

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jackson County Project Partnership Team
FROM: Shawn Dikes, Parsons Brinckerhoff
Patty Gentrup, Shockey Consulting Services
DATE: October 14, 2011
RE: Public Comment on Initial Alternatives

Introduction

To gain public input on how to best enhance transit service in the Kansas City metropolitan area, the Project Partnership Team for the Jackson County Commuter Corridors Alternatives Analysis (JCCCAA) hosted several opportunities for community comment during the week of September 26.

A formal open house was sponsored from 4 to 7 p.m. September 27 at the Regional Innovation Center in Independence. Two complementary open houses were then conducted; one was from 5 to 7 p.m. September 28 at the Mid Continent Public Library in Raytown and the other was from 5 to 7 p.m. September 29 at Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri.

At each event, participants were asked to complete a comment card that asked for input on the project Purpose and Need and the advantages and disadvantages of each of eight initial alternatives. (The card can be found on pages 9 and 10 of this document.) The form was also available online through October 7, 2011. About 160 people attended the open houses. Of those, 79 completed comment cards and three additional responses were received on line.

This memo will summarize the input received through these means.



Summary

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Jackson County Commuter Corridors AA is as follows:

The proposed project will improve transit system performance and usage by addressing the identified transportation needs in the two selected corridors. The project should provide an alternative to operating transit vehicles on congested roadways to improve system reliability, increase the competitiveness of transit for commuting and other purposes and provide added mobility options for the region. This project should also catalyze redevelopment in and near emerging and future transit centric activity centers and increase the regional transit mode share.

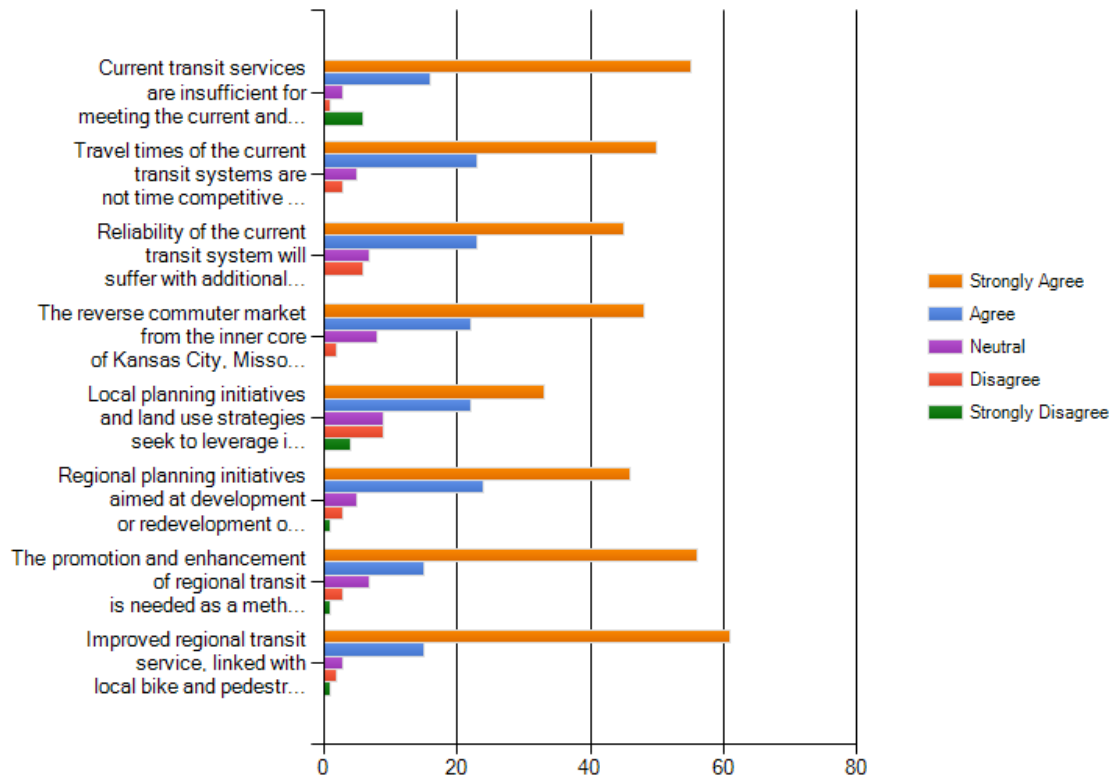
Stakeholders were asked provide their level of agreement with the following eight need statements that support the purpose,

