

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

Nov. 15, 2007

Location: Kansas City, Kan., Main Library

Facilitator: Tristan Cook

Recorder: Alicia Deville

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Attendees: 7

Do you use public transit in the Kansas City region?

- Five yes.
- Two no.

Those who do/don't — Why?

- I use it to get to any place I need to go, work or anywhere; I would have to use it, especially if it is not in walking distance.
- I use it to go to the VA a lot, but I also work in Missouri, so I depend on it. I don't have transportation. I also use it to go to Wal-Mart or the Legends. It is my livelihood.
- I don't drive, so I primarily take the bus to and from work and shopping.
- I'd like to use it more, whenever I have car problems I use it. I like to pick it up at the airport because it's cheaper.
- I'd like to use it. I came here from Chicago, I just don't know enough about it. I live in the west bottoms and it is not there or it doesn't run as frequently as I would like it to.
- I agree that it is hard to get information about the routes. I live in JoCo. The places where the JO stops is like a mile and I just don't feel walking one mile.
- I like to go to church and the bus doesn't run on Sunday. I am crippled. I wish it would run on a Sunday, or I would have to move to an area close to a church.
- I've got back problems so I couldn't use the bus regularly.
- I think the real question is, why are there so few [people] here? I saw an ad in library only, how was it publicized? A lot of people don't use online who ride the bus so they wouldn't know. Many don't go to the library to see it advertised there.
- Actually, if I did not come to the library today, I wouldn't be here.
- Maybe you need advertisements on the bus stops! If you want to hear bus riders' opinions, you should let them know. In Missouri, Kansas either one.
- People just don't come here in the evenings – it's just the location.
- Can you put it in the rider bulletins on the buses? I usually grab them.

Does public transit in Kansas City meet your expectations?

- No! First, I work in Missouri. The last bus leaves going to Kansas is 6:04 p.m., and I get off at 7 p.m. so I have to catch a cab - \$10. On Saturdays there is no bus, I definitely can't work on Sundays. It's just not efficient enough. The people on the Kansas side just must stay in for the weekend. People may want to get out like with their kids on the weekends and can't get out. What if you wanted to go to the concert? It should at least be a half day on the weekends. I'm from Texas and it's a lovely transit system there. Park and ride, security. Almost everybody in Houston rides the bus. I got here and couldn't believe it (no bus on Sundays).
- The problem I'm having is the hours. It stops running too early. The hours should be stretched a little bit longer, at least until 10 p.m. On Sundays, maybe a few buses at least, like so you can go to different churches.
- My major problem: Most doctors are way out in southern Johnson County, and I get way out there and I am stuck out there. We need a bus system for the whole region.
- I vacationed in Chicago (it was 15 of us), and we used every kind of mass transit available; from hotel to trolleys, so we could go from the hotel to museums to the pier. If the trolley were full or if

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we needed to leave between trolleys there were buses and we really enjoyed that. We also went to a ball game and it really pointed out just how much our area is lacking.

- There are package deals in Chicago to go to different sites.

How much should public transit cost?

- \$30/month is way too high. In Houston it is \$2 for 24 hours, here \$40 a month and if you don't get it at the beginning of the month, you still pay the full price even if it is mid-month.
- If I go to the VA, it's better to pay more money and have the all day [pass]. It's so much of a lack of information given to the patrons. Also, the bus-drivers don't seem to know either if you ask them, it's like they don't care. They should look at a film before driving the bus to help promote it. The bus drivers simply tell you to call to get the info.

Where are your typical destinations?

- VA.
- Work (four people said this).
- Doctor.
- Church (two people said this).
- Shopping.
- Grocery store.
- Entertainment.
- Shopping.

If it were available would you take transit?

- Yes! If it was good (unanimous).

Where would you look for info on alternative transit options?

- Library.
- Internet.
- Newspaper.
- Places of employment.
- Television — flash across bottom of the screen, Channel 2 — Time Warner — government channel (that may only be in Kansas City, Mo.). They have a lot of public information there.
- Realtors.
- Chamber of Commerce.
- People who deal with people in the area and visitors so they get that information immediately.
- Another one might be the radio.

