

# DAVIS & FLOYD

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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:

- 1) Panelists were asked to give their observation of what are the region's challenges to transit?

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- 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.