

JET TASK FORCE
Transportation Working Group Report Outline
December 2014 (DRAFT)

I. Executive Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

In April 2014, Mayor Michael B. Coleman appointed the Jobs, Expansion and Transportation (JET) Task Force to enhance and leverage the Port Columbus airport as an economic hub and the center of transportation for the region. The JET Task Force is comprised of three working groups: Air services, economic development, and transportation. This report summarizes the work of the JET transportation working group, which consists of leaders from Franklin County, the cities of Columbus, Gahanna, and Whitehall, and leaders from the airport authority, economic development and transportation sectors.

Areas of Inquiry

The group's work focused on five areas of inquiry. Each area of inquiry resulted in a series of key findings, from which the group based short and long term recommendations. These areas were as follows:

- ❖ Area of Inquiry No. 1: Creating multiple transportation choices in the airport area with a regional multimodal transportation hub at or near Port Columbus.
- ❖ Area of Inquiry No. 2: Improving connections between the airport area, regional employment centers (such as OSU, Downtown, Easton) and beyond.
- ❖ Area of Inquiry No. 3: Providing a rail connection between Port Columbus and Downtown.
- ❖ Area of Inquiry No. 4: Sustaining the JET Task Force's transportation recommendations over time.
- ❖ Area of Inquiry No. 5: Identify ways to finance the multimodal facility and rail connection between Downtown and the airport.

Key Findings

The transportation working group studied 17 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) to assess their mobility choices, including light rail connections between airports and downtowns, and whether these communities have a multimodal center similar to that envisioned by the JET Task Force. Below are the key findings from the working group's research. For a full set of findings by area of inquiry, please see Section III of this report.

- ❖ The insight2050 project by MORPC, Columbus2020, and ULI-Columbus indicates long-term demographic shifts and market changes with implications for the region's transportation infrastructure. Key findings show continued strong overall population growth, particularly in the senior and young adult segments. This has implications for both the demands on and nature of transportation systems.
- ❖ An airport to downtown light rail connection typically is part of a larger light rail system that connects the airport to key employment centers within the region as well as the downtown.
- ❖ The construction of the first line in a light rail system is generally the most expensive one. This is due to costs associated with the construction of a maintenance yard and other operating costs.
- ❖ To ensure connectivity, a local light rail system should be designed in consideration of the Columbus to Chicago passenger rail project, and other passenger rail efforts such as the Ohio Hub.
- ❖ Locating multimodal facilities near or within airport property is an innovative approach in the U.S. Only two of the case studies featured this type of facility near the airport (Minneapolis and Orlando). The most impressive of the two was the Orlando one (facility is in the final planning phase).
- ❖ Importance of building strong Public-Private Partnerships, and developing a successful approach to creating P3s.
- ❖ Importance of gaining support from private sector stakeholders, such as major retailers and employers.

Key Recommendations

Based on the work completed, the JET transportation working group has developed a set of recommendations for each area of inquiry. Key recommendations are summarized below. For a complete list of the recommendations for each area of inquiry, please see section III: "Findings and Recommendations" of this report.

Short Term:

- ❖ Recommend COTA incorporate JET Task Force findings into future service plans and in the upcoming NextGeneration study.
- ❖ Provide direct COTA bus service by 2016 from Downtown to the airport (as addressed in the Transit Service Review).
- ❖ Collaborate with City of Columbus staff working on the Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan to plan for the improvement of key streets and transit routes in and around the study area.
- ❖ Ensure that regional and local bikeway plans consider connectivity through and to the airport area.
- ❖ Collaborate with MORPC staff working on the Regional Thoroughfare Plan to ensure JET Task Force recommendations are reflected in this plan, where appropriate.
- ❖ Collaborate with Whitehall and Gahanna to ensure that necessary multimodal infrastructure improvements enhance connectivity to and through the airport area.
- ❖ Identify the best location for a multimodal facility (preliminary work underway through the Loop Road Study Addendum).
- ❖ Explore two potential fixed guideway corridors from Downtown to the airport area: One featuring light rail using a combination of light rail and street corridors and the second commuter rail using the existing rail freight corridor (underway, via the Loop Study Addendum).
- ❖ Establish a strategy to preserve corridor options through such means as maintaining key right-of-ways and design needs of future infrastructure improvements (such as bridge clearance heights, etc).
- ❖ Identify and fund an organization or staff person who would be responsible for convening the team and moving the JET Task Force recommendations forward, including:
 - Formalizing a partnership working group for the Port Columbus area's infrastructure and development coordination
 - Establishing an annual work program
- ❖ Create and implement a strategy for public coordination with private sector leadership on regional transit corridor development, with key initial focus on developing a corridor connecting Downtown with the airport area. Collaborate with Community leaders in prioritizing the initiatives with Columbus Partnership, Columbus 2020, and other community organizations to seek creative means to fund the additional studies necessary to advance projects.

