

MINUTES
I-26 Fixed Guideway Alternatives Analysis
Transit Talk – Environmental & Community Organizations

DATE: 4/14/2015

TIME: 8:30 PM – 10:00 PM

LOCATION: Coastal Community Foundation – Zucker Conference Room

PURPOSE: Environmental and Community Organizations Transit Talk

ATTENDANCE: See attached Sign-In sheet

Agenda:

- I. Introductions
- II. Project Overview
- III. Alternatives Screening
- IV. Environment and Mobility Discussion Items
 - a. Multi-modal mobility
 - b. Low Income Households
 - c. Transit Dependent Populations
 - d. Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources
 - e. Funding
- V. Upcoming Public Meetings
- VI. Project Next Steps

Discussion/Comments:

The livability transit talk was focused on bringing together a mix of environmental and community organizations throughout the study area to discuss how transit can preserve and enhance the natural and human environment along the I-26 Corridor between Summerville and Charleston. The intent of the transit talk was to inform these organizations about the study and upcoming public meetings; as well as solicit input regarding the mobility needs and concerns of these groups.

The following comments were noted:

- Transit has to become a part of a regional multi-modal system through education and outreach efforts. The public has to be educated and informed about what services the system offers and how to use/navigate the transit system.

- The current #10 Rivers Avenue route has the highest ridership of the CARTA routes. It was noted that given the already high use along this corridor (~25% ridership), it might be telling that this corridor is most suited for an alternative like BRT.
- Community safety is of major importance. Both current and future transit stops/stations have to consider safe pedestrian crossings for users at these locations.
- Summerville has a great need for transit within the local community. The current commuter service provided does not circulate around the city. Summerville residents need transit to get to medical appointments, shop, work, etc., as well as commute from Summerville to downtown Charleston.
- Comment was made about the high ridership that originates from the US 52 corridor out of Berkeley County to the K-Mart Park and Ride (Rivers Avenue). This might reflect a high demand along this US 52 corridor (Goose Creek and Moncks Corner).
- Given that the mode utilized is closely tied to the trip purpose and the distance one needs to travel, has any data been collected that will provide this information? The study has undertaken both an employer survey and origin-destination (O-D) survey that will provide this information.
- Question was posed to CARTA about the materials and system signage that are provided for non-English speaking users. CARTA provides Spanish translated system schedules to the public. On-route signage is however, primarily in English.
- “Millennials” are making the choice to use alternative modes such as transit. However, they have the flexibility to move to regions that have robust transit systems that can support their mode choice. Low-income and senior populations are usually dependent on transit services and do not have the same level of mobility as millennials. They therefore have to stay in place and make do with the current transit system. Transit should serve the needs of both of these groups.
- The land use along the corridor should look for infill opportunities to preserve currently undeveloped land and save rural areas.
- Although the current study looks at the I-26 Corridor, there has been a marked increase in use along the US 17 corridor (West Ashley/Mount Pleasant). There is a need to identify how these other corridors of high use will tie into the proposed system.
- A participant noted that this project has to show or demonstrate the viability of a new system (operational viability). If a system is proposed that is not viable and it fails, it will negatively impact the public attitude toward transit in the region.
- In determining an alternative, the community might place higher importance on a mode that is easy to implement (cost) and also has a fast implementation timeframe. Looking at these factors, BRT might be a supported mode since it seems have a relatively quick setup time (~4 years), and its startup cost is lower relative to other alternatives (commuter rail/light rail).
- A comment was noted regarding air quality; although the region is not currently a “non-attainment” area, historically, we have come close. In the future those standards may change, and our region may be faced with “non-attainment” status. Air quality should be a consideration in the study.
- The Rivers Avenue corridor might also be the best corridor to run BRT service because it has the space (median), it is already a high transit use corridor and it has the option to serve the Amtrak station, which is the future site for the Intermodal facility.

