

Meeting 11 Report March 3, 2010

Development and Infrastructure Work Group

Transportation

Observations

- Public transportation system serves less than (0.5% - what % is this available to?) of population in Gwinnett
- Roads: SPLOST is capital only, not for operating
- Great strides in efficiencies and cost-cutting (maintenance)
- Centralized facility functional and efficient
- Everything stops at the county line – no coordination with the other counties
- The oversupply of parking raises the impact of stormwater runoff and discourages the use of transit services
- Cuts have already been made to some bus routes. Can any more cuts be made?

Considerations

- Will stimulus funds save costs on traffic lights? How much, now and in the future?
- 21st Century traffic control training (more efficient) – need more training
- The department of transportation has managed well within the box – time to consider a new box.
- What role would technology play if starting a department from scratch?
- What are the consequences of privatizing the airport? What is the impact?
- Transit
 - Add Wi-Fi to express buses
 - Create “intra-county” express routes with fewer stops to increase ridership
 - Quantify the market penetration on existing routes. What if ridership increases by 15%?
 - What if weekly or two-week transit passes are offered?
 - Increasing commuter ridership requires more Park-and-Ride capacity
 - The Unified Plan is a long-term plan and vision for Gwinnett County. Revitalization needs density and density requires transit.
 - Transit also carries an impact on economic development (developments of regional impact).
 - Can transit be dropped to a minimum?
 - Continue to monitor ridership
 - Can route patterns be further altered?

Recommendations

- Do a better job of marketing transit service, including providing schedules in community centers, libraries, grocery stores, etc.
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should increase the amount of marketing in order to increase ridership. The current operating contract provides for the operations contractor to do some marketing. GCT can also look to low cost/high return advertising such as having a bus on display at various public

functions/festivals within service areas. An additional option is for the county to look at retaining a marketing firm as was utilized with the system start up. As the County moves forward with the next solicitation for the transit service operating contract, Transit can clarify the expectation for marketing services.

- The current 2010 Advertising operating budget for Transit is \$2,500. The advertising budget of \$2,500 for Transit is actually for Legal ads in the newspaper for fare changes, route changes, public hearing notification, etc. Staff would recommend incremental adjustments and evaluation of impact prior to a large allocation of funds being dedicated towards this service. Approximate initial expense to upgrade services - \$7,500. Additionally, the contractor is required and responsible to do all printing for route maps and related handouts as part of their contract and this is built into their rate, not a separate line item.
- Ensure we're maximizing our use of technology
 - Staff trained and knowledgeable in its use
 - We understand the recommendation to say staff should be trained and knowledgeable in order to ensure the current technology has every aspect utilized. Transportation has and will continue to avail our staff of all training as applicable and within existing budget
 - The current 2010 Dues/fees professional Assoc and travel/training current budget for Traffic Engineering and Planning is approximately \$10,000
 - Develop plans and strategies
 - We understand the recommendation to say that transportation should develop plans and strategize capabilities in order to ensure the current technology has every aspect utilized; including researching what products/systems can be implemented to increase efficiency. Transportation has an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plan that they plan current and future work around, but will continue to monitor and amend this in the future as transportation needs and corridors change.
 - Any revisions or updates can be funded through the various SPLOST programs approved by the CPSC (Citizen Project Selection Committee).
 - "Smart" technology
 - We understand the recommendation to say that transportation should utilize "Smart" technology. In addition to the ITS Master plan. Transportation is in the process of implementing a Traffic Control Center (TCC) plan, which makes use of many new features and processes, including an Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) effort to make real-time traffic information along certain corridors available to the public via the web and local cable channels.
 - The ATIS project is currently underway with SPLOST funding of approximately \$100,000.
- Independent expert review of county's use of technology and facilitate integration across functions (e.g., traffic lights, public safety)
 - We understand the recommendation to say there should be an independent expert review of the county's use of technology. The review should focus on integration across functions of the multiple Departments across Gwinnett County; examples would be traffic lights and public safety. Transportation is presently working with the Information Technology (IT) Department to coordinate our Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS) equipment and information with other County departments, but welcome any opportunity to have an independent review identify additional resources sharing opportunities. In coordination with IT, Transportation has set-up a task force to look at shared technology and infrastructure.
 - Specific projects are identified with cost sharing for any construction and equipment among user departments. Past projects have been funded with SPLOST money with approximately \$50,000 set up in sub-projects for utilization.
- Third party facilitation/review of inter-departmental coordination
 - We understand the recommendation to say there should be a third party that facilitates and reviews the uses for inter-departmental coordination. We welcome the opportunity to have an independent review to help identify additional inter-departmental coordination.
 - Hiring a third party consultant to facilitate/review inter-departmental coordination of all functions and activities is estimated to cost approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 based upon the understood scope of service.

