

January/February 2007

Last Two Years in KC Transit

(See column 4)

Transit Calendar – 2006

Dedication ceremony for the Historic KC PCC

Streetcar: The dedication ceremony has been postponed until the enclosure at Union Station is completed.

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

New Bus Service on K-10

A new transit service that connects the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence with the Edwards Campus and Johnson County Community College in Overland Park started January 17. This is a great chance for Students, Faculty and Staff to save their wallets and their vehicles.

- Operates Monday through Thursday from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.
- Operates Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- The fare is \$2.50 per one-way trip or \$5 round-trip
- 10-ride and monthly passes are available
- The service is open to the general public

- The express route will have stops at the west-side park-n-ride lot on the KU campus as well as the Haskell Indian Nations University parking facility and the Edwards Campus and JCCC in Overland Park.

- Contact the colleges for additional information



KCATA Board of Commissioners Commits To Work For Light Rail

(Kansas City, Mo. – November 16, 2006) The Board of Commissioners of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (ATA) approved a resolution regarding the November 7 ballot initiative for light rail.

At the November 15 board meeting, the ATA affirmed its support for light rail and improving multi-modal transit in the Kansas City region.

However, concerns have been raised about the possible impact on The Metro bus network. Additionally portions of the light rail route are in cities other than Kansas City, Mo., and these cities have not approved their inclusion in the light rail plan.

“The ATA is committed to rising to the challenges ahead,” said General Manager Mark Huffer. “We hope to work with the City of Kansas City, Mo., to sort out the implications of this initiative and respond to the wishes of Kansas Citizens to include rail in the mix of future transit services. We also must work to preserve existing transit services.”

There is an urgent need to identify alternative funding sources for The Metro bus network. The light rail plan approved a 25-year extension of the 3/8-cent sales tax that was approved for public transit in 2003. Beginning in 2009, this sales tax would fund light rail and not existing bus service, resulting in cuts in Metro service. The Board of Commissioners has committed to work with the City of Kansas City and regional leaders to secure adequate bus transit funding.

In order to find workable solutions to implement light rail in Kansas City, ATA will work with light rail supporters, the City and the initiative author Clay Chastain. The Board of Commissioners also recognized the need to in-

corporate light rail transit into the Smart Moves regional transit plan.

“We are glad to see that Kansas City supports light rail,” Huffer said. “Although the plan passed on November 7 has flaws, we are committed to serving the wishes of the citizens and improving public transit for the region.”

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Transit benefits increase to \$110 per month as of Jan. 1, 2007

Transit riders who use federal tax benefits to pay for commuting costs were given a raise on Jan. 1, 2007 when the monthly maximum for tax-free transit benefits increased from \$105 to \$110.

There are three ways an employer can receive the benefits. First, the employer can pay \$110 a month in tax-free benefits. How much an individual receives depends on the cost of the commute. The benefit will pay for commuting costs for all modes or combinations of public transportation or vanpool commuting costs.

A second way is for employees to pay for commuting costs using pre-payroll tax deductions. The transit benefit program allows employees to use pre-tax dollars to pay for commuting costs. Thirdly a combination of the two programs can be used.



Amtrak Offers Discount KC to STL

A second adult can travel for half-fare through April 1 on Amtrak in the Kansas City to St. Louis corridor. Regular one-way fare can be as low as \$25 per person, so two can travel round-trip for as little as \$75. See www.mo-rail.org details. This Amtrak service is partly funded by the state through MoDOT. RTA has a representative on MoDOT's rail passenger advisory committee.

The Last Two Years in KC Transit

The last two years have been really busy for the transit scene in Kansas City.

In 2005 and 2006:

- **RTA** was instrumental in establishing Missouri's first transit lane with "queue jumper" signal to speed transit service on Burlington Avenue in North Kansas City during the closure of the Paseo Bridge for repairs in 2005.
- Metro Area Express (MAX) started and gave KC a State-of-the-Art Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. MAX is so successful that one million people rode it in the first year of service and KCATA has begun studying Troost Avenue for a second BRT route.
- A new installation of stainless steel sculptures at the 10th and Main Transit Center, part of "Art in the Loop", celebrates public transit riders.
- Johnson County gets cleaner air as Johnson County Transit switches to an ethanol blend diesel fuel producing much less pollution.
- **RTA** worked diligently in support of proposed legislation to create a Regional Investment Fund to give the surrounding counties the ability to enact sales taxes to support public transit. The initiative passed in Missouri setting the stage for the Missouri counties to go forward with a regional transit plan.
- **RTA**'s Regional Advocacy Network created a large grassroots network that was very instrumental in passing the Regional Investment Fund in Missouri.
- **RTA** along with many regional agencies responded to MoDOT's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Paseo Bridge corridor because the plan is not transit friendly. That issue is still to be resolved.
- **RTA** worked with the KC City Planning department to assure that the new zoning ordinance allows for reduced parking requirements near MAX stations.

- **RTA** renovated and installed a historic KC PCC Kansas City Streetcar number 551 at Union Station.
- **RTA** started an initiative for a downtown streetcar route.
- KCATA introduced a unique Plug-In Hybrid Vehicle on its Westside MetroFlex route as a test to reduce pollution.
- Voters approved a light rail proposal presented by Clay Chastain. Financing and technical details are yet to be resolved, but voters clearly expressed their support for better public transit.
- Rail transit alternatives continued to be studied in the Kansas I-35 and Missouri I-70 corridors
- Blue Springs is creating a transit oriented development plan around a potential commuter rail service into KC.

New Web Link for Light Rail

The KCATA website, www.kcata.org, has a new feature for anyone interested in learning more about the light rail initiative. This information center covers:

- Summary of the Ballot Initiative
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Types of Rail Systems in the United States (Great for learning the difference between light rail, commuter rail and heavy rail)
- Light Rail Planning Status Update
- Review of Ballot Initiative by Holland and Knight (KC's Washington lawyers)

March Newsletter:

Next Steps in making light rail happen in KC

Newsletter Editor: Janet Rogers

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