



Nashville REALTORS® Support Collaborative Mass Transit Alliance

From commuter-frustration to air quality, the Greater Nashville Association of REALTORS® understands the critical impact that transportation issues have on the quality of life in their region, -- and they're doing something about it.

With a 2011 Smart Growth Grant from the National Association of REALTORS®, the GNAR has provided \$10,000 in funding to the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee in support of the Transit Citizen Leadership Academy, a progressive joint venture between the Alliance and the Nelson and Sue Andrews Institute for Civic Leadership at Lipscomb University.

The goal of the Transit Citizen Leadership Academy is to educate a broad and complementary range of key community leaders on the complexities of mass transit. By preparing them now, the planning that lies ahead for a system of mass transit in Middle Tennessee will be a well-informed, cooperative process.

The Academy consists of seven intensive seminars that immerse participants in studying the impact of transportation in the region; evaluating the options of mass transit and analyzing models of success; and formulating a leadership plan to educate communities and move forward toward consensus and implementation. Participants in the Academy's first class were nominated by mayors from all ten counties of Middle Tennessee, and the number of 'graduates' will top 200 by the time the Academy has completed its five planned sessions.

As GNAR Association Executive Don Klein explains, "The idea is that, by the time it's time to vote on funding, we won't be just sitting around and talking about it. We will have created a critical mass of meaningfully informed community leaders who will be able to explain, 'Yes, it's going to be expensive, but it will be more expensive *not* to build it -- and here's why.'"

GNAR President Alice Walker presented the oversized \$10,000 check to the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee in a dramatic press conference last summer at the site of a nearly complete, brand new intersection of I-40, against the backdrop of rush-hour traffic -- a very pointed visual commentary on the region's future *without* the benefits of well-planned mass transit. "GNAR is really pleased that the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® chose to fund this grant. It is a larger amount of money than usual, but will be well worth the investment as leaders in this region learn more about mass transit and how it can be used to help create the best future of the region," she said, over the roar of the super highway.

GNAR did not hand over a check for a big photo-opp, and then fade in to the background, however -- although they did receive significant press for their generous grant. The Association is involved in the Transit Citizen Leadership Academy on an ongoing basis, hosting an upcoming session on 'Community Engagement' at its campus, with Klein presenting the material and leading discussions. "And it would be easy to fill

the sessions with our membership, alone,” he laughs, “There’s so much interest among the REALTORS®. But we know we have to make room for the mayors’ folks, too.”

Klein points out that the grant created not only good publicity, but political benefits for GNAR, too. “It has shown in a very concrete way that the REALTORS® want to be engaged in their community, just as they are charged to in the preamble of the NAR Code of Ethics. Quite simply, we know that the better our community looks and is, the more opportunity we’ll have to attract families and businesses here to buy, lease, or rent. And of course, these are the communities we live and work in, too – so we don’t want 16-lane highways criss-crossing the region, either.” Having the elected leadership and the Chamber of Commerce recognize that GNAR puts its money where its mouth is, ensures them a seat at the table when it comes down to planning the future of Middle Tennessee. Says Klein, “They see that, as a group, we support what needs support, and fight what needs to be fought, to make this place a better place in which to live, to work, and to play.”



Greater Nashville Association leaders present \$10,000 check to Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee