

June 21, 2016

► **Lawrence City Commission**

Lawrence, KS

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**Commissioners,**

I apologize for not being in front of you personally to express these views, but complications from a recent surgery have impaired my voice temporarily.

As I understand it, you are being asked by Johnson County to provide \$327,800 to support the operation of the K-10 Connector line this year. This is a very significant increase in the amount currently taken from transit funds to support the service.

Before the City Commission approves any transfer of funds from support of the City's Transit System to support of Johnson County's Transit System, I recommend that it have the answer to two questions:

1. Are the citizens of Lawrence better served by transit funds in support of its own transit system, or in support of an intercity route designed to deliver students to Johnson County Community College (JCCC)?
2. If the City does decide to support the route, is it paying a fair and reasonable portion of the net cost of providing the route?

As a parent of a young adult who attends JCCC, I can attest that this is a great route for such students. It greatly reduces commuting costs for my daughter, and provides her with a safer commute than her driving individually would have. As a driver, I appreciate that this route also reduces congestion on K-10. But, as a member of the Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC), I cannot say that Lawrence tax dollars spent on the route offer most public transit benefit to the citizens of Lawrence.

The T provides citizens of Lawrence (many of who do not have, or have only limited use of a personal vehicle) with access to employment, to shopping and to services at local establishments. It benefits the users, the employers, the merchants and other service providers; all of whom are local. It benefits the City by reducing the volume of traffic and, therefore, the demand on traffic infrastructure, while encouraging the local economy.

Currently, the T is looking to improve the level of service it provides the citizens of Lawrence with more frequent service. It is also looking to preserve and improve the efficiency of its operations in the long term with construction of a new transit hub. Monies spent on the K-10 Connector will be not available for the improvement or operation of transit within the City.

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As beneficial as the K-10 Connector is for many of the citizens of Lawrence, Johnson County did not begin, nor does it maintain, the route as a service to our city. They derive two benefits from providing this route. First, they support JCCC. The Johnson County economy benefits from student tuition, fees and consumption. Second, since State funding for transit is apportioned considering ridership and revenue miles, a long and well utilized transit route can have a significant impact on the State funding provided to a transit agency.

If, at a policy level, it is determined to provide Lawrence tax dollars to a Johnson County route, a determination must be made on what is a fair amount to provide. To determine what is fair, we should know what is the net cost of providing the route. This requires knowing not only the operating costs and the farebox revenues, but knowing the portion of State funds that the ridership and miles that this route is responsible for providing to Johnson County. Kansas cities are in competition for this pool of money administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). When the City funds service for Johnson County, it is subsidizing the shift of monies to Johnson County that might otherwise go to Lawrence.

Knowing the funding that Johnson County derives from this route is essential to knowing the true net cost of providing the route—which should be the basis for any sharing of cost. Unfortunately, not only as Johnson County refused over the past two years to provide the specific numbers, also so has KDOT. This refusal is concerning to me as a PTAC member.

As a PTAC member, my duty is provide the City Administration and the Commission with my best advice on these matters. In this matter my advice is twofold:

1. Please consider what you feel the goal of public transit is for this community when apportioning its limited funding.
2. Please insist on having as complete of information as possible on the total cost of providing services before apportioning funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the community these past few years on PTAC.

Respectfully

Mark Hurt  
Member of the Public Transit Advisory Committee