



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Marion County Commission Auditorium
601 SE 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471

September 20, 2018

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

Members Present:

Commissioner Kathy Bryant
Commissioner Jeff Gold, *arrived at 2:14pm*
Councilman Justin Grabelle
Councilman Brent Malever
Commissioner David Moore
Councilman Jay Musleh
Commissioner Michelle Stone
Councilman Matthew Wardell
Commissioner Carl Zalak

Members Not Present:

Mayor Kent Guinn
Councilwoman Valerie Hanchar
Commissioner Ronald Livsey
Councilwoman Mary Rich

Others Present:

Melba Smith
Kellie Pecora
Oliver Cromwell, SunTran
Michael Ferro
Amber Gartner, Kimley-Horn
Tom Wilder, Marion Transit
Karen Williams, Marion Transit
Anissa Pieriboni, Florida Center for the Blind
Matt Thompson, Florida Center for the Blind
Angela Hammond, Florida Center for the Blind
Tracey Straub, Marion County BOCC
David Tillman, Tillman Engineering

Item 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Moore called the Public Hearing to order at 2:06 PM. Secretary Shakayla Pullings called the roll of members. A quorum was present.

Item 2. Proof of Publication

Secretary Shakayla Pullings stated that the Public Hearing had been published online to the TPO website and on the City of Ocala, Marion County, Belleview, Dunnellon websites, and to the September 6, 2018 edition of the Star Banner.

Item 3. Public Comment

Anissa Pieriboni, President CEO of Florida Center of the Blind located at 1411 NE 22nd Avenue, Ocala, FL 34470 expressed concerns to the board about the new SunTran routes and bus stop changes and how they may affect the visually impaired. Ms. Pieriboni wanted to ensure that the information of new changes was given in plenty advanced notice to the visually impaired so that the proper training on the new changes could be given.

There was some board discussion.

Ms. Pieriboni showed the board on a map where the bus stops were located nearest Florida Center of the Blind and where the new route system would move the stops.

Mr. Zalak told Mr. Daniels to look into the changes to the bus stops and take into consideration the Florida Center of the Blind and issues with bus stop issues in the past and Mr. Daniels said that he would.

Michael Ferro, 3617 NE 19th Place, Ocala, FL 34470 addressed the board and said that he had been a bus rider for a couple of years and questioned why there had not been route expansion to reach more employers such as Signature Brands, K-Mart Distribution, etc.

Mr. Daniels said that it was a part of the Transit Development Plan to continue to go out west.

Melba Smith, 1310 West Silver Springs Blvd, Ocala, FL 34475 addressed the board and said that she was thankful for the SunTran bus and had been a rider since SunTran began. She said that some of the bus routes should be expanded to On Top of the World and other areas for people that may not have transportation.

Mr. Daniels said that there would be access to the current route locations but would be changes in colors of the routes.

Suny Perez 3748 NE 8th Place, Ocala, FL addressed the board and said she like the idea of the crossing at Route 75 but wished that the system could go further specifically to West Marion Hospital and said that Silver Spring Shores Walmart route should have two stops so it is not a long wait time and ride to get to the Shores Walmart. Ms. Perez also expressed concerned about transportation to Marion Transit and also asked if shelters that were put up would be affected by the route changes and bus stop relocations.

Mr. Daniels said that the stops would stay were the shelters were put up. Mr. Daniels also said the further out the route is the less ridership in the interim there would be more expenses for fuel cost and route timing was a factor as well. Mr. Daniels mentioned that there were other ways for transportation out in different areas such as Marion Transit if for medical purposes.

Mr. Zalak said that he knew of a handful of retirement subdivisions that had their own transportation such as shuttles that would take people to regional shopping and serve as an amenity to the community. Mr. Zalak said that Uber or Lyft was also an option for transportation.

Item 4a. SunTran- Route Realignment

Mr. Daniels presented the SunTran Route Realignment and said that to maximize the efficiency of the SunTran network, the proposed route alignments from the SunTran COA, finalized in February 2016, and the Transit Development Plan Update in 2018, with some necessary modifications, were assumed to be the base network to the existing system. The revised network took the current funding environment into account.

