

**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP**

March 4, 2008 – 12:00 P.M.

Meeting was called to order at 12:17 p.m. by Mayor Naugle on the above date, in the 8th floor conference room of City Hall, concerning the Downtown Transit Circulator project.

Roll call showed:

Present: Commissioner Christine Teel
Commissioner Charlotte E. Rodstrom
Vice Mayor Carlton B. Moore
Commissioner Cindi Hutchinson
Mayor Jim Naugle

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager George Gretsas
City Auditor John Herbst
City Clerk Jonda K. Joseph
City Attorney Harry A. Stewart
Sergeant At Arms Captain John Labandera

Mayor Naugle recognized the Downtown Development Authority's Board of Directors present: Gale M. Butler, D. Fredrico Fazio, Peter Feldman, Alan C. Hooper, Charles B. Ladd, Jr., John (Jack) T. Loos and William Scherer. As well as Chris Wren, Executive Director and John M. Milledge, General Counsel.

Jack Loos, Authority's Board Chair, said the DDA and their many partners at the local, county, state, and federal levels have worked on the downtown transit circulator project for six years. The DDA has been able to bring all of these entities together. As a business group, they pursue and work on things they believe they can make happen. If this was easy to do, it would have been accomplished long ago. They hope a prototype could be created that could be expanded and duplicated throughout the community.

Chris Wren, DDA Executive Director, noted that transit projects are complicated. They believe this is the correct timeline. It is a public/private partnership. The DDA represents commercial property owners have funded this thus far with their partners, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The City is now being asked to weigh in as a leader of this project. The DDA is seeking the Commission's direction on the alignment, to endorse the funding strategy and be a funding partner. There is also an assessment for the downtown property owners only. He reviewed slides on the downtown transit circulator project. A copy of the slides is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Wren noted the proposal is for a fixed-rail system and actually a modernized and more high tech version of Broward County's transit buses. Traffic can be behind, in front or go around. There would be designated stops and information provided as to when the next vehicle will arrive and where it will go. There would be traffic signal

coordination. The streetscape would be improved. Portland found their pedestrian activity increased 60% with a rail system because people felt more comfortable. This is the vibrancy the Board is hoping to achieve.

Phillip Smelley, Parsons Brinkerhoff (retained by DDA), reviewed those slides having to do with proposed routes (alignments) and station locations. He noted a detailed process was prescribed by the Federal Transit Administration. He highlighted facilities, major activity points and neighborhoods that each of the four alignments would pass. Alignment D-3 uses the tunnel and Federal Highway instead of the bridge over the New River. Alignment E-1 was added and includes some distance on Las Olas Boulevard or 2nd. In reviewing the cost slide, he noted an average inflation rate of 3.7% has been factored in. They would not be locked into a specific alignment until a decision is reached on the local preferred alternative. Submittal would occur between June and September. Preliminary engineering would be an additional six months to mid-2009 and during that time, alignment and station locations would be further refined. When a project construction funding agreement is negotiated with the federal government, a specific alignment, scope and schedule would be locked in. This is anticipated toward the end of 2008.

Mr. Wren continued reviewing the slides. He indicated that the DDA has strong federal support with respect to funding. They have received to date \$6 million. The State is also a strong supporter.

Jeff Weidner, Florida Department of Transportation, indicated the project team has met with all three of the secretaries, all of which support this project. The Broward County long-range plan shows a grid of transit projects, which he enumerated. Two letters have been issued indicating once all of the technical commitments and answers are provided, the State would be a 25% partner. A second letter indicates if the federal government does not participate, FDOT would participate 50/50 state/local. In connection with the rebuilding of Interstate 595, they have funding for eleven hybrid electric buses and operational funding for maintenance of traffic during construction. They anticipate continuing that operation afterwards. A regional connection to this downtown circulator would help the entire county transportation system.

For the remaining 25% funding, Mr. Wren said a financial committee looked at it and proposes local users of the system would help pay a portion of fair cost that the transit would be located within. The Downtown Regional Center and the South Regional Center are the boundaries of an assessment district. As development occurs throughout the years, the assessment unit costs would decrease. There is a project gap of \$600,000 that they would like the Commission to participate as a significant funding partner.

