

INSIDE LANE

KANSAS CITY AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION

New Design Expected To Boost Image

Three-color scheme chosen for fleet

Metro buses are going to have more "pop."

That was Lynda Thompson's immediate reaction upon seeing a low-floor bus sporting the new paint scheme for the entire Metro fleet. The ATA graphic artist estimates that she and designers from a private agency developed more than 100 variations, before

the blue-teal-silver pattern received final approval.

"I like it," concluded Thompson. "It looks clean and sharp. 'The Metro' jumps out at you more."

The decision to liven up the fleet's appearance coincides with the order of new buses. Thirty-two low-floors will be delivered this fall after getting the customized ATA paint job.

"We spent a great deal of time to find a scheme that would be lively and is workable," said ATA Marketing Director Cindy Baker.

While Thompson fine-tuned designs on the computer, the Body Shop began applying a few of the more popular designs to the 9900 bus.

"You can't

just go by the drawings," Body Shop paint specialist Richard Mynster said. "You need to see the design actually on the bus, so we've been painting this bus off and on for three months. Paint it, sand it and paint it again."

JUNE UNVEILING Eventually, every Metro bus will receive a complete makeover and feature the new look, which prominently displays the agency's arrow logo and its website, www.kcata.org. The ATA will unveil the paint scheme in June.

"This cosmetic change should be more attention-getting," Baker said. "Our buses will have an appealing, *new* appearance."

"We're going to play up the new scheme in a TV commercial."

■ see **PAINT** on pg. 8



Lynda
Thompson

Richard
Mynster

INSIDE LANE

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All employees and their families are invited to attend annual event June 22.

This is a monthly employee publication published by the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, 1200 E. 18th St., Kansas City, Mo. Comments and contributions are welcome. Contact the ATA Marketing Department at (816) 346-0368.

Transportation measure on Aug. 6 ballot

Bill passes both chambers
by a healthy margin

That was close. Time was running out when the Missouri House began debating a comprehensive state transportation bill May 17, but the measure eventually cleared both chambers of the legislature with healthy margins.

During the legislative session's final hour, the House passed the \$511 million funding package 101-50. The Senate had already voted for the measure 26-6 about 2 1/2 hours earlier.

Getting a statewide transportation bill to emerge from the legislative process in Jefferson City has been a 10-year political struggle, but only half the battle.

Now the voters will have the final say. They will cast ballots Aug. 6 to either approve or reject the proposal, which calls for investing about \$63 million annually in public transit, rail, ports and airports.

ATA's portion of this new revenue could be as much as \$10 to \$12 million a year more than it currently receives from the state, which is \$2.4 million.

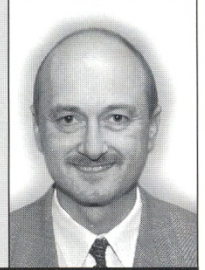
These new funds will not solve all of our long-range financial concerns, but would prevent a need for far deeper service cuts in 2003. Simply put, they would have a stabilizing impact on the ATA. They would enable the ATA to maintain our current service levels and essentially provide us the time we need to develop a more comprehensive regional funding mechanism.

The depth of the transportation bill – with funding to fix crumbling roads and bridges, bolster support for transit and allot \$6.3 million for ethanol and biodiesel producers – should appeal to a wide range of voters, from both rural and urban regions.

I think Rep. Don Koller, the bill's sponsor

FROM THE GM'S DESK

By MARK HUFFER
ATA
General Manager



in the House, said it best. *The Kansas City Star* quoted the Summersville Democrat: "This is not going to be a miracle cure, but it's going to do a lot of things for transportation in this state."

The bill does represent a giant step forward in improving Missouri's investment in public transit, which is currently less than \$7 million a year statewide.

We cannot take anything for granted. It is never easy to get voters to raise their taxes. The \$511 million will be funded through two tax hikes: a half-cent boost in the state's 4.225 sales tax and a 4-cent jump in the fuel tax, increasing it to 21 cents a gallon.

The bill's proponents and opponents have just two months to get their messages out. We will soon be announcing education efforts on this bill so that all of our employees can be knowledgeable and informed on this important issue.

For those who are so inclined, we encourage you to get involved and inform others of the importance of this bill. Don't be shy about reminding people that there is a crucial issue on the ballot Aug. 6. Ask if they're at least registered to vote.

