for 5311 funds, that low income and senior citizens also help qualify communities to receive these funds. Ms. Odum-Ford stated that GDOT uses three factors to determine 5311 eligibility and funding levels:

1. The number of eligible trips, i.e. rural to urban, urban to rural, rural to rural. Urban to urban trips are not eligible as they do not provide a rural transit connection.
2. The percentage of rural population compared to urban population. Take percentage of that area to determine additional allocation.
3. Percentage of community that is low income, elderly or disabled. Some 5311 allocations can be determined off of that eligibility.

Board comments and questions

Chairman Lee inquired on when GDOT’s guidelines would be complete.

Ms. Odum-Ford stated that they would be complete within the next few days.

Mr. Cain Williams added that these “urbanized” changes affect Cherokee, Henry, Forsyth, and Coweta County specifically.

3. CCT Flex Bus Service

Ms. Gail Franklin presented on CCT's new flex route bus service. She highlighted that this is the first transit expansion in Cobb County in some time. The Flex service is intended to provide transit service in areas that don't have low income and under-employed neighborhoods. The service will begin operations March 23rd, 2015, and will serve three zones in South Cobb (two in Powder Springs and one in Austell). The objective is to provide the best service possible in a suburban environment. Fare is \$2.50, Monday-Friday 7AM – 7PM.

Ms. Franklin reviewed the four steps involved when requesting a trip on Flex:

1. Customer provides trip details to reservationist;
2. Customer verifies details from reservationist;
3. FLEX will pick the customer up at the verified location;
4. FLEX drops customer off at destination.

In addition to Flex picking up riders at a pre-arranged destination, there are also set collection points along the routes that provide a consistent location where people can catch the FLEX shuttle. These collection points also offer free transfers to CCT Local bus service. The Flex bus routes serve these collection points once every hour.

Board comments and questions

Chairman Lee inquired about how the three Flex route zones were selected.

Ms. Franklin stated that CCT looked at census data to find where there were high populations of seniors, persons with disabilities, or low income households lived. This is a two year pilot.

Chairman Lee stated that this was an opportunity for Cobb County to help serve an area that we had previously had to cut fixed route service during the financial downturn. This new Flex service will allow Cobb to grow the service at an interim step until Cobb can implement more robust bus service. He noted that communication and outreach was critical, and that when the previous transit service had been cut Cobb staff realized that even though this was an area of the county with the greatest need, many residents were not aware that the transit service was there.

Ms. Franklin stated that one of the objectives was to create ownership of the transit service in the community. Public involvement efforts were focused on creating ownership with local organizations and community activists.

Mr. Cain Williamson mentioned that MARTA and Clayton County have been evaluating some FLEX route services in their transit expansion as well.

4. One-Click/Simply Get There Website Launch

Ms. Janae Futrell with ARC presented on Simply Get There, which is a rebranding of the “One Click” project. Simply Get There launched last week at www.simplygetthere.org. The website is mobile enhanced, so a user can access the site on a web browser on their phone. Ms. Futrell highlighted that user feedback indicated that the trip planning portal needed to provide clear transit options, and to be sorted by time, cost and ease of access.

After getting the input from a diverse set of partner groups, ARC developed the Simply Get There website. A user’s experience begins by first selecting all the transportation options that they are interested in taking. After putting in the trip destination, the Simply Get There portal provides a number of options for someone to select from. The portal gives the user the ability to easily change the departure and arrival times. Simply Get There also provides information on the walking portion of the trip. Additionally the portal provides the user the ability to add the trip request to the region’s carpool matching system.

One of the newest features is crowd sourcing any hazards and obstacles that users encounter when traveling. Someone with a disability would be able to note that an area lacks appropriate sidewalks, ramps or ADA access. This gives others the ability to plan their trip accordingly, and notified the proper authorities on the need to fix the concerns.

Board comments and questions

Commissioner David Austin inquired about how we provide access to this trip planning portal for those that don’t own a computer or smart phone, and if ARC would be partnering with libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, or other organizations where someone could look up the information.

Ms. Futrell highlighted that ARC is looking to partner with organizations where folks could inquire about their transit options.

Chairman Tim Lee stated that the portal is a wonderful step forward in trying to make it easier for folks to get to different locations across the region.

Chris Tomlinson asked how this portal compares with the mobile app RideScout?

Ms. Futrell stated that the biggest difference is that other trip planning portals don’t provide specialized services for those with disabilities. Simply Get There was designed in such a way that it enables all users to plan a trip, regardless of any disability.

5. Project Updates

Legislation Update:

Mr. Scott Haggard with ARC gave the Regional Transit Committee an update on the current State legislative session. HB170 passed the House with no specific transit provisions other than counties will be given the option to use a SPLOST for transit funding. Mr. Haggard stated that there are ongoing conversations about \$100,000,000 going towards state bond for transit capital. There’s also intent to use

the fees from alternative transportation vehicles towards an annual allocation for transit. There are also several MARTA related bills that passed in the House, the first of which eliminates that 50% capital, 50% operations funding restriction, another bill eliminated the option for counties to join MARTA at the half-cent rate. Lastly, HB386 attempts to eliminate the rural and human services coordination committee. This group has issued a number of reports on the picture of rural and human services transit that have provided useful to a wide range of groups.

ATLtransit.org:

Ms. Janae Futrell provided an update on the ATLtransit.org website on behalf of Mr. Landon Reed. ARC is transitioning this website from GRTA's servers to the ARC. Mr. Reed will soon engage transit partners on next steps.

Regional Bus Stop Signage

Mr. Aaron Fowler updated the committee on the status of the implementation of the regional bus stop signage. ARC is currently coordinating with MARTA on a grant application to replace MARTA's bus stop signage. The group has determined cost estimates for fabrication and install, and will soon reach out to partner transit agencies on providing a local match.

Regional Clearinghouse/Fare Collection Review

Mr. Aaron Fowler updated the committee that the RFP for the project was released last month, with proposals due from firms on Wednesday, March 18th. A selection committee will then convene to select a firm to move forward with.

Regional Transit Marketing:

Mr. Futrell updated the committee that ARC has moved forward with Porter Novelli in the marketing project. The project will begin work March 27th, and ARC is on track to finish up the project by year's end.

6. Meeting Wrap Up

Chairman Lee thanked the RTC staff and the transit operators for all the work they've done, and that RTC is always looking to see how we can coordinate and move these projects forward. The RTC publishes an update on the website to see where we are on all projects.

Handouts supplied in advance on the ARC website: (www.atlantaregional.com/rtc)

- 3/12/2015 RTC Meeting Agenda
- 1/15/2015 RTC Meeting Summary
- Presentations
 - FTA 5307/5311 Process Discussion
 - CCT Flex Bus Service
 - One-Click/Simply Get There Website Launch
- Handouts
 - 2014-2015 RTC Work Program Status Document