

**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HENRY**

The Henry County Board of Commissioners held a Virtual Called Workshop Meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 22, 2021. This meeting was streamed on Henry TV at the county website, as well as streamed Charter/Spectrum Channel 180 and Facebook Live. This meeting was advertised in the *Henry Herald*. Those present on the teleconference were:

Carlotta Harrell, Chair
Johnny Wilson, District I Commissioner
Dee Clemmons, District II Commissioner
Greg Cannon, District III Commissioner
Vivian Thomas, District IV Commissioner
Bruce Holmes, District V Commissioner

Also in attendance: Cheri Hobson-Matthews, County Manager; Patrick Jaugstetter, County Attorney; Stephanie Braun, County Clerk; Toussaint Kirk, Planning & Economic Development/Cluster Lead; and David Smith, Financial Services Director; Sam Baker, Transportation Planning Director; and Taleim Salters, Transit Director; Grady Smith, VHB Consultant; Michael Hightower and Geilia Taylor, The Collaborative Firm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge was recited.

CALL TO ORDER

Carlotta Harrell, Chair, called the Workshop Meeting of the Henry County Board of Commissioners for Wednesday, September 22, 2021 to order at 9:21 a.m.

PRESENTATION

TRANSIT

Discussion regarding the Henry County Transit Master Plan Draft Recommendations

Chair Harrell, asked **Taleim Salters, Transit Director**, to introduce the presenter.

Mr. Salters remarked that the Transit Master Plan was at the Needs Assessment stage and introduced **Grady Smith, VHB Consultant**, to present the information.

Mr. Smith asked his team members in attendance to also introduce themselves and encouraged everyone to participate freely. Mr. Smith stated that the plan was in the last stages and final recommendations would be brought to the Board of Commissioners in November.

Mr. Smith opened the presentation with a slide that captured various stages of the 30-yr vision of what transit should be in Henry County and summarized each phase. He stated the Transit Vision document was shared at a prior Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting following input from the BOC, community, and others. He then presented a road map which provided more detail on the plan in its final stages, focused on priorities and a financial plan for what is most important to the county. He stated

there are a series of committees and stakeholders involved and the workshop is critical to finalizing recommendations to form a plan.

Mr. Smith recapped the vision statement which is key in the vision document that was shared with the BOC. Henry County's Transit Vision:

To provide a safe and dependable high-quality transit system that enhances the quality of life and delivers mobility options for all county residents.

Mr. Smith stated the vision led to some critical needs identified by the BOC, community and technical data gathered over the planning process. Key areas of need:

- *Increase Transit Accessibility and Connectivity to Jobs and Opportunities*
- *Expand Multimodal Transportation Choices*
- *Provide as Safe, Equitable, and Cost-Effective Transit System*
- *Support Land Use and Economic Development*
- *Reduce Travel Times and Traffic Congestion*

Mr. Smith next presented potential project alternatives identified for consideration based on input from stakeholder committees, the public, and technical data. He indicated some may perform better than others and there is a process in place to test all the ideas and narrow down what is most important to the county. Major project types include:

- *Park-and-Rides*
- *Mobility Hubs*
- *Local Bus*
- *Commuter Express Bus*
- *Rapid Regional Connector*
- *Commuter Rail*
- *Demand Response Transit*
- *Operations & Maintenance Facility*

Mr. Smith said that there are number of services and projects that are complementary to the traditional transit investments being considered for the county and make transit reliable and safe. These complementary elements include:

- *Mobility on Demand Service*
- *Microtransit*
- *Park-and-Ride Lots*
- *Mobility Hubs*
- *First-mile/Last-mile Connections*
- *Operations & Maintenance Facility*

Mr. Smith reiterated the purpose of the meeting today was to gather input from the BOC on these ideas so that they can create priorities and recommendations which is the final step of the transit plan. In succeeding slides, he assessed these potential projects including park-and-ride lots, mobility hubs, local bus alternative routes express commuter bus routes, rapid regional connectors, commuter rail and demand response transit. The next slide evaluated key areas of need as described earlier. This was followed by an

exhibit of project alternatives in a matrix of high and low performers, in support of those need areas. He stated complementary elements will be evaluated as well when implementing various services and will be detailed in the 30-yr phase project.

Mr. Smith said that one of the important things for the BOC to consider is the financial aspect of the plan as additional funding will be needed. In 2019 the county had access to and leveraged approximately half a million of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Formula Grant dollars for rural areas. However, as the county continues to grow and become more urbanized, the ability to leverage those dollars by formula shrinks. One reason for this study is to position the county to take advantage of the urbanized area funds (5311 funds) which have different requirements.

