Situation Assessment

for the

Cross-County Corridor MetroLink Extension Community Engagement Process

Prepared for

East-West Gateway Coordinating Council

In association with

Bi-State Development Agency
Missouri Department of Transportation

Draft
07.23.98

1. Background

A. Scope of the Engagement Process

Mary Means & Associates, Inc (MMA), in collaboration with Vector Communications and Urban Strategies Incorporated, have contracted with East-West Gateway Coordinating Council (the Council) to design and manage community engagement and communication processes for the Cross-County Corridor MetroLink Segment I Extension Conceptual Design and Environmental Analysis. During the study, MMA will work with the Council's Transportation Corridor Improvement Group (TCIG) and the Parsons Transportation Group, the study's planning and design consultants, to ensure effective community involvement in the definition and testing of conceptual design alternatives for the first extension of MetroLink in the Cross-County Corridor.

The preparation of an assessment of past planning and decision-making processes, and the context for this planning process, is the first task under the contract.

B. Assessment Objectives

Before effective engagement and communication strategies are designed, fundamental questions concerning the context for the proposed decision process must be answered—questions concerning the effectiveness of public involvement in past planning and decision-making processes; past decisions regarding the proposed extension; the process sponsor's authority, objective and expectations; the scope and timing of the decision; and the anticipated engagement requirements of the general public, key stakeholders, and decision-makers.

This assessment is based upon the review of past research and studies conducted by the Council and others, the review of correspondence files maintained by Council staff, findings from interviews with key stakeholders in the region, and the results of a public opinion survey conducted at the start of the assessment process.

2. Past Planning & Decision Paths

The history of planning and public decision-making regarding MetroLink's extension in the Cross-County Corridor is summarized in the following section of the assessment. Public perceptions regarding this history, based on information gained through key person interviews, is described in section B.

A. Planning and Decision History

A sequence of planning studies, from the 1991 Systems Analysis to the 1997 Cross-County MetroLink Segment I Business Plan, document the rationale for proceeding with conceptual design and environmental analysis for MetroLink's extension along the selected (North-of-Forest Park) alignment from the Forest Park Station to Clayton and south to Shrewsbury. A summary of these planning studies and the decisions that resulted, drawn from documents provided by the Council, is illustrated below.

The Systems Analysis

Formal decisions regarding the possible extension of MetroLink in the Cross-County Corridor can be traced to the Council's adoption of recommendations contained in the St. Louis Systems Analysis for Major Transit Capital Investments. Completed in 1989 and amended in 1991, the Systems Analysis evaluated potential extensions of light rail and bus transit in nine corridors and suggested a four phase implementation sequence as shown in Table 1. Of the corridors examined, the Cross-County Corridor, along with the St. Clair and St. Charles Corridors, were identified in the first phase of MetroLink expansion. Northside, Southside, and West County corridors were identified in the second phase.

Table 1: MetroLink Extension Priorities
1989/91 System Analysis Suggested Phasing

Phase	Corridor
I	Cross-County (MO) St. Clair (IL) St. Charles (MO)
II	West County (MO) Northside (MO) Southside (MO)
III	Southwest (MO)
IV	Northeast (IL) Madison (IL)

Source: Cross-County MetroLink Segment 1 Business Plan

Transportation Redefined

Since September 1994, public involvement activities for transportation improvements in the St. Louis region have been guided by the recommendations and objectives in *Transportation Redefined,* the region's long range transportation plan. The plan was the product of more than two and one half years of work and extensive public outreach and consultation. The plan identified a number of "Major Transportation Investment" corridors in the region, including the Cross-County Corridor, for further analysis. *Transportation Redefined* represented a departure from past approaches to transportation planning in the region. Following the requirements of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the plan emphasized the effects of transportation investments on livability and economic vitality as well as mobility.

Transportation Redefined "places a priority on meaningful partnerships" with the public and stakeholders in the process. The public involvement process suggested by the plan was designed to be "proactive, inclusive, and ongoing, and to provide access to all key decisions in the planning process." The Council, as part of *Transportation Redefined,* adopted a new approach to public involvement, the goal of which is to get the public involved earlier in the development of regional transportation plans. The Council's strategies for more thorough public involvement include articles on transportation issues, periodic public press updates, and a speaker's bureau to disseminate information-as well as focus groups, public opinion surveys and advisory committees to communicate back to the Council.

This public participation process is to be evaluated in relationship to four measures:

- the number and diversity of individuals and groups participating
- the expressed satisfaction of participants
- the number and breadth of constituency groups engaged in cooperative planning, and
- the general public's level of knowledge about the transportation system

These public involvement strategies were established to "ensure that the needs of the broad user base are the principal reference point" in transportation decisions. *Transportation Redefined* also goes further by categorizing user needs into seven areas around which transportation decision-making should be organized. Transportation projects should be reviewed according to these seven issue areas:

- preservation of the existing infrastructure;
- safety and security in travel;
- congestion management;
- access to opportunity;
- sustainable development;
- the efficient movement of goods; and
- resource conservation.