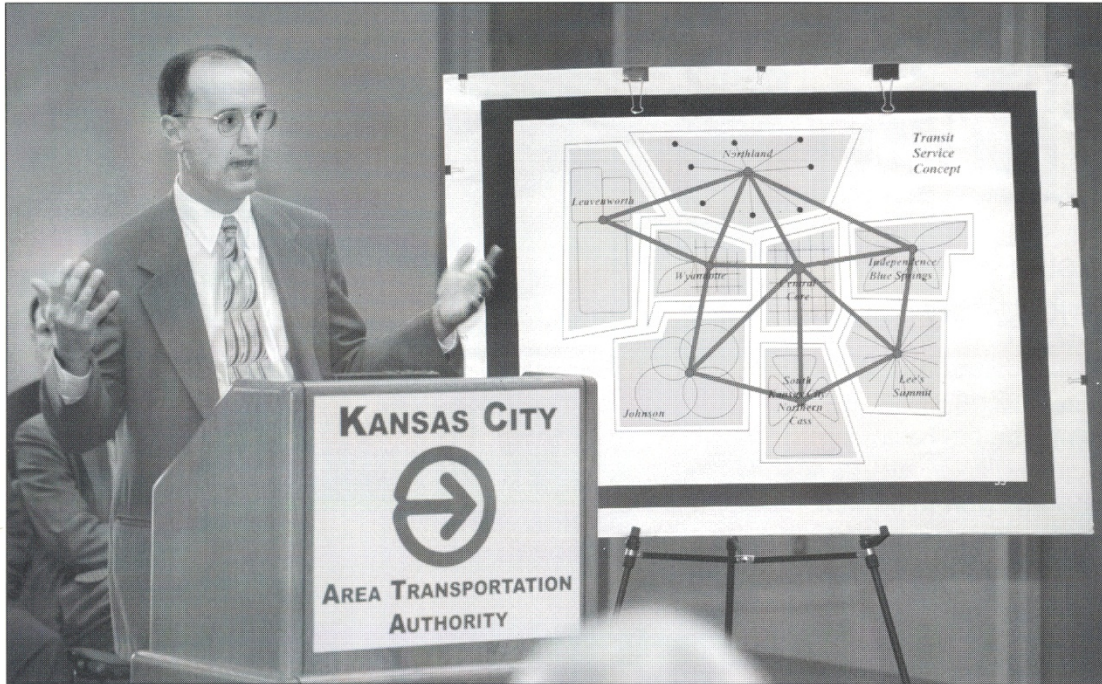
Along those lines, the ATA will soon conduct a voter registration drive among employees. Furthermore, volunteers will be at major transfer points to register transit customers.

Look for details in the weekly newsletter, *Transit Talk*.

“ This is not going to be a miracle cure, but it's going to do a lot of things for transportation in this state. ”

–Summersville Rep. Don Koller

10-Year Transit Plan In The Works



During the April ATA Board of Commissioner meeting, Mid-America Regional Council Executive Director David Warm explains the 10-year transit plan being developed to provide service to all areas of Greater Kansas City.

Details will set new project apart from previous studies

What sets the 10-year transit plan that the ATA and Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) are currently drafting apart from previous transportation studies about? An emphasis on details.

"There have been lots of nice, clean conceptual studies done," Senior Planner Gerri Doyle noted. "This one will get down to the nitty-gritty."

Planning Director Mark Swope anticipates the end product being a blueprint for a transit system that encompasses the whole region. The system will stretch across the state line and Missouri River, with branches to the suburbs.

"We'll stop just short of drawing exact route alignments and setting schedules," Swope said. "An individual can look at it and see how the service will work."

"Essentially, we're bringing all these previous studies together and hashing out the details."

'STABLE FUNDING' Doyle described MARC's role as that of an "umbrella organizer," coordinating efforts among the ATA, Johnson County Transit, Unified Government Transit and the Regional Transit Alliance (RTA). ATA planners will handle "much of the technical work," she said, including cost estimates.

Plan will be ready for public input before the end of 2002.

not-so-distant future. We'll spend more time on the road."

Urban planners and transportation efficiency experts, he added, now understand "building more roads or adding lanes is not the right answer to traffic congestion."

HIERARCHY Doyle explained that the plan will have a hierarchy based on a rapid transit component – probably Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – at the top level, combined with a more concentrated neighborhood service structure at lower levels.

