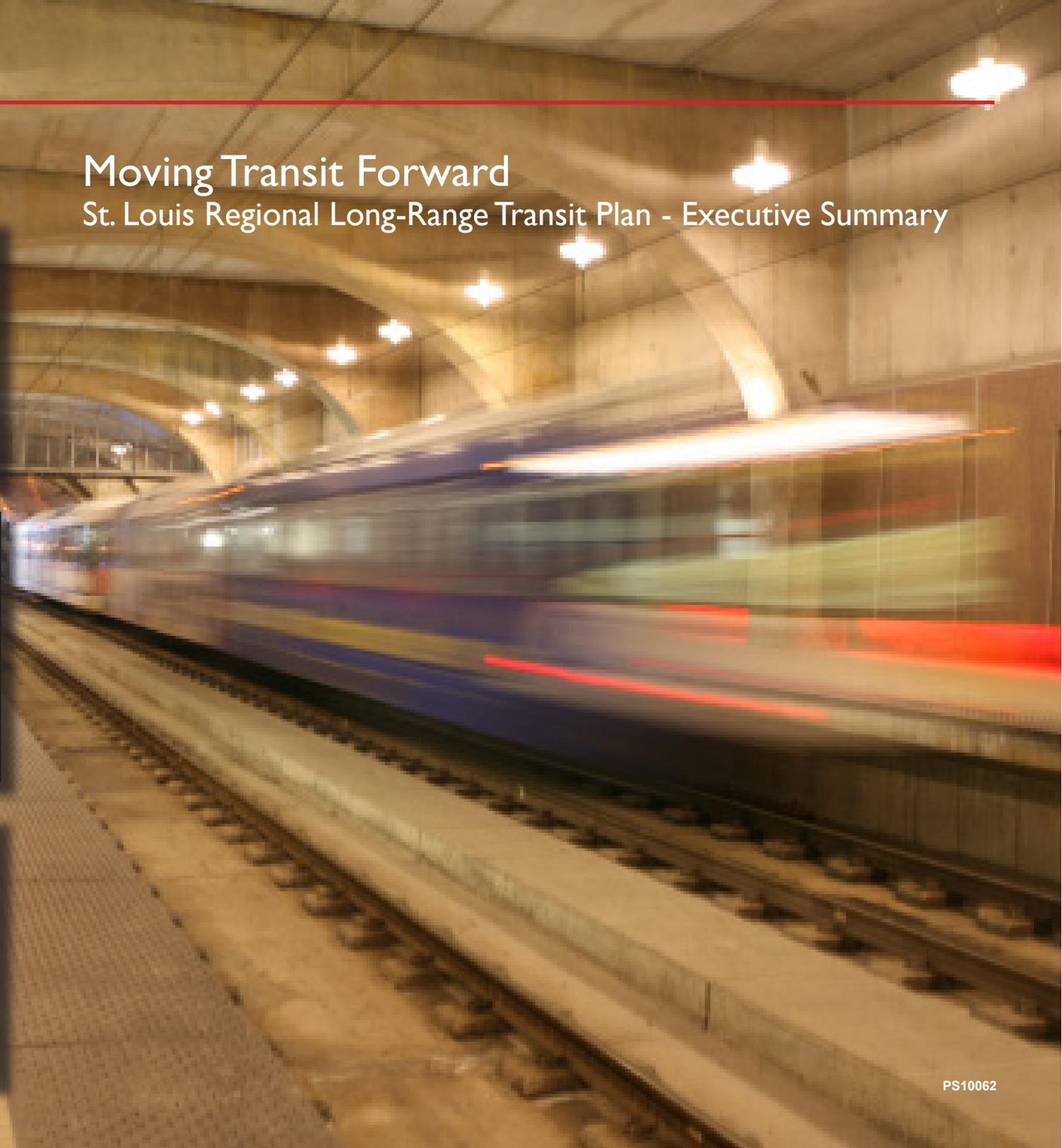




Metro

# Moving Transit Forward

## St. Louis Regional Long-Range Transit Plan - Executive Summary





## Message from the President and CEO

For the first time, the St. Louis metropolitan area has a long-range plan that presents a comprehensive vision for the future of public transit over the next 30 years.

