

# BROAD STREET RAPID TRANSIT STUDY AA/EA

## PUBLIC SCOPING REPORT

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GRTC and DRPT held public scoping meetings on February 24 and 25, 2010 for the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study. The intent of the meetings was to introduce the project, explain the study process and explain the alternatives under consideration. Citizens were invited to provide comments about the proposed transit improvements before, during and after each meeting through various formats. The public scoping meetings satisfy a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act that the public be given an opportunity to provide input on alternatives to be studied, the purpose and need of the project, and potential for environmental effects.

The meeting notification process, the information presented, comments received from the general public and agencies, and responses are presented below.

### 1.0 NOTIFICATION OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

Notification for the public meetings was accomplished in a variety of ways, including development of a study website, newspaper advertisements, email announcements, bus shelter posters, press releases, and distribution of flyers. These methods are described below.

#### 1.1 Study Website

GRTC developed a website to showcase information on the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study. The site can be found directly at <http://study.ridegrtc.com>. In addition, links were provided on the City of Richmond and Henrico County websites for several weeks prior to each public meeting. The site includes information pertaining to the study process and background, public meeting notices, the study schedule and access to both an electronic and downloadable version of public comment forms. A screen capture of the homepage and a summary of website usage are included in Appendix A.

#### 1.2 Newspaper Advertising

Newspaper advertisements were placed in several newspapers in the City of Richmond and Henrico County. Further details about the placement of the advertisements are shown below in Table 2-1. Copies of the advertisements are included in Appendix A.

**TABLE 1-1: SUMMARY OF MEETING ADVERTISEMENTS**

Newspaper	Advertisement Dates	Size
Richmond Times Dispatch	2/12, 2/20 & 2/25	4 columns by 6 inches
Henrico Citizen	2/4 & 2/18	4 columns by 6 inches
Richmond Free Press	2/18	4 columns by 6 inches

### **1.3 E-Mail Announcements**

Study information and public meeting details were sent via e-mail to approximately 700 contacts in the stakeholder database. E-mail notifications were further disseminated by various group contacts on the database such as city council liaisons, business and human service organization advocates. Copies of the e-mail announcements are included in Appendix A.

The email distribution list included the following groups:

- Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Public Involvement Offices (PIOs)
- Elected Officials and Community Leaders
- Citizens (those who requested to be included via the study website)
- Multimodal/Transit Users - RideFinders participants and Employee Travel Coordinators
- Business/Institutional Community
- Community Organizations & Special Interest Groups
- Environmental Justice Populations
- Richmond Regional PDC e-mail list

Three separate e-mails were sent out as follows:

- E-mail #1: 2/11/10: Initial announcement of the public meeting with links to website.
- E-mail #2: 2/15/10: A second announcement was sent to emphasize the meeting dates.
- E-mail #3: 2/22/10: A final reminder was sent to all contacts with a link to the electronic comment form.

### **1.4 Bus Shelter Posters**

GRTC developed bus shelter posters based on the newspaper ad and flyer to promote the study to transit riders. The poster placements were selected to inform Broad Street pedestrians and motorists of meetings. Large posters were mounted in three shelters along the Broad Street bus route in the study area at Willow Lawn, Gaskins and Parham Road. A photo of the shelter posters is included in Appendix A.

### **1.5 Media Relations**

Local and government media play a vital role in helping to disseminate important information to citizens and special interest groups alike. Meeting information was distributed to the public via print and broadcast media including newspaper, radio, television and internet. Members of the press were sent media advisories and were provided press kits at the meetings. Several articles appeared in the local newspapers and morning and afternoon news shows mentioned the study, meeting dates and locations. Press releases and a news coverage summary are included in Appendix A.

### **1.6 News Releases**

To broaden message distribution, news releases were sent to local print and broadcast medias as well as minority media in the Richmond area. A series of news releases were developed and distributed as follows:

- 2/10/10: Two Public Service Announcements (for broadcast use) were distributed to Henrico County and City of Richmond government access cable television stations.
- 2/10/10: A community calendar message in the form of a slide was distributed to Henrico County and City of Richmond government access cable television stations.
- 2/15/10: GRTC distributed a news release to local print, radio and television media. Additionally, the news release information was included in DRPT's RSS Feed.
- 2/23/10: GRTC distributed the Media Advisory to the GRTC media list.
- 2/24/10 & 2/25/10: GRTC distributed a press kit for attending media.

The local television and print media covered both public meetings. Organizations who received press releases are listed in Appendix A.

### **1.7 Property Owner Letter**

In accordance with the Code of Virginia (33.1-94), GRTC and DRPT were required to notify property owners to begin the data collection and field investigation process for the Environmental Assessment. These letters were mailed to 1,088 property owners in advance of the public meetings to ensure that the property owners would have a venue to ask questions and obtain information about the project. These letters were developed to include the times, dates, and locations of the meetings. An example property owner notification letter is included in Appendix A.

### **1.8 Flyers**

Two weeks in advance of the February 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010 meetings, 750 flyers were hand-delivered to approximately 50 contact points along the Broad Street corridor and in the areas surrounding potential transit stations, complementing the Property Owner letter sent out earlier by the team. Leasing offices of many major apartment and condominium complexes were included to serve as distribution points for the flyers. The Boys and Girls Club and several Subway and Exxon locations along the corridor agreed to provide stacks of flyers to patrons. For those not located in the Broad Street corridor, flyers were sent as attachments using the e-mail distribution list. The flyers were also sent to the Public Involvement Committee representatives for further distribution. A copy of the flyer is presented in Appendix A.

