Draft – Preliminary Working Document

Madison County Light Rail Feasibility Study
Open House Summary Report
December 14-16, 2004

Submitted By:
Vector Communications Corporation

January 4, 2005
Executive Summary

In mid-December 2004, three public open houses were held for the Madison County MetroLink Feasibility Study. The first was held in Alton, the second in Granite City and the final meeting in Edwardsville, Illinois. The purpose of this first round of open houses was to present the study’s goals and potential light rail routes and to get public feedback. All three meetings had the same content and format.

Approximately 250 people attended the open houses, with 100 present the first night, nearly 45 the second night and 100 on the third night. At the meetings, 186 comment forms were collected. One additional form was received via mail.

At all three open houses, attendees overwhelmingly supported pursuing MetroLink for Madison County. They also agreed with the study’s goals believing that light rail would reduce congestion, improve access to opportunity and foster sustainable development. The handful of attendees who were against bringing light rail to the county cited the high financial cost and the lack of funds.

Most respondents indicated that they thought routes A, which travels to the River Bend area along Route 3, and B, which travels through Granite City and Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville (SIUE) to Edwardsville, best served the study’s goals. Attendees chose SIUE, Alton, Downtown St. Louis, Lewis and Clark Community College, and Edwardsville as the top five activity centers.

Public Outreach and Media Relations

Since the purpose of this study is to explore and determine the feasibility of light rail in Madison County, an extensive outreach and media campaign was launched in order to solicit as much public input as possible. Below is a list of tasks performed to ensure greater public participation:

- Placed quarter-page advertisements in the Alton Telegraph, Collinsville Herald, Edwardsville Intelligencer, and Granite City Press Record Journal the week prior to the meetings;
- Mailed more than 2200 newsletters to municipalities, libraries, churches, and other institutions;
- Notified an undetermined number of people with an email announcement through Ameren, the Growth Association, and the Sierra Club; and
- Conducted a media campaign that included notifying more than 21 media outlets.

The media campaign resulted in the following:
- Ten newspaper articles in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s Alton Area Post, the Alton Telegraph, the Belleville News-Democrat, the Collinsville Herald, and the Suburban Journals;
- Three radio interviews on WSIE, WBGZ, and Metro Network News; and
- Two morning television interviews, one on KSDK (Channel 5, the other on KTVI Channel 2).
Open House Format

Three meetings were conducted to give people more opportunities to attend, and all were held at local sites within the study area. Upon arrival, attendees were welcomed by study team members, asked to sign in, and given a handout (Appendix A) and comment form (Appendix B).

There were a total of 19 display boards with information about the study’s purpose, stakeholder interviews and focus group summaries, purpose and need goals, study area existing conditions, initial evaluation measures and principals for defining routes, and the initial alternatives (a map of the alternatives is available as Appendix C of this report).

After viewing the information on the display boards, attendees were encouraged to complete a comment form. There was an area designated specifically for this purpose and study team members were available throughout to assist attendees.

Comment Summary

A total of 187 comment forms were submitted. At the first meeting in Alton, 76 forms were collected, 27 at the second, and 83 at the open house in Edwardsville. One form was mailed in after the meetings.

The comment form was designed to solicit informed input from open house attendees. The first set of questions asked if respondents thought MetroLink would benefit Madison County, to explain why or why not, and to indicate if they had ever ridden MetroLink. The next set of questions focused on the study’s goals (mitigate congestion, improve access to opportunity, foster sustainable development, and achieve cost-effectiveness). Respondents were asked if they agreed with the goals, if some goals were more important than others, and if there were other goals the study team should consider. Respondents were then instructed to review activity centers within the study area and to select their top three choices and add others if they were not listed. A key component of the form was the section that asked attendees to rate how they thought each of the initial alternative routes address the purpose and need statement. The comment form’s final section was designed to get feedback on the content and layout of the open houses and to find out how attendees learned about the meetings.

Comment Form Section One: MetroLink

The first question asked, “Do you think MetroLink would be a benefit to Madison County?” The overwhelming response to this question was “yes.” In fact, there were only seven “no” responses, a mere four percent. Those who said that MetroLink would be beneficial cited reasons that are, for the most part, in sync with the purpose and need goals. The benefits most commonly mentioned are listed below:
• Reduce congestion (the most-often identified benefit);
• Provide a fuel-efficient, environmentally sound alternative to automobile use;
• Connect people to employment, as well as other major activity centers;
• Help sustain some areas and encourage new development in other areas; and
• Provide transportation to the transit-dependent.

