

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

Oct. 18, 2007

Location: MainCor (Main and Linwood streets, Kansas City, Mo.)

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Recorder: Airick West

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Attendees:

Who uses public transit?

- Around one-quarter of hands.

For those who don't, why not?

- Not available.
- Job isn't conducive.
- "My lifestyle. I have four kids; my schedule at my work is erratic."
- "They'll have to be convinced that it is safe and reliable."
- "If I had a choice of bus or rail, I'd go rail."
- The schedule is difficult to understand; it seems to be overwhelming.
- "I was disappointed in the cost. It costs more than driving."
- Something about trains appeals to everybody.
- "No kid asks to play with a toy bus."
- "Buses seems old and archaic."

For those who do ride public transit, why?

- Park-and-ride.
- Convenient.
- "It's hard for me to imagine anyone in this room not being able to use transit at least once or twice a month."
- "I use it everyone once in a while to go downtown or to my office. Rail does attract. It's different."
- Safety isn't an issue; cars kill many every year, but no one stops driving after an accident.

What area do you frequent most often? What are your top destinations?

- 41st and Roanoke (home), Sun Fresh, church, 18th and Vine, Blue Room, Mutual Musician's Foundation.
- I live in Lee's Summit, south Kansas City, Linwood and Main area.
- Liberty, Mo.
- Work (Midtown), tennis (Overland Park).
- Home (Midtown), work (Brookside), airport.
- Blue Springs, Independence, Lee's Summit.

What would happen if you didn't have your car?

- Bus, cab, rental car.
- "I had to teach my wife how to drive because her bus route got dropped."
- Ride with a friend or play tennis at the Plaza [instead of in Overland Park].
- Don't go [if I don't have gas].
- "I used to bike and bus, but I have a kid now."
- The jobs are out of the mid-area, way out in Overland Park, Lee's Summit, airport.
- "The whole transit thing is going to have to be about getting people to jobs."
- If the Kansas City Missouri school districts were more acceptable, more people would live in the school district.
- I live in the Liberty School District for a reason.

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with a grant from the Federal Transit Administration.

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- I moved to Lee's Summit just to be in that school district.

What would the perfect system look like?

- "I'm annoyed" because of the three different boiling pots: approved plan, repeal the plan — Kansas City shouldn't act until suburbs are on board.
- Start a spine in Kansas City, Mo.; a world-class regional system would be designed to hook up to all of these areas.
- "I think Kansas City has to be the one to start it."
- "Five years down the road, we're going to be left in the dirt."
- Other cities have advanced.
- We were talking about it in 1988; we haven't done anything.
- I used to advocate the Chicago model: commuter rail, light rail, buses in the city, buses in the suburbs.
- Put aside political disagreements and talking about how spread out we are — just get started. We need a more positive attitude.
- How's the Dallas one doing? I liked it.
- Dallas is successful.
- High-level service to the center-most part of the system; park-and-ride and commuter rail to the rest of the region.

What hours/times would it run?

- "It has to run all the time."
- If it only runs at odd hours, they can't use it.

How long would you be willing to wait on the bus?

- It's a tradeoff; people would just adjust.
- Call for information and bus location.
- I'm 24; people my age won't come downtown because they don't want to drive 45 minutes to get home at 3 a.m.

Where would it go?

- It's got to go down corridors
- In Atlanta, you have to park and ride; MARTA does not run all night (5 a.m. to 2 a.m.).

What would you like to see on the buses/rail systems/stops?

- Clean.
- Lots of lighting.
- Seating; something somewhat comfortable and easily cleanable.
- Covered, protected.
- Heated; security.
- Real-time signs, like the MAX and the CTA (Chicago) have.
- Bus tracking on computer.
- Wireless Internet connectivity.

What kind of information would you want to know?

- Schedule (with transfer information).
- Simple signage, like in Portland, Seattle and the East Coast.

How should we pay for a public transit system?

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- Regional tax.
- Other cities have found a way to pay for it.
- Tax the people that benefit from the spine.
- "Kansas City, Mo., has to pay for it and others will join in."
- Federal support.
- "Where *do* other cities get the funding for this?"
- "What's the cost to not doing anything?"
- "Taxes here are nothing, that's why we've got no buses."
- Transit systems lose money.
- "We've gotten away from the concept of a public good — and that's going to cost something."
- Gas tax.
- State/county/city tax.
- User fees.
- Parking lot taxes.

Would you ride it?

- **What are some of the values of having a strong system?**
- Money back into Kansas City.
- "It bridges some social gaps between people. Brings people together."
- Des Moines did a spine, it has had amazing growth as a result — it's permanent infrastructure
- "It helps me spend more time with my family because I work while in transit."
- "When gas was \$3/gallon, a lot of people started riding the bus."
- Fuel costs will only go up; this also affects our air quality.
- Carbon emissions have an impact; larger issue than just local.
- "It will instill pride"/break our inferiority complex.
- "[A strong public transit system is an] insurance policy against the certainty of the rising costs of carbon fuels and energy."
- Will decrease the effects of urban sprawl.
- It doesn't get any cheaper to do it later.
- They're trying to turn Liberty into Brookside because they don't want to move back to the inner city.
- If we don't do something, people aren't going to want to come back here.

What is the impact [of a public transit system] on special needs/low-income populations?

- More mobile.
- More opportunity.
- Access to jobs.

Who or what group stands out in your mind as being a leader in regional transit planning?

- MARC.
- Kansas City, Mo.
- State.
- KCATA.

What is your role in the development of this system?

- "We have to demand of our political leaders" that we build a decent, cohesive system.
- "Quit talking!"
- To elected leaders: start actually working.

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- [Kansas City, Mo.] City Council will put it off to the end of time if they have a choice.
- We need to vote them all out if they don't do something.
- They're trying to distract us with "exploration."
- KCATA is working with consultants right now on an alternative.
- This council's been in less than six months; there have been few meetings when they haven't dealt with this issue.

Did this conversation make you more or less motivated to use the existing transit system?

- "The more participation you have, the more city government will have to look at doing something else also."

Any concerns we didn't bring up today?

- None.