



*March 15, 2010*

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 B**

### **REGIONAL TRANSIT STUDY (RTS) FINAL**

**REQUESTED BY:** CRTPA Staff

**TYPE OF ITEM:** Action

#### **STATEMENT OF ISSUE**

Formally initiated at the March 16, 2009 CRTPA meeting, the Regional Transit Study (RTS) is now complete. Consultants for the project will present the study's findings. Staff is seeking Board acceptance of the RTS.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS BY CRTPA SUBCOMMITTEES**

The CRTPA's three (3) subcommittees (Citizens Advisory Committee, Multimodal Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee) recommended CRTPA acceptance of the RTS at their respective meetings on March 2, 2010.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Option 1: Accept the Regional Transit Study.

#### **HISTORY AND ANALYSIS**

The RTS was initiated to develop a long-term vision for transit within the capital region (Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon and Wakulla counties). As such, the study is the first of its kinds to holistically address regional transit needs. The study's specific goals are to:

- prepare an assessment of future transit needs for the four-county area;
- identify and assess realistic funding strategies;
- identify an organizational structure that will promote the development of a seamless, regional transit system; and,
- identify an implementation strategy and milestones.

Formally initiated at the March 16, 2009 CRTPA meeting, the RTS was developed by the consulting firm HDR with federal funding administered by the Florida Department of Transportation (Public Transit Office). An executive summary of the study identifying the key recommendations is included as **Attachment 1**.

Two committees guided development of the RTS: the Stakeholders Committee and the Steering Committee. The RTS Stakeholders Committee provided guidance and offered recommendations on the study. The committee was comprised of representatives from the region’s public and private transportation related agencies including StarMetro, Big Bend Transit, Commuter Services of North Florida, Apalachee Regional Planning Council and Wakulla County Seniors Council. Additionally, representatives from the three universities/colleges were also invited to serve on the committee. The RTS Steering Committee, comprised of local government and agency representatives from the CRTPA region, served in a technical capacity to help oversee the project’s work tasks. Minutes of the committee meetings are available on the RTS project’s website that can be accessed from the CRTPA’s website ([www.crtpa.org](http://www.crtpa.org)).

## STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The RTS has developed a Service Development Strategy to identify the recommended transit service improvements, funding strategies and institutional framework options for the Capital Region over the next forty years. The recommendations were developed for the near, mid and long term time frame (Near Term: 2010-2014; Mid-Term: 2015-2024; Long Term: 2025-2050). The following identifies the recommended Transit Service Plan broadly identifying transit improvements for the region.

### **Recommended Transit Service Plan:**

#### **Near-Term (2010-2014)**

The Near-Term Plan focuses on enhancing local transit service within the City of Tallahassee as well the addition of two new express routes to Gadsden and Wakulla counties. The StarMetro NOVA 2010 plan to “decentralize” the current bus service forms the local transit framework in the Near-Term, with added service in the rapidly developing southeast quadrant of the city. Two express routes are planned in the Near-Term between Quincy and Tallahassee, and Crawfordville and Tallahassee. Both of these routes will be served by new park and ride lots at the end of lines in the out-counties. Finally, three transfer centers are proposed to provide for better connections between the decentralized StarMetro routes, planned express routes, and future BRT routes proposed in the later phases.

#### Capital and O&M Cost Estimates for Recommended Near-Term Plan (\$2009)

Improvement	Capital Costs	Annual Operating Cost
<b>NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS (2010-2014)</b>		
StarMetro Local Bus Service Expansion	\$5,784,000	\$4,101,000
Express Bus Service	\$945,000	\$898,000
Satellite Transfer Centers	\$4,563,000	\$30,000
Regional Park-and-Ride Facilities	\$763,000	\$20,000
<b>Subtotal of Near-Term Costs</b>	<b>\$12,055,000</b>	<b>\$5,049,000</b>

**Mid-Term (2015-2024)**

The Mid-Term Plan builds upon the Near-Term by two adding additional areas of local service, five new regional express routes (including one linking Jefferson County (Monticello) and Leon County), and three bus rapid transit (BRT) routes. Fixed-guideway transit is introduced in this phase, as two streetcar routes are planned as circulators connecting key employment and education centers in downtown Tallahassee. Four transfer centers and two park and ride lots are planned to serve the new transit routes.

