

MINUTES
I-26 Fixed Guideway Alternatives Analysis
Joint Steering & Technical Advisory Committees Meeting

DATE: 01/15/2016

TIME: 10:00 AM

LOCATION: BCDCOG (Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments)

ATTENDANCE: Available Upon Request

Agenda:

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Project Update
- III. Screen Two Alternatives Analysis
- IV. Financial Analysis
- V. Project Justification Screening
 - a. Travel Demand Forecast
 - b. Cost effectiveness
 - c. Mobility and congestion relief
 - d. Environmental
 - e. Land Use and Economic Development analysis
- VI. Conclusion/Next Steps
- VII. Adjourn

Discussion Comments:

1. The Steering and Technical Advisory Committees were presented with the Screen Two Analysis results and the alternative that overall rated highest in the evaluation: Alternative B-1: US 78/US 52/Meeting BRT.
2. Comment was made on more fully addressing the development potential of both light rail and bus rapid transit systems. Research has shown that the return on investment/development potential is greater for light rail investments. These differences need to be noted in the land use and economic development analysis of alternatives.
3. If a BRT alternative moves forward into implementation, steps need to be taken to limit “BRT creep” – or the loss of a high level BRT plan. A high level BRT plan encompasses specific elements such as use of dedicated bus lanes, enhanced BRT stations, off-board ticketing, bus signal priority, etc. “BRT creep” usually occur as a result of the ease at which BRT can be stripped down in an effort to cut cost. If care is not taken in the

implementation of service the BRT system could easily become an enhanced bus service instead of a premium BRT transit option as originally envisioned.

4. The City of Charleston expressed interest in when in the process will more detailed planning of the system occur (station level planning/more detailed alignment and circulation options) and to what degree would variances in the general alignment be examined?

As the process moves into Project Development, the alignment would be further refined or examined to address items such as system circulation in downtown Summerville, the engineering needs to effectively get buses through the Neck Area (address the high rail conflict in this area), the traffic impact of introducing bus only lanes, or variances in the alignment in the downtown area, etc.

The City of Charleston expressed support of recommending BRT as the preferred alternative for the I-26 Alternatives Analysis Study given the relative cost-benefit of implementing a comparable LRT system. However, it was noted that planning for a BRT system should account for future conversion of the system to LRT. Thus planning for BRT should ensure that right-of-way is preserved and alignment elevations and turn radii are able to accommodate possible light rail in the future.

5. Norfolk Southern (NS) commented that the Neck Area alignment variance on King Street was not desirable because of the limited right-of-way available. NS was more supportive of the US 52 (Meeting Street) alignment under consideration.
6. The City of Goose Creek commented that the “Our Region Our Plan” identified the US 17A/US 176 intersection as a high growth area in the future. Concern was expressed that the northern alignment of the fixed guideway system did not include this area.

It was explained that the US 17A/US 176 area and the corridor along US 176 did have the potential to support a fixed guideway in the future. The higher rating of the US 78 corridor from Summerville to North Charleston resulted from the development that currently exists along that corridor. The study team also explained that in the development of the system, recommendations would be provided on the expansion of the system to include these “spur” corridors such as US 176. Recommendations would include, for example, provision of enhanced bus service along these “spur” corridors that feed into the BRT system. These corridors could be upgraded to BRT corridors in the future as demand warrants and as funds allow.

7. The joint committee expressed support of Alternative B-1: US 78/ US 52/ Meeting BRT as the recommended locally preferred alternative to move forward from the I-26 Alternative Analysis.

A copy of the presentation used to facilitate the above discussions is attached to these minutes.

Next Step:

Presentation of recommended local preferred alternative (LPA) to the public at Public Meetings (January 25th, 26th and 28th).