

PUBLIC TRANSIT ENGAGEMENT

November 7, 2007

Location: Rosedale Ridge, Kansas City, Kan.

Facilitator: Gordon Criswell

Recorder: Julie Wittman

Staff: Liana Riesinger, Michael Briggs

Attendees: 12 plus children

Do you use public transit in Kansas City? Why? Why not?

Where do you go?

- Work.
- Doctor.
- School.
- Look for job.
- Grocery store.
- Families' houses.
- Shopping.
- "A lot of the jobs are in Missouri."

Does it meet your expectations?

- No (laughter, smirks), not enough transit.
- "No, it does not meet nobody's expectations! There's no bus service here!"

What are your expectations for transit?

- "To get to places, PERIOD."
- Sunday service.
- Think fares are reasonably priced when compared with other cities.
- "I was one of the voters that voted for the light rail system [in Kansas City, Mo.]." Lived in Minneapolis. Transit worked well there.
- *(Prompted by facilitator)* Want to conveniently get any place in region.

What would you change?

- "It takes too long to transfer to get someplace. To get to the Plaza takes sometimes an hour."
- "It takes too long to get to the bus stop."
- Closer bus stops.
- Shorter wait times.
- "Have it run seven days a week like Missouri."
- "Later hours, I guess."
- "If you work evening hours, you can't catch the bus."

Do you have friends/family who use transit here? How does it work for them?

- Yes. (general consensus)
- "Everybody [I know] uses public transit."
- "I don't think many people who live here use public transit because of the trains." Railroad crossing in Rosedale would impact bus schedules.
- One woman asked if there were any park-and-rides in neighborhood. The group said that there weren't any. She suggested that they are needed for people to park and get on a bus.

Have you used public transit in other cities?

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- Minneapolis; Dallas; Monroe, La.; North Little Rock, Ark.; East St. Louis, Ill.; San Diego; Washington, DC; Seattle; Springfield, Ill.

What differences did you note between our transit system and those of other cities?

- “The distance that they travel. They went to different little cities. They would go different places that are farther.”
- Regular and express routes.
- “Ran later.” (laughter) “And seven days a week.”
- The bus sizes — big and small.
- Minneapolis had light rail and regular buses.
- *(Prompted by facilitator)* Fares pretty decent compared with how far they take you.
- Safe. In San Diego, they have security that patrols day and night.
- “In Minneapolis, they had lanes strictly for the metro buses. You could not drive your car in that lane.”
- “When you’re paying on the bus for you and all your children, it really breaks you [the fares].” Woman suggested reduced fares for kids, especially those going to school. Said she had experienced that in other cities. (Another woman agreed.)
- “I think they need to go back to tokens.”
- “Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. They throw you off the bus when it’s your stop.” (laughs)

How do you usually get around? If you use a private vehicle, what would you do if you didn’t have access to it?

Top places participants need to go on the bus (facilitator made the “bus” distinction)

- Daycare.
- Work.
- Doctor’s appointments (seconded).
- Airport (seconded).
- Grocery store.
- SRS (Social and Rehabilitation Services).
- School.
- Bills, store, shopping.
- Two people said they couldn’t answer because they’ve never ridden a bus.
- “Downtown Kansas City, Mo., because it’s too hard to park.”
- Restaurants.
- South Johnson County for jobs, shopping.
- Attractions.
- Visit grandma.
- Greyhound bus station.

Where would you need to go daily, weekly, monthly?

- Work.
- Daycare.
- School.
- Check on grandmother through the week.
- Go to lunch.
- Restaurants.

What’s your alternate transportation method?

- Family member, friend.
- Taxi.

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- “The bus. I have a car, but if it breaks down or I don’t have enough gas money, I’d take the bus.”
- Bicycle paths. (someone responded “not in the winter”)
- “I don’t like asking for rides, but sometimes I have to.”
- “I use a taxi cab.” Woman agreed that she also doesn’t like to ask for rides. People often aren’t going where you need to go.

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

What modes of transit would be included?

- “It would be pink, and it would only be for girls.” (comment from a young girl; everyone giggled) “And blue for boys.”
- “It would be easily accessible in any weather condition: hot, cold, rainy, snowy.”
- “It would be interconnected, so if I wanted to ride a bike someplace and wanted to store it, or park car and take bus, that all would be linked together.”
- “Runs all day long. Seven days a week. Stress that.” (laughs)
- Express buses with lots of little stops.
- “Metroflex. I’m just shocked that Kansas don’t have all this stuff.” In Kansas City, Mo., a person can call and order bus service directly to job by reporting their work schedule.
- 24-hour security. Make sure you have somebody watching what’s going on. At stops or on bus. People may not feel safe on bus at night or walking streets late at night. (several nods, mmhms)
- Even at stops where there are booths, it’s still cold. Would like to see more places like transit center at 39th and Troost.
- In Arkansas they had big stop where buses came and you could wait inside. (lots of “yeahs”)
- Share-a-Fare. Buy a bus pass monthly. If your job is located where bus doesn’t run, you catch bus one way, take cab the other way and pay only \$2.50.
- “Make it where different types of transportation intermingle. If you have more than one type, something else is available to get you to the next destination.”

When would it start running?

- 24/7.

How close to your residence would transit be?

