



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

(816) 881-3333
Fax: (816) 881-3133

JACKSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

415 EAST 12TH STREET
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64106



Date: June 6, 2012

To: Jackson County Corridor Partnership Team

From: Calvin Williford
Chief of Staff, Jackson County

As we near the completion of the Alternatives Analysis for both the I-70 and Rock Island commuter corridors, I feel it is appropriate to recap our discussion of last week and our plan moving forward. When this study process began, we were aware of the need for expanded public transit availability in our community. As we have continued to work through the process and study a variety of transportation alternatives along these corridors, it has become clear that there are even larger numbers of transportation gaps that must be addressed in our community.

Over the last year, our team has engaged citizens to assess what they see as their greatest transit needs. There is obviously great momentum surrounding the development of a commuter rail transit system (and a downtown streetcar system). Our citizens also expressed needs for other transit modes. These include a more robust bus service including BRT and Express bus services to more effectively address service gaps. Additionally, the incorporation of an enhanced bike/pedestrian trail system (and bike lanes) into any new transit plan has been identified as an important investment as we move forward.

As you know, there has been an on-going discussion throughout the study process regarding Union Station and how it can be incorporated as a major hub for rail transit. Some of our initial findings indicated that this would be more difficult than originally thought. In fact, we were told it was cost prohibitive, if not entirely impossible. However, recent developments and updated information have come to our attention over the past couple of weeks indicating the possibility that Union Station may remain as a viable option. Additionally, new information indicates that rail construction costs within these corridors could be dramatically lower than previously anticipated.

As we discussed, in collaboration with local railroad companies we have agreed to do an analysis to determine if a rail transit system could successfully terminate at Union Station. We are also seeking more detailed information on anticipated construction costs. Knowing the final result of these efforts will be important for us to understand what a regional rail system could look like. It will also affect how such a system will incorporate with the downtown streetcar project that is being developed.

Because of these factors, I believe we have reached a consensus that it is appropriate to wait on the final decision regarding a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for both the I-70 and Rock Island commuter corridors. The Alternatives Analysis just underway for the US 71 corridor reinforces our belief that the relationship between these three corridors, and how they can work together, is vital to the development of a successful regional transit system.

We are committed to the establishment of a comprehensive regional transit strategy in Jackson County that incorporates all modes of transit including rail, buses and a well-connected trails system. Many of these needs were addressed in the MARC "Smart Moves Plan" that was updated in 2008. Because of this, it is my expectation that we will present a strategy to the public, shortly after completion of the US 71 AA study. The development of this long-range vision will allow us to fill in the transportation gaps that currently exist while satisfying the transit needs of future generations.

I thank you for your willingness to continue contributing your time, energy and expertise as we attempt to best address the needs of our residents.

Harry S. Truman, Presiding Judge, 1927-1934