As President and CEO of Metro, I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the executive summary from *Moving Transit Forward*, the plan we believe presents a realistic and responsible road map that our region can follow in its endeavor to build a world-class public transit system.

This plan was developed over more than a year of consistent study and effort by Metro and the East-West Gateway Council of Governments. It combines state-of-the-art transit science, professional urban and transit planning experience, and direct input from the community to reposition the Metro System to better connect people to jobs and other important destinations, and to act as a powerful engine of economic growth and development throughout the region.

*Moving Transit Forward* establishes a shared community vision to meet those goals, based upon a realistic appraisal of our region's public transit needs over the next three decades, the most effective options to meet those diverse needs, and the financial resources available to pursue recommended system improvements and expansion options.

The plan incorporates the proven strengths of bus, light rail and paratransit service strategies, as well as innovative concepts new to St. Louis, such as Bus Rapid Transit and commuter rail. It balances the very real need for a stronger, more extensive transit system against available economic resources. It provides the region's leadership with the vision and the tools to overcome the significant challenges Metro faces in delivering the kind of robust transit services we need to make the St. Louis a region a more vibrant community and a more competitive force in the global economy. Ultimately, *Moving Transit Forward* will better connect all our citizens to jobs, education, healthcare, commerce, and to each other.

We believe *Moving Transit Forward* can be a valuable asset as we work together to meet our region's transit needs in the months and years ahead. PDF copies of the full plan document are available for download at [www.movingtransitforward.org](http://www.movingtransitforward.org).

Sincerely,

Robert J. Baer  
President and CEO



Metro Transit and East-West Gateway Council of Governments worked with the community to create this blueprint for transit in the St. Louis region over the next 30 years. *Moving Transit Forward* establishes a vision for more effectively using transit to:

- ◆ Move tens of thousands of people to work every day
- ◆ Stimulate job growth and economic development
- ◆ Reduce pollution and traffic congestion
- ◆ Improve the quality of life for all citizens, whether they use the system or not

*Moving Transit Forward* is also a strategy for using different types of transit to strengthen the region's core, expand high-quality, high-speed transit service to more parts of the region, and better connect people to jobs. Planned investments include restoring transit services eliminated in 2009, enhancing the Metro System to make it more attractive and accessible to residents across the region, and expanding rail and higher-speed bus service.

*Moving Transit Forward* is a financially reasonable plan. It suggests phasing projects over the next 30 years, depending on available funding. Projects are divided into three achievable phases: a short-range component that outlines investments like service restoration, system enhancements, and initial design over a 1-5 year period; project construction and expansion over a 5-10 year period; and further options for expansion over the next 10-30 years.

*Moving Transit Forward* presents a dynamic community vision, a living document that can be revised as the region changes. Its success, however, depends on additional federal and state funding.

## Why is transit important?

Great cities have great transit systems. The St. Louis region is a wonderful place in which to live, work, and play, but in recent decades its population and job growth has stagnated. To change this, the region must move forward and boldly redefine itself as a catalyst for entrepreneurship, an attractor of talented young professionals, and a place that considers the needs of all its citizens. Transit alone will not make this happen, but it does play a vital role in shaping the region's quality of life and growing its economy. Here's how . . .

### ***Transit moves thousands of people every day to work, school, and life:***

- ◆ More than 50 million times each year, someone boards a MetroBus, MetroLink train or Metro Call-A-Ride van
- ◆ Most Metro customers ride to work or school
- ◆ Metro customers in Missouri alone earn more than \$2.2 billion in wages annually
- ◆ Metro carries nearly 2 million riders a year to special events



### ***Transit creates economic vitality and jobs:***

- ◆ For every \$1 invested in transit, \$4 is returned in local economic activity
- ◆ MetroLink has helped spur over \$2 billion in development near its stations
- ◆ Prior to the March 2009 service reduction, 98 percent of jobs in St. Louis City and St. Louis County were within walking distance of the Metro Transit System

