

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

Oct. 25, 2007

Location: Puppetry Arts Institute (Independence)

Facilitator: Jill Cornett

Recorder: Alicia Deville

Staff: Liana Riesinger, Karen Clawson, Stephanie Williams

Attendees: 13

Do you use the current public transit system?

- (A total of four hands were raised.)
- I've used intermittently, but not now.

Why do you not use public transit in Kansas City?

- It's not available; it's not convenient.
- I would have to use a car to get to the bus.
- It's not available when I want to go — and I want to go when I want to go.
- It's impractical for my work because of the amount of stuff I have to schlep around.
- You must be tough to ride the bus.
- It's for folks with no other options; they *have* to ride the bus.
- If you can stand on the corner for 20 minutes in mid-winter, you're tough.
- You also can't go by the schedule — you can throw it out the window.

For those who ride, does it meet your expectations?

- No.
- There are only two options to get to work and to get home.

Have you used Kansas City's public transit system in the past?

- Yes.
- I didn't have a driver's license until I was 30.

What would you change about our local transit system?

- Wider going east to west.
- In Hickman Mills you can get downtown, but not to Johnson County.
- If you need to go to Johnson County, you might as well forget it.

Do you have friends or family who use public transit?

- (About three hands went up.)
- We need to also go north and south.

What do you think about transit lines that run north and south?

- That has had interesting ramifications. People would come and use the computers and the bathrooms in the library. It brought more of the homeless in.
- Safety is a big issue. Going to the bus stop late at night equals [fear of] crime.
- I used transit in Portland, it had accessible routes, was clearly marked, good frequency and the price was nominal.

Where else have you used public transit?

- Bay Area; Seattle; Washington, DC; Atlanta; Scotland; Ireland; Brussels; Cairo; Paris; Anchorage.
- You could use [the transit system] even if you didn't speak the language.
- They had all-day passes.

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- You could hop off and on; it was really nice.
- Light rail needs to go to the airport.

In other cities, what did you use?

- Both rail and buses.
- In Rome, it was the same pass for all different types of transportation.

For your own transportation needs, how do you usually get around?

- Car (consensus).
- You'd have to be handicapped or on welfare to ride the bus continually.
- I had a friend whose company subsidizes their bus pass.

What would you do if you had no access to a car?

- From Blue Springs, you could go nowhere.
- Ride the bus or stay at home.
- Walk, take a cab or OATS (Older Americans Transit Service), but you need advance notice.
- Call friends or relocate — or move to a place where you can take the bus.
- The way communities have developed, especially south, it is designed not worker friendly.
- That's why I moved from Raytown to the Plaza.
- Suburbs are not built to do that.
- Something has to change for the future — we need the whole community in planning and zoning.
- Some senior citizen housing provides transit; I'd move to one of them.
- We moved for that reason — should we need transit.

Write your top destinations on an index card.

- Grocery store (about 10 hands raised).
- Entertainment, work (about six hands), volunteer activities, gas station (laughter), meetings and commitments, doctor, church (about seven hands), friends/social, community events, family visits, classes, education.

Would you use public transit to get to these places?

- Can't use it.
- I'd rather not.
- For some entertainment and some volunteer, but not all the time.
- I can use it for work.

Why wouldn't you use it?

- Not available, inconvenient.
- You just can't compare if you have a car.
- We're pretty independent.

Where would you get information [on bus service]?

- Web.
- Call the bus company.
- Public library.
- But if you're new to the community, you'd have to call the bus company.
- I think some of the malls have them.
- Nothing at Independence Center.

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If you could design the perfect public transit system, what would it look like?

- It would meet you at your door and carry you to the Plaza.
- Like the Metroflex.
- Need services to the airport.
- Need a combination — no one service will do it.
- Some areas have apartments in buildings that have businesses in them (retail/residential), and you can connect to the bus.
- Skyways, mixed-use design in Chicago and Minneapolis.
- Adequate frequency and reasonable cost.
- Reliability.
- Dedicated bus lane.
- Run late at night.
- Emphasis on cleanliness, like the ones in Washington, DC.
- No smoking.
- If they had a decent bus system when the Sprint building opened, there would have been no scare about parking.
- Need a fast way to get there — meet somewhere and park-and-ride.
- Like a shuttle service.

What modes would be included?

- Bus, light rail, subway if appropriate, some in different sizes.
- Community parking lot.
- If it's the perfect system, you don't want to use the old technology. In Shanghai, an 18-mile trip takes 8 minutes by magnetic train.
- Downtown Bangkok has a sky train.
- It should interface with trains, buses and airports, like in France.
- It's like that in Washington, DC; Baltimore; and New York.
- It's an interesting feeling when we get to places like St. Louis. We use their public system to see the sites.
- Tourists will use it because they don't know the area.
- Major businesses should be connected, government areas, hospitals, sports complexes, convention center, bus stations, colleges — they can put bikes on the racks.
- Low density residential — one- to two-acre lots.
- But with good transit it will go.
- But we don't need it on each street level.
- It's cleaning ladies who use the bus in low-density areas.

When would it run?

- 5 a.m.
- Until 11p.m.; midnight on weekends.
- Midnight on weekdays and later on weekends, less frequency, though.
- Holidays it would go places like the war memorial and Union Station, so it would need flexible planning.
- They do this for Chiefs' games.

