

Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority

Annual Report FY 2009

FY 2009 was a year of re-focus for the KCTA. With the defeat of the November 2008 county-wide transportation millage, the KCTA Board needed to re-prioritize its activities for the coming year. It was agreed that the transition of the system from the City of Kalamazoo to the KCTA be delayed until adequate local funding was secured. It was also recognized that a single millage rate across the County for transportation was unacceptable to the voters of the County. The KCTA, the City of Kalamazoo and the Transportation Authority Board (TAB) concluded that a two-tiered millage was necessary if an adequate, sustainable local share was to be secured.

Therefore the KCTA sought a four year County wide millage in May of 2009 and the TAB sought a three year City millage in November of 2009. The May millage (0.4 mils) covered Care-A-Van and Metro Van services for the entire County and all line haul routes outside the City of Kalamazoo including those three routes exclusively in the City of Portage. The November City millage (0.6 mil) paid for line haul service in the City of Kalamazoo. Both of these millages will expire in 2012. Only after these two components of local funding were achieved would the transition of the system be considered.

Planning Community Outreach Activities

- The KCTA Board held two stakeholder meetings in November of 2008 and February 2009 to hear from county leaders on strategies going forward.
- The KCTA Board supported the document co-authored by the County Administrator and the City Manager of Kalamazoo, "Sustaining Public Transit". This document laid out a blueprint for next steps for public transit in the County including, delaying the transition, fare increases, a two -tiered millage approach, an analysis of P.A. 196 and the ability to seek two millages under one authority, as well as comprehensive public awareness campaign.
- The KCTA Board held numerous public awareness sessions with various stakeholder groups throughout the County to inform residents of the benefits of public transit in the community.
- The Board put a 0.4 mil tax proposal on the May ballot. County voters approved the millage request by a margin of 63% to 37%.
- The Public Transit Human Service (PTHS) Coordinated Plan was formally endorsed and submitted to MDOT. The KCTA Board oversaw the creation and endorsement of the plan.
- The Board contracted with Lam and Associates to develop and implement a visioning process for the authority. This visioning process resulted in "Transit Talk", forums for feedback and input from the community.

Transit Talk

The following input was collected from a series of "Transit Talk" discussion sessions that were held during 2009. This input came from County citizens, both riders and non-riders. Groups involved in "Transit Talks"

included Friends of Transit, The United Way, Vicksburg Lions, Kalamazoo Public Library, the Health and Community Services Department, Area Agency on Aging, Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Westside Kiwanis, Citizens Promoting Comstock, and the AARP.

- A false assumption exists that tax dollars dedicated to public transit are a charitable donation benefitting only people with disabilities and seniors.
- Increased awareness efforts will help to break down negative stereotypes associated with public transit and help to increase ridership.
- Visitors to Kalamazoo County should be aware of the public transit system and see it as an economical way to travel in the county.
- Schools should partner with the Transit system to provide tokens to students focused on “The Promise”.
- By adopting and improving bus shelters along a bus route, local businesses could promote their businesses and enhance ridership.
- Sunday service could be provided for church goers.
- Make taking the bus “cool”

These are a few of the comments received during “transit talks”. For a complete list of comments please visit kalamazoo.transittalk.com.

KCTA Board Administrative Accomplishments

- Approved a FY2009 KCTA Operating Budget
- Entered into an agreement with EPIC/MRA to perform research work for the May vote.
- Extended the agreement with Pride Ambulance for Care-A-Van service through October 2009
- Experienced a successful FY 2008 audit with BDO Seidman.
- Passed a resolution supporting a fare increase for the system
- Approved 2009 budget adjustments
- Approved the FY 2010 KCTA operating budget
- Approved numerous administrative policy changes
- Refined the organization’s governance structure.

System/Operational Accomplishments

- The May 5, 2009 countywide ballot proposal (0.4 mills) was approved by the voters providing local revenue for Care-A-Van and Metro Van plus all line haul routes extending outside the City of Kalamazoo. Local support for Metro Van is included for the first time in a countywide levy.
- The system received federal stimulus funding (ARRA) to purchase “intelligent” transportation technology, new rider friendly bus shelters, support vehicles, shop equipment, facility renovation, and miscellaneous vehicle repair parts.

21.9% of respondents indicated they have a household income between \$6,000 and \$12,000/year.

48.97% respondents indicated they ride the bus 6 or more times a week.

21.90% respondents indicated they ride the bus 5 or more times a week.

Similar Surveys were conducted in 1995 and 2003

Key comparative data are:

Heavier use by WMU students changed the majority of trip purposes from work related in 1995 to school related in 2003 and 2009.

In 1995, the majority of respondents were full-time workers followed by students and part-time workers. In 2003 and 2009 the majority of respondents indicated they were students and then part-time workers.

In 2003, 25.27% of respondents indicating they were part-time workers were in the service industry. In 2009, that figure increased to 30.90%

Annual household income remained the same in all three survey years.

Survey results indicate that public transportation is providing needed service to those in the community without other means of transportation. The use by WMU students is a significant portion of the ridership. There is a correlation between low income and the use of public transportation.

Summary

The key goal of securing local funding for public transportation was accomplished in 2009. Much work was done to make the public aware of the benefits of public transit in the past year. Looking forward the KCTA will again focus on transitioning the system from the City of Kalamazoo to the KCTA. The details of that transition will be thoroughly addressed and the capacity of the organization will be fully assessed and fine tuned to accomplish this critical task.