

**Kansas Department of Transportation's  
5-County Regional Transportation Study  
Environment and Social Equity Working Group Meeting**

**August 28, 2009**

**8:30-10:30 a.m.**

**Johnson County Sunset Office Building, Room 1075**

**ATTENDEES**

**Working Group members in attendance**

- Laura Elkins, Leavenworth Council on Aging
- Tim Green, City of Lenexa
- Tom Jacobs, Mid-America Regional Council
- James Joerke, Johnson County
- Bob Nugent, City of Lawrence Transit
- Charlene Weiss, Miami County Environmental Health

**KDOT Staff/Study Consultants in attendance**

- Thomas Dow, Kansas Department of Transportation
- Davonna Moore, Kansas Department of Transportation
- Erin Ollig, Shockey Consulting Services
- Bart Rudolph, Lawrence-Douglas County MPO
- Sheila Shockey, Shockey Consulting Services
- Jim Tobaben, Parsons Brinckerhoff

## MEETING NOTES

### **I WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Thomas Dow, Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for the group to introduce themselves. He explained to the meeting participants that funding for Phase 2 has been suspended.

### **II ISSUES PRESENTATION**

Jim Tobaben gave a presentation regarding the information gathered to date and the issues identified during the planning process.

#### *Process*

Jim reminded the participants of the study process. A community meeting was held in each of the five counties in which a facilitated discussion took place. The discussion was based on the participants' values in transportation. A dot map exercise was also completed to find out where issues and problems were located.

Additional public outreach has included a public opinion survey. The random sample survey was statistically significant and gave a good geographic representation.

In addition, a more informal online survey was conducted, with a link provided on the [www.5countystudy.org](http://www.5countystudy.org) homepage. The questions from the online survey differed from the questions in the statistically valid public opinion survey. The Project Study team additionally conducted 30 stakeholder interviews throughout the study area.

#### *Findings*

Overall, the comments we've heard say that the people want to maintain the existing infrastructure and provide good flow on the highways.

The top satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels with the transportation services according to the public opinion survey were:

- 65% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with traffic flow on highways and major roads

- 58% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with maintenance of current roads between the cities
- 49% of respondents were dissatisfied with the availability of transit between cities
- 54% of respondents were dissatisfied with the availability of bicycle lanes and facilities

**Participant Question:** Did all respondents have to rate each item in that question?

**Response:** Yes.

According to public opinion survey respondents, the most important issues to address over the next 10 years were maintenance of current roads *within* the cities, traffic flow on highways and major roads, and maintenance of current roads *between* the cities.

According to the survey respondents, the top choices for solutions to improve travel were widening existing roads, improving existing intersections, and adding improved bus transit. Survey respondents felt that the most important planning factors were: safety, environmental protection (air and water quality), and the cost to tax payers.

**Participant Comment:** Air and water quality also ranked high on a survey with 1,300 respondents completed recently by MARC.

From the more informal online survey, the most important transportation issue to address was more transit options and availability followed by taking care of existing transportation facilities.

The online survey respondents stated that the best way to improve travel is to encourage transit-oriented development, expand transit services, and improve existing roads and intersections. Online survey respondents felt that safety and environmental impacts were the most important factors to consider when evaluating transportation strategies.

Nearly 70% of the online survey respondents said that when gas prices increased or the economy worsened they changed their transportation and travel habits. They changed their habits primarily by combining trips and making few trips. According to the online survey respondents, the top factors that make travel more difficult were sprawl and a lack of transit options.

**Participant Comment:** If gas prices increase again we will need to think about what we need to do differently like adding more park and ride facilities and move some more money to transit.

Mr. Tobaben then discussed some main themes of discussion and some detailed data and feedback received for each theme. He also included some geo-coded maps from the public opinion survey results.

### *Safety Issues*

- Increasing numbers of trucks- there is a perception that there are an increasing number of trucks although there are not as many trucks on the road as of late due to the economy.
- Congested roadways
- Railroad/street grade separations needed at key locations
- Adequate shoulders on rural roads
- Bike lanes/paths along major roads
- Expand KC Scout system

According to the public opinion survey, 39% of respondents were satisfied with the effect the transportation system has on safety and 38% were neutral. 53% of respondents said that safety was an important planning factor.

### *Efficiency Issues*

- Congestion on highways
- Provide better route for trucks
- Encourage higher density development
- Consider managed lanes

The traffic volume from the travel-demand model shows significant growth on the turnpike, K-10 and I-35 south to Gardner; all are areas where traffic volumes will be an issue.

**Participant Question:** What assumptions in land use were made?

**Response:** We incorporated planned land uses from comprehensive plans and from the MARC model, but we didn't do any scenario-planning for this phase of work.

**Participant Comment:** We have done some assumptions at MARC.

**Response:** Hopefully will be able to address that in Phase 2.

**Response:** We have seen the results from the MARC scenarios and they told a good story. MARC only covers 3 of our 5 counties, so we'll have to figure out how to incorporate those other two.

Mr. Tobaben stated that it may be interesting to show the Stakeholder Advisory Panel the MARC scenarios to help them when they will be making their recommendations. Mr. Tobaben also stated that for the next round of public meetings, we would like to ask people what the trade-offs may be- if we do this, then this may be reduced, etc.

### *Mobility Issues*

- Widen key highways
- Support light rail / commuter rail
- Support high-speed rail between cities
- Fund bus rapid transit / express bus
- Need seamless transit connections
- Develop a regional bicycle trail plan
- Peak hours – focus on moving people not just vehicles

When the public opinion survey respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the amount of truck traffic, 41% responded that they were neutral, while 26% responded that they were dissatisfied.