Long Term:

- ❖ Improve critical airport area corridors and intersections, such as those listed below, to include access management, streetscapes, and accommodations for walking, transit and biking:
 - 5th Avenue
 - Hamilton Road
 - Cassidy Avenue
 - 5th Avenue at Stelzer Road
 - Fifth Avenue at Hamilton Road
 - James Road at Johnstown Road
- ❖ Develop a strategy to encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD) along key corridors as identified above.
- ❖ Maximize development and redevelopment potential generated by implementation of any emerging rail system through TOD in proximity to station locations.
- ❖ Develop a fixed guideway transit corridor from the airport to Downtown as part of a larger multimodal and regional transportation system (via COTA's NextGeneration plan and other planning documents).
- ❖ Preserve the transit corridor right-of-way connecting the airport to Downtown Columbus and key employment centers.
- ❖ Develop a regional multimodal center in the airport area with direct connections to the airport terminal and key employment centers.
- ❖ Approach Greyhound and other intercity bus services to discuss the relocation of the Downtown bus terminal to a future multimodal center at or near the airport.
- ❖ Approach car-for-hire services regarding their potential participation in a multimodal center in the airport area.
- ❖ Incorporate intercity passenger rail (commuter and high performance rail) connection(s) to the regional multimodal transportation system.
- ❖ Establish an airport area marketing plan. A component of this plan will focus on securing private sector buy-in/support.
- ❖ Identify funding sources to advance the viability of this connection and utilize regional analytical tools like insight2050 to assess overall community impacts and development benefits.
- ❖ Look at potential role of public-private partnerships in funding transportation systems, particularly as in conjunction with development opportunities.
- ❖ Establish public and private partnerships to seek long term financing for both capital and the on-going operating costs for these projects.
- ❖ Incorporate this report's recommendations into future planning documents. The organization or staff person assigned is to provide input into any future planning documents relevant to the JET Task Force study area to incorporate the recommendations of this report, when applicable.

II. Administration

The JET transportation working group was assembled in May 2014 and tasked with providing the JET Task Force with recommendations on the viability of a regional multimodal center at or near the airport, as well as a light rail connection between Downtown and the airport.

The group met for an hour and a half bi-weekly between May and November and was composed of the following members:

William Murdock, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
(chair)
Jolene Molitoris, US Rail Car (co-chair)
Kacey Brankamp, Create Columbus (co-chair)
Steve Campbell, City of Columbus
Jonathan Pittman, City of Columbus
Vince Papsidero, City of Columbus
Kevin Wheeler, City of Columbus
Jennifer Gallagher, City of Columbus
Randy Bowman, City of Columbus
Michael Sexton, City of Columbus
Matthew Brown, Franklin County
Erik Janas, Franklin County
Jennifer Teal, City of Gahanna
Ray Ogden, City of Whitehall
Tory Richardson, Columbus Region Airport Authority (CRAA)
David Wall, CRAA
Michael Bradley, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
Thea Walsh, MORPC
Dina López, MORPC

The working group's research approach consisted of the following tasks:

- ❖ Review of city plans and other planning documents in effect with relevance to the airport area.
- ❖ Presentation from COTA regarding existing services, relevant transit planning initiatives, and the need to demonstrate cost-effectiveness in order to be considered for federal funding. The presentation also included discussion of potential connections (via the Panhandle line, as well as a combination of rail and street corridors).

