

Regional Transit Partnership (RTP)

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

CHARLOTTESVILLE-ALBEMARLE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION | JUNE 2017

RTP Overview

While conducting work on the *Transit Coordination Study*, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) and Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CA-MPO) worked closely with City and County staff, Charlottesville City Council, Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT), the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, JAUNT, and University Transit Services (UTS). As staff facilitated discussions and interpreted feedback, this effort revealed several opportunities for improving continued communication, coordination and collaboration between the identified transit partners. This study explored specific strategies for advancing solutions to recent concerns over transit services, as part of a new policy recommendation. On February 14, 2017, City Council and the Albemarle Board of Supervisors came together for a joint meeting, where both localities supported this proposed policy:

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Urbanized Area should establish a Regional Transit Partnership (RTP), guided by an advisory board whose membership would be consistent to that of a formal authority and whose charge is to provide a venue for continued communication, coordination and collaboration between transit providers, localities and citizens. The RTP could be a precursor to a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and could serve as an interim body, responsible for ushering the development of an RTA, if the region determines to consolidate transit systems into a single entity.

The following document defines an Operational Framework of the RTP Advisory Board and supports the official Memorandum of Understanding, which formally establishes the Partnership.

Purpose:

The Regional Transit Partnership (RTP) serves as an official advisory board, created by the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and JAUNT, in Partnership with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to provide recommendations to decision-makers on transit-related matters. There are four main goals of the Partnership, including:

- A. **Establishing Strong Communication:** The Partnership will provide a long-needed venue to exchange information and resolve transit-related matters.
- B. **Ensuring Coordination between Transit Providers:** The Partnership will allow transit providers a venue to coordinate services, initiatives and administrative duties of their systems.
- C. **Set the Regions Transit Goals and Vision:** The Partnership will allow local officials and transit staff to work together with other stakeholders to craft regional transit goals. The RTP will also provide, through MPO staff and updates of the Transit Development Plans (TDPs), opportunities for regional transit planning.
- D. **Identify Opportunities:** The Partnership will assemble decision-makers and stakeholders to identify opportunities for improved transit services and administration, including evaluation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA).

There are seven main objectives of the RTP:

1. **Further the City/County Relationship.** As trust appears to be a major obstacle to engaging in a consolidated transit system, the Partnership will help the region build relationships and momentum for future successes.
2. **Create a formal means of sharing information.** Created by an MOU, the Partnership will create a formal mechanism for exchanging information between transit providers, localities and other stakeholders.

3. **Address pressing issues immediately.** The advisory board will provide immediate attention for facing the pressing concerns and issues, as laid out in the Regional Coordination Study.
4. **Facilitate transit planning.** The Partnership will provide recommendations, overview and guidance to transit planning efforts, such as the upcoming development of CAT's and JAUNT's Transit Development Plans (TDPs).
5. **Integrating transit into other decision-making:** The Board will ensure that transit would receive increased consideration in regional and local planning efforts.
6. **Test an RTA structure.** The RTP will provide a trial version of an Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that allows all parties to become more familiar with the concept of a consolidated transit system.
7. **Preparing for an RTA.** Within the Partnership, the region will have a venue for negotiating and studying an RTA that could benefit all partners in the region.

If the Partnership determines that a full RTA is infeasible or not timely, then it would still have addressed the problem statement and brought greater communication, cooperation and coordination between transit stakeholders. This approach allows the region to immediately begin work on an RTA, while also tackling pressing issues.

Function:

The RTP will be an advisory board that provides recommendations to CAT, JAUNT and stakeholders, which include City and County officials, as well as other institutions, such as the University of Virginia (UVA). As this is a regional effort that focuses on the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), the CA-MPO will staff and maintain the RTP. The CA-MPO is also responsible for federal funding to CAT and JAUNT, through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process. The CA-MPO will:

- Provide a meeting space and coordination;
- Take meeting minutes;
- Prepare meeting packets;
- Coordinate studies and analysis for Board consideration;
- Facilitate continued communication, cooperation and coordination on transit matters; and,
- Forward all recommendations to the appropriate entity.

The RTP would send recommendations to:

- CAT and other City staff,
- City Council,
- County staff,
- The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors,
- JAUNT staff,
- The JAUNT Corporation Board,
- UVA Administration and UTS staff, and
- Other applicable stakeholders.

The City will maintain its existing Transit Advisory Board, to provide attention to micro-related issues, collecting feedback from riders and proposing changes to services. The RTP Board would focus on

macro-related issues, such as transit policies and coordination between stakeholders. The RTP will occasionally work with the City's Transit Advisory Board to develop comprehensive recommendations.

Funding:

As this is a regional transportation effort, the CA-MPO will staff the RTP Advisory Board with its annual work program funds. The RTP's administrative work is included in the CA-MPO's annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which makes those activities eligible for federal and state funding. While staffing the partnership is covered under existing programs, additional studies and special project development will require additional or alternate funding sources.

Composition:

The composition of the RTP may change with time as the Board meets and identifies an improved membership structure. At a later date, the Partnership may extend to the surrounding counties and towns, as needed. Initially, the RTP will include the following membership. The roster includes voting and non-voting membership.

Voting Members

Voting membership includes six members, including:

- Charlottesville City Council
two representatives
- Albemarle Board of Supervisors
two representatives
- JAUNT Corporation Board
two representatives
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
one representative

Non-Voting Members

There is a larger pool of stakeholders that have non-voting status on the RTP Advisory Board. This will allow them to participate in discussions. One representative each from:

- CA-MPO staff
- RideShare
- CAT staff
- Charlottesville's Transit Advisory Board
- JAUNT staff
- UTS staff
- Green County Transit
- Martha Jefferson Hospital
- UVA Hospital
- Charlottesville School System
- Albemarle County School System
- Piedmont Virginia Community College
- Charlottesville Area Chamber of Commerce

Meeting schedule:

The RTP has a similar voting composition as the MPO Policy Board, which includes two representatives from the City, two members from the County and one from VDOT. The RTP Advisory Board will meet on the off months from the MPO Policy Board, which convenes on the fourth Wednesday of every-other month.

