

OneAthens Public Transportation Implementation Team Notes

Multimodal Transportation Center, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

June 4, 2007

Team Members Present: Beth Gavrilles, John Devine, Butch McDuffie, Ron Hamlin, Andrew Neighbors, Ed Graham, Delene Porter (staff)

Guests Present: Jack Crowley, Gerry Toni, Roger Keny, Lee Shearer

Team Members Absent: Peggy Hackett, Alice Kinman, Dick Field

Beth welcomed group and asked for introductions.

Delene gave quick update on OneAthens progress- All Teams are meeting and have been asked to define their product(s), actions they will pursue to fulfill their Initiative. Product(s) should be defined by June 18th and will be posted on the website. The Teams will also be asked to present their work at a large PPA community meeting at the end of the summer.

Beth asked for approval of the minutes. Ron and Andrew had several corrections and will email them to Beth.

Athens Transit Advisory Committee:

Butch introduced representatives from the Athens Transit Advisory Committee. This Citizens Advisory Committee was appointed by the Mayor and has started meeting again on a regular basis. They are looking at many of the same goals as the OneAthens Team- increase mobility in Athens and regionally. Two years ago, the committee did significant work with commissioners from surround counties. There is a real need for those who cannot drive to be able to get to Atlanta. The 5311 Rural Transportation Programs might be a possible way to create a connected system to Atlanta, but need to get them to work together.

The 5311 Rural Transportation program makes a Federal match of 50% for operating expenses and 80% match for capital. These grants have to be re-written/submitted every year. Putting 5311 in place requires willingness on the part of local government to make 10% of the match for capital and 50% for operating.

5311 programs are demand response, so you can call between 1 and 14 days in advance to reserve a ride. You can also do subscription, which allows you to set up a ride at the same time every week or month.

Andrew discussed Greene's 5311 program taking people to Oglethorpe. Maybe Barrow and Elbert would be willing to discuss a 5311 program and crossing county lines as well. John and Andrew will discuss this further.

Regional public transportation system:

Prof. Jack Crowley discussed financing mechanisms for regional transit systems. Financing with volume of fuel or tolls does not keep up with demand (especially as fuel efficiency goes up, meaning more cars on the road for the same price in fuel).

Instead, use value of land as a leverage to pay for transportation. If land is publicly held, and you can influence what happens on that land, you increase its value by making it accessible by transportation (road or rail), then you can sell or lease the land and with the proceeds pay for the development of the transportation. And you increase the value by having the transportation be permanent, like MARTA, instead of movable, like a bus route. Key is to take advantage of publicly held land.

Prof. Crowley also explained that there is a generational aspect to transit use. It's been 3 generations since people have been used to using transit/rail, and it will take 10-20 years to get people used to it and really using it to its full potential.

Butch said that GRTA approached ACC a couple of years ago about express bus service to Atlanta (and he thinks GRTA is still interested in it), but he questioned whether it would really be "express" if it has to go through the same traffic lights on Hwy 316. ACC chose to focus on establishing night service first, as that was a higher priority. GRTA had proposed a 50/50 funding scheme for operating expenses for the first 3 years, with ACC providing 100% of the funding after that.

Need to look at what DHR is proposing- the Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Region 5 involves FTA Programs- 5317 New Freedom, 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute, and 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (See attached). Need to build off what they are already doing.

John Devine suggested that we look at establishing a regional transit system as a process in 3 stages:

- Short term- link up existing 5311 programs
- Mid term- get other counties to start 5311 programs
- Long term- get fixed and light rail

The group agreed that a link to Atlanta is a key component of the OneAthens regional transit plan.

In terms of an RDC workshop- we could bring counties together to educate on 5311 program and see if they are interested in working regionally. Perhaps 2 sessions, one an informational session about the basics of 5311 funding and the benefits of transit; then a session on linking existing 5311 programs. This would include regional success stories from other RDCs.

- Who would be invited: all 12 counties in the NEGARDC area, elected officials, management, staff?
- Needs: space, food, and invitations- possible help from PPA.

John will talk to Steve Tomlinson at the GDOT office in Gainesville to get his input. A workshop may not be the best format to get the information across. It might be better to go to the counties rather than ask them to come here, at least those counties that currently have no 5311 program.

May need to start on an individual basis with those counties who have expressed interest- John and Andrew will talk.

A regional plan- John will talk with RDC and see if there is support from GDOT to use their transit planning funding to do a regional plan. Beth is working on getting UGA funding for a GIS intern to work on this.

Ron brought examples of other communities with regional systems.

- Triangle Transit Authority in North Carolina
- Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority in Beaufort-Jasper
- PART in Greensboro- PART is much like what Athens could create- possibly bring in a guest speaker

Local Transit Expansion Info-

Butch has not gotten the priorities back from manager's office yet. Essentially the points were drawn from Section 4 of the Transportation Development Plan. This section can be reviewed on www.athenstransit.com

Butch also brought information on Transit and how it supports Economic Development. There are several publications from the American Public Transportation Association to review.

Future Events-

Next Team meeting will be Monday, June 25th from 2-4PM at Multimodal Station.

Chamber of Commerce "After Hours" at Multimodal Transportation Center, Aug. 17

December 12-14th, the State Transit meeting is being held in Athens- good opportunity to present what we're doing with PPA and region. Butch will get info on presentations.