### **1.8 Environmental Justice and Other Special Targeted Outreach**

Special targeted outreach was conducted to ensure that diverse segments of the population were given the opportunity to become involved with the study at an early stage. Targeted outreach included identifying contacts representing low income, minority, seniors, disabled, human service groups and organizations that advocate and/or provide services on their behalf. Additionally, businesses along Broad Street, particularly those near the potential station areas were included. All groups and individuals identified through this process were provided information regarding the project, the public scoping meetings, and asked for contact information. The parties identified have been added to the study mailing list to receive future communications about the study. Social Services, Disabilities Boards, the Area Agency on Aging and the NAACP were included in addition to community centers, universities, neighborhood associations and businesses.

Advertisements and flyers using simple language were generated in both electronic and print versions to engage audiences. Bus shelter posters with large visual images also were developed to inform transit users. Public meetings were held at ADA and transit accessible locations. All informational materials and meeting notifications were developed in an easy-to-read format and included visuals as appropriate.

The meeting notifications and the public meeting presentations included study area maps and other visuals such as Bus Rapid Transit photos and aerial views of study alternatives.

### 1.9 Public Involvement Committee

GRTC held a meeting on November 10, 2009 with the Public Involvement Committee which consists of representatives of the City and County public information offices. The meeting offered an opportunity to introduce the study to Public Information Officers (PIOs) and solicit their assistance in informing citizens of the study prior to the first set of public meetings.

Throughout the scoping phase of the project, the PIOs were provided information to disseminate to their City/County groups. An email on February 10, 2010 provided multiple outreach tools to distribute to citizens and stakeholders. These tools included a news release, TV cable slide, public service announcement, announcement flyer and email alert.

The City of Richmond and Henrico County PIOs complemented the GRTC’s and DRPT’s efforts by sending meeting information through their e-mail distribution system and included study information and links on locality websites. City Council liaisons for Richmond and Henrico County distributed study and meeting information to their e-mail lists.

## 2.0 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Open-house public meetings were held February 24 & 25, 2010 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Formal presentations were offered at 7:00 p.m. each night followed by a question and answer period. Upon arrival, attendees were given a public meeting handout providing background on the study and a comment form.

Throughout the evening, project display boards were available for public review and members of the project team were present to answer questions. Meeting attendees were encouraged to provide written comments at the meeting, mail comment forms to the project manager or comment electronically by March 27, 2010.

### 2.1 Public Meeting Attendance

Both public scoping meetings were well attended with more than 141 in attendance over both nights. Details are provided in Table 2-2. Sign in sheets from the meetings are presented in Appendix B

**TABLE 2-1: PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDANCE**

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Attendance
Wednesday February 24, 2010	Children’s Museum of Richmond 2626 W. Broad Street Richmond, VA 23220	97
Thursday February 25, 2010	Thomas Jefferson High School 4100 W. Grace Street Richmond, VA 23230	44
<b>Total</b>		<b>141</b>

## 2.2 Meeting Agenda

The agenda for the public meeting is presented in Table 2-2 below.

**TABLE 2-2: PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA**

Time	Topic/Activity
6:00 p.m.	Open house begins
7:00 p.m.	Opening remarks, introduce elected officials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Lewis, GRTC Transit System, CEO</li> <li>• Thelma Drake, DRPT Director (2/24 only)</li> </ul>
7:10 p.m.	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anne Darnall and Gibran Hadj-Chikh, PTG</li> <li>• John Lewis, GRTC Transit System, CEO</li> </ul>
7:40 p.m.	Citizen Comments, Formal Questions and Answers
8:00 p.m.	Open house (informal discussion and questions and answers)
8:30 p.m.	Open house ends

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation given at the meetings is included in Appendix C.

## 2.3 Meeting Displays

Display boards were positioned around the room to provide information about the study, its purpose, the topics and alternatives to be studied, and the future schedule. The display board topics included:

- Study Overview and Background
- Study Corridor Maps
- Draft Project Purpose
- Need for the Project
- Goals and Objectives
- Steps in the Study Process
- Contents of an Environmental Evaluation
- Alternatives Under Study
- Guideway Options
- What is Bus Rapid Transit
- Project Schedule
- Public participation process
- Ways to Stay Involved

Copies of the display boards are included in Appendix C. Following the meetings, the “What is Bus Rapid Transit”, “Guideway Options”, and “Alternatives Under Study” were posted on the study website.

## 2.4 Meeting Handouts

Meeting handouts included the comment form and study fact sheet. Copies of these are included in Appendix E.

## 2.5 Special Assistance

Sign language interpreters were on reserve but were not requested for the public meetings. Those with special needs were asked to contact GRTC Transit System at least 48 hours in advance of the meetings. No calls were received. Both meeting locations were ADA compliant.

## 3.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENT PROCESS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

Public meeting participants were encouraged to provide comments for the study team. Printed comment forms were available at each meeting, a PDF comment form was made available on the study website and an electronic comment form was circulated by e-mail and promoted before and during the meetings. The formal public comment period ended on Saturday, March 27, 2010. A copy of the comment form is included in Appendix E.

Written comments were accepted at any time during the public comment period using the electronic comment form at <http://study.ridegrtc.com>. Written comments were also accepted at each scoping meeting or by mail to GRTC. By the close of the formal comment period, the public submitted 51 comments via the project website and 19 comments written on comment forms or letters.

A summary of the comments received follows. A detailed summary of the comments made and the project team's responses to the comments is presented in Chapter 3.