According to the plan, these focus areas were established to "organize the work which must be done to ensure that the needs of the many and varied customers of the system can be met."

Cross-County Corridor Major Transportation Investment Analysis

The Cross-County Corridor MTIA, sponsored by the Council and MoDOT in cooperation with Bi-State, resulted in decisions to amend the region's long range transportation plan to include, among other transportation improvement strategies, the extension of the MetroLink system in the Cross-County Corridor. The MTIA planning process lasted approximately two years from the start of public involvement activities in the Spring of 1995 to the Council's action on the Study Management Group's recommendations in March 1997.

The study process is documented in a series of technical memoranda prepared by Sverdrup Civil, Inc., the company retained by the Council to complete the analysis. A summary of the *Public Involvement Plan* and of the engagement activities undertaken during the study process follows.

Technical Memorandum No. I Public Involvement Plan. The public involvement activities for the MTIA were guided by *Technical Memorandum No. I Public Involvement Plan* prepared by Sverdrup Civil, Inc. The 12-page plan specifies:

Public involvement goals; Management, coordination and reporting protocols; Public involvement strategies; and Information dissemination strategies.

The plan called for the establishment of a Public Involvement Management Committee to direct the activities of the involvement program. According to the plan, the committee was formed to direct the "day-to-day activities of the public involvement program" and approve plans for the dissemination of any "public materials, including press releases". Committee members were drawn from the staff of MoDOT (then MHTD), the Council, and Sverdrup Civil, Inc.'s Study Manager for Community Involvement and Participation.

The Involvement plan also described several proposed involvement and communication strategies, including the following:

- Establishment of a study hotline and response protocols;
- General guidelines for the involvement of elected officials, key institutions and organizations, and the general public;
- A plan for the placement of "computer-like devices" in various locations throughout the study to solicit public opinion on preliminary strategies; and
- A plan for several public scoping meetings.

The plan also outlined several possible communications strategies, including the establishment of a mailing list, the production and distribution of a video, the production and distribution of print material (newsletters, bulletins, and brochures), and methods to deal effectively with the media.

Sverdrup Civil, Inc.'s *Public Involvement Summary Report* documents public engagement activities during the two primary phases of the Cross-County Corridor MTIA: Problem Definition and Strategy Development. During Phase I of the MTIA, extending from approximately May 1995 to June 1996, comments on transportation issues in the corridor were solicited through scoping meetings, corridor outreach meetings, and briefings. A total of five scoping meetings were held, one for elected officials; one to receive input from public agencies, community organizations, institutions, and business interests; and three to gain information from the general public.

The public meetings were designed as open houses, where participants were invited to offer comments on various issues developed by the study team. Notes from the public scoping meetings indicate strong support for MetroLink's extension, as well as concerns about the impacts of the extension on communities along the alternative alignments. Announcements for these meetings did not suggest the possibility of MetroLink's extension in the corridor, only that transportation issues would be explored, so it is conceivable that those concerned with the extension of MetroLink in the corridor are underrepresented in the meeting notes and summaries.

Study team members also participated in approximately 50 corridor outreach meetings. These meetings, typically sponsored by organizations and localities, provided the team an opportunity to hear from several hundred individuals representing a variety of interests. Among others, the consultant team met with representatives of the Cities of Shrewsbury, Maplewood, Brentwood, Richmond Heights, Clayton, University City, and St. Louis; Washington University; the Parkview Neighborhood; the Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council; various businesses, and committees of RCGA and the Council. Near the end of Phase 1, elected officials were asked to review a preliminary draft of the "problem definition" and provide comments. The Public Involvement Summary also documents the media coverage received during this phase.

Phase 2 of the study was initiated in July 1996 with the publication of a newsletter describing the study process, the general results of Phase 1, and introducing the general improvement strategies. A public opinion survey, conducted in August of 1996 by Dohring Company Inc. and administered by the ORCA Partnership, was designed to gauge public opinion about various transportation improvement strategies and their positive and negative effects. The survey was mailed to approximately 1,000 individuals and made available at public meetings and briefings. While the survey did not include specific questions about the potential advantages and disadvantages of extending MetroLink, the survey results do reveal public attitudes about the effects improvements may have on residential and commercial areas in the corridor. Among other topics, respondents were asked to rank how significant seven factors were in evaluating solutions to transportation problems.

Improving alternatives to driving, reducing accidents, improving travel time, and reducing congestion were ranked as the most important factors. When respondents were asked about the possibility of residential and business displacements, reductions in parkland, and increases in noise to improve transportation, over fifty percent said that some residential displacements would be acceptable, 59 percent said some business displacements would be acceptable, 50 percent agreed that a reduction in parkland was acceptable, and 68 percent were willing to accept some increase in noise levels.