The few that did not think that Madison County would benefit from a light rail extension stated that the cost was too great and there was no financial support for it. Verbatim comments from this section are available in Appendix D and E.

The second question in this section asked attendees if they had ever ridden MetroLink. A total of 173 people checked “yes,” while only 10 responded that they had not.

Comment Form Section Two: Feasibility Study

In this section, the study’s “Purpose and Need” statement, the ways in which the study team believes that light rail could benefit Madison County, was provided in the form of four goals:

• Mitigate congestion;
• Improve Access to Opportunity;
• Foster Sustainable Development; and
• Achieve Cost-Effectiveness.

Respondents were first asked if they agreed with the four goals. The majority of respondents, 95%, indicated that they agreed with the goals, while only five percent checked “no.”

When asked if “certain goals are more important to you than others,” most people replied yes. The top goal selected was “Mitigate Congestion” with a response of 64. “Improve Access to Opportunity” was a close second with 58 responses. Following that was “Foster Sustainable Development” with 42, and “Achieve Cost-Effectiveness” with 17. The chart below shows the responses by open house location. The top goal per open house is highlighted. Comments from this question are in Appendix F and G.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose and Need Goals:</th>
<th>Mitigate congestion</th>
<th>Improve Access to Opportunity</th>
<th>Foster Sustainable Development</th>
<th>Achieve Cost-Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alton</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granite City</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwardsville</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The comment form also asked if there were other goals that should be considered and if so, to list them. Below are six additional categories under which most suggested goals could be organized. They are listed in order by how often they were identified (the number in parenthesis represents the approximate number of times they were mentioned by respondents):

Environmental goals – ability to reduce pollution and smog, improve the air quality, and lessen dependence on gasoline and consumption of natural resources (22);

Economic goals – ability to promote long-term development, spur urban renewal, prevent further decline in certain areas, encourage new jobs, and boost tourism (10);

Accessibility goals – ability to connect major institutions and activity centers, such as universities, colleges, and hospitals (10);

Transit-dependent goals – ability to serve and assist transit-dependent populations, such as low-income households and people who rely on wheelchairs (8);

Neighborhood preservation goals – ability to preserve the character of existing neighborhoods, prevent “cutting through” communities, and preserve bike trails (6); and

Ease of implementation and use goals – ability to use existing infrastructure (such as Madison County Transit facilities and the commuter lot at I-270 & I-255), compatibility with bus routes, and ability to be used with relative ease and convenience (3).

Verbatim remarks from this question are included in Appendix H.

In question two of this section, the study team identified ten activity centers and asked attendees to select the top three that they thought important to the viability of light rail. Below is a chart of the responses by open house location. The highlighted boxes are the top selections per open house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Centers</th>
<th>SIUE</th>
<th>Alton</th>
<th>Downtown St. Louis</th>
<th>LCCC</th>
<th>Edwardsville</th>
<th>Granite City</th>
<th>Gateway Center</th>
<th>St. Louis Regional Airport</th>
<th>Collinsville</th>
<th>Gateway Commerce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alton</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granite City</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwardsville</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As one might expect, open house attendees were likely to choose the area in which the meeting took place as one of their top three choices, leading to the assumption that people attended a particular open house according to the proximity of the meeting to their residence and/or business. For example, Granite City was selected the most number of times by attendees of the Granite City open house.

The second part to this question asked if there were other activity centers that needed to be considered. Below is a list of additional activity centers respondents suggested (it should be noted that these centers were only mentioned on one or two occasions, and none more than five times). Appendix I contains verbatim comments.

* Anderson Hospital*
* Belleville
* Bethalto
* Brooklyn
* Chouteau Island
* County Courthouse in Edwardsville
* Eastport Plaza
* East Alton
* Glen Carbon*
* GMAC Stadium
* Godfrey
* Grafton
* Hamel
* Highland
* Lambert International Airport
* Lewis and Clark National Park (Hartford)
* Madison
* Memorial Hospital
* O’Fallon
* Olin
* Oil refineries (Wood River)
* Port Authority
* Rivers’ Edge Complex
* Scott Air Force Base
* Troy*
* Venice*
* I-270 and I-255 commuter lot

* Indicates location was listed three times or more.