- **Support for the proposed BRT system was good.** Although a few people voiced strong objections to GRTC spending more tax dollars to fund a study that doesn't include light rail, most were encouraged by that a project was underway to enhance the transit system in Richmond. Since street cars are a prominent part of Richmond's history, people suggested bringing those cars and routes back instead of revamping or adding service to an existing system.
- **Concern for using 17<sup>th</sup> Street.** The concern voiced most frequently in all forms of communication was using 17<sup>th</sup> Street as the north/south alignment connecting Broad and Main Streets. People stated that 17<sup>th</sup> is a pedestrian friendly, narrow street with a vital Farmer's Market and isn't a good match for a large bus. Suggestions for an alternative route included 14<sup>th</sup> Street.
- **Support for current and planned transit-oriented development.** Many comments were made about the need for an enhanced transit system in order for Richmond to be able to support current and planned transit-oriented development such as Rocketts Landing. There are concerns that the proposed route is not going to adequately serve current and potential riders. Comments were mixed about the mostly east/west route and suggestions for a loop system were presented.
- **Concern for changes to current bus system.** Others were worried that changes to the current bus system would affect their daily commute and ability to travel throughout the city without the use of a car. Store owners expressed apprehension about losing bus stops in front of their store fronts; others were concerned with the potential to lose on-street parking for patrons. A shop owner and her customers submitted a petition to keep current bus stops in place.
- **Funding.** A few people raised concerns with funding for both the BRT study and the actual implementation of the project. Citizens were interested in how much funding from the Federal government the project would be available and how much the local governments would have to invest in terms of both taxes and bus fare increases.

- **Intermodal Connections.** Connections to alternate modes of transportation, such as park-n-rides, pedestrian walkways and bicycle compatibility was an issue for many citizens. Frequently mentioned issues included the future plan to develop a bus transfer station at Main Street Station. Several people expressed a desire to have plans for Main Street Station remain a priority in Richmond.
- **Existing GRTC Transit System.** Citizens also used the public meetings and comment forms to address overall concerns of the GRTC bus system. These comments are also included in the summary of comments presented in Chapter 3.

#### 4.0 SUMMARY OF AGENCY SCOPING PROCESS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

Agency scoping letters that introduced the project and provided a map to detail the study area were mailed to 71 local, state, and federal agencies to solicit input to the project and environmental assessment. A sample letter and detailed listing of the agencies that received the letter are included in Appendix F. To date, seven replies have been received. These letters are also included in Appendix F. The comments received and responses to each are detailed below.

**TABLE 4-1: SUMMARY OF AGENCY COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

Agency	Comments	Response
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After review of the project location with regard to HUD properties and activities, the Richmond Field office can find no impact as a result of GRTC's proposed action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment noted. Thank you for the input.</li> </ul>
U.S. Department of Interior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the project description, it appears that no impacts to federally listed species or designated habitat will occur.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This information will be accounted for in the Environmental Assessment.</li> </ul>
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the scope of the proposed action and distance to resources, it does not appear that the project will adversely impact natural heritage resources or documented state-listed plants or insects.</li> <li>• No State Natural Area Preserves under DCR's jurisdiction are located in the project vicinity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This information will be accounted for in the Environmental Assessment.</li> </ul>
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality – Air Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the following regulations when assessing the environmental impact of the project: 9 VAC 5-40-5600 et seq. – Opening Burning and 9 VAC 5-50-60 et seq. – Fugitive Dust Emissions.</li> <li>• Since the project is located in an ozone maintenance area, all precautions must be exercised to restrict emissions of VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> during project execution.</li> <li>• The project may have to be considered for transportation conformity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These regulations and information will be accounted for in the Environmental Assessment.</li> <li>• The project is included in the region's constrained long range transportation plan and has already been accounted for in the regional conformity analysis.</li> </ul>
Virginia Department of Health – Office of Drinking Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are minimal impacts to public drinking water sources from this project.</li> <li>• No drinking water wells are located within a mile of the project.</li> <li>• One public surface water intake is located within 2 miles of the western terminus of the project (City of Richmond, James River Intake) and is upgradient of the terminus.</li> <li>• The project is located within the water intake drainage area for the City of Newport News/ Chickahominy River intake.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This information will be accounted for in the Environmental Assessment.</li> </ul>

Agency	Comments	Response
Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Virginia Marine Resources Commission has jurisdiction over any encroachment in, on, or over beds of the bays, ocean, streams, or creeks which are the property of the Commonwealth.</li> <li>• If any portion of the project involves encroachments channelward of ordinary high water along natural rivers and streams above the fall line or mean low water below the fall line, a permit may be required from our agency.</li> <li>• Any jurisdictional impacts will be reviewed by VRMC during the Joint Application process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of the potential for impacts to waters of the Commonwealth will be included in the Environmental Assessment. If potential impacts are identified, GRTC and DRPT will initiate coordination with VRMC as required.</li> </ul>
Henrico County Department of Public Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any proposed structures could pose potential conflicts with County water or sewer lines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment noted. The potential for utility impacts will be investigated in detail as if the project proceeds from conceptual design into preliminary engineering.</li> </ul>

## 5.0 RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

For this report, each comment was reviewed and summarized to capture the substance of the issues raised. Similar comments have been grouped together by subject as follows:

- Purpose and Need for Proposed Action
- Alternatives Analysis
  - Guideway
  - Stations
  - Alignment
  - Light Rail and Street Cars
  - Intermodal Connections
- Funding
- Public Involvement
- Environmental Assessment
- General GRTC System Comments
  - Current GRTC System
  - Future GRTC System
- Other Comments

### 5.1 Purpose and Need for Proposed Action

**Comment:** A bus is supposed to provide frequent, multiple stops. Not everyone wants or needs to ride all the way from Willow Lawn to Rocketts Landing with no stops at places like VCU, Kroger, MCV etc. How does BRT provide for those patrons, including those who are not able to walk from one bus stop to another?

**Response:** *The Broad Street Rapid Transit Study will provide approximately 10-16 intermediate stops between Willow Lawn and Rocketts Landing to serve key destinations such as VCU and MCV. The new BRT line will have fewer stops than the current local service offered by the Route 6. However,*



*the new BRT line is not meant to replace local service along Broad Street. System users will still be able to transfer between the BRT line and the other local routes at locations along Broad Street.*

*Further, the exact number of BRT stops is currently being studied to determine the number that best supports the project's goals of improved regional and local mobility, support for economic development, support for livable, transit-oriented development, best return on public investment, and optimal environmental quality.*

**Comment:** The overall concept of the BRT system for Richmond is still unclear. Is a goal of the project to force travelers to switch from personal vehicles to transit by reducing available parking and removing travel lanes? The user benefits of BRT over what currently exists are not clearly defined.

