



Staff Analysis

RTS Bus Shelters

Legislative # 170026

Presented by:
Jesus Gomez
Transit Director

May 25, 2017

CITY OF GAINESVILLE STAFF ANALYSIS

Legistar No: 170026

Title: RTS Bus Shelters

Sponsor (i.e., Name of Commissioner or Department):

City Staff Contact: Jesus Gomez, Transit Director

Summary of Issue Review the status of bus stop shelters and amenities including current needs and future plans.

History/Background Information This item was referred by Commissioner Arreola during the May 4th City Commission meeting. He requested that there be a presentation from staff on the current inventory of bus stop shelters in the City of Gainesville. Staff should present a needs analysis and future plans for meeting these needs. For reference, the information below briefly describes the existing bus shelter request process, the bus stop improvement process, and presents an overview of the funding sources available for improvements.

RTS provides service both inside the City limits and in a limited area outside municipal boundaries. Bus stop improvements depend largely on the average daily passenger use; however, several other criteria guide the decisions about bus stop improvements. Criteria include the presence of sidewalks, curbs and curb ramps for ADA accessibility, the surrounding land uses (more transit supportive uses such as multi-family residential, medical offices, social service agencies, and others), availability of right-of-way, customer requests for the improvement, route efficiency, number of routes at stop, and nearby competing stop improvements. Many of these criteria affect the ability to improve a bus stop and sometimes lead to stop relocations to achieve the desired improvement.

RTS developed a bus stop classification system which helps match improvements to the level of passenger use and allows for the continuous system improvements as funding permits. Improvements include a range from just a bus stop sign with concrete boarding area (for fewer than 15 boardings per day) up to a Primary Super Stop with a large shelter and a bus pullout (for more than 80 boardings per day). The ridership standard to justify a bus shelter is 15 or more passenger boardings per day, but RTS also evaluates requests based on needs. For the past several years, RTS has focused on addressing ADA accessibility at many of its 1,191 bus stops; there is still a need to improve accessibility at 590 of these stops. RTS currently has 199 shelters (149 inside the City limits).

During the past few years RTS has received three Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grants totaling \$570,000 that require 50/50 local matching funds. The local match has been identified through Transportation Concurrency Exception Area (TCEA) funds or Transportation Management Program Area (TMPA) funds. However, TCEA or TMPA funds are restricted to close proximity to the contributing development which limits their utility in fulfilling customer requests. RTS is currently working with the Department of Doing to expand the area where bus stop improvements can occur (e.g., 1 mile radius from the development) when receiving development contributions.

Other funding sources used for bus stop improvements include the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant funds; RTS allocates up to \$75,000 per year, depending on funding availability. These funds are used mainly for capital procurement such as benches, trash cans, kiosks, signs, bike racks, and shelters.

RTS has completed phases 1 to 4 of an on-going bus stop improvement project; this consisted in the construction of 76 landings pads and installation of 28 shelters at a cost of \$651,640. RTS is designing phases 5 and 6 of the bus stop improvement project, which includes improvements to an additional 68 stops with 23 shelters at an estimated cost of \$399,801. Funds for construction are identified with an expected completion in December 2017. RTS still needs to identify approximately \$2.9 million to improve 590 stops and install an additional 67 shelters in the RTS service area.

Options

A. Continue to identify funds and partnerships for completion of bus stop improvements.

Pros

- **Allow RTS to continue the program and explore new options.**
- **No City General funds are involved.**

Cons

- **Implementation process will depend of availability of funds.**
- **It creates uneven distribution of funds and therefore; uneven distribution of bus stop improvements.**

B. Sell advertising on bus shelters and/or benches for potential new revenue source.

Pros

- **Raises revenue that can be used on bus stop improvements (advertising revenue estimates provided as an attachment)**
- **Revenue control by the City**

Cons

- **Prohibited by current regulations**
 - Section 30-317 of the Land Development code expressly prohibits off-premise signs within city limits. An off-premise sign “means any sign (with the exception of vehicle sign) with a commercial message that directs attention to a specific business, product, service, entertainment event or activity, or any other type of event, activity or thing that is not provided, sold, produced, manufactured, furnished, conducted, or located at the property upon which the sign is located.” The code also prohibits commercial signage in or on any public right-of-way. The placement of advertising on bus stop shelters or benches would constitute off-premise signage and would therefore be prohibited under the land development code. To permit advertising on bus shelters and benches could possibly invalidate the city’s prohibition against other types of off-premise signage including billboards.
- **Objections from the public about aesthetics (this was the case when previously considered in 2008 see Legislative item #080416)**
- **Would need to add staff to manage the program**

Staff Recommended Option Option A is recommended by staff.

Attachments/References

- Bus Stop Improvements Phase 1-6
- Bus Stop Advertising Estimates
- Historical/Background information from Legislative item #080416 in 2008.