



Breakout Group Summary Transit Roundtable 2 April 11, 2011

Group 1 Organizational Framework

Candidate organization frameworks described; strengths and weaknesses of each approach were discussed.

It was noted that there are existing informal arrangements between providers to coordinate services.

- An example of an informal arrangement was discussed
- Informal arrangements represent a good start for regional coordination and should be highlighted as a success and possibly serve as a model
- Opportunities to expand coordination within the context of a larger region with guidance for providers on how to do so is an aim of this project

Incremental approach to coordination may be easier at first than a more formalized process.

SEPTA was cited as an example of how a larger regional transportation system can be assembled of previously disconnected assets and facilities.

Political will is needed to help county or city-based systems look beyond their geographic constraints.

- Capital Area Transit: an example of a multi-county, multi-jurisdictional system already operating within project area
- Agreement between Adams and York County identified as an example of a regional agreement on transit services
- Agencies are already talking about these services – CAT, Red Rose and rabbittransit
- Value of the “Umbrella Agency” approach for planning and capital programming likely to lead to consistency of approach for routes or services that provide regional connectivity
- Benefits of umbrella agency approach vs. informal arrangements discussed
- Role of County Commissioners in new regional routes discussed – can agencies partner on regional routes without consent of County Commissioners? Ideally this can be kept at the agency level.

As the region begins to be combined into one metropolitan area, sharing of resources becomes both an opportunity and a challenge.

Fare Coordination: Fare and fare coordination is a significant issue.

- Transfers from one system to another, lack of a coordinated fare structure and lack of a common fare media all serve as disincentives to use transit

- All of this needs to be invisible to rider – disconnect between agency view of coordination (as difficult and complicated) and user (should be simple and integrated)
- Expectation that these cross agency issues can and should be worked out

Role of Technology: What role does technology play in service coordination?

- Swipe cards and EZ-Pass cited as example of potential technological solutions
- Are there computer programs to help oversee the sharing of fares and passengers?

Incremental Implementation

- Two tier system concept
- Informal coordination on specific routes at outset
- Creation of more formal system to address institutional issues
- This would then transform into umbrella-type agency as more routes came online

Marketing is key to making this work

- Selling these combined services as sustainable transportation solutions
- Younger people more comfortable using transit

What role can PennDOT play in helping regions coordinate services?

- Who is the champion for transit coordination?
- Without organization or authority is overseeing role, and to manage sharing of funding, hard to make the case to local counties for service coordination
- What about rural parity? Mix of urban, developing and rural counties in project area. Difficult to ensure that all receive appropriate level of services cost-effectively

Group 2 Legislation and Funding

The intended outcome of this breakout group was to obtain recommendations from BPT, legislators and others on the best ways to help fund regional transit, which would be included as part of the study's implementation plan. The following questions helped to guide the discussion:

1. *What is BPT's perspective on a new state program for funding regional transit?*

Demonstration projects are currently suspended, but the mechanism for their execution is still in place. Demonstration projects are for three years then it is up to the local sponsors to make the decision to keep the program going and compete for state and federal funding to continue the project. In order to continue, these projects must meet a prescribed set of criteria.

Due to declining sales tax revenues, overall operating dollars are down, but if revenues start to increase then there will likewise be an increase in formula funding.

In terms of continuing multiple transit operations, the Lackawanna/Luzerne/Hazleton example was cited including the potential of \$1.8M of savings per year by 2017 if these systems were to consolidate. This stated, cooperation is a good first step in terms of identifying potential cost savings, e.g., administrative services and operational coordination. Potentially, any savings from consolidating operations could be used to provide additional regional service.

There is more of a challenge for capital funds vs. operating funds.

2. What would be needed in potential legislation?

It was agreed that separate funding for facilitating regional transit coordination is needed in legislation, with local political support. However, issues such as labor pay rates and variations in unions would need to be considered, and shared administration may be encouraged.

Control would need to be with the local governments vs. the Commonwealth, such that elected officials would see the benefit in providing regional coordination. Legislation would have to reflect what the locals are interested in providing and it would be hard for the state to do this.

This legislation could potentially start off as coordination of services, and maybe in the future see the opportunities for more efficiency through regional transit consolidation in a piecemeal fashion.

3. What is the potential for enabling legislation to help support regional transit coordination?

Legislation needs to show why it is important to work together. Potential examples could include capital purchases such as unified systems (e.g. fare collection) and trip planning software. Service planning and standards could also be brought together to evaluate poor performing routes and prepare Transit Development Plans). Key staff positions could also possibly be shared.

