

January - March 2015 Public Comments

Date	Name	Question/Comment
1/27/2015	John Mobley	I attended tonight's presentation and found it to be informative. I look forward to the implementation. I understand you will be faced with several issues as you move forward, including elimination of parking on Broad and stations location. I hope you will keep in sight one of your goals of a "rapid" transportation system. I am a senior and a regular user of the current system. It would be most helpful at your next presentation you could present a simulated trip of a user. As an example would be if I stood on corner of Robinson/Broad and made a trip to Main Street station and return. Where is my departing station, how do I get there, buy my ticket, get on bus, off the bus, etc. There were minimal actual users at meeting tonight. I will leave questions of fares, transfers, senior discounts for the bean counters. Thank you again.
2/1/2015	Larry Hedgepeth	In May 2014, I attended a public meeting concerning the Bus Rapid Transit project proposed by GRTC. I learned that the proposed route would serve my area with a station at Hamilton Street, approximately halfway between stations at Staples Mill Road and Robinson Street. I read the GRTC Station Area Screening Study report, which emphasized criteria such as distance between stations, community facilities, and current ridership on GRTC routes. Although there would be a limited number of BRT stations, they would be spaced no more than one mile apart. As a regular bus rider, I was happy to see that GRTC's BRT would serve my neighborhood and the longtime residents and employers in the Malvern Avenue area. I was also happy to see my attendance at the May 2014 meeting recorded with a promise to keep me informed of future developments by e-mail. Imagine my surprise and anger when I attended the public meeting this past Tuesday night (January 27). I learned that GRTC secretly eliminated the proposed station at Hamilton Street that served my area and added a station at Cleveland Street. I do not oppose the addition of the Cleveland station, but eliminating the Hamilton station leaves a one and a half mile gap between stations, centered at Malvern. Riders who would board/depart for the following facilities will be underserved by the lack of a station between Hamilton and Westmoreland: • Thomas Jefferson High School • Guardian Place (senior citizen community) • Estes Express Lines • United Methodist Family Services • International Mission Board (Southern Baptist Convention) • Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries • Richmond Technical Center (on Westwood Avenue) • Multiple small businesses on Broad Street, Westwood Avenue and Dabney Road • Multiple apartment and condominium complexes along Hamilton Street • Westbound Broad Street connection to GRTC's Route 91 (Laburnum Connector) Longtime residents in the following neighborhoods will be underserved by the lack of a station between Hamilton and Westmoreland: • Sauer's Garden • Jefferson Terrace • Malvern Gardens • Westhampton (eastern portion) You may think that the station at Cleveland Street will serve Scott's Addition residents better than a station at Hamilton Street. A closer look shows that hundreds of new apartments on Rosemeath Road are actually closer to Hamilton than to Cleveland. Although the public meetings were held last week, GRTC has failed to upload to its website any recent studies or supporting documentation concerning the elimination of the station at Hamilton Street. I look forward to seeing those documents, and I hope you will revisit your own station location criteria and decide to restore the Hamilton Street station to your proposed project.
2/2/2015	Maritza Pechin	I attended the BRT public meeting on January 27, 2015 at the DMV. The meeting was disappointing for two reasons: 1. the format did not allow for meaningful community participation and 2. GRTC did not provide sufficient information on the analysis and design of the project. Public meetings should be a chance for the public to both learn about a project as well as provide input, and this one failed at both of these goals. Meeting Format: The meeting was a typical set up with an open house featuring boards and project staff available to answer questions followed by a formal presentation and a Q&A session. Meeting attendees had three options for giving feedback: 1. Speak to a project staff before/after the presentation; 2. Ask a question during the Q&A session; 3. Fill out a comment sheet. Each of these feedback methods is not very effective in truly engaging individuals because it's an open-ended format that asks individuals "for comments" rather than posing specific questions. Boards are also rarely an effective way for meeting attendees to learn about the project, particularly more complicated issues like station placement and transportation analysis. While it is important to allow open-ended responses, it is also critical to ask specific questions and provide attendees with enough information that they can formulate an empowered response and evaluate their options. During the presentation, GRTC staff stated that the purpose of the meeting was to share the current status of the project and to ask the community for feedback on the design of the stations. While I believe that this is a sincere desire, the format of the meeting did not encourage meaningful feedback on the designs and planning of the project. If they were truly looking for feedback about the station designs, they should have asked questions like: • What is most important in a station design to you? Why? • Which of the two designs do you like overall? Why? • Which roof/wall/materials do you prefer? Why? • Which signage do you prefer? Why? • Etc. These questions could have been posed using immediate voting devices that interface with PowerPoint to automatically display voting results. Or they could have been posed with dot voting stations. In addition, if GRTC wanted feedback about the design, they should have included handouts with the design renderings so individuals could get a closer look. Disempowering Lack of Detail: During the meeting, the GRTC staff and consultants mentioned a couple studies that helped them determine the ROW for the dedicated bus lane and station locations. The presentation should have included more details of these items. For example, the GRTC staff member said that several constraints determined the ROW and station location but he did not detail those constraints. It would be helpful to see a map of the constraints. It would also be helpful to see the parking study and traffic studies. These details help build confidence in the audience – which is critical in ensuring the success of the BRT line. Constraints are a very real part of the planning process, as is negotiating tradeoffs. This meeting did not empower the public to understand any of the constraints on the project or weigh tradeoffs in their priorities for the project. Future Meetings: It felt like the meeting was a conducted just to meet a federal requirement. It did not feel like GRTC, DRPT, the City of Richmond, and Henrico County are actually interested in hearing the public's opinions or empowering the public to set priorities for the project. In the future, at public meetings please consider the following: • Incorporate audience feedback techniques – voting with keypads, voting with dots, voting with fake money, break out groups focused on key topics (parking, ROW, urban design, branding, etc.) • Share some more details and focus on educating the public – show large maps that highlight constraints, share the parking study, share the traffic study. Meeting Materials – Post meeting materials on the website at least 24 hours before the meeting. Having two sets of boards with the same exact content is a waste of materials. This is a minor point, but the photo collage on the flyer is confusing because it makes it seem like all three places are in the same place, when they are not. I am truly excited about BRT coming to Richmond, but the current meeting format does not truly engage the public but rather feels like GRTC is just checking off a box that a public meeting was held. If you want input on how to host better meetings, you can reach me at the contact information below.
