

**CENTRAL ARKANSAS TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
**STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**  
**Coordinating Committee Meeting**  
**July 29, 2014, 9:00 AM, CATA Offices**  
**Summary**

**Meeting Summary**

Jarod Varner, CATA General Manager, welcomed everyone to the Coordinating Committee meeting and thanked them for coming to CATA's offices. He briefly introduced the project and asked meeting participants to introduce themselves. In total, 25 individuals attended the Coordinating Committee meeting, plus several members of CATA staff and the consulting team.

Bethany Whitaker from Nelson\Nygaard gave a brief overview of the Strategic Plan, including the technical steps involved in the planning effort as well as the role of Coordinating Committee members. Bethany told the Coordinating Committee members that she hoped they would be active in the project throughout, reviewing technical materials, helping identify key individuals and markets, and playing a critical role by providing a local perspective and "reality check" on recommendations. She said people could expect between four and six meetings over the 10-month project timeframe.

After the presentation, Bethany, Jarod, and Joey Goldman facilitated a discussion of issues to be addressed in the planning effort. Coordinating Committee members discussed transportation challenges facing CATA, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system. Many participants offered comments. These comments are summarized by major themes as follows:

- **Many people have positive impressions of CATA.** Participants talked about some of the strengths of the system, including that it is safe, clean and environmentally friendly. There is an impression that the buses run on time. Participants voiced a lot of support for the CATA staff, and especially the drivers who were deemed friendly and helpful.
- **CATA has a public perception problem.** There is a sense that the only people who ride the bus are poor, and they only ride because they have no other transportation options. Thus, riding the bus in Central Arkansas has some stigma attached to it. Some participants noted that they see a lot of empty buses driving around, which is seen as a waste of taxpayer money. Several participants said they do not believe service runs frequently enough to be convenient.
- **Two major markets are emerging for transit: millennials and baby-boomers.** Millennials are interested in an urban lifestyle, which often means living car free. Baby boomers are also looking for options other than driving, sometimes because they have to stop, but also because they are moving to Arkansas from northern cities where they are used to being able to get around by bus. As Central Arkansas develops more housing in downtown areas or denser areas, people are going to want to be able use transit to get around. Certainly, existing transit-dependent groups represent an ongoing market for CATA's services.
- **CATA has a major opportunity when the Broadway Bridge closes.** The closure of the Broadway Bridge will result in traffic congestion, and it might make some people more willing to try different things. CATA should be aggressively marketing its services

during this time and potentially considering some new routes to address the forecast increase in demand.

- **Employers should be engaged in the planning process.** Employers need to participate in the planning process so CATA can design services around employer needs, shift times and the locations where employees live. It may be helpful to develop an analysis that shows where people live and work and then design bus routes around that information.
- **A number of service improvements are needed.** Several participants talked about the need for a longer service span, improvements to frequencies/headways, and additional commuter services in some areas. While most of the participants indicated they had used transit in other cities (while traveling or on vacation), less than one-half of participants had used transit in Little Rock.
- **Capital investments are an important piece of this planning process.** Opportunities exist for park-and-ride facilities and light rail investments in the future.
- **People like River Rail.** People appreciate the service, but there is a perception that it “is more entertainment than transportation.” One individual noted, “It is the most fun you can have for a dollar.”
- **CATA must invest in its amenities.** Some people mentioned the importance of bus shelters, benches and information at the bus stops. Shelters should protect people from the weather, including standing in the hot sun. One individual said that people want to feel safe walking to the bus and while they are waiting for it.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Participants were asked if any other key stakeholders/organizations should have been seated around the table. The group suggested that most of the key organizations were represented. Bethany indicated that the group would meet about every two months and participants said that Tuesdays mornings would generally work for them. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 23 at 9:00 AM. One participant requested the remaining meetings be scheduled in advance.

Jarod thanked the group for participating and expressed optimism for a successful effort.

## In Attendance

- Bill Adcock, CATA
- Michelle Anderson
- Andre Bernard, Little Rock Housing and Neighborhood Programs
- Tom Clarke, Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport
- Marcia Cook, Sherwood Chamber of Commerce
- Casey Covington, Metroplan
- Wanda Crawford, CATA
- Tara Davidson, Maumelle Chamber of Commerce
- Lawrence Finn, CATA Board
- Gary Fletcher, Mayor, City of Jacksonville
- John Gaudin, Argenta Wealth Management
- Todd Hanson, North Little Rock Chamber of Commerce

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- John Haynie, North Little Rock Public Schools
  - Jennifer Herron, StudioMain
  - Jon Honeywell, Little Rock Public Works
  - Ken Keplinger, Sherwood Alderman
  - Matthew Long, CATA
  - Harrison Maddox, BACA - Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas
  - Bob Major, North Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Don McMillen, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department
  - Harold W. Payne, Rider
  - Margaret Powell, Director of External Affairs City of North Little Rock
  - Sharon Priest, Downtown Little Rock Partnership
  - Lynn Rockenbach, AARP
  - Belinda Snow, North Little Rock Housing Authority
  - Karen Sykes, Sierra Club
  - Jarod Varner, CATA
  - Henry Washington, Department of Human Services
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- Jason Brown, The Communications Group
  - Joey Goldman, Nelson\Nygaard
  - Dwight Norton, GCR
  - Boris Palchik, Nelson\Nygaard
  - Lisa Van Hook, The Communications Group
  - Bethany Whitaker, Nelson\Nygaard