

Chapter Four: Public Involvement

How Were the Public and Agencies Involved in the Alternatives Analysis?

Proactive and early public and agency involvement is an important component of the Alternatives Analysis because meaningful public and agency involvement will help guide the evaluation of technical aspects, the development of a locally preferred alternative that reflects the values of the community, and the creation of a transit system supported and endorsed by the community.

Phase I of the Alternatives Analysis developed the framework for the creation of project goals, purpose and need, and a community supported light rail concept to be analyzed in Phase II. Phase I was carried out within an extensive public involvement campaign involving public meetings, stakeholder meetings and the creation of the Light Rail Citizens' Task Force¹. Phase II was to complete the required Alternatives Analysis including detailed pre-design on the preferred alternative.

The public involvement and agency coordination process, beginning in Phase I, used several tools to include as many people as possible in the process and to make certain the community was informed and understood the project. The following sections summarize the agency and public involvement methods and tools that were used throughout the study process.

Public Involvement

Early in the Alternatives Analysis a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was approved by the KCATA as a guide to all public involvement activities, including sessions involving individual stakeholder groups. The PIP was discussed during the weekly project management meetings and used as a guide for tracking progress.

Who Was Involved?

Study Management Team

The Study Management Team was developed in March 2007 to provide an opportunity for KCATA, Kansas City, MARC, Gladstone, North Kansas City and MoDOT staff to provide technical input and direction and to discuss their thoughts on the alternatives. Meetings were held every other month. The study team did meet with the Cities' staff on a regular basis outside of these meetings to keep them informed on the project.

KCATA Board of Commissioners

The KCATA Board of Commissioners had a key role throughout the Alternatives Analysis. The project team met with the KCATA Board of Commissioners twenty times throughout the study process to present findings and receive input related to key policies, documents, and project milestones.

Elected Officials

Government relations coordination was essential to the overall success of the project. As a result, a program of activities specifically designed to educate and inform elected public officials at the federal, state, and local levels on the costs and benefits of the alternatives being considered was conducted. The following section summarizes the coordination conducted with elected officials.

- Transportation, Infrastructure Committee and City Council of Kansas City, Missouri

¹ North/South Corridor Alternatives Analysis, Phase 1 Summary Report, KCATA and HNTB, March 2008.

The project team worked with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee throughout the study process. The project team met with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee ten times. The committee provided input on the LRT alignment, the local funding strategy and the project's timing. This committee was responsible for final recommendations to City Council on the Alternatives Analysis and funding issues.

○ Mayor and City Council Members:

- **Business Sessions:**
Five business sessions were held with the Mayor of Kansas City and City Council members. The purpose of these business sessions was to brief the Council on the project's progress.
- **Coordination with other Council Committees:**
The project team also coordinated with other Council Committees, such as Finance and Audit, Planning and Zoning, Legislative, Neighborhoods and Public Safety and Housing to keep them informed and provide opportunities to comment throughout the study process.

○ North Kansas City

The project team met with staff, the Mayor and the City Council of North Kansas City to inform and receive input on the portion of the alternatives in North Kansas City. Both the Light Rail Alternative and the MAX Alternative would have a portion of the alignment in North Kansas City between 10th Street and 32nd Street north.

The project team met twice with North Kansas City Council, March 20 and August 7, 2008, to discuss the project and matters specific to North Kansas City. The project team also met regularly with North Kansas City staff and the city staff participated in the Study Management Team.

○ Kansas City Board of Parks and Recreation

In Kansas City an independent board is responsible for parklands and the city's boulevard system. The Light Rail Alternative would pass through or adjacent to several parks under the jurisdiction of the Board of Parks and Recreation. In addition, various light rail alignment options would operate on Broadway Boulevard, Cleaver II Boulevard and/or Volker Boulevard, all under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department.

The project team coordinated with the Board to keep them informed and provide opportunities to comment throughout the study process. The project team met with the Board three times during the study.

Who Were the Project Stakeholders?

An alternatives analysis is required to be conducted in an open public process. Because of the high profile of the project interest and involvement came from all parts of the community. A variety of civic, neighborhood and fraternal organizations participated in the process. Among the most active stakeholders were:

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. This group formed a "Light Rail Task Force" that met regularly during the course of the Alternatives Analysis to provide input and to stay abreast of developments.