"We want to move people longer distances more quickly," she said. "We might have a rapid transit line on Troost, for instance, with stops only every half-mile, but beneath it we'd still have another layer of localized service with the frequent stops."

Doyle summarized the necessary components a comprehensive transit system must have to increase public transit's appeal: "More extensive service, more frequent service, more options, and it's got to be quicker. All together, that would make transit more convenient for more people."

During their April meeting, MARC Executive Director David Warm told ATA commissioners the 10-year proposal should be ready for public input later this year.

The plan will feature recommendations for a dedicated funding mechanism to support public transit throughout the metropolitan area.

Swope believes transit "connectivity" throughout the region is vital for businesses seeking to expand both their employment and consumer bases.

"With so much development outward, businesses need transit to connect them with more people," he said. "Transit is not just important to our economic health, though, but also our environmental health. We're already on the verge of non-compliance with EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) air quality standards."

"And there are quality of life issues too. If we don't do something, today's 20-minute commute is going to be a 40- or 45-minute commute in the

Customers React To Restructured Service

Changes didn't sink in for many until mark-up day

With changes impacting more than 25 routes, the ATA's May 2002 mark-up figured to be among the most complex in years.

Therefore, the ATA made a concerted effort to be well prepared to implement a major restructuring plan, which was developed to counteract a \$1.6 million budget shortfall.

Route sheets were posted earlier than usual. Bus operator instructor Jerry Adcock and fellow instructor Cynthia Harper conducted route orientation training for more than two weeks.

BEING PREPARED Several Metro operators took the time necessary to completely familiarize themselves with the changes along their route.

"I wanted to make sure I had everything figured out to make things less confusing for my customers," said Metro operator Norene Hall (badge #135).

Her route, the #27-27th Street, has discontinued its downtown service, stopping at Union Station and requiring customers to transfer from there if they are traveling farther north.

"I had been telling my customers changes were coming, and they'd read the bulletins," Hall said, "but they didn't seem to comprehend that it was happening until it was actually happening."

"Unfortunately, customers never seem to realize the full implications of a route change till it happens," said Manager of Safety & Instruction Gloria Young.

CONSTANT CALLS The Regional Call Center received a steady stream of inquiries throughout the first week of the mark-up. The phones of Customer Relations representative Chris Wolf and Road Supervisor Sharon Teague were ringing almost constantly.

"The main complaint people have is about the changes themselves," said Teague, who fields customer calls for the Transportation Department. "They don't like having to transfer; they don't like being switched to a smaller bus."

Complaints about smaller buses were numerous, according to ADA Compliance and Customer Relations Manager Ah'Lee Robinson.

"They ask, 'Why the small bus?' and talk about people having to stand," Robinson said. "We've tried to tell them these changes are not something we did arbitrarily."



Joe McShane of Marketing hangs a new kiosk poster May 4 as part of the last steps in getting information out prior to the May markup.

Sometimes after 15 to 20 minutes, they understand that our funding situation forced us to make these changes."

Teague estimated that her average call jumped about eight minutes in length, and customers' tones were especially harsh.

"Considering the extent of the changes we've made, I don't think we're having that many problems," Adcock said, "but even if we were having just one problem, it could be the one type that really upsets customers."

During orientation training, Adcock and Harper cited the importance of providing smooth connections to help calm customers' concerns about transfers.

"With the changes we've instituted, making connections is vital - *very* vital," Manager of Road Supervision Jessie Ward said. "To come through for our customers, we have to allow them to make transfers on schedule and minimize their wait time. People don't mind transfers as much if they keep moving."

Entire process centers around communications

Jessie Ward won't accept the notion that "kinks that need a few days" to be ironed out are a reality of every service change.

She pointed to the early posting of route sheets and the extensive orientation training offered as improvements in the May mark-up process that can be built on for the future.

"I don't buy it that a lot of drama the first day of a mark-up is natural," said the ATA's Manager of Road Supervision. "If we're confused, we're adding to the customers' confusion."

Bus operator instructor Jerry Adcock agreed.

"The earlier we get finalized information, the better," he said. "That gives us more time to get people adjusted to new route alignments and schedules."

Almost every suggestion for implementing service adjustments more smoothly hinged on better internal communications.

