

INSIDE LANE

KANSAS CITY AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION

Explaining The Reason For Changes

ATA discusses restructuring with customers

Some customers understood exactly why the ATA had no choice but to adjust Metro service. One even expressed gratitude that, although it might be altered, his service was not going to be cut entirely.

"Here was a guy who was thankful, even though the plan meant he'd need to make a *third* transfer," said ATA Planning Director Mark Swope. "He appreciated that we were not cutting him off from service."

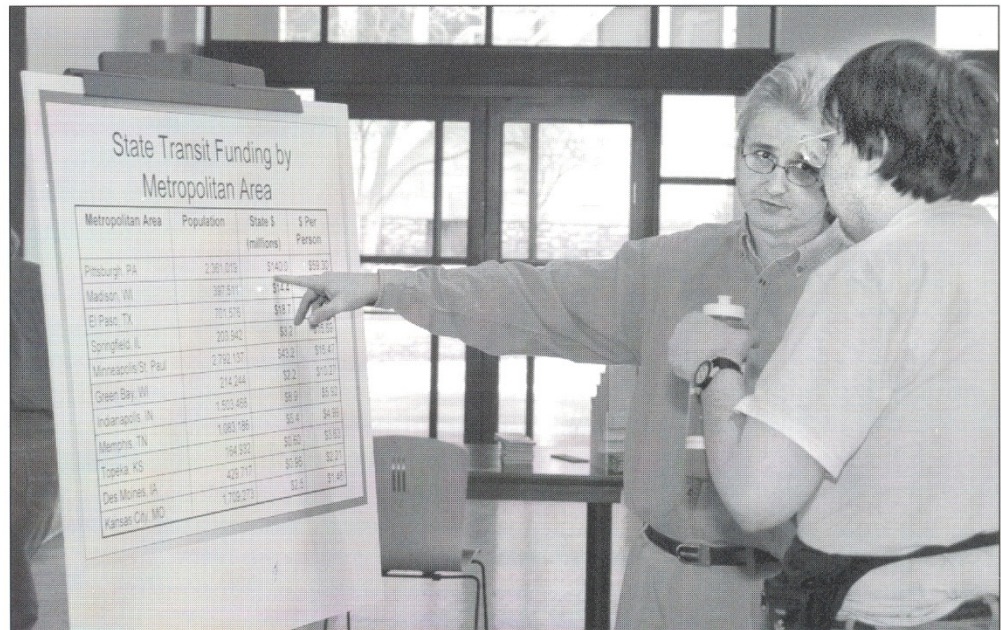
When the ATA unveiled preliminary plans to restructure bus service due to a \$1.6 million budget shortfall, the agency sought customer input. Dozens contacted the ATA through e-mail or dialed a special telephone hotline.

Others attended five public meetings held in mid-February.

"The customer input will influence our final decisions," Senior Planner Gerri Doyle said.

Swope and his staff are reviewing customer comments as they finalize the proposal. It calls for consolidating routes, eliminating those with low ridership, yet still including their service area by realigning other routes. For example, the #246—KCI Circulator will be cut, but the #129—I-29 Express route will be extended to Kansas City International Airport.

Another service restructuring measure calls for converting to smaller vehicles on many routes. Planning



ATA Planning Director Mark Swope (above) compares the state funding levels of Kansas City with other metropolitan areas.

conducted ridership studies prior to developing the initial proposal.

Final plans will be implemented May 4.

"We've been on a good roll, expanding service and hiring more bus operators," said ATU Local 1287 President Marvin Shackelford. "Now we've got this funding shortage and are being forced to reduce service, at a time when ridership is going up."

"It's frustrating. We have to step back, when we ought to be pressing forward."

Explaining the drop in sales tax revenue growth and the lack of state support for public transit, Swope said, gave many customers "more clarity and a better understanding of the situation."

"A lot of people were shocked by the numbers," he stated. "They didn't realize the state was spending so little on transit."

see **SERVICE CHANGES** on pg. 3

INSIDE LANE

FEBRUARY 2002

VOL. 3 ♦ No. 4

COVER STORY

Customers provide input as ATA finalizes plans for May service changes.

