

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

Sept. 12, 2007

Location: Northland Neighborhoods, Inc.

Facilitator: Jill Cornett

Recorder: Airick Leonard West

Staff: Stephanie Williams, Karen Clawson, Liana Riesinger

Attendees: 15 (7 female; 8 male)

Does anyone here use public transit?

- Three people currently use transit.
- Eight people have in the past.
- When asked why they don't use it, one gentleman responded that he's retired now but he used it every day when he worked.
- Another gentleman replied that it doesn't go where he needs it to go.

Why do you use it?

- One lady responded that she uses it for recreation and for community events.
- Another gentleman said he has used it for 26 years, previously for work, and now — even though he's retired (he also mentioned having no driver's license).

In what cities have you used transit?

- One lady responded with a number of cities, both domestic and international.
- Another gentleman listed several.
- Cities mentioned: Seattle; Washington, DC; Portland; Sacramento; San Diego; and St. Louis.

What differences have you seen between other transit systems and ours here in Kansas City?

- A gentleman immediately responded, "They have trains and light rail."
- Another lady indicated that in many of these other cities, "I wouldn't take the bus. I'd just take light rail". When pursued, she mentioned safety as the reason.
- Another lady suggested that "the great difference between here and Seattle is that we don't need it. There it's imperative."
- The high price of oil was also referenced.
- Portland's system was described as excellent. One gentleman indicated that their great light rail/transit system began as a great bus system.
- "Any large metropolitan area needs it."
- "We're kind of strung out like St. Louis is. It serves St. Louis quite well."

Why do we need public transit?

- "The voters said so."
- "We need to wean ourselves of automobiles."
- "We need it because of the downtown developing."
- "It seems like it would be much easier to get there [downtown]."
- "Parking is expensive."
- A volunteer of the Convention and Visitor's Bureau indicated that she suggests tourists get a car in order to take advantage of Kansas City's amenities.
- "The [bus] connections aren't quite what they need to be."
- The buses are infrequent.
- "I think a lot of people need it — especially low-income people. More probably would use it if it were more convenient. There's a lot of your low-income areas in the city that do not even have bus service."
- "I don't know very many people that are going to walk six or eight blocks to catch a bus."

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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When you took public transportation in other cities, were you willing to walk six blocks?

- "There is a cultural difference."
- It's because we haven't had rail in over 50 years.
- "Portland has a culture where all social classes use the rail."
- "For some reason, buses have always had a stigma in Kansas City, and I don't know why."
- A gentleman told a story of a lady whose company got rid of their free parking lots and gave everyone bus passes, but she says she hates riding the bus.
- "Pity the bus-rider."
- "To go to the places we want to go is very, very difficult by bus."
- "Our culture is to spread those things out."
- "The quality of the bus makes a difference in whether people are willing to ride or not."
- "In some cities, buses seem dirty."
- "We have to make it cool for people to ride the bus."

Are Kansas City's buses clean?

- "Yes."
- "The system I've used is very, very good."
- General consensus that it's a clean system.
- "They haven't properly marketed the bus system we have."
- "I don't know when it runs."

If you consider your daily transportation needs, how do you get around?

- Several responses of, "car"
- Eleven hands raised for, "I drive my own vehicle."
- Two hands for, "I try to carpool."
- Two hands for, "I walk regularly."

If you didn't have access to your car, how would you get around?

- General laughter.
- Someone said, "move."
- More chuckling.
- "North Kansas City has taxi service."
- "I'd limit my activities."
- "That's what we did during the oil embargoes of 1973 and 1979."
- **Would you consider using a bicycle?** This was met with chuckling again and general dissent.

Write down your top three destinations.

- Grocery.
- Volunteering.
- Church.
- Job.
- Medical care.
- Meetings.
- Zona Rosa.
- Post office.
- Family and friends.
- Bank.

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- Senior center.
- Tennis.
- Gym.
- Most recurring: grocery, volunteering, church, and seeing families and friends.
- Nine hands for, "I'd take the bus if I had to"
- A few calls for, "light rail!"

If you wouldn't take public transit to get to these places, why not?

- "Because land development dictates against it. Everything is too spread out."
- If there were public transportation, development would cluster around it.
- "I wouldn't take it because I have other things to do on my way home."
- "We're not really a pedestrian friendly community."
- "We don't have many sidewalks."
- Weather conditions play a factor. Convenience and frequency are major reasons why it's not used.