DAVIS & FLOYD

SINCE 1954

May 12, 2015

To: Kathryn Basha, AICP
Planning Director
BCDCOG

From: Sharon Hollis, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner
Davis & Floyd

RE: i-26ALT Transit Talk – Land Use Transit Talk
Developer Workshop, April 30, 2015, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Nexsen Pruet Board Room, Charleston SC
Catalyzing the Conversation about Transit Public Forum, April 30, 2015 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Charleston Museum, Charleston, SC

Meeting Recap

Developer Workshop

Moderator: Marilee Utter, Urban Land Institute

Attendees:

- Heather Foley, Urban Land Institute
- Jeff Baxter, CityVolve
- Jeff Fort, Gramling Brothers
- Ryan Knapp, Middle Street Partners
- Michelle Mapp, SC Community Loan Fund
- John Truluck, Dorchester County
- Vince Graham, The I'On Group
- Stuart Coleman, CC&T Real Estate
- Mark Taylor, Stone Street Capital
- Kent Johnson, The Beach Company
- Ashley Heggie, Greystar
- Neil Robinson, Nexsen Pruet

ULI and the i-26ALT project team opened up the meeting with an overview of the day's agenda and the i-26ALT project. Marilee Utter began to moderate the discussion with the attendees on the best corridors for transit oriented development. She opened the discussion with her experience with TOD and the 4 things that are needed:

- 1) Vision (i.e. zoning)

3229 W. Montague Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29418

o. (843) 554-8602 f. (843) 747-6485

WWW.DAVISFLOYD.COM

- 2) Market
- 3) Land
- 4) Champion

A discussion was held about where growth will be in the future. Attendees noted that growth will occur along I-26 where land is available, primarily from outside I-526 and beyond Summerville. Attendees noted that exit 199 will likely become the center of the Lowcountry in the future, and this will create a reverse commute.

A discussion was held on the best transit alignments in the study area for transit oriented development. The Park Circle area was identified as an upcoming trendy area outside of downtown. The Upper Peninsula/NoMo area was also noted as an area with TOD development opportunity. Morrison and Rivers both have the capacity to add transit. Attendees identified two major corridors:

- Old Trolley Road to Dorchester Road to Magnolia, Peninsula, and MUSC
- US 78 to Rivers Avenue, McMillan-Shipwatch, and Morrison Drive.

Rivers Avenue was the most commonly accepted corridor among the group.

Mode was not as much of a concern as land price (affordability) and in-place zoning that allows the required density. Safety was noted as a concern for some in areas that could be redeveloped. Parking as a consideration was also discussed.

A discussion was held about density and the current “anti-growth/anti-density” sentiment in communities throughout the region. Zoning was discussed as one area where stronger local and community support is needed to support higher density development. North Charleston offers a potential opportunity for TOD zoning districts since the city has a tendency to be pro-growth.

It was noted that the transit system needs to be affordable and have the ridership to make it feasible, and attendees were interested in how to measure a successful system. Transit was not as much of a draw for developers, as was the potential streetscaping that would come with a Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit system.

Attendees identified Rivers Avenue from Montague to Reynolds as a first phase. The group also discussed the need for a Champion for the project.

DAVIS & FLOYD

SINCE 1954

May 14, 2015

To: Kathryn Basha, AICP
Planning Director
BCDCOG

From: Sharon Hollis, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner
Davis & Floyd

RE: i-26ALT Transit Talk – Business Focus
Transit Makes Good Business – May 5, 2015, 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM
Montague Terrace, North Charleston, SC

Meeting Recap

Total Attendees RSVP: 81
Total attendees that signed in: 41

Moderator: Deb Campeau, AVP Business Development, Trident Health Systems

Panel Members in Attendance:

- Perrin Lawson, Deputy Director, Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau: Supporting the Tourism Industry – How Transit Serves Tourism in our Region
- Mike Graney, VP Global Business Development, Charleston Regional Development Alliance: Maintaining a Competitive Edge - Transit's Role when Industries Consider our Region
- John Runyon, Director, Business Services, Medical University of South Carolina: Leveraging Employee Parking with Transit – MUSC's Partnership with CARTA
- Raymond Smith, Director of Human Resources, Santee Cooper: Building Successful Partnerships - Santee Coopers iRide Program and Partnership with TriCounty Link

Also invited to the panel, but delayed due to a traffic incident on I-26:

- Robert “Robby” Robbins, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce Infrastructure Taskforce Chairman: Understanding Opportunities and Challenges - Chambers' View on Transit Infrastructure Needs and Challenges

The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. Because the BCDCOG's Executive Director was delayed due to the traffic incident, Kathryn Basha, Planning Director for BCDCOG gave an introductory presentation on the i-26ALT project. Deb Campeau introduced the panel and opened the discussion with questions to the panel.

