

Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

GHMPO

Flowery Branch - Gainesville - Hall County - Oakwood

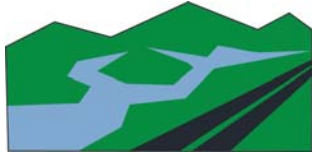
POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 13, 2007
10:00 a.m.

Room C, Georgia Mountains Center

AGENDA

1. Welcome – *Diane Hirling, Chairperson*
2. Approval of August 14, 2007 Meeting Minutes
3. Recommendation to approve minor amendment to the 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program
– *Srikanth Yamala, GHMPO*
4. Report on Transit Development Plan Study
– *Chip Burger, URS*
5. Update on GDOT's SR 365 Corridor Study
– *Jason Crane, GDOT*
6. Call for Projects under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program
– *David Fee, GHMPO*
7. Jurisdiction and Agency Reports
8. Upcoming Meeting Date: March 11, 2008
9. Other
10. Adjourn



Gainesville - Hall

Metropolitan Planning Organization

GHMPO

Flowery Branch - Gainesville - Hall County - Oakwood

POLICY COMMITTEE

Georgia Mountains Center, Room C
Minutes of August 14, 2007 Meeting

Voting Members Present:

Diane Hirling, City of Flowery Branch, Chairperson
Bob Hamrick, City of Gainesville
Sam Chapman, Hall County
Monty Robinson, City of Oakwood
Ulysses Mitchell, GDOT

Voting Members Absent:

None

Others Present:

Jason Crane, GDOT
Doug Derrer, Hall County
Phillippa Lewis-Moss, City of Gainesville
Neil Kantner, GDOT
Randy Knighton, Hall County
Srikanth Yamala, GHMPO
David Fee, GHMPO
Janice Crow, Hall Area Transit

Chip Burger, URS
Shelly Davis, GHCC
Bill Andrew, City of Flowery Branch
Larry Sparks, City of Oakwood
Emily Ritzler, WSA
Jeff Carroll, WSA
Connie Daniels, Hall County

1. WELCOME

Mayor Hirling called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She introduced Mr. Fee, the new Transportation Planner with GHMPO.

2. APPROVAL OF May 8, 2007 MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: *Mr. Hamrick made a motion to approve the May 8, 2007 Minutes. The motion was received and seconded by Mr. Robinson and passed by a unanimous vote.*

3. 2030 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

a. June 12th public meeting summary

Mr. Carroll presented an overview of the third and final public meeting on the 2030 LRTP Update. Maps illustrating the present and future traffic conditions were presented along with the list of projects. The meeting was well-attended and several comments were received on the proposed project list.

b. Draft Air Quality Conformity Determination Report

Mr. Fee reminded the committee that since Hall County was designated as part of a 20-county 8-hour ozone and 22-county particulate matter (PM 2.5) nonattainment area, GHMPO has coordinated its efforts with the ARC to adhere to the standards of the federal Clean Air Act. The draft Air Quality Conformity Determination Report outlines to the EPA the methodology used to measure 8 hour ozone and PM 2.5. The tentative schedule for the EPA to adopt this regional document is November 2007.

c. Approval of Draft 2030 LRTP

Mr. Yamala reported that the development of the draft 2030 LRTP has been a year long planning process that involved extensive public outreach and agency coordination. The draft 2030 LRTP Update meets the new federal requirements under SAFETEA-LU. The 45 day public notice period ended August 13, 2007.

Mr. Carroll thanked the GHMPO committees for their assistance and praised the way they were able to maintain schedules.

MOTION: Mr. Chapman made a motion to approve the Draft 2030 LRTP Update with a second by Mr. Robinson and passed by a unanimous vote.

4. APPROVAL OF DRAFT 2008-2013 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Yamala presented the draft 2008-2013 TIP, which is primarily a subset of the 2008-2013 projects listed in the draft 2030 LRTP Update. There were no further comments received from the public on the TIP during the 45 day comment and review period, which ended August 13, 2007.

MOTION: Mr. Chapman made a motion to approve the Draft 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program with a second by Mr. Mitchell and passed by a unanimous vote.

5. GDOT STATEWIDE TRUCK LANES STUDY

Mr. Crane reported on the feasibility study for truck only lanes that begun in April 2006 and runs through October 2007. A PowerPoint presentation introduced the truck only lanes concept and locations in Georgia which were had the greatest need for dedicated truck lanes.

6. REPORT ON GEORGIA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Mr. Fee presented information and a handout regarding this federal program and the process to obtain funding.

7. REPORT ON UPCOMING NORTHERN CONNECTOR STUDY

Mr. Carroll mentioned that the Northern Connector project resulted during the LRTP Update process. This new roadway would provide a connection in North Hall between SR 60/Thompson Bridge Rd and SR 365. This concept was presented to the public during three public meetings and several positive comments were received. He stated that his team will be doing preliminary analysis and conduct stakeholder interviews in the next couple of months.

8. REPORT ON TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN STUDY

Mr. Burger stated they will be producing a Transit Development Plan for Hall Area Transit over the next 12 months. Among other things, the study will look at improving planning, funding, delivery and potential for regional connectivity. The effort will entail community outreach and agency coordination programs.

9. JURISDICTION AND AGENCY REPORTS

Reports were given on the status of transportation projects within their jurisdictions: Mr. Knighton for Hall County; Mr. Sparks for the City of Oakwood, Mr. Hamrick for the City of Gainesville, Mr. Andrew for the City of Flowery Branch, Ms. Crow for Hall Area Transit and Mr. Kantner for GDOT.

10. UPCOMING MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be November 13, 2007.

11. OTHER

Mr. Chapman expressed concern that he was not invited to the GDOT Board meeting at Lake Lanier Islands which was sponsored by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. He wanted to make sure all Policy Committee members get invitations to appropriate transportation gatherings in the region.

12. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by the chairman at 10:30 a.m.

MOTION: *Mr. Hamrick made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second by Mr. Robinson and passed by a unanimous vote.*

Diane Hirling, Chairperson

Connie Daniels, Secretary



Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEMORANDUM

To: Policy Committee Members

From: Srikanth Yamala, Senior Transportation Planner

Date: October 31, 2007

Re: Minor Amendment to the 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program

There is a minor amendment to our current 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The change includes moving the Preliminary Engineering phase of Spout Springs Road widening project from the Long Range Transportation Plan into the TIP years. The attached project worksheet shows the change and more specific details on this project.

Minor Change

Project

Spout Springs Road – Widening (GH-023)

Reason for Administrative Change

Hall County identified funds for preliminary engineering

Conformity Impact

There is no change to the network year of 2020

Budget Impact

There is no change in the estimated construction budget

As required with minor amendments, a 15-day public comment and review period commenced from October 29th and will be complete by November 12th for your formal approval.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Recommend Approval of a Minor Amendment to the 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program

Attachment(s):

GH-023 Spout Springs Road Widening Project Worksheet



2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program

Project Name Spout Springs Road – Hog Mountain Road to Gwinnett Co. Line	GHMPO No. GH-023	GDOT No.
Local Rd. Name Spout Springs Road	County Hall	City
US/State Rd. Name n/a	GDOT District 1	Cong. District 10
	Map ID 23	RDC GMRDC

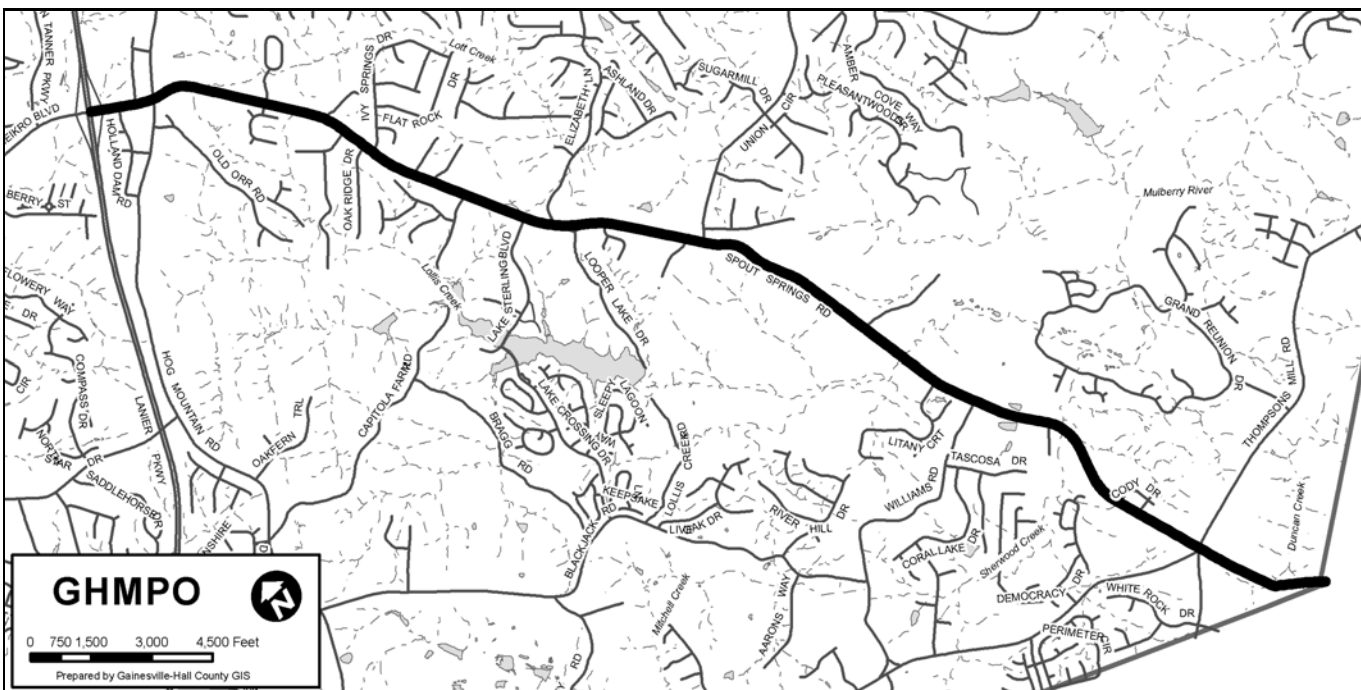
Project Description
The widening from two to four lanes of Spout Springs Road from Hog Mountain Road to the Gwinnette County line.

Improvement Type Widening **Regionally Significant** Yes **Capacity Adding** Yes **Funding Source**

Project Intent
The need for improved mobility and decreased congestion along an important east/west link in south Hall.