- Current transit services are insufficient for meeting the current and future mobility needs within the corridor(s).
- Travel times of the current transit systems are not time competitive as an alternative to the automobile.
- Reliability of the current transit system will suffer with additional congestion.
- The reverse commuter market from the inner core of Kansas City, Missouri to outer suburban employment areas is largely underserved and underused because the existing systems do not make reverse commuting easy for those who are transit dependent.
- Local planning initiatives and land use strategies seek to leverage improved public transportation services to strengthen communities and foster economic development.
- The promotion and enhancement of regional transit is needed as a method for improving the region's air quality and fostering environmentally sensitive travel alternatives.
- Improved regional transit service, linked with local bike and pedestrian systems, is critical for fostering vibrant walkable communities and improving public health.

Stakeholders overwhelmingly strongly agreed or agreed with the statements as is illustrated in Figure 1 on the next page.



We want to know your level of agreement with the following need statements for enhanced transit in Jackson County.



Respondents were also asked whether there were any other goals for enhanced transit that should be considered. Forty-three responses were received. While the same comment was not provided by a majority of respondents, there were some common themes.

- While a core system is needed, transit within communities also needs to be part of the plan.
- Amtrak should add service.
- The system should support economic development and tourism by serving the airport and activity centers such as hospitals, educational institutions, and other services.
- The opportunity for bike and pedestrian facilities should be emphasized.
- The system should extend into Cass County.

In general, however, the input supports the need statements as can be illustrated in this participant’s comment: “The statements cover a majority of the transportation issues in the Kansas City area—that the current systems are not sufficient and better/affordable/reliable/well-planned/economically and environmentally sound options are needed.”





Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Alternative

After learning about each of the eight alternatives presented at the open houses, respondents were asked to list what they considered the advantages and disadvantages of each of the alternatives.

No Build

Advantages	Disadvantages
The majority of respondents saw no advantages to the no-build option, with the possible exception that it would be low cost. One respondent simply wrote: No! No! No!	Respondents see this as a do-nothing alternative that only continues to contribute to the needs outlined in the Purpose and Need.

Transportation Systems Management

Advantages	Disadvantages
Many of the respondents indicated that TSM should be implemented regardless of which other alternative might be implemented. Reasons for doing so included the low cost, coordinated system to improve efficiency, and improvements to air quality.	Comments related to the TSM alternative were that the improvements are minimal and don't go far enough. Respondents also said this means we continue to rely on the car and the "Carless are still tuck in their own zip code if no highway routes are expanded."



Express Bus

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Respondents indicated that express bus service would be a lower cost alternative, could supplement existing bus service as well as regional rail, and that routes can be easily adjusted.</p>	<p>The very first comment is “isn’t as glamorous or fast as rail.” Comments continue to echo that: “not especially sexy-but who needs sexy:” “no pizzazz;” “nothing different than we have today.”</p> <p>Respondents also questioned whether ridership on busses would actually increase over what they are today.</p> <p>Finally, respondents said traffic congestion would continue and that it has limited environmental benefits</p>

Bus Rapid Transit

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>As with express bus, respondents indicated that lower cost alternative, could supplement existing bus service as well as regional rail, and that routes can be easily adjusted. Some also cited that using the aril ROW is practical and a good re-use of infrastructure.</p>	<p>Again, respondents echoed the disadvantages cities with express bus: Would bus ridership actually increase? This isn’t fuel efficient and doesn’t help with traffic congestion; and that again, it’s not as glamorous. However, one person did say a disadvantage was that it would not support new development.</p>



Street Car/Light Rail Transit

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Advantages of the streetcar/LRT option included that it would be fast, seemed fairly affordable, could enhance development with a variety of stops. Respondents also liked the idea of mixing technologies. One respondent did suggest that the downtown streetcar be evaluated before using it elsewhere.</p>	<p>As is often the case, what is an advantage in one perception is a disadvantage to another. Some respondents thought this option was too expensive, too slow, and too limited.</p>

Regional Rail (I-70 Option)

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Comments regarding the I-70 option for regional rail primarily focused on how fast such a system would be but had many general statements such as “makes sense;” “this could work;” “I like this;” and, “now we’re talking.”</p>	<p>Participants predominantly cited the high cost of this option as a disadvantage. They also voiced concern that the speed generally and also specifically along the common line as well as the inability to get to Union Station.</p>

Regional Rail (23rd Street Option)

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Respondents echoed their comments about the I-70 Option for the 23rd Street option, really focusing on the technology and not the route itself.</p>	<p>The focus of these comments was how the route would affect neighborhoods in addition to the disadvantages voiced for the I-70 option.</p>



Regional Rail (Trench Embankment)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Respondents echoed their comments about the I-70 and 23 rd Street options, really focusing on the technology and not the route itself.	Respondents cited the high cost to make this alternative viable.