**Capital and O&M Cost Estimates for Recommended Mid-Term Plan (\$2009)**

Improvement	Capital Costs	Annual Operating Cost
<b>MID-TERM IMPROVEMENTS (2015-2024)</b>		
StarMetro Local Bus Service Expansion	\$3,305,000	\$6,340,000
Rural Local Bus Service	\$868,000	\$2,709,000
Express Bus Service	\$3,464,000	\$4,692,000
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service	\$45,739,000	\$5,421,000
Streetcar Service	\$210,501,000	\$6,739,000
Satellite Transfer Centers	\$6,085,000	\$70,000
Regional Park-and-Ride Facilities	\$763,000	\$40,000
<b>Subtotal of Mid-Term Costs</b>	<b>\$270,725,000</b>	<b>\$26,011,000</b>

**Long-Term (2025-2050)**

The Long-Term Plan is the third and final phase of proposed transit improvements. Included in this phase are a few capital projects including three BRT corridors, and an express bus route. Local service improvements include a fixed route circulator in Crawfordville.

**Capital and O&M Cost Estimates for Recommended Long-Term Plan (\$2009)**

Improvement	Capital Costs	Annual Operating Cost
<b>LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS (2025-2050)</b>		
StarMetro Local Bus Service Expansion	\$0	\$6,340,000
Rural Local Bus Service	\$868,000	\$5,418,000
Express Bus Service	\$630,000	\$5,377,000
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service	\$76,976,000	\$13,501,000
Streetcar Service	\$0	\$6,739,000
Satellite Transfer Centers	\$0	\$70,000
Regional Park-and-Ride Facilities	\$763,000	\$60,000
<b>Subtotal of Long-Term Costs</b>	<b>\$79,237,000</b>	<b>\$37,505,000</b>

To construct the proposed transit improvements, the RTS identifies generalized projected costs and revenues for the recommended transit improvements through development of a Business Plan. These improvements, as reflected in the Business Plan, are contingent on the identification of new funding.

**Business Plan**

**Near-Term (2010-2014)**

In the near-term, the plan assumes that only Local Option Gas Tax (LOGT) funds are used to support the proposed capital and operating expenses of the transit improvements. As shown in Table 3-1 below, approximately half (2.5 cents) of the available 5 cent LOGT tax is necessary to support the near-term local bus, express bus, and park-and-ride/transfer expenses.

Table 3-1: Near-Term Revenues and Expenses

LOGT Revenue (cents)	2.5	\$3,671,578
Surtax Revenue (%)	0%	\$0
<b>Total Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$3,671,578</b>
Near-Term Operating Costs		(\$5,049,000)
Fare Revenue	25%	\$1,262,250
State Support	10%	\$504,900
Federal Support (PM)	10%	\$504,900
<b>Local Subsidy Required</b>		<b>(\$2,776,950)</b>
<b>Remaining Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$894,628</b>
Near-Term Capital Costs		\$12,055,000
Local Share of Capital Costs	75%	\$9,041,250
<b>Required Annual Debt Service</b>		<b>\$725,493</b>
<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>		<b>\$169,134</b>

**Mid-Term (2015-2024)**

Major investments are projected for the mid-term timeframe, including \$210 million for a streetcar and \$45 million for BRT corridors. In the mid-term, the plan assumes that the remaining 2.5 cents from the LOGT is approved and dedicated to transit. Then, out of a possible 1.0% sales surtax, a surtax of slightly more than 0.6% is necessary to generate sufficient funding for all the capital and operating expenses of the proposed mid-term improvements. The balanced revenues and expenses are shown in Table 3-2.<sup>1</sup>