Project Termini	Length (miles) 6.00
From Hog Mountain Road	
To Gwinnett County line	Exist. Lanes 2 Future Lanes 4
Bike / Ped. Sidewalks	Exist. Vol. 5,057 (2003) Design Vol. 19,059 (2030)
Connectivity Friendship Road, Hog Mountain Road	
Network Year 2015	Open to Traffic Date 2015

STATUS	PHASE	SOURCE	LOCAL	STATE	FEDERAL	OTHER	TOTAL
2008	Pre-Engineering	LOCAL	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000
LR	Construction		\$0	\$6,336,000	\$25,344,000	\$0	\$31,680,000
LR	Right-of-Way		\$0	\$1,018,181	\$4,072,727	\$0	\$5,090,908
		TOTAL	\$1,000,000	\$7,354,181	\$29,416,727	\$0	\$37,770,908





Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEMORANDUM

To: Policy Committee Members
From: Srikanth Yamala, Senior Transportation Planner
Date: October 31, 2007
Re: Report on Transit Development Plan Study

In July 2007, the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) initiated a year long Transit Development Plan (TDP) study to take a fresh look at Hall Area Transit (HAT) to identify and evaluate existing transit services, review travel behavior, and recommend public transportation solutions in our rapidly growing area.

One of the key tasks in developing this plan is community and agency coordination. We completed our first round of public meetings and stakeholder interviews. Attached are the summary reports for your review. In addition, we conducted general surveys, on-board surveys of riders and drivers, and online surveys both in English and Spanish. To date we received over 400 completed surveys. Findings from these surveys and next steps involved in the TDP process will be presented to you at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

None

Attachment(s):

- 1. Summary Report of Round 1 of Public Meetings*
- 2. Summary Report of Stakeholder interviews*



**Summary Report for Round 1 of Public Meetings
Transit Development Plan**

**Prepared for
Gainesville-Hall MPO**

**Prepared by
URS**

October 30, 2007





1. Introduction

In July 2007, the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) in coordination with Hall Area Transit initiated a Transit Development Plan (TDP) Study, which provides an opportunity to evaluate existing transit services, review travel behavior, and identify new transit solutions in Hall County. The GHMPO intends the TDP will build consensus on public transportation and will serve as a strategic guide over the next 5 years. A public meeting on September 27, 2007 and an outreach meeting on October 17, 2007 were initial steps in developing that consensus. This report summarizes the purpose, approach, and key findings from the two meetings.

2. Public Meeting

The public meeting was held on Thursday, September 27 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Georgia Mountains Center. The GHMPO staff and members of the URS consultant team helped to facilitate the meeting.

2.1 Objective of the Meeting:

- The purpose of the public meeting was to inform the community about the TDP development process and to provide citizens an opportunity to share their ideas, thoughts, and recommendations about issues such as: Current transit needs and concerns in Hall County
- Major transit routes needed in the County
- Transit strategies to address traffic congestion in Gainesville
- The role of Hall Area Transit in our community
- Regional commuter service

2.2 Public Notices and Informational Materials:

The URS project team assisted in the creation of informational material for public notice that announced the meeting date. Meeting notices in English and Spanish were mailed to over 400 members on the GHMPO mailing list, 138 churches and 13 schools. Notices were also sent to the elected officials. Press Releases were sent to the *Gainesville Times Access North Georgia* and *Mexico Lindo*. The project team was interviewed by La Que Buena, a Hispanic radio station, to promote the meeting to the Spanish-speaking community. Additionally, GHMPO advertised the meeting and provided information on the TDP study their website, www.ghmpo.org. Attendees were provided an information package containing a fact sheet, a comment form and survey forms.

2.3 Public Meeting Format:

The hour and a half meeting combined a variety of communication methods to provide information to the community to hear their concerns, priorities and reactions. The first thirty minutes of the meeting was designed as an "open house" format with boards and maps placed all around the room. A Spanish speaking staff member was available to provide information and answer questions in Spanish. A total of 30 participants attended this meeting. Four stations were set up in the meeting room with display boards and participants were asked open-ended questions about the displays with their responses recorded on flip charts.

The displays depicted:

1. HAT system maps
2. Study area characteristics



3. Study area maps
4. A dot placement exercise

The dot exercise encouraged participants to place dots under categories for two questions. The results follow:

Question 1: If public transit were available to you, where would you mostly use it to go? (Participants could select more than one category)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Dots</u>
Dining	8
Work	6
Recreation	5
Medical	7
School	7
Shopping	7

Question 2: How much would you be willing to pay for a one-way fare?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Dots</u>
\$1.00	8
\$1.50	0
\$2.00	0
\$2.50	0

2.4 Presentation

Following the initial open session, the participants were asked to be seated for a presentation on the TDP. Randy Knighton of Hall County Government, provided introductory comments and Srikanth Yamala from GHMPO began the presentation. Mr. Yamala gave a background of MPO's in general and of GHMPO in particular, including facts, organizational structure and the planning process. The URS consultant Project Manager Chip Burger presented information on HAT, including history, operational statistics, funding sources, services, and fares. Mr. Burger also presented the study purpose, key tasks, study schedule, and service area characteristics. The presentation concluded with a summary of what the participants had shared during the open session, with Janice Crow of HAT leading the discussion. A question and answer period followed the presentation and the findings are presented below.

2.5 Findings

Several comments, concerns, and recommendations were received following the presentation. They are listed in the following six categories:

I. Preferred Destinations

- o Atlanta Highway
- o Adult Learning Center
- o City of Oakwood
- o Department of Family and Children Services
- o Unemployment Office
- o Social Security Office



- Department of Labor
- East Hall Library
- Gainesville Career Center
- Gainesville State College
- YMCA
- Francis Meadows
- Avida Community Partners
- Brenau University (East Campus)
- Create a connection to Oakwood from downtown Gainesville.
- Create connectivity with MARTA
- Connect to Gwinnett Transit at park and ride lot
- Create a connection between North GA College and Gainesville State College.
- HAT Blue Route bus #2 Northeast is currently underutilized.

II. Operational/Infrastructural Changes

- Need for more park and ride lots to support transit
- Relocate stops farther away from curbs
- Increase size of signage
- Route electronic notices
- Extend hours of operations
- Create Saturday operations
- Create a run from 12:30-1am to cover night shifts
- HAT should hire its own mechanics
- Transit should be reliable, dependable, effective

III. Advertising/Promotions

- Raise money through local advertising
- Work with local business to advertise
- Greater emphasis on advertising
- Emphasize the benefits (of bus ridership)
- Need a picture a blue bus with a red rabbit. (Ms. Crow informed the audience new red buses are forthcoming)
- Create "free ride days" (Ms. Crow noted HAT already has "Free Fridays" sometimes).

IV. Fare Policy

- Need to make people aware of the fare before they get on the buses
- Consider a day pass- how much would it cost?
- There is little willingness to pay a higher fare because of seniors and fixed income residents as well as poor students.

V. Suggestions for Future Public Meetings on the TDP

- Change of future meeting locations so that transit riders can attend.
- Avoid Wednesday night meetings because of church services.

VI. Miscellaneous

- Address public perception that much money is being spent on transit for a few people.



3. Outreach Meeting

The outreach meeting was held on Wednesday, October 17 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Los Carrillos Restaurant located at 503 Atlanta Hwy in Gainesville. The GHMPO staff and members of the URS consultant team helped to facilitate the meeting.

3.1 Objective of the Meeting:

The purpose of the outreach meeting is to inform and get input from the local Hispanic community on issues relating to public transportation. The main objectives of the meeting were to find out:

- How would they like to see transit in Hall County improved?
- Are there specific corridors that need transit service?
- How can GHMPO best get input from all the residents?

3.2 Public Notices and Informational Materials:

The URS project team assisted in the creation of informational material for public notice that announced the meeting date. Meeting notices in Spanish and English were distributed at the Health Fair on October 13, 2007 at the Georgia Mountains Center and were mailed to 25 leaders in the Hispanic community that had participated in previous outreach efforts. In addition, the meeting notices were distributed by key stakeholders in the Hispanic community. *Mexico Lindo*, a local Hispanic newspaper, published an article on the event. Attendees were provided survey forms in Spanish.

3.3 Meeting Format

The meeting was informal and held at a local restaurant to encourage open, active participation from the attendees while the meeting facilitators posed questions to the attendees to incite responses. Light refreshments were served. Two Spanish speaking staff members were available to provide information and answer questions in Spanish. Participants were asked to introduce themselves and state where they lived. Two display boards were set up and participants were asked open-ended questions about their transit needs and concerns with their responses recorded on flip charts. The displays depicted:

1. HAT system map
2. GHMPO study area map

A total of 12 participants attended the meeting and six completed survey forms were received.

3.4 Comments Received

There were numerous questions and comments from the attendees in response to the open ended questions on various transit related issues. Although there was a small turnout of attendees, there were several comments. Some of them are as follows:

General Comments

- None of the participants currently use transit because it does not serve the areas where they live or work.
- Participants stated they currently live outside the HAT service area and would like the option of utilizing transit as an alternative to the automobile.
- Most of the participants live along US 129/Athens Highway. Others live in the Briarwood/Oakwood and Memorial Park areas.


Preferred Destinations

- SR 13/Atlanta Highway was cited as an important corridor for the Hispanic community where there is currently no service. This corridor would be a good location for transit expansion. It was suggested that service along Atlanta Highway should at least provide a connection from downtown (Jesse Jewel Parkway) to the bridge (on Browns Bridge Road) and eventually all the way to Oakwood/Gainesville State College.
- Other potential corridors suggested for transit expansion include:
 - SR 60/Thompson Bridge Road North of Gainesville to Murrayville
 - US 129/Athens Hwy South to the Flea Market (south of Pendergrass close to I-85)
 - A request was made for transit service from the Boys and Girls Club from US 129 near the school to the Club's location on Fair St (behind the Fair Street School). There are about 50 Children that need transportation to get to the club after school between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. The request was denied because the seating in the buses was deemed inappropriate for children.

