

ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
COORDINATING COMMITTEE
1ST Floor Conference Room – 12:00 Noon
September 22, 2011

Voting members present:

Jerry Russell, Chairperson	Citizen Representative
Donna Jean Boyer	City of St. Joseph
Byron Myers, Sr.	City of St. Joseph
Dan Hausman	Buchanan County
Barbara LaBass	City of St. Joseph
J. Bruce Woody	City of St. Joseph

Staff members present:

Andy Clements	City of St. Joseph
Ty Nagle	City of St. Joseph
Elaine Buckner	City of St. Joseph
Dustin Smith	City of St. Joseph

Others present:

Shannon Kuselik	MoDOT District #1
Kenneth Reeder	Citizen
Angela McLaury	Citizen

OPENING REPORTS

Chairperson Russell opened the meeting.

Roll Call. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes. Mr. Hausman moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2010 meeting as submitted. Mr. Myers seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Opportunity for public comment. Ms. Angela McLaury said she appreciates public transportation and is interested in seeing how it can be improved. One of the issues with her riding the bus is the transfers. Free transfers are good, but they are not long enough to do what is needed before catching the next bus. Mr. Clements said there is a transit operations study starting up with public involvement activities next week. It includes an open house at the bus station from 7-8 in the morning and 2-4 in the afternoon of September 27th. He encouraged her to attend and share her ideas. He will also relay her comments.

Mr. Woody said the topic is on the agenda for a City Council work session on October 28th to review the goals and process by which the operations study will occur. Chairperson Russell asked Ms. McLaury to encourage other riders to provide input at the public meeting.

Mr. Smith asked about the current transfer time. Mr. Clements responded that east-west transfers are free and take a 5-10 minute wait. A new ticket must be purchased when changing directions. Ms. McLaury has a good idea for enticing more riders by cutting the second full fare ticket, perhaps by 50%.

OLD BUSINESS – No old business was brought before the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Nagle introduced himself to the committee.

TEA (Transportation Equity Act). Mr. Nagle said the Act became law in 1998. Mr. Woody said the last two years have seen 6 month updates to the bill. Changes are set to stay this way until the next presidential election because there is no stability in the system. The most recent bill is proposed to be funded until March 2012. It is important to the country to focus on a balanced budget. The trust fund for transportation has been upside down for four years. The idea is that revenue needs to be tied to the revenue stream, not a trust fund. It is possible to see a 35% cut in all federal programs. Mr. Clements said the DOT's have done a good job of explaining what it means to them. A 35% cut will stop projects they are now doing. It will reduce MoDOT's services to maintenance only.

Mr. Kuselik said STIP projects will continue but major projects will stop. Mr. Clements noted that Kansas can go three months before shutting their programs down. Missouri could see a rescission take place in the middle of a project, even though funds have been obligated. St. Joseph would see a 35% reduction in FTA transit funds. There are various ways to react if that happens: 1) use the money in our capital reserve fund; 2) reduce services; or 3) shut the system down 9 months into the year. He encouraged contacting senators and congressmen to keep funding at a static level. Ms. Boyer commented that after passing an increased tax in St. Joseph to help subsidize the system, she doesn't want to tell the public we have to cut back. Mr. Clements said Kansas City and St. Louis passed a one-half cent sales tax and it will shut them down too.

Safe Routes to Schools. Mr. Nagle reported he has been doing site assessments with the St. Joseph School District. Plans for Wathena, Elwood and Savannah schools have been completed. It will take another 18 months to complete St. Joseph's study. Ms. Boyer asked how Safe Routes to Schools tie in with the Police Department's grants for sidewalks in school areas. Mr. Nagle said it is the same program but ties into the Police Department. Mr. Clements said the Police Department is working from the perspective of speeding and traffic safety.

Ms. Boyer asked if there is a program to help people construct sidewalks. Mr. Clements said once a plan is in place, sidewalks can be constructed in a 4 block diameter to the school with 100% grant money. Mr. Nagle said the plan encourages walking to school. Mr. Clements told about a "walking school bus" project where parents walk with a group of students. There are grants for that project.

TIP Amendment. Mr. Nagle described various administrative changes related to dates and the addition of text for federal funding. Specifically he noted that Rt. AC funding was moved a year closer

to 2012. **Mr. Myers moved to approve the amendment. Ms. Boyer seconded the motion, motion was unanimously approved.**

Bike to Work Day. Mr. Nagle reported on the May 20th event which had 43 participants. MoDOT had the largest number of employee riders (9) and the City of St. Joseph followed with (6). This is the third year for the national event, which continues to grow in popularity. Hy-Vee and East Hills Mall donated 100 gift cards. Mr. Clements noted that bike racks on the transit buses are used 15% of the service hours, mostly during the Nite Ride program where people are biking to get to the bus and using the bus to complete their trip to work.

Rail to Trail. Mr. Nagle said 8 firms submitted proposals for professional transportation planning services. The committee had a tie vote for the top two firms. They re-voted and selected Patty Banks of Kansas City. They have considerable experience and very good references. Mr. Clements said they were the consultant on the KC Metro Green project.

The rail to trail project would look at the Union Pacific Railroad from St. Joseph to Wathena and future implications over the river to St. Joseph and on to Savannah. The intent is to analyze the suitability of the former rail corridor for a trail system. Mr. Myers said rails and ties have been pulled. Mr. Clements said the Missouri side was abandoned in the mid 1980's, but the Kansas side has not been abandoned. It is actually easier if the property has gone back to the property owner. He has been told that the property in Andrew County is all fee simple with only a couple of property owners to deal with. A consultant will sort it out. Mr. Nagle noted that major issues will be two homes built on railroad right of way and a rock quarry built around it. Mr. Clements said the study should be complete by July 1, 2012. He asked Mr. Kuselik to serve on the steering committee.

Transit Study. Olson & Associates was selected for a study to optimize the same service we now offer. Public comments were taken. 1,500 on/off passenger counts were taken, as well as a 3-question survey taken of 700-800 riders. The questions were: 1) why did you choose a bus for today's trip? 2) what was the purpose of today's trip? and 3) did you have sidewalks on your way to the bus?

Staff has held weekly teleconferences with Olson. September 27 and 28 is the stakeholder kick off meeting and open house at the Transit Center. Additionally, a meeting will be held with all neighborhood associations on October 14th. Lastly, a presentation of the study results will be made to the MPO board, then the City Council. Implementation will depend on the City Council's direction.

Non-Motorized Count Project Update. Mr. Nagle said three more volunteers are needed to conduct the 2-day count in October. One day falls in mid-week in the evening and the second one on Saturday afternoon. Mr. Clements said the counts are taking place nationally on the same days. Counts will be taken on the trail system and areas with no sidewalks, i.e. Cook and the Belt. The Northwest Parkway sees 400,000 trips a year on that system. The Belt and Cook averages 300 walkers a day. It is amazing to see what is going on when you sit there counting. The counts will get more meaningful after 4-5 years of taking them. Chairperson Russell noted that the sidewalks along Heartland Road are constantly in use. Ms. Boyer said she walks that route regularly and wishes the sidewalks were wider. Ms. LaBass agreed, that bicyclists come up behind walkers and walkers don't hear them. Mr. Clements said more time needs to be spent on teaching bike etiquette. The complaint he frequently hears is "Why aren't you building the trails faster? and "Why aren't they wider?" He said the national average width is 8-12' (ASHTO standards) and ours are 10'.

Next Meeting Time. Mr. Nagle said the next meeting falls on Thanksgiving Day. He suggested it be held one week early. All agreed.

OTHER/ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 17th, 2011 at 12:00 noon. Lunch will be served.

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