ATA OLYMPIANS4

Two Maintenance employees earn a trip to the games in Salt Lake City.

BLACK ACHIEVER.....6

Marvin Shackelford becomes the first Union leader to earn prestigious award.



FEBRUARY EOM6

Efforts of helpful Facilities worker appreciated.

RUSS GREEN.....7

Russ Green reflects on his ATA career as he retires after 37 years.

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.

It's a question many customers posed during our attempts to gather public input about our proposal to restructure some Metro service: *If you've got a budget shortfall, then how can you afford to buy new buses and invest in technology?*

I'm sure several of you have wondered why we're proceeding with these improvements, at the same time a budget crunch is forcing us to trim our operational expenses.

We have funds restricted in their use for *only* capital projects; they *cannot* be diverted to help offset the costs of running our bus service. Fortunately, building a good relationship with local congressional delegates has enabled the ATA to secure these important funds for several vital projects.

We need new buses and a new radio system. We also need to catch up technologically. **We have a responsibility** to make the necessary investments for the future.

New buses do more than offer customers a more dependable ride. They help reduce maintenance costs.

APCs (Automatic Passenger Counters), meanwhile, will automate a process that is currently done manually. Therefore, they too are cost- and time-saving tools.

A major effort to overhaul our Metro Stops to make them more visible, secure, comfortable and informative, with at least route number listings, will make our service more user-friendly. AVLs (Automatic Vehicle Locators) will allow us to tell a customer at 11th and Grand where precisely the next Troost bus is. A new software package will enable customers to go online to plan trips aboard The Metro.

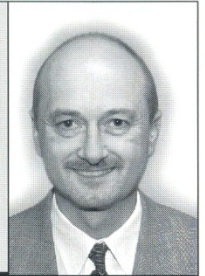
Continually striving to raise the quality of our service is essential to retaining current customers and attracting new ones.

Eventually, the economic pendulum will swing in a positive direction, leading to more customer spending and a corresponding hike in sales tax collections. Furthermore, our efforts to get a transportation funding bill through the Missouri House and Senate will go on through the end of the current legislative session.

In the meantime, we can and will push forward to make our agency and the services we provide better.

FROM THE GM'S DESK

By MARK HUFFER
ATA
General Manager



On The
Lighter Side
& brighter



General Manager Mark Huffer slips into a special gift presented to him during the February C.A.R.E. presentation. Body Shop Supervisor Walt Woodward (above/R) and Maintenance Director Ted Stone gave Mark a vest tailor-made from a fabric he had championed for the seat upholstery on new buses. A different fabric was eventually selected.

To reinforce that point at the public meetings, Swope used a chart comparing Greater Kansas City's state public transit funding to other metropolitan regions. He also showed a chart representing the declining growth of sales tax revenue.

According to the 2000 National Transit Database, Missouri allocated about \$6.8 million for public transportation, statewide. Wisconsin spent more than 12 times that amount.

"The meetings opened a lot of people's eyes regarding how the ATA is funded," Swope said.

He added, "The process for getting input from customers worked. We listened and will adjust our plans accordingly. They saw why making changes was necessary."



Senior Planner Gerri Doyle points to a route map, while helping a customer determine how service changes might impact him.

Local 1287 president rallying ATU leaders throughout Missouri

During the same week the ATA conducted public input meetings about Metro service restructuring, bills that would boost funding for public transit progressed in Missouri's House and Senate.

ATU Local 1287 President Marvin Shackelford has contacted the union's leaders from St. Joseph, St. Louis, Springfield and Joplin to discuss a joint lobbying effort. He hopes they can present a united front and converge on Jefferson City on the same day, later this spring.

"We can help push legislation through," Shackelford said. "A bill that would do a little is better than nothing. A good economy is the key, though, because it's difficult enough in good times to get votes for tax hikes."