**Response:** *Two of the key goals of the project are to improve local and regional mobility in Richmond and to create a multi-modal transportation system with attractive travel choices. The current study will help to determine if the introduction of BRT would result in improved regional and corridor mobility through reductions in travel times and more frequent service along the corridor. This study will assess the potential for BRT to increase transit ridership, improve transit service and reliability, decrease travel times, and support higher density land uses along the corridor. Another important objective of the study is to promote transit use among choice riders by making transit service in the corridor competitive with the private automobile.*

**Comment:** Richmond is in the midst of creating TOD land use areas in developments such as Rocketts Landing but still suffers from sprawl. In order for TOD to be successful, the entire transit system needs improvement. Rapid transit along the Broad Street corridor will go a long way in addressing those needs.

**Response:** *Comment noted. Thank you for your support.*

**Comment:** Changes need to be made to the way the current bus system operates on Broad Street. Due to their size buses often make lane changes that can cause traffic to come to a complete standstill. In addition to lane changes the buses stop very frequently, blocking the right lane. This causes the three lanes of traffic to squeeze into two.

**Response:** *This situation illustrates one of the key needs for this project. The existing bus lanes are relatively narrow and do not accommodate the width of a standard GRTC bus. The buses encroach on adjacent through lanes, causing vehicles in these lanes to slow down and wait for buses to move or encroach on the next adjacent lane to get around the buses. Further exacerbating the situation, cars are illegally parked in the bus lanes. This makes it difficult for the existing fleet of buses to navigate around parked cars and other buses and negates the benefits to transit service by forcing buses back into general traffic lanes.*

**Comment:** Why does GRTC need to conduct an additional study for a BRT route? An express Route 6 can still reduce overall route traffic on Broad by linking other routes in the same manner expressed in the BRT study without the need for tax dollars to be spent. Several studies have already been completed on the same subject but results have yet to be seen.

**Response:** *The benefits of a lower cost alternative such as the express service cited above will be studied as a part of the Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit Study. This alternative is called the Baseline Alternative and represents the best that can be done without a major capital investment.*

**Comment:** This BRT system is reactionary to the increased density downtown. Part of its function should be to encourage more economic development along the corridor. There are other demographics that would better utilize enhanced transit than the Broad Street corridor.

**Response:** *In part this is true. Providing high-capacity transit facilities at locations where existing and future land uses make them mutually supportive of economic development and livable, transit-oriented development in the corridor is a priority. The project is also intended to improve local and regional mobility by addressing transit reliability and performance, decreasing travel times, and improving access to the regional transit network. As a part of the study, each alternative will be assessed for its potential to encourage economic development and its effect on land use and demographics.*

**Comment:** This is a bad idea that will hurt all businesses in Shockoe Bottom in favor of GRTC that only consumes tax dollars. Any project that generates heavy bus traffic would spoil historical aspects of the neighborhood. The project team must also consider the economic potential of developing neighborhoods and ensure BRT does not work to their detriment.

**Response:** *As a part of the Study, GRTC and DRPT will study the potential to both historic resources and neighborhoods along the entire study corridor; this includes Shockoe Bottom.*

## 5.2 Alternatives Analysis

### 5.2.1 Guideway

**Comment:** Bus lanes seem like they will produce more car traffic in the remaining travel lanes and be an eyesore for automobile drivers, especially during hours the buses are not running often. Travelers visiting the region will have difficulty navigating bus-only lanes. Plus, enforcing dedicated lanes for bus travel along Main Street seems impossible given current traffic patterns and road geometry. It would require the loss of all on-street parking; essential to the success of retail and commercial businesses.

**Response:** *Thank you for your input. The effect that bus lanes will have on traffic conditions on Broad Street will be studied in detail as a part of the Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Assessment being conducted for the study. Impacts such as the reduction in the roadway capacity and possible reduction in the amount of on-street parking will be studied in detail. Detailed studies of a possible guideway and changes to the existing cross-section will also be conducted to determine how a guideway might fit on the roadway and where the roadway cross section would need to be standardized to avoid conflicts.*

**Comment:** If BRT is going to be a premium bus service for Richmond, then it makes sense that dedicated lanes be provided in order to make the system more visible to current and potential riders. Will these dedicated lanes reduce the amount of overall real estate needed for GRTC operation?

**Response:** *Comment noted. Recommendations for how GRTC operates buses on Broad Street will result from this study. However, local bus service would still be provided along Broad Street and buses would need to utilize Broad Street to connect to their routes even with BRT service.*

**Comment:** In terms of preference for side or center running buses, it seems that a better distinction can be made between BRT and local buses through the use of center lanes. Center lanes are also preferred in order to leave the option of a future conversion to light rail or street car systems.

**Response:** *Comment noted. Thank you for your input.*

**Comment:** GRTC should consider how the medians will look for each of the build alternatives. They should be a positive influence to the overall aesthetic along the corridor. If the BRT system uses the dedicated lanes build alternative, what is envisioned for the median?

**Response:** *If BRT utilizes the median for a dedicated guideway, the curb and/or plantings that are present would be eliminated. As a part of the Environmental Assessment, changes and potential impacts to the visual and aesthetic conditions along Broad Street will be studied.*

### 5.2.2 Stations

**Comment:** Current riders depend on the consistency of the bus route in order to have continuity in their daily lives. Shop and restaurant owners are reliant on the influx of customers through existing bus stops. It is important that local stops that exist now are not changed due to the new BRT system.

