

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

Oct. 1, 2007

Location: Johnson County Resource Library

Facilitator: Liana Riesinger

Recorder: Alicia Deville

Staff: Gerri Doyle

Attendees: 24 (includes facilitator, recorder, two library staff, three MARC staff and one reporter)

Who here uses the public transit system?

- No one responded affirmatively
- **Why not?**
- It doesn't start early enough, you can't get back home. You have to walk for miles and miles; it is just not worth it.
- The closest stop to my employer, I would have to cross Shawnee Mission Parkway, which is *not* pedestrian friendly.
- Before I was retired I rode the bus, but only in town. The bus did not go farther south.
- I would have used it, but it simply didn't go where I work. I think we need to expand the reach.
- At one point I had to drive for 4 – 6 weeks to Menorah Hospital, but there was no bus.
- The bus is not frequent enough. Also, I would have to plan for an hour-and-a-half ride.
- I would use it if they did something about Santa Fe. It is just so congested. (135th/Ridgeview area)
- "Why do you think concerns exist?" a participant asked. He answered by stating that in this region, 91 percent of all transit is in Jackson County; The Jo only carries 2 percent.

Free flow conversation:

- Fuel costs are becoming very high. If the buses ran on vegetable oil they would save a fortune.
- One of the best things is the bike racks on the buses.
- It would also help if corporations, for example if Corporate Woods. It could allow bike lockers to lock your bikes up during the day or overnight. If the weather is bad, you could lock them up and ride the bus home.
- Challenges are that the transit connections are fragmented and that makes it hard to plan.
- If we are having this much trouble, how will more transportation make it easier (if we already have problems with it)?
- About 50 years ago, the buses ran every half an hour. Now the routes are mostly focused on people going into town.
- There is no bus route for around JoCo; folks aren't centered just on work.
- It's embarrassing to ride the bus, especially if you are the only one on it.

Have you used public transit in other cities?

- Yes in Chicago, New York, Bay area — it's great! You can fly in and don't need a car or a taxi (well if you do, very little).
- You can get a two or three-day pass and hardly have to walk anywhere.
- Ft. Lauderdale and Miami — the buses run every 15 minutes.
- I think we should make it more convenient for visitors, and we will benefit as well.
- In Atlanta, you can park at the shopping mall and ride public transit with no worries about your car.
- In San Jose, the buses connect the entire area. You don't need a lot of money; \$1.00 will take you all over town with bus service every 5 minutes.
- With increased density there is increased frequency.
- In Denver it is good, but wrong for this area.

Public transit engagements hosted by One KC Voice, a program of the Mid-America Regional Council,
with a grant from the Federal Transit Administration.

600 Broadway, Ste. 200 | Kansas City, MO | 64105 | 816/474-4240 | www.onekcvoice.org

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- Lawton, Ft. Sill, Oklahoma — it's not a popular system, the community loathed it. I like to ride the bus, I'm a tree hugger. It didn't run late, though. It stopped at 6 p.m., and the bus was empty except for young kids who could not drive and folks with lower income.
- There is a stigma attached to bus riders.
- New York loves its transit system.
- You would have to sell people on the idea, change the stigma.
- Since moving here, my wife and I have both had to buy cars. It saddens us; we're more used to riding the bus. I used to ride it quite a lot, so did other folks. In western Shawnee, back with the GM training camp [in the '60s], the bus used to run every 10 minutes. [Service] has deteriorated since then.
- Commuter trains were the ride of choice, they are fantastic.
- The subways are filthy in New York, and the buses are worse. They had a tornado in Brooklyn, the tunnels were flooded. Folks drove their cars thinking they could not use the transit system and the traffic was in gridlock.
- In Japan and Tokyo, cities were built around the train systems.
- In Boston, if you were coming from the subway, Amtrak provided free parking and you could take the train and pick up the local train. It was dependable, safe and effective. You could use the bus to go to featured spots. It doesn't cross your mind to not take public transit. Parking is safe and well-lit.