- ❖ Presentation from ORDC and Genesee & Wyoming regarding the Panhandle rail line.
- ❖ MORPC presentation on the Columbus to Chicago passenger rail initiative.
- ❖ Review of existing transportation infrastructure in the airport area to assess its connectivity to the rest of the city via multiple transportation modes.
- ❖ The group researched 17 case studies, two of which featured multimodal facilities near the airport (Memphis, Orlando). Emphasis was given to discussing funding structures in each case study.
- ❖ Telephone interview regarding Memphis multimodal facility. History of Greyhound moving from downtown to the new facility was discussed. Greyhound was partner in the construction of the facility.
- ❖ Specifically looked at each case study featuring a light rail system to see if a downtown to the airport light rail connection was present, and if so, which phase of the light rail system development it was built in.
- ❖ Telephone interview with Memphis Area Transit Authority's John Lancaster, one of the main project managers who brought the Memphis multimodal center near the airport to fruition. This included discussion of how MATA engaged Greyhound to move the bus terminal from downtown Memphis to the new multimodal facility. This resulted in Greyhound became a partner in the construction of the facility.
- ❖ Consideration of planning studies underway through which to advance the multimodal regional hub as well as the Downtown to airport light rail connection (The Airport Loop Study, COTA's NextGeneration Plan, City of Columbus Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan, etc).

III. Findings and Recommendations

While the key findings have been included in the Executive Summary of this report, the JET transportation working group developed a number of detailed findings as well as short and long term recommendations for each of the five areas of inquiry, as outlined below.

Area of Inquiry No. 1: Creating multiple transportation choices in the airport area with a regional multimodal transportation hub at or near Port Columbus.

Findings

- ❖ No current direct bus or rail transit connection between Downtown and the airport.
- ❖ Some existing and planned bike paths exist in the area.
- ❖ A permitting process is currently being created by the airport to allow rideshare services such as Uber.
- ❖ The airport area has rail access, currently being operated by Genessee & Wyoming for short line freight movements.

- ❖ Locating multimodal facilities near or within airport property is an innovative approach in the U.S. Only two of the case studies featured this type of facility. Orlando's, currently in the final planning phase, was particularly noteworthy.
- ❖ The telephone interview relating to the Memphis multimodal facility, conducted with John Lancaster from the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA), informed the working group on how Greyhound became engaged (eventually becoming a financial partner) in moving from downtown to the new facility near the airport.
- ❖ The insight2050 project by MORPC, Columbus2020, and ULI-Columbus indicates long-term demographic shifts and market changes with implications for the region's transportation infrastructure. Key findings show continued strong population growth, particularly in the senior and young adult segments. This has implications for both the demands on and nature of transportation systems. For example, Millennials have a preference for a larger number of transportation choices, particularly transit choices.

Short Term Recommendations

- ❖ Provide direct COTA bus service by 2016 from Downtown to the airport (as addressed in the Transit Service Review).
- ❖ Recommend COTA incorporate JET Task Force findings into future service plans and in the upcoming NextGeneration study.
- ❖ Conduct a walkability assessment to identify needed improvements (pedestrian connectivity).
- ❖ Collaborate with City of Columbus staff working on the Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan to plan for the improvement of key streets and transit routes in and around the study area.
- ❖ Ensure that regional and local bikeway plans consider connectivity through and to the airport area.
- ❖ Collaborate with MORPC staff working on the Regional Thoroughfare Plan to ensure JET Task Force recommendations are reflected in this plan, where appropriate.
- ❖ Collaborate with Whitehall and Gahanna to ensure that necessary multimodal infrastructure improvements enhance connectivity to and through the airport area.
- ❖ Identify the best location for a multimodal facility (preliminary work underway through the Loop Road Study Addendum).
- ❖ Identify key Central Ohio employment centers that will be the focus of connectivity improvements with the airport.
- ❖ Identify key corridors linking the airport to key employment centers, and develop an approach to preserve the corridor right-of-ways.