When respondents were asked whether projects should be promoted that enhance Kansas City's role as a freight hub, there were mixed sentiments depending upon the area of the region, however a majority agreed.

### *Congestion Issues*

Mr. Tobaben presented some preliminary results from the travel-demand model. In general terms, congestion is expected to get worse along K-10 as well as I-35, I-435 and 69 Highway around 119<sup>th</sup> Street. The model includes projects that are funded to be built for the future. According to the travel-demand model, congestion is predicted to increase along the major routes, but most of the roadways will remain uncongested.

According to the survey respondents, 65% were satisfied with the flow of traffic on highways and roadways.

### *Independence Issues*

- Need seamless regional transit system
- Need transit service for aging population and for persons with disabilities
- Need a regional transit call center where you can call to find out about transit opportunities (i.e. Google Transit)

According to the public opinion survey results, 43% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied with the availability of transit within their city and nearly 50% were dissatisfied with transit options between cities. Additionally, 46% of respondents felt that transportation services for elderly and disabled are inadequate.

### *Accessibility*

- Enhance transit hours of operation
- Better connect transit systems
- Bike racks needed on all buses
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities needed along all major streets

According to the public opinion survey respondents, 54% were dissatisfied with the availability of bicycle lanes and facilities. Respondents in Kansas City and Edwardsville were more dissatisfied than other areas in the 5-County area.

### *Equal Opportunity*

- Need increased funding for transit
- Need dedicated funding source for bicycle/pedestrian facilities
- Need a regional transit system

According to the public opinion survey respondents, over half agreed that a regional transit system is needed. This was widespread throughout all five counties. Over two-thirds of respondents felt that projects should support healthy lifestyles.

### *Connectivity*

- Complete key roadways

- Preserve roadway right-of-way in key corridors
- Need multimodal connections between population centers
- Create system of “park and ride” lots
- Need regional bicycle trail plan
- Consider bike/pedestrian needs crossing rivers and major highways

#### *Environmental Protection*

- Priority to projects that reduce carbon footprint
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas
- Define better planning areas
- Protect air and water quality
- Protect prime agricultural land

Over half of the public opinion survey respondents felt climate change was an important issue. Loss of farmland was viewed as an important environmental issue to 67% of survey respondents and 75% of respondents felt that priority should be given to projects that helped to reduce our dependency on oil. Almost 75% of respondents felt that protection of local plant and animal life was important and nearly 40% of respondents felt current traffic congestion has an impact on the environment.

Mr. Tobaben said a majority of the comments on protecting water quality originated around Hillsdale Lake and Clinton Lake.

### **III ESTABLISHING CRITERIA**

Sheila Shockey discussed some of the results from the newspaper exercise that the working group members participated in at the last meeting. She said that the comments received were a good start to establishing some criteria for selecting projects in Phase 2 of the study.

Ms. Shockey asked the participants to give some additional details on what some criteria may be. She posed the following question to help spur discussion,

*“The five-county transportation system should...”*

- Reduce dependency on fossil fuels.
- Conserve energy and natural resources.

- Move people and freight rather than focus on moving vehicles.
- Minimize personal transportation expenses in a way that supports wealth creation (reduce the cost).
- Seek to maximize the vitality of social, economic and environmental systems at the same time.
- Provide equal access to all users.
- Provide multi-modal options and choice.
- Serve the growing aging population.
- Consider life-cycle costs.
- Foster biking and walking with better connections.
- Be a seamless system allowing the user to utilize multiple modes of transportation in a single trip.
- Be streamlined without unnecessary duplication of services.
- Be financially efficient and affordable for agencies and users (housing and transportation cost to user should be considered).
- Be integrated with and done in conjunction with land use and land development decisions (consider the constraints of the current transportation system; need to inform all parties of the impacts of their decisions; need to incent better planning)
- Promotes walkable, more functional development and integrated community planning.
- Enable all people access to good jobs, education and training, needed services, and recreational and community attractions.
- Be a well-connected system serving well-planned communities (land uses/mixed)
- Enhances water quality and air quality using an ecosystem approach (sustainable management plan for right-of-way for multiple benefits).
- Reduces the heat island effect and public health impacts (context sensitive design).
- Supports a multi-faceted climate protection approach.
- Reduces the climate impacts and carbon footprint (green house and gas emissions)
- Be safe for kids (walk safely to school).

**Participant Comment:** I have a concern about saying we will serve everyone; that can be expensive. Some people need personal attendants to help them get to a bus or on a bus. More and more people are obese which requires different assistance technologies than we currently have to serve those people.

**Participant Comment:** Some of these items are somewhat divisive. We will need to make the connection between these things to help reduce the potential controversy (may need to reword some items).

**Participant Comment:** We need to talk to the actors before they make their decisions.

**Participant Comment:** We have an issue with jurisdictional competition. A developer will just go to the next town over if they aren't allowed to do something.

Ms. Shockey said that all of the statements from each working group will be grouped together and compiled for the Stakeholder Advisory Panel for their consideration.

#### **IV WHAT IS OUR PRODUCT?**

Jim Tobaben stated that we want the working group participants help in deciding what we should do. He stated that this will be worked on at the next meeting.

It would be helpful if the participants from this group helped to develop a map that identifies the high priority natural areas in the five-county area. We'll need to decide where we **don't** want a road to be instead of where we think it should go.

#### **V NEXT MEETING & CONVENE**

The next meeting date will be announced by email, but will likely be held in October.

Meeting convened at 10:43 a.m.