Ron Centamore, President of Downtown Civic Association, noted their boundaries. People moved to the downtown because they feel it will be cosmopolitan. They look to how the city will grow. They believe this transit system will keep traffic to a minimum and the growth it will project will benefit the city. They would like to see large retailers. There has not yet been a formal vote, but in the straw poll taken, 90% agreed with the \$99 per unit per year assessment. They have concerns and plan to meet with the DDA. One is feeding the system from residents that are 3-4 blocks away either east or west and could the present trolleys be used as feeder routes. Another concern is proper sidewalks. These things are not stumbling blocks and could be worked out.

Mr. Wren indicated the DDA would like the Commission to endorse all four alignments to move forward through the process. They also would like the Commission to weigh-in on 1) DDA's selection of E-1 alignment; 2) indication today as to a financial commitment; and 3) whether the process with respect to community support is adequate for the City to measure such a response.

Mr. Loos emphasized the DDA's role and need for the City to move forward with it. It has been a very inclusionary process. The circulator extends to Sistrunk and the hospital district to provide an opportunity to grow into other neighborhoods and areas that need such transportation. The downtown is the easiest and first place to justify such a system. He hoped it will expand into other areas.

Mayor Naugle asked how the system would work over the 3rd Avenue bridge. He asked when it is scheduled for replacement. Mr. Smelley said plans are to rehabilitate the bridge that would extend its life expectancy to fifty years which would satisfy Federal Transit Administration requirements. Replacing it would provide an additional twenty-five years which is beyond the project scope. Replacement would have to be entertained by the County. The timing of the system and movement of the boats on the river have been aligned as closely as possible with the Coast Guard and the County. The bridge would open as it does now. There will be overhead wires. Drawbridge examples are Stockholm, Portland and Provence, France. He explained how it works. Ship traffic would only be disturbed some eight hours during construction. There will be times the bridge is closed, but not ship traffic.

Mayor Naugle asked where the riders would be let out. Mr. Smelley indicated the preference seems to be side platform stations, unless for geometric reasons it does not work. It would be ADA compliant.

Vice Mayor Moore was concerned nothing is extending into the Sistrunk corridor. The formula for federal funding provides one be inclusive as to where it is provided as well as ridership. He wanted the system extending at least to 9th Avenue.

With respect to the assessment, Vice Mayor Moore asked about those individuals who receive an additional property exemption based on their age. He requested consideration to this age group. He asked if the assessment would impact property owners along route to the hospital district. Mr. Smelley replied yes, it goes to 17th Street. The hospital would pay also. Vice Mayor Moore noted those along Sistrunk would be expected to be impacted in the same way.

Vice Mayor Moore asked about the County contributing with respect to capital outlay. Mr. Wren indicated the primary position of the County has been operational. There has been some dialogue about transit concurrency funds helping with the capital. The County would be making a 20-year commitment with starting operational costs of about \$2 million. The DDA wanted equity for all.

Charles Ladd, DDA member, indicated he was the co-chair on the financing. There are other initiatives in the works, but the general concept of the assessment district was that the users would pay. They are also pursuing other government revenue sources. One example is the concurrency impact fee which is already being paid by new residential and commercial development in downtown for mass transit. They are speaking with County staff as well as commissioners about some of this money coming back into the

formula on an annual basis for the assessment district. It would be used to reduce the contribution by existing residential and commercial property owners.

Mr. Loos commented that it is a delicate balance of many beneficiaries and participants; they want to make sure everyone feels fairly treated. It was significant to get the County's commitment to be the operating partner which is a federal requirement. They do not wish to pit one government against another.

Vice Mayor Moore asked if the bus system would be discontinued. Mr. Wren indicated the consultant would analyze that, which is known as a redeployment plan. It would include both the Transportation Management Association's shuttles and Broward County Transit. Mr. Loos emphasized that Broward County Transit will be making the decisions. He did not think anyone wants any service reduction.

Vice Mayor Moore asked if Broward County Transit has made the financial commitment and they have considered removing buses from the line. Lynn Everett-Lee, Broward County Transit, said they have been working with the project team and the County Commission is on record as supporting the project. No routing decisions have been made because a final alignment has not been determined.

Vice Mayor Moore discussed what he learned from the system installed in the City of Portland. In response to Vice Mayor Moore, Mr. Smelley explained why Portland was able to have a lower per mile cost. Two significant items in Fort Lauderdale that did not exist in Portland are rehabilitation of the bridge and building a storage/maintenance facility. The two items total about \$45 million.