As with Phase 1, the consultants participated in several corridor outreach meetings. Between July 1996 and January 1997, the consultant team met with approximately 500 individuals in 40 separate meetings. As communities became more aware of proposals for the extension of MetroLink, rail strategies became the topic of much discussion. As reported in the Summary Report, stakeholders in the eastern and southern area of the Corridor commented on the strengths and weaknesses of various proposals for the extension of MetroLink. Costs, neighborhood impacts, travel time, and traffic impacts were among the issues discussed during these sessions.

By this stage in the study process, following the announcement of the "Strategy Sets" and "Discrete Strategies," two issues began to dominate public discussion: the extension of I-170 south and the extension of MetroLink west from the existing system through Clayton to the Terminal Railroad alignment. The I-170 extension issue grew out of community concerns about the projected number of residential and business displacements required to complete the project. Elected officials and residents in South County advocated strongly for alternatives, including the extension of MetroLink. Concerns were also raised about the potential impacts of the extension of light rail on the communities through which it might be routed.

Peer Review Panel

During the Summer of 1996, near the conclusion of Phase 1, the Council invited a panel of experts to review the multiple MTIA processes underway in the St. Louis region. The members of the panel were well-respected practitioners from a variety of transportation planning disciplines and from all parts of the country. They examined the progress-to-date of the four MTIAs then underway (Cross-County, St. Charles, Southside, and Southwest).

The Peer Review Panel made few specific comments on the Cross-County MTIA planning process, but made several suggestions regarding the importance of public involvement in transportation decision-making. The Panel offered the following observation: "the St. Louis region is facing decisions whose impact will be felt well into the 21st century, and those decisions involve substantial tradeoffs and risks. Those tradeoffs can be made on an informed basis, and those risks made more manageable, if the region takes an orderly 'path to consensus' to reach decisions which are defensible, strike the right balance between the need for action and the need for caution, and adequately incorporate systems-level transportation impacts and financial implications and risks." In addition, the Peer Review Panel emphasized: "The decision-making process is important not only for *what is* decided, but for *how* decisions are made."

Regarding Cross-County, the panel noted:

- the opportunity to explore a range of multi-modal improvements
- the need to develop "more definitive evaluation criteria and multi-modal performance indicators;"
- the importance of accounting the inter-relatedness of other on-going studies and the need for a regional framework;
- the potential for investment in the corridor "for reinforcing the urban core, connecting key institutions and employment centers, and supporting sustainable community development;" and
- the need to consider timing and fiscal impacts of proposed projects.

Cross-County Strategic Alignment Assessment

Following the Board's decision in March, 1997 to support MetroLink expansion in the corridor, the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* was prepared to focus on specific alignment issues not addressed in detail during the MTIA process and to validate some of the information included in the MTIA. Specifically, the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* was designed to address important questions regarding:

- the specific alignment between the existing line and the Terminal Railroad right-of-way;
- projects cost and phasing;
- financing options; and
- potential environmental and community impacts.

To address these questions, several tasks were undertaken by the project consultants, Gannett Fleming in association with NationsBank and Sarah J Siwek and Associates. The consultants reviewed the technical products of the MTIA, refined revenue and cost estimates, prepared a summary of Council policy objectives, and analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of the four alignment alternatives illustrated in Figure 2.

