



DISCUSSION

January 19, 2011

BACKGROUND

In the 2010 State of the County Address, Chairman Surbaugh proposed the formation of the Strategic Transit Action Recommendation Taskforce (START). The charge of the taskforce was to study the approved Johnson County Transit Strategic Plan, to evaluate service options, and make recommendations on funding strategies (including long-term financing tools) for a county-wide transit system and other transportation and related linear amenities. The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) was apprised of this taskforce at both the October 2009 and April 2010 Transit Committee of the Whole meetings and formally agreed to the Taskforce at its May 6, 2010 Meeting.

The Johnson County Transportation Council developed, and the BoCC endorsed, a rolling Strategic Plan to build a comprehensive transit system to serve Johnson County. In addition, several of the member cities have adopted redevelopment plans that have transit as a core element. Detailing a funding plan, that is inclusive of initiation and maintenance of the Johnson County Transit (JCT) Strategic Plan that was approved by the BoCC in May 2008 is a critical function of the success of service implementation. In addition, clarity of jurisdictional responsibilities needs to occur, such as determining who will be responsible for what specific system components. Furthermore, the Taskforce evaluated other transportation related infrastructure and related linear amenities that complement and affect the transit system.

TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP

The taskforce was comprised of 24 Johnson County residents. To ensure broad representation of community interests and key stakeholders, the county Chair recommended that each Commissioner make one district appointment and that there be adequate representation by the following groups: convention and visitors bureau, chambers of commerce, environmental interest groups, disabled and elderly populations, development community, financial institutions and civic and professional organizations. The membership also includes three appointments from the Council of Mayors, and appointments from the cities of Overland Park, Mission and Prairie Village. It was further recommended that at least three of the 24 members should be from the Johnson County Transportation Council. These nomination and appointment procedures conform to the appointment policies adopted by the Board. The Transportation Council Chair acted as START Chairman and is deemed as an "ex officio member". The County Manager's Office, in partnership with the Johnson County Transit Department provided administrative and operational support for the committee. The Taskforce membership was approved by the BoCC at their July 15, 2010 meeting.

This report was the result of the six month START process. START has submitted to the Board this final report outlining its recommendations on short and long term funding strategies for a comprehensive transit system, transportation infrastructure and related linear amenities. With its work completed, the taskforce will automatically sunset.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan was developed jointly by the Johnson County Transportation Council (Transportation Council) and the staff of Johnson County Transit (JCT). The Strategic Plan is a living document, updated annually, to reflect changing realities and changing demographics. This rolling plan outlines strategies to address the demands of and for transit in Johnson County. Although the JCT's Strategic Plan has been fully embraced by JCT staff, JCTC, and the Board of County Commissioners, the implementation timeline and process, as well as the success of the plan, are dependent upon short-term and long-term funding sources. While the START process has generated a recommendation for near-term funding strategies, the Strategic Plan remains the county's vision for serving the transit needs of Johnson County. The 2011 update of the Strategic Plan will incorporate the recommendations from START and will outline a revised implementation plan in greater detail.

PROCESS

A series of 10 meetings were held from August 5, 2010 to January 5, 2011 at Sylvester Powell Community Center in Mission, Kansas. In order to ensure that everybody in the group was well-informed regarding transit services and needs, early meetings were focused on providing background information on a variety of local and regional transportation topics as well as outlining the issues to be addressed by the taskforce. Several meetings featured a facilitated session focusing on team-building and leadership within the group, defining issues and goals, and creating a framework for forming recommendations. The last phase of the process was dedicated to working through issues, forming recommendations, and creating a report and plan to present to the county.

Each taskforce member brought a unique viewpoint and set of ideas to the process. While there were disagreements about the details of building a high-quality full-service transit system in Johnson County, the Taskforce agreed that providing transit services is an important function of the county and contributes to the community's quality of life.

At the first meeting, Annabeth Surbaugh, Johnson County Board Chair, spoke to the Taskforce about the importance of a balanced transportation system for Johnson County as a "community of choice." Chuck Ferguson, Deputy Transportation Director of Johnson County, provided a background on transportation in the greater Kansas City metropolitan area and Johnson County Transit. Steve Klika, Taskforce Chair, provided an overview of major service opportunities as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The next series of meetings included presentations on a number of local, regional, and international transit-related topics, including:

- Anton “Tony” Nelessen, Principal of A. Nelessen Associates, gave a presentation on transit systems around the world and how they interact with and sustain livable communities, with a focus on what Johnson County can do to improve transit services.
- Tom Gerend, Mid-America Regional Council, presented an overview of the Transportation Outlook 2040 process and final plan. At a later meeting, Gerend also presented data on transit systems in other cities and regions, including how these systems are funded.
- David Peel, Johnson County, presented maps on integrating trails and transit routes in the county.
- Jeff Alpert, Leawood Park Place developer, presented the progress of the ongoing development in Leawood.
- Bill Ebel, City of Overland Park, presented Vision Metcalf and future transit-oriented projects along the Metcalf corridor and other parts of the city.
- Martin Rivarola, City of Mission, presented components of the East and West Gateway plans and updated the taskforce on current projects.
- Cliff Middleton, Johnson County Parks and Recreation, presented information on greenway trails planning in the county.
- Aaron Bartlett, Mid-America Regional Council gave an overview of regional bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts.
- Kent Lage, Johnson County Public Works and Infrastructure, provided an overview of the County Assistance Road System (CARS) Program and how it funds transportation projects throughout the county.

Andy Huckaba of Huckaba and Associates led the Taskforce through a series of exercises designed to improve cooperation, communication, and leadership. In an interactive process with taskforce members, Huckaba focused the taskforce on the county’s transit needs and opportunities, including the need to invest in improved transit service to meet future needs and the feasibility of potential financing alternatives (economically, politically, etc.).

After another review of the JCT Strategic Plan, the taskforce directed JCT staff to provide additional research and data to assist in the formation of recommendations. The taskforce also directed JCT staff to create a draft report and phasing plan for consideration based on a set of guidelines, which included a renewed focus on passenger amenities, information-sharing, marketing, and making the system more comfortable and easier to use. The final two meetings consisted of finalizing the taskforce’s recommendations and creating a final report to present to the Board of County Commissioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The taskforce determined that recommending full funding of the Strategic Plan over the next seven years was not a viable option at this time. The group decided upon splitting the financing and implementation of future services into a number of phases that are smaller and more incremental than envisioned in the Strategic Plan.

A phased implementation outline was developed by the taskforce to demonstrate this incremental approach to improving transit in Johnson County. This outline is much more conservative than the implementation strategies in the Strategic Plan, acknowledging the current financial and political realities in 2011. While the Strategic Plan still serves as the county's transit vision and will be updated in 2011 to reflect the results of the START process, the approach discussed by the taskforce presents a near-term funding strategy based on the following principles:

- Service will be implemented in a multi-year, phased approach.
- Add and improve passenger amenities such as shelters, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian infrastructure, and information technology.
- Improve the quality and increase marketing of existing core services; incrementally expand the system in later phases.
- JCT staff will provide cost estimates, reasonable funding options, and accountability measures prior to the implementation of each phase.

Each phase in the following outline has been designed to meet the above guidelines and is designed to be a multi-year process, but can be implemented more quickly if funding allows. Each phase includes both capital and operating costs, with the bulk of capital costs being initiated early in each phase to provide the infrastructure and resources for expanding service.

Compared to the JCT Strategic Plan (FY 2010), the following implementation plan:

- Provides increased funding for passenger amenities but fewer hours of service.
- Provides for a more incremental expansion of the transit system over a longer period of time.
- Does not get the system to "full build-out" as programmed in the Strategic Plan.
- Hours include limited ADA service, but do not include flex route (Local Links) services.
- Net Costs listed are incremental (the cost listed for each phase does not include operating costs of existing system or previous phases)

The net cost to Johnson County is a conservative estimate because it assumes 20% federal funding for capital projects after Phase 1. Capital projects could potentially be as much as 50% federally funded, which would decrease the amount of county support needed.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OUTLINE

Phase 1

Summary Improve amenities along core routes within the county, including Metcalf, Shawnee Mission Parkway, 75th and Quivira. Permanently fund new services initiated in 2010. Add service to existing core routes and new circulator routes that provide access to jobs in Johnson County.

