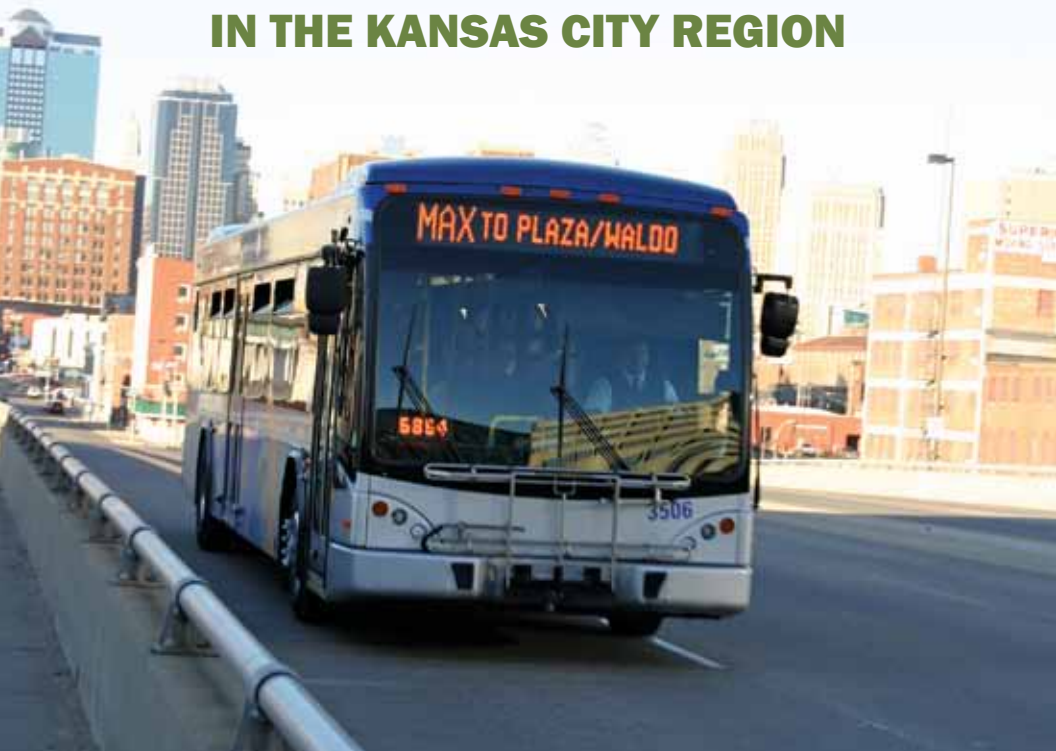


A Guide to Transportation Decision Making

IN THE KANSAS CITY REGION



MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

UPDATE 2011



printed with soy-based inks
on 100% recycled paper

MARC

Mid-America Regional Council

600 Broadway, Suite 200 ■ Kansas City, MO 64105-1659
Phone: 816/474-4270 ■ Fax: 816/421-7758 ■ www.marc.org

Table of Contents

- Purpose of Guide 4
- MARC’s Planning Role..... 5
- What is Transportation Decision Making?..... 6
- Transportation Challenges and Regional Population Growth.....7
- Who Are the Key Players? 8
- Transportation-Planning Process 10
 - Visioning and Goals 10
 - Long-Range Transportation Plan 11
 - Transportation Improvement Program 12
 - Project Details and Environmental Assessment 12
 - Project Implementation 12
 - Monitoring and Evaluation 12
- How Projects are Developed..... 13
 - Identifying Needs 14
- Transportation Funding..... 15
- How You Can Get Involved 16
 - Get Informed 16
 - Talk With Decision Makers..... 16
 - Volunteer to Serve..... 16
 - Join a Group 17
 - Attend Public Meetings..... 17
 - Provide Input..... 17
 - Contact MARC..... 17
- Contact Information..... 18
- Acronym Glossary 19



Purpose of Guide

Have you ever wondered how decisions are made about transportation projects that affect your life? How do government officials decide where to put a bus stop, road or bridge? How are these and other transportation projects planned? And how can you have an impact by making sure planners, road designers, elected officials and other members of the public consider your opinion?