MainCor. This group, representing businesses and property owners in the Midtown area, met periodically with KCATA during the course of the Alternatives Analysis and co-hosted several public meetings in the Midtown area.

Kansas City Downtown Council. The DTC was a very active supporter of the effort to enhance transit service and met periodically with KCATA during the

course of the Alternatives Analysis and co-hosted several public meetings in the Downtown area.

Northland Chamber of Commerce. This group formed a “Light Rail Committee” that met regularly during the course of the Alternatives Analysis to provide input and to stay abreast of developments.

North Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. This business group supported the effort to enhance transit service and was active in the campaign to promote the transit funding in North Kansas City.

Regional Transit Alliance. This Kansas City transit advocacy organization participated in dozens of public meetings and other transit-related events and supported the Alternatives Analysis.

Crown Center Redevelopment. Crown Center has historically supported transit in the community and played an active support role in the Alternatives Analysis.

Other stakeholders included municipalities and governmental agencies including the cities of Kansas City, Missouri, North Kansas City and Gladstone. The Mid America Regional Council (MARC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Missouri Department of Transportation, the Kansas City Board of Parks and Recreation and the Federal Transit Administration Region VII office.

Neighborhood organizations along the North/South Corridor were also important stakeholders.

Citizens’ Task Force

The importance of community buy-in on the process and findings of the Alternatives Analysis was essential. As a result, the project team created a task force that would assist with the decision-making process and be aware of the public pulse regarding transit improvements. This task force, designated as the Citizens’ Task Force (CTF), was made up of community residents who had a wide

range of interests and perspectives. This group provided credibility to the decision-making process. A summary of the coordination performed with the CTF is described in the following section.

Citizens’ Task Force Meetings

The purpose of the CTF was to provide input to both KCATA and KCMO from various perspectives and assist with community outreach during Phase II of the Alternatives Analysis. This body, jointly appointed by the City of Kansas City, Missouri and the KCATA, was a sounding board for the planning and design recommendations made during the Alternatives Analysis process. This group met eight times during Phase II, all the meetings were open to the public. The topics discussed at each meeting are described below:

Citizens Task Force Recommendations

After numerous work sessions, interpretation of technical information, and input from the public, the CTF developed a summary of conclusions regarding a preferred strategy for Kansas City to the KCATA Board of Commissioners and the City Council to:

- Protect the current bus system from service reductions and renewal of the existing 3/8-cent sales tax for continued transit support.
- Recommend a comprehensive transit system that connects the north, south and east areas of the city through the Central Business District and include a bus rapid transit line along Prospect.
- Employ light rail technology, reserved transit lanes with other transit priority techniques, such as traffic signal priority, to make the rail service as fast and reliable as possible.
- Support sales tax as the primary local funding source for the construction and operation of the light rail system, while pursuing other supplemental funding.

The CTF's recommendation October 2007 to the Kansas City Council was to repeal the November 2006 ballot initiative for an infeasible light rail system and place an alternative, feasible plan on the ballot as soon as possible. The CTF would also support an initiative combining the renewal of the current 3/8-cent sales tax with a funding plan for a light rail plan submitted to the voters as early as practical.

How Was the Public Provided Opportunities for Input?

Public Open House Meetings

The intent of the public open house meetings was to solicit additional input from the public at large. Through the Phase I process, citizens had two community public open house sessions in August 2007 and October 2007. In addition, one scoping meeting, sixteen meetings based on the AA study area, and two community-wide meetings were conducted to allow significant input on the alternatives proposed including the No Build, MAX Alternative, and Light Rail Alternative during Phase II.

Community notices were prepared to invite the public to the meetings. Notices were distributed to a 2,000-member database, which included all who had participated throughout the study process. Kansas City, Missouri staff and City Council were notified and had the opportunity to send notices to their lists as well.

August 2007 Public Meetings

The KCATA and the project team hosted two public meetings during Phase I, August 20th and 21st, 2007, with the following goals: (1) to educate the public on light rail and the planning process; (2) to update the public on the technical analysis of the November, 2006 initiative; (3) to get public input on the corridor, transportation issues and needs, and the project purpose and need, and (4) to gather input on the locations that should be served by light rail, possible routes and/or starter lines and key service areas.

