

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Task Team (TT)

Minutes of Meeting
May 6, 2005, 10th meeting

Participants: Peter Steinert, Chair (HQ Mass Transportation), Ina Gerhard, Recorder (HQ Mass Transportation), Al Arana (HQ System Planning), Xiomara Balladares (HQ Right of Way), Tunde Balvanyos (AC Transit), Tilly Chang (SFCTA), Paul Chiu (Caltrans District 4), Antonette Clark (HQ Design), Jim Cunradi (AC Transit), Don Dean (HQ Research and Innovation), Casey Emoto (Santa Clara VTA), Jean Finney (Caltrans District 4), Kimberly Gayle (HQ Mass Transportation), Corinne Goodrich (SamTrans), Gary Green (Caltrans District 8), Jim Jarzab (Commuter Associates), Julie Kirschbaum (SFCTA), Wingate Lew (Caltrans District 4), Charlie Larwood (Caltrans District 12), Peter Strauss (San Francisco MUNI), Martha Styer (HQ Traffic Ops), Chris Schmidt (Caltrans District 11), Sonja Sun (HQ Research and Innovation), Virginia Tomasian (HQ Mass Transportation), Mike Valcho (Caltrans District 7)

Introductions/Approval of April 1 Minutes

Following the introductions and a brief review of the main highlights of the last meeting minutes, the TT approved the minutes without comments/changes.

Draft Policy White Paper

The Service Planning/Identity subcommittee met twice to brainstorm ideas for the draft White Paper (WP). Julie Kirschbaum finalized the draft document.

Tilly Chang introduced and summarized the main concepts of the WP to the TT.

- Following a description of the main BRT features, the WP formulates/proposes Caltrans' goals in terms of BRT policy in the **Introduction**.
- The section on **Institutional Development** recommends the early involvement of Caltrans in the planning and decision-making process in order to be part of difficult decisions and trade-offs that will inevitably have to be made along the way.
- The section on the **Model Interagency Planning Process** recognizes the complexity of BRT, and suggests to give more authority to the districts to partner with local agencies in areas where Caltrans is best equipped and trained to do the work. Also, the state process should mirror the federal process and not make it more complicated.
- Future, more complex generations of BRT will have to be considered in the **Alternatives Evaluation** process. System-based performance measures will have to be developed to identify potential BRT corridors. BRT should be included in the long-range transportation plans.
- The **Legislative and Funding Assistance** section emphasizes the need for Caltrans to secure federal funding resources for BRT projects. More research is needed to identify legislative changes that might be needed to facilitate BRT in CA.
- **Technical Standards** refers to the modification of design standards and the promotion of flexibility in highway design to accommodate each unique set of BRT components.

A discussion of the WP followed. The major comments are listed below:

- Jean Finney and Peter Steinert thanked the subcommittee, especially Julie Kirschbaum and Jim Jarzab for their work on the WP, which they considered to be a milestone for the TT. It was noted that the draft WP would need to be carefully

reviewed by Caltrans HQ and District staff to address Caltrans' perspective. Paul Chiu mentioned his own experience and development to the point that he is now pushing for allocation of IT resources to fund TSP.

- Martha Styer emphasized that hardware would need to be compliant with Caltrans software standards. Paul sees the standards evolving to incorporate technical innovations. The objective is to be safe, cautious and innovative at the same time.
- Peter Steinert mentioned that the WP is supposed to set the policy framework for the Guidelines. It must be consistent with the Director's direction to transform Caltrans into a "Mobility Company", to move from looking at vehicle throughput to person throughput. The language in the policy document will set the stage by defining why are we doing this. The what and how part will come in later sections.
- Charlie Larwood liked the part about institutional development. There needs to be a paradigm shift. For example, Transportation Corridor Concept Reports (TCCR) have to tie in with the regional planning documents since most programming is done at the regional level. Also, capacity is the key word. There should be training especially for Traffic Ops to explain the paradigm change where capacity no longer means vehicle throughput.
- Jean believes that the person vs. vehicle throughput philosophy has not percolated down to technical staff at the district level. It might be the most critical aspect of the guidelines to convey this paradigm change.
- In response to Al Arana's questions whether performance ought to be measured not in vehicle hour delay but in person hour delay, Jim warned that person throughput or person delay cannot be the only performance measure. Economic considerations (goods movement) and other societal goals and needs have to be balanced, but person throughput has to get its fair share.
- Paul cited the successful example of signal coordination on Santa Clara VTA's route, which has resulted in improved overall throughput. Tilly believes that the positive impacts will be gradual. There will be some pain for car drivers, and at least initially there is likely to be more congestion. Alleviation will come on the long run. We should recognize the short-term negative impacts and not ignore them.