"Communication all-around is the key," said Senior Planner Gerri Doyle. "What may be a minor change from one department's perspective is a big change for another department."

Adcock also recommended more "mock bus runs" with simulated passenger stops to detect scheduling or alignment problems "early on in the process."

Ward concluded, "We're investing more time planning service changes, getting information out to customers and to doing a better job implementing the changes."

Gabe TV Returns In June

New commercials to stress how to use transit service

Gabe is back on the bus. The #1 Bus Fan will again be starring in ATA commercials this summer.

The ATA introduced the colorful character to Greater Kansas City a year ago, and he quickly became recognized as the "I-Love-The-Bus Guy." He saluted the bus as a symbol of freedom from high gasoline prices and insurance premiums; he collected Metro bus operator trading cards and sought out his heroes' autographs; he stressed that "size does matter" with the bus being more environmentally friendly than single-occupant automobiles.

"Last year, we used Gabe effectively to raise the ATA's profile and to build up transit's image," Marketing Director Cindy Baker said. "This year, Gabe's commercials will be more specific. He'll educate people about how to use the service."

One how-to spot will focus on paying bus fares with swipecards, either passes or change cards. Gabe will stress that customers no longer need to have the exact change.

A second spot will concentrate on the Bike-N-Bus program, while another will center around the new Metro paint scheme (see the cover story), with Gabe also anxiously anticipating the arrival of new buses

that will also feature more comfortable seating for customers.

"The Gabe commercials were seen by more than 90 percent of our target audience," said Baker. "It makes practical sense to integrate this year's commercials into marketing campaigns currently in place to



Gabe doesn't let rain dampen his enthusiasm during the April 27 Party For the Planet at the zoo as he dances with two little girls.

promote Bike-N-Bus, swipe passes and change cards."

The Gabe marketing campaign earned the ATA a first-place finish in the American Public Transportation Association's 2001 AdWheel Contest.

Second-Generation EOM Receives May Honor

Serviceworker mixes hard work with lots of smiles

Tommy Hernandez has grown up fast. At 22, he's a family man with a wife, a daughter, a second baby on the way, car payments, a mortgage.... And after 31/2 years on the service line, he is already contemplating having a long-term career with the ATA.

But while accepting ATA's May 2002 Employee of the Month (EOM) award, Hernandez showed he still has some *gee-Mom-not-in-front-of-my-friends* qualities. The son of ATA Scheduling Supervisor Marilyn Budd and Metro operator Jose Hernandez (badge #67) quickly shooed away his mom, when she approached him for a congratulatory hug.

With a roll of her eyes and a smile, Budd later reminded herself, "*Not in public.*"

"I saw her coming at me with her arms out," Hernandez said, sighing, "and thought, 'Oh, no.' The guys down here on the service line never would have let me hear the end of it."

Hernandez is a second-generation EOM. His mom's name can be found engraved on the December 1992 plaque.

"It took me five years, him just 31/2," Budd reflected. "I'm sure he won't let me forget that."

A LITTLE RELUCTANCY Hernandez was a little reluctant about even seeking a job at the ATA, unsure how he'd handle working for the same agency as his parents.

"Dad's on the road driving the bus, but Mom's right here," he said. "When she suggested I apply for a job here, I was fresh out of high school and thinking, 'No, no, no.'"

Now he is thinking he would "like to stay here a long while." He enjoys the work, and his check pays the bills.

"Most of all, I like the people," Hernandez emphasized. "We harass each other a lot, but it is all in fun and makes the work day go quicker."

His co-workers feel the same way about him. In nominating Hernandez for the award, serviceworker Clint Walker pointed to Hernandez's "fun" attitude. Walker also described Hernandez's old-fashioned work ethic, "always doing what is asked of him and some things that are not."

Darryl Bell, day service line supervisor, shared Walker's assessment of Hernandez's job performance.

"Tommy is the type of employee that every supervisor



Seconds after being named the May Employee of the Month, serviceworker Tommy Hernandez receives a pat on the back from Maintenance Director Ted Stone. Meanwhile, Hernandez's proud mom, Scheduling Supervisor Marilyn Budd, the December 1992 Employee of the Month, applauds the award announcement.

wishes for," Bell said. "When given a job assignment, Tommy needs no supervision, and he can be trusted to complete the task in a timely and effective manner."

Hernandez shrugged as he explained his mature approach to work.