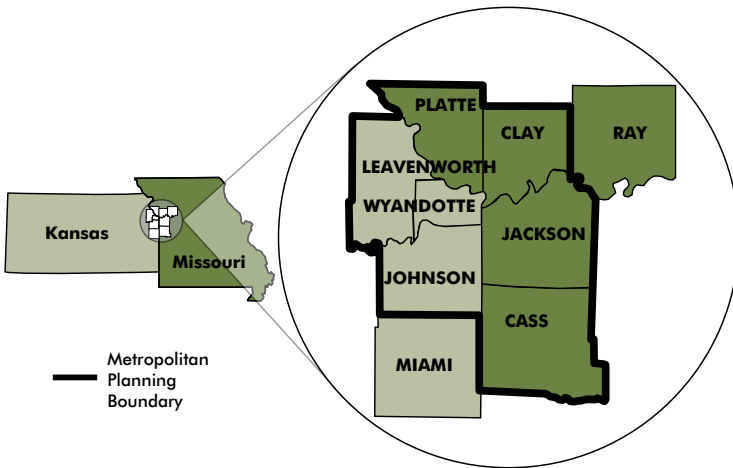
The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) has designed this guide to explain the transportation-planning process in the Kansas City region. We hope it will help you understand how decisions are made, what role MARC plays in coordinating the process, and how you can help ensure the transportation system is responsive to public concerns and needs.

MARC's Planning Role

MARC is a nonprofit association of city and county governments and the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the bistate Kansas City region. One of MARC's main roles is to provide transportation-planning services for seven counties — Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte in Kansas; and Cass, Clay, Jackson and Platte in Missouri.

MARC works with state departments of transportation, transit agencies, local governments, the private sector, aviation interests, and the region's residents to plan coordinated transportation systems that move people and goods affordably, efficiently and safely.

THE MARC REGION



MARC's transportation work includes:

- Evaluating the impact of development and land-use patterns on the region's transportation system.
- Working with committees to establish funding priorities and strategies for managing the region's transportation system
- Developing plans for long- and short-term transportation investments.
- Guiding state and federal transportation dollars to projects that meet regional and local goals.
- Coordinating technical and policy studies.
- Promoting transportation choices through supporting public transit, bicycle and pedestrian travel, carpooling and vanpooling.
- Improving air quality through investments in transportation infrastructure, public education and outreach



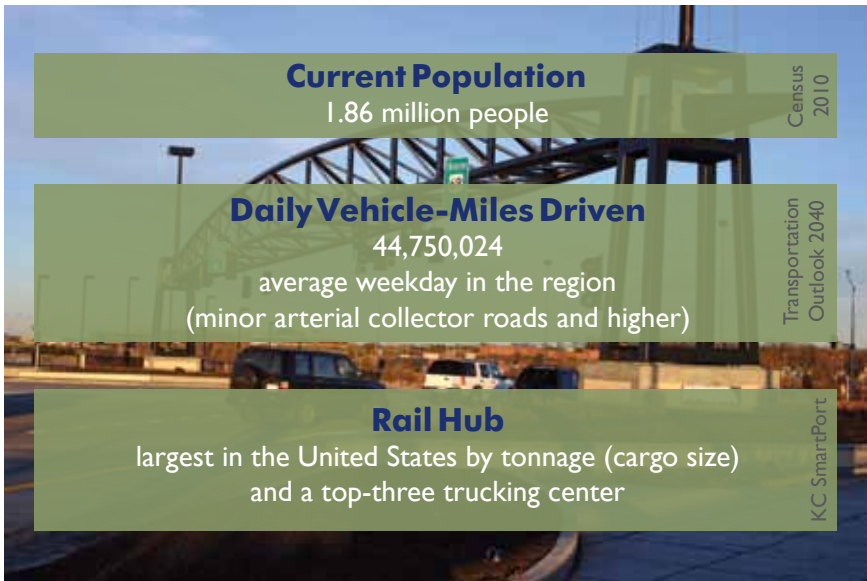
What is Transportation Decision Making?

The transportation system is made up of many pieces that work together to move people and goods around and through the metro area — including people, vehicles, roadways, bridges, sidewalks, rivers, railways and traffic signals.

