Open House Analysis – June 3, 2009

Prepared for the Mid-America Regional Council Total Transportation Policy Committee

Background

On June 3, 2009, the Mid-America Regional Council hosted a Transportation Outlook 2040 open house attended by over 140 participants. The major goals of the open house were to inform citizens about progress on developing the long-range transportation plan, solicit input on strategies identified so far, and evaluate "Paint the Town" growth and development scenarios produced by the region's Technical Forecast Committee.

The program for the open house included many elements. Participants were directed to a series of background informational display boards describing the Transportation Outlook 2040 process, changes in the region that will make planning for the future more complex, and the feedback that we've received to date. Participants were then introduced to two alternative "Paint the Town" development scenarios detailing how the region might grow in the future. They were given an opportunity to contribute what they perceived as pros, cons, and barriers. Participants then had the opportunity to review the policy framework that has been developed, learn about the strategies that have been suggested to help achieve those goals, and prioritize the strategies. Finally, there were three one-hour conversations facilitated by One KC Voice that focused in greater detail on the "Paint the Town" development scenarios and sought to get a greater breadth and depth of feedback. Over half of the participants attended one of the facilitated conversations.

Most content displayed at the open house is available at www.marc.org/2040.

Transportation Strategies Feedback

The open house presented 34 major strategies that could help move the region toward reaching the goals identified in the Transportation Outlook 2040 policy framework. Participants were asked to rate each strategy as high, medium or low priority in terms of importance and funding.

The number of responses for each strategy were added and weighted; high priorities were given a value of 3, medium priorities a value of 2, and low priorities a value of 1. For each strategy, a composite score was created by adding the scores for each level of priority. The results are displayed, with the highest priority first, in the table on the following page:

Strategy	Goal	Score
Expand regional transit service	Accessibility	169
Integrate transportation and land-use planning	Accessibility	169
Link environmental and transportation planning	Environment	168
Reduce vehicle miles travelled in the region	Climate Change and Energy Use	158
Reduce transportation demand	System Performance	157
Fund expanded bicycle and pedestrian facilities and networks	Accessibility	155
Implement region's Clean Air Action Plan	Environment	152
Develop and connect major activity centers and corridors	Place Making	150
Adopt "complete streets" policies to design and operate roadways with all users in mind	Place Making	149
Use transportation planning as a tool to respond to climate change	Climate Change and Energy Use	148
Expand regional transit service	Public Health	148
Encourage development standards that support active modes of transportation	Public Health	148
Fund and implement MetroGreen® regional trails and greenways plan	Environment	146
Invest in projects that support successful, vibrant places	Place Making	146
Emphasize preservation and maintenance of existing transportation facilities	Economic Vitality	142
Fund transportation projects that help attain federal air quality and ozone standards	Public Health	141
Establish stable, long-term funding sources and explore public/private partnerships	Economic Vitality	140
Eliminate barriers to transportation	Accessibility	138
Spend enough to keep the transportation system maintained in good condition	System Condition	138
Increase vehicle occupancy	System Performance	138
Maintain equipment and train responders	Safety and Security	137
Engineer transportation system for safety	Safety and Security	134
Improve transportation system management	Climate Change and Energy Use	133
Develop and expand technology and communication tools	System Performance	133
Encourage transition toward vehicles that use renewable, non-petroleum-based fuels	Climate Change and Energy Use	128
Educate the public about traffic engineering and safety issues	Safety and Security	123
Track return on investment to support funding decisions	Economic Vitality	122
Coordinate data collection and asset management	System Condition	122
Enforce traffic safety laws and their penalties	Safety and Security	121
Track congestion and transportation system condition	System Condition	118
Implement system enhancements	Economic Vitality	114
Access management	System Performance	113
Address bottlenecks	Economic Vitality	111
Increase roadway capacity where congestion and bottlenecks occur	System Performance	102

In addition to finding a composite score and ranking for the individual strategies, it is also possible to get some indication of which goals were more important to open house attendees. By adding the composite scores within each goal and dividing by the number of strategies (so that goals with more strategies associated with them are not overvalued) a score for each goal was determined. The results are displayed in the table below:

Goal	Score
Accessibility—Maximize mobility and access to opportunities for all areas residents.	158
Environment—Protect and restore our region's natural resources (land, water and air) through proactive environmental stewardship.	155
Place Making—Coordinate transportation and land-use planning as a means to create quality places in existing and developing areas and to strengthen the quality of the region.	148
Public Health—Facilitate healthy, active living.	146
Climate Change and Energy Use—Decrease the use of fossil fuels through reduced travel demand, technology advancements, and a transition to renewable energy sources.	142
Safety and Security—Improve safety and security for all transportation users.	129
System Performance—Manage the system to achieve reliable and efficient performance.	129
Economic Vitality—Support an innovative, competitive 21st-century economy.	126
System Condition—Ensure transportation system is maintained in good condition.	126

Growth Scenarios Feedback

Participants were introduced to the two "Paint the Town" growth scenarios detailing how the region might develop in the future. Neither scenario is a forecast; they represent two ends of a growth and development spectrum that the Kansas City region will be on. The purpose of including them in the open house was to generate discussion and feedback on what kind of region citizens think we ought to be planning for. The Baseline scenario characterizes how the region might grow if past trends continue. The Adaptive scenario characterizes how the region might grow if fiscal constraint, decreased consumption, increased oil prices, federal climate change legislation, ozone non-attainment, and/or an introduction of new transportation technologies causes the region to focus growth in activity centers and along transit corridors.

Both scenarios were displayed in a side-by-side presentation with statistics comparing variables such as land area consumed, population density, vehicle miles traveled, average trip distance, and areas in decline. Participants were asked to respond to the display with what they saw as pros, cons, and barriers to achieving both scenarios. Samples of comments are displayed below:

Baseline Scenario

Pros: "The baseline projection represents the continuation of the development patterns that have been driven by market demand (the patterns desired by the majority of the home-buying public). Consequently, they should not be viewed as evil, but some adjustment to those patterns certainly is appropriate and is likely to occur as market demand shifts in the future."

Cons: "To use baseline 2040 is to go from bad to disastrous, and is socially, environmentally, economically, and politically irresponsible and bad stewardship."

"If we spread a group of people over a larger area, they have to pay higher taxes to support the infrastructure. We're not talking about this."

Barriers: "Affordable workforce housing must be available so people can live near their workplaces."

"Accessibility for the elderly and disabled."

Adaptive Scenario

Pros: "Concentration of population will allow more affordable quality of life and enhance capabilities to serve with infrastructure, public safety, schools and help restore transit between communities and municipalities."

"Adaptive method gives hope for sustainable prosperity, growth and positive progress; it minimizes negative causes and results. The placement progresses naturally and brings optimal outcomes on every level."

Cons: "Adaptive scenario and higher densities creates a need for more emphasis on environmental protection, especially storm water management."

Barriers: "It will be important to be realistic in developing any final alternative scenario. Development trends do not change quickly and even if development patterns are modified over time, it will be difficult to see major shifts in population centers."

"Political will to make collective choices."