



# FINAL REPORT

January 19, 2011

At the direction of Chairman Surbaugh and the County Commissioners, the Strategic Transit Action Recommendation Taskforce (START) was formally created in May 2010. The Taskforce's charges were:

- *Studying the county's Transit Strategic Plan;*
- *Evaluating current service options, both within the county and metro links; and,*
- *Finally, presenting recommendations on future public transportation strategies, including both short-term and long-term financing options for a comprehensive county-wide transit system.*

## PROCESS

A series of meetings were held from August 5, 2010 to January 5, 2011 at Sylvester Powell Community Center in Mission. The first few meetings of the taskforce focused on providing background information on Johnson County Transit's existing and planned operations, regional transportation projects and planning efforts, transit-oriented development, and comparisons to transit systems in other regions.

The next series of meetings were a facilitated session focusing on building cooperation and leadership within the group, defining issues and goals, and creating a framework for forming recommendations. The final meetings were dedicated to working through issues, clarifying and providing additional information, directing staff to form a phasing plan, and forming and finalizing funding strategies and recommendations.

START will present its recommendations to the Johnson County Board of Commissioners on January 27, 2011 and to the Leadership Summit in 2011.

## START MEMBERS

Steve Klika, **Chair**, Overland Park  
Blake Schreck, **Vice Chair**, Lenexa  
Lawrence Andre, Mission  
James Azeltine, Leawood  
David Belz, Prairie Village  
Casey Cassias, Mission  
Vicki Charlesworth, Overland Park  
Jim Courtney, Overland Park  
Dennis Day, Overland Park  
Jack Epps, Overland Park  
Terry Goodman, Overland Park  
Kevin Jeffries, Leawood  
Henry Lyons, Leawood  
Tim McKee, Olathe  
Ronnie Metsker, Overland Park  
Calvin Roberts, Olathe  
E. Allen Roth, Westwood Hills  
Kurtis Ruf, Olathe  
Ron Ryckman, Olathe  
Lou Serrone, Lenexa  
Brenda Sharpe, Overland Park  
John Skubal, Overland Park  
Diane Stewart, Olathe  
Kevin Tubbesing, Shawnee

## Finance Sub-Committee

Doug Robinson  
Tom Kaleko  
Laura Smith  
Kevin Hiskey

## TENETS

In drafting the recommendations, START agreed on a number of tenets that should serve as guidance for improving transit in Johnson County. These tenets are as follows:

1. To maintain the high standards typically associated with Johnson County, additional quality transportation options must be implemented that support a competitive edge, grow at a sustainable rate and promote a healthier life style for our residents.
2. The approved JCT Strategic Plan, updated annually, serves as a guide for future investment decisions.
3. Reliable and efficient transit benefits the community by supporting:
  - *Air quality and other environmental concerns,*
  - *Area economic development, redevelopment, and other investments by providing transit services to employees, visitors and residents,*
  - *Changing demographics, healthy lifestyle choices, and community dynamics*
4. Successful transit systems need:
  - *Reliable and predictable funding stream to make long-term operation of a transit system in Johnson County viable.*
  - *Strong passenger amenities like safe bus stops, passenger shelters, signage, and real-time information.*
  - *Integration with other area transit systems to provide regional connections.*
5. A phased approach is the most likely way to ensure program success, community support, and long-term funding.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The taskforce determined that recommending full funding of the Strategic Plan over the next seven years was not a viable option at this time. The group decided upon splitting the financing and implementation of future services into a number of phases that are smaller and more incremental than envisioned in the Strategic Plan.

A phased implementation outline was developed by the taskforce to demonstrate this incremental approach to improving transit in Johnson County. This outline is much more conservative than the implementation strategies in the Strategic Plan, acknowledging the current financial and political realities in 2011. While the Strategic Plan still serves as the county's transit vision and will be updated in 2011 to reflect the results of the START process, the approach discussed by the taskforce presents a near-term funding strategy based on the following principles:

- Service will be implemented in a multi-year, phased approach.
- Add and improve passenger amenities such as shelters, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian infrastructure, and information technology.