Transportation planning is the process of identifying transportation problems and looking for solutions, while avoiding future problems. Transportation planners are constantly thinking about the best means of moving people and goods from one place to the next, and doing so in ways that are efficient, safe, cost-effective, and preserve the natural environment. This involves understanding where people live, work, shop, take their kids to school, visit health care facilities, and go for recreation.

Transportation planners have to plan not only for today, but for years and decades from now. To give you the best transportation choices, transportation planners work with many different public and private groups that provide housing, schools, jobs and parks.

Transportation planning must reflect solutions that benefit all people and communities in the region. Under national civil rights laws and policies, federal programs may not discriminate against people of color, people with low-incomes or people with disabilities. Because many transportation projects are federally funded, transportation decision-makers must ensure that their decisions do not have disproportionate adverse effects on these people or groups.



Key Transportation Issues

Elected officials and planners grapple with important decisions as our population becomes more diverse and energy and infrastructure costs rise.

According to MARC's economic model, the metro is projected to grow by some 750,000 people over the next 30 years — from just under 2 million people to 2.7 million people. We also expect to add 500,000 more jobs to the region by 2040. Where will these additional people live and work? How can we maintain a high quality of life where everyone has access to opportunities?

Historically, Kansas City's growth has occurred primarily on the region's edges. In the future, should we reinvest in existing areas or build new roads and other transportation infrastructure on undeveloped land? What kinds of places do we want to create? What can we afford? How important is it to support multiple modes of transportation around the region? How can we make transportation safer? What can we do to foster economic vitality and efficient movement? How do we take care of what we already have? How will we preserve valuable natural assets and ensure that transportation investments do not worsen air quality as federal ozone pollutant standards tighten?

These are questions you can help elected officials and planners answer by participating in the transportation decision-making process.



Who Are the Key Players?

Transportation decision making is carried out on several levels and includes federal, state and local governments, as well as other agencies.

The **federal government** distributes federal Highway Trust Fund dollars annually on a formula basis to every state for highways and transit. In addition, congressional spending legislation sometimes includes specially designated funds for projects sponsored by local congressional delegations.

Federal laws and regulations ensure that national standards are applied in planning and constructing transportation projects. These regulations are primarily administered by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, both of which are housed at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

State departments of transportation (DOTs) are largely responsible for building and maintaining the highway systems we rely on. They also support, in some cases, public transit, ridesharing, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. DOTs are the main recipients of federal Highway Trust Fund dollars and state transportation funds, and they set transportation goals for their states by working with state transportation organizations, other state agencies, MPOs, local governments, transit agencies, and other organizations. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is the DOT for Kansas and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) is the DOT for Missouri.



Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) The U.S. government requires urban areas larger than 50,000 people to designate MPOs in order to spend federal highway or transit funds. MPOs develop region-wide plans through intergovernmental collaboration, analysis, and consensus-based decision making. MARC is designated as the MPO for Greater Kansas City by the governors of Kansas and Missouri, in agreement with local governments. MARC's Total Transportation Policy Committee sets the agenda and develops policies for regional transportation investments.

Local governments develop comprehensive plans that lay out long-term visions and plans for transportation in their jurisdiction. They also carry out transportation-planning functions, such as scheduling improvements and maintenance for local streets and roads. When a pothole needs to be fixed on a neighborhood street, it is usually the responsibility of the local government.

Transit agencies are public or private organizations that provide transportation services to the region's residents. This may include buses, paratransit vans, trolleys, streetcars, light rail, commuter rail, monorail, inclined railways, subways, passenger ferryboats, and trams. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, Johnson County Transit, and Unified Government Transit are major public transit operators in the Kansas City region.

Transportation-Planning Process

Transportation planning at the local, regional and state levels is cyclical, and the transportation decisions made at each of these levels of government have implications for the others. Below is a visual representation of the transportation-planning process at MARC. The callout boxes show the phase of the process at the local and state level.