### ***Transit makes St. Louis a better place to live and work:***

- ◆ An extensive transit system provides mobility and freedom of movement to the elderly, disabled and students
- ◆ Metro service lowers the cost of living and removes the stress of driving, parking and car maintenance
- ◆ Public transportation makes the region more accessible to all, making it easier to get to work, school and other popular destinations
- ◆ Metro makes the region more interesting, more vibrant, and more competitive
- ◆ An attractive alternative to the automobile helps reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by taking nearly 45,000 cars off the road each workday



## Why move transit forward?

Metro provides nationally-recognized, award-winning transit service. Yet because of reduced funding, services had to be reduced by 30 percent in March 2009. As a result, entire MetroBus lines stopped running, Metro Call-A-Ride service for the elderly and disabled was pared back, leaving many customers stranded, and MetroLink runs less often at all times. Several of the most popular MetroBus routes are now overcrowded and buses have to pass by waiting customers. There are many parts of the region that Metro serves infrequently, or not at all. Even before these cuts, the system was unable to meet all of the region's diverse and growing transportation needs. *Moving Transit Forward* provides a strategy for both restoring service and, eventually, improving and expanding service to meet as many of the region's transportation needs as possible.



*Moving Transit Forward* includes a wide range of transit options to meet the diverse transportation needs of the St. Louis region. Land use patterns and community preferences vary across the region's many distinct communities, from St. Louis City's high-density employment centers and unique neighborhoods to newer regional business centers like Clayton and Creve Coeur, from historic inner-ring suburbs such as Florissant to suburban office parks and low-density residential subdivisions in Chesterfield and Maryville, IL. In the early 20th century St. Louis was the fourth largest city in the United States, and enjoyed relatively compact, walkable neighborhoods served by an extensive streetcar system. For the past sixty years, since the personal automobile became affordable and public policies have encouraged suburban development, St. Louis County's population has grown exponentially and the region's population has continued to spread outward. Most of the region's population now lives in suburban areas, but travels to

jobs in the urban core or other suburban communities. Many people also need to travel from homes in the urban core to jobs in the suburbs.

The Metro System must prioritize meeting these regional transportation needs, but they are not the only factor in planning effective transit investments. Metro must also do all it can to assist the St. Louis region in retaining and attracting new residents, growing new business opportunities, and making the region an even more attractive place in which to live, work and play. To that end, the Metro Transit System should encourage a more balanced development pattern. Suburban communities in St. Louis County and Metro East need to be stabilized, and travel between the suburbs and jobs in the core needs to be as fast and easy as possible. The urban core itself must also be strengthened through new development opportunities and the creation or preservation of unique neighborhoods with interesting, walkable streets. *Moving Transit Forward* is an action plan for using a variety of transit options to most effectively meet the region's transportation needs while encouraging healthier, more sustainable development.

## What drives the *Moving Transit Forward* plan?

*Moving Transit Forward* is a 30-year, long-range transit plan directed by Metro and East-West Gateway Council of Governments and guided by extensive research about the St. Louis region's needs and preferences.

Market research, including a survey and focus groups with Metro Transit customers and non-riders, initiated the planning process. Critical planning inputs included thorough evaluation of the Metro Transit System, analysis of regional population, employment and travel patterns, as well as forecasts of how the St. Louis region may change. A detailed 30-year financial model helped

to ensure that the plan was financially realistic. Some of the most important findings were:



- ◆ 87 percent of survey respondents thought that public transit is “important” or “very important” to a community’s quality of life.
- ◆ Population and employment growth in the St. Louis region has been fairly static, with very limited growth over the past decade.
- ◆ While revenue sources have remained flat or fallen, the costs of providing Metro service have risen due to normal inflation, making it difficult to fund transit operations and severely limits opportunities for transit system expansion.
- ◆ The success of transit investments is fundamentally driven by high concentrations of population and employment, and land use and economic development policies that encourage denser development.
- ◆ Metro System performance confirms that population and employment density drives transit success. The MetroBus routes with the greatest ridership demand, such as the #70 Grand, #4 Natural Bridge, and #64 Lucas Hunt, are those that serve the region’s more densely populated areas.
- ◆ The region’s largest employment corridor includes Downtown, Grand Boulevard/Saint Louis University, the Central West End and Clayton.
- ◆ The region also has smaller but growing employment centers, such as Brentwood/Richmond Heights, Westport and Earth City, which could support and benefit from increased transit service. Higher-density, more transit-friendly land use regulations would help make that possible.
- ◆ Today, St. Louis County attracts the highest share of the region’s work trips, and the City of St. Louis attracts the second-highest share.