Vice Mayor Moore questioned the number of stations proposed which is not of such frequency in Portland. Mr. Smelley explained that Portland has tri-rail, light rail and trolley systems. The tri-rail stations are usually over a mile apart. The streetcar stations are actually closer together than proposed in this case. Also, more upscale stations are proposed.

Vice Mayor Moore summarized his concerns: route should extend to 9th Avenue; and cost per mile – with six vehicles, questioned cost of maintenance facility. He wanted more information about the number of stations.

Dan Glickman, Deerfield Beach resident, suggested using hybrid buses to connect with the FEC and Central Broward East/West systems to be built. The cost would be \$10 million in alternative.

Genia Ellis, Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations, supported the proposal. She noted a presentation was made to the Council. They like that it connects to the hospital district. They support continuing dialogue with the DDA and public to decide upon the correct links.

Tim Smith, former commissioner, supported the project. He suggested the system extend to Sunrise Boulevard and the Sears Town area.

Michael Larusso said he owns property in the downtown and favors an impact fee and how this project would affect movement in the greater downtown area.

Tim Petrillo, resident, property owner and business owner, believed the assessment is a small price for such an impact to the community. He urged serious consideration.

Patsy Mennuti, Executive Director, Riverwalk Trust, said their Master Plan and Projects Committee reviewed this proposal and support the overall concept. She looked forward to having the DDA attend their board's meeting next Wednesday.

Michael Madfis, South Andrews Business Association, supported the project.

Clare Vickery, resident and business owner, was excited to see the project come forward. She asked about a seamless transition from the end point to the airport.

Fredrico Fazio, DDA member, said they would like the route to be longer, but money was an issue. They believe this is truly doable. It is some for the future and the time to do it is now.

Alan Hooper, DDA member, noted construction that has taken place in the downtown and now Flagler Village. Residents bought into an idea of a little more sophisticated downtown. From an economic benefit, if fixed rails are built and people know it exists, the investment will come. This will draw retailers south and north of the river and possibly toward Sistrunk. It will make a vibrant downtown. It is a responsible approach to take on behalf of the residents who invested in a downtown vision that is included in the Master Plan. From a tax return standpoint, Florida is a donor state when it comes to transportation. Federal taxes are going everywhere, but Florida. This is a very positive project that the City, County and the community should embrace.

Mr. Loos commented that this is a beginning. Once it happens, others will want it. They would like to expand the system, but resources are limited. It must be where people generators are situated. They were sensitive to Vice Mayor Moore's concerns and that is why it goes to Sistrunk. Because of other concerns, it extends to be hospital district. Under this program \$150 million is the limit. He asked the Commission make a firm commitment to the project. Federal and state dollars are going somewhere. Consideration should be given to bringing those funds to this community.

Mr. Ladd believed there is over \$20 million in the budget for buying real estate for right-of-way and the storage yard. If government or the Community Redevelopment Agency, being a prime owner of land contributed land for the storage yard, it would reduce the cost. A large part of the budget is to purchase real estate in downtown for the storage yard. In reference to Mr. Glickman's alternative proposal, there are many reasons why fixed rail is much more effective, especially in terms of predictability when investment decisions are made. TMA is currently running a route which is similar to the proposed route. He understood that the TMA routes could be adjusted to become feeder routes to the transit and provide more connection alternatives.

Mayor Naugle agreed with the Sears Town suggestion. As far as Sistrunk connecting, trolleys could be used to connect.

Mr. Ladd noted that the downtown is severely impacted because it does not have direct interstate access. The distribution system would make it viable to connect Tri-rail to downtown.

Mr. Loos asked the Commission to make a firm financial commitment.

Mayor Naugle asked if the assessment assumes that the Hospital District, School Board and the City are paying the assessment. Mr. Wren said the assessment assumes that everyone is paying. John Milledge, DDA counsel, said the assessment in the slide presentation today excludes those entities because the DDA is presently in negotiations with the Hospital District and the School Board for possible contributions.

Mayor Naugle felt if those parties were assessed and the County was given a credit for paying operating costs, the \$600,000 needed from the City could probably be eliminated. For example, the City assesses government agencies on stormwater and other fees. Mr. Loos said that has been looked at and there would be a large shortfall. Mayor Naugle indicated that the assessment may have to be increased then. Mr. Loos was hopeful the City would make a commitment with which the Commission is comfortable and they will work from there.