The TT then discussed the usefulness of case studies to get to all the issues. The key would be to identify impediments to implementation in a free and open discussion, eventually facilitated by an external moderator. There are limitations to that approach, however, since there are no complex projects deployed yet and it would be difficult to anticipate issues/problems.

The question was raised whether to continue subcommittee work or to wait for further directions from senior management in response to the policy paper.

The TT agreed to continue the subcommittee work as technical details will have to be worked out and written up anyway.

The TT discussed when to present the paper and to whom, middle or high-level management. Transit agency representatives would like to meet with management, preferably high-level management, to introduce the BRT concept and the WP as a policy document. They believe that pushing the matter from outside is more effective. There

was consensus that the Director and Chief Deputy Director ought to be in the loop as they are promoting the Mobility Company and partnership concepts.

The Department has a process in place of bringing in all the relevant deputies by formulating a “Director’s Policy”. This process worked to get the Context Sensitive Solutions policy approved and could work similarly for BRT. The experience within the Department is that nothing gets to the deputy level for review until division chiefs have seen and approved it. Therefore, middle management ought to be included along the way.

The TT agreed to pursue concurrent processes to a.) get initial direction from management sponsors on how to proceed with the WP and b.) modify the WP into a “Director’s Policy” document and request approval to move it up the chain of command.

It was agreed that Caltrans TT members would finalize the WP. Jean Finney and Wingate Lew agreed to coordinate and incorporate revisions. Comments should be submitted by each division and district to Wingate by May 13th. They should be specific, providing alternative language in “track changes” format. Wingate will send out the revised draft to members by the week before the next TT meeting.

The final draft will be discussed at the next TT meeting and any final revisions made at that time. The final draft will then be formally presented to the TT sponsors, Chiefs of the Divisions of Traffic Operations and Mass Transportation (early or mid June).

Subcommittee Reports

Service Planning/Identity: Julie Kirschbaum reported.

- a. The recent group work focused on the White Paper.
- b. With regard to the future subcommittee work, the group continues to be confused about how the subcommittee issues fit into the overall outline.

Technology Subcommittee: Don Dean reported.

- a. There is confusion as to where to direct the group’s efforts and what is wanted and needed in terms of the level of detail. Don cited the Department’s “Main Streets” Context Sensitive Solutions document as a good example for how the guidelines could look – user friendly and easy to read, although fairly general. A possible approach could be to develop the guidelines in two steps, from a more general to a more detailed document.
- b. The subcommittee did a 20 questions exercise, which was successful in coming up with a list of relevant issues.
- c. Another suggestion is to take a case study approach to identify the crucial issues.
- d. Don is negotiating with the Mineta Transportation Institute to get funding to hire expert consultants, George Gray (former Caltrans Mass Transportation Division Chief), Tom Larwin (former CEO of San Diego MTS), and Jim Swofford (Mineta Transportation Institute) to help with writing the guidelines.

Infrastructure Subcommittee: Chris Schmidt reported.

- a. The subcommittee did a 20 questions exercise, which was successful in fleshing out some of the issues, but at the same time it added to the confusion.
- b. The subcommittee also did a technical issues exercise, to which members had difficulties in responding. The case study approach in the form of a guided discussion with transit operators might help to educate Caltrans staff on the critical issues.

BRT TT Timeline Revised

The TT discussed potential need for modifying the timeline. It was pointed out that some items of work were currently not listed in the scope of work, namely the development of the WP and the associated management review. It was proposed that this item would be listed as “April – May” and the management review be listed as a “June” work activity.

A final decision on whether these new activities would require a revision to the timeline could not be made because we ran out of time and the videoconference locations were disconnected.

Next Steps

n/a

Next meeting

The next videoconference is scheduled for:

Friday, June 3, 2005, 9 – 11 am

Please also note that we have also scheduled videoconferences for:

Friday, July 1, 2005, 9 – 11 am

Friday, August 5, 2005, 9 – 11 am

Minutes by: Ina Gerhard