- “At least within a couple of blocks.” Need bus at the top of the big hill in front of Rosedale. (everyone laughs)

How long would you be willing to wait at a stop?

- “15 minutes. Max.”
- No more than 10 minutes. If we got all these different things [modes], should have something [else] coming around the corner to take you to next destination.

What kind of amenities would be available?

- Bus schedules.
- Specific route locations because they change at different times of the day.
- “Where certain businesses are, what type of services they provide.” Especially for people who aren’t familiar with area.
- There should be a free phone that links people to 4-1-1 or 2-1-1 for information.
- Public restrooms.
- “I think they should offer daycare.” Would be nice to catch two buses, one to daycare one to work. “Childcare centers inside metro buildings. We’ve only got one that I know of.”
- “Snack bar.” (laughter)

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- Security.

How would it be paid for?

- (Everybody laughs).
- I think the city should do 75 percent and the citizens should do the rest.
- Another woman clarified that the only money the city *has* is taxpayer/citizen money.
- (Saucy response) “City has money available.”
- Entertainment taxes.
- Somebody should just write Oprah.
- “Trial services. Have it go around and see how many people would take advantage of it.” That could help pay for it.
- “This might be a crazy idea, but they have donations for sick kids in hospitals in restaurants like McDonalds.” Could do that in businesses around neighborhood.
- (Facilitator asked group about whether employers should have to contribute to transportation) Sure! (laughter)
- “Me as a taxpayer, I could be willing to pay for it if it’s going to benefit me in all those ways.”
- “As development increases out south — leapfrog development — can you put a tax on those developers to go toward transportation? They should be paying for transportation.” (Another woman said “yup.”)
- (Facilitator talked about Wyandotte County casino proposal requirement for transit plan and asked how do you get potential employees to the jobs?)
- “What if we had an electric transit system instead of gas-powered? Like the old trolleys. That could be a different way to not pollute. Those buses are really stinky.”
- Gambling money. (one woman laughed.)
- “That’s still taxpayers who’s playing.” (Laughs.) “That’s who’s *paying*.”
- Can you tax heavy polluters, like coal-fired plants?
- Grants from government, like for Katrina recovery. Emphasize how important transportation is in the state.
- “I think the government should be responsible in some sort of way. Probably could fund programs like SRS less if they put more money into transit so people could get to jobs.”
- (Facilitator prompted participants to consider a bi-state approach.)
- “How about put two state taxes together that would cover all the counties in Missouri and Kansas?”
- (Facilitator asked, “Would you pay more to use this perfect transit system?”)
- “Yup. (several nods) It’s still cheaper than gas.”

Now that you’ve designed perfect system, would you use it? How often? Why/why not?

- “Yes” from a couple women.

What is the value of a strong public transit system, even if you don’t use it?

- Access to attractions like Sprint Center, Kemper Arena. Helps the cities collect money by transporting people there.
- It might increase the number of people who have employment if there is reliable transportation to job, daycare. Or you could have access to *better* jobs.
- “Yes, because we is way behind.” (laughs)

How might public transit help or harm the region’s economy?

- Could only see transit hurting car dealerships.
- “If we don’t have enough of them [buses] they’re gonna be too many people on them.”
- Need extra equipment to accommodate increased ridership/population changes.

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Low-income populations?

- “It can’t hurt it.” (Laughter)
- “How low they gonna go?” (Laughter)
- “It would probably make it about even now.”

Special needs populations?

- Have to have separate system or a special bus that can accommodate them. Shouldn’t have too much or too little to meet those needs.
- “Well, the transit system can have all that, like wheelchair access.”
- When you have more than one person with wheelchair on bus at a time, it can’t accommodate more than that. Need to meet that demand.
- “I figure if we’ve got buses coming every 15 minutes, the two that couldn’t get on that last bus can get on the next one.” (Everyone laughs.)

What would the impact of a strong public transit system be on:

Property value?

- Increase.

Traffic?

- Decrease number of cars. (general agreement)

Crime and safety?

- “Crime is crime.”
- Generally think won’t improve crime situation. (All laughed.) Some criminals use bus during their crime or right after.
- System won’t be perfect. Going to have some holes.
- “Will there be a special place for homeless to ride 24/7?” (Laughter)
- “I think nobody should be homeless. If you have family out there and somebody who cares, you’re not homeless.”
- Woman who posed homeless question said there are people with mental illnesses, and if she were homeless, she’d prefer to ride around on a warm bus than sleep under the interstate.

Who/what group stands out as a leader in regional transit planning?

- Mayors.
- Mid-America Regional Council.
- “The Metro probably has a big stake in this. Ca-ching!” (laughs)
- Phoenix House.
- City council members.
- Rosedale Ridge. (laughter)
- *(Facilitator prompts participants to consider federal elected officials, congressional leaders, then tells them to contact all of these groups with input.)*

Do you have other concerns that weren’t discussed today?

- Are you going to areas [to have transit engagement meetings] that we want to get to on bus, like in Olathe and Raytown?
- “When we gonna get a bus?” (laughter) Woman said she has a car but doesn’t know how long it’s going to last. “You know, money is funny.” She is leasing agent for Rosedale Ridge, and it’s hard to get “decent folks” to move into the complex because there is no access to buses. That huge hill ...

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- Think it's a good idea to send messages to Congress.