The public meeting included a presentation on the basics of light rail and a question and answer session. Additionally, the public participated in both individual and group activities during the meetings. The study team collected input on destinations, alignments, the draft goals, and purpose and need via an individual exercise with dots to express the importance of draft project goals.

October 2007 Public Meetings

The KCATA and the project team hosted two public meetings, on October 29th, 2007, to gather public input on the following issues: (1) route, (2) mode, and (3) method of operation. The public was also invited to attend the CTF meetings in September and October.

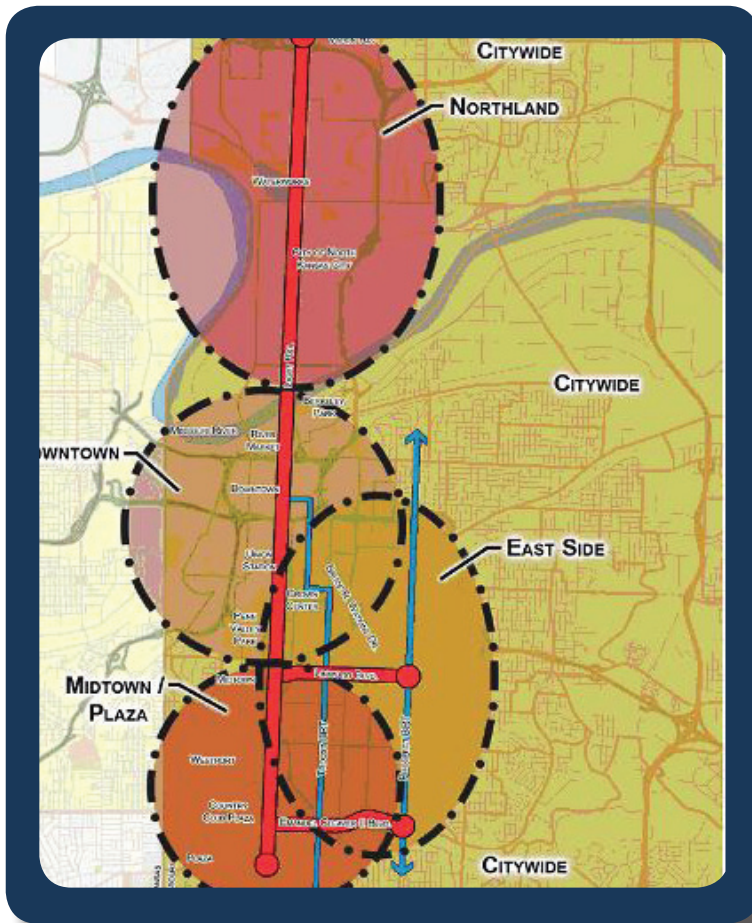
The October 29th public meetings included a presentation and public discussion about the Corridor, modal options and fixed guideway alignments (shown in Figure 4-1). There was also a question and answer session on financing. The team collected input via the discussions and the completion of the "Harvey Ball" surveys. Harvey Balls are round pictograms, shown in Figure 4-2, used in comparison tables to indicate the degree to which a particular item meets a particular criterion. They are particularly useful to visually convey qualitative information. The technique of using Harvey Balls, sometimes referred to as the "Consumer Reports" method, is frequently used in the initial evaluation of transportation alternatives.

In addition to these public meetings, all of the CTF meetings, KCATA Board meetings, and Kansas City Council meetings were open to the public.

Scoping Meeting: February 27, 2008

Scoping was the first formal opportunity for the public to provide input on the alternatives being considered and the issues to be addressed during Phase II of the study. Scoping was conducted in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines for early and effective public involvement. The Notice of Intent (NOI)

Figure 4-1: Fixed Guideway Alignments



for the North/South DEIS was published on Wednesday, January 30, 2008. Input from the Scoping process was used to help refine or modify the alternatives taken forward in the Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) and shape the scope of the study analysis, ensuring that public concerns or community issues were considered. It also provided an opportunity for suggesting additional alternatives that may be beyond the conceptual alternatives being proposed.