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

- One main focal point, like a depot station, like union station or at 10th and Main and everybody leaves from that bus. And it would coincide with the times, instead of it pulling in as your bus is pulling out. There would be time to transfer and it would run every 30 minutes. And for folks who live on the outside you would have a rail system and even it meets at that one main depot.
- Running every 15 minutes would be ideal.
- (One referred to the picture/diagram and said it was similar to Chicago's system.)
- Something running from the airport to downtown. Chicago was built one line at a time starting with the central parts and building on from there. There are other smaller lines feeding into a central area. And if it would run every 15 minutes and would be more reliable. Start with more central heavier used parts and not try to build everything at once.

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- I would say ideally that is what we would want, that is the only way it would happen, one branch at a time. Other cities did it like that too and it is the only realistic way to do it now. We are fragmented and the other cities mentioned were all in one place. Ideally I would have street railways all around the metro, just replace what used to be here that was torn down. They wouldn't have to be street cars, it could be light rail. Take the billions used on the roads and put it into the light rail.
- On both sides of the state line. Initially stick close to the downtown area. A misconception is that we have to include the suburbs all at once.
- I think we do need to go further out. A friend of mine, lady in Tonganoxie, Kan., would be willing to travel to village west and park and take the bus from there. A lot of those people way out would just love to catch the bus.
- If parking was cheap it would be better to park and ride.
- In St. Louis the parking is free.
- But downtown the park and ride costs \$5, which wouldn't do me any good.
- Land use and making things pedestrian friendly to kind of open up the area so people can feel safe crime wise, etc., and streets that have no sidewalks.
- People don't stop here even in the crosswalk.
- In Minneapolis people do stop. The mentality of pedestrians change when you have more walkers

How do we change our mentality to accept public transit/pedestrians?

- Sidewalks, narrow the streets, and have bike lanes.
- I live in Shawnee, and there is no way you can cross Shawnee Mission Parkway — [it's a] very pedestrian unfriendly area.
- Build things the way they used to be more traditional.
- That is also better for local businesses.

What major destinations should be connected by this system?

- Airport.
- Football fields.
- Downtown (Kansas City, Mo.).
- Shopping areas.
- Great Mall.
- Legends.
- Speedway.
- Nelson-Atkins.
- The Zoo.
- I had to turn a couple of jobs down because of transportation.
- Westport and the Plaza area — that would also cut down on people drinking and driving.
- Crown Center.

Anywhere it should NOT go?

- No.

When start running?

- 4 a.m. (first bus now starts at 5:18 a.m.).
- But like in Johnson County, you get out there in the morning. When you get out there you can't leave until in the evening.
- Buses used to run all night every hour — 24-hour system.
- Maybe a night owl system that slows down during lighter travel morning hours (3 a.m., etc.).

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- From Saturday at 6 p.m. till Monday you can't go anywhere (currently).
- It doesn't have regular hours which affect when I would ride the bus.
- Only certain lines would be 24 hours. Main lines like from downtown 10th and Main to the Kansas side.
- If you miss the last bus downtown at 10:40 p.m., you are stuck.
- I lose \$10 bucks a week having to catch the cab.

How close would public transit come to where you live?

- Express buses that come within a block-and-a-half to two blocks.
- 'Course you really don't have "blocks" in suburban areas.
- Express could be for certain lines, for train lines could be 5–6 blocks especially if you could catch the bus to the train.
- From Village West to downtown Kansas City, Mo., would be a train route and to connect would be buses.
- Have the train lines in the heart of the Metro that goes all the way across from one section of the county to the next. Rail system to Olathe would be good, make a zigzag, about four of them.
- Train stop in Lenexa, Olathe, and downtown Missouri.
- Have a main hub where they all meet up.
- (Map was pulled out again) — folks agreed on it.
- Radial shape and then like I-435 — loops around.

