

**JOINT MEETING  
ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE  
&  
ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING SUMMARY  
OCTOBER 3, 2014**

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

The Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) Planning Director, Kathryn Basha extended comments welcoming everyone in attendance giving the opportunity to all attendees to make brief introductions.

**II. Project Overview & Update**

A recap of past activity was given in order to bring the committees up to speed noting work on this project was halted because of the Federal Transit Administration's new legislation, Map 21. A Commuter Rail feasibility study Phase II conducted in 2011 recommended the Alternative Analysis report, a FTA Guided process. Awarded in 2012, the alternative analysis study was initiated just as Map 21 was signed into law a few months later, causing the project to pause in order for staff to gain a thorough understanding of the new legislation and its impact on FTA's New Starts - capital investment program requirements. After many conversations between the BCDCOG and FTA, staff now has direction necessary in order to proceed with the study. The criteria rating was dramatically change because of the new legislation which increases the competitiveness of applications seeking project funding.

Davis & Floyd was contracted to conduct the Alternative Analysis (AA) research so that the best transit alternative can be determined to improve transit services along the I26 corridor from Summerville to Charleston. Sharon Hollis with Davis & Floyd is leading this initiative and spoke on work completed, why the study is being done and what to expect over the next 15 months, placing emphasis on the project goals. Six goals identified for the study included (1) a transit alternative that would improve mobility & accessibility for the transit system, (2) a cost effective and financially feasible system that could be implemented within the community, (3) an alternative that supports local land use as well as projected growth, (4) respond to community needs, (5) have community support and (6) a plan that will support a diverse regional economy. Ultimately, the intent is to create a project that qualifies for federal funding of a capital investment in a fixed guideway system.

The BCDCOG, CARTA and TriCounty Link, the two transit providers servicing this corridor from Summerville to downtown Charleston, are the three major partners involved in this initiative along with SC Department of Transportation and the FTA. Moving forward, members of the committee were advised of their involvement as well as what will be expected of them during this process. A comparison of the old and new AA processes was presented.

Ms. Hollis continued sharing information on new criteria used to score projects that will need to be met in order to receive a medium ranking or higher to qualify for FTA funding. Criterion includes mobility improvements, environmental, congestion reduction, cost effectiveness, economic development and land use. The second

component that will be evaluated by the alternative analysis initiative to demonstrate readiness to receive FTA funding is the local financial commitment. The financial condition will include an assessment of the current financial conditions of the area's transit system to demonstrate successful management of the existing system, which includes an overview of the current system. Secondly, commitment of funds is expected at a certain level for each phase of the guideway's development. Although FTA can fund up to 80% of the capital cost, 50% is the typical funding provided.

Therefore, other local funding sources must be identified and available for the region to remain competitive with the other projects. Lastly, the reliability and the capacity to operate a sustainable system is the third component considered when looking at the local financial commitment.

Now in the pre-project development phase, a comprehensive operational analysis is necessary for both transit systems within the tri-county, similar to what TriCounty Link recently completed. In tandem will be the alternative analysis that will take into account key factors such as environmental and mobility benefits.

The FTA Travel Demand model will be used during this process as well as surveying of passengers, employers and employees in order to estimate potential ridership. Public involvement will increase to assist with refining the study. RSG services were retained to handle the travel demand forecasting since their firm developed the travel demand model used by FTA and their involvement will be advantageous to the region because they have a very strong understanding of what is required.

In preparation for the project development phase, a comprehensive operational analysis consisting of data collection will be done first, to include public input to assess the type of system that would be needed in order to be successful. An additional emphasis will be placed on land use. A funding recommendation memorandum will be drafted giving options of funding sources available to the region to help offset the required match. In addition, preliminary screening criteria will be conducted to assist with determining whether the region is competitive.

As part of the PowerPoint presentation distributed at the meeting, a project timeline was addressed noting public meetings - October/November 2014, CARTA passenger Outreach - October/November 2014, FTA Coordination - CARTA ridership counts October/November 2014, COA/AA Alternative Development - Fall 2014/Winter 2015, and the Next Steering Committee/TAC Meeting - January 2015. Kick off meetings are being scheduled for Summerville, North Charleston and Charleston to acquire comments on the existing transit service in November.

The Planning Director elaborated on why the existing system is looked at in such detail explaining FTA requires examining the existing system to demonstrate that everything possible has been identified towards improving the system prior to requesting dollars to design something different. This will be accomplished through the operational analysis. It will give the region an opportunity to achieve short-term resolution of transit service issues, as well as identify the required match funding that will be brought to the table.

The committee wanted to know what local options are available/envisioned in order to satisfy the match requirement. Currently, existing options are extremely

limited consisting of Charleston County's local option sales tax and small state contribution and federal contribution. The study will include the process of determining funding options, which will have to be a very large capital and operational investment requiring new multi-jurisdictional funding source.

Members of the Committee had strong opinions about introducing new legislation that would fund this project. It was pointed out Berkeley County would have difficulty contributing funds towards this project since their local sales tax program is definitive in the projects it can support.

The topic of commuter rail and previous studies was discussed, with one committee member noting the federal process was not followed in 2008 when the study was completed in addition to the fact that findings revealed the capital investment could not be supported. It was also pointed out if the state fuel tax is not increased, efforts to implement a new and successfully transportation system would be defeated. A consensus among residents was thought to be the key toward achieving this initiative.

**III. Other Items/Discussion**

None.

**IV. Adjourn**