<i>Route</i>	<i>Service Additions</i>
Metcalf-Plaza	Expand service, adjust midday service and permanently fund 2010 additions.
I-35 Express	Expand service, improve travel time in peak hours, add reverse-commute trips.
College Blvd	Expand service, new circulator route connecting North/South routes to College.
75th-Quivira	No new service, adjust ADA midday service and permanently fund 2010 additions.
State Ave Connector	New route connecting State Avenue BRT with Mission Transit Center.
Amenities	Build on TIGER projects by improving stations, signage, shelters, adding real-time information, and other amenities at major stops, transfer points, and park-and-ride facilities.

Net Cost to Johnson County: \$8.2 million (Operating: \$2.6 million; Capital: \$5.6 million)

Phase 2

Summary Add service to core routes and begin peak-hour service on new routes that access jobs and neighborhoods within the core of the county. Begin improving amenities and service for routes that connect to the system's spine established in Phase 1.

<i>Route</i>	<i>Service Additions</i>
Metcalf-Plaza	Expand service, including expanded evening, midday, and ADA service.
I-35 Express Routes	Expand service, including reverse-commute trips that connect to local jobs.
College Blvd	Expand service, including non-peak hour trips to enable greater access.
75th-Quivira	Expand service, including midday, evening, and ADA service.
95th Street	Initial phase of new route connecting Lenexa, Oak Park Mall, and Metcalf South to State Line.
87th Street	Initial phase of new route connecting Lenexa, Downtown OP and eastern JoCo.
Nall Avenue	Add service to existing route; extend to 119th or 135th to improve connectivity.
Mission Road	Initial phase of new route connecting jobs and neighborhoods from KU-Med to 119th.
Amenities	Identify new park-and-ride locations; continue to improve stations and signage on core routes. Work with businesses on College Blvd on passenger amenity improvements.

Net Cost to Johnson County: \$6.4 million (Operating: \$2.3 million; Capital: \$4.1 million)

Phase 3

Summary Expand the reach of the transit throughout the county and region, providing access to more neighborhoods and jobs at more times of day. Expand real-time signage throughout the system and identify new park-and-ride opportunities.

<i>Route</i>	<i>Service Additions</i>
Metcalfe-Plaza	Expand service, including expanded evening, midday, and ADA service.
College Blvd	Expand service for non-peak hour trips to enable access for more employees.
Quivira	Expand service on Quivira route; change route to local service and split 75th-Quivira route.
Shawnee Mission	Expand peak-hour service connecting Shawnee to the Mission transit center.
119th Street	Initial phase of new route connecting Olathe to Leawood or south KC.
I-435 Express Routes	Initial phase of new express service on I-435 connecting major employers & destinations.
Downtown Circulator	Add new route connecting local JoCo local routes to downtown KCMO.
Amenities	Continue to improve stations and park-and-rides, expand real-time signage throughout the system, and add enhanced stations at major transfer points as new routes develop.

Net Cost to Johnson County: \$7.7 million (Operating: \$2.5 million; Capital: \$5.2 million)

Phase 4

Summary Expand service on the routes initiated in previous phases, adding peak, midday and evening hours and continuing to improve amenities as development occurs and ridership increases.

<i>Route</i>	<i>Service Additions</i>
Metcalfe-Plaza	Expand evening, midday, and ADA service on this core transit corridor.
College Blvd	Expand non-peak hour trips to enable access for more employees.
N/S and E/W routes	Expand service (including ADA) on 95th, 87th, Nall, Mission, Quivira, SMP, and 119th.
I-435 Express	Build on service initiated in Phase 3, adding additional peak hours to serve express commuters in both directions.
West JoCo N/S route	Initial phase of new route (undetermined alignment) connecting Shawnee, Lenexa, and Olathe.
135th Street	Initial phase of new route connecting Olathe to State Line.
Johnson Drive	Initial phase of new route (area already served by other routes going to Mission transit center).
Amenities	Provide signage and shelters at major stops along new routes; continue to add real-time signage at major destinations.