Suggested Operational Changes

Many stated a lack of awareness of the schedule as another reason they do not use transit. The schedule should be very simple stating:

- Origin/destination and time
- Origin and destination should be landmarks familiar to the Hispanic community
- Currently too many numbers and too much information, which leads to confusion
- Color code routes for people who cannot read
- Other suggestions for service improvements included:
 - More bus stops and/or shelters
 - Numerically code buses as they do in Mexico
 - Hire Spanish-speaking drivers

Advertising/Marketing/Outreach Methods

- Build awareness through the churches, particularly St. Michael's which has the largest Hispanic Congregation
- Advertise at the chicken plants
- Public displays at Wal-Mart and Target
- Hold another meeting at Los Carrillos restaurant on a weekend
- Advertise at parks and recreational areas on weekends during children's athletic activities

4. Summary

During the first round of public meetings several themes and overarching comments were provided by the participants. The individual comments generally ranged from new transit routes to increased bus frequency to better marketing strategies, but the most popular and overall themes from the first round public meetings are as follows:

- Many of the participants use transit and would like to see HAT service expanded to other areas/destinations
- Participants stated they currently live outside the HAT service area and would like the option of utilizing transit
- HAT should consider regional commuter services in the future
- HAT should do more advertising and marketing of their services



**Summary Report for Stakeholder Interviews
Transit Development Plan**

**Prepared for
Gainesville-Hall MPO**

**Prepared by
URS**

October 31, 2007





Introduction

In July 2007, the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) initiated a year long Transit Development Plan (TDP) study to take a fresh look at Hall Area Transit (HAT) to identify and evaluate existing transit services, review travel behavior, and recommend public transportation solutions in our rapidly growing area.

One of the key elements identified under the community and agency coordination task is stakeholder interviews. Members from the consultant team, URS, worked with GHMPO and HAT to identify key stakeholders for individual interviews which were conducted in person and via telephone. Relevant questions and discussion points were developed to guide this process and a summary of the responses and common themes are listed in this report.

Stakeholder Interviews

A total of thirty stakeholders were identified to be interviewed for their input regarding the Transit Development Plan. Four elected officials were selected to be interviewed in person, and twenty-six were selected for interviews via telephone. Of the four anticipated in person interviews, three were conducted. The individual not interviewed was Lamar Scroggs, Mayor of Oakwood. Mayor Scroggs indicated that the responses Oakwood City Manager Stan Brown gave in his telephone interview also represented his views.

Twenty-three of the twenty-six individuals selected for telephone contact were interviewed. The three individuals not interviewed due to their limited availability were: Richard Higgins, Chairman, Hall County School Board; Bobby Banks, Hall County Board of Commissioners; and Dr. Ed Schrader, President, Brenau University. A detailed list of the stakeholders can be found in Table 1.

Main Issues

References were made to almost every question about the need to promote the service more effectively and that more public relations and marketing are needed to increase visibility. Several respondents mentioned they believe the system needs a new look. Blue buses and the name Red Rabbit don't match.

There were many references to a need for transit service in the Hispanic community. Myrtle Figueras stated that the Spanish language brochure is not enough to encourage ridership in the Hispanic community and recommended that HAT hire Spanish speaking bus operators.

Unfortunately, several of the respondents are not very aware of the services HAT provides or where the routes actually go. One seemed confused about the difference in the Red Rabbit and paratransit service.



Transit Development Plan

Report of Stakeholder Interviews October 31, 2007

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	MODE OF CONTACT	DATE OF CONTACT	COMMENTS
Wayne Dempsey	Executive VP and CFO	Brenau University	Telephone	9/28/2007	
Ed Schrader	President	Brenau University	N/A	N/A	Mr. Schrader was not available for interview
Lana Fuentes-Krummen	Director	Catholic Social Services	Telephone	9/20/2007	
Diane Hirling	Mayor	City of Flowery Branch	In Person	9/27/2007	
Bill Andrew	City Manager	City of Flowery Branch	Telephone	9/18/2007	
Bob Hamrick	Mayor	City of Gainesville	In Person	9/27/2007	
George Wangemann	Council Member	City of Gainesville	Telephone	9/19/2007	
Danny Dunagan	Council Member	City of Gainesville	Telephone	9/25/2007	
Myrtle Figueras	Council Member	City of Gainesville	Telephone	9/25/2007	
Ruth Bruner	Council Member	City of Gainesville	Telephone	9/27/2007	
Bryan Shuler	City Manager	City of Gainesville	Telephone	9/24/2007	
Lamar Scroggs	Mayor	City of Oakwood	N/A	N/A	Indicated responses of Stan Brown represented Oakwood
Stan Brown	City Manager	City of Oakwood	Telephone	9/18/2007	
Bob McGarry	Executive Director	Disability Resource Center	Telephone	9/19/2007	
Richard Devine	Manager, Transportation Services	GA. Dept. of Human Resources	Telephone	9/18/2007	
Raymond Mensah	District Coordinator	GA. Dept. of Human Resources	Telephone	9/24/2007	
Shirley Whitaker	Asst. to Superintendant for Special Activities	Gainesville School System	Telephone	9/20/2007	
Martha Nesbitt	President	Gainesville State College	Telephone	9/21/2007	
Sam Chapman	Policy Committee Member	Gainesville-Hall MPO	Telephone	9/24/2007	
Kit Dunlap	President/CEO	Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce	Telephone	9/20/2007	
Jim Shuler	Administrator	Hall County	Telephone	9/20/2007	
Billy Powell	Commissioner	Hall County Board of Commissioners	Telephone	9/19/2007	
Bobby Banks	Commissioner	Hall County Board of Commissioners	N/A	N/A	Mr. Banks was not available for interview
Deborah Mack	Commissioner	Hall County Board of Commissioners	Telephone	9/21/2007	
Steve Gailey	Commissioner	Hall County Board of Commissioners	Telephone	9/25/2007	
Tom Oliver	Chairman	Hall County Board of Commissioners	In Person	9/27/2007	
Richard Higgins	Superintendent	Hall County School Board	N/A	N/A	Mr. Higgins was not available for interview
Michael Moye	President	Lanier Technical College	Telephone	9/21/2007	
Chad Bolton	Planning Manager	NE Georgia Medical Center	Telephone	9/28/2007	
Denise Deal	Executive Director	Vision 2030	Telephone	10/7/2007	

Table 1 – Key Stakeholders Identified for the TDP Process



Following is a summary of responses received to individual questions:

1. **On a scale of 1-10 with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

Rankings for the entire group averaged 5.9 for transit (ranging from 2 to 10). Two respondents commented without providing a ranking.

Respondents had opinions on the topic covering everything from, the community being tied to their vehicles with no desire to use transit, to the service “is good for people who use it”. One participant actually uses the service, but most respondents felt that the service is poorly utilized overall.

2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

The overwhelming response to this question was yes. One person wasn't sure and several felt the issue should be evaluated prior to committing to new service.

3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**

Most respondents feel the community's perception is that HAT is used by a very small percentage of the population. People in the community cite seeing empty buses or buses with one or two people riding as proof the system is underutilized. Other comments included that the community believes the service is “a waste of taxpayer money”; however, several respondents believe the service is a real necessity for the area. Respondents also stated that many people are not informed about HAT and that more marketing is needed to increase the visibility of the service.

4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

Overwhelmingly, respondents believe the service does a good job for people who have no other transportation options, especially the disabled. Several mentioned the service is efficiently run and that management is very good at responding to community needs. Other comments included that the service is reasonably priced, the demand response works well and three people responded that the very fact that it has stayed in business is an accomplishment.

5. **How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

Once again, there were many references to the fact that the service is doing a good job for people who need it and it should be promoted more effectively. Several respondents stated the Hispanic community needs the service but doesn't find it very accessible to them. One of two respondents mentioned the need for more buses



and weekend service. Respondents from the three colleges believe student ridership will increase if the service is promoted more aggressively to that audience.

One respondent believes HAT can be a “tremendous asset” to the Vision 2030 transportation goals. She mentions there are references to transportation throughout the Vision 2030 document, specifically with regard to school age children.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

Several respondents felt their answers to question #5 were applicable to this question. Several respondents didn’t feel they knew enough about the service to offer suggestions, and one doesn’t believe additional service is needed.

Other ideas mentioned were:

- a. Airport service.
- b. Service to the MARTA station.
- c. Park and ride with a connection to the Gwinnett system.
- d. Extend routes further into the county.
- e. Weekend service and/or extended hours.
- f. A route down Atlanta Highway promoting the service to the Hispanic community.
- g. Easier to access schedules and better overall promotion of the service.
- h. Additional buses to help increase frequency.
- i. More frequent service at lunch or peak times to the downtown area, hospital and Brenau University.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Most of the respondents feel the major funding source should be the Federal government with contributions by the city, county and transit ridership. One respondent listed SPLOST or local sales dollars as funding sources. Four respondents didn’t really feel they could comment on this question. Two respondents believe the only reason the system is funded at all is due to the requirement for the county to do so in order to get road subsidies.

One respondent mentioned again that the public perception is that the system is a waste of taxpayer money and he feels something should be done to convince the public it’s good for the community. Another respondent mentioned he thought the taxpayers should determine the funding source.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Most all agreed that major residential growth is occurring in Gainesville and South Hall County. One respondent guessed that growth could also be as high as 180% in East Hall and North Hall and several mentioned the senior residential area at Deaton



Creek off Friendship Road. Growth in the Hispanic population was also mentioned again as having important potential for transit service. One respondent stated that commercial growth is county wide but he is unsure as to how transit can “fit into that picture”. One respondent mentioned the need for park and ride and commuter service to connect to the Gwinnett system and reduce traffic, but another raised the issue that there is some opposition to the idea of taking people outside the county to “spend their money”.

Additional ideas for how transit can respond to these trends: Provide service to senior residential areas, south and east sides of Gainesville, the YMCA in East Hall, apartment complexes and moderately priced housing, the new location of the Social Security office, and to the new hospital under construction in South Hall and the surrounding area.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

The majority agreed that much of the increase in ridership is directly related to population growth. Four respondents were surprised to hear that ridership has increased. The issue was raised again for the need to do more marketing, but at least three respondents feel that better awareness and education about the service are responsible for the growth in ridership.

Other contributors mentioned were:

- a. The route changes.
- b. Current management.
- c. Word-of-mouth.
- d. Better frequency and more bus stops/shelters.
- e. Cost of gas and operating a vehicle.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Opinions were split almost equally on this question, with twelve respondents either saying yes or maybe, and eleven responding no. However, many of the respondents feel that riding the bus cannot compete with the convenience of the personal automobile.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

Two respondents were confused as to why the blue buses are called Red Rabbit and five would definitely change the name and image. Six respondents would like more information, marketing and better communication and one mentioned the need to conduct a survey to determine where people want to go. Five either wouldn't change anything or didn't have any ideas for change.

Other ideas for change include:

- a. Additional bus stops.
- b. Extended hours of operation and on weekends.



