

CR 30-A Transit Coordination Meeting Minutes

11/30/05

Attendees:	Pat Blackshear	Walton County Planning
	Lois LaSeur	Walton County Planning
	Greg Graham	Walton County Planning
	Kriss Titus	Walton County Tourist Development Council
	Christy Johnson	Okaloosa County Transit
	Barry Peterson	Okaloosa County Transit
	Lani Burritt	Okaloosa County Transit
	Debbie Dantin	Genesis Group

A. Historical / Current Transit System Data

The Transit Development Plan (TDP), developed for Okaloosa County Transit (OCT), was adopted in August 2005. The report is still pending from CUTR. The TDP includes general language regarding expansion of the transit system into Walton and Santa Rosa Counties. On January 16, 2006 the Okaloosa Island route will be extended, using existing vehicles to Silver Sands Factory Stores. A State Corridor Management grant will be used with matching Tourist Development Council (TDC) funds. It was noted that the Conference Center pays for transit as part of road impact mitigation to assist with matching local funds.

Approximately three (3) to four (4) years ago, TDC and Okaloosa County conducted a feasibility study of transit into Walton County. No additional information regarding this study was provided. An old trolley system was operated along CR 30-A several years ago. This system was privately owned, had no A/C, and many maintenance issues. Developments such as Rosemary and Seaside paid for trolley stops.

Kriss has a concern, as others, with the feasibility to extend a transit system into Walton County. This topic of transit came to surface as part of Genesis Group's CR 30-A Traffic Study recommending several measures to mitigate and reduce vehicle traffic loadings. The build-out traffic analysis for CR 30-A indicates that five (5) of the current six (6) roadway segments of CR 30-A will be over capacity, or 15.7 miles of the 18.4 mile roadway. CR 30-A has also been identified as a constrained facility and limited roadway improvements will be made; therefore, transit has been identified as an alternative mode to reduce personal vehicle usage. At this time, private monies have been offered to pursue and reinstate a trolley service, but this service must be maintained by the public agency.

Kriss stated that to use TDC money for transit, it must be proved that it will promote tourism. TDC money can be used from a marketing standpoint. It was proposed that TDC money be used for research to find out who would use the system. Bed tax collections database will also be needed to survey tourists. OCT representatives indicated that 60% of the current Okaloosa County route users are work purpose and 40% for other trip purposes. It was also noted that approximately three (3) companies

currently use commuter vans for shuttling workers in Walton County. It was discussed that the 60/40% trip purpose would differ in Walton County and the primary use was expected to be recreational/retail purposes if the route was installed only along CR 30-A. It was also mentioned that transporting employees into south Walton County is an issue that needs to be addressed at some time in the future.

B. CR 30-A Transit Discussion Items

- Users - It was mentioned that the survey conducted in the Genesis Group Traffic Study identified only 40% of those surveyed would use transit. The survey conducted in February 2005, included 60% permanent residents who reside in Walton County year round with approximately 52% within the Santa Rosa and Seagrove Beach areas. It was determined that there is a need to identify who the users would be and if the tourists would support. TDC would need to market the service. CR 30-A has advantages different than Destin with three (3) State parks, coastal dunes, lakes, kayaking, cycling, which are activities beyond the beach. A driving force as to the users would be the availability of public parking, particularly given the limited parking to public beach access. Higher density typically helps support transit service. It was mentioned that the Walton County does not want higher density because of the additional evacuation issues, environmental issues and traffic issues.
- Routes – If the Silver Sands route was extended to CR 30-A, it is approximately a 45 miles round trip. Based on this distance and the number of vehicles to provide a reasonable headway, it may be practical to provide service only along CR 30-A. It was suggested that limiting the travel distance could be considered to between CR 393 and CR 395. Other destinations that may be desired by users could also include Bay Town, Silver Sands and the proposed theatre near the new Publix on Grand Boulevard.
- Vehicle Type - Okaloosa County uses shuttles at a cost of \$75,000 which seats 14 passengers. A low emission trolley which seats 22 would cost \$275,000 to \$300,000 each. If a 20 minute headway were provided along CR 30-A alone, approximately four (4) vehicles would be required. A trial route in a commuter van was discussed, but determined not as desirable as a quant trolley for this area.
- Time of Operations - Okaloosa County runs their service from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. In Walton County, the group felt that 8:00 a.m. was too early and 8:00 p.m. was not late enough. Some research would be needed to determine the best time of transit operations in Walton County.
- Funding – Preliminary calculations using FDOT 2004 Transit Cost figures (\$42.74 veh-hour, or \$2.80 per mile), indicates approximately \$1,200,000 annual operating costs with an estimated \$600,000 capital for two (2) vehicles would be needed. Data was based on a 45 mile route, operating between 8:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. seven (7) days a week.

