

June 2006

RTA Speakers Bureau

(See column 4)



Transit Calendar - 2006

June 7: RTA exhibits at Missouri Department of Social Services - Children's Services 2nd Annual Resource Fair

June 13: RTA participates in Johnson County United Community Services State of Caring event

June 27: RTA exhibits at Greater Kansas City Chamber's Business to Business Expo (OPKS)

July 30-August 1: Missouri Public Transit Association (MPTA) Annual Conference



Annual Meeting goes Over the River

Over one hundred people attended the 2006 **RTA** Annual Meeting on May 17 at the North Kansas City Community Center in North Kansas City, Missouri.

This year's gathering highlighted the benefit of public transit across one of our region's greatest physical barriers, the Missouri River. It also recognized a first of its kind public transit service in Missouri. The City of North Kansas City, through the leadership of its Mayor, Gene Bruns, implemented a transit-only lane on southbound Burlington Avenue leading to the Heart of America Bridge during the closure of the Paseo Bridge for repairs in the summer of 2005. Use of a lane of traffic allowing pub-

lic transit vehicles to move freely and ahead of regular vehicular traffic had never been done in Missouri. The **RTA** played a significant role in this effort by bringing together representatives of MoDOT and the KCATA to get MoDOT's approval for this application.

Additionally, Mayor Bruns offered a warm welcome to the **RTA** for holding its annual meeting for the first time in the northland. Other elected officials from around the region in attendance were Trent Skaggs of the Missouri House of Representatives; Deb Hermann and Al Brooks of the Kansas City, Missouri City Council; Councilmembers Betty Hall, Bettie Miller and Lisa Ronning from North Kansas City; Phil Perry of the Mission, Kansas City Council; Councilmembers Nick King and Coni Hadden from Liberty; Eugene Standifer of the Jackson County Legislature; and staff representatives from the offices of Kansas City, Missouri Councilman John Fairfield, Kansas City, Missouri Mayor Kay Barnes and United States Congressman Sam Graves.

The **RTA** presented the second annual Daniel P. Bishop Friend of Transit Award to Mayor Bruns in recognition of his innovative contribution to an area of transit service previously uncharted in Missouri. The Mayor provided an inspiring address after accepting the award. He reminded us of the extensive level of regional service that existed in the first half of the 20th century. A service, known as the Interurban, ran through North Kansas City as it headed to St. Joseph, Missouri.

The Board of Directors reappointed five current members and welcomed two new members. The new members are David Doyle and Mike Kelley.

Major RTA Corporate Sponsors:

Heros: Commerce Bank

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Former Mayor and Governor from Brazil Speaks to large crowds in KC

Hundreds of people in the Kansas City area, including several key elected and civic leaders, had the pleasure to hear Mr. Jaime Lerner address the key issues of mobility, sustainability and identity for cities in a series of talks on May 22nd and 23rd.

Mr. Lerner, a three-term Mayor of the City of Curitiba and two-term Governor of the State of Parana in Brazil, is a visionary architect who transformed his home city of Curitiba into a showcase for the world for its state of the art bus rapid transit (BRT) system and its use of open green spaces to create a more livable environment.

In a city with a population much larger than the Kansas City metropolitan area, Lerner led the people and businesses in Curitiba to invest in a BRT system that now carries over 2 million people a day (the BRT buses normally run at 1 minute intervals and 30 second intervals during peak hours), a recycling program that involves over 70% of the citizens and the conversion of properties from industrial hazards to useful green spaces.

Mr. Lerner emphasized what he called the "Equation of Core Responsibilities". This "equation" involves identifying and allocating the specific roles government, business and private citizens need to play in order to accomplish a city's goals. He often used very creative solutions to this equation.

Listen to his archived interview on KCUR's Up To Date with Steve Kraske from May 23 at www.kcur.org/upto-date. **RTA** Chairman Mark McDowell also takes part in this interview.

July Newsletter:

Get out of the car and onto the Kansas City Trolley for summer fun.

Regional Investment Fund Legislation

The Missouri General Assembly passed SB 825 and it now awaits the Governor's signature to become law. This legislation allows voters to decide on dedicated funding for transportation. This is not only exciting news, but almost unbelievable. A piece of legislation, no matter how simple or "inexpensive" to the State, seldom passes during its session of original introduction. Many thanks to Senator Chris Koster for his leadership and skilled statesmanship in sponsoring and carrying this measure from start to finish. It is also important to recognize representative Bryan Pratt for carrying this legislation in the House.

The new Regional Investment Fund created by this law puts Missouri one very big step closer to making the **Smart Moves** transit plan a reality for the citizens of our community. Hopefully this law acts as an impetus to the elected leaders in Kansas to join Missouri and enact a similar law during the 2007 session in Topeka. It is important to mention the great effort and leadership of Representative David Huff during the 2006 session in Topeka. He sponsored the House bill and despite opposition kept the measure alive and even got the bill a hearing in the House Taxation Committee. Representative Huff is retiring and will not be returning to Topeka in 2007. We will miss his presence and support in Topeka and we wish him all the best in the years ahead.

The Missouri law allows the Missouri counties in the plan to move ahead alone if the Kansas Legislature does not pass legislation to participate by the end of its 2007 session.

RTA Speakers Bureau

Regular readers of this newsletter know about the **RTA (Regional Transit Alliance)**, the RIF (Regional Investment Fund) and **Smart Moves**. But what about your family, friends, co-workers, company, church group, garden club, social clubs and every other group you belong to?

The first wave of success happened with the passing of the RIF in Missouri. Topeka still needs to pass this legislation to build a truly regional system. Then each county needs to create a ballot initiative to present to the voters. Finally voters need to be educated so they will want to vote **YES** for this sales tax.

The **RTA** is working diligently in all of these areas. We know that everyone in the **RTA** Regional Advocacy Network and many others will continue to contact the politicians as needed to get this on the ballot. However, the longest and most important job is educating the voters. Get them excited about the prospects of a good transit system!

For this purpose **RTA** is firing up the Speakers Bureau. We have speakers who want to come talk to your organizations. This issue is important to the whole community and its success depends on enough people getting excited about it to vote **YES** on a sales tax.

Please contact Greg Lever at www.kctransit.org or 816-471-6808 to organize a speaker for your group. Be sure to get us on your calendar.

IRS Move Fairs

On May 23 and 25, the **RTA** participated in the IRS Move Fairs held at the Bannister Federal Complex and the Rosana Square offices. These events allowed the IRS employees to gather information in preparation for the move to their new, consolidated, downtown Kansas City facility at Pershing and Broadway. The **RTA** highlighted the benefits of using public transit and made employees aware of the proposed regional transit system called **Smart Moves**. **RTA** visited with thousands of employees that were very excited to hear about the potential of an integrated, seamless level of service for the Greater Kansas City area. Hundreds of people signed up on the spot for the Regional Advocacy Network while others pledged to do so online.

Please let the **RTA** know of other opportunities to educate the community about this exciting and critically necessary public transit service.

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TRANSIT NEWS

KANSAS CITY
regional transit
A L L I A N C E

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