List your top three destinations.

- Work.
- Airport.
- Shopping.
- Library.
- Church.
- Doctor's office.
- Recreation areas.
- School.
- It doesn't matter where entertainment is, as long as it is on a bus route.

Would you use the transit to these locations?

- Sometimes. I love to shop. If I am buying something big, I would take my car, but I would rather not have to drive.
- We must keep in mind that the time will come when we can't or shouldn't drive our cars, or at least not drive very far (because of age). This is a great concern for the baby boomers.
- I would use it if it did not take an excessive amount of time.
- The airport would be ideal, or to work if [the service] was frequent enough.
- If there were wonderful parking areas to leave cars, then less traffic would be on the freeways.
- It is a waste of time to get tied up in traffic. If I'm on a bus I could be reading, relaxing, people could do work.

Design your ideal transit system for the region.

- Modes: Buses, light rail, fixed guided buses. Plenty of park-and-rides, on-demand (flex) services, and transportation to bus stops.
- Destinations: Johnson County Community College, feeder systems that go to connector points and other express systems to transit points, direct lines and tour lines. Arteries – a local system that stops at almost every corner, but we also need express routes. Additional lanes just for express buses so they will be faster than cars.

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- Wait Time: One person willing to wait for one hour. Average folks in group said 15 – 20 minutes. (particularly during high travel times)
- Now is the time to start before the congestion increases.
- “We don’t have the density,” but we keep building.
- A participant asked “do we believe transit has to be subsidized?”
- We take care of our own cars. Will it fail if it is privately owned?
- Brazil has privately owned transit, but all those companies failed and the government took it over.
- Our cars are subsidized. (roadway costs)

How far are you willing to walk?

- No more than ½ mile, farther if the bus has bike racks.
- Studies show people are only willing to walk ¼ of a mile and no more.

What information should be at the stop?

- Schedules, Starbucks coffee, maps, security phone, good lighting, covered bench, Wi-Fi, video camera, radiant lights, a well-maintained bathroom and motion sickness bags.

How should it be paid for?

- Cigarette tax. Why not budget it like they do for the roads?
- Gasoline tax, sales tax, visitor’s tax.
- Could use as a model Summit County, Colo.
- Companies could subsidize for employees who use transit. Hotels could subsidize.
- How about something like the TIF dollars, not that specifically, but something like it.
- Incentives for large employers.
- Ads on bus stops.

Would you use a new and improved system?

- Much of the time, but not all of the time.
- Sure.
- Not in the winter.
- Most other participants said “yes.”

What is its value?

- Builds infrastructure and the core.
- Companies have more options on location to move in.
- Ecological benefits.
- Environmental. (if each bus replaces 60 cars)
- You will have to sell the idea.

What is the impact on the low income and those with special needs?

- It is necessary, especially for the low-income. It will help provide a better income, better jobs, most own cars that are not reliable — if they can afford one. They can use the system when their car breaks down.
- There are some people with special mobility needs it would help. They should have a special provision.

Other impacts?

- Give Kansas City a competitive edge.
- Senior citizens move if there is no good transportation.

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- Major companies consider transportation.
- Property values will go up across the transit lines and incremental value should increase. Buses don't increase it, though — light rail and street cars do.
- It will connect more workers to jobs.
- Light rail costs \$70 million per mile and street cars only cost \$20 million per mile to construct due to the depth of you have to dig.

Who should be in the planning groups?

- MARC.
- Mayor Funkhouser.
- City of Lenexa.
- Kansas has not passed a tax for transit, this is a big problem.
- There is a deep distrust of the ATA. When JoCo pulled away from the ATA they saved \$1 million in one year.
- We don't have the population density for it to be successful. We can't afford to do it. We must first find a way to increase density.
- Possibly we could run smaller buses more frequently? That would still help with congestion, make it more attractive and not waste a larger passenger bus on a smaller number of people.
- How much did it cost to expand 435? JoCo is always under construction.
- We could place a tax on folks building way out to discourage and maintain population density.