## What types of transit and technologies were considered for *Moving Transit Forward*?

Some of the transit options considered for inclusion in the plan are familiar to St. Louis residents, such as expanded light rail (MetroLink), paratransit (Call-A-Ride) and conventional bus (MetroBus) service. Others, like Bus Rapid Transit and commuter rail, would be new additions to the Metro System. The plan also includes options to



### MetroLink Characteristics:

- ◆ High-capacity vehicles
- ◆ Permanent stations and passenger stops
- ◆ Frequent, all-day service
- ◆ Higher travel speeds with fewer stops
- ◆ Separated or street-running rail
- ◆ Economic development catalyst
- ◆ Average \$60 million per mile

enhance existing services, making Metro Transit more attractive and accessible to people across the region. Each of these transit types and service improvements was presented to the community, and the public’s feedback helped determine which of these would be in the plan. The range of services and technologies included in the plan is reflected in the options described below.

### *MetroLink (Light Rail)*

Light rail carries large numbers of passengers and is most effective when serving higher-density neighborhoods and large employment centers. Light rail acts as a catalyst for new development. Community feedback indicated that the MetroLink light rail service is the region’s preferred type of transit service.

## Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an innovative type of service that has successfully delivered higher speed, higher capacity service in cities across North and South America. It is a range of bus-based technologies and service strategies that combine many of the features of rail systems with the flexibility and cost savings of buses.

Some BRT systems are urban-oriented services that run along busy roads with stops only at major intersections and other destinations.

Other systems offer suburban services on regional highways, using dedicated on-off ramps and park-ride lots.



The MAX Bus Rapid Transit system in Kansas City, MO



Trinity Railway Express, commuter rail in Dallas, Texas

## Commuter Rail Characteristics:

- ◆ Long distance suburb-to-city trips
- ◆ Typically diesel powered
- ◆ Rush-hour oriented service, with less frequent midday, weekend and late evening service
- ◆ High capacity vehicles with passenger amenities
- ◆ Costs dependent on federal and state investment in high-speed rail

## Bus Rapid Transit Characteristics:

- ◆ Higher travel speeds and fewer stops than buses
- ◆ Frequent, all-day service
- ◆ Possible rights-of-way include bus-only lanes, bypass lanes, and separate busways; can also run in mixed traffic with traffic signal prioritization
- ◆ Dedicated stations and passenger stop
- ◆ High-capacity vehicles with low-floor boarding, comfortable seating, and, possibly, real-time arrival & departure information
- ◆ Average \$35 million for highway-based route

## Commuter Rail

Commuter rail is longer-distance train service intended to transport high volumes of passengers from suburbs to city destinations. There are many commuter rail systems in medium and large cities in the United States, including Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Austin.

Commuter rail would be an option for expanding high-speed, high-quality transit to more distant parts of the region. However, implementing it in the St. Louis region depends upon the success of federal and state plans for an intercity, high-speed rail network between Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City. If those high-speed rail lines are implemented, the St. Louis region could operate commuter rail service by purchasing or leasing trains, building stations and operating the service, but would not have to make major investments in additional track and signals.



## MetroBus (Conventional Bus)

Conventional buses operate on the road with other traffic. Service is frequent and stops are often closely spaced. Speeds can vary, with express services offering higher speeds. Buses offer advantages such as very low capital costs and the flexibility to provide many different types of service. MetroBus is the backbone of Metro Transit because of its greater service area coverage, flexibility, and lower capital cost.

### Bus Characteristics:

- ◆ Serves a variety of passenger demands with a highly flexible system
- ◆ Increases connectivity to existing rail system and other bus routes
- ◆ Provides frequent, all-day service
- ◆ Operates in mixed traffic and makes frequent stops

## Metro Call-A-Ride (Paratransit)

In addition to service that operates on fixed routes on a regular schedule, transit systems also provide paratransit service such as Metro Call-A-Ride, to elderly and disabled customers. This door-to-door service provides independence and a critical link for many residents of the St. Louis region to employment, healthcare, retail, and recreation opportunities. Call-A-Ride service is available to qualified individuals traveling within  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of a fixed route, like MetroBus or MetroLink.