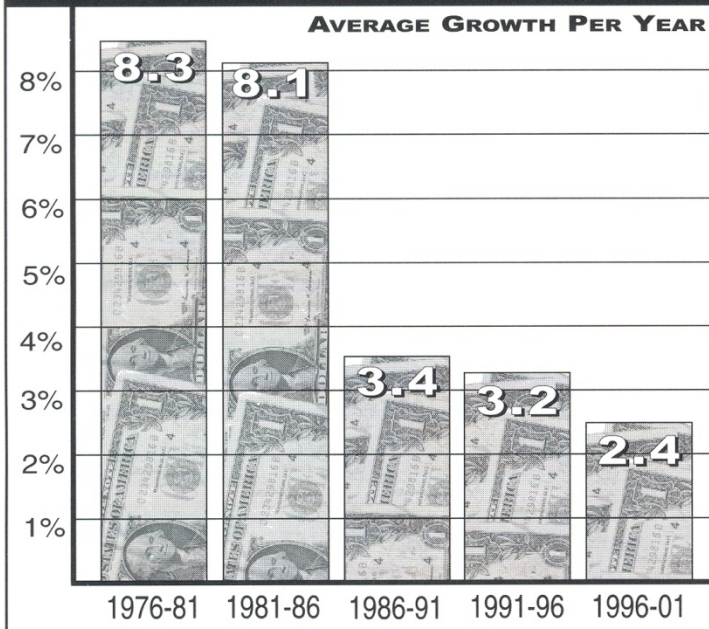
He added that he would try to influence local leaders to "reassess priorities." He believes a "first-rate" transit system is among the most basic of services that "any metropolitan area provides."

"Transit needs to be a higher priority in this region," Shackelford said. "When people are considering Kansas City for a convention, they always ask the same question, 'How's your transit system?'"

◆ Employees interested in writing their State legislators should contact the Election Board at **(816) 842-4820** for names and addresses.

KCMO SALES TAX GROWTH

AVERAGE GROWTH PER YEAR



\$STATE SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

METROPOLITAN AREA	POPULATION	STATE \$*	\$ PER PERSON
Pittsburgh, PA	2,361,019	140.0	59.30
Madison, WI	397,511	14.4	35.22
El Paso, TX	701,576	18.7	26.65
Springfield, IL	203,942	3.2	15.69
Minneapolis	2,792,137	43.2	15.47
Green Bay, WI	214,244	2.2	10.27
Indianapolis	1,503,468	8.9	5.92
Memphis	1,083,186	5.4	4.99
Topeka, KS	164,932	0.60	3.63
Des Moines	429,717	0.95	2.21
Kansas City	1,709,273	2.5	1.46

* - Measured in millions, this column reflects the total state dollars allocated to the local transit agency serving each metropolitan area. The dollar figures are based on the 2000 National Transit Database, while Census Bureau figures account for the population.



Joe McShane of Marketing leads the cheers as the torch route brings the Olympic flame down The Paseo. (Opposite page/L-R) Members of the Procurement Department, Edwina Brown, Denise Bradshaw, Tracy Gamble, Joyce Young and Sharon Bradford also celebrate the passing of the torch.

Going To The Games

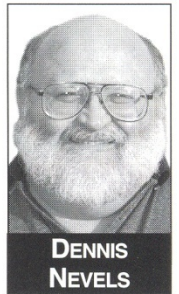
Two ATA employees 'qualify' for Olympics

One might have been puzzled to learn that Dennis Nevels was going to the Winter Olympics as a participant.

After all, Dennis doesn't look much like an Olympian. He has more grey whiskers and bulk than the typical world class athlete.

But thanks largely to his intense training over the years and, to a lesser extent, his previous experience as an international competitor, Dennis earned a trip to the Salt Lake City games.

He qualified for the Olympics as a bus mechanic. During the 2000 International Rodeo in San Francisco, Olympic organizers from Utah sought out bus drivers and mechanics to assist with the massive public transportation effort needed for the games' thousands of athletes and coaches, as well as the millions of fans. Dennis quickly volunteered.



