

September 2007

RTA delegation supports public transit funding at transportation summit (See column 4)

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Transit Calendar – 2007

October 2007: BY THE PEOPLE 2007-

Metro Kansas City talks about regional transportation

Kansas City Consensus and its KC Forums project are preparing for an exciting event this fall called BY THE PEOPLE. During a day of deliberation, more than 100 randomly selected citizens will consider different ways to approach the issue of transportation and address key questions such as: How can we work together as a region to assure we can get around? How important is mass transit? What should be the role of the automobile? Who should pay?

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KC Light Rail Alternatives Analysis

The KCATA and the City are moving forward on implementing light rail. An alternatives analysis study has been underway for about two months and a lot of progress has been made.

Technical

Most of the technical work thus far has focused on the assessment of the November 2006 ballot initiative.

The alignment poses several challenges. The segment through Penn Valley Park would have to address the terrain of the Park, and the elevation difference north to Union Station. In addition, federal and local laws protect parklands from impacts from transportation projects making the alignment through the parks extremely difficult to justify.

There are five existing bridges on the proposed alignment, including the Heart of America Bridge over the Missouri River. None of the bridges are designed to carry the weight of a light rail vehicle and would have to be strengthened or replaced. This of course adds to the cost.

The preliminary analysis has the estimated capital costs in 2007 dollars in the range of \$1.4 to \$1.6 billion, about 50 percent over the cost estimate in the petition initiative. Annual operating costs are estimated at \$11 to \$14 million.

The funding source specified in the November 2006 initiative, the existing 3/8-cent sales tax now used to support the KCATA bus system, is inadequate to fund a system of this size and cost. The financial analysis concluded that the proceeds from the 3/8-cent sales tax would fall about \$500 million short over a 25-year period. Of greater significance, the problem of inadequate funding for the bus system would remain.

Public Involvement

A Citizens Task Force was appointed by Mayor Funkhouser, Councilman Ed Ford and the KCATA to provide advice and guidance as the study moves forward. This 35-person group had its first meeting August 15th and will meet monthly during the course of the project. The **RTA** is well represented on the Task Force. Board members Kitty McCoy and Kite Singleton, along with Executive Director Greg Lever, are on the Task Force. Ms McCoy is Co-chair of the Task Force. In addition, several other **RTA** members round out the **RTA's** representation.

The first of several planned public meetings were held August 20th and 21st. Attendance was good and the input from the attendees will be very helpful in plotting a course for implementing light rail.

What's Next?

The project team will be working to identify viable alternatives during the next six weeks. It is anticipated that these initial alternatives will be reviewed by the Citizens Task Force later in September.

An initiative petition brought by interests in the Westport area to repeal the November 2006 initiative complicates the project. The City Council has decided to put this issue on the ballot in February 2008. The project team is expected to have at least an outline of an alternative light rail plan before voters are asked to repeal the November 2006 initiative. Details on how this will be done, and what the alternative plan will be, are being worked out.

In any case, the project team does plan to have a financially feasible light rail plan to present to Kansas City early in 2008.

John Dobies, Project Manager,
KCATA Light Rail Alternatives Analysis

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TRANSIT NEWS

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Web site: www.kctransit.org

1000 Walnut, Suite 224
Kansas City, MO 64110
Email: glever@kctransit.org
Phone: (816) 471-6808
Fax (816) 472-1823

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RTA delegation supports public transit funding at transportation summit

RTA Board Chair Margie Richcreek, Board Member Ron McLinden, and Executive Director Greg Lever were among 250 people who attended a Missouri Transportation Funding Summit in Jefferson City, Mo., on July 31. Our message: public transit needs to be included in any discussion of transportation funding.

Richcreek made that point in speaking to MoDOT Director Pete Rahn, who had made no reference to transit in his keynote speech. State funding for transit has declined steadily over the past decade, just as the need for improved transit continues to grow.

Sen. Bill Stouffer (R) and Rep. Neal St. Onge (R) both introduced bills in the most recent legislative session that would increase the state sales tax for transportation. Stouffer's proposal was all for highways, while St. Onge's included just over 1 percent for transit — far less than is needed.



RTA Board Member Ron McLinden, Rep. Neal St. Onge, MoDOT Director Pete Rahn, RTA Board Chair Margie Richcreek, and Sen. Bill Stouffer.

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Citizens weigh in on Light Rail

Hundreds of citizens participated in the first two public hearings as part of the ongoing Alternatives Analysis process. The citizens were engaged in the question and answer session and "hands-on" breakout sessions that allowed them to share their thoughts on the proposed route, economic development and several other issues. The project team will incorporate input from these meetings input in the next steps of the development of Kansas City's light rail plan.

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State Avenue Corridor Study

In an effort to improve public transportation service in Kansas City, Kansas, the Unified Government and the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) are jointly sponsoring a study of the State Avenue Corridor. The goal of the study is to identify current transportation issues in the corridor and develop effective transit alternatives.

The consulting team of Olsson Associates, Parsons Brinckerhoff and Collins, Noteis and Associates are being guided by a Study management Team of Mayor Joe Reardon, Unified Government officials, representatives from the KCATA, the KDOT and MARC.

"The challenge for transit is to move to the next step," said Mayor Reardon. "We have to focus on the fundamentals that will ensure this happens. The public expects improvements so we must show evidence to our citizens that they are underway".

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Kansas City Light Rail Citizens Task Force
Newsletter Editor: Greg Lever