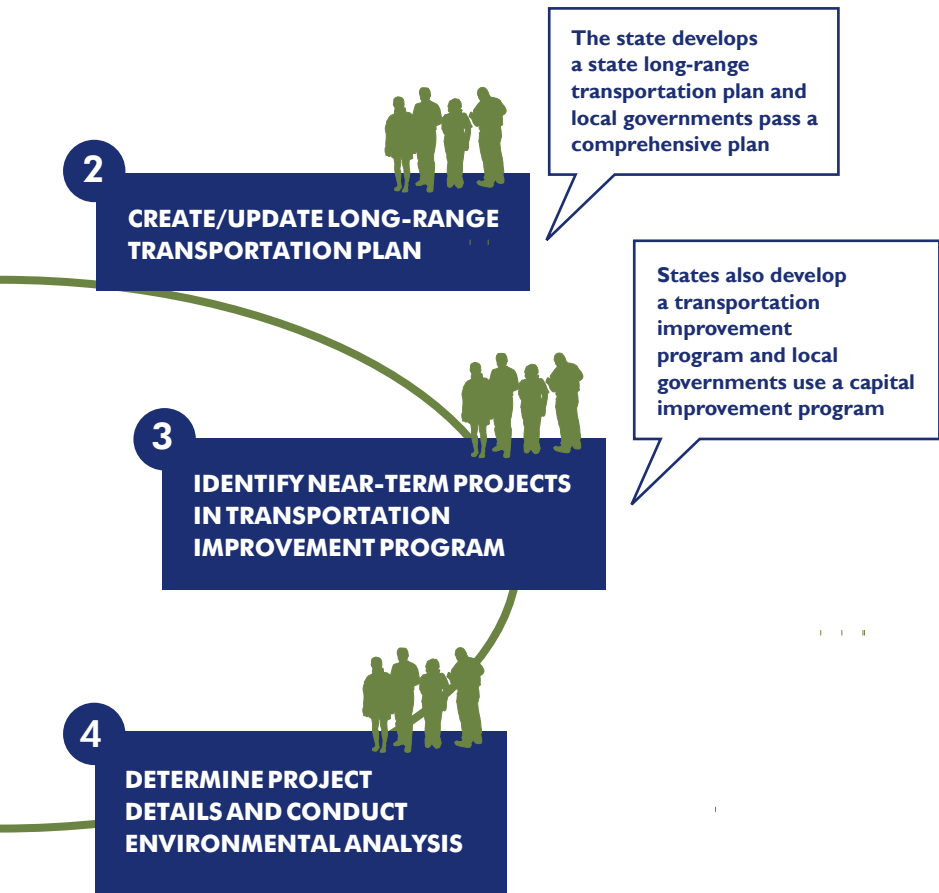


Public involvement is encouraged throughout the entire transportation decision-making process. However, your input is most effective during a few specific stages. The symbol on the left denotes the best opportunities for people to get involved in the process.

1 Visioning and Goals

Transportation investments are most effective and supported by the community when they are built on a shared idea of what the region aspires to be. It is important to have a vision that lays out broad goals and identifies what role the transportation system should play in achieving the vision. Example goals may include decreasing the use of fossil fuels and creating quality public spaces to preserving existing infrastructure.

You can help us identify issues, challenges and needs.



2 Long-Range Transportation Plan

A long-range transportation plan (LRTP) serves as a blueprint for managing, operating and investing in a transportation system over a period of several decades. The plan considers projected population growth and economic changes, multimodal transportation needs, safety concerns and environmental issues. *Transportation Outlook 2040* is Greater Kansas City's current comprehensive long-term plan of transportation strategies and major projects that will help make progress toward the region's vision and goals. MARC updates the plan every few years, undertaking an extensive public participation process with local communities.

You can help us establish policies, strategies, solutions and priorities for the region.

3 Transportation Improvement Program

Every couple of years, MARC works with the Kansas and Missouri Departments of Transportation, local governments and public transit agencies to develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Greater Kansas City. The TIP puts the long-range plan into action by budgeting federal, state and local funds for major transportation investments that support the region's vision and are planned to happen over the next five years. At the state level, a DOT develops a similar Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). At the local level, a city develops a Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

You can comment on TIP projects on the MARC website.

4 Project Details and Environmental Analysis

Once the STIPs, TIPs or CIPs are approved, the next step in the planning process is to determine who will implement specific transportation projects, develop project details — such as location, features, financial costs — and evaluate possible impacts to the community.

The National Environmental Policy Act, enacted in 1969, requires all projects using federal dollars to undergo an environmental analysis of potential impacts before construction occurs. This requires agencies using federal funds to evaluate and address all social, economic and environmental concerns.

Help identify concerns and acceptable strategies to lessen environmental damage or other impacts.