- ❖ Consider employment centers' connectivity through studies such as COTA's NextGeneration plan and to ensure employee and operations needs of defense related employers in the airport area (i.e. DSCC).
- ❖ Collaborate with Columbus 2020 to ensure the Columbus Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) incorporates the JET Task Force's key findings and recommendations.
- ❖ Collaborate with City of Columbus staff working on the Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan to plan for the improvement of key corridors (5th Avenue, Stelzer Road, Hamilton Road, James Road, Cassidy Avenue and Johnstown Road).

Long Term Recommendations

- ❖ Develop a regional multimodal center in the airport area with direct connections to the airport terminal and employment centers.
- ❖ Establish a timeline with a phased approach to achieve multiple mobility choices.
- ❖ Approach Greyhound and other intercity bus services (i.e. Megabus, GoBus, etc.) to discuss the relocation of the downtown bus terminal to a future multimodal center at or near the airport.
- ❖ Approach car-for-hire services (such as Car2Go, Uber, and the Vehicle-for-hire Board) regarding their potential participation in a multimodal center in the airport area.
- ❖ Incorporate new technology and best practices for multimodal planning and implementation of multimodal connectivity projects
- ❖ Develop a partnership with Ohio research universities and institutions to incorporate technological advancements into multimodal facility design.
- ❖ Incorporate this report's recommendations into future planning documents, when applicable.

Area of Inquiry No. 2: Improving connections between the airport area, regional employment centers (such as OSU, Downtown Columbus, Rickenbacker) and beyond.

Findings

- ❖ Recognized that the airport to Downtown light rail connection needs to be part of a larger light rail system that connects the airport to key employment centers within the region as well as the Downtown.
- ❖ Consideration of the Columbus to Chicago passenger rail, and other passenger rail efforts such as the Ohio Hub, need to be considered as alternatives for a light rail connection between Downtown and the airport continue.

Short Term Recommendations

- ❖ Identify key Central Ohio employment centers that will be the focus of connectivity improvements with the airport.
- ❖ Identify key corridors linking the airport to key employment centers, and develop an approach to preserve the corridor right-of-ways.
- ❖ Consider employment centers' connectivity through studies such as COTA's NextGeneration plan and to ensure employee and operations needs of defense related employers in the airport area (i.e. DSCC).
- ❖ Collaborate with Columbus 2020 to ensure the Columbus Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) incorporates the JET Task Force's key findings and recommendations.
- ❖ Collaborate with City of Columbus staff working on the Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan to plan for the improvement of key corridors (5th Avenue, Stelzer Road, Hamilton Road, James Road, Cassidy Avenue and Johnstown Road).

Long Term Recommendations

- ❖ Incorporate intercity passenger rail (commuter and high performance rail) connection(s) to the regional multimodal transportation system.
- ❖ Improve critical airport area corridors and intersections, such as those listed below, to include access management, streetscapes, and accommodations for walking, transit and biking:
 - 5th Avenue
 - Hamilton Road
 - Cassidy Avenue
 - 5th Avenue at Stelzer Road
 - Fifth Avenue at Hamilton Road
 - James Road at Johnstown Road
- ❖ Create Transit Oriented Development (TOD) strategies to implement in key corridors as identified above.
- ❖ Preserve the right-of-ways of corridors to key employment centers.
- ❖ Identify funding sources to support recommendations.

Area of Inquiry No. 3: Providing a rail connection between Port Columbus and Downtown.

Findings

- ❖ Recognized that the airport to Downtown light rail connection needs to be part of a larger light rail system.

- ❖ The Panhandle rail line, owned by the state, is currently leased to Genessee & Wyoming for short line freight movements. ORDC informed the group that this line is highly congested with freight traffic.
- ❖ A light rail connection between downtown and the airport is typically part of a larger light rail system, as found in all case studies featuring this downtown to airport light rail link.
- ❖ The construction of the first line in a light rail system is typically the most expensive one. This is due to costs associated with the construction of a maintenance yard and other operating costs.
- ❖ In order to secure federal funding for light rail, proponents have to demonstrate strong ridership for the proposed line. Ridership between downtown and the airport is not typically the highest. Therefore, most case studies featured an airport light rail link as one of the last phases.
- ❖ The insight2050 study is developing analytical tools that may be able to assess the broader impacts of transit corridor investments (i.e. fiscal, transportation, environmental, etc.).

