

Bringing Power Home.™

July 17, 2009

The Honorable James E. O'Neal
Mayor, City of Springfield
Busch Municipal Building
840 Boonville Avenue
Springfield, MO 65802

Dear Mayor O'Neal:

As you are aware, there has been considerable community discussion recently regarding Springfield's transit service provided by City Utilities (CU). Specifically, the discussion has included the proposed new downtown transfer station and its location, whether the city should transition to a grid route system instead of the current hybrid route system, and further community interest in investigating the feasibility of a regional transit authority.

The grid route system and a regional transit authority were both issues identified for further study in the 2007 Transit Development Plan prepared by the Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO). As the City of Springfield and CU plan for the future transportation needs of the community, these critical issues should be carefully evaluated by transportation professionals and the opportunity provided to more fully engage the community in this discussion.

With this objective in mind, we would request the OTO, as the metropolitan planning organization for our region, to take on the task of addressing the following three questions:

- Do we need a downtown transfer station, regardless of the type of bus route system in place or planned for the future?
- What are the one-time and ongoing costs associated with establishing and operating a complete grid system?
- What are the advantages, disadvantages, and costs associated with establishing a regional transit authority, and what steps would be involved in making this transition?

We will commit resources from both CU and the City of Springfield to assist with this effort as needed. Obviously, we would like to see the first question addressed as soon as possible since Federal funding for the downtown transfer station is at stake. We ask that the OTO consider formalizing the existence and charge of a "working group" to focus on these issues, and that their initial task be to respond to the first question within a reasonably short time frame so that identification of a bus transfer station location can be re-energized soon.

As a matter of background information, it is important to note that CU's current transit system includes fourteen (14) fixed routes and is operated for the most part as a hybrid system. Ten (10) of these routes utilize the existing downtown transfer station on a hub-and-spoke, pulse-

type system. Most routes enter the transfer station twice hourly, enabling passengers to transfer to another bus in an efficient manner. Four (4) north routes make connections at Kearney and Glenstone and three (3) of these routes do not utilize the downtown transfer station. Three (3) south routes make connections at the Battlefield Mall and one (1) of these routes does not utilize the transfer station. Thus, CU's transit system is not a pure hub-and-spoke system, but more accurately described as a hybrid system.

CU continually evaluates transit routes with the objective of providing the best possible service to Springfield citizens at a reasonable cost, keeping in mind that transit service is subsidized by CU's electric and natural gas customers. For example, earlier this year, route changes were implemented to better meet riders' needs and to enhance night and weekend service. These improvements were made after obtaining input from transit riders, bus operators, and the general public. In addition, three (3) major studies of the transit system have been conducted in the past fourteen (14) years.

A 1995 study, performed by the Corradino Group at a cost of \$68,000, recommended major route restructuring, which was implemented the following year. This study did not recommend transitioning to a grid system and included the following statement: "With the strong ridership in the northern part of the community and the continued emergence of the southern part of Springfield as the retail and commercial center, a strong downtown transfer point is needed. Subsequent efforts to create satellite transfer centers should focus on the Battlefield and North Town Malls."

In 2002, Urbitran completed the "Springfield Planning and Organizational Management Services Study" which included analysis for CU's transit system, MSU's shuttle service, and the OATS transportation service. This study was funded by OTO planning funds at a cost of \$94,000. Again, several route changes were implemented following this study.

As noted earlier, the Transit Development Plan was completed by the OTO staff in 2007. The short-term recommendations of this study included a fare increase, improvements to night and weekend service, and a comprehensive review of bus stop locations; all of which have been implemented. In addition, the study made two longer-term recommendations mentioned above -- to consider the implementation of a grid-based system and to prepare a strategic plan for the creation of a stand-alone regional transit authority. Both of these recommendations are under review.

In evaluating the grid system recommendation, CU Transit staff has conducted a benchmarking review of other transit systems. The five (5) peer systems identified in the Transit Development Plan are Topeka, KS; Gary, IN; Fort Wayne, IN; Sioux Falls, SD; and Clarksville, TN. Each of these transit systems operate a hub-and-spoke route system with a central downtown transfer station. Other urban systems in Missouri are operated in the same manner. The Metro system in St. Louis is a partial grid system that includes express bus routes and light rail, yet retains a central transfer station, as well as many smaller transfer points. The transit systems in Wichita, KS; Tulsa, OK; Little Rock, AR; Fort Collins, CO; and Nashville, TN were also evaluated. Each of these systems is operated as a hub-and-spoke system with a central downtown transfer station.

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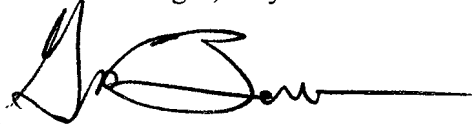
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We greatly appreciate the assistance of the OTO in addressing these important issues related to the future of public transportation service in the Springfield area. Both City Utilities and the City of Springfield are committed to working with the OTO and our community to find the best solution to these challenges. By working together, we can assure that the needs of our citizens are met through the provision of efficient transit service at an affordable cost.

Sincerely,



John Twitty
General Manager, City Utilities



Greg Burris
City Manager

c: Board of Public Utilities