**Response:** *The BRT service being studied would not replace all local bus service on Broad Street. As a part of the Environmental Assessment, potential impacts to local businesses and land use will be considered in detail.*

**Comment:** GRTC already has local bus stops serving the Broad Street corridor. What is envisioned for BRT stations in this project and to what degree will stations be produced during this project? Will they include structures or just signs? Will they be different from local bus stops to distinguish service from local bus service?

**Response:** *As the study proceeds, station prototypes will be developed. The size and scale of these stations will be developed to take into account the surrounding land use and the number of people who use the bus stop each day and during the peak hours. The stations will include specialized branding to distinguish them from the local bus stops (i.e., a different style of canopy and color scheme) and additional amenities (i.e., off-board fare collection, variable message boards).*

**Comment:** The BRT system could serve more potential riders if the stations were away from busier intersections and closer to connecting neighborhoods. For example, the Malvern/Westwood stop could be further east, closer to Hamilton to serve that corridor as well as the Malvern/Westwood corridor.

**Response:** *The locations of the stations will be refined as the study proceeds to ensure the best connections with existing and future planned land use and to best serve the origins and destinations within the corridor. More detailed recommendations for station locations will be presented at the next set of public meetings.*

### 5.2.3 Alignment

**Comment:** 17<sup>th</sup> Street is the worst choice for a north/south connector between Main and Broad. It is narrow, made of cobblestone and divided by the Farmer's Market. It is one of the most pedestrian friendly and commercially viable streets in the region. Consider 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> instead as they would both serve major work centers and are wider streets with more parking.

**Response:** *Given the likelihood of impacts of BRT traffic on 17th Street, it was decided that this option to access Main Street from Broad Street would be dropped from further consideration. The project team is current studying access between Broad Street and Main Street through one of the*

*ways: 8th/9th Street, 14th Street, 21th Street, and 25th Street. These options will be studied further over the next few months and results will be reported at the next set of public meetings.*

**Comment:** The Shockoe Bottom Neighborhood Association supports the modernization of the routes, vehicles and creating a system that will encourage all of our citizens to use bus transportation by providing more direct and efficient service but cannot support any system that uses 17<sup>th</sup> street as a main north/south connector. This is the street most identified with Richmond's oldest neighborhood and bus traffic would eliminate our summer events, parking and would do great harm to our most pedestrian friendly street.

**Response:** *Given the likelihood of impacts of BRT traffic on 17th Street, it was decided that this option to access Main Street from Broad Street would be dropped from further consideration. The project team is current studying access between Broad Street and Main Street through one of the ways: 8th/9th Street, 14th Street, 21th Street, and 25th Street. These options will be studied further over the next few months and results will be reported at the next set of public meetings.*

**Comment:** Restricting the BRT route to only serving the Broad Street corridor is a detriment to the system and will not serve as many customers as possible. Another proposal is to consider a loop system. Ideas include traveling west to Libbie Avenue, south to Grove Avenue, East on Grove to Hamilton and then back to Broad to meet up with the main line and a loop bounded by Broad/Belvidere or Blvd going to 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Response:** *As a part of the Richmond Regional Mass Transit Study (2008), the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (Richmond Regional Planning District Commission) conducted a detailed study of the potential growth and changes in population, employment, and land use throughout the Richmond region to develop and implement a program of regional mass transit improvements. The result of this study was a set of recommendations for new transit service and improvements to the existing transit system. The recommendations were divided into three tiers for implementation based on the corridors and modal alternatives (i.e., BRT, light rail, express bus) that would be the most likely to have supportive land use and high enough employment and population densities.*

*For the Broad Street corridor, this plan recommended both a Tier I and Tier II project to implement BRT service. The Tier I recommendation was to implement BRT from Rocketts Landing to Willow Lawn; the Tier II recommendation was that BRT service should be extended from Willow Lawn to Short Pump. The Broad Street corridor was recommended for a Tier I transit improvement project because it has the highest existing and projected population and employment densities and the most transit supportive land use in the Richmond region. BRT was recommended as the modal alternative because the land use, employment, and population projections were found unlikely to support a high enough transit ridership to justify the cost of light rail transit within the timeframe studied (2005-2031).*

**Comment:** BRT routes should continue to follow street car lines, even extending past Rocketts Landing and Willow Lawn. Rocketts Landing is not yet fully developed; Willow Lawn isn't a destination with major retail centers existing in Short Pump.

**Response:** *As a part of the Richmond Regional Mass Transit Study (2008), the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (Richmond Regional Planning District Commission) conducted a detailed study of the potential growth and changes in population, employment, and land use throughout the Richmond region to develop and implement a program of regional mass transit*

*improvements. The result of this study was a set of recommendations for new transit service and improvements to the existing transit system. The recommendations were divided into three tiers for implementation based on the corridors and modal alternatives (i.e., BRT, light rail, express bus) that would be the most likely to have supportive land use and high enough employment and population densities.*

*For the Broad Street corridor, this plan recommended both a Tier I and Tier II project to implement BRT service. The Tier I recommendation was to implement BRT from Rocketts Landing to Willow Lawn; the Tier II recommendation was that BRT service should be extended from Willow Lawn to Short Pump. The Broad Street corridor was recommended for a Tier I transit improvement project because it has the highest existing and projected population and employment densities and the most transit supportive land use in the Richmond region. BRT was recommended as the modal alternative because the land use, employment, and population projections were found unlikely to support a high enough transit ridership to justify the cost of light rail transit within the timeframe studied (2005-2031).*

*Other corridors and/or projects included in the Tier I recommendations include: airport limited stop service; commuter bus service to serve I-95 north, I-64 east, Midlothian, and Mechanicsville; enhanced bus service to Petersburg; and several new local bus routes.*

**Comment:** Too many car trips originate outside of the proposed BRT zone. BRT should replace those trips and GRTC should consider using the interstate.