Mr. Smith presented baseline transit funding sources from FY 2019 (pre-pandemic) with the County General Fund the highest at \$1,426,453 and state funding the least at \$192,067. He remarked, the county received direct CARES Act transit funding of \$2.8 million with no sunset on how those dollars are spent and, additionally received supplemental funds of approximately \$730,000 from the state in CARES Act funds. He stated these funds are one-time and not likely to recur. The projects and opportunities presented in the 30-yr vision equates to approximately \$140 million dollars of capital investment, together with an associated operations and maintenance budget. This is a significant investment to get the county in position to have a strong transit network with the continued growth. He continued to say, the county can leverage other sources such as T-SPLOST with a portion allocated to do some transit projects. Under Atlanta-Transit Link (ATL) House Bill 930, metro Atlanta counties have the opportunity to levy an additional sales tax to raise funds for transit. Several counties are contemplating this and other funding sources including Cobb, Fulton, Dekalb, Gwinnett and others, to position local funds with federal opportunities to implement their transit vision. To leverage FTA dollars there are local match requirements with nearly a 50/50 match but may change under the Biden Infrastructure Bill to approximately 80/20. He stated, it is important to have local funding to take advantage of federal funding that may come down the pipeline.

Mr. Smith concluded that today they are looking for input to accomplish short and long-term goals as well as aspirational transit goals. Evaluation results will be finalized using professional judgement together with the leadership team. He said financial strategy with various scenarios will be developed for the Board of Commissioners to consider and could serve as a blueprint for transit funding. He reiterated that stakeholder and technical meetings and public input will occur before taking the final plan for adoption to the Board in November.

Chair Harrell, asked if any commissioners had questions.

Dee Clemmons, District II Commissioner remarked she did not see the presentation mention how the transit system could be better marketed to the community so people know transit exists in the county and how that can be improved. She also remarked she did not see the presentation mention capital investments like other counties or cities for instance having a structure similar to a house by a bus stop.

Mr. Smith addressed the marketing remark from the District II Commissioner and said this is a scope of their work. They have shared with the Henry County transit team a rebranding package for Henry County transit. He said, this is a task that is being worked on and was mentioned on a slide in the presentation. The marketing component will be a part of the final recommendations to go before the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Smith addressed the second comment by Commissioner Clemmons regarding capital investments and the example she provided, then referred to his presentation where he talked about mobility hubs. He said this would allow for multi-mobile connections between local buses, express buses

and regional rail or bus rapid transit. This is where carshare, bikeshare, rest rooms and other rider amenities are available and improve the transit user experience. These hubs are complementary and foundational elements to the transit system. There are five (5) portrayed on the map presented.

Commissioner Clemmons responded that for rebranding, it would be beneficial to give the county a 12-month plan that is specific on how to utilize the information to reach constituents in the county.

Mr. Smith responded that is not a part of the current scope of the plan but agrees that it should be and would recommend this be incorporated into the plan.

Commissioner Clemmons commented she has an issue when money is spent for branding and staff not knowing what to do next. She stated the scope of work should include this or bid it out.

Johnny Wilson, District I Commissioner said he did not see anything regarding Hampton or Locust Grove on the mobile hub slide.

Mr. Smith referenced the slide and stated if the BOC wishes they can add the mobility hub project to both Locust Grove and Hampton, but based on analysis the Locust Grove hub did not perform well. However, it would make sense to consider one in Hampton. He said, if there is high-capacity transit happening in Clayton County we can connect to, having a park-and-ride is one thing, but having the ability to transfer from transit into a high-capacity transit system that goes further North is another.

Chair Harrell asked if any other commissioners had questions.

Chair Harrell stated she had questions regarding the hubs: 1) Would it be necessary to have a component for police protection as people are making the transition, and 2) What would that entail?

Mr. Smith responded that this should have been mentioned in his presentation. He stated that safety and security is required by the FTA and there will be a need to implement to meet FTA safety and security standards. The recommendations will lay out what those requirements are and how they relate to the plan.

Mr. Michael Hightower, The Collaborative Firm, stated that current hubs in the region: South Dekalb and Stonecrest for example, have a very active public safety component which ties into local police and modern systems.

Mr. Smith reiterated that this will be included before being rolled out to the public.

Chair Harrell asked **Cheri Hobson-Matthews, County Manager** if she had any comments if there were no other questions from staff.

Ms. Hobson-Matthews responded that she had no questions but will ask staff to partner with Mr. Smith and his team on his scope of work for marketing and branding for the county. This will be reviewed for recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for consideration. She said she hopes this plan is what the BOC wants to see in November for final approval and, is looking to identify short term improvements to start working towards. She remarked the FY 2023 budget meetings will kick off in December and January and it would be great to have some of the small projects incorporated into **Mr. Salters** budget.

September 22, 2021

Page 5 of 5

Chair Harrell and **Ms. Hobson-Matthews** thanked everyone who participated in the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business at this time, **Chair Harrell** adjourned the meeting. ***Meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.***

Carlotta Harrell, Chair

Stephanie Braun, County Clerk