Short Term Recommendations

- ❖ Explore two potential fixed guideway corridors from Downtown to the airport area: One featuring light rail using a combination of light rail and street corridors and the second commuter rail using the existing rail freight corridor (underway, via the Loop Study Addendum).
- ❖ Conduct a sidewalk assessment to identify needed improvements to support existing and future transit corridors.
- ❖ Identify key corridors linking the airport to downtown Columbus, and develop an approach to preserve the corridor right-of-way.

Long Term Recommendations

- ❖ Develop a fixed guideway transit corridor from the airport to Downtown as part of as part of a larger multimodal and regional transportation system (via COTA's NextGeneration plan and other planning documents).
- ❖ Preserve the transit corridor right-of-way connecting the airport to downtown Columbus.
- ❖ Identify funding sources to advance the viability of this connection and utilize regional analytical tools like insight2050 to assess overall community impacts and development benefits.
- ❖ Maximize development and redevelopment potential generated by implementation of any emerging rail system through TOD in proximity to station locations.

Area of Inquiry No. 4: Sustaining the JET Task Force's transportation recommendations over time.

Findings

- ❖ Importance of an advocacy strategy to gain public support (Salt Lake City).
- ❖ Importance of gaining support from private sector stakeholders, such as major retailers. The Salt Lake City case study provided an example of a store retailer going on a trip to Portland with Salt Lake City transit rail proponents to experience first-hand what having light rail to his store door could look like once completed. This trip resulted in the retailer becoming not only an advocate, but a partner in making Salt Lake City's light rail system a reality.
- ❖ Importance of building strong Public-Private Partnerships, and developing a successful approach to creating P3s.

Short Term Recommendations

- ❖ Identify and fund an organization or staff person who would be responsible for convening the team and moving the JET Task Force recommendations forward, including:
 - Formalizing a partnership working group for the Port Columbus area's infrastructure and development coordination
 - Establishing an annual work program

Long Term Recommendations

- ❖ Incorporate JET's goals into future and ongoing planning studies, COTA's NextGeneration Plan, Columbus Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan and the Airport Loop Study Addendum.
- ❖ Create and implement a strategy for public coordination with private sector leadership on regional transit corridor development, with key initial focus on developing a corridor connecting Downtown with the airport area.
- ❖ Establish an airport area marketing plan. A component of this plan will focus on securing private sector buy-in/support.
- ❖ The organization or staff person assigned will provide input into any future planning documents relevant to the JET Task Force study area to incorporate the recommendations of this report, when applicable.

Area of Inquiry No. 5: Identify ways to finance the multimodal facility and rail connection between Downtown and the airport.

Key Findings

- ❖ Memphis - Greyhound was a partner and provided funds for the multimodal facility
- ❖ Salt Lake City - Some of their light rail system was financed without federal funds
- ❖ Portland – The airport engaged in a land swap with a private developer to acquire lands needed for the rail right-of-way.

Short Term Recommendations

- ❖ Collaborate with Community leaders in prioritizing the initiatives with Columbus Partnership, Columbus 2020, and other Community organizations to seek creative means to fund the additional studies necessary to advance projects.

Long Term Recommendations

- ❖ Establish partnerships similar to above to seek long term financing for both capital and the on-going operating costs for these projects.
- ❖ Look at potential role of public-private partnerships in funding transportation systems, particularly in conjunction with development opportunities.

IV. Record of Proceedings

- Appendix I: The working group work plan and meeting notes
- Appendix II: Presentations by ORDC, COTA, MORPC, Memphis Multimodal Facility presentation (courtesy of MATA)
- Appendix III: Case Studies Summary Tables
- Appendix IV: Bibliography of resources (articles submitted by working group members)