
MINUTES
CITIZENS TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
December 3, 2009

PRESENT: Dr. Charles Gillespie, Chairman
Commissioner Gloria Gaines

ABSENT: Billy Merritt
Thomas Fratino
Peter Ngwafu
Dr. Surendra Pandey
Emmanuel Konde
Terrence Kennedy
Nicole Williams

STAFF PRESENT: David Hamilton, Transportation Planner
Howard Brown, Planning & Development Services Director
Alfred Lott, City Manager
Bob Alexander, Lee County Director of Planning & Engineering
Jennifer Newton, Administrative Secretary, SR

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gillespie called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Dr. Gillespie to approve the amended September 17, 2009 minutes. Commissioner Gaines seconded the motion, and the amended minutes were approved with the following votes:

Charles Gillespie	yes
Gloria Gaines	yes
Surendra Pandey	absent
Nicole Williams	absent
Emmanuel Konde	absent
Billy Merritt	absent
Terrence Kennedy	absent
Thomas Fratino	absent
Peter Ngwafu	absent

The minutes were unofficially approved because there were not enough members present to constitute a quorum.

DARTS 2035 LRTP

Eric Lusher, with URS, stated that the DARTS LRTP 2035 had been completed. It had gone through an extensive public and stakeholder's process. They had a 30 day public comment period from October 21st to November 19th of this year. A formal presentation will be done to the Technical

Coordinating Committee and the Policy Committee. They are asking that the TCC recommend approval to the Policy Committee and the Policy Committee's approval will formalize the plan itself. The real significance was to continue to receive federal and state funding for transportation projects in the DARTS region, which are all of Dougherty County and the southern half of Lee County. CTC members were welcomed to stay and view the presentation.

MULTI-MODAL CITIZENS DOCUMENT

Dr. Gillespie stated that he determined that he had been presented with a list of concerns by a citizen to discuss. It was not on the agenda for that meeting so it passed along to the staff for presentation. Dr. Gillespie noticed that that document had not been discussed in the later meetings. Mr. John Sherman was the citizen who submitted that list so, Dr. Gillespie subsequently was in contact with Mr. Sherman to find out if he was still interested in making a presentation about his list and he was. Dr. Gillespie asked for it to be put on the agenda to give Mr. Sherman a chance to present something that had brought before CTC before but had not been discussed. Dr. Gillespie opened the floor for Mr. Sherman.

Mr. John Sherman noted that when he had given Dr. Gillespie that copy of concerns, he had previously given a copy, hand delivered on March 31st a year earlier, to Nedra Woodyatt. He also e-mailed Mayor Adams, James Taylor, the Commissioners and Wes Smith the same thing a year earlier. It had been in the works for well over a year when he gave it to Dr. Gillespie and then Dr. Gillespie gave it to David Hamilton. Then it was subsequently left out of the Environmental Assessment. Mr. Sherman turned the floor over to Mr. Al Corriere, his lawyer.

Mr. Corriere stated that he represents the Shermans in this matter. The properties that they own are in the area that is affected by this Multi-Modal Transportation Center. The letter dated September 15, 2009 outlined their position regarding the study that was done on the Multi-Modal Transportation Center. They thought that the folks that were considering this, including the input that was given to this committee, did not accurately reflect the public input that was given concerning this project. They pointed out in the prior letter that there were misrepresentations of what was given. There were statements that there was no public input and there was a lot of public input. His clients had a good bit of that. Mr. Corriere passed out a set of photographs. He stated that there were a number of issues that needed to be considered before the center was approved. The original bus terminal is servicing the people that live in that area and who need the bus service. Relocating the station to the railroad track was questioned because there was no rapid rail transportation between cities in place or likely to be in place. If there is no real reason to locate near the railroad, then why move at all. The area where this building is to be placed is where a parking lot is located now. The parking lot services the need of the courthouse and there will be no parking available to fill that need. There were also some questions regarding hazardous materials. There are old wells in the general area that may contain potentially hazardous materials. His clients did not think that any study had been made concerning these materials. In addition to the hazardous materials impact, there are storm sewer questions that relate to this area as well. The area is also prone to flooding. The new location will also be away from the people who need the bus system and deprive the people from access to the service. Other social impacts of moving the bus terminal are the buildings in the area that are of historical significance, which would be significantly impacted if this project goes forward. Mr. Corriere stated that it would be fundamentally unfair to proceed with the matter without giving reconsideration to the input from the public that was asked for, received, but, for some reason, not passed along to this committee or the submission.

Dr. Gillespie reported that he had also done his own research with Norfolk Southern Corporation. Mr. Joel Harrell wrote Dr. Gillespie concerning the current policy of their rail service but not necessarily directed to Albany. It was a generic letter basically about the area Mr. Harrell was responsible for. Dr. Gillespie passed out the letter, "RE: Passenger Rail Service in Georgia over Norfolk Southern lines" and two maps - the Georgia Rail Passenger Program Proposed Commuter Routes and the 2050 PRWG proposed intercity passenger rail network maps. There were currently no service nor were there plans for high speed rail in the area. He also asked Mr. Harrell if anyone from Albany had attempted to talk to him about this project or high speed rail and Mr. Harrell replied that he had had no communication with anyone in the Albany area. Dr. Gillespie stated this information and the fact that the center would be moving away from the population density were not included in the report.

Mr. Hamilton stated that Dr. Gillespie's comments from the public meeting were included in the report. The city did not make the statement of "no comments received." That statement was a mistake on the part of the FTA. Those comments, as well as others, were included in the Environmental Assessment. The comments may not have been addressed properly but they were included. Also, rapid rail was not the intent for the new center but a commuter rail. In addition, the original Albany transit system operated for years, just one block away, where the River Aquarium is now and Mr. Hamilton disagreed with the idea that there would be a negative social impact if the center was moved. Albany does not own the building that the terminal is located in now. These things need to be considered when we are deciding whether or not to relocate. Mr. Alfred Lott concluded that they did not have any more comments about the project.

Dr. Gillespie stated that the three possible providers of a commuter rail did not have any knowledge of those services becoming available in this part of the state.

Dr. Gillespie opened the floor to Orlando Rambo, with Destiny Transportation Group, which is the 5311 provider for five counties in southwest Georgia. They are also the property owner's of the current bus terminal. He proposed that thought a viable alternative to moving the center would be to acquire adjacent property and expand the existing site. Recently the Destiny Group acquired a purchase option to the Heritage Bank location, which is almost a two acre site. When that land and the current site are combined, there are over four acres of land with about 37,000 square feet of retail and mixed-use space. Mr. Rambo thought his was an opportunity, for less money, to provide a better situation on a more traveled thoroughfare. Destiny had determined that it was not in their best interest to move and Greyhound had also expressed a desire to continue to stay where they are. If another location is built, there would essentially be two bus stations in Albany trying to service the same thing. Mr. Rambo encouraged some consideration to this viable alternative while the environmental assessment was being redone.

Mr. Sherman added that the proposed site for the multi-modal center was in the 100-year flood plain and Mr. Rambo's site was not. Also, when Greyhound sold the current property to Mr. Rambo, the site was considered environmentally clean.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 a.m.