



DeKalb County Government

1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Minutes

PWI-Public Works & Infrastructure Committee

Thursday, April 21, 2022

11:00 AM

Special Called Meeting

This meeting will be conducted via teleconference (Zoom). Simultaneous public access to the meeting will be available

(1) via live stream on DCTV's webpage,

(2) on DCTVChannel23.TV

Meeting Started At:11:02 AM

Attendees: Commissioners Cochran-Johnson, Terry, Patrick, Davis Johnson

Present 3 - Commissioner Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, Commissioner Robert Patrick, and Commissioner Ted Terry

I. DISCUSSION

Modes of Mass Transportation

-presentation provided by Jonathan Webster - Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) on the different modes of transportation options

-Question LCJ: of these options, what would you say is the fastest mode of transportation?

J Webster: typically heavy rail because it operates entirely in an exclusive right of way. There are some delays with light rail and BRT, but they are both speedy, but subject to delays with being in mixed traffic. I can provide documentation that might help with your decision making

-information provided by Manjeet Ranu - Chief of Capital Programs, Expansion and Innovation at MARTA

-Question TT: regarding link trips, a few of our officials have attended those link trips. As we move forward in our DeKalb discussion on transit, we may need our own link trip to experience these modalities as well as a larger stakeholder group. Understanding the experience for the rider and what it means. Regarding an all-subway system, when we were doing our master plan and reviewing aspects of above/below ground, did the analysis of the giant sheath below the county of granite affect drilling? When you think about light and heavy rail, there are similarities; what would you say from a customer experience is the difference between the two?

J Webster: regarding underground service, if the DeKalb transit plan, we reviewed the extension of heavy rail that would be over-ground; the costs there were developed through the I-20 east transit initiative. Because of the previous planning efforts regarding heavy rail, that's why that project was included

M Ranu: regarding tunnelling, the 3 primary methods are: sequential mining, cut and cover trenching, and tunnel boring machine. All methods are capable of going through the rock that is most efficient. Regarding customer experience, the main difference is that heavy rail needs to be fully grid-separable. For the customer it's about the speed and how you access the system. For light rail you can cross the grid like you see at train stations. The vehicles tend to be lighter; in terms of capacity the heavy rail can move more people. BRT can also move a mass amount of people

-LCJ: as it relates to heavy rail, it can be very difficult to assess costs. In DeKalb due to the presence of heavy granite and rock, it would be difficult until there is a path to determine the costs

-Question MDJ: I understand that costs are important to understanding how we will proceed in DeKalb County. I do want to be mindful that South DeKalb has been paying into MARTA from the 1970s; we have paid enough into. It may be that the citizens of DeKalb decide that this would be a locally preferred option. In terms of equity, heavy rail must be considered here. We know there will be costs for it to go from South Indian Creek to Stonecrest; if that is the citizens' desire, and DeKalb determines this would be the locally preferred option, and we have the resources necessary, I think it is possible to do. I am a staunch proponent of heavy rail. Whatever granite and rock there may be, then we will go through, just like we had to go through other types of things to get rail in other parts of DeKalb. If we had a referendum it would tell the story of it all regarding heavy rail going South Southeast in DeKalb County. I thank MARTA for their review into the possibilities of rail; I think we have all the components right now to make this work

-LCJ: I don't think the purpose of today's call is to exclude any options. DeKalb did pass a resolution that indicated the locally preferred option is heavy rail, but not to exclude other types of mass transit. At this moment we are at a unique time because we have an opportunity to receive federal funds that has not been previously available to us; to secure these funds it does require a local match. In case some are not aware, with the penny allocated to MARTA, we will receive the costs of good repair and the costs of administration. Moving forward we must develop a path to develop a means for mass transit to move forward.

-Question RP: as a follow up to Commissioner Terry's question, a DeKalb link trip would be worth exploring; that is an important part of the conversation. Could the slides be forwarded to commissioners? Do we have a time frame for construction on each one of these options? What are our needs for now and what our needs are for the future will also be an important discussion point

-LCJ: everyone will be receiving a copy of the presentation here today; I would ask that commissioners make it available for your constituents as well

J Webster: generally construction timelines vary considerably based on the corridor or any delays in construction. I'm not aware of general guidelines. Generally, ART would be the fastest followed by BRT, LRT, with HRT being the most time consuming to construct.

