

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

DATE: 7/28/2015

TIME: 10:00 AM

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

ATTENDANCE: Available Upon Request

Agenda:

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Project Update
 - a. Public Meetings (April 2015)
 - b. Comprehensive Operational Analysis
 - c. Peer City Review
 - d. Initial Screening
- III. Screen One Alternatives Analysis
 - a. Transit Technology Overview
 - b. Corridor Alignments & Considerations
 - c. Screening Criteria
- IV. Discussion: Alternatives to move forward into Screen Two – Detailed Screening
- V. Next Steps and Schedule

Discussion Comments:

1. Prior conversation was held with Norfolk Southern (NS) Railway about introducing commuter rail in the region. Conversations revealed the very high insurance cost that is associated with providing passenger rail service. A major point of contention during discussions at that time was the allocation of passenger rail liability responsibilities (insurance costs).
2. Comment was made on the ranking of the Dorchester Road alternative. Committee members suggested that the Dorchester Road alternative, which ranked #10 out of 20 in the Screen One Analysis, should be revisited. Major factors identified and presented for consideration that might impact the Dorchester Road ranking include:
 - a. Traffic volumes have increased over time along the corridor.

- b. Residential growth is expected along the Dorchester corridor (partially due to the Wescott and Oakbrook developments located at the northern end of Dorchester Road)
 - c. Dorchester Road has right-of-way available in the large grassed median which runs from Parlor Drive to Cross County Road.
 - d. Dorchester and Charleston counties have entertained the idea of introducing commuter traffic lanes on the Dorchester Road corridor.
3. Committee members elected not to move the utility corridor alternatives (Santee Cooper and SCE&G) forward into Screen Two. Given the screening criteria used to assess alternative alignment suitability, the utility corridors under consideration did not score high in achieving the screen one goals. These goals included:
 - a. Improve mobility, accessibility, safety and connectivity of the transit system and region
 - b. Promote a cost effective and financially feasible transit alternative
 - c. Support local land use objectives
 - d. Plan for projected growth in an environmentally sustainable manner
 - e. Respond to community needs and support
 - f. Support a diverse regional economy

The utility corridors did not serve areas with high employment densities in comparison to other alignments. It was also noted that there will be associated costs with property acquisition since the alignment will impact some private residential properties, as well as with utility infrastructure relocation (poles and lines). Finally, ease and speed of implementation is a high priority for the steering committee, and the utility coordination adds a time and unknown cost element that is greater than the other alternatives.

4. Committee members elected not to move the CSX and Norfolk Southern rail line options forward into Screen Two. From the project staff's experience and peer system review, it was noted that many rail related projects that operate on rail right-of-way typically made use of abandoned or relatively inactive/underutilized rail lines. Both the CSX and Norfolk Southern rail lines in the Charleston area are active lines and lines of interest to the operators because of the planned Port of Charleston expansion. Due to these facts, negotiation of rail right-of-way or the possibility of shared rail lines are limited. Conversations with the rail operators also indicated that a rail related capacity analysis, led by the rail operators and funded by the region, will have to be conducted to determine the future capacity needs of the rail operators along the corridor, the potential operation needs of the proposed fixed guideway and the infrastructure needed to implement passenger service (safety features/signals/crossings, etc.). It was also noted that the CSX rail alignment would have to utilize some roadway facilities to link the Summerville, North Charleston, and Charleston corridor; and the Norfolk Southern rail alignment paralleled much of the US 78/US 52 alternative alignment. When comparison was made between the two similar alignments and the relative costs and level of uncertainty associated with the

two options the committees opted to not move forward with consideration of the rail right-of-way alignments.

5. Given the major project goals identified, committee members were supportive of the US 52/78 and US 52/176 alignment options. These alignments best serve the Summerville-North Charleston-Charleston corridor, operate along the existing high transit corridor (Rivers Avenue), and provide Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities needed to support a high capacity transit option.
6. Comment made that the mode considered should be guided by the overall cost to implement, the implementation timeframe and the likelihood of the project securing federal support/funding.
7. General consensus identified that in the short-term, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) technology is the most logical of the technologies presented since it can be implemented at the lowest cost per mile, and it has a relatively short implementation time.
8. Although members suggested that BRT technology could be realistically implemented in the short/mid-range timeframe, the Committee suggested moving a Light Rail Transit (LRT) option into a long-range or future project phase.
9. Committee members were supportive of developing a phased project implementation approach. Through this approach, the identified fixed guideway implementation schedule should propose a major segment or foundation segment that should be implemented first, and subsequent segments and phases should also be identified for later implementation.
10. Even though this process should ultimately pick the Locally Preferred Alternative for implementing a fixed guideway option in the Charleston region, members suggested that consideration should be given to other alternatives that could benefit from high capacity transit and how these corridors could be integrated into the greater I-26 transit corridor system. Consideration should also be given to how other routes could benefit from some of the technologies explored during the process such as signal priority technology along select routes.
11. At the end of the Joint Steering and Technical Advisory Committee meeting, the following alternatives were suggested to move forward into the Screen Two Analysis:
 - a. US52/78: BRT
 - b. US52/78: LRT
 - c. US 52/176: BRT
 - d. US 52/176: LRT
 - e. Dorchester Road: BRT
 - f. Dorchester Road: LRT

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

Next Meeting

October/November 2015 - TBD