

**MEETING NOTES
CAPITAL AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT COORDINATION COMMITTEE (RTCC)
MEETING**

August 12, 2008– 2 PM

1. Introductions

Bill Hamilton, Chair, called the meeting to order and committee members and other attendants provided introductions.

2. Public Comment

Presentation from Richard Schultz on “Cellular Mass Transit”

Mr. Schultz gave a presentation about Cellular Mass Transit (CMT) and how it could be applied to the Capital Metro Transit Authority service area. He explained the pros of cellular mass transit and the unique dynamics of the Austin market. Mr. Shultz expressed his concerns about current transit services and provided an example of poor circulation service in North Austin.

He commented that Cellular Mass Transit may have several benefits which could include reduced operational and infrastructure costs, improved access to transit—especially in low-income neighborhoods, and improved air quality. Also, CMT may also be more responsive to demand.

Cellular Mass Transit uses taxis and mini buses in combination with existing buses and calls for a Bus Rapid Transit network. It works by dividing the service area into cells and providing neighborhood transfer centers and major hubs by which users can transfer. Residents can reach neighborhood transfer centers (NTC) by collector bus, car, bicycle, or walking. From NTCs, transit users will be taken to by taxi-van, mini bus, or express bus to their destination or a large hub. At a hub, transit users may take any of the before mentioned travel methods to another neighborhood transfer center or final destination.

Mr. Schultz reported that under the CMT model, express buses would operate in their own right-of-way and would have queue jumpers that would give them priority when approaching and proceeding through an intersection. When a bus is not near an intersection, traffic signals would operate uninterrupted.

Mr. Shultz figured that CMT will cost about 1.4 million dollars per mile.

Committee Comments and Questions

Sean Moran suggested that a prototype should be developed in order to test CMT in select areas. A small trial system that will not require a lot of capital costs would be a reasonable first step towards inclusion of Cellular Mass Transit.

Two cells from existing Park and Rides could be a test of the model.

Dave Marsh asked about incentive to taxi drivers and taxi van operators. He explained that Austin has a peculiar taxi market and asked why would drivers buy into and operate the CMT model?

Mr. Schultz said that Capital Metro Transit Authority would buy the taxi vans and then lease them to drivers, making the system possible.

Dave Marsh asked, if the drivers don't collect fares, then how do they get paid?

Mr. Shultz replied that the taxi driver is paid by the transit authority—all transactions are electronic. Drivers are paid on a per-mile basis.

Vanessa Sarria asked how far away Capital Metro is from considering this model feasible? And, would Capital Metro be able to operate fewer busses?

If no one calls in to confirm or request a trip, then a trip is not made.

Sean asked for clarification about service. This model calls for partial fixed route service and partial demand responsive service.

Bill Hamilton asked if the CMT presentation had already been made to Capital Metro?

Yes, the presentation had been made to Capital Metro, but, due to time limits on public comments, desired communication of the idea had not been reached. Mr. Shultz had separate discussion with a Capital Metro board member.

Meredith informed the Committee that Capital Metro does plan in advance over a period of years and that the Authority has some planning limitations. Planning takes a lot of effort with many groups and involves many pieces. She clarified a point made in Mr. Shultz's presentation; in some areas where service gaps were shown, service had once been provided, but it was not used and therefore discontinued.

Some ideas are being considered for Bus Rapid Transit, but capital costs are a big concern.

Dave Marsh commented that that this idea should not be "all or none" because the entire model may not work but some good pieces can be taken and applied to certain areas.

Mr. Shultz commented that many taxi trips will be cancelled and will therefore cancel the costs.

The group generally felt that some of the concepts could be used in certain areas but demonstrations need to be done first. There needs to be an incremental approach if the idea is going to work. If it is truly better and cheaper, then people will use it and we will see the results.

The logistics of how Round Rock and Georgetown will be included need to be worked out. How will they pay for services? If the services work as the model calls for, then it will be cheaper and faster for the residents of those cities to get to downtown Austin. Service to these communities will be improved, so they will want to join/pay for them.

Bill Hamilton opened the discussion to the audience.

Audience member Skip Cameron commented that that the Austin area needs a paradigm shift like Curitiba, Brazil. Curitiba has one of the world's best systems that

pays for itself. The City's transport system is doing what Mr. Shultz has mentioned and is Bus Rapid Transit with the taxi system. A new paradigm needs to be adjusted to fit the local nature and topographical problems. Commuter and light rail won't work without absorbent costs. We need to use what we already have and put it into a new paradigm and embrace and integrate new ideas. There is no reason that we shouldn't. This system that is being presented does not have all the answers, but it should be explored. It should at least be given a small trial run.