Potential Light Rail Alternatives

A key component of the comment form was question three, which asked respondents to review the six potential light rail routes being presented at the open houses and, for each route, identify to what degree, “Very Little,” “Somewhat,” or “Very Much,” they felt it addresses the study’s purpose and need statement. Following is a description of each route (again, Appendix C includes a map of the potential alternatives):

- Alignment A begins either at the existing East Riverfront MetroLink station or at the 5th & Missouri station both in East St. Louis. The two options are being presented because of the New Mississippi River Bridge. Alignment A services the Riverbend area by traveling on existing rail lines near Route 3.
- Alignment A Alternative begins the same as Alignment A until Wood River where it branches off and travels to Lewis and Clark Community College instead of to Alton.
• Alignment B begins at either of the two existing MetroLink stations similar to Alignment A, then follows the Nature Trail through Granite City and continues to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and then to the City of Edwardsville.
• Alignment C begins either at the current East Riverfront or 5th & Missouri MetroLink stations and follows the Schoolhouse Trail to the Gateway Center. From the Gateway Center, the route continues through Maryville and ends in Edwardsville.
• Alignment D begins either at the current Emerson Park MetroLink station or the Jackie Joyner-Kersee station and travels to the Gateway Center. From the Gateway Center, it goes to Glen Carbon and stops in Edwardsville.
• Alignment E begins at the current Fairview Heights MetroLink station and travels along the Nickel Plate Trail to the Gateway Center and Maryville and concludes in Edwardsville.

The chart below shows attendees’ responses. The routes are listed in descending order based on how many times they received a rating of “Very Much.” The highlighted boxes represent the route that received the most responses in each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Responses From All Three Open Houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alt A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, respondents thought that Routes B and A respectively best served the purpose and need goals, with the alternative to Route A not far behind. Attendees felt that Route E was least likely to address the study’s goals. The chart below shows how each route was rated according to the open house location. The boxes highlighted in yellow point to the routes that received the most responses in the “Very Much” category. For example at the Alton open house, attendees primarily chose Route A and its alternative. At the Granite City open house, Routes A and B received the best rating. For Edwardsville attendees, Route B ranked highest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Alton</th>
<th>Granite City</th>
<th>Edwardsville</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Very Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Alt</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Comments

At the Alton open house, 23 respondents provided additional comments. Most comments either suggested key activity centers that should be connected, provided other route options, or made general suggestions. For example, at least four people commented that the major educational institutions in Madison County, Lewis and Clark Community College and Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville (SIUE), are critical activity centers and should be connected to a light rail system. Several others remarked that any MetroLink extension should serve the following areas: Alton, East Alton, Edwardsville, and Godfrey. Hartford, Troy and Wood River were also mentioned. Three other respondents suggested the following routes: one that would begin at Emerson Park and connect to Fairmont, Gateway Center, Glen Carbon, SIUE, Edwardsville, Wood River, and Lewis and Clark Community College; another that would travel from Edwardsville to Glen Carbon, Gateway Center, Caseyville, Fairview Heights, Godfrey, and to Lambert International Airport; and finally, one that would travel in the I-255 corridor. A few respondents commented that light rail should travel in a “loop” in order to maximize service and accommodate the most activity centers. At least three respondents mentioned ridership, and thought that any extension should target the county’s most populated areas (e.g. Alton) and areas where public transit would be utilized. Two other people voiced their support of using existing right-of-way.

In Granite City, there were only a handful of additional comments. Two respondents remarked at how light rail could improve the region, by providing a service to residents and facilitating revitalization and economic development. One attendee added that the Illinois Route 3 corridor would provide a direct route to large metropolitan areas that in their opinion would generate the most ridership. Two other respondents voiced their support for particular routes. One thought the A-Alternative would best serve the area. Another felt that Route A would best address access to opportunity, but that Route B would better serve the goals of mitigating congestion and fostering development. One respondent was concerned that a light rail extension was too costly to taxpayers because Metro is already financially strapped.

