ANNUAL REPORT
and 2006 calendar

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1965 years 2005

EAST-WEST GATEWAY
Council of Governments

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To Our Colleagues

From left: Alan Dunstan, Francis Slay and Les Sterman

When East-West Gateway Council of Governments was formed 40 years ago, a visionary group of local elected officials wanted the St. Louis area to think, plan and act regionally. They formed an agency to make that happen.

The articles of incorporation state the intent was to "foster metropolitan cooperation on a broad front" to address "metropolitan problems" that included, but were not limited to, "land use, transportation, housing, economic development, natural resources, community facilities and general improvement of living environments."

We have not forgotten the importance or the difficulty of East-West Gateway's stated mission.

In 1965 cooperative decision-making regarding transportation was the biggest expression of regionalism, and it remains our preeminent activity. What's different now is that we simply don't have enough money to do what we've always done. We have neither the fiscal nor the physical capacity to build more roads at the pace we have done in the past. We have to approach transportation in a different way.

Beyond transportation, East-West Gateway is involved in what looks to be the second major expression of regionalism at the federal level. After the events of Sept. 11, 2001 and this year's destructive hurricanes, we have become the clearinghouse for federal funding for disaster preparedness. A coordinated, regional response is needed for disasters and the federal government knows that a truly regional organization like East-West Gateway is the best place to initiate regional cooperation.

Other issues are no less important and no less complicated. Local government financing is in a critical state, with many entities increasingly being unable to afford essential public services such as education, public safety and adequate infrastructure. East-West Gateway, Focus St. Louis and the Regional Chamber and Growth Association have joined to form Metropolitan Forum, which has as its initial task an analysis of local government finance. How local governments deal with this problem could be the biggest issue of the current decade.

Transportation, regional security and local government finances are all basic, bedrock issues for East-West Gateway. They also all lead nowhere unless the area as a whole can thrive. The real regional issue is not where the next highway or MetroLink route will go, but in achieving equality of access and opportunity for all who live here.

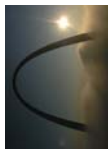
Our Where We Stand reports clearly demonstrate that the St. Louis area can do far better in addressing economic, racial and spatial disparities. That's why such functions as economic development and workforce planning would benefit from more regional approaches.

Solutions to these problems must be based on leadership, honesty and trust among our key local and state governmental institutions. Our businesses and citizens must demand solutions. East-West Gateway faced many of these same problems 40 years ago. That they continue to exist only makes the need for solutions more urgent.

Alan Dunstan
Chair

Francis Slay
Vice Chair

Les Sterman
Executive Director



When Mayor Alfonso Juan Cervantes of St. Louis, Mayor Alvin Fields of East St. Louis and Supervisor Lawrence K. Roos of St. Louis County sat down in 1965 to form what would become the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, it was just six years after a plan to create a metropolitan governmental agency to be known as the "Greater St. Louis City-County District" had failed miserably at the polls.

The proposal, which then city Alderman Cervantes had worked on for years, lost by a 2-to-1 margin in the City of St. Louis and 3-to-1 in St. Louis County. It fell victim to political feuds, tax phobia and public inertia. In a 1961 analysis of the issue, political scientists Henry Schmandt, Paul Steinbicker and George Wendel concluded that the possibility of metropolitan reform in the "foreseeable future" was "highly remote."

Despite that history and that prognostication, Cervantes continued his quixotic pursuit of regional cooperation, though he toned down the method and the goal. East-West Gateway's articles of incorporation stated it would not be a government nor did it seek to become one. Local governments, the document stated, should have "primary responsibility" for dealing with problems, even ones that exist areawide. Still, the council was given the charge to address a broad range of regional problems. So from the beginning, East-West Gateway had a grand mission – and definitive limits to its power.

