



REGIONAL TRANSIT DIALOGUE

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

April 2, 2009 – 1:30 p.m.
The Reed Center, 2nd Floor, Room F
5750 Will Rogers Road, Midwest City, Oklahoma

Steering Committee Members Present

Hon. Mick Cornett
Jay Hannah
Pam Henry
David Herbert
Grant Humphreys
John G. Johnson
Hon. Willa Johnson
Dick Lee
Steve Kreidler
Hershel Lamirand
Hon. Kathy McMillan
Hon. Dan O'Neil
Bob Rader
Hon. Cindy Rosenthal
Jim Roth
Hon. Russell Smith
Blake Wade

Organization/Entity

City of Oklahoma City
BancFirst
OKC Mayor's Committee on Disability Concerns
Midwest City
The Humphreys Company
ACOG
Oklahoma County
COTPA (Proxy for Chris Kauffman)
University of Central Oklahoma
Oklahoma Health Center Foundation
City of Moore
City of Edmond
Capital West
City of Norman
Phillips Murrah P.C.
City of Midwest City
Oklahoma Centennial Commission

Steering Committee Members Absent

Dean Jackson
Klaholt Kimker
Tom Love
Tom McDaniel

Organization/Entity

United We Ride
Devon
Love's Travel Stops
Oklahoma City University

Guests

Rick Cain
Larry Hopper
Steve Commons
Shannon Entz
Mike McAnelly
Jeff Bezdek

Organization/Entity

COTPA
COTPA
City of Edmond
City of Edmond
JACOBS
MTP

Guests [Cont.]

Shawn O'Leary	City of Norman
Tom Sherman	Norman Chamber of Commerce
David Streb	Oklahoma Department of Transportation
Randy Entz	City of Oklahoma City

ACOG Staff Present

Douglas W. Rex	Transportation Planning & Data Services (TPDS)
John Sharp	TPDS
Holly Massie	TPDS
Andrea Weckmueller-Behringer	TPDS
Kara Chiodo	TPDS
Meredith Williams	TPDS
Ryan Billings	TPDS
Jane Sutter	Deputy Director
Jerry Church	Director of Media and Public Relations

Welcome and Introductions

John G. Johnson, ACOG Executive Director, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Regional Transit Dialogue (RTD) Steering Committee. He provided a brief background of ACOG and thanked everyone for their commitment to this important endeavor. He advised that the purpose of today's meeting is to let everyone get acquainted and to hear more about the RTD process and the Regional Fixed Guideway Study that was completed for Central Oklahoma in 2005. Mr. Johnson advised that Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett and Tom Love of Love's Travel Stops have agreed to co-chair the committee and he turned the floor over to Mayor Cornett.

Remarks by Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Mayor Cornett commented that effective public transportation requires a regional approach rather than being resolved by individual communities. Therefore, we need to work together, plan together, and finance together any system that would eventually serve all of our citizens. Mayor Cornett mentioned the extensive work that went into the Fixed Guideway Study and said that it can be used as the starting point for our future efforts. He said that it is not the purpose of the Steering Committee to get bogged down in the details of modes and routes, but rather to work on the structure of a larger regional transit authority and how a regional system could be funded. He said that there are lots of models out there and we can learn from them and benefit from their mistakes. Mayor Cornett thanked everyone for their time and said that each person was asked to serve because they have special talents and knowledge that will contribute to the RTD effort.

Presentation on the Regional Transit Dialogue Purpose and Structure

Douglas W. Rex, Director of ACOG Transportation Planning & Data Services Division, provided an overview of the RTD process, saying that it was anticipated to take approximately 12 months and is modeled after a similar process used in the Kansas City area. Mr. Rex reviewed the RTD committee structure, which began with the creation of a Planning Team to assist ACOG staff in setting up the logistics of the process. He said that the planning team includes staff from the Cities of Oklahoma City, Midwest City, Edmond and Norman, COTPA, CART, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, the Norman Chamber of Commerce and ACOG.

Mr. Rex said that the RTD will be led by the Steering Committee, which will oversee the entire process and receive input from four subcommittees. The Governance Subcommittee will be responsible for researching various regional transit governing structures in place throughout the country and other parts of the world, explore the advantages and disadvantages of each, and hopefully provide at least three examples of the structure a regional transit authority could take for consideration by the Steering Committee.

Mr. Rex explained that the Finance Subcommittee will research the various funding mechanisms to support the capital and operating portions of a regional public transit system by exploring all federal, state and local funding options. He said that, similar to the Governance Subcommittee, the Finance Subcommittee will be asked to provide the Steering Committee with several options that seem viable for this region.

The Technical/Land Use Subcommittee will research land use planning policies that can be put in place at the local level to further transit supportive development. He reemphasized Mayor Cornett's earlier point that the Fixed Guideway Study will provide the foundation for the RTD and we don't need to reinvent the wheel by looking at corridors and transit modes. He said that this is a benefit that this region has over others that have undertaken similar endeavors. The subcommittee will review the FGS corridors and make some recommendations concerning prioritization.

Mr. Rex stated that the final subcommittee is the Public Outreach Subcommittee which will develop a comprehensive public involvement plan and recommend methods on how we approach the public with this concept. He said that this is a very important part of the process because it will ultimately be the public that will decide, through their votes, whether a more comprehensive public transportation system will be developed.

Mr. Rex emphasized that the RTD is a planning process that will answer a number of important questions that this region has never been able to answer before. He said that the hope is that the group will reach consensus concerning an appropriate governing structure and appropriate funding options in order to move forward with a more regional transit system if that is where the citizens of Central Oklahoma wish to go.