The panel discussion is summarized as follows:

3229 W. Montague Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29418

o. (843) 554-8602 f. (843) 747-6485

WWW.DAVISFLOYD.COM

- 1) Panelists were asked to give their observation of what are the region's challenges to transit?
 - Geographic: Our region has unique geographic challenges, i.e. rivers and waterways that do not lend themselves to a traditional hub & spoke system. We do not have a central city with surrounding suburbs, and as a result, growth tends to be linear.
 - Cultural: Transit is not part of our community culture. People are attached to their cars and do not have confidence in the transit system. In other cities, transit is more culturally accepted.
- 2) Santee Cooper provided an overview of the i-Ride program, which has successfully initiated a cultural shift by its employees from single occupancy vehicle commutes to one that includes transit.
 - Express bus service travels from urban area to rural jobs (reverse commute).
 - 700 people use the transit routes.
 - Link to Lunch route was created so employees do not need to take cars to lunch.
 - Routes are used for other trips in the community as well. For many, TriCounty Link is a *Link to Life*.
- 3) MUSC provided an overview on how transit service is part of their parking strategy.
 - MUSC has appx. 9,000 parking spaces; 7,000 are in parking garages.
 - MUSC has appx. 2,000,000 visitors per year and 11,000 students/workers.
 - MUSC transit system carries 1,600 persons/twice per day between campus and remote parking lots.
 - Route 213 travels from the Hagood parking lot to campus.
 - As new facilities come online, the cost to build parking structures is high; as a result, the cost benefit of subsidizing transit in lieu of parking makes sense for MUSC.
 - MUSC does not subsidize parking, but they do subsidize transit 100% through a partnership with CARTA.
 - Appx. 500 to 600 round trips a day by MUSC employees ride CARTA Express to work. Although ridership was higher when gas prices were up, ridership has remained stable despite lower gas prices.
- 4) A discussion was held on the transit needs for the Visitors and Convention Bureau industry.
 - CARTA's DASH is a productive service, and the new NASH service connects Tanger Outlets/Airport to DT Visitors Center.
 - Charleston's visitors' come from major metropolitan areas through expanded airline service and the drive market is still big from Charlotte, Columbia, and Georgia cities.
- 5) A discussion on transit's role for industry and economic development initiatives in the region was held.

- Industry wants access to market diversity and will go where real estate costs are low.
 - Access to talent is number one priority. Are there workers with skills/capacity to do a job, and will the talent be attracted to this region if coming from a metropolitan area with a robust transit system?
 - I-26 is a travel shed to regional talent, and industry is not mode specific on how workers get to work on time--they want the best system overall.
 - Currently, manufacturing/industrial is main industry looking at the region, but 3-5 years from now, the IT clusters/creative cluster is anticipated to grow, which will bring a workforce looking for transit alternatives. The region needs to be on top of it today to be ready for that market.
 - Industrial jobs will continue to grow, and the I-26 corridor it will expand, since environmental concerns limit growth in other directions.
 - The corridor needs to be efficient and predictable.
- 6) Is industry willing to make the investment needed?
- The region competes with other areas; anything that is a disincentive would make it harder to compete.

The panel discussion was opened to the audience, and comments/questions are summarized as follows.

- 1) Audience member wanted to know if the planned Amtrak Station/Intermodal Facility will tie into the system. The project team discussed how the Amtrak Station would be considered as a potential stop for the Rivers Avenue and CSX alignments.
- 2) Audience member asked about how the private sector could help with park & rides, which led to a discussion about real estate being at a premium and the need for partnerships.
- 3) A discussion was held on whether panelists used flex time, vanpool incentive program, or shared parking. For some, employers offer, but employees do not participate. Santee Cooper has a vanpool program that 400 employees use.
- 4) Audience member asked if there was any consideration to adding HOV lanes to I-26.
- 5) A discussion on the food & beverage industry was held. It was noted that employees have a problem getting downtown to jobs, and their needs should be included. Shift times do not align with transit service hours.
- 6) Audience member commented on the correlation between parking costs and transit usage, and how high parking costs can incentivize transit usage and potentially fund transit service.
- 7) An audience member asked about how connections between CARTA and TriCounty Link could be improved in the process. The recommendations from a comprehensive analysis of both systems will be incorporated as part of the overall plan.

- 8) Audience member mentioned how reliability of current transit service is important. People are interested in using the system, but routes do not go where they need to go or are not reliable enough to get them to work on time.
- 9) Audience member asked if there was any consideration for Ferry Service.

DRAFT