- c. 30-minute frequency.
- d. Emphasize benefits to businesses and not just employees.
- e. More bus shelters.
- f. Community perception.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

Most respondents felt their answers to the first eleven questions were sufficient. However several did offer either new information or reiterated responses from earlier questions. Some of the issues mentioned were:

- a. Concentrate on finding out where people want to go.
- b. HAT seems to be well run with a concern about meeting customer needs. Excellent director who knows the community.
- c. It's a waste of taxpayer money but if more people used it the respondent stated he might feel differently.
- d. The service needs to be more accessible to the Hispanic community.
- e. Increased marketing to attract more people and change community perception.
- f. This survey is a good idea.



Person: Bob Hamrick

Agency/Title: Mayor, City of Gainesville

Date of Interview: Thursday, September 27, 2007

Status: In person/Phone: In person

Interviewer: Chip Burger, Janide Sidifall, Srikanth Yamala

1. **On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**
6-other services are more important
2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**
No-would like to see business opportunities stay in Gainesville
Maybe for employment
3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**
Perception is not favorable-not as utilized as it could be
Need to get ridership up
Don't see ridership will increase until fuel prices skyrocket
4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**
Tried to serve the community with the Dial-A-Ride service
Dial-a-Ride serves the community more effectively than the fixed route
5. **How does (or could) HAT service impact your organization/community?**
Could support employment centers better particularly from areas outside of Hall County or Gainesville
Park and ride, carpool, vanpool potential
6. **Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so, what type, where and/or when?**
Need for areas to gather commuters and transport to employment centers
7. **As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source? (Refer to list of funding sources)**
Need for continued state and federal funds to support
Current funding structure is appropriate
8. **What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**
Seasons on Lanier (800 homes)

**Transit Development Plan****Report of Stakeholder Interviews
October 31, 2007**

Larger subdivisions are being developed and reach out to larger communities to provide service

9. **As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**
Knowledge that it is here and efforts to make public more aware
Support to employers-getting employees to work
10. **Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**
No, it hasn't so far
11. **If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**
Can't think of anything-keep doing what we've been doing.
Increase number of bus shelters and other amenities i.e. sidewalks.
12. **Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**
Colleges and academic institutions could be serviced by transit
Interest in a commuter rail service to Atlanta for employment/airport/major events



Person: Diane Hirling, Bill Andrew, James Riker
Agency/Title: Mayor, City Manager, Planning Director, City of Flowery Branch
Date of Interview: Thursday, September 27, 2007
Status: In person
Interviewer: Chip Burger, Janide Sidifall, Srikanth Yamala

- 1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**
 9-based on growth of community, i.e. Stonebridge Village as compared to others first would be roads and some others before public transportation.
- 2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**
 Absolutely-buses to Stonebridge Village and even down to Atlanta. High percentage of residents commute to Atlanta.
- 3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**
 Non existent-hasn't been a critical mass to seriously consider bus service-however new alternatives are in development-Stonebridge Village Shopping Center, 985 Hog Mountain Road. Sterling on the Lake. 900 acres of planned development upon completion 1800 homes. Catholic Church-Prince of Peace. Six services, 2,000 persons.
- 4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**
 Bus shelters, 22 new bus shelters
 New busses
 Serves seniors well with connection to Senior Center
- 5. How does (or could) HAT service impact your organization/community?**
 Could impact with more service
 Biggest problem is no transit, particularly for the elderly.
 Potential to feed into the MARTA, GRTA or Gwinnett System
 New developments along Spout Springs Rd.
 Perception is that the busses drive around with no one in them.
- 6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so, what type, where and/or when?**
 Other corridor Thurman Tanner Parkway (exit 14) eventually connect to Mundy Mill Gainesville Tech.
 Industrial collector with new interchange at I-985
 Might be interesting to see a route to serve employment in this industrial area.



7. **As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source? (Refer to list of funding sources)**
 Not taxpayers
 Federal Government -5307, 5311
 Tax on gasoline
 Challenge is the local market currently County and Gainesville
8. **What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**
 See previous answers.
9. **As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**
 Due to congestion on roadways
 Aging population does not want to drive in congested areas
 Need for a commuter service to Atlanta
10. **Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**
 Maybe
 Split-studies show that gasoline prices are not encouraging more transit use
11. **If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**
 Come to South Hall
12. **Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**
 Fixed route study is warranted at some point

Additional Comments Included:

- Many residents don't know about the service-Dial-a-ride, inadequate information dissemination
- Stone Bridge Village entertainment component being considered
- Reunion-John Wieland-Few hundred homes
- Del Webb-Deaton Creek- active senior community
- New hospital
- New middle school and high school
- Sprout Springs Rd. Corridor
- Most of the growth in the County is happening in South hall-Flowery Branch and Oakwood growing faster than the rest of the County
- Rest areas at I-985 two of them that are totally underutilized-could serve as a service area as well as Park and Ride lot



Person: Tom Oliver
Agency/Title: Chairman, Hall County Board of Commissioners
Date of Interview: Thursday, September 27, 2007
Status: In person
Interviewer: Chip Burger, Janide Sidifall, Srikanth Yamala

1. **On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**
 4-Public transportation depends on what the densities are-not the time
 Goal is to develop multi-use developments
2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**
 Not at this time
3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**
 Need to have some form of public transportation. May need to be more structured and efficient
4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**
 Cheaper
 Supports mobility-contributes to quality of life
5. **How does (or could) HAT service impact your organization/community?**
 Impact depends on how community develops
 Greenspace limits transit
 Density = greater transit
6. **Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so, what type, where and/or when?**
 Go to where people go
7. **As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source? (Refer to list of funding sources)**
 30 years out, potential to piggy back on expansion from Atlanta, Gwinnett
8. **What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**
 Residential outpacing commercial
 Seems to be responding to current needs

**Transit Development Plan**

**Report of Stakeholder Interviews
October 31, 2007**

9. **As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**
More people-increased population
10. **Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**
Definitely
11. **If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**
It is somewhat isolated-there is potential for expansion- question is where?
12. **Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**
Got to combine to support
Socioeconomics dictates who rides
Public good
-Community for all



Person: Stan Brown
Agency/Title: City Manager, City of Oakwood
Date of Interview: September 18, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

- 1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

I'd give it a five, based on the nature of this community and that people here are tied to their vehicles. If I lived in a different community I might give it a different score but here it would be middle of the road.

- 2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

Yes.

- 3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**

Perception is not high as far as usefulness. There isn't enough service. I haven't kept up-to-date with it and I know there have been some changes and we lost some service. It has to have more of a presence. There is not enough PR and marketing and the system needs more signage and bus stop areas.

- 4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

It seems to have a good consistent group of riders for work and other basic needs. It meets the needs of those who don't have other transportation, especially people with disabilities.

- 5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

If there was more of a presence here it would be better. I know we have had several groups or people applying for permits to operate taxis so there must be a demand for transportation that isn't being met. Also, we have a fairly large Hispanic community so there is potential in that area.

- 6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**

I believe my answer to the last question is applicable for this one.



Stan Brown (page two)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

There should be a shared responsibility. I know they get the FTA money but if a community supports having transit there should be some effort to harness money from the local government. Also, passengers should contribute some portion of that and especially advertising on the buses and at bus stops.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Huge transportation dollars are being spent on the interchange at Highway 16. Sixty percent of the population is south of Chicopee and the majority of the population geared more to jobs in Atlanta. There is an opportunity for park and ride and commuter service to connect to the Gwinnett system. Also people moving into the area expect to have other modes of travel. The people moving in on the south end might not ride transit but they would probably support it.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

Probably the population and area growth that is occurring has contributed a lot. Also I understand that the current management has made changes that have improved operations and management so I think that has helped.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Yes.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

I'd like to see more route and schedule information. More marketing is needed. Also, there is a new Wal-Mart and Sam's Club which might be considered as a place to put a bus stop. Enrollment is also up at Gainesville College so there is potential there for riders.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

Not really. I think my answers to the other questions have pretty much covered it.



Person: Bill Andrew
Agency/Title: City Manager, City of Flowery Branch
Date of Interview: September 18, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Here, it's actually fairly low so I'd give it a two or three.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes. Maybe to Atlanta or within Gainesville for the hospital, shopping or medical services.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

Overall HAT has no profile, or it's somewhat negative. I hear people talking about lots of buses running empty. But I have been down at the senior center and I see seniors getting off the bus in droves and so I'm aware of a demand in that area. Personally I think it has an important role to play.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Recently they have put up bus shelters so that's important. Also a couple of years ago they did a brochure. I thought it was odd that they didn't have one before. (*I asked if the brochure was easy to read to which Mr. Andrew replied that he doesn't know because he's never actually read it. Since the bus doesn't go where he wants to go he hasn't actually looked at the brochure.*) They have also done some reconfiguring of the routes which have helped.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

I think there is a core elderly group in the historic district in town that could use it. They may use the on-demand but there isn't any regular service that they can use.



Bill Andrew (page two)

- 6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**

Maybe a bus to the airport although I don't know how that could be set up. Also, just taking people to the MARTA station or maybe a park and ride in an area where people could use it to connect with the Gwinnett system with stops at exit four or the Mall of Georgia.

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

I think the only reason the County has a system at all is because they must have it to receive the road subsidies. I may be wrong but I believe that's the way it works. The perception is that the County is so far behind on road projects that funding the bus systems is a very low priority.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

As far as residential I think that it's moving out from core area. In South Hall County at Flowery Branch we have a big base population and we're still growing. East Hall and North Hall, I'm guessing the growth may be as high as 180%. There is a senior residential area at Deaton Creek off Friendship Road with several hundred homes going in where transit may be needed. I know of at least three senior living neighborhoods in the County and none are really close to Gainesville or accessible to HAT.

We have the largest single shopping center going in over at I-95 on exit 14. It's on a 50 acre site with walking paths and there is another big development going in across the way from it. Also, Spout Springs Road has a big shopping center and 1,800 homes are scheduled to go into a new subdivision with a school and another 390 homes slated for another area. All of this on a two-lane road so after the road construction is finished and the area is developed HAT might think about providing service in that area.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Partly the route changes and continued influx of low income people. There are about 30,000 to 35,000 Hispanics living on the Atlanta Highway on the South Side of Gainesville. I know that getting a car is extremely important to Hispanic men but there may be grandmothers or mothers at home with kids that might really need transit.



Bill Andrews (*page three*)

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

No. I think it will have to go up and stay above \$3.00 a gallon for people to get serious about using transit.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

It's difficult to say. Getting the word out to the compact urban neighborhoods is probably important. I don't think they even know it exists. Doing more marketing is important. They did some free rides a while ago so maybe more of that type of thing would help.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

Just that the service needs to concentrate on finding out where people want to go and when. Maybe work with the County to use the GIS system to get a sense of where those places are. They might put up more bus shelters. Hall County has no culture for transit but the traffic is getting worse so I think people are starting to become more aware of the need for transit.



