

What's Happening

for Community Leaders

March/April 2017

Heartland 2050 hosts implementer of KC Streetcar at Winter Summit

When Kansas City considered adding a streetcar to its transportation system, city leaders began by talking to skeptical residents about their transportation needs. It's an approach that Omaha may find helpful in its own discussions about a possible streetcar project, says Joe Reardon, the man who helped bring the Ride KC Streetcar to Kansas City.

Reardon, president of the Kansas City Area Chamber of Commerce, helped build support for the streetcar as head of the Kansas City Area Transit Authority. He made his remarks during the keynote address at the Heartland 2050 Winter Summit on March 23.



Joe Reardon, president of the Kansas City Area Chamber of Commerce, speaks to attendees at the Heartland 2050 Winter Summit about transit and regional growth on March 23.

Reardon acknowledged he and other community leaders had challenges when it came to projects such as the Ride KC Streetcar. "When we started out of the gate there was a lot of skepticism." He believes expanded public transit options work best when there is a regional consensus. "The way we were able to put this together was with a great coalition." Reardon said his meetings to discuss the idea for a streetcar generated ideas for ways communities could connect to and benefit from the Kansas City area's transportation system. "Several of those who were skeptics are now proponents."

The two-mile streetcar line in Kansas City opened in May 2016. Since then 1.4 million riders have used it, with an average of 5,400 riders per day. Reardon said the line has helped bring \$1.8 billion in downtown development to Kansas City. "The infill is really happening in and around this corridor. Bread and butter infrastructure done well; economic development comes to it."

The KC Streetcar, which is free to ride, is funded through a Transportation Development District. The funding generated

within that district's boundaries includes a sales tax of up to 1 percent, a special assessment on real estate, and a supplemental special assessment on surface parking lots.

Nearly one year since the KC Streetcar began operating, Reardon says it is an efficient way to move people and regional and national transportation figures show that how the population gets around is changing. On April 6, the KC Streetcar Authority issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Design Services to study a possible southern extension to the current service route to connect to the Country Club Plaza and University of Missouri - Kansas City. Reardon expects regional collaboration to continue growing along with streetcar service. "If you get an extension done, it causes the regional conversation to happen."

And there are two questions he wants to remain in that regional conversation: what is the region doing to continue growing and what is it doing to connect people to the jobs that exist today? "Movement in Midwestern cities is of interest. Other ways of moving in the region can make sense to catalyze growth in the area." Reardon also worked to expand transit in suburban locations. KCATA piloted a public-private partnership with Bridj to provide on-demand mobility to select areas.

Heartland 2050 will sponsor a forum with the University of Nebraska Omaha Center for Sustainability from 3:30-6:30 p.m. April 21 at UNO's Weitz Community Engagement Center. Chuck Marohn will present "Transportation in the Next American City," exploring transportation and ways it impacts the sustainability of communities in the region. Register at heartland2050.org.

BROADLY SPEAKING

featuring
CHUCK MAROHN, PE & AICP
TRANSPORTATION IN THE
NEXT AMERICAN CITY

FRIDAY, APRIL 21
**UNO Community
Engagement Center**
Presentation: 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Social hour: 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Broadly Speaking is a speaker series designed to engage the mind and stimulate the senses.

New Heartland 2050 mini-grants awarded

For the first-time Surface Transportation Block Grant funding is being used to issue mini-grants for projects in the MAPA region, which align with the goals of the Heartland 2050 Regional Vision and Action Plan. The available funding for the Heartland 2050 mini-grants totaled \$250,000 in Nebraska and \$80,000 in Iowa.

Four governmental and transit agencies are recipients of the mini-grants. The projects receiving awards include Metro Transit Authority's Transit Development Plan (\$87,500), the City of Omaha's 13th Street Corridor Walkability Study (\$100,000), Sarpy County's Arterial and Collector Road Location Study (\$30,000) and Council Bluffs' Walkability Master Plan project (\$80,000).

