



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Final

City Council

Tuesday, October 21, 2025
4:00 PM

Work Session

City Hall
Conference Room
1A/1B
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Buffaloe called the meeting to order at approximately 4 p.m.

Present: 7 - Buffaloe, Foster, Waterman, Peters, Carroll, Sample, and Elwood

Transit Study - 2025 Update

Attachments: [Comprehensive Transit Study - 2025 Update Presentation](#)

Shane Creech, Public Works Director, introduced Transit staff, Mike Sokoff and Shannon Hemenway, and consultant, Corrine Donahue. Corrine provided some background on the work that has been done to date. She covered the market analysis, City's comprehensive plan, previous transit plans, and regional transportation plans. She noted that for communities that are consistently growing, like Columbia, the transit demand will continue to grow as well. She covered a peer city review.

For the operations analysis, she discussed the existing Transit services. She emphasized the desire to get service back to pre pandemic levels. She highlighted the dip in ridership during the pandemic, but noted that was common among transit systems.

Going into the project, there was a heavy emphasis on gathering feedback from the community. The community had a strong preference for increased frequency on existing bus lines. Additionally, there was a strong preference to expand service during off peak hours, such as nights and weekends. The key takeaways included that the services were more limited than they should be, that recruitment/retention was a high priority, and that current routes, while limited, structurally made sense. These takeaways informed the vision statements.

The recommendations focus on near-term concepts, or budget neutral, and long term concepts. She noted that implementation takes time - to identify funding, to hire staff, etc. She reinforced setting realistic expectations in the community. The recommendations included annual appropriations for operation and maintenance. She reinforced purchasing capital resources and hiring and retaining high performing staff.

Tier 1 recommendations would not offer any changes to the current route map, but would offer evening services. It slightly expands weekday and weekend service hours. The annual service hours would increase by around 4,000 hours.

There was discussion around current staffing levels, as well as challenges to hiring drivers.

Tier 2 recommendations would significantly increase service hours from baseline by around 19,000 hours. The frequency would increase. She also offered an alternative to Tier 2 which would introduce a “purple” route serving Paris Rd. / Route B corridor.

Tier 3 recommendations would expand service hours, as well as adding service hours on Sundays. The frequency would increase as well, with wait times at around 30 minutes during weekdays. This would increase revenue service hours significantly to just under 60,000 annually.

Tier 4 recommendations represent where many community members would like to be. Service hours would increase substantially, with weekday service from 5 a.m. to 11:55 p.m. and service on both Saturday and Sunday. This would be approximately 5 times the current baseline. This option would also include microtransit zones.

There were some discussions around potential expansion to future high employment areas, such as near the MU Research Reactor. Some questions came up about, in the future, incorporating bike lockers near bus stops. Shane noted that it hasn't been the practice to purchase right of way to add to bus shelters.

Corrine highlighted some regional service options, though the emphasis would be on building up our local transit service. These recommendations are not included in any of the prior mentioned tiers. She provided some potential route schedules. The estimated costs to operate six daily round trips on weekdays would be around \$616,356 - though this cost does not include the vehicles. While the estimated ridership is unknown, there is a demand.

For implementation, she covered operating cost estimates by tier, including cost estimates for fixed route service as well as paratransit. The baseline total is around \$5 million, compared to Tier 4 which is over \$19 million.

She also covered capital estimates for bus replacements, additional buses, bus stops, and facilities.

She discussed potential funding options at the federal, state, and local levels. She reviewed some potential grants at the federal level, including competitive grants. She noted that the state funding has been almost cut in half. She reviewed local opportunities, such as a dedicated tax or enhanced MU partnership.

A question came up about the impact bringing back bus fares may make. Corrine noted the national average for every 1% increase in fares, ridership decreased approximately 3%. She said most transit providers see fares as around 10% of their total revenue.

She discussed the staffing plan. She noted there isn't a wrong answer, but cautioned having staff members wear too many hats due to the risk of things falling through the cracks. When discussing integration and development, she emphasized aligning development policy with transit system improvements. While transit can't limit development, it should be a consideration.

She shared an updated timeline. It outlines the potential to get to Tier 1 by FY 27. She noted that in order to meet this goal, the City needs to get back to the baseline level of service as soon as possible.

She covered the additional peer review that was done. State funding in Missouri is

incredibly low compared to Illinois (~50% of agency budget) and Indiana (~27% of agency budget). In Columbia, state funding is approximately 1% of the agency budget.

Looking at additional peer reviews within the State of Missouri - Corrine reviewed St. Louis, St. Joe, and Cape Girardeau. She reviewed communities with microtransit opportunities, including Norman OK, Lawrence KS, Bloomington IN, and Champaign-Urbana IL.

She also covered other university partnerships, including KU/Lawrence KS, UI/Champaign-Urbana IL, KS/Manhattan KS, IU/Bloomington IN.

Peer county partnerships included Iowa City Transit, Manhattan/Junction City KS, Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill.

She highlighted some causes of the driver shortage, including the aging workforce, drug/alcohol testing, CDL requirements, etc. Some of the best practices include increasing compensation, improved schedules, mentorship programs, clear path to promotions, etc.

She noted transit oriented development, with examples from Cleveland OH and Omaha NE. This could be a collaboration with Community Development, particularly with the Comprehensive Plan update.

Questions came up related to proximity to affordable housing and MU employment hubs. Council emphasized that transit, housing, and development should all work together.

II. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

None.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:05 p.m.