Person: Richard Devine
Agency/Title: Manager, Transportation Services Section,
 GA Dept of Human Resources
Date of Interview: September 18, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Ten, because transportation is the key for people to access services.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes. There could be commuter services to Atlanta, Athens, Northern Gwinnett and maybe Forsyth.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I couldn't say because I don't live in that area and I rarely go out there.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

I really don't know if I can answer that completely but I they seem to run a good operation; it's efficient and they provide a good community service.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

They have a positive impact on my organization because they provide transportation so clients can get to needed services.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I'm not really familiar with Hall County.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Most of it should come from the Federal government. I don't think there is really a big problem getting the local match.



Richard Devine (page two)

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

I'm familiar with the County's demographics and they have a huge influx of a diverse population, not just Hispanic. They also have a lot of people moving out from Atlanta and industry is moving into the County. HAT is definitely an important player.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Demographics.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

Limited because people just don't want to give up their cars.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Can't answer.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

Nothing except HAT seems to be well run and they have a concern about meeting customer needs. I don't know what type of marketing or advertising they do but if their attitude stays the same then people will find them.



Person: Bob McGarry
Agency/Title: Exec. Director, Disability Resource Center &
 Director, Center for Independent Living
Date of Interview: September 19, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Ten. Because I have to depend on it.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

People really like it and it's more reliable than it was at one point. I do hear big complaints about the maintenance. Because they use the city maintenance people it takes at least three days to get a bus fixed.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Getting people where they want to go. HAT is very accommodating to individuals with disabilities; they do lots of sensitivity training. The majority of drivers I've been associated with have been great. Weaknesses are that it's hard to schedule a pick up on the demand response because they have a contract with the Senior Center. It seems like the seniors are the priority and people who work have to work around the schedule for the seniors. I can only ride one day a week because they have the Senior Center contract.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

I think they are doing pretty good. They provide rides for people with disabilities who need to get to our organization and shopping, etc. It would help to have more buses.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

Maybe extend the routes further into the county, operate on weekends and extend the hours of operation.



Bob McGarry (*page two*)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

I don't have a real clue.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

The county is growing by leaps and bounds. We're Northeast of Atlanta and Gwinnett and lots of people there have been moving here because those areas have such high growth. I think the system could link the counties better. People live in Hall and work in Gwinnett or go there to catch MARTA but there is no connection from Hall County to Gwinnett.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Population growth.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

No, people like their cars and the independence of being able to come and go when they want to. We're not in New York so people don't want to give up their cars.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

I'd change the name. Red Rabbit doesn't make any sense and I understand that the buses are blue so what is the connection to Red Rabbit? My first choice for change would be the hours of operation; to extend them later in the day and on weekends.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

Hall County has about a 19 percent Hispanic population for work in the poultry plant that might use transit. I don't know how the new law that fines employees for hiring illegal aliens would affect that but it might be something to look at.



Person: George Wangemann
Agency/Title: Council Member, City of Gainesville
Date of Interview: September 19, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Based on what I see I'd say a two. There seem to be very few people using it.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

No.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

The perception is that it's useless and a waste of taxpayers' money. Those are the comments I usually hear. The buses are usually empty or there are one or two people riding. It's not an efficient use of taxpayer money.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Well, they tried different routes to make it more efficient or "linear" as they called it. It is a little better but not significantly. So now there are two people riding rather than one.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

It fills a small niche for people who can't drive or can't afford a car. It's a good service for low income people.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I don't see a need for additional service. Based on what's up and running I'd leave it as it is.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Obviously the private sector doesn't do it because it loses money so naturally the government would run it. So it needs to be funded through Federal and State money. If we had to fund it locally we'd be highly criticized.



George Wangemann (*page two*)

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

We have a big mixture of residential and commercial development in the city so it's hard to know where to put routes. Maybe put routes where people who really need it live; might be the south side and east side of Gainesville.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

I haven't seen a whole lot of increases in the ridership. If there is then it's because there is a greater awareness to those who can't afford cars.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

I haven't seen it yet. People don't care because they like convenience. Convenience is still a big factor and it's not convenient to ride the bus. You have to stand in line, wait a long time for the bus and there is just too much time involved in using it.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

I'd put smaller buses on the routes and when the ridership goes up they can move to larger buses. That might keep the cost down a little.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

I know I'm in the minority when it comes to this. Most of the Council Members think it fills a need. I think it's a government service that few people use and it's not worth the investment. (*When I asked him if he would feel better about spending taxpayer money on it if he saw more people using it he said he definitely would.*)



Person: Billy Powell
Agency/Title: Commissioner, Hall County Board of Commissioners
Date of Interview: September 19, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

I'm torn between saying three and four but I'll go with three.

- 2 Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

No

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I hear people saying that it's a waste of money. People in the coffee shop I go to talk about it. I usually look for how many seats are full, not empty.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Strengths? It provides a service to some of those that need it and wouldn't otherwise have transportation. I just wish they could do it more efficiently.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

One thing I'd like to see is a comparison of providing the dial-a-ride with the fixed route service. How would the cost compare with other ways to get around like taxis. Maybe there should be less fixed route and more dial-a-ride.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I pretty much answered that in the last question.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Federal and state but people still say it's too expensive for the return you get on it.



Billy Powell (page two)

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

Commercial growth is almost county-wide but I'm not sure how public transportation can fit into that picture. You'd need some large retail development to even play into consideration for public transportation. Can't see it making any difference in the residential growth.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Better defined products that meet demand; the re-routing they did. They do studies all the time so I hope they're actually using some of the information they get.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

No.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Fewer big buses driving around empty. It would be better to see smaller vehicles because they at least seem fuller.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

No.



Person: Lana Fuentes-Krummen
 Agency/Title: Catholic Social Services
 Date of Interview: September 20, 2007
 Status: Phone
 Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Seven

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I have a limited view. I work primarily with the Hispanic community and low income workers. Most of them don't know how to use the bus and feel it's inaccessible to them. The drivers don't speak Spanish and they aren't comfortable riding it so they pay large fees to taxi companies to get around. *(When I asked about the Spanish language brochure she responded that HAT does have one but it's not enough to encourage ridership in the Hispanic community.)*

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

It's just good that they exist and the price is good. The demand-response also works well. I know people who use it and it's working well for them.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

The community that I work with would certainly benefit if they could use it because it would provide an economical savings for them. But they don't feel it's accessible to them.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

Additional, if they could run a route down Atlanta Highway and publicize the service in a way that makes it more accessible to the Hispanic community that might help.



Lana Fuentes-Krummen (*page two*)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

I don't really know.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

I can't really answer that.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

I don't know...they had some promotional campaigns; maybe that helped.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

Not really.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Not the way the current system operations. They need to get the word out better about the service to people who don't drive.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

Just that they need to make it more accessible to the Hispanic community.



Person: Jim Shuler
Agency/Title: Administrator, Hall County
Date of Interview: September 20, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. **On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

The importance of those projects is based on participation and we don't get participation from public transportation. It doesn't mean we don't think it's important, we just need more participation. It's about trying to serve as many people as possible with the funding we have.

2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

No. certainly not Atlanta, not regularly anyway.

3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**

The fact is it goes down the road with no one or just one or two people on it. If there is a way to make it more attractive so more people use it that would be better. It's like recycling, you just keep doing it even though it doesn't pay for itself. People are not opposed to it and they see a need by certain people in the community to use it, but they just put up with because of that. Hispanic people use taxis all the time (there are at least 100 different taxi services permitted). They pay a premium to use them so why don't they ride the Red Rabbit? Unless more people ride, the perception won't be good. Elected officials don't openly talk bad about it, but we can't talk good about it either.

4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

One thing is that they've stayed in business. I think that's a major accomplishment with as little participation as they have and the indifference of the community about it.

5. **How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

They just need more participation, maybe run service where the Hispanic community lives.



Jim Shuler (*page two*)

- 6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**

In the Hispanic community.

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

I'm pretty biased about that. Federal mostly I guess; maybe from a gas tax. The problem is that we have to run it because it's linked to the highway money.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

Hall County is growing all over and mostly in South Hall. I don't care if Gwinnett comes up here in the deep end of the county and provides service to Atlanta but we don't need to do it. There should be a joint county thing.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

I didn't even know it was growing. It's not obvious to the public. Who's doing the riding? It's not like they've gone from 10% to 50%.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

No. People are just going to fuss about fuel prices and keep driving.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Change the image. I'd change it but I don't know what I'd do about it. People make fun of it.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

I'm not against it; I'd like to see it do better. I just don't know what it would take to make more people participate.



Person: Shirley Whitaker
Agency/Title: Asst. to Superintendent for Special Activities,
 Gainesville School System
Date of Interview: September 20, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

At least an eight.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

At the present time I don't think people think it's important. I don't see people using it. I know it's important for people that don't have cars.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

It gives people without cars a reasonably priced way to get from one place to another. I don't see people using it for work. For some reason our social services are way out of town so at least people who go there can use Red Rabbit. But people don't use it for shopping downtown. They need to do more PR work.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

In some cases we have given our parents tickets to use Red Rabbit when we are going to have a big meeting. Parents that might not have any transportation can get to school that way. We're not taking advantage of what we have though, if there was more PR that might help. It might have a larger impact with more PR. I just don't hear about it.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I'm not sure I'd know because I don't know where it goes and what the needs are. Maybe something to the Chicken Plant at Murrayville. Lots of our parents work there. It should go by the major poultry and manufacturing plants when there's a shift change. Also, it goes out to the Hall County Alternative School in the afternoon so kids can get to school but they can't use it to get back home.



Shirley Whitaker (page two)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

The city should contribute more.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

Hall County is growing rapidly in the South. More routes there and in the eastern part of the County might be good. Also the YMCA in East Hall would be a good place to have routes.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

It has been increasing? I don't know what the ridership is just from seeing it go by but it's not very well used.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

I'd hope so.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

To continue to update information from riders to see where the people who use it need to go and that their needs are being met.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

I hope they can continue it. Gainesville hasn't seemed to support transit for any reason. There have been two or three attempts since I've been an adult but none really worked. The Hispanic community uses a lot of taxis so if they could use transit it would make better sense.



