

## QUICK STOPS



KCATA's Joe McShane assists Von Smith of Children's Mercy Hospital as she plans a trip through the Authority's new online *eTrip Planner*.

### ETRIIP PLANNER

When the KCATA developed its new online trip planner, its chief objectives were for it to be quick, easy and accurate. Since being

launched at [www.kcata.org](http://www.kcata.org), *eTrip Planner* has proven to be all three.

Now anyone anywhere can visit the KCATA website and in the matter of a few keystrokes and mouse clicks plan a trip aboard The Metro. A Rockhurst student wanting to ride the bus to class or a Boston business executive planning a trip to Kansas City, can answer four simple questions – Where are you starting? Where are you going? When are you traveling? What options would you like? – and click “Plan My Trip.” Within seconds, *eTrip Planner* generates a full trip agenda: Metro Stop locations... bus route names and numbers... schedules... overall travel time... estimated walking distance... and a link to an even more detailed trip

description. A return trip plan can be created instantly.

### BRT

The KCATA conducted public hearings earlier this summer to discuss the alignment of a Bus Rapid Transit line, linking the City Market, downtown Kansas City, Mo., and the Country Club Plaza. The route will circulate throughout downtown, serving governmental offices off Oak Street and the Bartle Hall Convention Center.

The KCATA Board has approved a \$1 million BRT design contract with HNTB Corp. Construction is scheduled to be completed by January of 2005.

BRT systems are intended to function similar to light rail, with buses running in exclusive lanes.

# Next Stop

Kansas City  
Area Transportation  
Authority

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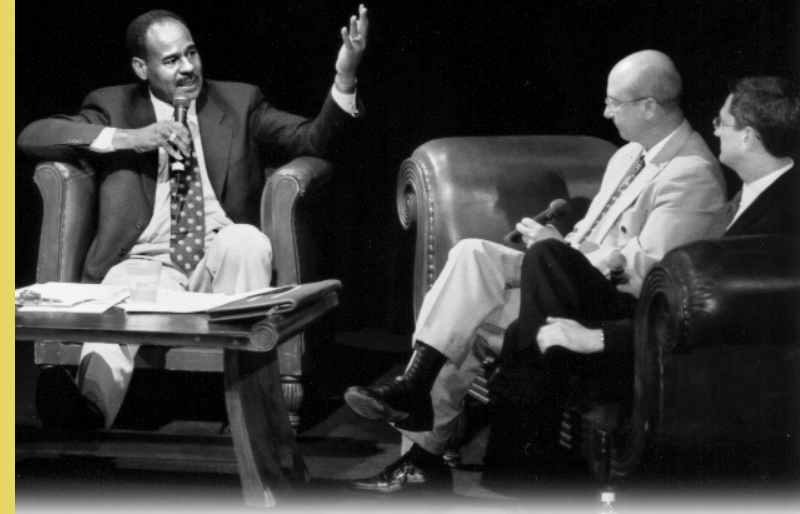
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## Transit At A Crossroads



The state of public transportation service in Greater Kansas City is examined as (L-R) former Kansas City, Mo., Mayor Emanuel Cleaver welcomes ATA General Manager Mark Huffer and Mid-America Regional Council Transportation Director Mell Henderson to KCUR's Aug. 15 *Under The Clock* broadcast. Johnson County Transit Deputy Director Chuck Ferguson and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1287 president Marvin Shackelford also participated in the roundtable discussion.

KCATA General Manager Mark Huffer. “We have a plan for the future, but that plan is at risk because of the funding problems facing us today.”

### Long-term future of transit in Greater Kansas City at stake when voters go to the polls Nov. 4

**E**manuel Cleaver believes he may have gotten a glimpse at Kansas City's future during a recent trip to the West Coast.

While traveling less than 10 miles from Los Angeles' airport to his hotel, the former Kansas City, Mo., mayor spent nearly four hours trapped in gridlock. His driver insisted the slow traffic was normal – just the status quo in the southern California metropolis.

But when he appeared on Cleaver's *Under The Clock* radio show Aug. 15, Mell Henderson, transportation director for the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), assured KCUR listeners that LA's present needn't be Kansas City's future.

