

AIMS Coordinators Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2013

Host: Johnson County Transit

Location: Johnson County Transit Center

Presentations:

Shawn Strate – Transportation Planner

Shawn started the meeting by presenting an overview of current Johnson County Transit operations, initiatives, and infrastructure.

Items covered include:

- The JO's current operating routes, including commuter services, para-transit services, and the developmental support program (SWIFT).
- Ridership – Shawn presented JO ridership figures for the past decade, showing a significant increase in ridership despite service reductions in the past few years.
- Recent developments – Several changes have occurred over the past year, including service reductions and the accompanying streamlining of routes, fare increases, new Xpress & Connex services, and several infrastructure improvements.
- Regional planning initiatives – Transit works closely with the other municipalities that comprise the Kansas City Metro region (KCATA, KCSA).
- K-10 connector – The JO's most popular route services KU, JCCC, and KU-Edwards campuses.
- JO Xpress – Buses can drive on the shoulder of I-35 in certain areas and situations. Transit would like to expand this to other areas in addition to I-35.
- JO Connex – This was an update of the old Metcalf-Plaza route, with many changes and improvements funded by a federal TIGER grant. The route still runs along Metcalf, with new and enhanced stations, and continues to the Plaza and UMKC.
- Infrastructure – Transit has invested heavily in passenger infrastructure in the past few years. Several of the highlights are listed below:
 - Xpress transit stations
 - New Mission Transit Center
 - New curbside stations, shelters, real-time signs, & information kiosks
 - Bike & Pedestrian improvements

Travis Smith - Applications Development Analyst

Travis presented the final 2/3 of the meeting in regards to Transit's efforts and initiatives using technology, including mapping and GIS; as well as planning for the future.

Technology has drastically improved Transit's operations over the past several years by providing greater efficiencies for drivers and riders alike.

Technology highlights:

- Driver tablets
- Wi-Fi
 - Wi-Fi is free to all riders. A public announcement is pending, and Transit hopes that this will be a large selling point for workers to use the JO for their commute (get work done, be efficient while commuting).
- Passenger Counters – Uses a laser to count riders. Transitioned from driver using paper tablet.
- Digital signs and display boards – Greatly improves rider awareness of schedules, timing, and stops.
- Web portal & Mobile App – Can see bus locations in real time, as well as anticipated arrival.
- Traffic Signal Priority – This uses the same technology as emergency vehicles to “reserve” a green light. It allows buses to maintain schedules as well as assists Transit in scheduling routes with greater confidence.
- Queue Jumps – At a couple of locations on Metcalf, buses can use a magnet to adjust the traffic signal so that the bus has the right-of-way through the intersection.

Mapping & GIS

Travis provided several examples from the U.S. and World of popular transit maps. Travis explained that when mapping transit, topology maps (schematic design) are the standard instead of cartographic-based maps. They are looking to change to a subway design.

Most of Travis's paper maps illustrated that Johnson County & Kansas City lag other metro areas in the U.S. in the area of transit. The examples also illustrated some important points when mapping transit, such as street network minimization and color limitation.

Web mapping – There is a definite need for web maps as the JO's current site is the 4th busiest in the county (Appraiser, Treasurer, AIMS).

- Jo Trax – Live AVL vehicle tracking...no dedicated app currently, but is mobile ready.

- RouteShout – Quick way to get route info, optimized for mobile.
- Google Transit, KCATA, city-specific viewers
 - Travis pointed out the technology has drastically changed transit in just a few short years.
- Mobile apps – There are many available (Google Play, App Store). Transit has taken the position of using others that are available, rather than developing their own dedicated app. Travis also showed the Walk Score app.

Planning

Travis finished the presentation by looking to the future of transit in the region. The following point encapsulated this quite well: “Transit is much larger than bus service...it is heavily integrated with Infrastructure, Planning, Economic Development, Sustainability, Emergency Services, and Redevelopment.” Planning highlights include:

- Senior and Para-transit increasing due to aging population
- Demographic changes are changing transit – aging population, more low-income families, increasing fuel prices, and youth transitioning from owning vehicles.
- Employment trends – Not everyone works in downtown Kansas City, so better service is needed for employment centers in Johnson County.
- Multi-Modal planning – Integrating bus service with other forms of transportation – walking/biking, street car, ride share, etc.
- Economic Development – Some of the challenges of selling transit to policymakers were presented, largely due to a ‘Suburban’ mindset.
- Environmental impact in planning
 - Air Quality, Fuel consumption, Vehicle cost, Pavement maintenance, Parking cost
- GIS Analysis in planning – used to identify origins/destinations and areas lacking service.
- Future Transit initiatives were also discussed.
 - Stop & Sign inventory, Mobile apps, Route enhancements, Metro collaboration, Mobile ticketing, AVL/GPS