5 Implementing Projects

After visioning and project development has taken place, a local project sponsor has been identified, and funding sources are secured, then projects can move on to construction.

6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance measures are a very important part of the transportation-planning process. Local and state governments, transit agencies and MPOs must make sure that their projects connect back to the larger transportation vision for their jurisdiction. The long-range transportation plan for the Kansas City region includes system measures that help MARC evaluate how well transportation investments are achieving the region's transportation goals. Monitoring and evaluating progress helps us recognize problem areas in the transportation system early on so that adjustments can be made to future plans.

You can provide feedback on the impacts of projects and policies.



Photo courtesy of KC SmartPort

How Projects Are Developed

Let's look at how transportation projects are selected and developed before they are submitted to the region's LRTP and TIP.

Federal planning requirements and MARC's Total Transportation Policy Committee's regional policies influence the types of projects that are developed and submitted by states and local jurisdictions. However, project development typically occurs at the state and local levels.

Project development can be unpredictable. Some projects move forward when they are selected as preferred alternatives in studies. But in other cases, projects are delayed or dropped because funding is unavailable, because other alternatives emerge, or simply because they are controversial. Projects are sometimes prioritized because elected officials or a group of citizens take a special interest in them. Sometimes transportation improvements are listed for years in local or state plans before any action is taken to get them funded.



Identifying Needs

New transportation projects can arise from simple citizen suggestions or from years of complicated technical analysis. A variety of plans, studies and other mechanisms are used to identify and prioritize project needs throughout the region.

Transportation projects are often first identified through local planning, which is performed by county or city governments. Local comprehensive plans usually include a transportation element identifying specific projects that a jurisdiction has determined will be needed during the period of the plan. State DOTs have methods for identifying projects needed to maintain the transportation system, enhance safety or improve mobility or accessibility. Transit agencies also regularly assess the needs of the public transportation system and identify system enhancements.

MARC is often asked to participate in transportation studies that span multiple jurisdictions and look at a variety of solutions and specific needs. At the regional level, MARC helps identify problems and needs by monitoring current travel conditions and forecasting future travel demand. MARC also studies how travel might be affected if we changed current land-use patterns and transportation investments.

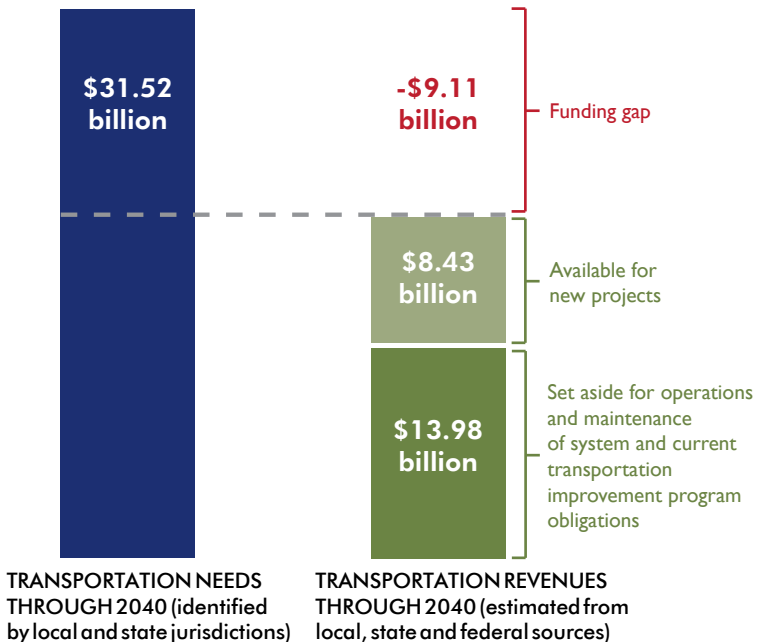
Transportation Funding

Before the Kansas City region can plan and implement improvements to the transportation system, we must forecast how much money may be available over a period of time. A variety of sources are used to pay for transportation projects, including fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees, transit fares, and sales and property taxes. Just as an individual would budget money for short-term family and home expenses, MPOs, states and local governments allocate funds from various sources for specific transportation projects that help meet their goals.