Mr. Shultz introduced a petition to get Capital Metro to listen to a 30 minute presentation. He asked for RTCC members to sign it.

Bill Hamilton indicated that that the RTCC cannot endorse/sign the petition as a group. If members want to sign it as individuals then that is a decision each person needs to make.

3. Action: Report from June 12 Health and Human Services Coordination Forum in Belton, TX and endorse moving forward on recommendations.

Stevie sent out action items prior to the meeting for the committee members to review. She summarized the purpose of the coordination forum and explained the action items that had resulted from group discussion. Action item 1 requires action from the RTCC before moving forward because it involves work beyond the scope of the existing RTCC work plan:

Item 1: Land Use

The connection with affordable housing and social services to transit need to be made in land use practices, specifically when agencies, businesses, and housing developments are choosing where to locate.

Meredith gave an example situation where a transit dependent organization did not choose its site with regard to transit access for its transit dependent clients and workers.

The action item calls for development of an informational piece that would support siting social services with transit in mind.

Item 2: RideCARTS fare card

Item number two identifies interest in farecard projects. Farecards can help meet the needs of public transit users and human service agencies by allowing more ease in both purchasing cards and paying for fares, and tracking and auditing trips. CARTS will continue to move forward on that item.

Item 3: Transportation Options

Barriers in rural transportation need to be removed. Non-transportation trips (trips for elderly and rural-fringe areas) need to be provided. Recreations trips need to be given consideration. Dave Marsh from CARTS and Meredith Highsmith from Capital Metro are the points of contact for this item.

Item 4: Downtown Homeless Transportation Services

Social Service Providers expressed interested in bus services that would make it easier for clients to reach social services, especially those services related to

employment. JARC funding may be used for this. Community Action Network and Capital Metro will continue work on this item.

Dave Marsh made a clarification if item number two, bullet number three. Smart cards are not smart card technology. They do not have a microchip, rather, they have a magnetic swipe.

Bill Hamilton asked for committee comments related to items 2,3, and 4.

Vanessa clarified item number 4. The action item to provide downtown homeless transportation services are not just intended to give access to the homeless. Social services should be connected and information and maps should be developed to help the homeless use existing services.

Dave Marsh indicated that the forum in Belton was a very good meeting and led to great discussion. He informed the group that general consensus was drawn at the forum, and that Medical Transportation Program is seen as a barrier to efficiency.

Jackie spoke on the issue of Medicaid and transportation. Medicaid already has funding. Other Health and Human Service providers don't (with less or no funding) didn't understand what transportation providers could offer until the conversation was opened up.

Stevie: The Land Use action item would require work beyond what is included in the RTCC work plan, and forum participants are seeking action from the RTCC before moving forward on this step.

Bill Hamilton asked if committee members recommended the adoption of the action item.

Sean Moran and Dave Marsh recommended the approval of the action item. The action item was unanimously approved.

A product will be ready for the January RTCC meeting. The rest of the Recommended Next Steps for the Capital Area will be re reviewed then.

4. Action: Designate a staff lead to prepare November 18 quarterly meeting

Stevie will be absent in November. A motion to approve Meredith Highsmith as her replacement was presented. Jackie moved to approve. There was no committee opposition and the motion is approved. Meredith Highsmith will be the staff lead for the Tuesday, November 18, 2008 RTCC quarterly meeting.

5. Report on Goal 2: Overcome Jurisdictional Boundaries, and review draft agenda and invite list for stakeholders forum on Urbanized Area.

In the last meeting, it was suggested that the committee should accelerate its work on the goal. A subcommittee has met. A TTI interlocal agreement has been signed that authorizes work and research for a forum on the topic of overcoming jurisdictional boundaries.

Stevie announced to the group that the forum will be held September 26 at the TxDOT Riverside campus. A draft agenda and list of invitees has been given to the committee.

Bill Hamilton spoke on the need to know exactly what is expected from this meeting and know what the committee wants to get out of the meeting.

1. The Committee needs to know exactly what it wants to accomplish.
2. The invitees need to know exactly what is expected to be accomplished.
3. There needs to be time at the forum for invitees to express other concerns that are not addressed in the agenda.
4. The committee needs to know, specifically, what has been assigned to Linda Cherrington.