What set East-West Gateway apart from most other metropolitan planning organizations across the country was that its voting board members were the top elected officials of the region. The board was made up of mayors, county executives and county board chairmen with no "proxy" votes allowed. In almost all other major metropolitan areas, the federally designated planning organizations do not enjoy that same level of commitment by elected leadership.

In the beginning East-West Gateway had an eight-member board and consisted of six counties and the City of St. Louis. The council, which now covers seven counties and the City and has a voting board of 21 members, has seen the tide of regionalism ebb and flow. The federal government encouraged regional planning in the '60s and '70s, but it was de-emphasized during the '80s as distrust of government became a prominent feature of the political landscape.

Federal transportation law, beginning in the 1970s has proven to be an innovative and durable form of federalism that gave local governments a meaningful role in determining the regional transportation agenda through their own metropolitan planning organization. These statutes are the single most important catalyst for local governments to deal with each other in order to plan regional transportation systems.

Despite these efforts to coordinate regional planning, the St. Louis area remained the poster child for the popularity and sovereignty of local government. With nearly 800 units of local government, more than 230 general purpose units of government and more local governments with taxing power per capita than any metropolitan area in the country, the governmental terrain in St. Louis was not conducive to crafting regional solutions to problems. It remains so.

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In light of those obstacles, the most visible and traditional activity of the council and its staff is planning and approving transportation projects. The Transportation Improvement Program for 2006-2009 involves 689 projects in Illinois and Missouri at the cost of $2.28 billion. Recently, preservation of the existing infrastructure has been emphasized, with 45 percent of the program going to resurface and reconstruct roads, repair and replace bridges and replace aging public transit assets such as buses.

In addition to planning road projects, staff this year worked on a Transportation Safety Initiative to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on the region's roadways. The initiative included establishing "TravelSafe Zones" that designated sections of roads that had a high incidence of fatal crashes. Signs in those zones will warn drivers they are entering a high-risk area. Each zone will be the target of increased law enforcement and public education designed to reduce the number of crashes.

Other issues in which East-West Gateway has had a beneficial impact include protecting the quality of the region's air and water. This past year, some of the East-West Gateway staff's recommendations to fine-tune the Missouri vehicle emission program were adopted by state legislators who previously had wanted to scrap the program.

The continued expansion of the St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS) under the auspices of East-West Gateway is yet another expression of how certain issues are best served by a regional approach. STARRS was created to better respond to large-scale critical incidents in the metropolitan area, whether those incidents are natural or man-made disasters. The federal funding for STARRS comes through East-West Gateway and is used to better equip and coordinate local emergency medical services personnel and fire, police and health departments.

With rising gasoline prices and increased use of public transit, planning continues for further MetroLink light rail expansion even though funding for actual construction is not yet in place. East-West Gateway also is involved in aviation planning for the area's 13 public use airports.

Through the last 40 years, much of what East-West Gateway has accomplished has been out of the public eye, though far from unimportant. As local governments are beginning to find themselves more financially strapped and unable to provide basic services, it is reasonable to expect them to search outside their boundaries for aid and assistance. If regional solutions to regional problems are sought, East-West Gateway Council of Governments remains the region's best hope and its only common ground.

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Statement of Resources and Expenditures

EAST-WEST GATEWAY
Council of Governments

	2004 (audited)	*2005 (estimated)*
Resources:		
Federal grants	$6,227,300	$16,910,845
State appropriations and grants	41,048	97,545
Local contributions:		
Cash—per capita	297,952	310,367
Cash—other	1,215,196	751,645
In-kind services	895,605	968,165
Miscellaneous	34,104	76,733
TOTAL RESOURCES	$8,711,205	$19,115,300
Expenditures:		
Salaries, benefits	$3,420,980	$3,550,825
Public agencies, planning consultants	3,729,731	5,150,015
In-kind services	895,604	968,165
Grant funded equipment	3,625	8,613,645
Operating expenses, staff development and travel	602,904	637,780
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$8,652,844	$18,920,430

Committees

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