How long are you willing to wait?

- 15–30 minutes (max).
- 15 minutes for peak hours and work hours, after 9 p.m. go to 30 minutes.

What information would be available at a public transit stop?

- Everything: bus schedule, scheduling changes like special holidays (Thanksgiving bus schedule — not running).
- Bus maps, information, special events, predicted slow traffic like with the Garth Brooks concert traffic was slowed.
- Anything affecting transit.
- Discounts or pricing plans, special routes (one special route was not even on the Internet — they come and picked you up, but I didn't know they would even do that).
- Information about attractions in that area — bus route.
- Information on connecting; connections from one bus to another or if we are talking light rail connections there from bus to train.

What other amenities would be available?

- Vending machines, heated areas, wind stops, roof, temporary heat lamp that comes on every 15 minutes, bathrooms (handicap accessible), security (like a transit security).
- In Houston they have HPD — Metro police for the transit — bus-drivers can hit a button.
- Lighting — the more the better.
- Phones by bus stops, direct line to the police station.
- Wi-Fi.

How would the system be paid for?

- Raise the bus fare.
- I don't think that's a good idea (the above).

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- Raise the taxes on the businesses; the government should help us, ask for more taxes from the businesses.
- But the businesses came due to tax breaks, the federal government could get involved and more people park and ride the buses, and it would be better all around.
- Budget set aside for roads; take some of that budget and use it for public transit and not have to steal it from the buses either.
- Texas added a state tax (\$2 on cigarettes) prices of cigarettes went from \$4 to \$6.
- You could ride the streetcars from Kansas all the way out to Swope Park (back then). The auto companies want people to drive cars. We have GM in Kansas and that is why the bus system is so lousy in Kansas.

Now that a new system is designed, would you use it?

- Yes. Most definitely!

What is value of a strong public transit system?

- Brings money in from the outside, people from other cities, states countries into our own city.
- If you've got a good system and if it's advertised, you would get more people, you are actually selling the city.
- More neighborhood friendly, people would keep money in different parts of the cities, better school access, no more pockets in the metro areas not being used and just sitting there, lower crime and better schools, you would get to know your neighbors better.
- Funkhouser said light rail or public transit is what brings the density.
- Greater foot traffic to small businesses.
- Help out with people who buy gas, more money to spend on other things.
- Cuts down on drinking and driving.
- Greater access for goods and services, more local neighborhood businesses.
- Doesn't matter where the store was, you could get there.
- Bring people from suburbs to the city more often.
- People who don't normally go to the suburbs can now go.
- Easier to access different jobs.

Additional thoughts on how public transit might help or harm the region's economy?

- Less unemployment if people can get to jobs.
- Spend more money.
- Good for tourism.

What would impact be on low-income populations and special needs groups?

- A big boost.

What is the environmental impact of public transit?

- Conserves energy.

What is the impact of public transit on property values?

- Certain corridors not doing so well, that might improve and may bring more jobs and hopefully more economic [benefit].
- Property values would get better.
- Some would say it decreases values.

What would be the impacts on crime/safety?

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- Johnson County thinks they don't want certain folks in that area; let's bring them in at certain times only.

Who or what group stands out in your mind as leader in public transit?

- (They thought it was *who* should be involved).
- Mayor, council people, transit folks, MARC, all mayors, in whatever major cities — all need to get involved.

What is your part in this issue?

- Put in some input, voice your opinion.
- To try to better the transit system in itself.
- You could write to your politician, council person and whoever all your political leaders are, writing letters to the paper.

Did participating make you more/less motivated to ride as it is now?

- Same.
- As it improves.
- I'll agree with that.

Any other concerns not discussed?

- What I mentioned about getting the word out — more of informing the people who *use* the service! Hand out at the bus stops or on the bus.
- Most feel we will run our mouths, but nothing's been done. They've already got what they want to do figured out already.
- There are old schedule with old times still at bus stops.
- I listen to the radio a lot — reword the ads to voice your opinion. Chose the station bus riders listen to.