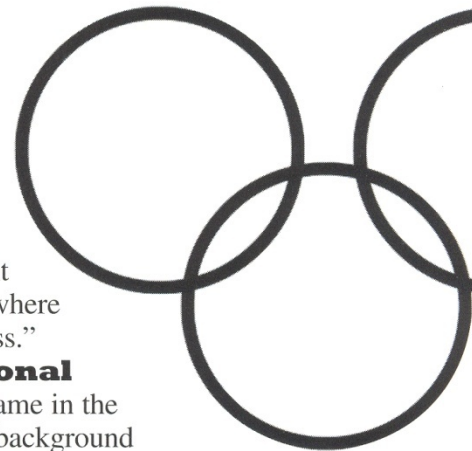
DENNIS NEVELS

"I thought it was a once-in-a-lifetime chance, so I signed up," said Dennis. "The Olympics are only held in America so often, and I'm obviously never going to make it to any Olympics anywhere on my athletic prowess."

Dennis' personal Olympic trial came in the form of an extensive background check. The evening maintenance supervisor received numerous phone calls from federal officials, "asking all sorts of questions."

Upon arriving in Utah, Dennis planned to meet with another Olympic participant from the ATA, mechanic Brad Dunaway. Both anticipated their work keeping them busy throughout the Olympics, yet they still hoped to get together to attend a few events.

Brad thought his job would involve being at many event venues. He traveled to Utah as a part of the 110th





Engineering Battalion, a local Army National Guard unit activated to help with the enormous security effort.

Brad recently moved to Kansas City from the St. Louis area, joining the ATA Maintenance staff and transferring to the 110th just three months ago.

“The day I reported to my new Guard unit in November, it wasn’t five minutes until they told me, ‘You’re going to the Olympics,’” he said Jan. 22, less than 24 hours before reporting for duty.



**BRAD
DUNAWAY**

While he eagerly looked forward to the exciting event competition, Brad hoped his job in Salt Lake would be thoroughly uneventful.

“We’ll be doing car searches, people searches and pulling patrols,” he said. “In light of what’s happened, everybody in the unit is expecting it to be a very stressful situation. I do too.”

Dennis tried to ease the tension, joking, “Brad’s only real responsibility in the Olympics is going to be guarding my tool box.”

On a more serious note, Dennis explained that neither he nor Brad “are going to be on vacation.” They were both going to be working long, hard hours.

More than 700 buses and hundreds of bus drivers and mechanics from across the nation answered the Utah Transit Authority’s (UTA) call for help to form the Olympic Spectator Transportation System. The UTA’s own system features light rail and a 900-plus bus fleet.

“This isn’t even going to be a working vacation,” Dennis said. “It’s going to be a lot of hard work period. They bring in buses from all over the country to handle all the riders, and they bring in mechanics to keep all the buses running.

“It’s an around-the-clock operation, three shifts, working non-stop.”

Still, Dennis and Brad expected to have some “free time,” and they were glad to learn that tickets to their favorite events remained available in late January.

“I would like to see the bobsled,” said Dennis. “It’s partly mechanical.”

Emphasis On Service

New director oversees
ADA & Customer Relations

Sharon Bryant believes the formation of an ADA Compliance/Customer Relations Department signals the ATA’s firm commitment to customer service. She is the new department’s first director.

“Whether we’re talking about regular Metro customers or individuals with disabilities, it’s *all* about customer service,” she said.

Bryant assumed her role with the ATA Jan. 2, the same day two new managers were appointed, Anita Cobbins in Marketing and Cheryl Coleman in Human Resources.

Bryant’s department encompasses the Regional Call Center, Customer Service and Share-A-Fare. Her career in public transit traces back to 1975, when she started driving buses for the Bi-State Development Agency. Later, as a senior planner at Bi-State, she worked closely with para-transit providers serving customers with disabilities.

Cobbins, an 11-year veteran of the Marketing Department, supervises the Marketing staff and oversees programs related to bus ridership development, pass revenue, print advertising, promotions, publications and public relations.

Coleman brings 16 years of experience as Swope Parkway Health Center’s HR director to the ATA. She previously spent five years as a Civil Rights investigator for the City of Kansas City, Mo. She is responsible for ATA recruitment, employee retention and Equal Employment Opportunity programs.