Stevie informed the Committee that, among other things, TTI staff (probably Linda Cherrington) has been asked to facilitate the forum, provide examples of agreements and models from other regions, and put together a report and recommendations after the conclusion of the forum and additional research. CMTA is providing graphic assistance for an invitation reminder, and CAMPO is handling the initial invitation letter and mailing.

Vanessa asked who the RTCC would be inviting.

Bill Hamilton referred the Committee to the invitee list said it should be assumed that city mayors would be invited. Also, appropriate city staff, council and managers should be invited as well.

Dave Marsh reminded the committee that this is not a big public forum. It intended for key public officials and staff.

Vanessa asked if it was likely that the Committee would be able to get the invitees to attend and the group discussed methods of ensuring good attendance.

Joe Cantalupo indicated that CAMPO would work to ensure that invitees attended, by developing a compelling invitation letter and sending it out from the CAMPO executive level.

The group discussed the appropriate breadth for the invitee list, and determined that the invitation should go to elected officials and key staff from jurisdictions currently within the urbanized area, or that would be within the urbanized area in the near future. In addition, RTCC members would all be invited to attend. This scope will allow the focus to be on Urbanized Area funding issues.

Bill Hamilton indicated that the timing of the forum seemed to be good given the recent policy action by the Capital Metro Board to allow communities outside of the service area to negotiate for service. Meredith Highsmith passed around a copy of the Capital Metro presentation on their recent policy change that was given at the last Transportation Policy Board meeting, Monday, August 11, 2008.

Capital Area Regional Transit Coordination Committee (RTCC) Draft Agenda Items

Stevie walked the group through the draft forum agenda.

Bill Hamilton asked if Linda Cherrington will be available to help answer questions before the forum is held.

Rodd Gibbs suggested that MHMR and health and human service issues should also be discussed at the forum

Stevie replied that this is just the first of many meetings, and this meeting was intended to focus on the gap in general public transportation. Specialized transportation services would be the focus of a forum under another RTCC Work Plan Focus area.

Dave Marsh added that this first issue is that of jurisdictional boundaries and the elected officials needed to start talking first. This meeting is not intended to solve all things for everyone. He agreed with the incremental approach. Bill Hamilton commented that the sales tax issue is a huge barrier and that the jurisdictions are responsible for breaking that barrier.

Rodd Gibbs expressed his concerns to the committee that the MHMR and transit directors to play a big part in the sale tax issue. Bill Hamilton asked the committee if it should design a role for MHMR and transit providers. Stevie suggested that since the RTCC is invited, the RTCC could represent the needs of the MHMR at this initial forum and cover any gaps.

Joe Holland commented on transit service gaps in reference to UZA boundaries from the 2000 Census. He commented that, long term, the issue is not sales tax and that when the UZA boundaries change again with the 2010 Census, there will be jurisdiction-service issues again. The forum should focus on what can be done now. Sale tax may be a separate issue. Stevie commented that there are many barriers that are adding to the problem of gaps in transit service. Sales tax caps are just one tool in a bucket.

Bill Hamilton requested that the agenda be modified and refined with Linda Cherrington's input. He asked about the send date for the invitational letter and was told that it was to be sent the week of August 25, 2008.

Sean Moran distributed commuter shed information that has been developed by CAPCOG, and the group agreed to discuss the data at the November meeting.

5. Reports from the July 23-24 Statewide Regional Coordination Workshop

Stevie explained the purpose of the workshop that was held in July and gave an overview of the workshop. Workshop participants provided synopses of the tracks they attended.

Jeanie Teel attended the Building Partnerships track and commented on the session. She found it to be very beneficial and very relevant to what the RTCC is doing.

Joyce Lauck attended track two—coordinated planning.

Stevie and Jackie attended the technology track. The session covered many topics including dispatching systems. They recommended visiting other systems before buying one.

Edna attended the marketing track.

Bill Hamilton commented that the event was paid for by TxDOT.

Vanessa reported that many of the transit providers and leaders at the forum were frustrated because of quality of life issues.

7. Urban JARC/New Freedom Grants

Stevie indicated that the CAMPO Call for projects was currently open, and that a report on what proposals had been received by the October deadline would be given at the November meeting by another committee member. Joe Holland provided a hand out for TxDOT rural and non-urban grants.

8. Other Business

- Report on Other Work Plan Goals
- TxDOT Funding for FY2009 Coordination
- NTI course on Mobility Management—recommended course but may be full at this point.

9. Adjourn. Next Meeting: Tuesday November 18, 2008, 2-4 PM at One Texas Center Room 325.