Net Cost to Johnson County: \$11.2 million (Operating: \$3.6 million; Capital: \$7.6 million)

Phase 5

Summary Expand service on routes initiated in early phases. Make the system more accessible to non-work trips and increase service frequency. Continue to improve amenities and infrastructure at bus stops and park-and-rides.

Route	Service Additions
N/S and E/W local routes	Expand service (including ADA) on 95th, 87th, Nall, Mission, SMP, 119th, West JoCo, 135th, and Johnson Drive routes.
I-435 Express	Expand service, potentially adding weekday and evening hours.
Metcalf Local	Initial phase of new route with local service, creating a high-frequency transit corridor on Metcalf, combined with Metcalf-Plaza and Metcalf-Downtown routes.
Amenities	Add and improve park-and-ride facilities along the I-435 corridor, provide signage along routes and shelters at major transfer points to other routes.

Net Cost to Johnson County: \$11.6 million (Operating: \$4.1 million; Capital: \$7.6 million)

Total Net Cost to Johnson County (after completion of all phases):

- Operating Costs: \$15.1 million annually
- Capital Costs: \$30.1 million

Net costs are based on 20% federal funding for capital projects and 10% farebox revenue for operating costs. As improvements are made and ridership increases, Johnson County Transit would be in a better position to leverage more federal investment.

FINANCING CONCEPTS

To support the taskforce in evaluating various funding options and scenarios, a Finance sub-committee was created to provide detailed information on potential funding sources and the feasibility of each option. A number of financing options were evaluated, including:

- Mill Levy Increase
- Motor Vehicle Registration Fee
- Specific User Fee – Transportation Utility Fee
- New Gas Sales Tax
- Local Sales Tax Increase
- Excise Tax – Countywide
- Transportation Development District
- Community Improvement District

The sub-committee created three initial funding scenarios that were based on conservative federal and state funding projections. The funding sources range from sales and use taxes, general government support and motor vehicle fees. Very few transit properties that were evaluated during the START process use mill levy support to fund extensive transit systems.

To initiate funding of transit services, the following options have been discussed and submitted to the County Commissioners for consideration:

- The use of county reserves and the reallocation of existing resources should be considered for near-term capital investments and operating costs.

- Gradually increase the county's mill levy and dedicate this funding to be used for transit projects and operations. The benefit of a mill levy increase is that it is controlled by the county and does not require state legislative approval. However, this funding may not be a consistent source of dedicated funding for transit, based on future budgeting processes. An increase of one mill would generate approximately \$7.3 million in annual revenue, which could be used for both operating and capital expenses.
- Initiate a county-wide motor vehicle registration fee. This fee would require state legislative approval and can be used to fund operations as well as provide a local match for capital projects receiving federal funding. However, this option could represent a dedicated source for transit funding, at a relatively low cost to each car owner. A \$10 registration fee would generate approximately \$5.5 million in revenue.

CONCLUSION

The members of the Strategic Transit Action Recommendation Taskforce generously contributed their valuable time and effort to the process of creating a transit vision for the county. A wealth of transportation and development-related information was presented and thoroughly analyzed at each meeting, with strong participation by all taskforce members. Due to the complexity of the issues revolving around transit, there were many diverse ideas on the best way to move the county forward.

The group agreed that it was important to work toward improving mobility options in Johnson County. This report is a tool for the County Commission to utilize in considering how to provide a consistent funding source for future transit improvements and operations. The taskforce feels strongly about the importance of continuing the growth, improvement and stability of the transit system to meet the needs and demands of the future growth of Johnson County. While this report and presentation to the BoCC on January 27th formally concludes the START process, the continued public education and marketing of transit services and benefits is critical to the success of the system. The taskforce intends for their work to spark a public discussion of transit and to guide future marketing and planning efforts.

In addition to the START members who contributed their time and effort, the following organizations contributed to this process by providing useful information and making presentations at START meetings:

- Johnson County Board of County Commissioners
- Johnson County Transit, Planning, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works & Infrastructure departments, and the County Manager's Office
- Mid-America Regional Council
- City of Overland Park
- City of Mission
- City of Lenexa
- Andy Huckaba, Huckaba and Associates
- Anton "Tony" Nelessen, A. Nelessen Associates
- Leawood Park Place
- Members of other organizations and the general public who attended meetings