Commissioner Hutchinson felt the City has to be a part of this. Whether it is a financial and, or a land commitment, it could be the same thing. It would free millions of dollars for for hard track in the road versus having to buy land. She liked the project, Alignment E-1 and believed the TMA would be a definite connector.

Commissioner Rodstrom felt it is a great idea, but she was concerned why it does not extend to Sunrise Boulevard and to 6th. She felt the trolley could infiltrate areas north of Sunrise Boulevard towards Sears Town.

Commissioner Rodstrom asked about the maintenance facility in the Progresso area. Mr. Wren said it is a maintenance facility site option, but it is not high on the consideration list. Mr. Loos said they identified a number of potential sites; they are looking for donors or voluntary sellers. They do not intend to condemn anything. Through the federal process, they have to vet sites properly before enter into any negotiations. The site must meet their criteria, but next is what would be most cost effective. They hope to cut the \$15 million budget.

Commissioner Rodstrom questioned if the ultimate site would have to go through the neighborhood compatibility process. She pointed out that areas where this system is placed will see rapid redevelopment, therefore, she was concerned about the northern end and Sistrunk. She wanted Alignment E-1 expanded. If not, she wanted that area to be first once the system is operational.

In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, Mr. Wren indicated that County committed to the operational costs in 2004.

Commissioner Rodstrom asked about the assessment process and would the City's commitment be contingent upon it. Mr. Wren said they wanted to make sure they are on the right track and obtain the Commission's endorsement today. They would continue working with all of the residential and business leaders. They would bring back a majority to the Commission to demonstrate support.

Neil Sterling, DDA Government Liaison, said there would be a public hearing. Mayor Naugle concluded it would be a typical special assessment process where the

Commission listens to public input and then makes a decision to tax the area. A good campaign should be presented to the property owners.

Without the public hearings, Commissioner Rodstrom asked what the Commission is being asked to commit to financially. Mr. Wren explained everyone is waiting for someone to go first. They would like to see the Commission indicate some amount with which they are comfortable so they could begin getting finite answers from everyone else. They also would like the Commission to give the go ahead on all four alignments.

Commissioner Teel discussed what she gained from visiting Portland and the monumental redevelopment that occurred. Those areas that there is concern about not being included will come into place in time. In the meantime the trolleys provide connectors and feeders. Portland elected officials stressed public participation. The maintenance facility was tucked under an overpass. It was quiet and clean. She supported the project, whether it be cash or participation with land. The longer one waits, the higher the price.

Vice Mayor Moore wanted a review of expansion to Sunrise Boulevard and 9th Avenue. The reason the rail is such an advocated method of transportation is because the adjoining property owners have a vast value adjustment in their property. If certain communities are excluded from that same value added opportunity, expansion becomes more costly and difficult to do in phases. The federal government requires there be inclusive ridership. Once they look at the opportunities of assessing individuals included with the broadened route, it may lessen the unit cost.

Vice Mayor Moore commented about changes made in the City's government in order for people to have a voice at the table. The proposal did not originally include the Hospital District, but it is now included because Commissioner Hutchinson was involved in the process and it made valid sense. He asked the DDA to return in one month after additional research on the expansion discussed today. There is no need to exclude communities.

Mr. Loos explained it was extended to the Hospital District, not because of Commissioner Hutchinson, but because the transit experts looked at the people generators and density. The North Broward Hospital District and Broward General Hospital and the court system are the two largest people generators, coupled with the bus terminal. Out of respect for Vice Mayor Moore, they will take another look at the expansion suggestion. There is a finite amount of money and they have budgeted as long of a route as possible with the budget. They have attempted to reach out to all communities. The route goes to the bus terminal. They are trying to be as inclusive as possible.

Mayor Naugle said this matter would be discussed on the April 1, 2008 Commission conference agenda and a resolution would be scheduled for a vote that evening.

Vice Mayor Moore thanked the DDA for that consideration. He asked they contact the Midtown Business Association, Negro Chamber of Commerce and the Flagler Heights Progresso area.

Mr. Loos said there are finite dollars involved. He asked Vice Mayor Moore to assist in providing potential funding sources for the money he is talking about. Vice Mayor Moore noted the property assessment.

There being no other business to come before this Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:50 p.m.