Person: Kit Dunlap
Agency/Title: President/CEO,
 Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce
Date of Interview: September 20, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Ten

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

I'm not sure. If it's the right kind, maybe. If it was a regular commuter that was more upper class people would probably ride it.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

Well, why they named it Red Rabbit I don't know. I mean I know who runs it and they are great; very efficient. But the general public doesn't think about it much.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

The fact that we've got one is an accomplishment. I haven't studied the route changes but I don't think people use it to go back and forth to work. The management is first class but how they determine where the routes go I don't know. Also, I don't know how much money they have to spend on marketing and who they need to market. I think the business people say, well there goes our money but no riders.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

We need it because we're growing. When they first rolled it out with the blue buses and the Red Rabbit that was cute, but it needs a new look and more marketing.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

It's not going to work unless Gwinnett gets into the MARTA. We have as many people commuting in for jobs as out. The next step is rapid rail or something for Hall and Gwinnett but that could take 20 years.



Kit Dunlap (page two)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

That's what we're all struggling with. People aren't going to give up their cars but the state has to come up with something soon.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

We're experiencing huge growth so it goes without saying that Hall County roads, particularly in the southern end of the county, can't keep up with it. Some sort of transit will have to be put in to help get more people off the roads.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

I'd like to see those numbers before I comment on this. The population Red Rabbit is trying to serve (the underserved as far as socioeconomics) they're just not doing it.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

Not unless something changes soon.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

I guess the look. Also more education and marketing.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

No.



Person: Michael Moye
Agency/Title: President, Lanier Technical College
Date of Interview: September 21, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Two.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes. Maybe a fast shuttle or carpooling to Atlanta. Or better yet, something to the pick-up site at exit 4 and partner with Gwinnett transit.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

As far as the community and going back to that scale of one to ten with one being unimportant, I'd say the community would rate it way down. Only the people who use it or need it would rate it higher. As far as my opinion, I'd rate it at an eight or nine. A significant number of our students use it. It stops right in front of my office and I see them getting off. I believe the students at Gainesville College use it too. A couple of years ago when they were talking about eliminating some routes one of our staff members spoke to a group about not eliminating the one going by our school. I'd bet ridership on this leg isn't very high but it's needed.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Their willingness to listen to community needs is their big strength. I'd say that just keeping the Red Rabbit rolling is a huge accomplishment.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

It provides transportation for students at our college that would not be able to get here otherwise.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

Certainly looking into these alternatives such as the commuter bus or carpooling would be good. At a time when we are beginning to understand how much we need



Michael Moye (page two)

to conserve energy and definitely the economic factor makes it important. But I'll bet that if we had that commuter bus to Atlanta not more than 15 or 20 people would use it even though thousands go that way everyday. We just have a car culture and our density isn't high enough to support transit as much as places like Manhattan.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Maybe a three-way split of Federal, state and the majority coming from local. Some kind of county tax like a special purpose tax.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

There is growth in all parts of the county particularly from Gainesville to the south. I'd say the transit system should concentrate on the apartment complexes and moderate priced housing (although there isn't much of that).

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

Two things: Natural increases in the county's population and more awareness by residents of the service and it's convenience. They probably need to do more marketing targeted at people who they finally decide make up most of the ridership. It's a waste of time and money to market to people that will never ride it.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

I think it has to be a yes.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

I don't know if I'd change anything, although I've often wondered why the blue buses are called Red Rabbit.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

I think it's fairly a well run service and I applaud the fact that they are looking at the operation and want to improve it.



Person: Martha Nesbitt
Agency/Title: President, Gainesville State College
Date of Interview: September 21, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. **On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

Nine. I just think a good public transportation system is important to keep wear and tear off our roads and reduce traffic congestion. It's also good because it provides a service to people who really need it.

2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

I think a needs assessment should be done before they really try to plan anything like that. Before we started the Red Rabbit I'm not sure there was enough buy-in from the Latino community because they still use taxis so much. The needs assessment will give them some idea of who would use the service before they start up anything like a commuter bus.

3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**

I can't really answer on the part of the community because I don't know enough about that but I would think it would be positive. I don't think people are ecstatic about it but I think they believe it's good because it provides service for people who don't drive. I personally like it because I know my students use it.

4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

The major strength is that it provides opportunities for people to get where they need to go at a reasonable cost. It also ties the community together and makes it more unified when people can go from one end of the community to the other and shop where they wouldn't necessarily have a chance to shop without it.

5. **How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

It could definitely help us with parking, although we just finished building a new parking lot. It could help the economically disadvantaged students. We provide financial help with registration and other things but we can't provide transportation.

6. **Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**



Martha Nesbitt (*page two*)

I can't answer that because I don't know what service is out there. I guess I could have someone on the staff take a look at it and decide how it could help more of our students.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

I would say city and county with fares although I understand that fares don't really support it. But since it helps with traffic congestion and to reduce pollution I think locally we should contribute more.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

There is definitely a lot of growth in the South. I don't know what the routes are but it would seem that additional routes out here might help with the bottleneck. I know the bottleneck is caused right now by road construction but when that's done the road will be a major thoroughfare. It would help with unifying the county and maybe help people in the southern end of the county identify more with Gainesville rather than Gwinnett.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

I think you have to look at population growth first. Also, I think people are more comfortable with it now. Anything new is hard for people to get used to but now that it's been around a while people see that it's safe. As long as it maintains a reputation for being safe and reliable the ridership will continue to grow. People are very concerned about safety.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Yes.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

I can't answer that because I don't know enough about it. If we had people here on registration day and maybe distributing information during the first two weeks when everything is crazy, especially parking, it might help. We built bus shelters so the students could wait for the bus and about 34 percent of our students come from Hall County so it might be beneficial to have more information about it.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit? No.



Person: Deborah Mack
Agency/Title: Commissioner, Hall County Board of Commissioners
Date of Interview: September 21, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Ten

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

The Red Rabbit is perceived as being used more for low income people.

My perception is that it is needed for everyone. If they would promote it properly and provide better service with regard to where and when it runs I think more people would use it.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

It does provide a service for those people who need it. I can't think of anything I would call a real accomplishment.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

Number one, if they would promote the service more ridership would increase. Also if the routes were more convenient. Most transit systems have schedules that get you from point A to point B at reasonable times but not here.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

The services are there but it is just not being promoted the way it should be. People need to know what the schedules are and where it goes.



Deborah Mack (page two)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

It has to be a combination of city, county and federal money with some coming from the ridership. If ridership increased that would help generate more revenue from the fares.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

The largest growth is in the south and now it's moving more to the east part of the county. In the southern part I think commuter rail to the metro area would be used. I'm not sure if it even goes to East Hall. That's why I think the routes need to be changed.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

People learning about it. There is a lady at my church who found out about it and she was really pleased it is available. *(When I asked how she found out about it, Ms. Mack responded that it was during one of the free ride weeks. The lady is a senior citizen and went with a group that rode the Red Rabbit.)*

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Yes. If it came to my community I would ride it too, but it doesn't.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

Change the scheduling. They need more routes and maybe run about every 30 minutes.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

We never toot our own horn about the existence of a great service. We need to let people know it's here.



Person: Raymond Mensah
Agency/Title: District Coordinator, GA Dept. of Human Resources
Date of Interview: September 24, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Eight. They are extremely important because they do the coordination trips and without their program a lot of our clients wouldn't have access to programs they need.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

I think they should.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

They are extremely important because they are pretty much the sole provider in the area. Overall, we haven't had any complaints for an extended period of time so I think the community must be happy.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

They seem organized, and they have a pretty good staff and system operationally. I'm not really involved with their day-to-day operation so I don't really know.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

They play an integral roll in the Gainesville and Hall county area. We'd have serious problems without them.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

As far as I know they pretty much cover the bases. I can't think of anything else to improve. Maybe additional buses to help improve the timeliness of trips, or may they could go to other counties like Gwinnett or Dawson to give people access to those areas.



Raymond Mensah (*page two*)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

My comments are really all about the coordinated system so I know they get Federal and 5310 money.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

I don't really know what's going on in this area. I know the Social Security Office moved and now people don't have direct access to it. Maybe they could do something to improve that.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Probably area growth. Our situation is that we have more aging clients who are involved with the senior center and baby boomers retiring.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

I think so.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Nothing major I can think of. The only thing is they could add to the fleet to provide more efficient service which would improve customer satisfaction. I don't know how the normal public trips go, just the coordinated service.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

I have heard people talking about seeing only two or three people on the buses with a lot of empty seats. They need to find a way to attract more people. I don't see a lot of advertising but I don't know what they could be doing. One thing is that it's hard to tell where the bus stops are.



Person: Sam Chapman
Agency/Title: Policy Committee Member, Gainesville-Hall MPO
Date of Interview: September 24, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. **On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

Well, I think it's just as important as the other services. It's part of the infrastructure.

2. **Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

I think they should look at market demands and respond to that. If there is demand for that type of service then they should do it.

3. **How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?**

It's not perceived very good out in the county. I'm a farmer and I live out in the county and the perception is not the greatest. It's a perception, not a fact. My thoughts are that I don't know that much about it as far as how they are doing. I know about the plan and all but as far as things like how the bus drivers are treating the passengers or anything like that I don't know.

4. **What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

A certain population needs it to get to and from work but I don't know if it's meeting their needs. The demand response works well. I know people that use it and they are happy with it.

5. **How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

Well my community isn't in their service area. We call and make appointments but there isn't that great a demand. We have a lot of Hispanics out here and many of them are illegal and don't speak English. They need it but if they ride it then it won't be perceived well, there would be a negative impact.

6. **Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**

I'd say there is a possibility of a greater need for demand response. People just don't know about it. The people who go to the senior centers and participate know about it, but there are a lot of people who don't go to the centers and they don't know



Sam Chapman (*page two*)

anything about it. I'd also say that radio would be the best way to advertise it, not in the newspaper.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Has to be a combination of county and state money.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

South Hall is the biggy as far as growth. It's really a bedroom community with a lot of people who live there but work elsewhere. We're building another hospital out there and that should result in a need for service. Also there are several age restrictive subdivisions going in and those people know nothing about it. I'd say they (HAT) should be looking at zoning and where the subdivisions are going in and respond to that. The area where the hospital is going in is booming and will only get bigger.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

More because they've learned where it's needed and have responded to that.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

It will but may not make people use this one (HAT).

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

Well first they call it the Red Rabbit and all the buses are blue and it makes no sense. Otherwise I really don't know enough about it to comment.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

I've suggested to them that they need to get out to the PTO's at the elementary schools and see if there are needs there. The parents are responsible for transportation when they move their kids from one school to another and it seems like there are a lot of opportunities there.

Getting the word out about the service is important.



