

City of Jefferson Transit Development Plan

Public Meeting Summary June 14, 2005

A public meeting was held in the city council chambers as part of the public outreach effort of the Transit Development Plan (TDP). The purpose of the public meeting was to inform interested members of the public of the TDP project and solicit input from the public on improvements they would like to see.

The public meeting was held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Over 40 individuals attended the meeting; most attendees were users of the transit system. The following is a summary of comments and suggestions received through the discussion with attendees. Attendees were also encouraged to complete a comment form (attached).

The second section of this report summarizes responses and comments.

General Comments on the Transit System

The overwhelming opinion expressed was that JEFFTRAN services are very good. Complimentary remarks included "courteous, helpful bus drivers, clean buses and good (but limited) service." This is consistent with market research performed earlier in the project that found high levels of satisfaction with JEFFTRAN services.

There were negative comments as well, mostly directed at the limits of the transit service.

- One attendee stated that she felt "harassed" at times when she used the bus because of her disability.
- Several individuals noted that the policy limiting the number of grocery bags that could be taken on a Handi Wheels vehicle has unreasonably restricted their ability to use transit for shopping.

Expanded Service Hours

Expanded service hours would include evening service on weekends and weekend service for both the fixed route service and Handi Wheels. This improvement is by far the most favored among the attendees.

- Various comments were made regarding how late service should be extended into the evening. Generally, the attendees seemed to indicate that 8:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. would be sufficient for most purposes.
- Several individuals noted that the service should start earlier in the morning to allow people to get to work by 7:30 a.m., for example.
- It was stated that perhaps service could be extended later on select days to reduce the cost impact. For example, it was suggested that Wednesday evening service might be useful because merchants in the downtown area stay open later on Wednesday evenings. One opinion expressed was that it would be better to have service extended to 9:00 p.m. 2 days/week than to 6:30 p.m. 5 days/week.
- When questioned about the need for extended hours, most attendees said they simply did not travel in the evenings or weekends when bus service was unavailable. They indicated that cab fares were simply too high.

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Schedules and Service Levels

There were no comments or suggestions relative to more frequent service. Generally, the attendees seem to feel the service frequency was adequate.

Individuals were asked to comment on the possibility of extending the service frequency from 30 minutes to 40 minutes to accommodate increased bus travel times. Generally, the group seemed to think this was an acceptable approach as long as timed transfers were made among the routes and care was taken in the development of schedules to make sure people would get to and from work in a timely manner.

- It was noted that even though buses run late at times, transfers are made because drivers call the need for transfers using the radio system.
- Change to 40 minutes headways would disrupt the current “clock headways” making it more difficult to remember bus schedules. It was suggested posting scheduled times at key stops and making printed schedules available would offset this inconvenience.

Expanded Coverage and More Bus Stops

Service expansion was not discussed much, perhaps indicating general satisfaction with JEFFTRAN's coverage. This would be expected from a group largely consisting of existing bus riders. There were a few specific comments in this category:

- An extension of service on the Capital Mall route to better service Thomas Jefferson Middle School was requested. It was noted that a number of the pupils from the middle school reside in the central parts of Jefferson City. The lack of transit service makes attendance at after-school activities difficult.
- Extension of the Missouri Blvd. route was requested to better serve employment for the portion of Missouri Blvd between Commerce Drive (Hwy 179) and Wildwood that currently has no transit service. This area includes several auto dealerships, a McDonald's and several other retail establishments. The nearest bus stops to the McDonald's for example are at either Lowe's or at Hwy 179 and there are no sidewalks for pedestrians to safely navigate to businesses between Wildwood and Hwy 179.
- There were a few comments about the length and circuitry of some of the routes. The mall route was cited as a route that is too long, leading to extended travel times.
- One attendee suggested that service could be improved by creating secondary transfer centers so that riders would not have to come all the way downtown to transfer.
- There was some discussion about providing service to the prison although no one in attendance had any idea the level of demand or need for the service. A suggestion was made that perhaps a shuttle from Amtrak to the prison could be run once a week or a few times a month and advertised by the Department of Corrections so individuals could plan their visits.