MARC and the KCATA share a vision in which traversing our metropolitan region will remain relatively quick and easy, through enhanced public transportation. In a joint effort, the two agencies have finalized “Smart Moves,” a plan to establish a regional transit system.

It is the most comprehensive transit plan drafted for this region.

“Transit is at a crossroads in Kansas City,” said

The KCATA is facing a \$12 million revenue shortfall that will force the agency to cut Metro service 20 to 25 percent in January 2004. However, if Kansas City, Mo., voters approve a three-eighths cent sales tax Nov. 4, current service could be preserved and modest improvements made.

Revenue from the tax would result in as many as 10 new Kansas City, Mo., bus routes in areas where transit service is currently unavailable. On several existing Metro routes, hours and frequency would increase.

Stabilizing today's transit service in Kansas City, Mo., is critical to the “Smart Moves” effort.

**SWIFT SERVICE** If “Smart Moves” is fully implemented, the Kansas City region will have in place a crucial component necessary to keeping traffic flowing smoothly: a fluid regional public transit system. Having such a system in place to provide a convenient alternative to the automobile is imperative *before* gridlock becomes prevalent.

Swift transit service across the state line, from county to county and even suburb to suburb, is possible. The multi-layered “Smart Moves” transit network would include several bus rapid transit lines, increased service frequency, extended hours

◆ See **CROSSROADS** Inside

NEXT STOP is published by the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority

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**INSIDE:** Service to new MetroCenter to begin

## Learning Center At 39th & Troost Nearing Capacity

When he appeared on *Under The Clock* Aug. 15, KCATA General Manager Mark Huffer stressed that adequate transportation and quality child care represent the two biggest obstacles to "moving from welfare to work." Therefore, the KCATA's 39th & Troost MetroCenter must, he stated, be considered an enormous success story.

The two-in-one facility opened last November. It houses both the Metro Early Learning Center for children six weeks to five years old and a climate-controlled transit center. Two of the most heavily travelled Metro routes converge at that intersection.

Combined, more than 12,000 trips each weekday are made aboard #25-Troost and #39-39th Street buses.

Just as public schools in the Kansas City area were reconvening in mid-August, 84 children were enrolled at the Metro Early Learning Center. The KCMC Child Development Corporation operates the 15,000-square foot development center and can accommodate 100 children. Before the facility's first anniversary, Judith Hall, the KCMC site manager, anticipates having a lengthy

waiting list.

"Lots of parents ride the bus," said Hall. "They used to have to ride so many buses to get to child care, then so many more to get to their jobs. Here, they step off their bus, kiss their children good-bye, walk down the hall to the transit center and catch the next bus. "This center has made life much easier for these parents."

Parents like Carleita Robinson. "The center is right on my route, from home to work, so this is real convenient for me," said Robinson, whose 3-year-old son attends the learning center. "Plus, this is a great

day care – very nice, very modern, cheerful. I love it." Hall considers the MetroCenter an "obvious example" that transit improvements can boldly impact the lives of individuals, such as Robinson, and significantly revitalize a neighborhood. The center filled the void of a long-abandoned vacant lot.

"This center's made a big difference for this community," she said.



The Metro Early Learning Center is giving Kansas City youngsters, from six weeks to five years old, a head start on their educations.

## Northland MetroCenter Opens In September

Kansas City's Northland seems to be in a perpetual state of economic development, as major retailers and popular restaurants contend for space along the thriving I-29 corridor.

The KCATA has a prime location for its newest transit center, right at the bustling I-29 & Barry Road intersection. Metro buses will begin serving the new Boardwalk Square MetroCenter on Sunday, Sept. 28.

The Missouri Department of Transportation has leased the center's property to the KCATA for 25 years for only \$1 per year. A federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality grant funded construction of the facility, which features 47 park-and-ride spaces, three large passenger shelters and a clock tower. Two of the shelters are enclosed and have heating systems.

"Public transit service has to be a big part of the total transportation picture as we grow in the Northland," Platte County Economic Development Council



Metro buses will begin serving the new Boardwalk Square MetroCenter in the Northland on Sunday, Sept. 28.