**Response:** *As a part of the Richmond Regional Mass Transit Study (2008), the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (Richmond Regional Planning District Commission) conducted a detailed study of the potential growth and changes in population, employment, and land use throughout the Richmond region to develop and implement a program of regional mass transit improvements. The result of this study was a set of recommendations for new transit service and improvements to the existing transit system. The recommendations were divided into three tiers for implementation based on the corridors and modal alternatives (i.e., BRT, light rail, express bus) that would be the most likely to have supportive land use and high enough employment and population densities.*

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*Other corridors and/or projects included in the Tier I recommendations include: airport limited stop service; commuter bus service to serve I-95 north, I-64 east, Midlothian, and Mechanicsville; enhanced bus service to Petersburg; and several new local bus routes. Tier II recommendations include an extension of the Broad Street BRT to Short Pump, two commuter bus routes (I-64 West and Powhatan), as well as expanded local service in Henrico and Chesterfield counties and Mechanicsville. Tier III includes converting the Broad Street BRT into LRT, as well as commuter rail lines to Petersburg (via the I-95 North corridor), Midlothian, and the Richmond International Airport.*

**Comment:** Extending the route past Willow Lawn is a bad idea.

**Response:** *Comment noted. Thank you for your input.*

**Comment:** GRTC should look at BRT and other bus systems for ideas such as, Curitiba, Brazil; Berlin and Hamburg; Austin, TX.

**Response:** *Comment noted. The study team is familiar with these systems and many others within the United States.*

#### 5.2.4 Light Rail and Streetcars

**Comment:** If GRTC is not looking at light rail instead of BRT currently, then perhaps the BRT system should be designed for future conversion to a light rail system. If that is considered the gold standard in transit, then it makes no sense for Richmond not to pursue that option.

**Response:** *Conversion to a light rail system is possible. However, if a guideway is implemented within Broad Street and its location is determined to be the best location for a future light rail system, then the BRT service would need to be displaced so that rails and the necessary electrical system components can be installed, tested, and commissioned. This would result in a substantial impact to transit patrons and mobility in the region.*

**Comment:** Richmond was one of the first cities to employ a street car system. GRTC already follows the former street car routes. Why not bring them back? Streetcars add to the historical significance of the city and use less gas than buses.

**Response:** *Previous regional planning efforts and a Technology Assessment conducted as a part of this Study, have determined that BRT would be the most cost-effective investment for the Broad Street Corridor at the present time. Its technical attributes would allow it to address local transportation needs, support economic development plans and achieve environmental objectives, all within difficult fiscal constraints. Most importantly, the lower capital costs of BRT would make it a more competitive candidate for Small Starts funding, while offering the opportunity to phase in rail alternatives once ridership and land use in the study area warrant further investment.*

**Comment:** This transit study should not be confined to considering the two build alternatives verses the no build alternative. The study should show the cost of implementing BRT vs. implementing LRT by considering first cost comparisons, operating costs and the capacity to attract ridership.

**Response:** *A goal of this particular BRT project is to qualify for and receive federal funding from the Federal Transit Administration's Small Starts program. The lower capital costs of BRT make it a more competitive candidate for those funds. Once ridership and land uses within the area warrant further investment, the option of phasing in rail alternatives still exists.*

#### 5.2.5 Intermodal Connections

**Comment:** Park-n-Rides should be an integral component of BRT to encourage people to leave their cars and ride transit. Will the Willow Lawn Center have parking available for downtown commuters who wish to ride the rapid transit bus and will there be transportation shuttles to the financial district, i.e., the James Center from Broad Street?

**Response:** *The need for and location of park-and-ride lots will be investigated as a part of the Alternatives Analysis.*

**Comment:** Broad Street could be a major thoroughfare for cyclists if there were proper bike lanes. There are many people including VCU students and commuters that enjoy using their bicycles for purposes other than simply recreation. Proper bike lanes, with a curb separation, are crucial to reduce car use and to promote safety. BRT buses should also be capable of bike storage.

**Response:** *The addition of bicycle lanes on thoroughfares such as Broad Street is an important component of a multi-modal transportation system. However, such an alternative is not being studied as a part of the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study because it would not meet the project's purpose and need. The possibility of the buses being capable of bike storage will be investigated.*

**Comment:** Broad Street is not all that safe for pedestrian crossings. Station construction should be coupled with significant pedestrian safety improvements along the corridor.

**Response:** *As a part of the study, each station area will be assessed for the available pedestrian amenities and recommendations will be made for improvements.*

**Comment:** In order for Richmond to be a true participant in transit, any BRT system should connect to existing modes of transportation including the Amtrak station at Staples Mill and the Richmond Regional Airport.

**Response:** *As a part of the Richmond Regional Mass Transit Study (2008), the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (Richmond Regional Planning District Commission) conducted a detailed study of the potential growth and changes in population, employment, and land use throughout the Richmond region to develop and implement a program of regional mass transit improvements. The result of this study was a set of recommendations for new transit service and improvements to the existing transit system. The recommendations were divided into three tiers for implementation based on the corridors and modal alternatives (i.e., BRT, light rail, express bus) that would be the most likely to have supportive land use and high enough employment and population densities.*

*For the Broad Street corridor, this plan recommended both a Tier I and Tier II project to implement BRT service. The Tier I recommendation was to implement BRT from Rocketts Landing to Willow Lawn; the Tier II recommendation was that BRT service should be extended from Willow Lawn to Short Pump. The Broad Street corridor was recommended for a Tier I transit improvement project because it has the highest existing and projected population and employment densities and the most transit supportive land use in the Richmond region. BRT was recommended as the modal alternative because the land use, employment, and population projections were found unlikely to support a high enough transit ridership to justify the cost of light rail transit within the timeframe studied (2005-2031).*