2/2/2015	Jane Elder	I am concerned about the elimination of the Hamilton Street stop on the proposed BRT line. I live very close to there, and occasionally take the bus. It is too far to walk to Cleveland Street or Staples Mill Road to take advantage of the faster speed of the BRT buses. I would ask that you consider adding back in a stop somewhere between Hamilton Street and Malvern Ave.
2/5/2015	Maria Carmen	For all it's worth, I don't like the idea. The money that was in the grant, should be used to change the Go cards to all day, monthly, and reduced fare monthly and 10 ride cards. Transfers should have longer times, no charge, or restrictions. Also fares for kids 6 years old and older should be 75 cents instead of an adult fare because kids under 18 years old are not adults. Virginia Beach has it and other cities in the country have it set up this way, why can't the capital of Virginia have it also? You just got the concept of a "transfer plaza" in place, and it's a pain in the neck, but it's there.
2/9/2015	Larry Hedgepeth	Although the public meetings were held two weeks ago, you have failed to upload to your website any recent studies or supporting documentation. Your slideshow lists twelve engineering studies/reports that are now complete. I would like to be able to view these documents. I am particularly interested in the Station Locations Report, the Basis of Stations Design, the Basis of Roadway Design and the Parking and Traffic Design. I would also like to see the Gap Analysis. If you will not post these to your website, please send me copies of the reports. I look forward to seeing these documents.
2/11/2015	Lori Kietzmann	I am just now hearing of the existence of this project. I'm the owner of 18 W. Broad street in Richmond. My tenant is extremely concerned about the loss of business he will incur because of this project. First, his clientele doesn't want to 'catch a bus'. Second whatever street parking he did have will be gone and little effort has been done to provide any parking downtown. All will be lost during the construction phase. He might as well just close up shop. Can you forward me a copy of the economic study that was done to justify this project? I just don't see in the long term how this will help myself and/or my tenant who has been located there for almost 10 years. How long is this project going to take to complete? I tried to look at the map and it just doesn't have enough detail. Basically, my tenant is looking to break his lease and move... leaving me with an open space during construction. In your planning stages did even consider existing business and how they would be affected? I've owned the property on Broad for almost 10 years and over those years this town has done almost nothing to vitalize downtown. They drag their feet, let delapidated buildings just sit and waste away, refuse to allow almost NO improvements and now you are going to have a bus system that the city doesn't have the infrastructure to support. I guess they will ride through a ghost town. The infrastructure needs to be addressed before you bring people to it by bus. Because right now... you are pushing businesses away and devaluing properties by FORCING people to take a bus or don't bother going because you won't be able to park. Has anybody even spoken to the business owners? Do they know what's about to happen? I surely didn't and I'm still not certain of what you have planned. I just know you have to provide PARKING as well as bus transportation. I guess government grants and money just allow people to make senseless decisions. Please convince me otherwise. Please send addl information to my attn. at this address.
2/14/2015	Jennifer Wampler	I have been riding GRTC buses for many years, and was excited to learn about a stop on the BRT at Hamilton. There are many multi-family housing units along Hamilton that would benefit from this stop, as would the tenants of the Seaboard Coastline building. Please keep this stop in the plans for the BRT!
3/3/2015	Elizabeth Jordan	I have been searching your website, but am unable to find a copy of the NEPA document for this project. One of our (VDOT) executive leadership team would like to see it, so I would greatly appreciate you emailing a copy of it—or a link to it—to me, so that I can provide him with that information.
3/20/2015	Trip Nesbitt	Where exactly will the "Route 5" station on the BRT be? When is it expected to be online?