

# What's Happening

for Community Leaders

July/August 2017

## Metro Transit introduces ORBT brand for bus rapid transit system

After months of anticipation and with the help of public and stakeholder input, Metro Transit makes it official and releases the brand of Omaha's first bus rapid transit system: ORBT.

ORBT, pronounced "or-bit," is a play on BRT, the acronym for bus rapid transit, but is meant to make the transit industry term more relatable for the average citizen. Metro launched the brand on Aug. 16, with a news conference led by Curt Simon, the Executive Director of Metro. Metro Board Chairman Daniel Lawse and Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert also spoke about the new service in Omaha, as well as transportation in the city.



Metro Transit Executive Director Curt Simon (left) and Metro Board Chairman Daniel Lawse (right) unveil the brand for the incoming bus rapid transit system.

"High quality transportation options are critical for a city like Omaha," Stothert said about ORBT. "I'm looking forward to being one of the first riders."

The name and logo are meant to emphasize the constant and reliable path riders will take every day and the rapid nature of the service. "It embodies the forward movement we want this project to show," said Simon of the logo and name. ORBT was

also chosen because it is a short, but memorable word. Metro hired The New Blk advertising agency to do the branding for the upcoming bus rapid transit system.



ORBT will start on Dodge Street, which serves as the spine of the Metro system, intersecting with almost every other bus route, and will be expanded eventually into a rapid transit network. The first route will run from Westroads to downtown and will use 60-foot vehicles powered by compressed natural gas to serve stations every 10 minutes during rush hour.

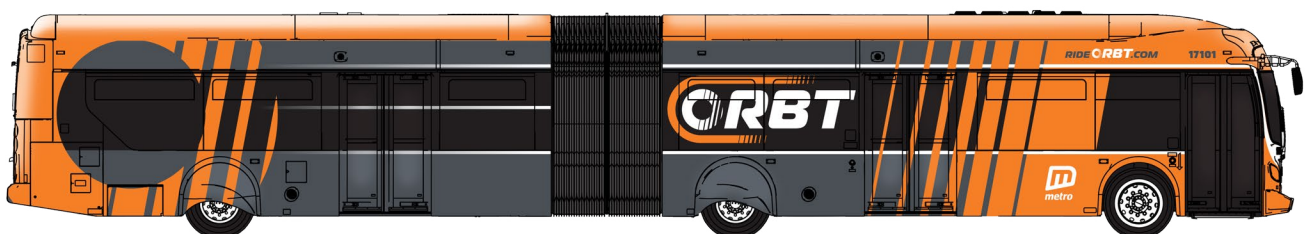
When using ORBT, riders will be able to buy tickets at stations before boarding, board vehicles from a level platform, and bring bikes onboard. Stations will have real-time arrival displays, Wi-Fi, bike racks, and Heartland B-cycle stations.

ORBT is being funded with a \$14.9 million TIGER grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation and support from several local partners: The Peter Kiewit Foundation, The Sherwood Foundation, The Nebraska Environmental Trust, Metropolitan Utilities District, the City of Omaha, Heartland B-cycle, and MAPA.

"The ORBT project is a bold step toward the Regional Transit Vision. It will expand choices and help close the gap for mobility needs," said Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director.

Metro is in the final design process for ORBT, and will have updated roadway and station designs later this fall. As public input has been an important part of planning ORBT, Metro will host public events for these project milestones.

For more information about ORBT, get on board at [rideORBT.com](http://rideORBT.com).



## Heartland 2050 aims to change the conversation about transportation in metro area

Don't miss out on the Heartland 2050 Summit with keynote speaker Ben Pierce! Ben is changing the conversation from transportation being a problem to it being a solution to societal problems. He is recognized nationally as a speaker and thought leader on transportation and smart cities.



Ben is one of the key architects and lead authors of the successful City of Columbus Smart City Challenge application, a \$50 million award.

Following his keynote address, Ben will lead a conversation in an interactive workshop centered on increasing equity and opportunity in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan region by leveraging innovative transportation solutions.

The Heartland 2050 Summit: Change the Conversation is set for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sept. 27, 2017 at the Omaha Marriott Downtown in the Capitol District, 222 N. 10th Street, Omaha. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. RSVP at [2050Summit.eventbrite.com](https://2050Summit.eventbrite.com).

**HEARTLAND 2050**  
**SUMMIT**  
**CHANGE THE CONVERSATION**  
September 27, 2017  
Registration: 7:30 a.m.  
Summit: 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Omaha Marriott Downtown  
at the Capitol District  
222 North 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68102  
presented by  
**HDR**  
CLOSE THE GAP

The \$25 early bird registration fee is available until Sept 8. After Sept. 8, the fee is \$35 until Sept. 22 when registration closes.

## MAPA assists U.S. Census Bureau and governments with 2020 Census preparation



Attendees of the 2020 Census meetings represented many interests in the community and discussed participation barriers.

Acting in its role as a convener, MAPA staff organized and facilitated government and community meetings in July with the U.S. Census Bureau as it helps communities prepare for the 2020 Census.

The two sessions, one tailored to city and county officials and staff and the other for community and grass-roots leaders, focused on how to navigate the obstacles in obtaining full participation in the survey.

Group discussions addressed issues such as declining participation, population diversity and changing households as some of the barriers to full census participation.

At the 2020 census, the United States population is projected to be 341,387,000, a 10.6% increase from the 2010 census.

## Gretna City Council approves streetscape-focused Downtown Revitalization Plan

The City of Gretna has a new downtown revitalization plan. Gretna's City Council approved the plan, which focuses on a streetscape concept, at its meeting Aug. 15.