Mr. Daniels said he went over the presentation at the August TPO meeting but wanted to present the presentation again with summarized the modifications to the route alignments for the public:

Realign existing system – To maximize the efficiency of the SunTran network, the proposed route alignments from the SunTran COA, finalized in February 2016, and the Transit Development Plan Update in 2018, with some necessary modifications, are assumed to be the base network to the existing system. The revised network takes the current funding environment into account. The following summarizes the modifications to the route alignments:

Blue Route – The proposed alignment of the Blue route would provide one-way service on the majority of the route, including a one-way loop along Blitchton Road that is currently serviced by the Purple route with 60-minute headways. The alignment would provide a more direct travel path between several important anchors: the Health Department, the Ocala Regional Medical Center, SW 17th Street, Downtown, and the northwest area identified as an important transit market. The alignment would benefit ridership due to the directness of travel between major anchor points and the available transfers at the Downtown Transfer Station. This would also make service more efficient in the northwest, as it would provide a transfer opportunity to all other routes serving the Downtown Station before continuing to the Health Department.

Yellow Route – The proposed alignment operates similar to the current Yellow B route, with some segments with two-way service and a loop in the northeast. This route was redesigned to reduce out-of-direction travel, provide coverage service in the northeast, and provide more premium two-way service in the area. This route alignment provides two-way service on NW 35th Street that previously only had one-way service every other hour by removing the out-of-direction travel that had served some very low ridership segments in close proximity to the current and proposed Green routes. This alignment maintains a substantial level of coverage in the northeast, increases efficiencies in service, and improves the frequency of the Yellow route.

Green Route – The proposed alignment operates similar to the current Green Route with a minor exception of expanding to provide service directly to the Marion County Library and removing a segment northeast of the Silver Springs Walmart by continuing on SR 40. The alignment then continues the current inbound alignment, returning to Downtown. This alignment has the effect of providing counter-clockwise loop service (opposite the Yellow route) on a few roadways, providing two-way transit service on those routes. This alignment reduces overall out-of-direction travel on the outbound trip by adding service where the current Blue route alignment had provided service on. Additionally, this alignment provides coverage to a significant portion of the northeast that was modified to increase efficiencies for the Yellow route.

Orange Route – The proposed alignment is a combination of the Orange and Yellow A routes, with extended service past the I-75 corridor. This alignment uses N Magnolia/1st Avenue (one-way pairs) to exit/enter the Downtown area and station. This alignment removes some difficult turning movements from the current Orange alignment near the medical centers south of Downtown that are served by the Blue route in this recommendation, without the need to complete the difficult turn. This has the effect of reducing out-of-direction travel and providing two-way service along portions of the route. The newly-added service area along SR 200 was a top request of current and potential riders and was identified as a sizeable transit market due to the employment density in the area. This alignment may also assist in attracting paratransit trips to fixed route service in an area with an already high number of paratransit trips.

Purple Route – The proposed alignment is a combination of the current Purple, Orange, and Yellow A routes. It provides more direct service to the southwest and a second route option to the northwest, both important coverage areas. This alignment also provides coverage in the southwest where the Orange and Yellow A routes were assessed as being too close to each other. This alignment extends route service to Paddock Mall before returning to Downtown. This new alignment would serve several high-ridership stops in coverage areas while providing access to several key anchor points in the southwest.

Red Route – The proposed alignment preserves the western portion of the existing route from the Health Department as it continues east but would connect directly to Winn-Dixie and Walmart using SE Maricamp Road and not bifurcate into A and B branches at the Winn-Dixie. The Red route is presently the lowest ridership route and has the highest operating cost per passenger trip. It is proposed to eliminate the last trip of day, due to low ridership.

Silver Route to the Ocala / Marion County Commerce Park

The proposed alignment shall provide service to the Ocala/Marion County Commerce Park, which is a growing employment center for Fed Ex Ground, Chewy.com, and AutoZone. The route shall be coordinated to run during employee shift changes.

Commissioner Gold asked what would be the impact if the stop at the Shores Walmart was added.

Oliver Cromwell with the SunTran addressed the board and said there would be a time constraint on the end bound and because there was a long stretch of road on the red route adding another stop would add additional 4 to 5 minutes that would miss the connection to the Health Department but said it could be looked at.

Ms. Stone made a motion to approve the Route Changes as they had been presented with the addition of addressing the Center for the Blind concerns. Ms. Bryant seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5. Adjournment

Chairman Moore adjourned the Public Hearing at 2:42 PM.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Pullings, TPO Administrative Assistant