Metro's Transit Development Plan will evaluate existing service, review the alignment of current service with the Regional Transit Vision, prioritize future improvements and evaluate the impact of Heartland 2050's Close The Gap initiative on future Metro operations.

The **City of Omaha's 13th Street Corridor Walkability Study** will determine how to best utilize existing right-of-way to accommodate all users including automobiles, transit, bicycles, pedestrians and on-street parking.

Sarpy County's Arterial and Collector Road Location Study will identify the roadway network to support and complement existing and anticipated residential, commercial, industrial and public development outside each community in the county.

The **Council Bluffs Walkability Master Plan** would identify corridors best suited for walkability improvements based on the Heartland Connections Regional Bike-Pedestrian Plan to close the gaps in the existing recreational trail system.

Funding for Heartland 2050 mini-grants will be available annually.

MAPA staff efforts have resulted in C.I.T.I.E.S. and CDBG funding for the following areas:

MACEDONIA up to
\$206,200



will provide rehabilitation as part of Macedonia's Main Street Enhancement

MINDEN up to
\$345,325



for the Streetscape Project: replacing walkways and stairways, installing ADA compliant ramps, new railing systems, decorative pavers, and more



TREYNOR up to
\$60,000



to replace and upgrade water main, help improve the community's ISO rating and provide connections to encourage development

WALNUT up to
\$300,000



to drill and construct a new well to meet the Ten States Standards for back-up raw water

New round of Citizens Academy Sessions start for 2017 at Omaha by Design offices

A new round of Citizens Academy Sessions is underway.

The Citizens Academy curriculum is designed to educate its participants on the many activities local governments perform, give them tools to participate in a meaningful way in their local government and advocate successfully for their communities on important issues affecting them.

The Citizens Academy is a partnership of the seven agencies and organizations listed below who provide a combination of staff time, funding, and presenters.

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| • Live Well Omaha | • Omaha by Design |
| • MAPA | • One Omaha |
| • Mode Shift Omaha | • Omaha Neighborhood Alliances |
| • Douglas County Health Department | |

Other agencies that present to the Citizens Academy are: The City of Omaha, Steve Jensen Consulting, the University of Nebraska, City Ventures, Metro Transit and Verdis Group.

The first Citizens Academy classes took place in the Fall of 2014. The program continues with two, 6-week sessions each year.

Attendance is capped at 25. Students are identified through their neighborhood alliance or other connection with community groups, as well as through a growing pool of recommendations from previous students.



Participants meet at the first 2017 Citizens Academy session on March 30 at Omaha by Design's offices. Each workshop includes a guest speaker to talk about their field of expertise.

MTIS completing Phase 2 and entering Phase 3 of project

During the past 18 months, MAPA has worked closely with project partners to complete Phase 2 of the Metro Area Travel Improvement Study (MTIS). MTIS is a collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) and MAPA to identify long-term needs of the interstate and freeway systems in the Omaha region.

The final MTIS also will include recommendations for improving other major roadways in the region, transit service, and the performance of existing roadways using technology. This comprehensive approach was designed to ensure that all modes were represented in future recommendations, and that new or innovative strategies were evaluated as well.

In Phase 1, MAPA and NDOR worked closely with HDR (the lead consultant on the project) to identify existing conditions of the region's transportation network. This data included information about pavement condition, the condition of bridges, travel time, vehicle crashes, and the long-term needs of Metro Transit. Stakeholders and

local, state and federal partners identified different strategies that could address these long-term needs.

During the last year, the project team created and evaluated six proposals with recommendations designed to meet the needs identified in Phase 1. Each represented a different investment strategy focused on different types of roadways, technologies and levels of transit service. These proposals were evaluated based on 20 performance indicators and vetted against the priorities learned through the project's public involvement process. Ultimately, the preferred scenario reflected a high-level of investment in freeways, arterial roadways, and the creation of a fast, frequent regional transit system.

