



Future Planning & Technology Committee Members

Rosalynn Bliss, Jack Hoffman, Robert Postema, Terry Schweitzer (Chair), Paul Troost

FUTURE PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 6, 2018, 8:00 a.m.

Rapid Administrative Office, 300 Ellsworth Avenue, SW

AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. MINUTES – October 2, 2018 Committee Meeting
2. DISCUSSION
 - a) Align Study
 - b) Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA)
3. FUTURE
 - a) Meeting Schedule for 2019 - Time, Day and Frequency



**MINUTES OF
FUTURE PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

October 2, 2018

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members Present: Jack Hoffman, Robert Postema, Terry Schweitzer (Chair), Paul Troost

Committee Members Absent: Rosalynn Bliss

Staff Present: Robin Crothers, Andrew Johnson (CEO), Brian Pouget, Dina Reed

Others Present: Josh Owens (Mobile GR)

Mr. Schweitzer called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT – no comments

1. MINUTES

There are no minutes since this is the first meeting of the committee.

2. DISCUSSION

a) Committee Responsibilities

Mr. Schweitzer asked committee members about their view of the responsibilities of this committee going forward.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he would like Route 19 issues to be resolved to make this service successful. The Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) should look toward increasing ridership with current resources and possibly reduce the number of bus stops. He would like to see the Silver Line realize its full potential. Mr. Hoffman was interested in considering on-demand service for people who can't walk very far.

Mr. Troost was interested in service expansion. The current service is constrained. We need to look at technology, such as electric buses or other technological advances. Increasing ridership is significant and last mile service is key.

Mr. Hoffman added that he supports reorganizing/expanding the system as a way to revitalize the service. Transit oriented development (TOD) could be examined in the more dense areas.

Mr. Postema commented that being fairly new on the Board he does not have a full picture yet. He does support getting the Silver Line to reach its full potential related to development in the Division Avenue corridor. He also supports the use of more technological advances.

Mr. Schweitzer stated that he agrees with all comments made by the committee members. He noted that the Align Study gives perspective to potential service improvements and possible use of newer technology.

Mr. Schweitzer asked for staff views on the committee's responsibilities.

Mr. Pouget mentioned that we should focus on the Silver Line off-peak and possibly change it from 20 minutes to 15 minutes. The cities/communities need to initiate TOD possibilities; The Rapid cannot drive this effort. The COA can evaluate the potential for running smaller vehicles at night when demand is lower and initiatives for last mile. He noted that we will always be mostly a large bus system but need to evaluate more frequent service or more coverage. We need to consider more options with increased revenue.

Ms. Reed agreed with Mr. Pouget's assessment, especially maximizing revenue. She felt we should look at this area as a regional destination. We can look at what this region can be, what prominent things other cities have created, leveraging partners and creating equity among the six cities. Technology is key in generating additional revenue for new ideas.

Mr. Johnson commented that we should be available to talk about any idea. We should define what mobility means and focus on those possibilities related to riders, outcomes and impact on the communities. Brainstorming needs to happen regarding technology and future service options. We need to define the vision for our future.

Josh Owens from Mobile GR stated that he agreed with what has already been said by committee members and staff. Route 19 and the Silver Line need to be very successful. Technology is important to make service easier. Mobile GR is looking at electric buses and will work with The Rapid on this effort. We need to take a regional approach to mobility and look at on-demand service.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he is not opposed to going back out for additional millage at some point, but not at this time. First we need to have some successes and ridership increases through innovation.

Mr. Schweitzer noted that partnerships have a lot of potential for success. He mentioned that the City of Hudsonville was interested in transit in some form. There is the issue of funding, however. This committee can discuss ideas without the issue of funding and be ready for when additional resources become available.

Mr. Johnson acknowledged that not all ideas come from within The Rapid. We should work with groups like Mobile GR, among others. We cannot do it alone; partnerships are critical.

Mr. Hoffman concurred with a previous comment that The Rapid cannot redevelop Division Avenue. He commented that the Silver Line has not triggered significant development at this point. The Rapid should be an active player in redevelopment. A plan for Division Avenue has begun and we should be involved.

Mr. Schweitzer stated that The Rapid spearheaded a grant for examination of the Division Avenue corridor. We should hear about that soon.

b) Align Study

Mr. Pouget reported that the Align Study works in concert with the COA. The staff and Board need to agree about guiding principles and key outcomes, such as coverage vs. frequency.

