

ARC COMMITTEE MEETING FOLLOW-UP

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE

March 10, 2016 Meeting Notes

Voting Members Present:

Commissioner Tim Lee, Chair
Commissioner Buzz Ahrens
Commissioner Charlotte Nash
Mr. Sonny Deriso
Mr. Kerry Armstrong
Commissioner Tom Worthan

Voting Members Absent:

Interim CEO Lee May
Commissioner John Eaves
Mayor Kasim Reed
Mr. Fred Daniels
Mr. David Austin

Non-Voting Members Present:

Mr. Keith Parker
Mr. Rudy Bowen
Mr. Doug Hooker
Mr. Donald Hawbaker
Commissioner Charles Oddo
Mr. Christopher Tomlinson
Ms. Carol Comer
Mr. Clark Boddie

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Commissioner Jeff Turner
Commissioner Richard Oden
Commissioner Pat Graham
Commissioner Pete Amos
Commissioner Keith Ellis
Commissioner Kevin Little
Commissioner Tim Lassetter
Commissioner Tommy Smith

The committee did not have quorum initially.

1. Welcome, Chair's comments, Approval of meeting summary, Public comment period

Chairman Lee gave notice that because there wasn't quorum that we would skip items requiring approval. It was noted that the number of CNG buses being purchases by Cobb County was incorrectly stated in the minutes, and requested amending the minutes to reflect the correct number.

2. Regional Transit Marketing Campaign

Ms. Janae Futrell, Senior Principal Planner at the Atlanta Regional Commission, presented on the launch on the regional transit marketing campaign: Do You Love Traffic? This campaign attempts to push interest and web traffic to the ATLtransit.org trip planning website through videos and social media marketing transit. Three marketing campaign videos were presented to the committee, as well as other marketing collateral including interactive banner ads and print signage.

The marketing campaign's key focus will be on those who already have access to transit, either by walking or driving to a transit stop. Demographics were a key driver in the campaign's development, with the goal of reaching demographic groups that would be most receptive to riding transit. Finally, several focus groups were used to find the most receptive campaign message, with the marketing team choosing a satirical approach targeted towards millennials. The campaign launch on March 10, 2016 and will run through May 8, 2016, for a total of 8 weeks.

Ms. Futrell pointed out that the campaign will utilize cross promotional partners to help spread the word across social media platforms. There are 28-30 cross promotional promoters. Additionally, there are online transit promoters that give the campaign a grass roots feel.

Ms. Futrell closed by reviewing how RTC staff would evaluate the success of the campaign. She noted that social media analytics including impressions and interactions will be kept track of for evaluation purposes. Staff have also enabled Google analytics to evaluate website traffic and key search terms. As needed the marketing campaign can make strategic pivots in strategy to increase its effectiveness.

Comments and Questions:

Chairman Lee: ATLtransit.org's re-launch was presented in the previous RTC meeting, and this efforts aligns many of these RTC projects together. Hopeful that when the initial 8 week marketing campaign wrap up that it can be extended for further success. Does everyone believe that we are heading in the right direction?

Mr. Chris Tomlinson: Love all the work, videos and posters. Next step is ensuring we have all the communication staff from the transit agencies working together so that we can see a coordinated effort in dropping the banners and social media around the same time.

Mr. Keith Parker: Important to remember that the millennials will enjoy these satirical jokes more than we do, but this is a great first step in talking about transit on a regional basis.

3. Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Byron Rushing, Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner for the Atlanta Regional Commission, presented on some key findings from ARC's new Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The plan focuses on the short trips, and highlights that biking and walking trips are critical to transit access and boosting transit ridership. The importance of these walk/bike connections to

transit should not be underestimated: while surveying transit riders a common response was “of course they walked to the transit stop.”

Four main influencers in biking and walking: safety, mobility, economic competitiveness and regional trail access. Safety: walking and biking trips make up 5.3% of all trips in the Atlanta region, but make up 18% of all roadway crash fatalities. Mobility: Currently 72.4% walk to transit, and 0.3% bike to transit. Economic Competitiveness: there’s growing market demand for housing and office buildings within walkable, bikeable, and transit accessible neighborhoods.

Regional Framework recommendations include focusing on higher potential demand for walking and biking for improvements, crashes, equitable target areas, activity centers, higher transit propensity, walk-friendly and bike-friendly communities.

