

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. Background

KCATA has been planning and developing transit centers as part of an ongoing effort to improve transit service, particularly in lower density suburban areas. KCATA's south Kansas City service area has a number of transit routes generally focused on the CID area. Bannister Mall is a large suburban shopping mall situated on 90 acres, opened in the 1980s, now largely vacant. Retail activity has moved to other parts of the metropolitan area. Bannister Mall is located at Bannister Road and Hillcrest Road, and abuts I-435 on the east.

The recently formed 266 acre 3-Trails Community Improvement District is authorized under state statute and approved by the City of Kansas City, Missouri. 3-Trails CID is a political subdivision of the State of Missouri. It derives its revenues from a special real estate assessment on District property and an additional 1/8 cent sales tax on purchases within the District. The CID is governed by a Board of Directors elected by the District property owners and approved by the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

The CID purpose is to promote economic activity and development within the District which is considered a "first tier subdivision" that displays both suburban and urban characteristics. The District has embraced the FOCUS Plan of Kansas City, Missouri and the principles embodied in MARC's "Creating Quality Places" and "Transit Supportive Development".

Thus, the concept of developing a transit center within the CID was conceived and KCATA and the CID commissioned a study of the feasibility of developing a transit center in the District.

B. 3-Trails Community Improvement District Plans

The authorizing state statute permits the creation of an organization to promote and facilitate development of a specific area specifically including public infrastructure and transportation. A CID is empowered to conduct planning, own and construct improvements, and work with public and private organizations in the furtherance of economic development.

The CID has been working with all of the District property owners to redevelop the District. The owner of the Bannister Mall has expressed an interest in donating certain Mall property for public institutional use as a beginning effort to convert the Mall into a mixed use facility. Three uses that are currently planned to occupy the Mall initial mixed use area are the Hickman Mills C-1 School District, Swope Park Medical and a private day care facility. It is envisioned that other uses will follow to occupy space now vacant in the Mall and surrounding District, especially with the prospect of an enhanced transit center within the District. In addition, there is approximately 1,200 acres adjacent to the CID that is positioned for development. The CID is actively working with these stakeholders to insure that an efficient transit service option is incorporated into all base line development/infrastructure planning. Currently there is great interest by the area stakeholders in an enhanced transit center located within the CID with service capability to these adjacent development areas.

These uses and other future uses represent a market for transit services.

C. Project Purpose and Need

KCATA has been configuring service around the hub and spoke service concept, using transit centers as points of convergence for transit routes. KCATA recently opened a transit center in the service area north of the Missouri River at Barry Road and I-29, and is developing a transit center near Independence Square. The concept was initially put forth in the Metropolitan Transit Initiative Demand Assessment and the transit center concept was further developed in KCATA's Gateways report. The Gateways report presented design concepts for regional and local transit centers.

Transit service in south Kansas City consists of several routes that serve the vicinity of the CID. Over the years the individual routes have been coordinated and converge at two surface bus stops on Hillcrest Road at 90th Street. This location near the center of the CID has become the focus for transit in the area, and is the primary transfer point in the service area.

The current focus at Hillcrest and 90th Street is inadequate for the purpose because it is isolated from other land uses and facilities for transit passenger are minimal. Passengers must walk approximately 1,000 feet to the primary eastern commercial destination across a surface parking lot and approximately 1,600 feet to the primary western commercial destination. Also, some transferring passengers must cross Hillcrest Road, a four-lane arterial roadway. Bus passenger shelters are provided at both the northbound and southbound bus stops, and turn out lanes are provided so that buses can pull out of the traffic lanes on Hillcrest Road.

The six KCATA routes that currently serve the area represent a level of service that warrant a transit center, especially with the level of transferring that occurs among the routes. In addition, the KCATA plans to increase transit service in the south Kansas City area with the addition of three additional routes. These routes will be implemented as part of KCATA's response to the successful transit tax referendum in November 2003. Information on the current and planned services is included later in this report.

The specific objectives of the 3-Trails Transit Station project are:

- To provide an enhanced area for transferring passengers to wait for buses;
- To focus transit service to better serve area destinations, including an emphasis upon "front door" destination service via scheduled zone circulator shuttles within the CID and the surrounding area;
- To serve as a connecting point for various transportation modes;
- To elevate the profile of transit in the area; and
- To help foster economic development in the CID.