Central Transfer Center

Questions were asked of the group about the advisability of changing the location of the central transfer center. Some background was provided on the concepts that have been discussed so far, and the reasons the relocation is being considered.

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Generally, the group did not react negatively to the idea of relocating the transfer center. About half of those in attendance were Handi Wheels users thus not required to transfer, and some of the others do not transfer for their trip on the fixed route service.

- Prevailing opinion was that it doesn't matter where the transfer connections are made, as long as they are convenient.
- Several attendees indicated support for the former Greyhound bus station that would afford interior air conditioned and heated waiting area and restroom facilities.

Fare Structure

Many of the attendees expressed the opinion that the fare for JEFFTRAN services is quite low.

- A number of individuals stated that they would be willing to pay a higher fare, particularly if there were some service improvements.
- It was noted that many people paid 25 cents per trip under JEFFTRAN reduced fare program for elderly and disabled persons.
- In discussion, people indicated they would be willing to pay \$1-\$1.50 per trip with some comments as high as \$3.00/trip.
- Some interest was expressed in an unlimited monthly ride pass.
- It was stated that the last fare increase for JEFFTRAN services was in 1982 or 1983.

Funding Ideas

In response to the statement that service improvements require additional funding, several ideas were offered for additional funding:

- Advertising on the exterior of buses was suggested, although it was noted that advertisement was somewhat unsightly. A suggestion was made to form a committee to review submitted advertisements to ensure appropriateness.
- One attendee suggested allowing businesses to purchase audible advertisements.
- Several ideas were offered for sponsorships or partnerships, for example, having downtown merchants provide funding for evening service on Wednesdays consistent with the extended commercial retail operating hours on Wednesday evenings.
- A similar suggestion was made to have private businesses help support service on at least one Saturday a month.
- One individual suggested a cooperative agreement with the University similar to what is done in other cities whereby students can use their student ID to access transit.
- It was suggested that JEFFTRAN could do "other kinds" of fundraisers to raise additional funding. No specific ideas were offered.
- It was suggested a partnership with state government could be a way to obtain additional funding. The idea would be for the state to subsidize bus passes or pay for a portion of the service. The suggestion included the State providing a subsidy for bus passes in conjunction with requiring employees to pay for parking instead of providing "free" parking.
- A suggestion was made to solicit participation by key businesses (K-mart, Wal-mart, etc) to help pay for improved shelters and other amenities.
- A suggestion was made to survey major employers such as Scholastic, Alcoa, State of Missouri, Wal-mart, Target, Lincoln University to assess interest and support for transit.

Marketing and Public Awareness

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There was some discussion that the City needed to provide more information about the bus service. Decisions for this ranged from simply increasing public awareness to encouraging more ridership.

- It was suggested that JEFFTRAN take advantage of public service announcements (since they are free) to publicize the service.
- One individual noted that she did not ride the bus because the routes and schedules are confusing.
- One individual suggested a Trolley-type vehicle as a means of promoting transit use for the Missouri Boulevard route.
- One attendee suggested running a TV ad showing a guy scraping ice off his car in the wintertime while a bus full of “warm” and waving transit riders passes behind. Another TV ad format suggested would be to show a person pumping gas into his car while a bus full of happy transit riders passes behind.
- One individual suggested that JEFFTRAN sponsor a free day to encourage people to get on and try riding the bus.

Handi Wheels

Although not a specific topic for the public meeting, about half of the participants indicated they were Handi Wheels users. Generally, Handi Wheels users indicated satisfaction with the service.

- One individual noted Handi Wheels was not like the previous OATS service in that OATS was more personalized (reasons stated was OATS drivers took care to ensure the rider was safely in their residence, etc.)
- One attendee expressed desire for Handi Wheels to provide extended hours of operation in order for those with disabilities to have more social opportunities and added independence.