If you wanted to find out about public transportation, where would you go?"

- "311."
- "Look on the Internet."

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

- First response: "light rail"
- "Something like the local MetroFlex is now."
- A hub to light rail.
- "You would need buses for something."
- Bus rapid transit.
- "Some people would have to use their car to get to the stops."
- "There'd have to be a network of transit stations to make it work."
- "Airport to the Plaza."
- "Airport to downtown."
- "Convention centers."
- "Shopping centers."
- "I'd do a survey and find out where people are going."
- "We need peripheral transit systems. Much of traffic isn't downtown; it's around town."
- "We don't connect the suburbs."
- "The malls, not just the Plaza."
- "It takes an act of Congress to get to Worlds of Fun on a bus."
- Large employers.
- Colleges.
- "I think the primary concentration should be from the neighborhoods to the places where people work because those are going to be the people that ride the bus every day."

Is there any place where we don't need transit?

- Silence.
- "Johnson County!"
- Laughter.
- "Excelsior Springs? I don't know. You get far enough out ..."

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When would you like to see a full-scale transit system begin operating?

- "ASAP."
- "The referendum passed. Get with it."
- "Light rail will only increase ridership if there are good buses."
- "We have to have reliable public transit first."
- "You don't embark on a project of that magnitude without a marketing campaign."
- "Rails are permanent. Buses are not that way. You don't know when they're going to be where."
- "Make it safe, convenient and cheap."
- "The buses are the feeders."
- "Park-and-Ride is important. I'm not going to ride the bus to the light rail."

How close would transit have to be to you before you actually used it?

- And: **How long will you have to wait when you get to the bus stop?**
- "I have to take two buses to get to work. I have to wait. Ten minutes would be nice, but I don't know if it's realistic."
- "Park-and-ride!"
- "Travel time via light rail is no faster than via bus." Some attendees disagreed with this statement.

What do you want to see at the stops?

- Several calls for "a shelter."
- "Lighting. Safety."
- "I'd like to see a satellite tracking system so I can see how close the bus is to me."

Who should pay for it?

- Several cries of, "everybody!"
- "Everybody benefits from something like that, not just the riders."
- "\$1.50."
- "No, that's high. It should be a dollar."

We've built the perfect system. Would you use it?

- "Certainly. God, yes; I wouldn't drive my car."
- "I would not divorce my vehicle, but I would probably use [the new system] 50 percent of the time."
- "Convenience is everything."
- Someone suggested fee-based cars for temporary use.

What are the benefits of a strong transit system to our region?

- "Economy [growth]."
- "Recruiting outside business to Kansas City."
- "Reducing greenhouse gases."
- "Monetary savings."
- "Improves mobility for all."
- "Increases the options for some people who can't afford to own a car."
- "Helps the disabled."

What impact would a transit system have on property values?

- It would impact it, but many people didn't know how.
- "It will increase property values around the rail lines."
- "Definitely increase property values around the stations."

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- "Depends on the city."
- "It might decrease property value along the lines."
- Attract more people to Kansas City.
- The cities with light rail get the conventions.
- The cities with light rail get talked about. We're talking about them now. Kansas City isn't being talked about in this way.

What impact would a public transit system have on crime?

- Silence.
- "I don't think it makes any difference."
- "There's a possibility it could decrease."
- "More eyes on the street at night, the less crime you have."
- "In Atlanta, there's a police officer on every train."
- Buses are safer. Drivers are watching out.
- "Lighting would have a lot to do with crime."

Is there any person or group in our area that you currently admire for their efforts to make progress on our transit system?

- "Probably NNI, right here."
- "Mid-America Regional Council."
- "The Kansas City TIF Commission."
- KCATA.
- "Clay Chastain."
- "I agree. I think some of our civic leaders have dropped the ball on this and at least Clay [Chastain] got it started."
- "The Chastain plan is an unworkable plan."
- "I hope 'The Funk.'"
- "James Nutter."

What's your role in this issue?

- "We're paying taxes."
- "Provide information about the Metroflex."

How did this session impact you?

- "We should talk to Sam Graves about this."
- Contact county/city reps.
- "Go back and tell them we're interested — and to get with it."
- "The first line is not going to be north of the river."
- "Use local money because federal money is at least 10 years out."
- "Who pays for what?"
- Does Clay's plan shut the buses down?
- "How will we pay? Property taxes?"
- Hasn't MARC been delinquent in making this happen? Where has MARC been on light rail?

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