- Alternative Funding - Funding could be obtained from an FDOT Grant, called a Service Development Grant. Ft. Walton has secured this same grant, which is available for only two (2) years. This grant would require a 50% match from local government. An alternative funding source would be commuter service money, which Okaloosa County has been doing for eight (8) years on CR 331. Tri-County Community Council already receives money. It was mentioned that traffic mitigation money along CR 30-A could provide an alternative funding source for the system as identified in the CR 30-A traffic mitigation strategies, proposed by Genesis Group anticipated for Ordinance adoption in January 2006. (As a follow-up to this meeting, Urban Capital funding through FDOT is no longer available at 50% for vehicle purchases.)
- Advertising – Okaloosa County stated that advertising and logos on transit vehicles do not help with identifying routes for users. People get confused if advertise for example, “Lucky Supper” and “Jetty East”.
- Fares - It was mentioned that a previous Walton Sun reporter was to conduct a survey in summer 2005 and one of the questions Genesis Group asked her to survey included how much users would be willing to pay for transit. No response was ever heard on this survey.

C. Action Items / Needs

1. The research/survey needed can be funded by TDC prior to 7/1/06. Questions will need to be developed and TDC can do the research using the bed tax collections database. Input from Genesis Group to assist with identifying questions was requested.
2. Transit planning is necessary to define a route for CR 30-A. It may be practical to extend beyond CR 30-A in a Phase 2 to connect to the Okaloosa route ending at the Silver Sand’s Factory Mall.
3. Christy is to check the language in the TDP to determine if it is sufficient for expansion into Walton County.
4. Include development of a transit plan in Walton County’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which was included and approved by Walton County in November 2005. A CIP element will also be necessary for the TDC. Pat mentioned that addition of the CIP element under TDC could be included in Walton County’s Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) due in August 2006. Identifying the user fare would also be necessary for this evaluation.
5. The FDOT Service Development Grant application is due annually by July 1. It was targeted to apply for State money in July 1 2007, following transit research and further plan development. Walton County would need to have financial commitments identified as part of this application, and in place prior to implementation.
6. Walton County is to contact Seaside representative Rick Severance regarding their previous willingness for monetary contributions to initiate a CR 30-A trolley service.
7. OCT is the dedicated recipient of State money, and staffing for Okaloosa transit is necessary. It was discussed that Okaloosa would likely pursue an Interlocal Agreement and contract with OCT.
8. Christy or Pat was to contact Joel Paul of Tri-County Community Council to check their interest in running a CR 30-A transit service.
9. Contact of the US 98 Corridor Authority to make them aware of the desire for transit (and ITS) into Walton County was to be initiated by Walton County staff. It is understood that FDOT will oversee management of this committee.
10. Design standards for CR 30-A and transit are now needed including bus pull-outs, shelters, benches, restrooms, and landscaping. It was mentioned that the CR 30-A design standards in the traffic report does not specifically require these as transit is not yet available; however, the proposed CR 30-A traffic mitigation does promote every one of these items (excluding public restrooms).
11. Checking into the willingness of facilities, proposed to be served by transit, to offer a discount to transit users was necessary including retailers along CR 30-A, the State Parks, Bay Town, Silver Sands, new theatre, and others.
12. Options were identified for a satellite office necessary for bus staging. District 5 Road Department located south of US 98 is one option. County office satellite building located across the parking lot of the Town Center (proposed to include affordable housing) may be an option.