It was agreed that a comprehensive solution is needed – one that encompasses all modes including rail freight, airports, highways and transit – and that it should be all or nothing. Ideally there would be a larger pie available for transit, with the same percentage allocated among the various transit agencies in the State.

The message of the importance of locals was made clear in that it is important to educate on the importance of local transit and its benefits. However, a local tax would not be supported due to political ramifications and even if it was it would be instead of (not in addition to) a certain portion of State funds.

4. *What is the timing or window for such an opportunity?*

There is currently a potential window to get language in a transportation funding bill for regional transit coordination in the May-June timeframe.

In any legislation there would be some form of performance measures in place, e.g., performance criteria used for Act 44 (passengers per revenue vehicle hour, operating costs per revenue vehicle hour, operating revenue per revenue vehicle hour, and operating costs per passenger). Legislators will need to be educated that farebox is not the only performance measure, particularly in less urban areas.

5. *What is the potential for P3's as related to regional transit coordination?*

The potential for P3's was seen as important and occurring between businesses and transit agencies. This would be discussed in Group 3 as part of Community Partnerships.

It was discussed that MPOs have the ability to transfer highway funds to transit (e.g., CMAQ funding), but their hands are often tied in a relatively highway-dominated state (e.g., large number of structurally deficient bridges). However, there is interest in showing the benefits of transit and traffic operational changes such as queue jumpers and operating on shoulders that could make transit faster than an auto commute. TCRPC is doing a study in Carlisle to identify potential recommendations to this effect.

6. *What is the best way to secure/encourage a local match and/or reduce the burden on the local municipalities/counties?*

Employers need to understand "what's in it for them." Suggestions included hosting an open house at their facilities with groups such as the County Commissioners and Chambers of Commerce.

Overall it was agreed that SRTP could serve as the facilitator for regional transit coordination, particularly with regard to the "look and feel" of transit services from the passenger's perspective. SRTP functions with the right attitude to make this coordination move forward, and any turf issues would need to be left at the door. The potential perception from the smaller counties losing turf would need to be address.

Incremental change would be most desirable for now, but this process needs to begin with the end in mind, focusing on the longer-term.

Group 3 Community Partnerships

The purpose of this session was to learn about existing partnerships for regional service that could be documented as “successes” and also identify types of partnerships needed and ways to approach businesses and local governments.

Existing Partnerships

Commuter Services of PA has many existing programs in place with area employers. These include:

- Letterkenny Vanpools
- Hershey Carpools
- East Penn Emergency Ride Home in conjunction with BARTA service

Transit agencies have partnerships with malls and large stores for park and rides:

Lebanon Transit	Walmart park and ride, express bus to Harrisburg
Lebanon Transit	Indiantown Gap park and ride
	Vanpools, carpools,
	Express service to Harrisburg—one section
BARTA	service to East Penn manufacturing plant funded by CMAQ
	Service around the clock; serves 3 shifts

CAT provides dedicated transit service to Hershey Park temporary workers every summer. CAT has purchased buses for the program that are only used for that purpose. It is worth it because Hershey Park guarantees CAT sufficient revenue to cover the costs.

Park and Rides are seen as win/win situations between the transit agencies and the malls because the parking lots are rarely full and the transit users often shop before or after work.

Transit agencies have partnerships with each other:

- Lebanon Transit-, rabbittransit, and CAT meet regularly to discuss fare structure
- Lebanon Transit and CAT are seeking funding for express service along Rt 422
- Planning for Corridor 2 did a good job of forging relationships between transit providers, Hershey enterprises (park, medical center, factory) and public officials

Future Partnerships/(ways to improve Transit Business Partnerships)

Transit agencies need to solve business' problems in order to become more effective partners.

- Increase access to employees
- Help reduce turnover
- Help reduce absenteeism

Transit agencies should work with local chambers of commerce to identify and facilitate discussions with businesses who may need service.

Transit agencies must make sure the waiting areas/bus stops are clean and safe.

Transit agencies should employ new technologies to inform riders of schedules, delays, etc.

Transit agencies/local government partnerships

Selective education about how local ordinances to be transit friendly

- Buildings close to road
- Sidewalks
- Bus pull offs
- Turning radii to accommodate busses
- Increase density to make transit a more viable choice

There are two new developments that have been designed with transit in mind.

- Shrewsbury Commons—Park and Ride
- New development in Lebanon—bus pull offs

Communication is key. Transit agencies need to recognize and celebrate businesses and local governments that are actively partnering with them. Call them out as demonstration projects. Commuter Services was identified as a potential actor in this regard. The potential for a reward ceremony was discussed to recognize these employers.