The FTA and KCATA invited interested parties to comment on the purpose and need, project alternatives and scope of the AA/DEIS, identifying specific

Figure 4-2: Harvey Balls



transportation problems to be evaluated or on proposing transportation alternatives that may be less costly, more effective, or have fewer environmental impacts while improving mobility in the Corridor. Invitations to the Scoping meeting were tendered via press releases and news stories, a project newsletter and electronic mailings to interested parties.

The public input process was divided into two related meetings, held on the same day. An Agency Scoping Meeting took place at the KCATA Main Conference Room in Kansas City, Missouri, on Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at 1 p.m. Representatives from federal, state and municipal agencies viewed a presentation from the Kansas City North/South Corridor AA/DEIS study team, took a bus tour of the study corridor, and provided comments and input on the project scope.

The Public Scoping meeting was held at the Mohart Community Center in Kansas City, Missouri on the evening of February 27, 2008 from 5-8 p.m. The study team hosted both an informal open house and formal public comment session. The open house portion of the meeting allowed attendees to view display boards highlighting a North/South Corridor study draft purpose and need statement, the range of alternatives for transportation improvements and technologies under consideration and an overview of the study process. Study team members staffed the boards to answer questions and collect comments. During the formal comment portion of the meeting, the study team gave presentations at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Following the presentations, questions and comments from those in attendance were received by the study team.

Participants were also encouraged to fill out a comment form designed to elicit stakeholder opinions on the range of alternatives to be considered, issues to be addressed and the study process itself.

Figure 4-3: Newsletters and Fact Sheet

Public Input by Areas

Five areas were established to provide an opportunity for general community, business and neighborhood level areas to provide input into the concept plan prepared by the CTF and approved by the KCATA Board and the City of Kansas City, Missouri. These areas were identified as the Northland (north of the Missouri River), Downtown (from the Missouri River to Linwood), Midtown/Plaza (31st to the University of Missouri, Kansas City), and Eastside (east of Main Street). Two citywide meetings were also conducted to allow citizens who live south, east and north of the study area to

voice their concerns and discuss how the transit system services are enhanced and expanded to these parts of the community. The process was designed to have an initial orientation meeting and allow participants to review the project goals. The follow-up three meetings in each zone were designed for groups of participants to discuss the planning and implementation issues in each area, as well as map their preferred route (street), station locations and development protections and opportunities.

Members of the CTF signed up to attend an area meeting to listen to community dialogue.

In addition public meetings and presentations to organizations, members of the project team met periodically with individual stakeholders when necessary. Newsletters were developed to help provide information on the project (Figure 4-3).

Alternatives Analysis Project Website

A project website was created for the study; Figure 4-4 shows the websites home page. The website was frequently updated with timely study information and reports. In addition, the website allowed public



comments/questions to be submitted and captured, increasing the amount of public input. The website also had a page on Frequently Asked Questions. Information was posted about upcoming meetings and opportunities for the public to get involved. The public could request a presentation to be made at their next community group meeting, such as neighborhood associations, fraternal organizations and professional societies. It should

Figure 4-4: KCATA Alternatives Analysis Website



also be noted that KCATA's public website also contained information on the study, however the website is currently disabled, for more information go to http://www.kcata.org/light_rail_max/light_rail/

Other Methods of Outreach

Communication tools tailored to specific stakeholders and other audiences were created and used throughout the study. These included:

Newsletters

Several newsletters were written during the course of the study. These newsletters were primarily distributed electronically; some hard copies were printed and mailed to those without internet access. In addition, the newsletters were posted on the website. The newsletters provided project updates and provided readers with additional knowledge on the project.

Fact Sheets

Along with the newsletter, several fact sheets were developed and distributed. The topics of these fact sheets included; (1) 2006 ballot initiative, (2) analysis of the 2006 plan, (3) project overview, (4) technology, (5) financial analysis, and (6) legal issues.

Media

An important component of the community engagement process is the media relations and publicity. Making sure the media understood the study and received the correct information was critical to the study's overall success.

The media strategy employed techniques such as one-on-one editorial briefings; informational press kits; press advisories and releases; and other study-related materials for the print and broadcast media. These materials strived for simple and timely reports on study progress, and sought to engage the media productively in disseminating accurate information about the study and proposed solutions.