JEO Consulting Group and Steven Jensen Consulting presented the streetscape concept to residents during a second public meeting on July 26.

The streetscape concept includes curb bump-outs, pedestrian scale lighting, a splash pad, street trees and planting areas along with stairs and a bench proposed for the west side of the City's main downtown street, McKenna Avenue.

MAPA provided the funding for the Main Street toolkit used to determine the preferred development concept, which was developed by project consultant and Heartland 2050 Consultant Steve Jensen. MAPA is working with the City of Gretna to secure funding for the project.



Gretna residents look at a streetscape concept for the downtown revitalization plan at an open house event on July 26.



## Program focuses on Nishnabotna Watershed improvements

A collaborative program is underway to conserve and improve the East and West Nishnabotna Watershed Districts. MAPA is conducting grant administration and compliance for Mills County as part of this collaborative program.

The Nishnabotna River flows through Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska, and into the Missouri River. It travels through many counties and this makes cooperative management and planning a challenge. The soil in the area is susceptible to erosion in particular. The Iowa Watershed Approach (IWA) in reference to the West Nishnabotna River Watershed notes, "An estimated \$1.1 billion in damage has accrued from damaged bridges, utility lines, culverts, farmlands, and sediment deposition from post-channelization stream bank erosion."

To mitigate these issues the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the State of Iowa a \$96.9 million grant for the IWA, a program to improve watersheds across Iowa.

The East and West Nishnabotna coalition or Water Management Authority (WMA) supports the IWA. It consists of 24 jurisdictions including all or parts of Carroll, Crawford, Shelby, Audubon, Guthrie, Pottawattamie, Cass, Adair, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont and Page Counties, as well as soil and water conservation districts, emergency managers, landowners and other interested parties. It is the largest WMA in Iowa so far.

The projects in the program will aim to improve water quality and mitigate flooding.

## Metro Area Motorist Assist program honors volunteers

MAPA honors the volunteers who make its Metro Area Motorist Assist (MAMA) program possible at the annual recognition dinner July 27.

The MAMA Program is designed to provide assistance to motorists on the interstate system in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area.

Volunteers are trained by the Nebraska State Patrol and operate two vans during the morning and evening peak travel periods, which they utilize to provide a variety of services to motorists.

Those services include: filling automotive

fluids, helping with flat tires, providing jump starts, providing directions, arranging to have vehicles towed and clearing debris from driving lanes.

Special recognition goes to three volunteers who retired this year after providing thousands of hours of service: Darrell Harding provided 3,012 hours of service while Bill Muth and Dean Bentzinger had 5,144 hours and 5,380 hours of service respectively.

MAPA administers the program in conjunction with the Nebraska State Patrol.

Thank you volunteers!



Volunteers for the MAMA program were celebrated at the annual dinner on July 27.

# CALENDAR

## September 2017

- Sept. 4th – Labor Day  
MAPA Offices Closed
- Sept. 13th – RPA Policy/Tech Committee  
11 a.m.
- Sept. 20th – Finance Committee  
8:30 a.m.  
Coordinated Transit  
10:30 a.m.  
League of Nebraska  
Municipalities, Lincoln, NE  
Sept. 20 - 22
- Sept. 22nd – Transportation Technical  
Advisory Committee  
10 a.m.
- Sept. 27th – Heartland 2050 Summit  
Omaha Marriott Downtown  
8 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Iowa League of Cities  
Davenport, IA  
Sept. 27 - 29

- Sept. 28th – MAPA Board of Directors  
1:30 p.m.

## October 2017

- Oct. 4th – MAPA 50th Anniversary  
Annual Meeting  
Livestock Exchange Building  
Omaha, NE
- Oct. 9th – Columbus Day  
MAPA Offices Closed
- Oct. 11th – RPA Policy/Tech Committee  
11 a.m.  
Heartland 2050 Executive  
Committee  
8 a.m.
- Oct. 18th – Finance Committee  
8:30 a.m.  
Coordinated Transit  
10:30 a.m.
- Oct. 20th – Transportation Technical  
Advisory Committee  
10 a.m.
- Oct. 26th – MAPA Board of Directors  
1:30 p.m.

## MAPA to celebrate 50th anniversary at Council of Officials Annual Meeting Oct. 4

As mayor of Oklahoma City his one million-pound weight loss challenge to residents led to efforts to redesign streets for use by pedestrians, not just vehicles. Mayor Mick Cornett will share his city's success stories of downtown revitalization, increased walkability and a budding streetcar project at MAPA's Council of Officials Annual Meeting and 50th Anniversary Celebration on October 4.

MAPA's Annual Meeting will take place in the North Ballroom of the Livestock Exchange Building, 4920 S. 30th Street, Omaha, Nebraska. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Mayor Cornett's presentation will begin following dinner.

Register online at [mapa2017annualmeeting.eventbrite.com](http://mapa2017annualmeeting.eventbrite.com) or mail your registration form to MAPA Dinner Reservation, 2222 Cuming St., Omaha, NE 68102. You may also contact MAPA to request a registration form.

RSVP by Sept. 22, 2017 to Christina at [cbrownell@mapacog.org](mailto:cbrownell@mapacog.org) or call: 402-444-6866, ext. 210. Cost is \$30. No refunds will be made after Sept. 29, 2017.



**MAYOR MICK CORNETT**  
Oklahoma City Mayor

**Metropolitan Area Planning Agency**  
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MAPA is an EOE/DBE employer