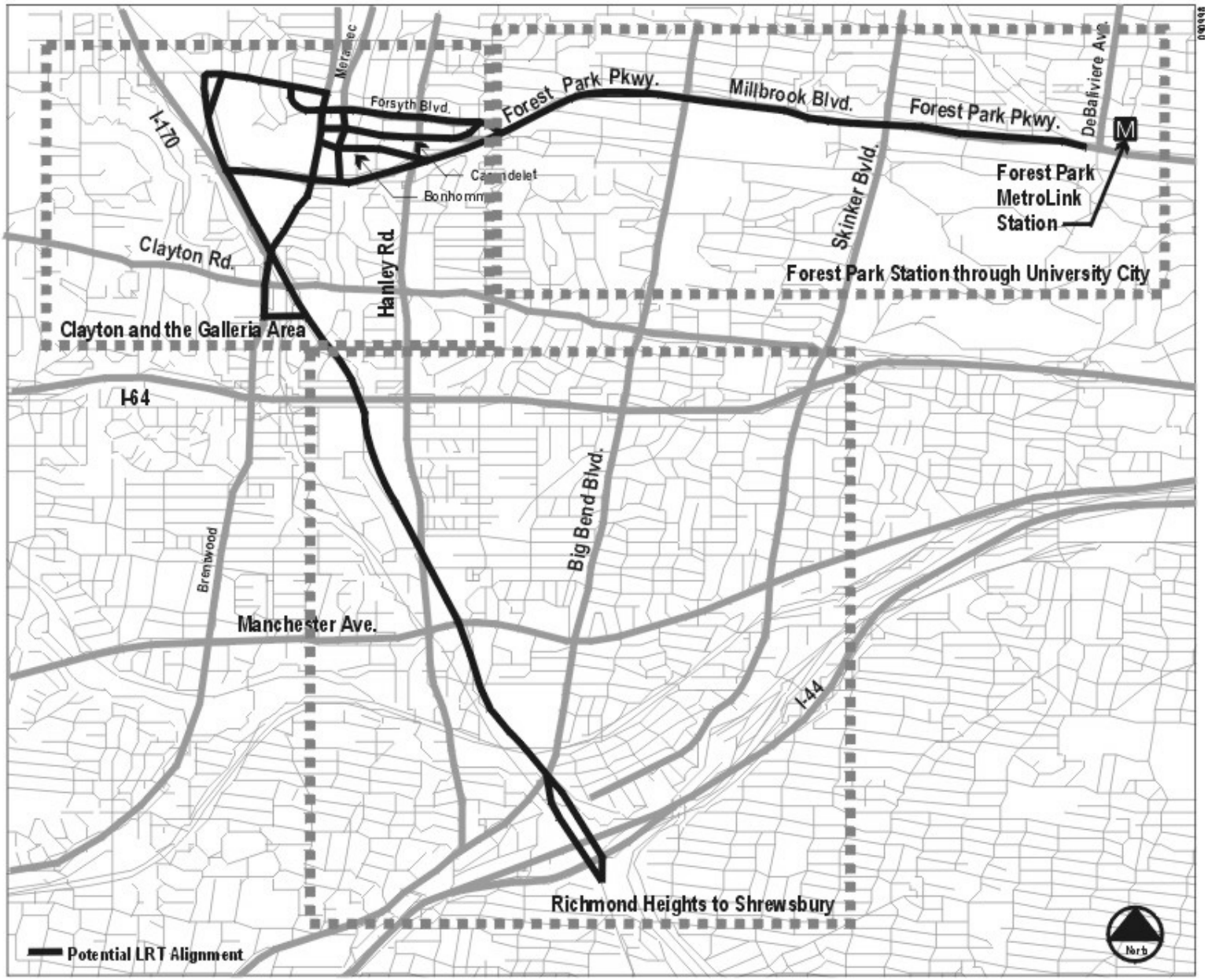
The analyses resulted in the identification of alignments S-IA (North-of-Forest Park) and S-IB (Through-Forest Park) as the ones most likely to satisfy the Council's policy objectives, with the North-of-Forest Park alignment identified as the one least costly to construct and to operate. As the *Assessment* indicates, cost effectiveness, timing, and community compatibility factors played a role in this outcome. The Assessment reports the Council's intention to complete the extension to I-44 through Clayton "as quickly as possible," "without federal funds," in a cost-effective manner, "consistent with existing and planned land uses." The report was completed in August 1997 and transmitted to the Council for their review and approval.

Public involvement activities were conducted in an ad hoc manner during the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* process. While the *Assessment* does not document the extent of public involvement in the alignment evaluation process, the Council staff has recorded the number and types of meetings held between March 1997 and August 1997. According to the list attached to the September 16, 1997 memorandum to the Council, staff participated in 46 meetings with community groups and organizations, conducted briefings with local officials and community leaders, reviewed petitions and resolutions provided by community organizations and localities, and provided information and background material to the press.

Staff Memoranda on the Alignment Selection

At its August 1997 meeting, the Council reviewed the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* and directed the Council staff to prepare a written recommendation on a preferred alignment. Staff responded in a memorandum to the Council dated September 10, 1997 which outlined a rationale for the selection of the North-of-Forest Park Segment IA alignment as a better investment for the region.

Alignment Options Considered During Strategic Alignment Assessment



The staff report weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the two alignments identified in the Strategic Alignment Assessment based on evaluation factors specified in *Transportation Redefined.* Specifically, staff organized their rationale around three core values about what makes a good investment. These values include:

- productivity (the outcomes which can be reasonably expected from the investment);
- equity (the distribution of benefits and costs in the context of a region-wide system); and
- sustainability (the durability of the investment, and its impacts on future quality of life choices and opportunities).

A week after the release of their recommendation to the Board, staff prepared a follow-up memorandum to address issues raised by the elected officials and other stakeholders in the Cross-County Corridor. This memorandum offered answers to questions concerning the advantages and disadvantages of alternative alignments, service to Forest Park, ridership, funding, and other issues.

The Council approved the staff recommendation to select the North-of-Forest Park alignment during a special meeting on September 17, 1997.

Cross-County MetroLink Segment I Business Plan

Following the Council's alignment decision, a plan was prepared to provide a framework for decision-making during and after the Conceptual Design Study. The *Business Plan* sets forth policy, financing, management and decision-making strategies to guide the actions of the Council, Bi-State, and their partner agencies and organizations from Conceptual Design and Environmental Analysis through system start-up.

The plan confirmed the previous decisions of the Board regarding the alignment, project financing, and phasing, and outlined the responsibilities of the Council, Bi-State, MoDOT, and the Council staff through the process, and suggests strategies for public involvement in the design process.