"I come to work to work," he said. "I do the job I'm required to do. I want to earn my paycheck."

PAYBACK That doesn't mean Hernandez is all business all the time. Anything but. He likes the "give-and-take" in Maintenance – that good-natured "harassing."

EOMs have traditionally been a primary target.

"When there's one down here in Maintenance, we 'rass the Employee of the Month pretty good," he said, adding as another serviceworker pointed at him and broke out laughing, "I'm finding that out now. It's payback."

Though they may be good comedians, Hernandez learned his service line colleagues need to fine tune their acting skills. Their repeated insistence that he *had* to attend the EOM announcement gave him a strong indication that he might be hearing his name.

"Everybody kept trying to get me to go upstairs," he said. "Then a couple of more guys came up to me and said, 'Make sure you go to the C.A.R.E. presentation.'"

But Hernandez didn't prepare an acceptance speech.

"I'm a person who always has something to say, but not this time," he said. "I was flattered, but embarrassed too." ◆



Cinco de Mayo

The Metro bus in the local Cinco de Mayo parade draws a crowd as friends and family of Metro operator Ignacio Orozco (badge #115/second from the right) join him and ATA Marketing Coordinator Kathy Hunt (first on the right). Hunt is the newly elected chapter president for the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO).

At the right, Orozco introduces Jorge Romero, the guest speaker the ATA Cinco de Mayo luncheon.



Round 'em Up For The Roadeo

Event to be held in June and at a new location

The annual ATA Bus Roadeo will be held Saturday, June 22, in the Truman Road parking lot of the Manual Career & Tech Center school. The 146 eligible Metro operators have until June 7 to enter.

Mike Studards (badge #53) is the leading point-earner from 2001 competing again this year. He has placed second the last two years, within a whisker of Richard Hernandez (badge #110) each year

– 616-603 in 2000 and 627-625 in 2001.

“I’ve done all right driving the course the last couple of years, but I think I’ve been screwing up finding things wrong with the vehicle,” Studards said. “I’ll be paying closer attention to the vehicle inspection this year. Every point counts.”

The Bus Roadeo isn’t just for operators and hostlers – and the dozens of volunteers. All employees and their families are invited to attend and encourage their co-workers. The event starts at 9 a.m.

Hamburgers and hot dogs will be served at the roadeo location between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

ATA IN THE NEWS

Supporting public transit doesn’t mean one is against roads and highways. It means that transit must be included when considering how to allocate transportation dollars and that we must have a more balanced approach to planning our cities and encouraging the movement of goods and people.

The time to invest in public transit is now, before funding cuts further jeopardize our transit system and our community.

– **Kansas City Star**, May 12, 2002

“As I See It” article by ATA Chair Herbert Hardwick

(Several citizens) spoke at the Blue Springs Council meeting Monday against the possibility of the (Blue Springs Express) coming to an end.

Funding for the Metro system in Blue Springs was made possible by a Clean Air Act grant. Cities were given the money as an incentive to develop a transit system during a three-year period. The three years is up Oct. 1, and more than 100 people could be forced to find a new way to make their morning and evening commutes.

Mayor Greg Grounds told the citizens that the city wants to keep the buses, and is trying to find the money to continue operating them.

– **Blue Springs Examiner**, May 9, 2002

That building going up will fill two major voids: It will provide a quality day care center and a warm place for bus riders to wait.

You won’t find this project replicated anywhere in the area...

The project is the epitome of win-win for Kansas City. Some of Kansas City’s hardest working people will be safe and warm at the city’s busiest bus stop this winter. More important, more children will receive the care they desperately need at a critical juncture in their lives.

– **Kansas City Star**, May 7, 2002

Columnist Steve Penn on 39th & Troost Transit Center

These are tough times for government at all levels, and they’re especially difficult for the ATA. Aggressive marketing and increased efficiency can help the agency weather the financial storm. And, of course, the public should also help by giving the Metro a try.

– **Kansas City Star**, May 5, 2002

Then

&

Now!



■ PAINT from pg. 1

KEEP IT STRAIGHT Although the four-color scheme is “more involved” than the old blue stripe across a sea of white, Mynster doesn’t anticipate

touch-ups or even complete repaint jobs being more complicated.

“This design has lines running at angles, but they’re *straight* lines,” he

said. “All you have to do is pull a straight line of tape down at the proper angle.”