### Paratransit Characteristics:

- ◆ Provides door-to-door service for the elderly and disabled
- ◆ Utilizes large vans equipped with power lifts
- ◆ Requires reservations in advance
- ◆ Mandates that ADA-eligible trips must begin and end within  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of a MetroBus route or MetroLink station



### Passenger Amenities

Passenger amenities that provide shelter, comfort and convenience are a vital component of any transit system and are very important to Metro customers. The plan proposes a variety of passenger amenities that will help improve the customer experience, as well as enhance security, attractiveness and the overall performance of the system.

- ◆ More bus shelters, seating and improved signage
- ◆ More lighting
- ◆ Climate-controlled seating and shelters
- ◆ Public restrooms
- ◆ Customer information using Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
  - Google Transit and TripFinder, online trip-planning tools
  - Smart Cards, automated fare-payment and proof-of-purchase system
  - Real-time vehicle tracking and arrival/departure information
- ◆ Transit centers, which maximize efficiencies and improve bus connections

## How were specific corridors and types of service evaluated?

The planning team selected corridors for possible service expansion using transit planning research and community input. The plan also identifies the types of transit that may be most effective for servicing each of these corridors. Once a broad range of plan options was established, nine community values guided the selection of specific projects and service enhancements for inclusion in the plan. These values include:

- ◆ Provides transit service to more people and places
- ◆ Improves transit's image as a regional asset
- ◆ Enhances mobility options for transit-dependent residents
- ◆ Attracts federal funding
- ◆ Positively impacts and supports development
- ◆ Protects our natural environment
- ◆ Strengthens our regional core
- ◆ Provides cost-effective improvements
- ◆ Can be implemented in a reasonable amount of time

## How was the community involved in shaping the plan?

*Moving Transit Forward* was built on a foundation of technical planning and a community vision for guiding the growth of the region's transit system. To create this shared vision, a robust community engagement strategy outlined a variety of ways for engaging the public, including surveys, focus groups, webinars, three separate series of regional public meetings, and web-based technologies and social media tools, including a dedicated project website ([www.movingtransitforward.org](http://www.movingtransitforward.org)). Two groups, the *Moving Transit Forward* Advisory Group and an Executive Committee, engaged elected officials, business leaders, and community organizations. These strategies elicited the involvement of key stakeholders and helped ensure a transparent planning process.

## What is included in *Moving Transit Forward*?

*Moving Transit Forward* provides a set of options from which regional leaders, acting through East-West Gateway Council of Governments, can choose to build when adequate financial resources become available. In addition to the suggested projects outlined below, the plan's first priority is restoring the services that were cut in March 2009.



### **MetroLink:**

- ◆ **Northside-Southside** would extend from North St. Louis County near St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley into Downtown St. Louis, then south down I-55 to Bayless Avenue. This corridor is divided into three separate segments that could be constructed at different times.
- ◆ **Clayton to Westport (Daniel Boone)** would extend from the Clayton MetroLink station to I-170, travel north to some point between Page and Olive Boulevard, then head west to Westport.
- ◆ **MetroSouth** would extend MetroLink from the Shrewsbury MetroLink station southeast along River Des Peres to I-55, then deeper into south St. Louis County.





- ◆ **MetroNorth** would travel along or near I-170 from a point near the North Hanley MetroLink station north into Florissant.
- ◆ **Madison County Tri-Cities** would extend MetroLink from the Emerson Park station in East St. Louis, IL to Granite City, then to Edwardsville. This route would require political support and funding from Madison County, IL.

### **Bus Rapid Transit:**

- ◆ **Grand BRT** would operate on Grand Boulevard between Chippewa and Natural Bridge in the City of St. Louis.
- ◆ **I-64 BRT** would operate between Downtown St. Louis and Chesterfield, MO, and could be extended further west.
- ◆ **I-70 BRT** would operate between Downtown St. Louis and St. Charles County, possibly O'Fallon, MO. This service would require funding and support from St. Charles County.
- ◆ **I-55 BRT** would operate between Downtown St. Louis and south St. Louis County, and could extend into Arnold, MO with political support and funding from Jefferson County.
- ◆ **I-44 BRT** would operate between Downtown St. Louis and Eureka or Pacific, MO.