The *Business Plan* was completed on December 2, 1997 and approved by Council on December 10, 1997.

B. Perceptions of Past Planning Processes

Understanding public perceptions concerning past planning efforts, as well as expectations about future ones, is an important part of the assessment process. To the extent possible, the public engagement program for the Cross-County Study needs to address the concerns or negative perceptions about earlier efforts.

To gain insight into the opinions and feeling of individuals and organizations involved in the *MTIA* and *Strategic Alignment Assessment* processes, MMA staff engaged approximately 60 individuals—through one-on-one and small group discussions—in a dialogue about their experiences, perceptions, and opinions, as well as their expectations for the Cross-County Design Study. It should be noted that perceptions reported herein should not be represented as fact, but are rather a reflection of the views of the people interviewed, including those who strongly disagreed with the Council's alignment decision.

Clarity of Path: How Did We Get Here?

Many of the individuals interviewed indicated that the *MTIA* and *Strategic Alignment Assessment* processes and the path toward the Council's alignment decisions was not made clear. Interviewees cited the lack of a publicly available timeline or 'road map' as a significant gap in past public information campaigns. During past processes, many mentioned, meeting purposes were unclear, background material was unavailable, and decision dates were not widely known.

Many interviewees mentioned they did not have a clear idea of what would be done with community comment, what weight it would have in the decision-making process, and how and by whom the choices would be made. Several participants in the interviews did not have a strong sense of the Council's roles and responsibilities for regional transportation decision-making.

Quality of Engagement: Opportunities to be Heard

Although the MTIA reports and the September staff memoranda reported that numerous opportunities were provided for public participation, there is a strong sense among those interviewed that the planning and decision-making processes were not as open as they might have been. Interviewees cited examples when meeting purposes were unclear, meeting announcements were incomplete or not widely distributed, and information was not available for review prior to meetings.

Several expressed concern that access to the MTIA planning team and decision-makers was not equal. The ad hoc nature of community outreach activities, especially during the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* process, was cited as problematic. While the Council's staff and the consultant team's willingness to respond to invitations and their effort to engage in community outreach can be appreciated, the inconsistency of the process contributed to perceptions of unequal access.

Quality of Communications

Many interviewees reported difficulty in getting written information about the MTIA and Strategic Alignment Assessment processes, the issues raised, and the technical analysis undertaken. The lack of information in advance of public meetings was often cited as a concern, as was the quality of some of the information offered by staff and previous consultants. Based on the interviews and a review of documents, it appears that very little of the technical analyses were summarized for review by lay audiences. Transportation planning, as with any technical field, has developed its own vocabulary. While engineers and planners may be aware of the difference between such terms as "routes," guideways," and "vertical alignments," these terms mean little to the general public. Information generated by interest groups, though not always accurate, was generally better organized, more clearly presented, and more widely distributed.

The interviews also revealed the public's lack of knowledge of past planning for the Cross-County extension. There seems to be little public understanding of what has been decided and planned, and what remains to be decided and planned. The absence of an official map showing the corridors considered for MetroLink's extension in the *Systems Plan* helps explain the lack of "context" for public discussions during the MTIA and Strategic Alignment Assessment. This added to feelings of confusion, distrust and frustration among certain stakeholder groups.

Rationale for the Council's Decisions

Dialogue about the most effective alignment for a MetroLink extension in the East Subcorridor did not heat up until Phase 2 of the MTIA process, and became the focus of much community debate during the *Strategic Alignment Assessment.* The results of Gannett Fleming's analysis of alternative alignments were not available for public review until mid-Summer 1997, so the community had little time to gain an understanding of the study's scope, the rationale for the selection of various alignment alternatives, and the Council's methods of weighing their advantages and disadvantages. A lack of confidence—as expressed by several interviewees—in the rationale for the Council's decision influences the public climate for dialogue during the Cross-County Conceptual Design Study.

3. Decision-Making Context

A. Baseline Decisions & Actions

The MTIA, Strategic Alignment Assessment and Business Plan processes resulted in important policy decisions concerning the scope of the Cross-County Conceptual Design Study. The results of these decisions are described below.

Decision-Making Authority

The Council will oversee the Conceptual Design Process, select a preferred conceptual design, then turn the project over to Bi-State for final design, engineering, construction and systems operations.

Pursuant to the Business Plan, the Council holds primary responsibility for the completion of the Conceptual Design and Environmental Analysis for the Cross-County Corridor MetroLink Segment I Extension. In collaboration with the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, the St. Louis County Municipal League, Bi-State Development Agency, and the Missouri Department of Transportation, the Council will direct this stage of planning, and, at its conclusion, will select a conceptual design for the extension. Once a design is approved by the Council, Bi-State will take responsibility for the final stages of the process: final design, construction, and operations.

The North-of-Forest Park Alignment

The Council has selected the Segment S-IA alignment (North-of-Forest Park) for the Cross-County Extension, running from the Forest Park Station to Clayton, then south along the Terminal Railroad right-of-way to I-44.