Projected revenues will not be enough to cover all projects — plus costs to operate and maintain the existing transportation system — that local jurisdictions envision for the next 30 years. The region’s top priority is preserving what we have. **We will need to spend nearly 60 percent of estimated revenues over 30 years just to keep our transportation infrastructure in good condition.**

Transportation funds are expected to be in short supply in the future, and the region will have to make tough decisions about what projects will be funded.

30-YEAR FINANCIAL OUTLOOK



Figures are based on 30-year estimates calculated for *Transportation Outlook 2040*. All data listed is in year-of-expenditure dollars. Transportation needs includes set-asides for operation and maintenance of the transportation system and projects identified during the development of *Transportation Outlook 2040*.



How You Can Get Involved

MARC has a Public Participation Plan that guides how the organization involves residents and others in the transportation decision-making process, and how the public can influence planning and investment choices. Ideas and input from the public give state and local governments a clearer understanding of evolving community needs and goals, which can help lead to better transportation solutions.

Here are some ways you can become more informed about — and involved in — transportation decisions that are made in the Kansas City region.

Get Informed

Follow transportation issues in the media. Search the Internet or monitor websites of transportation organizations for information about projects and plans. Sign up to receive newsletters or regular updates on the transportation planning process by placing your name on mailing or email lists or following social media.

Talk With Decision Makers

Contact elected officials or the staff at transportation agencies to request information about projects or plans. Find out how citizens can play a role.

Volunteer to Serve

Participate in a focus group or on an advisory committee for a local or regional transportation study.

Join a Group

Join an organized group that is promoting a special transportation project or advocating broad policy changes for transportation investments in your community or across the region.



Attend Public Meetings

Attend public community meetings on transportation projects or plans. These sessions are often advertised in local papers or posted on the internet by local or state agencies. Be sure to ask questions and contribute thoughtfully with the good of your community in mind.

Provide Input

Provide input in the transportation-planning process by expressing yourself on record. Citizens have the opportunity to make statements and provide testimony at a number of venues, including formal public hearings and information-sharing meetings on projects and plans as well as online. The LRTP and TIP are excellent opportunities to make your voice heard. Send a letter or submit a written statement to key decision makers.

Contact MARC's Transportation Department

Website: www.marc.org/transportation

E-mail: www.transportation@marc.org

Newsletter: www.marc.org/transmat

Sign up: Visit the MARC transportation website and sign up to receive newsletters and updates.

Social media:

 www.facebook.com/MARCKCMetro

 www.twitter.com/MARCKCMetro

 www.flickr.com/MARCKC

 www.youtube.com/MARCKCMetro

Contact Information

Federal Highway Administration Kansas Division Office
(785) 267-7281
www.fhwa.dot.gov

Federal Highway Administration Missouri Division Office
(573) 636-1704
www.fhwa.dot.gov

Federal Transit Administration Region 7 Office
(816) 329-3920
www.fta.dot.gov

Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
(816) 346-0200
www.kcata.org

Kansas Department of Transportation
1-877-550-KDOT (5368)
www.ksdot.org

Local Governments
Please refer to MARC's Public Officials Directory
www.marc.org/pod.htm

Mid-America Regional Council
(816) 474-4240
www.marc.org

Missouri Department of Transportation
1-888-ASK-MODOT (275-6636)
www.modot.mo.gov

Johnson County Transit
(913) 782-2210
www.thejo.com

Unified Government Transit
(913) 573-5000
www.wycokck.org



Acronym Glossary

CIP.....	Capital Improvement Program
DOT.....	Department of Transportation
EPA.....	Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA.....	Federal Highway Administration
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
KCATA.....	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
KDOT.....	Kansas Department of Transportation
L RTP.....	Long-Range Transportation Plan
MARC.....	Mid-America Regional Council
MoDOT.....	Missouri Department of Transportation
MPO.....	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA.....	National Environmental Policy Act
STIP.....	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
JCT.....	Johnson County Transit
TIP.....	Transportation Improvement Program
TTPC.....	Total Transportation Policy Committee
UGT.....	Unified Government Transit
USDOT.....	United States Department of Transportation

MARC

Mid-America Regional Council

600 Broadway, Suite 200 ■ Kansas City, MO 64105-1659
Phone: 816/474-4270 ■ Fax: 816/421-7758 ■ www.marc.org