



VCU

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RE: Statement from Fabrizio Fasulo, Ph.D., Director, Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) on the newly released memo from Jarrett Walker + Associates on GRTC Reroute

CURA stands behind its study, including its methodology and findings. The report focused on access to public transportation among the region's economically disadvantaged residents, and found that, in addition to a positive increase in jobs access across the region, transit proximity for residents living in areas of concentrated poverty has been reduced.

I have just received a copy of the Jarrett Walker and Associates memo. The report does not include any methodology or data used, so for that reason, I won't comment on that. Having read the summary of findings, we did not find any contradictions with those outlined in the CURA study. Jarrett Walker's summary concurs with CURA's findings of an increased jobs coverage and increased connectivity for some areas of the city; likewise, the summary does not deny that the coverage of lower income populations has been reduced as a consequence of the reroute.

The Jarrett Walker summary mentions increased "useful" public transit service without providing any methodology or data to support it. Both the improvements in East End routes implemented by GRTC in the last few months and the \$1 million increase in the City's budget to GRTC to extend coverage in those neighborhoods would suggest that the useful coverage was not initially sufficient.

To provide some useful context, CURA's study on GRTC Reroute is part of a larger, unfunded study (forthcoming at the end of 2019), where the research team is exploring the balance and connection between jobs and affordable housing in our region. Considering the dependency on public transit for large segments of our population (largely located in low-income neighborhoods), the goal of this larger study is to understand – at the regional level - the first and last mile accessibility to jobs and housing by using public transit and other modes of transportation. The GRTC white paper that CURA released in December was the first step of this process. CURA researchers received an email expressing concern on the findings from Jarrett Walker and Associates the same day of the study release, and since then CURA has engaged

in a professional and transparent conversations with Jarrett Walker and Associates representatives, opening and sharing every single files used for the research.

What Jarrett Walker and Associates call errors, are in fact different methodological choices, and can be traced back to three main analytical issues:

1. Considering the regional dimension of our study, and our goal of measuring unbalances and connectivity gaps between neighborhoods and job centers, our geographical level of analysis was the parcel - which is already a rather granular level (for context, most planning reports use census tracts, which contains hundreds of parcels). An alternative, which CURA researchers discussed with Jarrett Walker and Associates, is to use address points. Although this could be too detailed of an approach and distract from the original goal, CURA will explore this deeper level of analysis in the final version of the larger study.
2. To calculate the connectivity index of each bus stop CURA gave equal weight (importance) to frequency and proximity, among other factors. While CURA understands that a more efficient system has to reduce proximity to increase frequency of service, it is also very true that this approach cannot be applied to every neighborhood or city.
3. To create the connectivity index, one of the files that CURA researchers used is the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS), which GRTC publishes monthly on their website. The Jarrett Walker and Associates report indicates that GRTC staff told them that data is not reliable. CURA plans on using GRTC rider brochures and processing that data for the final version of the original study.