- Transit
 - Complete 5-year transit master plan
 - We understand the recommendation to say that a 5-year transit master plan be completed. The Transit 5-year master plan is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2010.
 - The current 2010 Budget for the 5-year transit master plan is \$199,900.
 - Offer weekly passes in addition to monthly
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should offer weekly passes in addition to the monthly passes and 10-ride passes currently offered for both express and local services. Generally, a weekly pass option is the same market segment as the 10-ride ticket option; large transit systems with a 7-day local service sometimes offer discounted weekly passes to their customers. This would not be a cost-effective alternative for GCT local customers since Transit does not provide any Sunday service and provides Saturday service on only one route. That being said, a regional fare product for local service has been proposed and later in 2010 may possibly be considered by the Regional Transit Committee for implementation.

For express service, the preferred fare media are monthly passes and 10-ride ticket books. Customers generally buy the monthly pass, but will buy the 10-ride ticket books only for those months when they know they will be on vacation, out-of-town, etc. and thus will not get the full benefit of the monthly pass; most all monthly passes and ticket books are sold at each of the six (6) park and ride lots the last two (2) days of the month – generally, a weekly pass would require three (3) to six (6) additional sale days. Our regional partners sell only monthly and 10-ride ticket books for the same reasons. In 2009 Transit spent \$3,337 for monthly passes thus, it would cost three to four times that amount (\$10,000 - \$13,000) to introduce a weekly pass; the pass sales would add 750 hours of labor annually because the fare systems are electronically linked into the Breeze Card System.
 - The current 2010 budget for Printing/Binding is \$18,000. The budget of \$18,000 covers the cost of the monthly passes, 10 - ticket books and Paratransit passes. Because the fare systems are electronically linked in Breeze Card System, a minimum of \$25,000 would have to be spent to upgrade the Breeze Card software for this product since this would be a shift from the use of existing media, there likely would be no revenue gain in offering a weekly pass.
 - Market to potential riders of necessity for local routes to increase ridership
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should increase the amount of marketing in order to increase ridership in particular areas. GCT will take advantage of public events along service corridors to have a bus on display as well as look at marketing as covered in the first recommendation – both internally and thru an outside marketing firm.
 - The above recommendation would have a budget impact. A marketing firm cost would depend on the scope of services and would likely range from \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually. This is an estimate at this point and these costs may run significantly higher for a more effective effort. While no current funding is in place, GCT can look to apply for capital grant funding or assistance programs for marketing. Even with this assistance, GCT would typically need to provide 20% matching funds.
 - Assess market penetration in areas currently served and develop strategies to increase ridership to break-even status from general fund standpoint
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should assess areas that currently utilize Transit and strategize on how to increase ridership so it may break even and eliminate the subsidy from the general fund. Part of the marketing, again internally and potentially thru a private firm, will focus on increased ridership thru additional exposure.
 - A marketing firm cost would depend on the scope of services and would likely range from \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually.

- Evaluate the return on investment and funds from MARTA (Breeze Card program)
 - The recommendation is suggesting an evaluation be done in order to see if there is a return on investment and funds from utilizing the combined efforts of GC Transit and MARTA. Currently ongoing – MARTA is looking at distance based fares versus flat rate as part of additional revenue
 - MARTA is evaluating at no additional costs.

- Generate revenue through ad sales for the buses
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should utilize the buses and post advertisement sales on them in order to generate revenue. This feasibility and cost/revenue is being studied as part of the Transit Development Plan – currently many systems are having difficulties with these programs as markets are limited and restrictions on undesirable advertisers could result in potential exposure and legal expenses.
 - The above recommendation is suggesting a revenue increase which may yield additional expenditure risk.

- Eliminate the cost of printing transit brochures by making them available electronically or outsourcing the printing to libraries
 - We understand the recommendation to say that Transit should eliminate and/or supplement their cost of printing brochures by making them available electronically via email, internet, etc. OR move the cost of printing to the libraries. This cost is incurred directly by the operations contractor. Transit can certainly look at means to reduce and move to more electronic means of information as part of the enhanced marketing and public outreach. Transit can also have the operator provide information in public facilities.
 - The would not have a budget impact due to the contractor being required and responsible, under contract, to do all printing for route maps and related handouts as part of their contract and this is built into their rate, not a separate line item.