*Other corridors and/or projects included in the Tier I recommendations include: airport limited stop service; commuter bus service to serve I-95 north, I-64 east, Midlothian, and Mechanicsville; enhanced bus service to Petersburg; and several new local bus routes. Tier II recommendations include an extension of the Broad Street BRT to Short Pump, two commuter bus routes (I-64 West and Powhatan), as well as expanded local service in Henrico and Chesterfield counties and Mechanicsville. Tier III includes converting the Broad Street BRT into LRT, as well as commuter rail lines to Petersburg (via the I-95 North corridor), Midlothian, and the Richmond International Airport.*

*In the long term, increased high speed rail service is designated to serve Main Street Station. The Broad Street Rapid Transit Study plans a station to serve Main Street Station to offer an intermodal connection.*

**Comment:** The City of Richmond and surrounding jurisdictions have issued studies to enhance public transportation and alleviate traffic congestion throughout the area. The emphasis has been on bus transportation and high-speed (higher speed) rail service along the Mid-Atlantic corridor, concentrating between Washington and Richmond. In the Richmond area, GRTC is missing the trees for the forest as they appear to be proposing to improve the flow of traffic with larger buses and dedicated bus lanes with fewer local stops.

**Response:** *A balanced transit system uses a hierarchy of modes to connect large numbers of riders to diverse destinations, ranging from a single family home to a regional employment center. In order to do that efficiently, transit systems use feeder services and high capacity trunk lines. Feeder services deliver passengers from neighborhoods to high-demand corridors where they transfer to high-capacity trunk lines.*

*Currently, Richmond's primary transit service is local bus. The Broad Street Rapid Transit Study is studying how introducing a trunk line on Broad Street, the region's highest demand corridor, would benefit the region. Trunk lines aren't characterized solely by high-capacity service; they also feature high-frequency, high-quality service. To that end, the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study is evaluating improvements such as dedicated lanes and stop consolidation in order to reduce travel time and increase reliability.*

*Viewed within this hierarchy, a trunk line on Broad Street would also potentially be a feeder system into another higher capacity form of transit: high speed rail. With a stop at Main Street Station, BRT service on Broad Street could speed passengers from cities along the East Coast to major destinations along Broad Street, or to a transfer point with a local bus serving one of Richmond's many residential neighborhoods.*

### 5.3 Funding

**Comment:** What percentage of funding needs to be locally matched? How much will the system cost and where is that money coming from? Have potential changes to ticket fares and other price changes been evaluated? What is that projected increase? In meeting materials, alternative costs are listed at \$54.5 million. Which build option does that represent? Is there a critical timeline for funding options?

**Response:** *For a Smalls Starts project, the total project cost must be less than \$250 million with a maximum federal share of \$75 million. At this point in the study, the alternatives under study are not yet defined enough to fully understand what they will cost. As we continue the study and know more about which BRT components will be included in the alternatives, we will be developing a capital cost estimate. Changes to ticket fares will be considered but may not be necessary.*

**Comment:** As Richmond and GRTC get closer to the Small Starts application later in 2010, it is crucial that they do all that they can to market the region and the new service as dynamic, transformative and unique.

**Response:** *Comment noted. Thank you for your support and input.*

**Comment:** GRTC should avoid costly federal transportation studies and issue a state bond referendum.



*Response: Comment noted. However, GRTC does not have this authority.*

#### 5.4 Public Involvement

**Comment:** Please consider the diversity of locations for public meetings. Places like the visitor's center and train stations could be potential meeting places.

*Response: Comment noted. Additional meeting locations will be explored prior to the next set of public meetings.*

**Comment:** When and how does the public (business and property owners, existing and potential riders) stay informed? The notice for the meetings regarding the planning for Broad St. transit service should also be hung on the bus stop signs at least along Broad Street, and posted in the buses themselves. The public has had very little time and notice to digest information and plan to attend meetings.

*Response: The public can stay informed in a variety of ways. The project team developed a website (<http://study.ridegrtc.com/>) where information about the study is posted and updated as additional data and reports are developed. Also, two additional sets of public meetings will be held at key milestones in the study process to obtain public input on the alternatives being studied, potential station locations, and the findings of the environmental assessment.*

*As documented in Chapter 1 of this report, the notice for the public meetings included advertising at bus stops and on buses in the Broad Street corridor.*

**Comment:** Stop the veil of secrecy and start open dialog with not only the City of Richmond but the entire Metro area. Get people involved by more than this blog and two public meetings.

*Response: The City of Richmond is an active partner for this project and is fully represented on our Technical Advisory and Policy Advisory committees by their Executive Administrator, Director of Community Development, and key Transportation Planners from the Department of Public Works. In addition to the City's involvement, GRTC and DRPT have been actively coordinating with Henrico County, VCU, the Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau, Greater Richmond Chamber, Greater Richmond Partnership, Venture Richmond, Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization), and VDOT.*

*Further, two additional sets of public meetings are planned to involve the public and obtain additional feedback as the projects proceed. Meetings with individual stakeholder groups are also planned as more details regarding station areas become available to obtain input.*

#### 5.5 Environmental Assessment

**Comment:** Please avoid locating a transfer station at the base of a hill where vapors, noise and vibration would travel uphill quickly.

*Response: The bus transfer station is the subject of a separate study being conducted by GRTC. The Broad Street Rapid Transit Study is being conducted to investigate improvements to transit service along the Broad Street Corridor and includes study of bus rapid transit and the addition of new bus stations for this service.*

**Comment:** Richmond is a heavily historical city. Larger buses crowding the streets and distracting from historical buildings, causing more air pollution and vibration issues will ruin the character of the city.

**Response:** *An Environmental Assessment will be completed to study both the benefits and impacts associated with the project. Potential effects to historic resources, air quality, noise and vibration will be studied in detail as a part of this Assessment.*

**Comment:** Bus stations really need to have benches, shelters, trashcans, and perhaps trees to help Broad Street look more inviting for pedestrians.