- Improve the quality and increase marketing of existing core services; incrementally expand the system in later phases.
- JCT staff will provide cost estimates, reasonable funding options, and accountability measures prior to the implementation of each phase.

Each phase has been designed to incrementally expand the network of routes and the number and quality of passenger amenities. These phases include:

**Phase 1:** Focus on improving passenger amenities and strengthening the core routes of the system, with the primary goal of providing access to jobs and making the system easier to use.

**Phase 2:** Continue to strengthen the core system and provide access to jobs, while beginning new services on arterial roads in higher-density portions of the county with businesses and neighborhoods.

**Phase 3:** Expand the reach of the transit system throughout the county and region by providing access to more neighborhoods and jobs at more times throughout the day.

**Phase 4:** Add additional service hours to the routes initiated in previous phases, adding peak, midday and evening hours and continuing to improve amenities as development occurs and ridership increases.

**Phase 5:** Continue to expand service on routes initiated in early phases, making the system more accessible to non-work trips and to all areas of the county.

Note: These phases are presented in greater detail in the **START Discussion** document.

## FINANCING CONCEPTS

To support the taskforce in evaluating various funding options and scenarios, a Finance sub-committee was created to provide detailed information on potential funding sources and the feasibility of each option. A number of financing options were evaluated, including:

- Mill Levy Increase
- Motor Vehicle Registration Fee
- Specific User Fee – Transportation Utility Fee
- New Gas Sales Tax
- Local Sales Tax Increase
- Excise Tax – Countywide
- Transportation Development District Special Assessment
- Community Improvement District

The sub-committee created three initial funding scenarios that were based on conservative federal and state funding projections. The funding sources range from sales and use taxes, general government support and motor vehicle fees. Very few transit properties that were evaluated during the START process use mill levy support to fund extensive transit systems.

To initiate funding of transit services, the following options have been discussed and submitted to the County Commissioners for consideration:

- The use of county reserves and the reallocation of existing resources should be considered for near-term capital investments and operating costs.
- Gradually increase the county's mill levy and dedicate this funding to be used for transit projects and operations. The benefit of a mill levy increase is that it is controlled by the county and does not require state legislative approval. However, this funding may not be a consistent source of dedicated funding for transit, based on future budgeting processes. An increase of one mill would generate approximately \$7.3 million in annual revenue, which could be used for both operating and capital expenses.\*
- Initiate a county-wide motor vehicle registration fee. This fee would require state legislative approval and could be used to fund operations as well as provide a local match for capital projects receiving federal funding. However, this option could represent a dedicated source for transit funding, at a relatively low cost to each car owner. A \$10 registration fee would generate approximately \$5.5 million in revenue annually.\*

\* These figures are only examples; refer to the **Phased Implementation Outline** in the **START Discussion** for the total costs of each phase.

## CONCLUSION

The members of the Strategic Transit Action Recommendation Taskforce generously contributed their valuable time and effort to the process of creating a transit vision for the county. A wealth of transportation and development-related information was presented and thoroughly analyzed at each meeting, with strong participation by all taskforce members. Due to the complexity of the issues revolving around transit, there were many diverse ideas on the best way to move the county forward.

The group agreed that it was important to work toward improving mobility options in Johnson County. This report is a tool for the County Commission to utilize in considering how to provide a consistent funding source for future transit improvements and operations. The taskforce feels strongly about the importance of continuing the growth, improvement and stability of the transit system to meet the needs and demands of the future growth of Johnson County.

While this report and presentation to the BoCC on January 27<sup>th</sup> formally concludes the START process, the continued public education and marketing of transit services and benefits is critical to the success of the system. The taskforce intends for their work to spark a public discussion of transit and to guide future marketing and planning efforts.