

**OneAthens
Public Transportation Implementation Committee
Multimodal Transportation Center
July 16, 2007**

Team Members Present: Beth Gavrilles (Chair), John Devine (RDC), Butch McDuffie (Athens Transit), Ron Hamlin (UGA Transportation), Andrew Neighbors (ABHS), Peggy Hackett (DHR), Alice Kinman (ACC Commission)

Present from Staff: Delene Porter, Jamie Castlejohn

1. Beth welcomed group and had Team review and approve minutes of previous meeting.
2. Update was given on Regional Transportation Plan activities:
 - A. Try Transit Day- Andrew gave update on August 3rd “Try Transit Day.”
 - i. Elbert, Jackson, Banks, and Greene will bring in passengers (the goal is 25 from Jackson, Banks, and Elbert, and 50 from Greene).
 - ii. Athens Transit will provide 200 maps and free passes to the passengers from those counties for rides on that Friday.
 - iii. An advertisement will run in Greene County’s *Herald Journal*.
 - iv. A message to the PPA listserv can be created, but must specify that the passes are just for participants in this 5311 event. A notice will also be put on the PPA website
 - B. Commuter bus- Team continued to discuss the possibility of having Southeastern Stages work with Georgia Regional Transit Authority to have commuter buses run from Athens to Atlanta.
 - i. Ron got the contact information for Southeastern. The CEO of Southeastern Stages is Michael Dickson. The corporate phone number is (404) 591-2780. They currently operate two Atlanta-bound services out of Athens- 10:40 am and 3:45 pm. Service in this direction departs Atlanta at 11:45 am and 6:45 pm.
 - ii. Team discussed how a commuter bus might “lay the track” for a rail or dedicated bus/car pool lanes on 316.
 - iii. The Team decided that contact should first be made with GRTA to see if they can do a public private partnership like this and if they are still interested in paying half for the first two years as they had suggested when they approached Athens Transit a few years ago.
 - iv. One other complication is that this will have to be subsidized to be affordable. 4 buses will probably cost \$500,000 annually. With rides costing \$7.50 there will need to be public and private support.
 - v. The route that Greyhound ran from Macon to Atlanta did not last more than a year. We need to look into what went wrong there.
 - vi. Operating expenses are the main cost since federal dollars can help with capital expenses.

- vii. It was suggested that UGA might be willing to help subsidize this service since this would provide a safer and more affordable way for students to travel to and from Atlanta than driving on 316.
 - viii. The Job Access Reverse Commute 5307 grant is a possibility for funding, but that still requires a 50% local match. This match can come from all of the locales in which the bus stops if there are to be multiple stops. GRTA currently uses the 5307 grant to run its buses.
 - ix. Crossing county lines would require coordination with the Public Utilities Commission.
 - x. Team agreed that contact with either Southeastern or GRTA should come with support of PPA leadership. Beth will get in touch with Judge Jones and Joe Whorton.
 - xi. Butch will contact Jerome Parker at GRTA and ask him if he could come and talk to us about the possibilities for a commuter bus.
 - xii. In general- there needs to be a mechanism for coming back to the Co-convenor Boards to ask for financial support.
- C. Northeast Georgia Surface and Air Transportation Commission- John provided information about this group.
- i. It was established in 1989 to look at extending the airport system
 - ii. John was not sure which counties were included, but the Commission can employ people and has bonding authority for “projects,” defined narrowly to mean airports (and possibly airport-related items.)
 - iii. EH Culpepper was part of this group and may have given paperwork to Jim Dove at RDC. John will find out.
 - iv. Beth will also ask Ed Graham what and if the Regional Economic Development Team is doing regarding this.
3. Local update- Beth gave update from Co-convenor Board meeting Monday night. Co-convenors asked about getting people to and from jobs and about engaging employers in this effort.
- A. Team discussed that connecting people to their jobs was not the only way transit helps people get out of poverty- accessing health care, services, shopping, and schools are important as well. Transit also helps by allowing people to avoid the expenses associated with owning and operating an automobile, which frees up funds that they can use for other purposes, including building equity.
 - B. Athens Transit has a “Study on Barriers to Job Access” which includes lack of transit as a barrier to work. Butch will get a copy to the Team.
 - C. Athens Transit currently goes to many employment centers, but does not have routes out Olympic Drive or off the Atlanta Highway where UPS is located.
 - D. Working with employers to determine their employees’ transit needs is difficult.
 - i. Athens Transit has many calls from shift workers who miss the bus or the bus does not run early enough to get them to their jobs. For instance, UGA food service workers need to be at work by 5:30 am but the Bus doesn’t start running till 6 am.

- ii. UGA students, faculty and staff make up about 60% of Athens Transit's ridership, many of whom are the lower-paid staff workers, with poultry plant workers the second biggest group.
 - iii. Athens Transit has tried to survey employers but found that they aren't very interested in providing information.
 - iv. Employers who need transit usually call Athens Transit- Dial America, after their move, put in a request for more frequent service to their new location, but has not followed up. Butch has found this to be typical.
 - E. Team discussed need to state clearly that it was working on public transit as a way to help people become self-sufficient, which encompasses more than just employment.
 - i. Team needs to have a clear statement about what transit does to help people move out of poverty.
 - F. Maybe the Team can create 3 or 4 questions for employers and work with the Chamber Transportation Committee to get information.
 - G. Another option that might be more fruitful is to survey employees. Questions on transportation could be included in the Housing Team's housing demand study, or possibly done through the Dept. of Labor.
 - H. The current information available is enough to justify the recommendations of the TDP and PPA.
 - I. Team needs to prioritize the expanded hours, routes, bus service, etc.; determine the cost; and provide a breakdown of where the funds could come from to meet the cost.
 - J. In terms of costs- local road dollars can be redirected, the fares could be raised, etc. Need to identify options.
 - K. Butch will work on a shorter list of expansions with price tags to each. At next meeting, team will begin to determine sources of funds.
 - L. John asked about the long-range plans for PPA/OneAthens and if it might make sense to ask for a seat on the MACORTS Technical Coordinating Committee.
4. Next meeting will be on Monday, August 6 at 2pm at the Multimodal Transportation Center.