Person: Bryan Shuler
Agency/Title: City Manager, City of Gainesville
Date of Interview: September 24, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Six.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes. To me that's what it's all about. In a community our size, getting people to work should be the priority. Express buses not just to other areas but to downtown during peak times such as lunch hours might be a good idea.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

The larger community views it less than favorably because they don't know what it's about or think they need it.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Increasing ridership. It started out to do too much and scaled back because our community is really small to support it so just surviving is a big accomplishment. Listening to customers is something they do well.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

There are a lot of labor intensive jobs here, lots of low income people with no transportation. Some of the industries have asked us to get them into the city so they can use the system to get their employees to work. The system is making a difference as far as overall economic opportunities.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

We have a downtown square, a hospital and Brenau University is behind the hospital. They might look at more frequent service at lunch or peak times because it's a little far for the people who work at the hospital or at Brenau University to drive downtown for lunch. People who might not otherwise ride a bus might use it to get to lunch if it's convenient and timely. That would also help change the perception.



Bryan Shuler (*page two*)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Well the only realistic source is the Federal government. We'll never have enough farebox to pay for it. Clearly it has to be subsidized.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Residential growth is fairly strong in Gainesville and Hall County in the south going towards Atlanta. I don't think it's realistic to expect transit to serve residential areas that are so spread out, it needs to focus on the areas where there is a need. Commercial growth is stronger in South Hall, Beaufort, Flowery Branch and Oakwood. Retail development is strong but it's also spread out from the transit hub so that is the same problem we have with residential. Some people think the two transit systems here and in Gwinnett County should be linked but politically there is opposition to the idea of taking people to other areas to spend their money.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

Awareness and education about the service. Making the service more realistic with regard to the routes, times and accessibility. Also working a lot with the elderly community.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

The price has an impact but I'm not one to believe that economics is the big driver. Convenience is the thing that determines whether people get out of their cars and ride transit.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

I don't know that there is much I could change. I might try to change it's identity, not the name but how it's perceived and identified. Emphasize benefits to the businesses not just to employees.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

Well I'm biased but I think the leadership now is very good; the director is excellent, she knows transit and is getting to know the community. The problem is that the affluent see it as a black hole and the media picks up on how much each ride costs and they don't understand the value of it to the community.



Person: Myrtle Figueras
Agency/Title: Council Member, City of Gainesville
Date of Interview: September 25, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Eight.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

The general perception is that it is only for low income and our role should be that we are reducing traffic and helping our air quality.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

Strength is that it is getting the people to destinations where they want and need to go. It's important because so many people can't afford taxis.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

We simply need a way for people to access services or other things they need.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

Expand to weekend service and make sure it's advertised early enough for people to plan to use it. We tried it before but there wasn't enough advertising so the ridership was low. We also need to find ways to make the bus schedules available to people who might use the service if they knew what the schedules were,

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

I know there is a constant uproar because of what the services is perceived as. Some people with the money think it's a waste of tax money so we need to convince them it's good for the community.



Myrtle Figueras (*page two*)

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

There is a call for more affordable housing in our area and I'd like to see commercial and retail development expand to areas where low income people live. We need to spend more time getting the transit system to connect with people that need to get to work.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

One of those was making the trip times shorter and also putting up more bus stops, especially in areas where low income people live.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

It should, but because of general prevailing attitudes I'm not sure. If we could change people's attitudes so that they understand that using transit is good for traffic congestion and helps with air quality they might use it more.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

More bus shelters. I rode it one day and I got soaking wet.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

I believe we have a great transit system and if we could change attitudes to get people to ride one time a week everyone would benefit from HAT. That would be more cars off the road each time they used HAT. I did a survey in the grocery stores a few years back and asked people if they would ride. That was before we had so many taxis. I think there is a problem with the trust factor in the Hispanic community and they ride the taxis because they trust the Hispanic drivers.



Person: Steve Gailey
Agency/Title: Commissioner, Hall County Board of Commissioners
Date of Interview: September 25, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Seven.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I don't think they are perceived very well because John Q. Public doesn't understand it and what it means to the community. I'd like to see more ridership and I think that would help public perception.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

As far as strengths it cuts down on traffic; if people would use it more. A lot of people can't afford a car so it helps with that.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

It could have a big impact on traffic and make a difference for people who can't get from A to B any other way.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I guess there needs to be fewer in some areas and more in others just depending on what people need and where they want to go.



Steven Gailey (page two)

- 7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?**

The Federal government.

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

There is too much residential versus commercial development right now. The problem is that it's broad and spread out so it's probably going to be hard to provide convenient transit to all those subdivisions.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

Probably the convenience, cost of gas and just the cost of operating a vehicle.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

Most definitely.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

I think I'd want a different type of bus. The Red Rabbit buses don't look like a transportation bus to me. Maybe some real small MARTA-type buses. I think there is a company over in Alabama that produces all kinds of buses (*wasn't sure about the company name*). It seems like small and more functional buses would be cheaper to operate.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

No.



Person: Danny Dunagan
Agency/Title: Council Member, City of Gainesville
Date of Interview: September 25, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Eight.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes. I'd like to see a study first. We need to seriously look at it because it would help traffic.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I think it's perceived ok; some people wonder what it does though. Myself, I've got employees that use it and I know people use it to get to work that don't have cars.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

I don't really know how to answer that. I think it's run very well and it's organized. They do a wonderful job.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

It moves people around who need it and the more riders we have the less traffic.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I don't know of anything. Not fewer that's for sure but as far as I know nothing additional.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

I really don't know. Of course we'd all want Federal so it wouldn't come out of our budget.



Danny Dunagan (*page two*)

- 8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?**

Gainesville and Hall County are growing by leaps and bounds. We need to keep reviewing the areas where there is growth and put transit where it's needed.

- 9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?**

I guess the economics and convenience of it. It's certainly cheaper to ride than to own or operate a car.

- 10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?**

Yes.

- 11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?**

Right now I don't see anything that I would change.

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?**

It's a wonderful system, especially for people who need it.



Person: Ruth Bruner
Agency/Title: Council Member, City of Gainesville
Date of Interview: September 27, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Four. We're not a big metro area, or if we had a great system it would be better. It's good for the people who use it but it just doesn't work for everyone.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

I don't think people understand the difference between HAT and the Red Rabbit. Most people think the Red Rabbit just runs around with one or two people on it. It's good for getting people who are disabled and elderly to medical appointments and for people who otherwise can't drive. I don't know how many people use it to go to work but maybe the times are not set up well for that.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

They had a consulting group work on improving the routes that seemed to make it better. It does a good job getting people to the doctor and the Senior Center. The manager has been a good addition.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

It helps a certain segment of people and it could improve traffic but that's not what it's for. I don't know that much about it really. It doesn't affect me personally.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

HAT stays pretty full so maybe more buses and or better times. I'm not sure how and where it goes. The Red Rabbit could be improved by having more full fledged bus service that goes more places. It just seems to take longer to get to the mall and other places than driving a car.



Ruth Bruner (*page two*)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

The only reason we can run it is because of the Federal funds. You should get Federal and state funding for the Red Rabbit. I think the demand response should have local funding too.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Things are booming all over the place. There are elderly communities, clusters of people age fifty-five and over, centered in or around Gainesville and it would be good to offer them more service. I can't see it helping out in the county subdivisions where things are more spread out. In town, with more density, it would be more feasible. A lot of the people haven't moved into these elderly communities yet but it will start filling up at some point.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

They've improved the routes and convenience and they have some covered bus stops.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Yes. You see that in other countries with high gas prices so we should start seeing it more at some point.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

It might sound silly but I think I'd change the name. The blue buses and the Red Rabbit aren't really effective. Maybe change it to something that makes it sound like it's more for everybody.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

I don't think most of us know much about it. Maybe they need more marketing.



Person: Wayne Dempsey
Agency/Title: Executive VP and CFO, Brenau University
Date of Interview: September 28, 2007
Status: Phone
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Seven. I've lived here for two years and observed how quickly the traffic has increased and we're going to come to a point where we have to consider some type of transit alternative to deal with it.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

Yes.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

My perception is that I've seen a couple of small transit buses but I really don't know much about it. I think there isn't much perception of it in the public except by certain socioeconomic groups that depend on it. Others of us take for granted that we have our cars and can go where we want, when we want.

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

I have to say that I don't know what's available or how far you can go. It's very positive for providing transportation for certain socioeconomic groups. I moved here from Rome and we had a strong transit system there but we didn't have to deal with the fragmentation created by the lake so I don't know exactly what it does or can do.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

This is an interesting question for me. Perhaps it could impact our students, especially for the academy. If I wanted to take a bus from one point to another I wouldn't know how. There needs to be a more systematic approach to communication so the students know what's available.

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

I really don't know, but there should be better communication about where people can go and when.



Wayne Dempsey (page two)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

The citizenry must determine that. There are so many needs on the tax base but the commitment must come from the city and county and maybe some portion from the riders.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

I've been impressed with the amount of residential growth. We're all going to have to deal with a lack of infrastructure to support it and I would ride the bus if it were convenient and on time. I heard Frank Norton say that Atlanta is growing not TO Gainesville but THRU Gainesville. I've been amazed at the amount of traffic that I see on both sides of Highway 60 and Highway 53 when I go back and forth.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

If it has I think it's partially because of the growth in the Hispanic community. I think they probably need it more than most.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

I don't think so. We're spoiled and as long as we have four wheels and air conditioning we're going to keep driving our cars.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

For me to have a better understanding of the transit system because I really don't know much about it. There should be a better communication plan, but maybe there is and if I called and asked about it I would find out. I might not have even thought of it if you hadn't called and asked these questions. They are good questions.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?

I think this kind of survey raises awareness and I'm pleased as a new resident that the transit system is taking time to do this. I've been very pleased with what the County and City is doing here and we've been very happy since we've moved here.



Person: Chad Bolton
Agency/Title: Planning Manager, NE Georgia Medical Center
Date of Interview: September 28, 2007
Status: Email
Interviewer: Susan Richards

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?

Five.

2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?

No.

3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?

Not sure that I am aware of a public perception. Personally, I perceive that HAT is extremely underutilized

4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?

I'm not sure.

5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?

I imagine that, especially for the indigent/unemployed population base, it could make access to local healthcare access points more accessible. Specifically, access to healthcare other than the hospital Emergency Room (e.g., health department, Good News, etc.)

6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?

My perception is that the existing services are underutilized. I'm not sure why. It could be lack of marketing, wrong access points/HAT stops, lack of community education on available services, etc.; Quite possibly, Hall County is still rural enough that metro-type public transportation just isn't feasible given the current ease of commute, distances traveled, etc.



