

**March 2007**

## **Experts Evaluate Light Rail Proposal**

(See column 4)



## **Transit Calendar – 2006**

**April 21:** RTA sponsorship and participation in Earth Day at Theatre in the Park, Shawnee Mission Park.

**May 16:** RTA Annual Meeting

**May 22:** RTA First Annual Golf Classic



## **KCATA Board of Kansas City Targeted for \$6.3 Million For Troost BRT**

(Kansas City, Mo., February 6, 2007) – President Bush’s federal budget, submitted to Congress yesterday, includes \$6.3 million for planning, design and construction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line for the Troost corridor in Kansas City, Mo. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (ATA) project would be funded under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). ATA has already received \$12.3 million in earmarks for initial planning and design.

“Kansas City officials have a track record of working closely with our congressional delegation and the FTA to assure that we receive our share of federal funding,” said Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes. “We have cultivated a strong relationship with those in Washington. The first MAX line was funded in large part with federal dol-

lars, and has resulted in a local success being touted all over the country. We hope to replicate that success in the Troost corridor.”

Kansas City’s first BRT line, otherwise known as MAX, currently serves River Market, downtown, Crown Center, midtown and the Plaza.

MAX Bus Rapid Transit service provides faster, more frequent service, and features the latest technology in the transit industry. MAX uses easy-to-identify vehicles. Its stops are well-lit, with highly visible information markers and newly designed passenger shelters. Information markers feature real-time MAX arrival information so that customers may wait with greater confidence.

“We are very excited to move this project forward,” said ATA General Manager Mark Huffer. “This funding will put the ATA on target for a 2010 launch for a MAX line on Troost.”

The unique branding of the first MAX line has successfully attracted non-transit users to the system, many of which say they will now ride other Metro routes. MAX has earned national attention from transit systems across the country. The FTA has recognized Kansas City’s MAX project as an example of a cost-effective application of the BRT technology.

“On the national level, MAX has been held out as a model of cost-effective design and implementation for BRT technology,” Huffer said.

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## **RTA 2007 Agenda**

In January the **RTA** board adopted the following action agenda for 2007.

1. Broaden and Strengthen RTA’s Education Efforts. Expand **RTA’s** role as an information clearinghouse on transit. Explain differences in transit modes and their respective costs to the citizenry and business community. Inform the public about the approval process for light rail and other federally-funded initiatives. Be-

come the Region’s key resource in the public dialogue on transit issues.

2. Grassroots Support: Continue to expand and enhance the advocacy database and mobilize the Coalition for Regional Transit advocacy network for support of issues identified by the **RTA**.
3. Kansas City, Missouri Light Rail: Gather and share information regarding the proposed light rail project, consult with city leaders and transit professionals, and help the community reach a feasible consensus on light rail.
4. Johnson County, Kansas: Continue facilitation of the dialogue between elected and community leaders at the city and county level regarding the opportunity for enhanced transit in Johnson County.
5. Jackson, Clay, Platte and Other Missouri Counties in the Region: Assess interest of county and municipal elected officials in implementing Regional Investment Fund authority passed by the Missouri Legislature in 2006.
6. Wyandotte County, Kansas: Assess opportunities to maintain existing public transit in light of anticipated funding reductions, and assist in other transit initiatives.
7. Kansas City, Missouri Downtown Streetcar: Continue to lead this project under the purview of the Project Steering Committee.
8. Work to achieve greater coordination among the transit agencies: Improve regional transit service with an initial focus on implementing a regional transit pass.



## **April Newsletter:**

Prepare for the **RTA** First Annual Golf Classic and the Annual Meeting

Newsletter Editor: Janet Rogers

## Experts Evaluate Light Rail Proposal

Transit advisor **Jeff Boothe** of Holland & Knight, the City's federal lobbying firm, met with the City Council last week to evaluate details of the light rail proposal passed last November by Kansas City, Missouri voters. **Boothe**, who has advised several other cities on light rail proposals, was asked by Mayor **Kay Barnes** to review the issue and to specifically analyze the climate in Washington for possible federal funding. Among the points made by Boothe to the Council are:

- The process to secure federal approval would likely take seven years or longer and includes several onerous steps, such as studying transit types and routes, cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and more.
- The process to secure federal funding for light rail is growing more and more competitive.
- Revenue generated from the 3/8-cent sales tax that Kansas City voters have reallocated from funding bus service to light rail would have to be replaced in order to qualify for federal light rail funding. The Federal Transit Administration will not approve light rail plans that greatly reduce bus systems.
- Light rail systems currently under construction in other cities cost considerably more than the \$35 million per mile estimated for Kansas City's new system.

Additionally, Assistant City Attorney **Bill Geary** presented the City Law Department's legal opinion of the light rail proposal passed by voters, which includes the following points bringing into question the proposal's legal viability:

- The proposed route travels through North Kansas City, Gladstone, and a bridge controlled by the

State of Missouri. The City of Kansas City does not have jurisdiction over these areas.

- The proposal dictates how parts of the City's parks and boulevards would be used, which according to the City Charter, would require the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners to determine that the property is no longer needed for parks purposes, and the voters to approve the removal of the property from the Parks system after the City Council places such a vote on the ballot.
- Current economic development agreements between the City and property owners along the proposed route could be invalidated.
- The proposal could be challenged as a violation of the Missouri Constitution, because all necessary funding is not provided by the initiating ordinance.

Additionally, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority indicated it will try to secure roughly \$2.5 million in federal funds, likely not available until the fall, to begin planning for the light rail system.

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## I-70 Commuter Rail Study

The draft of the I-70 Commuter Rail Study has just been released to Mid-America Regional Council. The study looked at the feasibility of operating morning and evening commuter trains on existing tracks between downtown and Kansas City and eastern Jackson County via Blue Springs and Grain Valley. Expect a series of public conversations with communities along the corridor to discuss the results of the study and how to proceed. **RTA** will keep you informed as details become available.

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