

# BRT deemed a bus at workshop

Transit industry members participating in the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/Vehicle Testing Workshop, held in State College, Pa., spent a majority of their time defining the concept of BRT, its funding and whether BRT vehicles should be Altoona tested.

A majority of attendees agreed that a number of characteristics describe a BRT-type vehicle. Those characteristics include rubber tires, low floors, high capacity, a dedicated guideway, automated guidance, signal priority, rapid load and unload and low environmental impact.

Commenting on the possible use of dedicated roadways for BRT, **Theodore Pickett**, a project supervisor for the **Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority**, said that roadways would be constructed and maintained by the city, leading to disrepair similar to other downtown roads.

Another intended parameter of BRT includes a desire to start services with cleaner propulsion systems, such as electric or hybrid power sources.

It was concluded that since the vehicles used for BRT (e.g., Civis, Phileas and the STREAM concept) all use rubber tires and therefore fit under the FTA definition of a bus, there is no need to define a BRT-type vehicle further.

While there was much discussion about whether or not Altoona bus testing applies to a BRT-type vehicle, it was apparent to most, if not all, participants that as BRT-type vehicles are in

fact buses, they are subject to the regulatory requirements established for bus testing. In addition, it was suggested that modified test protocols may be necessary.

Other much-discussed topics during the two-day workshop were waivers and funding. It was generally agreed that the **Federal Transit Administration** (FTA) should continue allowing waivers from testing for up to 10 vehicles total. FTA members said they would also try to identify ways for the test bus purchased by a transit agency to be eligible for 100% FTA funding.

The current status of BRT, which has been implemented in France, the Netherlands, Japan, China and South America, was also under discussion. The FTA identified 17 cities in the U.S. to be BRT development and demonstration sites, with 10 being implemented within the next two years. Forty cities are currently examining the BRT concept, for which Congress allocated \$80 million.

**Bert Arrillaga**, an FTA division chief, said federal funds are available to cities that will be participating as BRT demonstration sites, which will include service route testing of guidance systems and information transfer.

Attending the workshop were 36 members of the transit industry, including transit property representatives, federal officials, manufacturers and members of the **Pennsylvania Transportation Institute**.