Transit Action Network was asked to provide a list of recommendations for the new Transit Coordinating Council workplan, which we provided to Co-chair Robbie Makinen in late August.

Here is the main body of that document.

We know that the transit operators are very knowledgeable about many of the ways the different systems don't adequately coordinate, and we are excited that this new council will provide a formal venue to eliminate current roadblocks to seamless transit and make sure maximum coordination happens. We appreciate getting to provide our perspective.

There is a lot in our list but we have identified some specific actions that we think can be done early for some positive results.

As a philosophical starting point, we trust the Council fully accepts the concept of "seamless transit for the region," and that it's largely a matter of what constitutes seamless transit and how we bring it into being.

It is essential that the TCC express strong support for the concept of seamless transit to serve as the groundwork for all future work.

Also, this Council should ensure that Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Orders related to transit and the Americans with Disabilities Act are being adhered to fully throughout the region.

We have organized our "agenda" under twelve major issue headings, with a focus on the transit system as it appears to riders and potential riders. We realize there are also a lot of administrative and other "internal" actions that can and will be taken to improve coordination and cooperation among the various transit operators, and we leave it to the operators to pursue those actions.

We have also identified some specific items that we think ought to be achievable in the near future, and thus become "early wins," both to demonstrate to the region that the TCC is indeed making progress, and to serve as a basis for working on more difficult issues.

 TAN's Recommendations for a Transit Coordinating Council Agenda

 1 - Regional Fare Analysis – A regional fare analysis needs to be done immediately in order to achieve a truly seamless fare structure and fare payment mechanism throughout the region. We think you know this, and we concur.

1a EARLY WIN - Get the regional fare analysis under way.

New fareboxes are on the horizon for all operators, and a full and thoughtful analysis of current fare structures and policies is needed now in order to help identify the many opportunities for using new farebox technologies to create a truly regional fare structure and fare collection system. This won't be the easiest issue for the TCC to tackle, but it's one of the most important and we feel it should be started on immediately with a strong commitment to act on its findings.

1b Show an immediate, real commitment to seamless transit by actually implementing a new program that improves pass reciprocity between KCATA and JCT, at least until the fare study is complete and a permanent solution is found.

Since KCATA already accepts the JCT monthly pass, a new program where JCT accepts either the KCATA monthly pass or day pass on a limited basis would serve this purpose.
EARLY WIN –Create a new pass reciprocity program, possibly until the recommendations of the Fare study can be implemented, where The JO accepts the Metro monthly pass on either certain routes or on certain days. An alternative would be for The JO to create a similar program to accept the Metro day pass on certain days or routes.

JCT would benefit by even a limited acceptance of KCATA passes in order to advertise The JO, get new riders and introduce riders to the new CONNEX routes.

2 - Define the Transit Stakeholder Forum -- Like the regional fare analysis, defining the proposed Transit Stakeholder Forum is a critical part of making this new structure work, and we consider it an important agenda item for the TCC because we recognize its importance.

EARLY WIN - Define the role and structure of the Transit Stakeholder Forum and set it in motion.
We previously offered some input regarding this forum to Tom Gerend and look forward to conferring with you as the TCC defines the TSF.

3 - Regional Transit Identity (Brand) - We fully support creation of a regional "brand" as a way of signaling that we are moving toward a seamless transit system for the region, regardless of the pace of actual integration. We anticipate that a regional brand / logo would be used on all transit property (such as vehicles and transit stops / centers) and publications, in addition to and/or along with existing separate identities / brands, as that might be desired.

4 - Standards for Transit Information - The region needs consistent standards for presenting information about public transit across all media. This is an issue that has come across loud and clear in our bi-monthly meetings, especially better route and schedule information at major bus stops, especially where systems

meet. KCATA does a pretty good job of this, but providing adequate on-street information has generally been a challenge for other operators. Setting and achieving some basic standards will benefit a lot of riders, as well as people who might become riders.

4a - Posting schedule information. Previous attempts to co-ordinate the publishing and posting of route schedules have been hampered because JCT and KCATA schedule changes have not been in sync.