The Edwardsville open house produced a few more additional comments than Alton’s, but the nature of the remarks are just as varied. Some attendees used this opportunity to indicate further their support for a specific route, five of whom pointed to Route B for the following reasons: serves SIUE, uses some existing right-of-way, has land for park-and-ride lots, is close enough to serve Glen Carbon and Granite City, is direct and could foster new development. One person commented that Route C provides the opportunity to gain ridership from the areas of Troy, St. Jacob and Highland. Another remarked that routes A, B, and C would spur development in Madison and Venice. Yet another provided that Route E, with an extension to SIUE via Route B, made the most sense. Several remarks demonstrated support for particular activity centers, such as Collinsville, East Alton, Edwardsville, Downtown St. Louis, Gateway Center, Granite City, Maryville, SIUE and Troy. However, of these, Edwardsville and SIUE were mentioned the most. Four comments indicated support for using existing right-of-way, two of which hinted at concerns about preserving trails. A
few others had concerns with the following: security at stations, incorporating the I-55 corridor, and planning this extension strategically so that it can “get ahead” of development and pick up future commuters. Others suggested that routes be combined, similar to the “loop” suggestions that came out of the Alton open house, in order to maximize service.

Respondents’ verbatim comments are available in Appendix J.

Comment Form Section Three: Public Engagement

The public engagement questions asked participants to rate the meeting according to the information provided, competence of the study team, and meeting organization. Attendees were asked to then describe themselves and how they learned of the meeting. Respondents also had the opportunity to provide additional comments regarding public engagement. Please remember that this information is based on the comment forms, and may not be an accurate reflection of the entire open house audience.

The information provided was:

- 57% Useful
- 41% Very Useful
- 2% Not Useful

The study team was:

- 59% Helpful
- 38% Very Helpful
- 3% Not Helpful

In general, the meeting was:

- 50% Organized
- 46% Well Organized
- 4% Not Well Organized

Attendee Self-Descriptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Official</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee in Study Area</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Owner</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Tenant</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the other ways in which attendees described themselves were:

- Airport manager
- Engineer for local firm
- Frequent Visitor
- Granite City Landlords Association President
- Pastor of local church
- Regional Planner
- Retiree
- Trail User
- Tri-Cities Regional Park District Executive Director
How informed of Open House:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How informed</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Advertisement</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – TV News Program</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organization</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Official</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Worker</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Newspaper Article</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – Misc.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Madison County Resident or Business Owner – Yes or No

| Resident – Yes | 168 | Resident - No | 7 |
| Business Owner – Yes | 26 | Business Owner - No | 139 |

Additional Comments

Relative to the amount of forms received, there were only a handful of additional comments in this section. The following are some suggestions that were mentioned more than once:

- Display more of the alternative maps and/or have it as a handout;
- Conduct a presentation and/or provide a more clear explanation of information presented (e.g. define TAZs);
- Provide more detailed information on cost estimates, and possible funding options, sources and/or scenarios;
- Conduct more meetings, specifically after the holiday season; and
- Ensure greatest access to meetings (especially for the transit-dependent) by putting notices on buses and selecting locations that are accessible via public transit.

Conclusion

Out of approximately 250 open house attendees, 187 people completed and turned in comment forms. This represents a 75% response rate. Based on these 187 completed forms, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that they thought MetroLink would be beneficial to Madison County and agreed with the Purpose and Need goals identified by the study team. Most respondents selected SIUE, Alton, Downtown St. Louis, Lewis and Clark Community College, and Edwardsville as the top activity centers, and thought that Routes B and A respectively would best serve the study area. For the most part, people felt that the meeting was organized or well organized, that the study team was helpful or very helpful, and that the information provided was useful or very useful.
Appendices

Appendix A: Welcome Handout
Appendix B: Comment Form
Appendix C: Map of Potential Light Rail Routes
Appendix D: Verbatim Comments from Section One, Question 1a
Appendix E: Verbatim Comment from Section One, Question 1b
Appendix F: Verbatim Comments from Section Two, Question 1a
Appendix G: Verbatim Comments from Section Two, Question 1b
Appendix H: Verbatim Comments from Section Two, Question 1c
Appendix I: Verbatim Comments from Section Two, Question 2b
Appendix J: Verbatim Comments from Section Two, Additional Comments
Appendix K: Verbatim Comments from Section Three, Additional Comments