**Response:** *The BRT stations will have additional amenities over what is currently provided at the existing GRTC bus stops.*

**Comment:** Buses in US past were electric with overhead wires. This project should look at options to power buses other than gas. If new buses are being purchased they should be energy efficient or use alternative energy. Buses that are too large will only make the city less friendly in appearance.

**Response:** *The buses for this project will not be powered with overhead electric wires. This technology would add additional capital costs to the project that would increase the total project cost to a level that will not be considered cost effective by the Federal Transit Administration. Federal grant money is critical to making this project a reality.*

**Comment:** I think the environmental benefits of this project will be far greater than any potential concerns or negative impacts.

**Response:** *Comment noted. An Environmental Assessment will be completed to study both the benefits and impacts associated with the project.*

## 5.6 General GRTC System Comments

### 5.6.1 Current GRTC System

**Comment:** Replace some of the current, less crowded buses with some smaller models. Jitney type buses may be cheaper to operate and would hopefully run more often.

**Response:** *In addition to periodically replacing our traditional city buses, GRTC is diversifying their fleet to include more neighborhood friendly "mini" buses. Currently, GRTC has purchased eight of these vehicles. They will be used along routes with smaller capacity requirements and those that travel through neighborhoods.*

**Comment:** Tell VCU to use the regular GRTC buses. In cities with public transit systems, public high school students frequently ride public transit/ buses instead of school buses to school. Why not here in Richmond?

**Response:** *GRTC has periodically worked with the City of Richmond regarding the concept of GRTC providing transit services for high schools students. To date, an agreement has not been reached. The main issue with this service concept is the fact that GRTC, unlike larger urban areas, does not have the budget available to increase service levels along routes that currently provide service near all of the City schools to the level that would be needed to deliver students to school by the morning bell and to bring them home in the afternoon at the dismissal bell.*

**Comment:** General signage for all GRTC bus routes can be improved with electronic arrival boards, signs indicating which routes are served by that stop. Schedules should also be clearer and on the web to aid in trip planning for daily riders as well as those trying to gain access to Amtrak and the airport. The system, as it stands, is difficult to figure out and GRTC customer service is lacking.

**Response:** *GRTC is currently in the process of significantly improving all of its bus stop signage throughout the service area. Under this initiative, the most heavily used stops will receive kiosks with real-time messaging capability that will let passengers know when the next bus will arrive. Other bus stops will be replaced with stop signage indicating the routes that service each stop. In the near future, all users will have the ability to access real time tracking information for their bus via the web and hand held devices.*

**Comment:** I hope this city/county can get things right as far as mass transportation is concerned. I'm using it right now, and I am not pleased with the service at all. GRTC should work on making the current system more user friendly before adding an additional service.

**Response:** *GRTC is currently in the process of developing tools to make using the system more user friendly. The provision of real-time bus tracking information, pocket sized schedules, and enhanced bus stop signage are signs of the system's commitment to make riding the bus easier.*

**Comment:** GRTC needs to lower their prices and add transfer capabilities to their regular fares.

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

**Comment:** Please ask bus drivers to turn the heat blowers on the buses down to 1/2, within 30 minutes of starting their first run, and to turn on the lights in the busses so patrons can read while they ride.

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

**Comment:** Ensure drivers see the passenger showing their Medicare Card, and enter the correct amount.

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

## 5.6.2 Future GRTC System

**Comment:** Get Hanover, Fredericksburg, and Henrico on the GRTC board.

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

**Comment:** GRTC needs to look at expanding their footprint into the counties and offer more mid-day commuter buses, a local circulator type bus or frequent shuttles to areas like the financial district and the VAMC.

**Response:** *Although GRTC regularly tries to work with the surrounding jurisdictions regarding the provision of public transit, the company can only provide bus service under the authorization and funding support of individual localities*

**Comment:** Keep Main Street Transfer station as a priority. Richmond needs a centralized transportation hub to increase local ridership and ridership between other cities.

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

**Comment:** With any transfer station you create, please add retail opportunities so people can take care of daily errands as part of their commutes – another way to save energy and money (transit-oriented development).

**Response:** *Comment noted.*

**Comment:** Why is GRTC continuing to pursue Main Street Station as a transfer center after Mayor Jones has instructed GRTC to find another site?

**Response:** *The BRT study and the Main Street Station study are different entities and can move forward independently from each other. GRTC is committed to developing the best possible bus system and continues to explore options to achieve that goal.*

## 5.7 Other Comments

**Comment:** We need to be promoting proper density areas and reducing parking requirements so that transit can and will be supported.

**Response:** *The allowances for density and parking within the study corridor are within the jurisdiction of the City of Richmond and Henrico County.*

**Comment:** I am a retired Parking Operator with prior experience in traffic engineering. I would like to volunteer to work on your project.

**Response:** *Comment noted. Thank you for your interest in the project.*

**Comment:** Please replace the warped asphalt at Broad and Lombardi with concrete.

**Response:** *Comment noted. We will pass your comment on to the City of Richmond representatives on our Technical Advisory Board.*

**Appendices Content:**

- A. Public Meeting Notification Materials
  - 1. Study website screen capture
  - 2. Newspaper Advertisements
  - 3. E-mail Announcements
  - 4. Bus shelter posters
  - 5. Press Releases
  - 6. News Coverage Summary
  - 7. Listing of News Organizations that Received Information
  - 8. Property Owner Notification Letter
  - 9. Flyer
  - 10. Environmental Justice & Special Targeted Outreach
- B. Sign-in Sheets
- C. Copy of Presentation
- D. Copy of Display Boards
- E. Handouts (Comment Card, Fact Sheet)
- F. Agency Scoping Letters (Distribution List, Outgoing Letter, Incoming Letters)
- G. Public Comments (not included on public distribution versions)