

## ***Nova 2010 Overview***

For many years transit concentrated in downtown Tallahassee where shoppers, moviegoers, employees, and diners invariably traveled. Over the ensuing decades, the downtown share of the city's employment decreased as shopping centers, restaurants, movie theaters, and even government jobs relocated to the periphery (Tax World, Koger Center, CCOC, etc.).

The practice of transit is changing, and a growing number of agencies have found serving multiple destinations has been tremendously successful, starting with West Coast transit properties in Portland, Oregon, and San Diego, California and then spreading to places like Colorado Springs and Madison, Wisconsin, a state capital with a large university presence like our own. In Florida, Pinellas and Broward Counties have similarly restructured their systems.

Concurrent with the *2005 StarMetro Renaissance Plan*, the *2005 Transit Development Plan*, the November 2008 City Commission Target Issue Meeting and the City Manager's 2009 Resolutions, StarMetro has taken preliminary steps to create a decentralized route structure plan for the City of Tallahassee. Once implemented, the plan, known as *Nova 2010*, would distribute transit services mostly along major roadways in Tallahassee; several routes will not serve downtown at all. By not sending every route to C.K. Steele Plaza, passengers would experience greater frequency of service and a system that more closely resembles contemporary vehicular travel patterns.

In developing the draft plan, there were several assumptions about conditions in Tallahassee. First, the system would, like the present one, serve the city of Tallahassee with the few exceptions currently in place, such as Bradfordville on the 80x. Second, we would work to use, to the best extent possible, existing facilities. We have Steele Plaza and approximately 105 bus shelters, and have adapted a draft plan to use these resources as a starting point on implementation day. Expanding with additional facilities would be added as the plan gains popularity, as needed and as fiscally feasible. Lastly, we assumed two lanes on Tennessee Street between Monroe and Ocala would be converted to transit-only use, as is currently recommended in a study by Genesis Group. Beyond that, our goal was to use similar existing resources—the number of buses and drivers, the funding level—all would remain as close as possible to current levels. The above is based on our cursory draft plan. This draft plan is subject to changes based minimally on a full system analysis, review of alternatives, considerable public involvement, a thorough origin and destination study and Commission approval.

We focused our analysis on employment density, as the planning literature consistently points to employment density being better at generating transit trips than population density; although having high densities of both is best. Since employment densities are highest on major roadways, we assigned routes to these roads while trying to approximate a grid network as seen on the attached map.

Nova 2010 is intended to accomplish several things:

- ❑ **Reduce Downtown Trips:** The most common customer complaint is that all the buses go downtown. At a recent listening session, a customer lamented the only way to get from one section of Orange Avenue to another was to first go to Steele Plaza at the corner of Tennessee and Adams Streets. In order to mimic contemporary travel patters (i.e. to go to jobs on the periphery) passengers often must make the V-shaped trip of going downtown first and then back out again to the customers final destination.
- ❑ **Reduce Redundancy:** The current hub and spoke system requires all buses to meet at the same time at the central hub. Since C.K. Steele Plaza is located along a major arterial (W. Tennessee Street, near the intersection with Monroe Street), every bus must travel along this corridor at the same time in order for passengers to make their transfers. This results in two or more buses arriving and leaving from the plaza in tandem to travel along the same corridor for a significant distance, passing the same stops. With the concept Nova 2010 plan, the importance of C.K. Steele Plaza is downplayed as buses operate independent of each other. This allows for one bus to cover an entire corridor, instead of five buses covering the same corridor, as is the case of W. Tennessee Street.
- ❑ **Increase On-Time Performance:** Another complaint staff receives is buses run behind schedule. This is primarily due to two reasons – buses traveling at lower speeds in neighborhoods, and routes being dependent on each other for transfers (i.e. if one arrives late, the other buses are held for transferring patrons). Under Nova 2010, buses will remain on the major roads allowing for higher travel speeds as applicable. In addition, the routes operate independent of each other. This means if one arrives late, it does not affect the operation of the other routes. Patrons are would be accommodated better with Nova 2010 with higher service frequency leading to shorter wait times (10 to 30 minutes during peak hours verses up to an hour with the current system).
- ❑ **Increased Ridership/Decreased Carbon Footprint:** StarMetro expects Nova 2010 to make transit significantly more attractive to a much broader part of the community, and each single-occupancy-vehicle driver that shifts to transit represents reduced carbon emissions, cleaner air, reduced congestion, less road maintenance, etc.
- ❑ **Reduce travel time for patrons using transit:** Instead of going in and out of neighborhoods, the Nova 2010 plan would have more direct service to major employment and shopping/recreation centers.
- ❑ **Increase frequency:** Buses will arrive more often giving our customers more options for using transit service with greater convenience.
- ❑ **Increased Opportunities for Regional Travel:** With few exceptions (80X, Route 17, and Route 21), there are no opportunities for regional travel in the current system. By decentralizing the system, independent cross-town routes along major corridors create the opportunities for regional expansion.

While there are many distinct advantages in addition to the aforementioned ones of the Nova 2010 concept plan, there are a few perceived disadvantages, which have proven to be advantages across the country:

- Routes would no longer circulate within neighborhoods. This will, however, allow StarMetro to serve a larger population by providing higher frequency and better service to the most popular destinations.
- Related to the above, walking distances to StarStops are anticipated to increase. On the other hand, this will lead to fewer stops, increased mobility, a more pleasurable riding experience and a healthier community.

The benefits, however, would far outweigh the few discrete disadvantages, which are better communicated in a longer visual presentation. StarMetro would have a more dependable system going where our patrons want to go doing so in a timely, efficient fashion.