The *Cross-County Corridor MTIA* resulted in a recommendation by the Study Management Group to amend the region's long range transportation plan to include, among other transportation improvement strategies, the extension of MetroLink in the Cross-County Corridor. According to the recommendations, the extension should occur in two stages: Stage 1: Existing MetroLink to Clayton and south to Butler Hill Road; and Stage 2: Clayton north to I-270/Florissant.

While various MetroLink alignments between the existing line and Clayton were analyzed in the MTIA, i.e., North-of-Forest Park, Through-Forest Park, and South-of-Forest Park, the Council's Transit Steering Committee recommended that a more detailed assessment of the three options be carried out before an alignment decision was made.

The North-of-Forest Park alignment decision was reached in September 1997 based on analyses conducted on behalf of the Council by Gannett Fleming. The result of these analyses are reported in the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* and summarized in two staff memoranda addressed to Council dated September 10 and 16, 1997. In the first of the two memoranda, staff offered the following recommendations for Council action:

"The S-IA option, which runs north of Forest Park, is the better investment for the region. Staff recommends that the Board endorse the selection of alternative S-IA as the preferred alignment for the first segment of the Cross-County Corridor and authorize preliminary engineering to begin immediately for this segment, including a design process which fully consults with affected communities."

The Council accepted the staff recommendation to proceed with planning and design for an extension along the Segment IA alignment, running from the Forest Park Station to Clayton and south along the Terminal Railroad right-of-way to I-44. The Council has confirmed this decision to pursue planning and design for this alignment in several decisions since its acceptance of staff s recommendation, most notably in their decisions to approve the *Business Plan* and retain engagement and design consultants to prepare and test a conceptual design for the extension. Pursuant to the Council's decisions, further consideration of the alignment decision will not be done.

Phasing of the Cross-County Extension

The Council has decided that the first Operating Segment of the Cross-County MetroLink extension should reach from the existing line to I-44 via Clayton.

Various phasing alternatives for MetroLink's extension in the Cross-County Corridor were explored by the Council during the MTIA, *Strategic Alignment Assessment,* and *Business Plan* processes. During the MTIA process, the following four basic MetroLink extension scenarios were developed and evaluated:

- an extension of the existing line to Clayton (included in Strategy Sets No. 2 and 4);
- an extension of the existing line to Clayton and South to I-44 (included in Strategy Sets No. 3, 5, and 7);
- an extension of the existing line to Clayton and South to Butler Hill Road (included in Strategy Sets No. 6 and 8); and
- an extension of the existing line to Clayton and South to Butler Hill Road and North to Florissant (included in Strategy Sets No. 9 and 10).

Following analysis of the improvement strategies, it was decided that the MetroLink extension described in Strategy Sets No. 6 and 8 was to be the first priority, with the extension north to Florissant the second. These were subsequently described as "Stage 1" and "Stage 2" respectively, and approved by the Council in that order.

During the *Strategic Alignment Assessment,* the potential phasing strategy was refined to include three operating segments for the extension. An extension from the existing line to Clayton and South to Shrewsbury was identified as Operating Segment 1, a subsequent extension from Shrewsbury to Butler Hill Road was identified as Operating Segment 2, and an extension from Clayton to Florissant was identified as Operating Segment 3. This phasing order was approved by the Council at the conclusion of the *Strategic Alignment* Assessment process and reconfirmed during the process of developing the Business Plan.

Funding the Cross-County Extension

The Council has decided that Operating Segment I of the Cross-County Corridor MetroLink System Extension will be funded from local sources.

The basis for the Council's decision to use local funding sources rather than federal or other sources for Segment I of the Cross-County extension is documented in both the *Strategic Alignment Assessment* and the *Business Plan.* The financing plan approved by the Council relies only on revenue from the existing St. Louis City and County transit sales taxes. Other than the existing Prop M transit tax revenue, no other state or local funding, federal transit funds, privately invested funds, or joint development revenues have been assumed (although the latter two sources will continue to be explored as the project proceeds). The flow of federal funds to the region will be directed to the St. Clair Corridor until at least 2002, and it could take well into the next century to accumulate sufficient federal funds for another corridor. Therefore, the Council concluded that the only way to move the implementation of Segment I ahead at a reasonable pace is to rely on local funding. Once Segment I is complete, additional federal funding could become available to support the extension of the line south to Butler Hill Road and north to Florissant. (The recent passage of TEA 21-- legislation which authorizes federal surface transportation programs-- is not expected to increase the likelihood that federal funding will come available sooner, or at a higher level, than anticipated in the *Business Plan.)*

Assessing Environmental & Community Impacts

Though a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, pursuant to federal regulations, will not be prepared, the relevant environmental and community impacts of alternatives will be assessed in detail during the conceptual design study.