EARLY WIN - Transit operators adopt a common calendar schedule for implementing route and schedule changes in order to facilitate co-posting of schedule information.

4b - Pocket Schedules should be of common general format (e.g., size, layout, presentation style of map and timetable information, etc.) and should be available at common outlets for all operators, to the extent practical.

EARLY WIN - KCATA agrees to locate JCT pocket schedules alongside its own schedules in its racks, and further agrees to re-stock those schedules.

EARLY WIN - In consultation with transit riders, operators reach agreement on a common general format for pocket schedules.

4c- On-street schedules should be posted at priority stops, including all transit centers, time points, transfer points, and other major boarding locations.

EARLY WIN - All operators identify priority stops and agree to post on-street schedules at such locations.

4d - Where systems intersect, schedules for routes of different operators should be presented on the same poster to the extent possible. When that is not possible, they should be located in close proximity. Past attempts to accomplish this have not been successful. Posting schedules for JCT Route 575 at Waldo, for example, has been complicated by the fact that JCT schedule change dates have not always aligned with KCATA change dates.

 5 - Transit Maps
5a - There is currently no single map of the region's transit routes, and only a handful of sub-system maps. We need a Big Picture Transit Map of the region's transit services that can convey a quick picture of "transit possibilities" to actual and potential transit riders, to be updated quarterly.

A small-format paper map of the "big picture" for widespread distribution, updated quarterly

EARLY WIN - Publish a Big Picture Transit Map before the end of 2013. Make it widely available, both in paper form and as a poster at all major transit centers, transfer locations, and park-and-ride lots.

The big picture map would differentiate among at least four categories of routes by level of service: seven-day, six-day, five-day, and peak-period-only routes. It would also show rivers and major jurisdictional boundaries, plus major highways because they are such widely-recognized reference features.

5b - Localized transit maps for transit centers and other major locations. The sub-regional maps posted at the Independence Transit Center and at Johnson County Community College are current examples. Each provides a picture of transit from a particular location or within a sub-area of the region, and helps transit riders understand the transit service that is available close at hand.

EARLY WIN - KCATA prepares and posts such a map for Wyandotte County to go with the new Transit Centers and Connex service.

Such maps would also be prepared for locations such as the 10th and Main Trnsit Center, The Plaza, Waldo, Blue Ridge Crossing, Boardwalk Square, Antioch Transit Center, 31st and Van Brunt, and the Mission Transit Center.

5c - An online map is needed to supplement the paper and poster maps. It should provide the ability to, for example, click on a route number to display a detailed map of that route and associated schedule information.

5d - An updated and more transit-friendly map of park-and-ride locations is needed. The existing map (on MARC's Ride Share webpage) is out-of-date and not clearly identified as transit oriented.

 6 - Transit's On-Street Presence
6a - It's important to establish common expectations for what facilities riders and potential riders will find "out on the street." Transit's on-street presence is 24/7, and should be viewed as a key element of transit marketing by communicating not only that transit service is available at a given location, but when it is available and where it goes. It will take time to actually achieve the desired outcome for a consistent on-street presence, but it's important to establish some goals.
EARLY WIN - Agree on a set of basic guidelines regarding the type of transit presence, both facilities and information, to be provided at major transit stops.

6b - Transit stop signs should identify a stop as a transit stop (including route number or numbers, phone number, and web address), and should be designed and installed so as to be conspicuous and identifiable as a transit stop to persons approaching from any direction.

6c - Common guidelines are needed for when to provide transit stop amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, schedule posters, route and/or system maps, shelters, etc.

7.- Trip Planning Assistance

7a - A Transit 511 Information Center (currently referred to as "The Call Center") is an essential service to help riders use the transit system.

There should be one such line for the region, it should be staffed 24/7 (via call-forwarding to work-at-home operators during off hours), or at least during all hours of transit operation, and it should provide timely and reliable information to callers regarding services provided by all transit providers.

EARLY WIN - As an interim step, improve training for staff of the present call center so they are able to provide timely and reliable information about all transit routes and services, including those not provided directly by KCATA.