Table 3-2: Mid-Term Revenues and Expenses

LOGT Revenue (cents)	2.5	\$3,671,578
Surtax Revenue (%)	0.63%	\$24,250,090
<b>Total Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$27,921,668</b>
Mid-Term Operating Costs		(\$20,962,000)
Fare Revenue	25%	\$5,240,500
State Support	10%	\$2,096,200
Federal Support (PM)	10%	\$2,096,200
<b>Local Subsidy Required</b>		<b>(\$11,529,100)</b>
<b>Remaining Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$16,392,568</b>
Mid-Term Capital Costs		\$270,725,000
Local Share of Capital Costs	75%	\$203,043,750
<b>Required Annual Debt Service</b>		<b>\$16,292,756</b>
<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>		<b>\$99,812</b>

<sup>1</sup> Note that the operating costs indicated here and in the long-term table are not the cumulative totals from the earlier tables, but instead are the *incremental* amounts added in each period.

**Long-Term (2025-2050)**

With the LOGT exhausted, the only available revenue for the long-term projects is the remaining 0.37% of the hypothetical region-wide dedicated sales tax. Roughly half of funding is needed to support expanded operating costs, but there is sufficient funding remaining to support the final major capital expansion of the BRT system with funds remaining in reserve.

Table 3-3: Long-Term Revenues and Expenses

LOGT Revenue (cents)	0	\$0
Surtax Revenue (%)	0.37%	\$14,242,117
<b>Total Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$14,242,117</b>
Long-Term Operating Costs		(\$11,494,000)
Fare Revenue	25%	\$2,873,500
State Support	10%	\$1,149,400
Federal Support (PM)	10%	\$1,149,400
<b>Local Subsidy Required</b>		<b>(\$6,321,700)</b>
<b>Remaining Dedicated Revenue</b>		<b>\$7,920,417</b>
Long-Term Capital Costs		\$79,237,000
Local Share of Capital Costs	75%	\$59,427,750
<b>Required Annual Debt Service</b>		<b>\$4,768,636</b>
<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>		<b>\$3,151,780</b>

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Based upon the recommendations, strategies and options identified by the RTS, perhaps the most important immediate question is how to next proceed. To that end, the project consultants have identified a number of implementation strategies and key policy decisions to be addressed by elected officials.

Implementation Strategies:

- **Near-Term (2010-2014) Implementation Strategies:**  
 The immediate implementation actions for the Capital Region are relatively straightforward and are intended to support the near-term local and express bus transit improvements described above. From a governance perspective, the near-term strategy can be characterized as “less is more.” The current institutional arrangement for cross-jurisdictional services, whereby counties can contract directly (via intergovernmental agreements) with StarMetro or Big Bend Transit for service, appears to be working well. For a modest expansion of local and express bus service, this arrangement should continue to be sufficient. If greater coordination between jurisdictions is needed, an *ad hoc* committee (most likely under the umbrella of CRTPA) should be able to address most service planning issues. From a funding perspective, the necessary near-term actions are more challenging. Even the modest local and express bus expansions will not

be possible without new funding. The most readily available source of funding for these near-term improvements is the local option gas tax (LOGT). Although raising the gas tax is likely to encounter opposition, officials in each county in the region should begin to work with their citizens and business community to explore this possibility if this is an option they choose to pursue.

- Mid-Term (2015-2024) and Long Term (2025-2050) Implementation Strategies:

The long-term recommendation for the Capital Region is a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) with dedicated funding and the responsibility for fixed guideway services and cross-jurisdictional bus services. But the region cannot (and should not) attempt to make an immediate move from the current decentralized structure to a full-blown RTA. The process will likely unfold over a number of years, with the following key steps:

- *Undertake preparatory work with citizens, the business community, and the Legislature:* Laying the groundwork for an RTA and for designated funding can begin almost immediately. While many in the transportation community are familiar with the idea of an RTA, transit's relative lack of prominence in the Capital Region means that a significant education process will be required. (And even the passage of RTA enabling legislation at the State level will not guarantee success unless local stakeholders are engaged and willing to support the RTA with funding.)
- *Inaugurate a Capital Region RTA:* If the creation of an RTA is enabled by the Legislature and the voters in the region approve, a Capital Region RTA can be inaugurated. Initially, the RTA will likely have few powers, and it may act simply as a planning body for transit in the region.
- *Designate the RTA as a regional CTC:* As noted in the preliminary recommendations in Technical Memorandum #4 – Institutional Structure and Funding Options, services for the transportation disadvantaged (TD) are a natural candidate for regionalization. Following the creation of the new RTA, it could be designated as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the entire region, and its first major responsibility could be the provision of truly regional TD services. Assuming that it performs this task successfully over the first few years, this will provide a base of goodwill and expertise for the expansion of the RTA's responsibilities.
- *Dedicate funding to the RTA:* The success or failure of an RTA for the region will depend largely on funding. The RTA may be able to successfully deliver TD services by relying only on annual allocations from local jurisdictions and state agencies. However, the delivery of bus services and fixed guideway services will require dedicated funding. As noted in Technical Memorandum #4, the most likely candidate for long-term dedicated funding in the Capital Region is a sales tax. However, there will be many difficult steps necessary to achieve a dedicated regional sales tax for transit. Statutory changes will likely be required, and then the approval of voters in each county will be needed. As with the creation of the RTA, this will necessitate a major public education and outreach process.
- *Shift cross-jurisdictional bus services to the RTA:* The responsibility for planning, funding, and operating existing and future cross-jurisdictional bus services would then be shifted from the local jurisdictions to the RTA. Local bus services would remain under the control of the local jurisdictions.

- *Deliver regional BRT and streetcar services through the RTA:* The delivery of premium transit such as BRT and streetcar service will mark the culmination of the RTA.

Furthermore, the following contains the policy decisions associated with the implementation strategies and transit recommendations identified by the RTS:

- **Will the region pursue near-term (2010 – 2014) bus improvements?** The proposed local bus, express bus, and park-and-ride/transfer improvements will improve transit options for commuters and begin to raise the profile of transit in the region. But these improvements cannot be undertaken using existing funding sources. The three policy options are: fund the improvements with a local option gas tax (LOGT); fund the improvements with a different funding source (such as general funds); or defer the improvements.
- **Is an *ad hoc* coordinating committee needed?** As express bus services and cross-jurisdictional services are implemented in the region, greater coordination among the local governments may be needed. A decision should be made about creating a committee (under the umbrella of the CRTPA or another regional body) where regional bus service planning issues can be formally raised and addressed.
- **Should the region begin to pursue enabling legislation for a Regional Transit Authority (RTA)?** If the answer is yes, this pursuit will need to include legislative efforts and formal exploration of options for organization, governing board composition, functional responsibilities, and legal requirements. It also will have to include extensive citizen and business community outreach in the form of town hall meetings, opinion polling, public relations and media efforts.
- **Should the designation of a regional CTC (TD service provider) be pursued?** If the regional stakeholders believe that the potential gains to riders will outweigh the potential costs, then this designation should be explored at the State level with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD).
- **Can the region begin a feasibility study and/or alternatives analysis (AA) for any of the proposed premium transit investments?** The lead-time on major transit capital projects can stretch many years from project conception to the first shovel actually going in the ground. If the Capital Region is serious about pursuing a streetcar or a major BRT corridor in the mid-term timeframe, these studies need to begin in earnest now.
- **How will the region pay for premium transit?** If the Capital Region is to successfully pursue a streetcar or major BRT corridor, dedicated funding will absolutely be needed. A dedicated sales tax is by no means a perfect funding source, but it has many positive qualities. Yet it would be very difficult to implement a true region wide dedicated sales tax given the current statutory and political environment. The region's stakeholders need to achieve consensus on whether to begin the difficult work of changing that environment.

As noted above, there are many steps and options to be followed with regards to addressing regional transit within the Capital Region. Whether local officials decide to choose to proceed forward at this point with the studies recommendations or decide to wait at this time, the plan provides a blueprint

from which to proceed. Furthermore, because the plan was developed at a high level, any further decisions will require more detailed analysis and study.

**OPTIONS**

- Option 1:     Accept the Regional Transit Study.  
                  (RECOMMENDED)
  
- Option 2:     Provide other direction.

**ATTACHMENT**

- Attachment 1:     Executive Summary