### **Commuter Rail:**

- ◆ St. Louis to Alton, IL
- ◆ St. Louis to Eureka/Pacific, MO

### **Passenger Amenities:**

The plan also includes an array of general service enhancements and new technologies to improve the customer experience, such as: additional transit centers; a Smart Card system for automated fare payment; GPS tracking of MetroBuses; additional seating, shelters, signage and lighting at MetroBus stops; and real-time arrival and departure bus information directly available to customers.

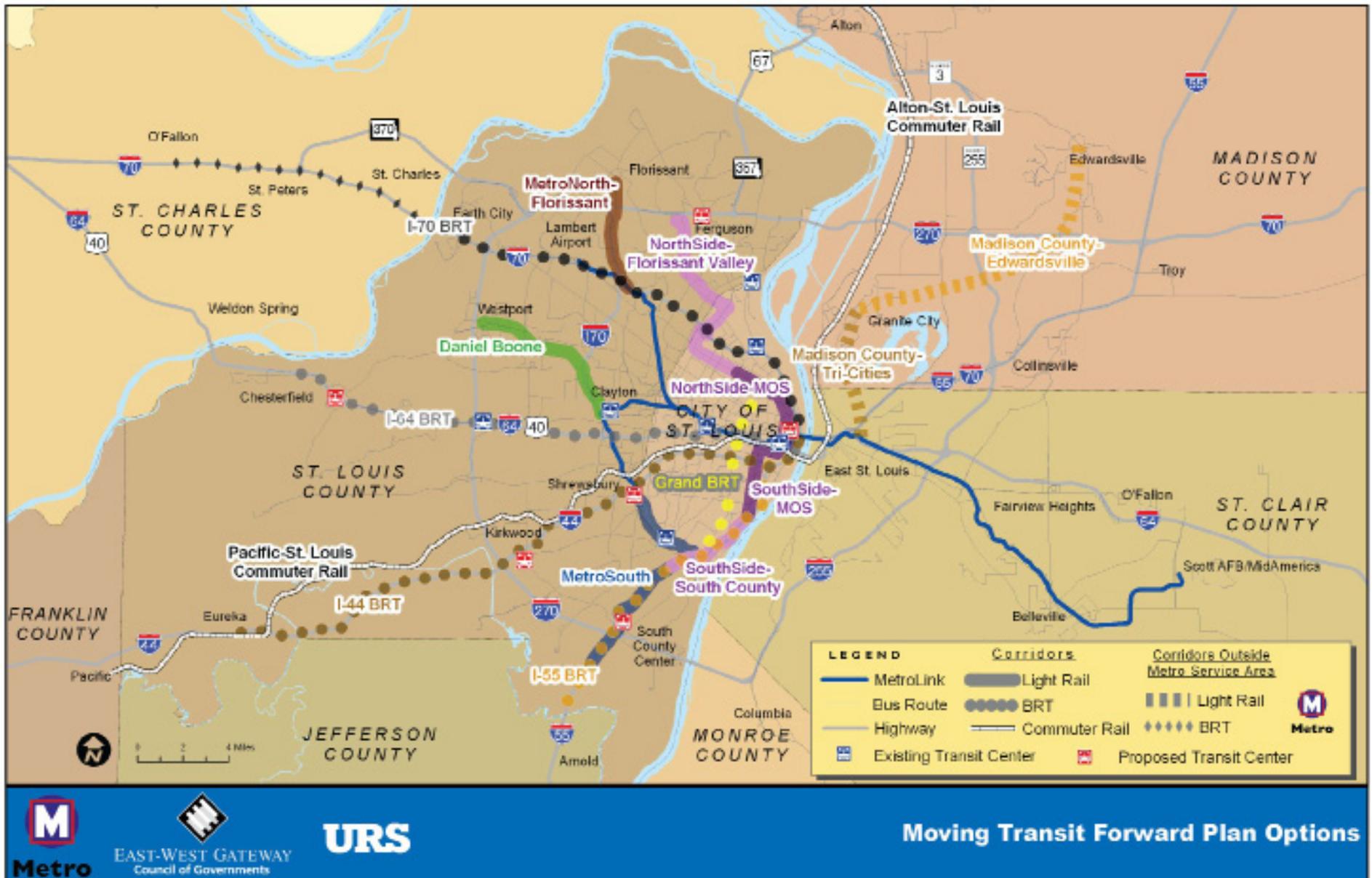
## **Is Moving Transit Forward financially realistic?**