**SHARON
BRYANT**



**ANITA
COBBINS**



**CHERYL
COLEMAN**

An Appreciative Achiever

Union President receives award

Marvin Shackelford made an observation as he stood among his fellow honorees during the 27th Annual Black Achievers Recognition Dinner.

“All the other Achievers were corporate people,” he said. “They had Bachelor’s, Master’s, Ph.D.’s. I didn’t recognize anybody else with a union background.”

Shack, as he’s more commonly known around the ATA, earned special distinction as the first-ever union leader named a Black Achiever. Former Mayor Emanuel Cleaver II founded the Black Achievers Society in 1974 to salute African-Americans in business and industry. Shack has served as Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1287 president since 1995, after nine years as vice president and 22 additional years as a steward.

Upon receiving the news that he would be joining 19 other 2002 Achievers at the annual dinner sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of



Marvin Shackelford (L) accepts his Black Achiever award from the local program’s co-chairman, attorney Taylor Fields.

Greater Kansas City, Shack was “shocked, excited, honored and pleased all at the same time.”

“I guess, first thing, being nominated by the Authority was an honor,” he said. “It’s not an award you set out to receive. If there’s one thing the Achievers have in common, it’s that they don’t look for recognition. They set goals and work hard to achieve those goals.

“If you’re working hard toward worthwhile goals, that can, I guess, open the door for others to recognize your efforts.”

The official Black Achiever program called Shack a leader “in promoting public transit in the Kansas City metropolitan area” and an “advocate for public transit customers.”

Shack’s selection also factored in his community service. He works as a mentor for young adults through the Memorial Missionary Baptist Church “Street Ministry.”

“We try to lead these young people in the right direction,” Shack said. “Not everybody is a superstar basketball player. Few are.

“Most of us are just going to be everyday people, going about doing our daily work. We’re the ones who need to be the role models in our communities.”

In summarizing his moment in the spotlight as an Achiever, he added, “I enjoy what I do for the union and my church. I love the challenges.”

‘No Quit In Joe’

‘Quiet’ Facilities worker earns February honor

Perhaps it was only fitting that the February 2002 Employee of the Month be someone who plays an important role in helping keep The Metro going, despite Old Man Winter’s wrath. Just days before having the honor bestowed upon him, Facilities mechanic Joe Marshall had worked tirelessly to help keep Metro routes treated during a devastating storm that had Kansas City under ice as January ended.

“We worked 16-hour days three straight days keeping routes salted,” said Joe. “A couple of days, we didn’t bother going home. We just stayed here.”

Joe’s willingness to put in the extra hours — do whatever is necessary to

get the job done right — came as no surprise to Facilities Director Jim Chowning.

“There’s just no quit in Joe,” declared Chowning.

That’s an observation others have made during Joe’s 31 years at the ATA. In that time, he has seen-sawed back and forth between Facilities and Vehicle Maintenance, because he enjoys “variety.”

“This is a good place to work,” said Joe, who celebrated his 32nd wedding anniversary in February.

“Everybody’s friendly. I’ve always tried to get along with everyone.”

And he has succeeded.

Body Mechanic Willie Wilson nominated Joe for the award, citing Joe’s skillful craftsmanship and saying, “He is always cheerful, having a good word for everyone around him, and always



Facilities Director Jim Chowning (R) congratulates February 2002 Employee of the Month Joe Marshall.

willing to help others.”

Body Shop Supervisor Walt Woodward, likewise, praised Joe for “going out of his way” to assist others.

Joe shrugged and explained, “There’s no secret to it. I just do what I can to be helpful.”

All Smiles

‘Every day is now a Saturday’
for Russ Green

Russ Green thought his career in public transportation was over after just one day. He *wanted* it to be over.

His father never warned him that being a bus driver would be like this: Reporting for work at 3:45 a.m., “then hauling a bunch of screaming girls” on a special Beatles charter, finally pulling in after the concert around 2 a.m., only to be assigned another run starting at 3:45.