Chad Bolton (*page two*)

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

Really not sure, but I'm not in favor of local tax increases or more entitlement-type programs either at the state or national level.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Vast majority of residential growth is happening in South Hall County. Public transportation to Atlanta could be feasible given that most newcomers work well South of Hall County.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

Population growth and perhaps greater than normal gas price inflation.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Maybe, but the push for bigger SUVs hasn't slowed down too much and consumers don't seem to be clamoring for fuel-efficient vehicles like they did in the late 70s/early 80s. Until public transportation becomes significantly more convenient or efficient than private automobiles, this area probably will not have the critical mass needed for a robust public transit system.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

No opinion.

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit?



Person: Denise Deal
Agency/Title: Executive Director, Vision 2030
Date of Interview: October 07, 2007
Status: Email
Interviewer: Susan Richards

- 1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating not important and 10 indicating very important, how would you rank public transportation when compared with other services such as roadways, schools, parks and recreational facilities, recycling services, fire and emergency services?**

6
- 2. Do you believe that Hall Area Transit (HAT) should expand operations to include some form of commuter services, i.e. express bus or vanpools?**

Express bus would be great, especially if targeted at commuters from Hall County to the Metro-Atlanta area
- 3. How is HAT perceived in the community? What is your perception of transit's role in the community?** HAT is perceived as a service that is used by a very small percentage of the overall population – most comments I receive are in the nature of they never see anyone on the buses. My perception is that there is a need for a public transportation system in our community both for a socio-economic need and for a general transportation alternative option. We need to lay the groundwork today for the future growth of our region so that we are prepared. With regard to the role of transit in the Gainesville/Hall area.... needs to be available to those who either don't have their own transportation so that they may be gainfully employed and be able to get the necessary goods and services they need. Long-term, I would love to see us have more options in place for buses that take residents from point "A" to "B"...i.e. from North Hall to South Hall or from one destination point to another to reduce the overall automobile traffic.
- 4. What are the major strengths and accomplishments of the transit system?**

I don't know that I am familiar enough with the existing system to list major strengths and weaknesses – I personally have never been a passenger, however, I do see the buses around town and I see folks getting on and off and more importantly, I see folks standing at the bus station locations waiting for the bus.
- 5. How does (or could) HAT services impact your organization/community?**

HAT could be a tremendous asset to the overall transportation goals of the Vision 2030 initiative. I have enclosed a copy of the document for your review – I would identify one specific goal, but there are references to transportation throughout the document. One idea...we are strong supporters of our school age students being able to utilize dual enrollment options specifically during high school – one thought would be a bus route that directly tied one learning environment to another, creating that specific need.
- 6. Are there current needs for additional or fewer HAT services? If so what type, where and/or when?**



Denise Deal (*page two*)

See response to #5 – additional might be linking destination points from cross-points in the community so as to reduce auto traffic.

7. As public transit service is dependent on subsidies, what is the most appropriate funding source?

SPLOST or local sales tax dollars.

8. What is happening in Hall County in terms of residential and commercial development? How much? Where? How can transit best respond to these trends?

Tremendous residential development has come on line in the last 12 to 18 months and too much of that is sitting empty or in some cases, it is in foreclosure because we have been overbuilt. I am not the expert, but I would imagine that some of the developers in town could give you a breakdown on the number of pending new housing permits that are on the drawing board at this time and how long the current build-out would be in order to exhaust those pending permits. Commercial growth is very active, but in specific areas of the County. There is explosive commercial and residential growth in the southern end of the county. There is a need for commercial growth on the northern end of the County for goods and services/retail centers, restaurants, etc. but the numbers must not work out for those doing the development. We are becoming a very concentrated nucleus of retirement age housing developments – I would think that future options for public transit might be to tie those developments to retail/goods and services locations. Again, the need to get folks from North to South and East to West and to create commuter options for the large South Hall population commuting into the Metro area.

9. As HAT has been experiencing increased ridership over the past few years, what do you feel is responsible for this growth?

Recognition of existence in the community and as an alternative. I would be interested in the number of Hispanic riders you have on average with HAT routes and where those destination points are located. One other issue is the growing elderly population and the congestion on the road – using HAT as a safe and stress free alternative.

10. Do you believe that the current escalating fuel prices will promote additional public interest in using HAT or other transit services?

Not until we reach gridlock – we love our cars and the flexibility to be where we want when we want....we are still way too suburban/rural.

11. If you could pick one thing to change about the transit system, what would it be?

Perception

12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding local and/or countywide transit? We will be at a point in our future where public transit will be a necessity and I am doubtful that we will build a system now that will be the ground work for our future – still too easy to use our autos or rather the congestion is not at a crisis point.



Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEMORANDUM

To: Policy Committee Members

From: David Fee, Transportation Planner

Date: October 31, 2007

Re: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program Call for Projects

Since Hall County is designated as a non-attainment area for 8-hour ozone and Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) pollutants, there is funding available under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) issued a call for projects for fiscal years 2008 through 2013 with a required 20% local match. The 80% CMAQ funds are only eligible for construction and implementation costs.

The focus of this most recent call for projects is for projects which are designed to reduce PM 2.5 emissions only. Examples of eligible projects are included in your attachment under the "Project Selection Tool". Also included for your information is the schedule. The deadline to submit applications to GDOT is December 21, 2007.

The last call for projects in spring of 2007 yielded the following five projects to our region:

1. City of Oakwood Public Works Diesel Retrofit Project (FY 2008)
 - Retrofitting seven public works fleet
2. City of Gainesville Sidewalk Project (FY 2008)
 - One mile sidewalk on SR 60/Thompson Bridge Rd
3. City of Gainesville Traffic Signal Retiming Project (FY 2008)
 - Traffic signal retiming along SR11/11 Business/60 and SR 369
4. Hall County Public Works Diesel Retrofit Project (FY 2008 & 2009)
 - Retrofitting 90 public works fleet
5. Hall County Intersection Improvement Project (FY 2008 & 2009)
 - Intersection improvement at Old Cornelia and Joe Chandler

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

None

Attachment(s):

1. CMAQ Call for Projects Schedule
2. CMAQ Project Selection Tool

**State CMAQ Program Call for Project Applications*
Nonattainment Area
2007-2008 Schedule**

August 8, 2007	GDOT on behalf of the State Air Quality Partners, issues a call for project applications to CMAQ Program stakeholders. Project application and schedule are posted on the GDOT Office of Planning web site.
December 21, 2007	Project applications (original hard copy with signature and electronic version) and application attachments are due to GDOT. (Mailed applications will only be accepted if post marked by the before mentioned date)
January 7, 2008	GDOT submits project applications to State Air Quality Partners for evaluation.
Week of Jan. 14 th	Partners and MPO's submit ratings to GDOT by 1:00p.m.
Week of Jan. 14 th	State Partners and MPO's have met, discussed independent evaluations, and reached consensus on project ratings. Projects will be rated as highly beneficial, beneficial, or not considered.
January 25, 2008	State Partners and MPO's announce list of pre-qualified projects to the MPO for future considerations and to FHWA/FTA/EPA for information; sponsors are notified of project status.

[Projects will not be included in the RTP, TIP or STIP until quantitative emission analysis have been conducted, State Air Quality Partners have reviewed and approved project selections as effective use of CMAQ funds, and eligibility has been confirmed by federal partners (FHWA, FTA and EPA).]

***Schedule is subject to change**

Project Selection Tool

The following was developed as a guide for applicants and sponsors to provide examples of relative priority levels within five project categories. Individual projects may rate higher (or lower) if circumstances warrant. The matrix priority is based on relative anticipated emissions benefit and cost effectiveness. The five categories are independent of one another and not considered directly comparable relative to anticipated emissions benefits; therefore a high ranked Traffic Flow Improvement project may be equivalent to a medium ranked TDM project. Expanded matrix definitions are included below. The Tool will serve as a guide, not the sole determinant for the rating.

Due to this current call for projects being focused solely on Particulate Matter 2.5, projects only contributing to reducing Particulate Matter 2.5 will be reviewed at this time.

Project Selection Tool for CMAQ Projects

	Traffic Flow & ITS	Alternative Fuel / Diesel Retrofits	Transit / Diesel Retrofits	TDM*	Bike/Ped
High Priority	Traffic signal coordination Intersection Improvements (High truck traffic volume)	Idling Controls Diesel Fleet Conversion/Retrofit Purchase (start-up) or expansion) of alternative fuel fleet (non-transit) vehicles Passenger Vehicle IM Controls	Fleet retrofitting Start-up or expansion of alternative fuel transit vehicles	Employer incentives Alternative transportation incentive program (ex. transit incentives) Carpool/Vanpool programs, startup or expansion PR, Advertising, and Outreach (employer & school) Improved transit information to the Public Congestion/Value Pricing	New Bike/Ped facilities providing direct access to existing transit and/or schools
Medium Priority	Roadway ITS Transit ITS Speed Limit Enforcement Intersection Improvements (Low truck traffic volume) Intermodal Freight Improvements Access Management Incident Management Improvements (HERO units)	Clean Fuel Incentive Programs, Infrastructure or Vehicles Heavy Duty IM Controls	Transit startup or expansion Start-up or expansion of diesel transit vehicles	Startup or Expansion of Employer Services Organizations	New Bike/Ped facilities linking existing bike/ped facilities (addresses "missing link" sections) Installing pedestrian or bike access to facilitate high use during peak travel times (access to major destinations)
Low Priority	Interoperable Communications HOV Lanes	Vehicle repair subsidy (in IM areas)		Park and ride lots Shared car program	Pedestrian and bicycle projects intended primarily for use during non-work trip times

~Transportation Controls Measures in the SIP have the greatest Priority

~Projects consisting of aspects that can be a combination of multiple descriptions may receive a higher priority ranking

-Interoperable communications is the exchanging of data in a quick and efficient manner so agencies from different jurisdictions or different locations can act promptly to remedy a situation. Interoperable communications is eligible for CMAQ funds.

*The Clean Air Campaign is the statewide contractor for TDM activities.



Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

GHMPO

Flowery Branch - Gainesville - Hall County - Oakwood

2008 GHMPO COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Technical Coordinating Committee – 2:00 pm

Development Service Center, 440 Prior Street, Gainesville

- February 20
- April 16
- July 16
- October 15

Citizen Advisory Committee – 4:00 pm

Development Service Center, 440 Prior Street, Gainesville

- February 28
- April 24
- July 24
- October 23

Policy Committee – 10:00 am

Georgia Mountains Center, 301 Main Street, Gainesville

- March 11
- May 13
- August 5
- November 11

Note: Dates/locations are subject to change.