Other Comments

When given the opportunity to provide additional comments regarding the alternatives, respondents overwhelmingly shows a support for enhanced transit—not just in Jackson County, but in the region as well. They cited a need for reduced reliance on the automobile and a positive influence on economic development. Below are some sample comments.

- Build it and they will come.
- Good to be looking at alternatives.
- We need to advance transportation alternatives in the region, period.
- I believe with global events, the future costs of transportation will skyrocket. This will cause tremendous hardships. The forethought of this type of system with future communities development and strategic terminals could be a tremendous boom for these communities with these type of systems. A great concept!
- Where does the money come from? It seems only the consultants win. All that said, I think we need to proceed and will support this project.
- Whatever we add to our greater metro transit will be an improvement! A great challenge is selling the idea to a car loving public.
- A very complete study. All we need is money.
- Alternatives 6, 7, 8 are my “dream choices” for future transportation services. Alternative 8 seems to have the last obstacles to construction. Thanks for a good study-looking forward to the rest.

No one was overtly opposed to the alternatives but did raise questions about the alternatives. Sample comments are as follows.

- Concerned about at-grade crossings in Lee’s Summit. Also concerned about location of depot stations, parking and increased traffic to residential areas where track is located. What is true demand of commuter traffic from Pleasant Hill to downtown on a daily, hourly basis?
- Have surveyors surveyed proposal to see if land is accommodating? What is trench embankment? How will the project be funded?



- KC region density issues, lack of a downtown center, only 14 percent of jobs in the CBD, lack of existing rail or right of way into KCMO (last several miles) all make getting FTA funding very difficult for a rail system. High cost, low ridership can sink rail.
- People are in love with commuter rail without understanding how little it would contribute to the region's public transit system. Stick with bus/BRT/streetcar and build from the urban core out. Commuter rail reinforces sprawl, and we don't need more of that. It doesn't do anything for the 80 percent of trips that aren't on commutes.
- The very first light rail train should go to the airport. I can't believe KCI is part of the plan.
- I think the combination of bus, light rail (inner city KC) and commuter rail is the best answer to serve all the needs of KC and eastern Jackson County. I would like to see an alternative that combines the three types of service and see how that might work together.





Jackson County Commuter Corridors Alternatives Analysis
Open House #1- Comment Form

Individual Information

Name _____

Zip Code for where you live _____

Zip Code for where you work _____

Please list some locations of places that you like to go for shopping, dining, entertainment, and other social activities.

We want to know your level of agreement with the following need statements for enhanced transit in Jackson County.

Need Category	Need Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Transportation	Current transit services are insufficient for meeting the current and future mobility needs within the corridor(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Travel times of the current transit system are not time competitive as an alternative to the automobile.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reliability of the current transit system will suffer with additional congestion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The reverse commute market from the inner core of Kansas City, Missouri to outer suburban employment areas is largely underserved and underused because the existing systems do not make reverse commuting easy for those who are transit dependent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic Development & Land Use	Local planning initiatives and land use strategies seek to leverage improved public transportation services to strengthen communities and foster economic development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Regional planning initiatives aimed at development or redevelopment of activity centers and corridors, using transit oriented development strategies, require enhanced transit to catalyze future economic growth and maximize public investment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainability & Livability	The promotion and enhancement of regional transit is needed as a method for improving the region's air quality and fostering environmentally sensitive travel alternatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Improved regional transit service, linked with local bike and pedestrian systems is critical for fostering vibrant walkable communities and improving public health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Are there other needs or goals for enhanced transit in Jackson County that are not included in the statements on page 1? If so, please tell us what they are.

Based on the information that has been provided, please list any advantages and disadvantages you see for each alternative (refer to your handout for maps of the alternatives):

	Advantages	Disadvantages
1 No Build		
2 Transportation Systems Management		
3 Express Bus		
4 Bus Rapid Transit		
5 Streetcar/Light Rail Transit/		
6 Regional Rail: I-70		
7 Regional Rail: 23rd St.		
8 Regional Rail: Trench Embankment		

What other comments do you have about this project?

Submit your comment card by handing it to a project team member today or mail to: Shockey Consulting 7914 Quivira Rd., Suite A Lenexa, KS 66215. Or email to Patty@shockeyconsulting.com