Executive Director Pete Fullerton said during the April groundbreaking ceremony.

Platte County's representative on the KCATA Board of Commissioners, Thomas Rule, cited the importance of "reverse commutes," as The Metro brings people living south of the Missouri River to their jobs in Tiffany Springs and at Kansas City International Airport.

### ◆ CROSSROADS

on weekends and at night, reverse commutes from the urban core to the suburbs, and new routes branching out to all corners of the region.

"Smart Moves" represents the blueprint for the future of public transit in Greater Kansas City.

The KCATA is already laying the groundwork for "Smart Moves." An influx of federal grants has permitted KCATA make several capital improvements that are "Smart Moves" prerequisites.

- Sixty-six new buses have replenished an aging Metro fleet and reduced maintenance costs.

- KCATA has launched an initiative to refurbish every bus shelter and replace its 30-year-old signage with more distinctive and informative signs.

- This spring, KCATA became one of the few public transit agencies in the country with an automated trip planning program on its website.

- Before the close of 2004, KCATA's new radio system will be installed. Global tracking technology will lead to real-time schedules, permitting bus arrival times to be posted online and scrolled across digital displays at key bus stops.

- Finally, "Smart Moves" calls for a network of transit centers at primary

METROPOLITAN REGION	ANNUAL TRANSIT INVESTMENT PER CAPITA	TRANSIT BUDGET*	CENSUS POP.
Portland, Ore.	\$107.73	\$227.62	2,112,802
Denver	\$100.26	\$232.43	2,318,355
Cleveland	\$80.13	\$233.06	2,908,439
Salt Lake City	\$76.79	\$95.90	1,247,554
Milwaukee-Racine	\$76.04	\$124.45	1,636,572
Dallas-Ft. Worth	\$68.47	\$320.68	4,683,013
Minneapolis-St. Paul	\$60.74	\$169.60	2,792,137
St. Louis	\$58.65	\$150.07	2,558,806
Columbus, Ohio	\$42.77	\$62.46	1,460,242
Cincinnati-Hamilton	\$41.75	\$80.76	1,934,145
Jacksonville, Fla.	\$34.86	\$36.07	1,034,604
<b>Kansas City</b>	<b>\$33.52</b>	<b>\$57.31</b>	<b>1,709,273</b>
Memphis	\$31.20	\$33.80	1,083,186
Des Moines	\$25.57	\$10.99	429,717
Omaha	\$22.40	\$15.40	687,454

SOURCE: 2000 National Transit Database

\* – Combined annual operating budget for transit agencies in the region in the millions.

transfer points – just like the recently completed Boardwalk Square MetroCenter at the Barry Road/I-29 connection.

**A SOLID FOUNDATION** Rather than starting entirely from scratch, "Smart Moves" anticipates building upon a solid transit foundation – The Metro bus system.

"A cutback in Metro service now will hinder efforts to successfully develop regional transit later," Huffer said. "Creating a regional transit system is an enormous task. There's several steps involved. We don't want to start by taking a big step backward."

To avoid compromising the long-term potential of "Smart Moves," Kansas City must first successfully avert its immediate transit funding crisis, emphasized KCATA Chairman Herbert Hardwick, when he addressed the *Under The Clock* audience. He described the sales tax as an investment that will pay big dividends: "If we invest today, good transit will be in place to serve the people for a long, long time. If Kansas City is to be and remain a world-class city, an investment in public transit is fundamental."

## Authority Prepares Two Budgets As It Awaits Outcome Of Pivotal Election

The KCATA has prepared two budgets for 2004 – one for each possible outcome of the Nov. 4 election.

"We have to have plans in place for cuts, but we hope

we'll never have to implement that plan," stressed KCATA General Manager Mark Huffer, as six public meetings were held in July to review preliminary service reduction plans.

Several business executives attended those meetings, citing their reliance on The Metro to get a significant number of employees and customers to their shops and restaurants. Others

expressed concerns about Kansas City's economic vitality because transit cuts would hamper efforts to attract new employers and major conventions.