Design alternatives developed during the Cross-County Conceptual Design Study will be analyzed for their possible impacts on the environment and surrounding communities. Because the Council has decided that no federal funds will be used to construct the Segment I Extension, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement following federal guidelines will not be prepared. However, a similar level of analysis will be undertaken to gauge the potential short- and long-term effects of the extension on:

- communities and neighborhoods along the alignment;
- regional and local transportation systems;
- socioeconomic condition; and
- the natural environment

A methodology memorandum describing the approach and procedures to be applied in the evaluation of alternatives is among the first products the Design Consultants will produce.

Design Decisions

No decisions regarding the design of the line, the precise alignment through Clayton, or the exact location of stations have been made by the Council.

The Council's Board of Directors will make design decisions at the conclusion of the Conceptual Design Study. While assumptions regarding alternative designs were used during the MTIA and the Strategic Alignment Analysis as the basis for cost estimating, a wide range of design alternatives will be explored during the Conceptual Design Study. As stated in staff s September 16, 1998 memorandum to the Council, "more complete, accurate, and reliable data and cost information" will be prepared for the Conceptual Design Study, "allowing a more deliberate, careful and sensitive community consultation process."

At the conclusion of the Cross-County Study, the Council will make decisions regarding the conceptual design of the line, the line's profile, the location and design of stations, and, where necessary, appropriate measures to mitigate the anticipated impacts of the extension.

4. Stakeholders and the Public

A. Primary Stakeholders - (to be completed)

B. Secondary Stakeholders & Interested Parties - (to be completed)

C. Regional Publics - (to be completed)

5. Planning Process Issues

"Start with a clear view of the big picture." This quote from one of the leaders interviewed sums up strong feelings about earlier processes, and gives direction to this one. The Cross-County Extension needs to be placed within its system context and this stage of the planning needs to be placed in the context of earlier plans, and the decisions emerging from this study needs to be understood in the context of the line's construction, operation, and future extension.

At the same time, clarity is needed about the process of how, when, what and by whom key decisions will be made. There needs to be a clear flow of communication from the planning team outwards, and from the public in to the planning process. There needs to be a commitment to early release of useful, clear information in a variety of formats. And, there need to be active opportunities for community learning about the complex choices that accompany this Conceptual Design phase. Every effort needs to be made to demonstrate fairness in terms of access to information and decision-makers, and in terms of how choices are evaluated.

The following objectives for the community engagement process are intended to address the insights gained from the situation assessment.

Process Transparency.The planning process must be open and clear. There must be a published timeline indicating the objectives of each stage of the study, the times when public information will be available and distributed, and the process by which decisions will be made on the definition, selection, and refinement of alternatives.

Integration of the Work of the Design & Engagement Consultants. The engineering and technical analysis must be coordinated seamlessly with the community engagement process. The two tracks need to operate in close collaboration, with a common calendar, and consistent attention to providing responses to issues raised through the community input process.

Useful Information Throughout. Clear information must be available to the public sufficiently in advance of meetings and decision points to encourage meaningful discussion. Public information must be available in several formats, for audiences seeking detailed technical analysis, as well as for those seeking clear public summaries of issues.

Vertical & Lateral Communications. Effort must be made to balance the input of active interest groups and individuals with that of the broader larger, less actively engaged publics. Methods should include polling and focus groups, the latter to solicit the perspectives of such traditionally under-represented groups as transit-dependent persons.

Listening & Learning . A forum must be provided for constructive communication to take place. Transportation planning is extremely complex involving as it does technical engineering issues, finance and operational issues, regional considerations as well as community issues. A 'surrogate community,' formed with representatives of key stakeholders, will meet with the technical team at regular intervals throughout the planning process, serving as a sounding board and as a vessel for dialogue and learning.

Measuring Impacts, Considering Alternatives.All alternatives need to be evaluated in open public processes. Evaluation criteria, covering community concerns as well as technical considerations, must be publicly available. Impacts need to be measured using both objective and subjective methods, as appropriate. Balance must be sought between regional benefits versus local 'costs' or impacts.

Narrowing Options.At key points in the planning process, namely at the conclusion of each phase, options must be narrowed. Each of these points represents an occasion of important policy direction. The planning and decision-making process needs to be clear and open regarding how and by whom policy decisions will be made.

Recommending Solutions & Deciding. Decisions regarding major regional transportation investments are made by the Council's Board of Directors. In reaching its decision, the Board will consider the recommendations of the technical team and staff, the resolutions of municipalities along the alignment, the report of the community engagement process, and comments from the final public forum.

Appendix A

Cross-County MetroLink Extension Public Opinion Survey
Prepared by Attitude Research Company, St. Louis, MO

The public opinion survey provides insight into the perceptions of individuals living close to the proposed alignment who might not otherwise be engaged in the planning and design process for Segment I of the Cross-County extension. The survey results will help the Engagement Consultants understand the nature of the community's concerns regarding the extension and various design ideas and alternatives.

Background

In May 1998, Attitude Research Company conducted a telephone survey to test attitudes toward possible MetroLink expansion. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of support for the extension, to understand why people supported or did not support the extension, and to help planners understand public opinion about various design features.

