



Regional Transportation Authority
501 Union Street, Sixth Floor
Nashville, TN 37219-1705

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Nashville, TN
Permit No. 1457



Vol. 5

Moving Middle Tennessee Forward

Winter 2006

American Public Transportation Association Celebrates The Star

The Regional Transportation Authority is pleased to share with our Music City Star Notes readers that the American Public Transportation Association published an article updating their members nationwide about the construction progress of the Music City Star (MCS). The article appeared in the January 30, 2006 edition of the weekly newsletter, Passenger Transport, and is re-printed, along with photos of the construction sites, below for your enjoyment.



Bridge over Stoner's Creek

MCS, Tennessee's first commuter rail, is solidly on track to begin operation in the second half of 2006.

In November of last year, the U.S. Congress approved six million dollars in federal funding for the project for the 2006 Fiscal Year paving the way for construction to continue on this much-needed transportation alternative for the growing region.

The MCS East Corridor connects suburban Wilson County to Metropolitan Nashville. A regional commuter transit network is planned for the nine-county area, but this corridor was selected first for two reasons: 1) because of the existence of a public railroad with available capacity and 2) because 2000 United States Census data show that 45% of Wilson County residents commute into Nashville/Davidson County each workday.

In addition, the sheer statistics of the Metro Nashville area make commuter rail necessary. Metro Nashville has some of the most congested thoroughfares in the country, increasing the travel time for commuters. Currently the region is home to 1.2 million people and

the population is expected to grow 42% by 2025. The area is also home to 19 colleges and universities. In 2000, The Employment Review listed Nashville as one of the 15 best cities in which to live and work, making it an even more attractive place for businesses and families to relocate. In fact, just last year (November 2005) the Nissan Corporation announced it will move its corporate headquarters to the region from the Los Angeles area.

The MCS East Corridor is much anticipated by many in the region and it is being embraced by federal and local leaders because it is being built for just under \$40 million dollars. That is less than any other commuter rail in the country. This figure includes track improvements, station construction, crossing upgrades, bridge replacements and administrative costs among others. "It's quite amazing that what we are doing for \$40 million is what some systems spend for a single station," says Kevin Walker, project engineer and resident engineer with Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the lead agency for the rail project, has been able to keep the capital costs low by acquiring retired rail cars from Chicago Metra by transferring remaining federal interest. Additionally, when the project was put out to bid in spring of 2004, steel prices were extremely volatile. "The RTA found it difficult for companies to give us long-



Music City Star at Riverfront Station

term bids because of the volatile market. Therefore, we took the steel cost out of the bid and purchased the steel directly from L.B. Foster Company. This enabled us to lock



Mini-High Platform for Mobility Impaired

in a steel price and saved the project several hundred thousand dollars," says Allyson Shumate, project manager.

The MCS East Corridor project is breaking new ground in other innovative ways. Besides the low capital costs, the project has had tremendous support from its partners. "Getting three cities, two counties, state and federal entities together was a coup. This project is the best example of regionalism that there is, where everyone comes together in the best interest of the region and the residents," says Bill Orange, RTA Board Chairman and Cheatham County Mayor.

"The Tennessee Department of Transportation has provided in-kind marketing assistance and has committed to \$0.4 million annually through its operating assistance program. Nashville's Metropolitan Transit Authority

(Continues next page)

Community Connections

Upcoming Meetings

RTA Board Meetings

3rd Wednesday each month
10:00 a.m.

Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency
1101 Kermit Drive, Nashville, TN

Music City Star East Corridor Oversight Committee (ECOC) Meetings

2nd & 4th Tuesdays each month
10:00 a.m.

Metropolitan Transit Authority
130 Nestor Street, Nashville, TN

Visit our website:

www.musiccitystar.org

Contact:

To Schedule a Music City Star or Operation Lifesaver Presentation for your group, contact

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Message from RTA Board Chairman, Mayor Bill Orange

Recently, there have been many stories about The Star Commuter Rail service in local newspapers, on radio and in television reports. It is a pleasure to see the media interest in the train increase, but what is even more refreshing is the increasing number of queries from interested commuters.

The Regional Transportation Authority staff members say they are taking a number of phone calls and e-mails every week from people who live along the corridor and want to get more information about The Star. They are also getting calls from people out of state, who

are relocating to the Middle Tennessee area and want to learn more about how they can use the train to get to and from work.

This excitement is especially invigorating for those of us who have worked on the project for the past eight years. It all began with market studies and surveys, then we had the incredible assignment of getting three cities, two counties, state and federal entities together. After that, came the planning and design components. All of this work finally started to come together in the fall of 2004 when construction began.

Today, I am proud of the work the staff, our contractors, the RTA Board of Directors and the East Corridor Oversight Committee have put into this historic venture for our region and state. As I drive along the corridor, it gives me great pleasure to see the stations being built and I know it is just a matter of time before those stations are filled with commuters going to and from work.

APTA Celebrates The Star (Continued from previous page)

will provide ticket sales, public information and connecting and shadow bus services to get commuters from rail stations to their workplace. "Our suburban cities will also provide security at the stations, as well as maintenance and utilities support," says Bill Farquhar, commuter rail director and RTA interim executive director. The Nashville and Eastern Railroad is contributing the local match for improvements to the right-of-way.