Mr. Rex introduced the ACOG staff who will be the key contacts and staff resource for each of the subcommittees: Meredith Williams, Governance Subcommittee; Kara Chiodo, Finance Subcommittee; Ryan Billings, Technical/Land Use Subcommittee; and Jerry Church, Public Outreach Subcommittee. He also said that ACOG staff is developing a page on the ACOG website that will be devoted to the RTD and will include information about the process and structure, as well as meeting agendas and summaries for each of the various committees.

Presentation on 2005 Regional Fixed Guideway Study for Central Oklahoma

Michael D. McAnelly, Senior Planner with JACOBS (formerly Carter::Burgess) provided an overview of the Fixed Guideway Study (FGS) that his firm prepared under contract with COTPA in 2004 and 2005, noting that the firm now has a new name. He stated that his firm is currently preparing for COTPA the Alternatives Analysis (AA) for a downtown circulator in Oklahoma City, which was one of the recommendations from the FGS and is the second step in the federal evaluation process for eventually seeking federal assistance. He explained the various analyses that will be a part of the AA

process, including development of an operating plan and ridership forecasts, which will lead to the eventual selection of a locally preferred alternative.

Mr. McAnelly explained that the FGS was a regional long-range systems plan, which is the first step toward development of any type of public transportation that will be eligible for federal funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). He said that currently the federal government is participating on about a 50 percent matching ratio, although it can be higher. He said that there was extensive public involvement during the FGS – four rounds of over 20 meetings around the region, stakeholder meetings, steering committee meetings, a newsletter, and a project website that is still online at www.okfgs.org.

Mr. McAnelly recapped the recommendations of the FGS and noted that many of those have been realized – identification of community champions, establishment of a regional committee like the RTD to move the process forward, update of the ACOG regional travel model to include a mode choice component which is underway by ACOG, and initiation of an Alternative Analysis for one of the FGS corridors that is also now underway with the downtown circulator AA. He said that the FGS included a financial strategy that consisted of two components. The first component being modern streetcar for the downtown Oklahoma City area, which could be locally implemented and funded through some type of local source (such as MAPS 3) and FTA New Starts or Small Starts funding. The second component was the rest of the region, which included recommendations for enhanced bus service, bus rapid transit and commuter rail, which would provide regional benefit and require regional funding and implementation; possibly through some type of regional transit authority. He said that other regions around the country that implement such systems have a dedicated source of local funding to operate their fixed guideway systems.

Mr. McAnelly briefly reviewed the steps that are required to secure federal funding assistance: Systems Planning (the FGS completed in 2005), Alternatives Analysis (currently underway for the downtown corridor), Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review, Funding Grant Agreement from the FTA (once environmental clearance has been secured), Final Design, Construction and Operation. He said that the entire process takes approximately 7 to 10 years. This process applies to each corridor that is pursued. He said that FTA evaluates projects based on their merit in order to award funds to projects with the most potential benefit, and the areas that FTA looks at are mobility improvement, environmental benefit (or at least no negative impacts), operating efficiencies, cost effectiveness, transit supportive land use policies by the local communities, and a commitment of local financial participation in the project. One way some communities have expedited the process is to move ahead with a starter project using local funding, with the intent that once the starter project is complete, they will seek federal funding for subsequent phases of the system.

Mr. McAnelly then reviewed each of the corridors identified by the FGS and the technologies considered most feasible for each, as well as preliminary ridership forecasts for each. He said that the consultants looked at the locations where people live and work to see where trips will be generated and attracted. The ACOG 2030 travel forecasts were used in this effort and with the regional transportation model upgrade underway, this information can be better refined in the future.

Finally, Mr. McAnelly stressed the importance of having leaders in the community that support transit in order to maintain momentum and move the process forward. He thanked the Steering Committee for the role that they are taking on and their leadership.

Comments by Steering Committee Members

Hershel Lamirand mentioned the importance of the RTD subcommittees and their work and that the Steering Committee needs to give thoughtful consideration to the composition of those working groups. Pam Henry stressed that the needs of those with disabilities should be kept in mind in everything that we do because accessible public transportation is critical to getting to the grocery store and meeting other everyday needs. Jim Roth mentioned the importance of serving social services destinations. Dave Herbert mentioned the significant number of abandoned rail lines that the State of Oklahoma currently owns or owns and leases to Class A railroads, and that this puts this region in a great position to add parallel tracks and to save money related to right-of-way costs.

Steering Committee Recommendations for Subcommittee Members

John G. Johnson mentioned that the Committee received a handout that describes each of the RTD subcommittees, as well as a form for use in recommending names of subcommittee members. Doug Rex reminded the group that the subcommittees will be working committees and will be expected to meet at least monthly. He said that ideally the members of the subcommittees will have some background and knowledge of the area that their subcommittee will be charged with researching. Mr. Rex also mentioned that staff would like to have some members of the Steering Committee also serve on each of the subcommittees, and that it is anticipated that each subcommittee will include approximately 15 members. Mayor Cornett clarified that the subcommittees will periodically report back to the Steering Committee with research and recommendations.

Establishment of Meeting Schedule and Next Meeting Date

The Steering Committee was provided with a list of the next three tentative meeting dates and times: June 23¹, August 26 and October 28. Each meeting is expected to be held from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. in the ACOG Board Room. However, the final dates and times will be confirmed in advance with the Committee if changes are needed.

New Business

Mayor Cornett commented that the co-chair, Tom Love, was unable to attend today's meeting due to a surgery in the family.

Bob Rader commented that he felt that more people would ride the current bus system if they knew more about it – when and where it runs.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

¹ This meeting was subsequently changed to June 17, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.