The Partnership will have regular meeting on the fourth Wednesday at 4:00 PM of:

- August
- October
- December* (rescheduled due to holidays)
- February
- April
- June

The Partnership may alter the regular meeting schedule or hold special meetings as approved by the Partnership voting members. All Partnership meetings and advisory committees of the Partnership will be held as public meetings following Virginia Code of Law 2.2-3707.

Bylaws:

This Operations Framework and the subsequent MOU serve as the main guiding documents for the Partnership. The RTP Advisory Board may adopt bylaws to aid in management of meetings. Unless otherwise determined by the Partnership, CA-MPO staff will facilitate meetings. Voting will be conducted according to the simplified Robert's Rules of Order.

Deliverables:

In addition to recommendations, the RTP Advisory Board would be responsible for supplemental transit products and deliverables. These deliverables would be focused on ensuring continued communication, coordination and collaboration. Documents and responsibilities include:

- **Drafting Formal Agreements:** The advisory Board would review existing arrangements and transit relationships, reviewing and drafting if necessary, formal contracts and agreements. The initial and primary task would be to address the most pressing problem, the overly complicated web of arrangements.
- **Integrating Transit into Decision-Making:** The RTP Advisory Board would work to integrate greater transit considerations into planning efforts around the region. The Board would have involvement with the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan, vetting transit-related recommendations. It would also provide recommendations to local planning efforts and projects.
- **Coordinated Transit Development Plans:** Currently, the three transit providers have entirely separate planning documents. CAT and JAUNT must update their Transit Development Plan (TPD) every five years. In previous years, these were conducted separately but DRPT staff indicated these processes will be coordinated in the upcoming updates for Fiscal Year 2018. Whether completed through the TDP or as a document that later consolidates planning recommendations, the RTP is responsible for overseeing the region's transit planning process.
- **Update RTA Study:** The last RTA study dates nearly nine years. The RTP Advisory Board, in coordination with the CA-MPO, will consider updating the plan and development of a new report that will help the region determine if an RTA is feasible. The report should also address the many controversial decisions that are needed to establish an RTA.

- **RTP Bylaws and Mission:** This advisory board may develop bylaws and a refined mission statement and course of work.

Timeline:

As there are immediate needs with coordinating transit systems, the City and County governing bodies requested that the RTP Advisory Board be established as soon as possible. The following timeline sets an outline for establishing the RTP and resolving pending concerns, while planning for future opportunities.

Task 1: Approval of Concept - COMPLETED

February 2017

The Board of Supervisors and City Council met in a joint meeting on February 14th, to discuss transit coordination. Both bodies approved the concept for further development.

Task 2: Formalizing Structure and Procedures - COMPLETED

March – June 2017

CA-MPO staff drafted a formal structure for the RTP that includes board membership, procedures, relationships with governing bodies and an MOU. Members of the RTP will have their legal counsel review the proposed structure, to verify legal aspects of the RTP.

Task 3: Securing MPO Funding-COMPLETED

March – May 2017

The CA-MPO included RTP activities in the Unified Planning Work Program. This secures federal and state funding for staffing and administering the RTP.

Task 4: Formal Approval

May and July 2017

All governing boards will need to approve the final RTP proposal and MOUs to formally establish the RTP. The Board of Supervisors, City Council and JAUNT Corporation Board would provide these approvals, through resolution.

Task 5: Convene the RTP Advisory Board

August 2017

At the beginning of FY18, the RTP Advisory Board would convene its first meeting, reviewing the Operations Framework and MOU, as well as a work program.

Task 6: Address Immediate Needs

October – December 2017

As its first focus, the RTP Advisory Board would work to address and refine the region's problem statement. Specifically, the Board would:

1. **Formalize Agreements:** The primary objective should be improving the relationship between the City and its biggest client, Albemarle County. The RTP should work with the City and County staff to develop a contract for services, based on examples secured by CA-MPO staff. The RTP Advisory Board should also draft agreements between CAT and UTS, for the Trolley and reciprocal services. These contracts may be renewed on an annual basis, but they will be critical in formalizing services and compensation. The process will allow all parties to communicate

their needs and ensure a more collaborative solution, even if the final arrangement results in no changes to services or costs.

2. **Improve Communication:** The RTP will formalize a venue for CAT, JAUNT and UTS to communicate on new routes, stops, grant applications, driver training and other opportunities for collaboration.
 - a. Receive the first of monthly ridership data from CAT, JAUNT, Rideshare.
3. **Shared Facilities and Operations:** The RTP will explore opportunities for shared vehicles maintenance and storage, as well as shared office space. Shared facilities could be a transition to a potential RTA, if the region decides to move forward with that option.

Task 7: Transit Development Plans

October – March 2018

CAT and JAUNT will be working with DRPT to develop their updated Transit Development Plans. The RTP Advisory Board will be a conduit for directing input from the local officials and stakeholders. The Partnership will provide recommendations and guidance through that process.

Task 8: Pursue RTA Assessment

2018-2019

The next step would be an exploration of an RTA. The County and JAUNT would need to show how the City would benefit from a consolidated system. The RTP Advisory Board would also need to negotiate the many difficult decisions that goes into establishing an RTA. Most notably, the parties would need to focus discussion on funding an RTA.