Currently, construction continues including building each of the six stations and their amenities. Riverfront, the destination station, will be the only one to have an indoor facility with restrooms and space for retail. It is located near downtown businesses, condominiums and apartments. Each station will have mini-high platforms and bridge plates that make boarding easy for mobility impaired passengers. The platform is manual and it is easy for the conductor to use.

The next steps include completing construction, implementing an aggressive marketing plan to employers and commuters, educating the local community on commuter rail and running demonstration trains. The MCS East Corridor has been in the works for the past 10 years from concept to completion and all involved are proud to announce that the train is pulling into the station in 2006!

Website: www.apta.com

Birmingham, Alabama Officials Tour The Star Site

In October, as part of its Inter-City visit, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce took a tour of The Star construction site. The tour was the feature of the group's transportation break out session. The City of Birmingham is exploring building a rail system for its city.



Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

The Star Gets Federal Funding...Plans for Late Summer Launch

In November, the U.S. Congress approved \$6 million in appropriations for the construction of The Star. The funds were included in the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary and Housing & Urban Development

Appropriations conference report. This funding paves the way for the commuter rail to begin service in late summer.

"Everyone with the Regional Transportation Authority [RTA] is elated that the funds have been approved. This will allow us to complete a project that we have worked on for many years. We are thankful to U.S. Senators Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander and U.S. Congressmen Jim Cooper and Bart Gordon for the dedication they have shown this project and the community," says RTA Board Chairman and Cheatham County Mayor Bill Orange.

The Music City Star East Corridor will provide commuter rail passenger service between Downtown Nashville's Riverfront Station and the City of Lebanon in Wilson County. The 32-mile rail service has six planned stations in Lebanon, Martha, Mt. Juliet, Hermitage, Donelson and the destination station, Riverfront.

"We are extremely thankful to the efforts of Senators Frist and Alexander and Congressmen Cooper and Gordon for their unprecedented support and commitment to carrying the full appropriations amount to the funding committees. Without their unwavering support, the project would not be where it is today," says Bill Farquhar, Director of the Commuter Rail project and Interim Executive Director for the Regional Transportation Authority.

Riverfront Station History

The Star's Riverfront Station has a rich history in Nashville. It was built circa 1902 and was the old Tennessee Central Railway Passenger Station. Some of the tracks at the station were also used for freight service.

Passenger service at the station ended in 1955. After that, the site was used for storage and freight. The entire area that we refer to today as Riverfront and Riverfront Park was covered with tracks.

Rail tracks covered what is now First Avenue, along where the current Nashboro Park is located. Those tracks were filled with freight

cars that were loaded with goods from the warehouses on the West side of the tracks. Today, those warehouses are home to the Hard Rock Café, B.B. King's Blues & Rhythm Kitchen, the Spaghetti Factory and various other restaurants and shops.

In a few short months, those tracks will be active once again; this time with commuters pouring into Downtown Nashville heading to work. For many, it will be a bit of nostalgia, seeing trains pull into the Riverfront again. And for a new generation, it will be an exciting and reliable commuting alternative that will create a new set of memories.



Freight Depot on 1st Avenue 1958



Riverfront Station Rendering 6-23-04



Riverfront Station Excavation 11-24-04

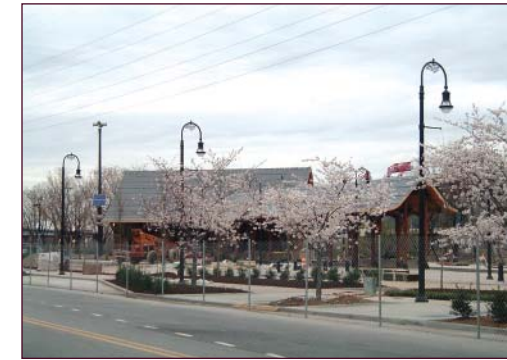


Riverfront Station Grading 8-25-05

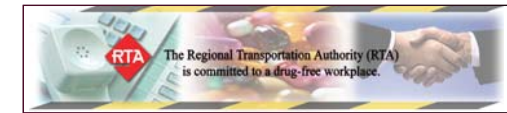
CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction continues at each of the stations. The outlying stations will be Park & Ride facilities, where commuters will park their cars and board the train. The lots will be patrolled by local police officers. The Riverfront Station will have a building with restrooms and small retail.

Work also continues on the temporary station in the Martha Community. Initially, that station was scheduled to open after the launch of service. However, as it is anticipated that the Martha Station will be heavily utilized by commuters from neighboring communities, a temporary station will open at the time The Star launches service. It will be located at State Route 109 and Powell Grove Road.



Riverfront Station 3-19-06



OPERATION LIFESAVER

Trains can't stop quickly. . . you can!

A fully loaded freight train traveling at 55 mph takes a mile or more, after fully applying the brakes, to stop while a passenger vehicle requires an average of 200 feet in an emergency.

Operation Lifesaver

If you suspect a signal is malfunctioning, call the 1-800 number posted on or near the crossing signal (1-866-503-1158 for the Music City Star East Corridor) or your local law enforcement agency.

Website: www.oli.org