How close to your homes?

- Within 3 – 5 blocks
- We ought to take a look at public transportation instead of school busses...especially high school

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- Elementary kids use it in NY
- The same 3 – 5 blocks to destination

How long are you willing to wait?

- 5 minutes
- 10 minutes
- If the bus is running hourly, I don't want to wait 2 hours, if it comes early you miss it
- It should sit and wait

What information should be at the bus stop?

- Time, schedules and maps, routes to see, connectors, map, cost, special events, bus amenities, transfers
- Use the system like in Geneva, Switzerland, its zoned so if you go 2 zones, its good for the day. The do spot checking and cheaters get a \$50 fine
- We in America have given up, torn up the rail system and assume you will always be in a car. Europe has not made that error to the almighty car – they can switch
- Increasing gas prices will eliminate
- Promote car pooling
- Punish those driving
- In Washington if you drive in the high occupancy lane with blow up dolls you get fined \$200

How would you pay for it?

- Federal grants, taxation, rider fees
- How much are we willing to pay to ride?
- Rider fees are not even a drop in the bucket, its taxes and grants
- City taxes, Independence pays about \$1 million a year
- It should be a percentage of what cabs cost like if a cab costs \$17 it should be \$7. A formula based on cab fare, set it up with student tickets
- Earlier we were talking about getting everywhere for nothing
- Longer distances should be more
- Fees based on distance
- Property tax, sales tax, what are we prepared to pay?
- Many who ride can't afford
- Would you pool it? Independence all by itself or pool it with Jackson
- Not property tax but a sales tax. Tax when you use your car, paying for the privilege of using a car
- State does not give the counties a right to tax ... Regional Investment Fund (2006)
- Look at the State level. There are transportation dollars there is we pull people off the highway, they won't wear out as fast
- Should MoDOT be responsible for asphalt and transportation?
- Can we at least get what St. Louis gets?

Now would you use it?

- Yes (about 10 hands)

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- If we could get a bus to the airport or to the square and then use our cell phone to call a friend to pick us up from there
- Get rid of free parking, for example on the Plaza area, force them to consider gas and parking
- Commuter lots should be free for bus riders
- In Portland you took a bus for that reason
- In going to Hawaii for 3 weeks so did Quick Silver to and from house so no parking for three weeks.

What are the benefits to the community?

- Economic development – inequity
- MORE (Metropolitan Organization for Racial Equality) = the low income are unable to get to locations. We may not be the best group to ask. You may need to ask Metropolitan Baptist Church, they have lower income people. Also people in areas heavily populated by Latin Americans... the Gregg Community Center. What problems do they have?
- People could pull themselves up by their bootstraps and not fail by lack of transportation
- Eliminate incentives for driving a car
- Increased educational opportunities. In St. Louis, kids could ride free to the library on certain days
- It would decrease fog and increase air quality
- Help with tourists (easily understood). Those who come to the museum, most questions are about where they want to go and how to get there
- Trolleys used to be fun
- It needs to go to Senior Citizen centers. Some have vans but not all
- Special target to low income
- Special busses for special needs ... my mom is 96
- Busses are now mandated to have a lift
- Ability for young people to get around, we have become chauffeurs for kids
- Now kids play sports 20 miles away to compete
- Used to take the "L" to go to sports
- Independence has several hundred busses

Impact on property value?

- Good on the realty market ... selling a house on the transit
- Crime increase. Crime and busses go hand in hand
- There's not many fast getaways on a bus!
- Most criminals won't come on a bus to rob you
- Many don't transfer for that reason (i.e. won't stand on Troost for a transfer)
- It will decrease congestion

Anything else?

- About 50 years working time on all of this
- The aging of the population and Baby Boomers moving into this. What happens when we can't drive (someone stated "or we don't want you to drive") ... there will be a greater necessity

Who are the leaders in the community?

- Government, local and City officials
- MARC/Smart Moves

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- Working on it for 10 years

Any individuals?

- ATA
- Margie at the ATA
- Clay Chastain – but he's going to muddy the waters, things have to be flexible
- Cleaver
- Need a starter rail... silly to start at the zoo to the airport when most don't use it
- Need a regional plan passed on both sides of the State line

What is your role?

- Inform and use
- Missouri will have to build the transit system. We will never get a bi-tax. We should build it and Kansas will have to catch up
- Johnson County and KCK are thinking of BRT. They are already planning
- Already have a rail from Olathe to downtown, but they don't want it to be used
- Communicate with elected officials. We need to know What to communicate to them. You guys will come up with a document explaining the concensus, we could pick and choose and communicate that to the elected officials.
- Until people are ready to pay for what they want, it will never happen
- Tax cars and license plates, things that consume resources and are a part of the problem
- We should try the existing system. We have a role to get involved in what we have now
- I view the transit system as infrastructure and a necessity and I am willing to pay for it because I need it
- Gotta figure out how to tax the rich

Did this conversation compel

- Yeah, I'm gonna do it
- Who? (about 5 raised their hands)
- Are there free transfers? (Yes, within a given period of time)
- I car pool and I think that is comparable, we get neighbors to work at the same job so we are all able to work late and get overtime
- ATA has a van pool program
- Ride share – found out through MARC
- Cost for a bus pass is not a problem
- If disabled it is a reduced price