Mr. Johnson noted that the Align Study recommendations tie into The Rapid's short range plan. The COA will reveal how to fit in other opportunities.

In response to a question from Mr. Schweitzer, Mr. Johnson stated that the COA will address the long term. We need to be in agreement with the Board about outcomes, how to achieve a balance between current and future service, and which communities to target based on guiding principles. The Rapid will define the scope for the consultant that is eventually hired to do the COA. They will do a significant amount of public outreach to determine how to meet the needs in the communities.

Mr. Schweitzer commented that we have a good partnership between the Board and staff which provides the Board with what they need for good decision-making.

3. FUTURE

a) Conference Schedule

Mr. Schweitzer noted that conferences are a good opportunity for learning for Board members and staff. Mr. Johnson mentioned that he will send out the list of conferences to the Board that would be most beneficial and cost-effective for them, and the key staff that would attend.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he went to a recent APTA Transit Board Member Conference and found it to be a very good experience.

Ms. Crothers commented that Board members who wish to attend the APTA Transit Board Member Conference in late November, which is part of this year's Industry Leadership Summit in Washington DC, need to notify her or Mr. Johnson soon. They need to be registered by October 30.

b) Meeting Schedule

Mr. Schweitzer noted that another meeting of this committee was scheduled for November 6, 2018. The committee will discuss the timeline for the COA and points of focus. The committee members need to think about frequency, day and time of future meetings. More discussion on this will take place at the November meeting.

Mr. Johnson mentioned that we will need to start working on the scope for the COA with the Present Performance and Service Committee. Staff will work on the timeline and tasks for the COA with subsequent committee review. The timeline needs to be set up in a way that includes timing for school service, summer service, etc.

In response to a question from Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Johnson indicated that the COA should start in late spring. He expects a lot of consultant interest. It will take several months for gathering data and public outreach.

Mr. Schweitzer stated that the COA and the Align Study will be on the Future Planning and Technology Committee agenda for November.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 a.m.



Robin Crothers, Board Secretary



Date: October 26, 2018
To: The Rapid Board
From: Conrad Venema – Manager of Planning
Subject: ALIGN STUDY AND COMPREHENSIVE OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS (COA)

BACKGROUND

The goals and objectives for the Align study reflect The Rapid's priorities in planning for the system's future. Ridership has leveled off since 2015 and identifying ways to attract riders is a main driver of Align. Potential opportunities to increase ridership include adding new enhanced transit services, increasing service in areas with a high density of potential users, and implementing new technology to help optimize existing operations. In addition, Align addresses ways to increase access to transit in areas of the region that are typically underserved. Finally, all of the improvements recommended as a part of this plan need to be supported by the community. Having broad community support is a great way to encourage those same community members to use the services.

The five goals and related objectives for Align are as follows:

Goal 1: Provide enhanced transit service options to grow ridership and improve reliability

Goal 2: Improve equitable access to transit services

Goal 3: Prioritize future transit enhancement projects that maximize positive regional impact

Goal 4: Foster transit supportive land use policies and encourage economic development

Goal 5: Develop and select implementable investments that have community support

METHODOLOGY

The Align Study combined both qualitative and quantitative data to determine priority projects through a two-phased approach. The first phase included a high-level evaluation of all the data collected. The second phase included a detailed evaluation of these potential projects that resulted in the final recommendations presented in the Align Study. In addition to an analysis of hard data throughout the study process, a wide variety of engagement methods were utilized in order to reach The Rapid's diverse and geographically-large service area. Both digital and in-person engagement efforts gathered the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of transit riders and non-riders alike. As a result of combining the qualitative and quantitative data, the final report includes various project categories that have been identified as priorities for The Rapid moving forward.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

To ensure that the recommended projects will benefit the region, it is important that there are projects that can be implemented in the near-term. The Align Study does offer a list of priority projects. Some examples of these projects are as follows:

- Potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects
- Bus stop amenity improvements
- Mobility hubs
- Super stops

- Pedestrian intersection improvements
- Dedicated bus lanes
- Transit Signal Priority (TSP)
- Queue jumps at signals
- Bus bulbs
- Express bus
- Stop consolidation
- Crosstown routes
- System-wide service enhancements
- Expansion opportunities

NEXT STEPS

A Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) is scheduled for FY 2019. While the Align Study serves as a guiding document that identifies priority projects, the COA will strive to bring the recommended near-term and longer-term projects to fruition. The COA will study the system as well as the region in order to make recommendations for a variety of service options/modifications such as reallocating resources to better serve mobility needs over the next few years. Longer term recommendations may include structural changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, adding community value and to increase ridership.