Five hundred (500) people were selected from the vicinity of the proposed extension to participate in the survey, yielding an overall margin of error for the survey of 4.4%. Specifically, the sample included 100 respondents each from the City of St. Louis, University City, and Clayton, 101 from Maplewood, 49 from Richmond Heights, and 50 from Brentwood. In the larger municipalities the geographic area was further limited: For instance, in University City no one who lives north of Vernon was called. These geographic limits were chosen to ensure that the majority of respondents lived within one half mile of the proposed extension, and that no one was called who lived more than one mile from the extension.

Summary of Results

Survey participants were positive toward a MetroLink extension that would run along Forest Park Parkway from the Forest Park-DeBaliviere station to Clayton, and then south through Richmond Heights, Brentwood and Maplewood to I-44. A majority (87.8%) was in favor and only 10.6% opposed the extension.

If residents could walk to the MetroLink station, they would be even more likely to favor the extension. Three-fourths (76.8%) of respondents said they would be "much more" or "somewhat more" likely to support the proposal if MetroLink was in close proximity to their home.

Although a majority of residents never (47.4%) or rarely (21.0%) use MetroLink, 65.6% feel the proposed expansion would cause them to use MetroLink "much more" or "somewhat more often." Only one-third (32.0%) answered that the expansion would have little or no effect on their MetroLink usage.

Almost all respondents (94.0%) agreed that "MetroLink is an environmentally clean, safe, and efficient method of transportation" and "The St. Louis area should take pride in the success of the existing MetroLink system" (94.0%). The same percentage (94.0%) also agreed that MetroLink should link commuters to employment centers in Clayton, downtown St. Louis, and the airport.

Regarding the potential negative affects of an extension along the proposed alignment, most (80.2%) residents did not agree that MetroLink will increase crime in their neighborhood, and 70.0% said they did not worry that there would be too much noise from the trains if MetroLink came through their neighborhood.

Many design alternatives will be analyzed for the extension. The Study will consider the advantages and disadvantages of several alternatives, including whether or not trains should run at street-level, in a tunnel, or in an open trench below street level. Respondents were read a list of features that would be involved in building a MetroLink extension in a tunnel under the street. The cost of tunneling and the fact that this may delay building the full extension to I-44 were seen as negatives by respondents. The length of time it would take to dig the tunnel, build the rail line, and then rebuild the street above as well as how it may disrupt the area, were also seen as negatives.

The most positive feature of an underground tunnel to respondents is that, once completed, it would be the quietest option. The fact that the tunnel will cause little or no disruption to the businesses or homes nearby once in place was also well liked.

The same process of questions was repeated for features of building the extension at street level. Residents were most responsive to the fact that building at street level may be the least disruptive and least expensive alternative. Residents also responded positively to the statement, "a street-level track would give riders a more pleasant view than either riding in a tunnel or in an open trench." Finally, the fact that the light-rail train may be quieter than bus traffic and similar to automobile traffic was also seen as a positive.

The only feature regarding a street level extension that was viewed as a negative was that the train, running on or along the street, might cause some disruption of automobile traffic.

When reading negative features for building the light rail in an open trench, residents were more negative toward most of the features. The fact that adjacent properties might have to be purchased was a negative for over half of the residents. "The walls of the trench will block riders' views of surrounding neighborhoods" was also very negative in the minds of residents.

In commercial areas, residents preferred the extension to be built at street-level (59.6%) rather than in a tunnel (26.4%) or in an open trench (9.4%). Of the respondents that preferred a tunnel, most would be willing to pay higher taxes in order to build the tunnels.

When asked about residential areas, a plurality preferred a street-level extension. Fewer than half (41.8%) favored a street level extension and 35.8% felt a tunnel would be the best option for residential areas. A smaller number (17.6%) preferred an open trench. Of those respondents who preferred a tunnel, three-fourths would pay higher taxes to help pay the added expense.

Respondents were then read a list of statements in favor of the MetroLink expansion. All of these statements struck a cord, and "The expansion of MetroLink should be encouraged because it is an environmentally friendly way to get around St. Louis" was considered "very" or "moderately" persuasive by nine out of ten (92.0%) respondents. The fact that the light rail service, going through downtown Clayton, near the U. City Loop, and through the Central West End, will enhance economic development and make these areas more attractive to shoppers and diners was considered positively by 86.6% of respondents.

The above procedure was repeated with statements in opposition to the expansion. Most were considered not very persuasive. The argument, "People will drive to the MetroLink stops even if they don't have any Park and Ride facilities, parking on residential streets and disrupting the neighborhoods," garnered the most support with 45.5% answering it was "very" or "moderately" persuasive against expanding MetroLink.

Finally, when asked to consider the possible expansion, after learning more facts about the expansion, respondents were supportive of the proposal. Almost nine of ten (86.6%) favored the expansion compared to only 11.4% who opposed it.