This plan is based on a set of reasonable assumptions regarding the capital and operating costs of the existing transit system, costs for system expansion and enhancements, and likely sources of existing and potential revenue. A 30-year financial model helped determine what the region can afford to build and when specific projects could be implemented.

While it is impossible to project detailed costs and available financial resources more than 10 years into the future, the planning team considered costs for comparable projects, industry standards, and professional judgment about the costs associated with each of the possible service enhancements. The model was also used to establish a capital investment strategy that sequences projects over the 1-5, 5-10, and 10-30 year phases of the long-range plan.

The plan's financial model indicates that local resources will allow Metro to restore service, plan BRT routes, and sustain the system. Any expansion of the Metro System will require matching federal funds, and any MetroLink extension will require additional state support for construction and operations. Other key conclusions from this analysis include:

- ◆ While each of the three phases of the 30-year plan includes capital projects, the actual timing of each investment will depend on the availability of funds.
- ◆ For all major system expansions – light rail, BRT and commuter rail – the plan assumes federal funding for 50 percent of the capital costs, a typical assumption based on nationwide experience.
- ◆ While program details are constantly changing, there are signs of more favorable transit funding at the federal level. This plan assumes an increase in ongoing annual federal support for Metro.
- ◆ It is especially important that the State of Missouri increase its funding for Metro to a level comparable with that of similar regions and transit agencies. The national average of state support for transit operations in areas with population more than 200,000 is 23 percent. This plan assumes State of Missouri support rising from less than one percent to 18 percent.



## Moving Transit Forward Plan Options

## How can *Moving Transit Forward* be implemented?

To ensure that the plan is financially realistic, projects are divided into suggested phases over the next 30 years. The phases include improvements that can be implemented immediately; projects that can be pursued in the near-term (1-5 years); some that will take longer (5-10 years); and those that the region will not be able to build for quite some time, but which the region still needs to begin planning and saving for (10-30 years).

### ■ Immediate Action Steps

- ◆ Restore MetroBus, MetroLink, and Metro Call-A-Ride service
- ◆ Begin planning and engineering for first MetroLink extension
- ◆ Begin planning and engineering for first Bus Rapid Transit route

### ■ Short-Range (1-5 Years)

- ◆ Continue planning and engineering for first MetroLink extension
- ◆ Construct and operate first Bus Rapid Transit route
- ◆ Plan, construct, and operate second Bus Rapid Transit route
- ◆ Begin passenger amenities and technology program

### ■ Mid-Range (5-10 Years)

- ◆ Construct and operate MetroLink extension studied in the first phase
- ◆ Plan, construct, and operate one or two additional Bus Rapid Transit routes
- ◆ Plan and construct additional transit center(s)

### ■ Long-Range (10-30 Years)

- ◆ Plan, construct, and operate second MetroLink extension
- ◆ Begin planning and engineering for a third MetroLink extension

## What are the next steps for *Moving Transit Forward*?

*Moving Transit Forward* has been adopted and approved as the St. Louis region's official long-range transit plan. It is intended to be a dynamic, living document that will be updated as the region's transit needs change.

The projects outlined in this plan can be implemented only with additional state and federal funding. With the additional local funding approved by voters on April 6, 2010, Metro is committed to moving quickly to restore service. Metro and East-West Gateway Council of Governments will also begin planning for the next MetroLink extension and Bus Rapid Transit routes. Regional leadership will then use that additional local funding to leverage the increased state and federal support that is vital to implementing and sustaining the full range of potential system expansions included in the *Moving Transit Forward* Long-Range Plan.