When his first day lasted 33 hours, Russ was convinced he had made a big mistake following in Russ Green Sr.’s footsteps as a bus operator.

“I think working a new driver like that was part of the initiation back then,” Russ recalled. “I didn’t know I could say, ‘I need my eight hours.’ My dad sure didn’t tell me.

“All I know is that they gave me two days off, and I spent both days trying to find another job.”

Fortunately, Russ Sr. convinced Russ Jr. to “give it another try.”

Russ expressed no regrets about his decision to “stick around a little longer” as his last day on the job, Jan. 31, 2002, approached. Nonetheless, he was thrilled to be retiring 37½ years after that first day he now remembers with a smile, rather than a yawn.

“You know when it’s time to go, and now the time is right for me,” said Russ, who served the last dozen years as ATA’s Superintendent of Transportation. “I’ve enjoyed it, every bit of it. Well, *almost* every bit. I’ve never been ashamed to say I work for The Metro.”

Nonetheless, Russ could scarcely contain his laugh — part hiccup and squeaky chuckle — as he looked ahead to retirement, daydreaming about frequent trips to the golf course.

“My wife, Judy, works for Johnson County Parks and Rec., so I get to golf

on two courses over there for a big discount — just a 50-cent greens fee,”

Russ said. “I’ll have to keep her working to keep me golfing.”

Russ anticipated that his greatest adjustment to retirement would be *not* having to wake at 4:30 a.m.

“Every day is a Saturday,” he said, grinning.

Before tossing his alarm clock in the trash, Russ had plenty to do as he counted the days ’til he could permanently hang a *Gone Golfin’* sign. He spent two months working closely with his successor, another former bus operator and dispatcher, Tom Morgan.

“Russ is real easy-going and has such a vast knowledge of how everything in this department works,” said Tom, who was promoted after 21½ years as a full-time instructor.

“Russ’ experience is irreplaceable,” he added. “I can’t replace Russ, and I shouldn’t even try. I have to just be who I am.”

What does a Superintendent of Transportation do?

“Help the operators do their jobs better,” Russ said. “You help with all kinds of things. Sometimes, it’s just somebody coming in, needing to talk.”

But when asked specifically what the position entails, Russ remained sketchy, saying, “A whole lot.”

Whatever it is a Superintendent of Transportation does, Russ did it well, according to Transportation Director Bob Kohler and ATU Local 1287 President Marvin Shackelford. They both called Russ a “bus operator’s superintendent,” and Bob said, “Russ is



Russ Green (R) enjoys the view from outside the Superintendent of Transportation’s office as he relinquishes responsibilities to his successor, Tom Morgan.

the Ann Landers and the Father Flanagan of the ATA.”

“Russ was fair,” said Marvin. “There wasn’t a bus operator he dealt with over the years who he didn’t want to succeed. We had disagreements, but we never let that interfere with us being friends.”

“The good thing is I made a whole lot more friends than enemies,” Russ said. “When you get down to it, that’s who I’ll miss — the people . . . all the friends I made.”

While stressing that he may not be “as sociable as Russ,” Tom explained what can be expected of him in his new position: “I’m not Dr. Tom. I like to stick to the facts, stick to the job. I think my organizational skills will be an asset. I have a sincere desire to get the job done right. I try to always do what’s fair . . . what’s right.”

He was certainly impressed with Russ’ commitment to the job when ice coated Kansas City Jan. 30 and 31, noting “He had just days left, and Russ was still working 12-hour days.”

Russ didn’t let the ice cool his enthusiasm. Summing up his final days at the ATA, he said, “I came in like a lion, and I’m going out like one.”

Black History

Activities sponsored by the ATA Black History Month committee include (clockwise) a dance routine by Kansas City Boys Choir choreographer Kim Lews; a "Name That Tune" version of charades with Marilyn Budd of Scheduling; Brenda Canady of the Call Center catering the "Soul Food Luncheon;" a sometimes frustrating game of "Wheel of Fortune" for Metro operator Rita Jones (badge #209); and the Errol Jackson Trio, featuring Errol, a Metro operator (#505).

