

Policy Initiatives

CoMET's *three-year goal* is to triple Columbia Transit's service. This would enable a combination of improvements to take place:

- Increase bus frequency
- Extend evening and weekend service
- Expand into currently-unserved areas
- Switch to "network model"[footnote #1]

A variety of strategies will be used to achieve this goal.

Immediate Awareness-Building Strategies

- **Signature Campaign:** The CoMET Team will ask Columbia residents to sign on in support of the Community Vision to demonstrate strong public support for transit expansion (please visit www.pednet.org/comet).
- **Educational Outreach:** CoMET partners will conduct presentations, workshops, and media outreach to explain the benefits of transit, promote transit as a viable travel mode, and teach people how to use the system in Columbia.
- **Increase Ridership:** The overall goal of awareness-building strategies is to increase ridership, enable more Columbians to appreciate the benefits of transit, and build more support for the campaign.

Medium-Term Capacity-Building Strategies

- **Community Design Charrettes:** The CoMET Team will conduct inclusive and transparent stakeholder meetings throughout the community to discuss the benefits and challenges of expanding transit services and develop a strong community plan.
- **Partnership with University of Missouri:** Columbia Transit already partners with the University of Missouri to provide transit services to students. By facilitating further dialogue between "town and gown," CoMET advocates will seek to leverage considerable additional funding for transit services while simultaneously helping the City and University achieve their mutual goal of reducing the cost of parking.[footnote #2]
- **Partnership with Columbia Public Schools:** As a result of state budget cuts, student transportation costs are now reimbursed at a small fraction of their level a few years ago, creating a strong incentive for school districts to partner with municipal transit agencies to help children get to school.

Long-Term Funding Strategies

- **Federal Transit Grants:** Increased ridership achieved through immediate and medium-term strategies will make Columbia more competitive when applying for federal transit grants.
- **Transportation Sales Tax:** The City of Columbia collects a dedicated transportation sales tax of one-half cent on the dollar. In fiscal year 2010, \$1.7 million from this sales tax was budgeted for transit services while \$6.2 million was budgeted for street maintenance/improvements. With more people using transit and fewer automobile trips, there will be less need to add driving lanes and repair streets.
- **Dedicated Transit Tax:** If transit services expand so that everyone feels the benefit, voters will be more likely to support a dedicated transit tax that could further enhance the community and save the City money.

[Footnote #1: Columbia's existing "orbital-pulse model" imposes fundamental limitations on the service. Purchasing additional buses would enable Columbia Transit to switch to a more efficient "network model."]

[Footnote #2: In Chapel Hill, NC, the City's partnership with the University of North Carolina has led to a frequent, extensive bus service that is free to students and community members.]