

Public Transit Missouri Legislative Agenda 2010

At the advent of 2009, Metro faced a \$35 million operational deficit, with no new revenue stream identified, and the narrow defeat of Prop M in St. Louis County, Metro faced a transit crisis unlike any facing other U.S. cities. Metro increased fares, and subsequently cut transit service by one-third, eliminated over 500 Metro jobs including operators, mechanics and support other support staff. After a request from Metro for emergency funding to help bridge the \$35 million deficit, the Missouri Legislature approved a one-time emergency appropriation for \$12 million. This financial infusion, along with federal grants and stimulus dollars, allowed the Agency to restore a portion of the Call-A-Ride and MetroBus service cut in March of 2009. It is expected that the funding will provide service through May or June of 2010.

The state of Missouri is forecasting a bleak financial picture for the upcoming legislative session, and it has also been signaled that there will be no additional funding for transit from the State of Missouri in support of transit. Metro and the Missouri Public Transit Association (MPTA) anticipate that the annual general revenue appropriation from the Missouri General Assembly will follow suit of recent years. Approximately \$4 million for all public transit agencies in the state is expected. Concurrently, MPTA will be asking the Legislature, and the Missouri Department of Transportation to give serious consideration to the future of state support for public transit funding.

Proposition M 2010

On November 19, Metro has plans to invite the St. Louis Regional Caucus to meet with Metro leadership to discuss transit issues. The discussion is expected to include a presentation from grass roots supporters of PropM 2010 initiative in St. Louis County in April 2010. While this is a local initiative, **statewide political support is essential**. The passage of Prop M equals a ½ cent sales tax increase in St. Louis County (enacting a ¼ cent sales tax in St. Louis City, passed in 1997). Prop M would provide:

- Dedicated source of local funding
- Increased transit service and expanding all modes of transit service
- For the Development and roll out of a transit plan including MetroLink, bus rapid transit, flex routes, etc.)

Statewide Transportation Funding Initiative 2010

MODOT is also facing a funding crisis, and while it has not determined specific date or means, will likely bring a statewide tax initiative to the voters in 2010 or 2011. Missouri's transit providers, including Metro, are asking that any statewide effort must contain significant benefits for transit providers. Metro and other MPTA partners are in talks with MoDOT, and the Transportation Committee members in the Missouri Legislature, promoting a greater need for transit funding. **This support is most effective when voiced by other civic and community groups at the local level and in Jefferson City. MPTA estimates that state funding over \$100 million would adequately address crucial operational and capital transit needs. Currently, Missouri provides only \$4 million, with \$1.3 million going to support Metro.**

While it must be determined how the state would apply the funding (capital v. operating) both urban and rural providers have a critical need to match federal grants that support the growth and maintenance of the state's transit infrastructure. And, cities like Kansas City and St. Louis face crucial operating needs, which could be addressed with local dollars. The combination of state capital funding and a permanent local funding source would allow public transit in St. Louis to thrive and grow into the twenty-first century.

Public support of these initiatives is critical. The more voices that are heard in support the more action we can expect from the Missouri Legislature. The St. Louis regional caucus came together last session to address Metro's critical needs. Support within the caucus is deep and strong. These legislators welcome hearing from other transit supporters. **In Jefferson City, legislators from other parts of the state, particularly in the rural segments, need to hear from members of the community who are interested in all modes of alternative transportation.**