There was also a recommendation for the development of a local toolkit for walk/bike friendly communities: ARC doesn’t install sidewalks and bike paths, but the toolkit helps guide local municipalities and transit agencies on how to make bicycle and pedestrian improvements. ARC staff plans on offering initial workshops in the Fall of 2016.

Mr. Parker: In areas where they have invested in bike/walk improvements, do they have better crash numbers than Atlanta?

Mr. Rushing: Yes, there’s a strong correlation between investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and the community’s actual safety.

Mr. Fowler: The next RTC meeting we will present on how RTC can leverage this project to improve regional bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to transit.

4. Regional Travel Training

Ms. Renee Ray, with the Aging and Health Resources Division of the Atlanta Regional Commission, presented on travel training: a program to help people feel safe and comfortable using bus and rail transit systems. Travel training programs are typically launched in order to give people a greater sense of freedom, a sense of independence and empowerment, increased access to the region, and to help transit agencies and riders save money. Typical demographic groups that could benefit from travel training include current and new paratransit users, seniors, people with disabilities, and children/young adults.

Ms. Ray stated that ARC would be interested in partnering with any county or municipality with a transit system for travel training.

5. Regional Clearinghouse/Fare Collection Project

Mr. Aaron Fowler, Senior Transit Planner with the Atlanta Regional Commission, presented a final overview of the findings and recommendations that resulted from the

2015 Breeze Clearinghouse and Fare Collection Review and Analysis. He started the presentation by pointing out that currently and before the launch of this study that each Breeze partner agency paid \$3,000 per month, and those costs amount to about \$0.03 per Breeze trip. When looking at all three Breeze partners together, about 41% of all their rides are initiated with a Breeze Card. The consultant for the review proposed that the regional cost-share amount for Breeze was \$357,021 for the partner operators combined, which amounted to \$0.11 per Breeze trip. Currently that proposal has been countered by MARTA, with MARTA requesting that the partner operators pick up the cost of the \$183,700 Clearinghouse staff. Under that proposal the total regional operator cost would amount to \$540,721 with an average of \$0.17 cost per each Breeze trip. Additionally staff have projected the potential cost savings if the three partner operators were able to attain 75% Breeze usage. If attained the partner operators would save about \$0.01-0.03 per dollar earned, and MARTA would save roughly \$270,000 annually. Finally Mr. Fowler reviewed the three main policy recommendations provided by the consultant including addressing the transfer imbalance, improving multi-agency decision making in regards to Breeze policy, and addressing the interest accrued on stored value.

6. Updates and Wrap-Up

Mr. Scott Haggard, Legislative Affairs Director for the Atlanta Regional Commission, spoke with the committee on current state legislation affecting transit and transportation. He informed the committee that the bill that Senator Beach introduced, SB330, passed the Senate Transportation Committee, but did not come up for a vote before crossover day. Mr. Haggard stated the the bill could potentially be added to another piece of legislation. Additionally, the bill could also be broken up into smaller, local pieces of legislation that would allow Atlanta and DeKalb county to vote separately on passing a referendum for a transit tax for MARTA expansion. Local bills are typically placed on a local calendar for passage. Representative Buzz Brockway introduced legislation last year, and companion legislation this year, that would create a constitutional amendment to create CIDs for transit expansion. Property taxes within these CIDs could be used to help fund transit within those areas. This effort has had strong support by the Atlanta BeltLine. Serperately, SB420 would require a referendum if a municipality is seeking to install fixed guideway transit service. MARTA would be exempt from this requirement under the current wording of the legislation.

Mr. Aaron Fowler, ARC, asked if SB420 would require a referendum to allow bus only lane? Mr. Haggard stated he was going to look further into the definitions stated in the legislation.

Finally, Mr. Haggard stated that there may be several study committees that may advance this year including transit and regional commission study committees.

Mr. Chris Tomlinson updated the committee on the GO transit bond program being carried out by SRTA. Open call for applications closed January 31. SRTA received 22 applications from 10 different applicants, with a total of \$119 million in requests (\$75 million available). Five of the applicants are a part of Atlanta Regional Commission. One of the issues that limited

applicants was the ownership of the capital by the state, as well as the useful life of the capital. The bond funds require a 10 year useful life. SRTA expects to provide notice by June 2016.

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

- 3/10/16 RTC Agenda
- 1/14/16 RTC Meeting Notes and Summary
- Presentations
 - Regional Transit Marketing
 - Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
 - Regional Travel Training
 - Regional Clearinghouse/Fare Collection Project
- Handouts
 - RTC Project Update File