In order for the COA to be successful, however, the Rapid Board, staff, and the consultant team will need to adopt guiding principles, develop a phasing plan, and introduce the region to some new ways of thinking in order to make sure that the project identified in the Align Study are realized at their full potential. As part of the COA process, the Align findings will be folded into the overall system plan. In order to assist with this process, the Align Study recommends the following general areas of focus:

- ***Leverage investment in the existing BRT corridors.***
- ***Invest in amenities and service upgrades in the high-ridership, high-frequency network.***
- ***Move toward and strengthen the core system based around more of an all day / all week service model.***
- ***Provide new connections and service types to key growing travel markets, including expansion areas.***
- ***Explore Mobility on Demand services.***
- ***Work with partnering jurisdictions to make regional land use more transit friendly.***
- ***Encourage partnership-based implementation.***

There is an entire spectrum of possible outcomes from a COA ranging from minor adjustments to an entire system reboot. Nevertheless, the COA will analyze current resources and recommend actions based on the availability of those resources. In addition, the COA will provide alternative service plans if more resources are identified or become available. Some examples of particular focus of the COA are as follows:

- Increase system ridership
- Improve system on-time performance
- Improve system reliability
- Address demand for additional or more frequent service
- Explore alternative services
- Evaluate bus stop placement/spacing
- Explore route optimization and/or redesign

Memorandum: Thoughts on Scope of Comprehensive Operations Plan

From: Jack Hoffman

To: Future Planning and Tech Committee

Date: November 2, 2018

In view of Andrew's recommendation that we talk about scope of a COA looking toward a spring 2019 kick off, I said I would take a stab at starting a discussion with some thoughts.

Revenue miles 8,200,000

Revenue Hours 600,000

Service area is 185 square miles.

28 fixed routes.

249 vehicles

Frequency and consistency look to be primary ridership drivers in the foreseeable future.

Distribution of service across the service area should take into account transportation oriented development and opportunities to develop ridership.

A network model rather than a hub and spokes model might offer a better distribution of resources. Transportation oriented development would center on the nodes of the network.

Going toward a network model would mean a decrease in density of service around the hub. This can be compensated in a couple of ways. 1) Extend the existing Dash service further out from the hub. 2). Explore rapid operated mobility on demand for those who may be burdened by the decrease in density of service around the core.

Evaluate what sort of frequencies and consistencies could be achieved by a redistribution of resources.



DRAFT - 2019 MEETING SCHEDULE

RAPID BOARD

Wednesday, 4:00pm

Rapid Central Station Conference Room

- January 30 – Annual Meeting
- March 27
- May 15
- June 26
- August 28
- September 25
- October 30
- December 4

RAPID BOARD SPECIAL MEETINGS

Board Retreat

Monday, January 21, 8:30am-4:30pm
Location to be determined

Board Planning Meeting

Wednesday, May 15, 1:30pm
Rapid Central Station Conference Room

Board Budget Meeting

Wednesday, July 31, 3:00pm
Rapid Central Station Conference Room

PRESENT PERFORMANCE & SERVICE COMMITTEE, day/time??

Rapid Ellsworth Conference Room

January 8

FUTURE PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE, day/time??

Rapid Ellsworth Conference Room

FINANCE COMMITTEE day/time??

Rapid Ellsworth Conference Room

Consumer Advisory Committee for Seniors & Persons with Disabilities Tuesday, 3:00 p.m.

Rapid Ellsworth Conference Room

- January 22
- March 19
- May 7
- June 18

- August 20
- September 17
- October 22
- November 26

MEETING LOCATIONS:

Rapid Central Station Conference Room, 250 Grandville Ave SW, Grand Rapids MI 49503
Rapid Ellsworth Conference Room, 300 Ellsworth Ave SW, Grand Rapids MI 49503

The Rapid reserves the right to move the location of the meetings above between these two locations if that is deemed to be necessary.