M Ranu: I agree it depends on the complexity of the corridor; the process to get to when you start construction is the most difficult - and that is now, the planning phase. Coming to that decision is a public process that takes time and a lot of work, and in some cases takes longer than the construction itself

-Question Mayor John Ernst: if we were to have funding today using GDOT right of way, we could have an express transit system around 2030; between the modes of transportation and different plans in DeKalb County, there was a study done that showed jobs a person could access with the system being fully built out. Do the consultants have some of that data available on the number of jobs accessible to?

J Webster: yes that analysis was part of the DeKalb transit plan; I can include that into this PowerPoint to share with the group

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- Question J Ernst: if we were to do the half penny or penny scenario, what was the number of jobs a person in Stonecrest could get to?*
J Webster: I'd have to take a look at the numbers but it was a fraction of what could be provided by a full penny
- J Ernst: I think we need to look at moveability of moving people and how can we move the most amounts of people*
- Question Mayor Garrett: I did attend a previous link trip in Minnesota to experience the light rail and BRT options that were very pleasant. I was on the call yesterday for 2050, and the statement was made that certain decisions until the land use plan was updated. I would like more information on the timing regarding timing for moving forward, and I'm not sure when the 2050 plan would be completed*
- Question LCJ: to my knowledge there is no discussion that we halt planning or conversations related to mass transit as a result of the 2050 plan*
- Z Williams: I think that's a safe statement; I have not heard any discussions to halt conversations as it relates to the transit plan or the Unified Plan*
- Question LCJ: I understand that you Ms. Pastore are working with the 2050 plan, could you provide more information*
-additional information provided by Cristina Pastore
- Question TT: having a DeKalb link trip would provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to have that on-the-ground perspective. I'm very supportive of the current DeKalb master transit plan; constituents in District 6 were very interested in the potential in light rail to South DeKalb mall. I understand there is consensus building, and we have learned that we must have the municipalities on board as it relates to funding options. It does appear that we have much more work to do; I don't want to rush anything in lieu of getting it right; I thank the mayors for their engagement to continuing these discussions. I agree that the transit investment needs are important for our people here now and the DeKalb of 2050.*
- Rita Scott - MARTA board member: I want to add how excited I am that we're having this discussion. Last month there was a criteria regarding the amount of funding; that criteria is equity. I am going to ask MARTA to provide data and share with us in DeKalb how the difference between 50/50 or any amount of shared funding, how equity will play into that. Equity is a specific criteria as it relates to this*
- Question MDJ: it's good to have the municipal associations on and providing input. At times their interests could be contrary to our interests. We the county - what the Commissioners may feel is the best interest may differ from the interests of the DMA.*
- Question LCJ: if we move towards a referendum, it may be like we experienced with the SPLOST program; it would be county wide so there would need to be consensus amongst the County as to what is best. If we were to move forward with a referendum, each city would receive a pro-rata distribution of the monies that would be allocated; it is important that we all be part of this conversation. I do believe a link trip is in order; I will work with the Administration and others to set a date and time for the trip as well as location, so we will see firsthand the modes of transit that have gone through this process*
- TT: regarding the cities, I thought state law required input from the cities; I do acknowledge that we have different interests as it relates to county and cities. The involvement of the cities is a good thing. I'm looking forward to next steps*
- LCJ: mass transit is not insular; this is something that will benefit us countywide. During our next meeting I would like to see happening moving toward a memorandum of understanding with us all. We will continue to have discussion that focuses around the types of transportation, the costs associated with each, and also a link trip.*
- LCJ: at our next meeting I would like to specifically focus on potential funding sources. During our next conversation expect to hear about potential funding sources, so that we can move toward a dedicated funding source and what that looks like.*

Meeting Ended At: 12:19 PM

MOTION was made by Robert Patrick, seconded by Ted Terry, that this agenda item be adjourned meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Commissioner Cochran-Johnson, Commissioner Patrick, and Commissioner Terry

Barbara H. Sanders-Norwood CCC, CMC