MAPA will incorporate the recommendations in the Preferred Scenario into its 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan and work closely with NDOR as the interstate and state highway projects are designed during the next 18 months as part of Phase 3 of the project.

Facade upgrades part of Walnut downtown revitalization

Walnut, Iowa's downtown is getting a new look. Sixteen storefronts along the main street in "Iowa's Antique City" are will have façade upgrades with a streetscape project to follow.

The project is funded in part by a \$400,000 Iowa West Foundation grant and a \$300,000 revitalization grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority, which MAPA staff helped secure for the project. The City of Walnut is contributing \$335,000 in funds from local option sales tax dollars.

The storefront façade renovations are expected to be completed in June 2017. The streetscape project will follow with upgrades and ADA accessibility improvements to sidewalks, upgrades to

curbs and gutters and work to straighten and level the downtown road made of cobblestone.



An example of a facade in downtown Walnut. Sixteen facades will be upgraded as part of a revitalization project.

Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program will start initially in Valley and Waterloo

MAPA's housing rehabilitation program for low and moderate income households will begin initially in the communities of Valley and Waterloo.

MAPA is applying for a \$315,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. \$250,000 will fund the rehabilitation of 10 homes. \$15,000 of the funds will be used for

lead based paint testing. The remaining \$50,000 will be used for housing administration and general administration.

The Cities of Valley and Waterloo will provide 15% of the matching funds for the program. Both communities have approximately 175 homes greater than 75 years old.

CALENDAR

May 2017

- May 9th – City of Omaha General Election
- May 10th – RPA Policy/Tech Committee 11 a.m.
- May 17th – Finance Committee 8:30 a.m.
Coordinated Transit 10:30 a.m.
- May 18th – Mayors' Bike Ride
Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge
- May 19th – Transportation Technical Advisory Committee 10 a.m.
Bike to Work Day
- May 25th – MAPA Board of Directors 1:30 p.m.
- May 29th – Memorial Day
MAPA Offices Closed

June 2017

- June 4th – NARC 51st Annual Conference
June 7th Monterey, CA
- June 14th – RPA Policy/Tech Committee 11 a.m.
Council of Officials
- June 21st – Finance Committee 8:30 a.m.
Coordinated Transit 10:30 a.m.
- June 29th – MAPA Board of Directors 1:30 p.m.

JumpStart Challenge winner chosen

And the winner of The Startup Collaborative's JumpStart Challenge is...Joe Frost.

Judges chose Joe's proposal, "Stop and Give Me Ten," as the winning solution to MAPA's problem: How do we get more people to move around without a vehicle?

The proposal creates an app for a regional challenge. Participants would log their trips by alternative transportation during 10-day periods and receive rewards from their employers.

Joe receives \$2,500 raised by MAPA through generous donations from Live Well Omaha, HDR and Veridian Credit Union and a 12-month fellowship at The Startup Collaborative. The Startup



Judges of The Startup Collaborative's JumpStart Challenge stand with Joe Frost who was selected as the winner for MAPA's challenge.

Collaborative, in conjunction with the Greater Omaha Chamber, focuses on radically improving the odds of startup business success.

HDR sponsors autonomous shuttle demo

If you thought driverless vehicles were only something for the future, think again. The future is now.

Members of MAPA and Heartland 2050 staff and MAPA's Board of Directors received a first-hand experience of how an autonomous shuttle operates during a demonstration at the Lewis and Clark Landing in Omaha sponsored by HDR.

The Easymile EZ10, a driverless and electric shuttle, can carry up to 12 passengers. It has no steering wheel and operates by following a pre-programmed virtual line mapped and loaded in the software of the vehicle. The shuttle uses LiDar, a special radar that picks up signals through sensors to help the vehicle determine its path and place in the roadway.



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MAPA is an EOE/DBE employer