7b - Trip planning assistance should be available via a Transit 511 Center, and also via web-based or mobile services or apps. Such information, especially bus-location and estimated-arrival-time information, should be provided through a single facility and/or app for all transit operators, regardless of whatever differences there might be among the GPS/AVL systems, to enable riders to obtain such information seamlessly.

8 - Connectivity
8a - Routes should be designed in such a way as to maximize connectivity between systems.

8b - Schedules should be coordinated so as to maximize ease of connectivity and minimize waiting times, especially across systems.

8c - Transit operators should clearly communicate opportunities to make such connections. One example is identifying routes of other systems on pocket schedules and route maps.

9 - Transit Marketing / Outreach - At present, marketing efforts and campaigns are largely done by transit operators independently of one another.

9a - A common web presence via social media is desirable for transit, at least for routine transit promoting messages.

EARLY WIN - Establish a common social media presence for general transit information to supplement if not largely replace @KCATAMetro and @JoCoTheJO.

9b - Joint media releases can be done regarding "generic" issues such as holidays, ozone alert programs, transit promotion days, etc., to reinforce the notion of a unified transit system for the region.

EARLY WIN - Transit operators identify opportunities for joint media releases during the year.

9c - Combine marketing efforts. Current marketing efforts appear to be largely opportunistic. For example, tabling is done at a place of employment with staff of the separate operators providing information for their own routes and services. The region needs a single coordinated transit marketing / outreach program that will systematically and proactively do outreach at places of employment (with priority given to locations with good levels of transit service and many employees), community fairs and events, schools, and community / senior / social service centers. The program should also develop additional programs such as the current student pass programs at UMKC and (beginning within days) Rockhurst University. Partners should include major employers. Furthermore, this program should work with willing employer partners to promote such programs as "parking cash-out" to encourage transit use and ride sharing.

9d - Transit marketing / outreach efforts should be fully coordinated with the regional ride-share program.

10 - Transit Rider / Customer Involvement - It's important that transit riders have regular access to transit decision-makers, both the policy makers and the implementers.

10a - Meetings of the governing bodies of the respective transit operators should be held at times and locations that make it possible for riders/customers to attend via public transit.

EARLY WIN - Each operator adopts a meeting schedule that provides ease of access to its customers.

10b - Regular public meetings should be held to give riders access to staff and others who can hear their concerns regarding service issues.

10c - MARC's yet-to-be-established "Transit Stakeholder Forum" could serve the function of providing riders an opportunity to express concerns. However, it might be important to also offer operator-specific opportunities in order to avoid having the TSF overwhelmed with operator-specific issues.

11 - Paratransit
The need for more and improved paratransit services becomes more apparent with each passing day as the number and percent of over-65 people continues to

grow. The challenges are many, and efforts are currently underway to meet those challenges.

11a - Define how the fixed-route operators and special transit operators will coordinate their respective services to ensure the two groups are maximizing efforts to improve paratransit services.

11b - Create and/or improve mechanisms to assure that paratransit clients are able to cross jurisdictional boundaries seamlessly, both "coming and going."

11c.- Trip planning and scheduling assistance should be available via a single Call Center, and also via web-based or mobile services or apps.

11d -Paratransit users should be able to receive real-time trip information, especially bus-location and estimated-arrival-time information, through a single facility and/or app for all paratransit operators.

11e. - Co-ordinate the routing for paratransit trips so there are minimal transfers to reach a destination, and transfer points have waiting facilities to protect riders from inclement weather.

12 - Shaping Regional Development - While the capacity of the transit providers to directly influence future development in the region may be limited, it's important that they play a more active role in helping to guide such growth. They currently do this through the location of transit capital investments and the services they provide, but they are generally unable to assert the best interests of transit when it comes to major decisions being made by other public and (especially) private entities. The most recent example that comes to mind is the move of AMC and its 400 jobs from Downtown Kansas City to Leawood: from a location served by literally dozens of transit routes to a location served by only two. We submit that the TCC can and should play an important role by providing a forum in which transit operators discuss pending developments and actions they can take, whether by themselves, through elected officials, or through transit advocacy and other independent organizations. Shaping development patterns in the region needs to be a continuing agenda item for the TCC.

August 2013