

A Guide to Transportation Decision Making In the Kansas City region



MARC

MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Purpose of the 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 eight counties — Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami 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.

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 ways to move 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 and play.

Transportation planners have to plan not only for today, but for decades from now. MARC works with many different public and private groups that provide housing, schools, jobs and parks to develop plans.

Civil rights law states that federal programs may not discriminate against minorities or people with low -incomes or disabilities. Many transportation projects are federally funded, so transportation planners have to ensure that projects do not have disproportionately adverse effects on these populations. Transportation planning must reflect solutions that benefit all people and communities in the region.



The average metro commuter has an annual travel time delay of **27 hours**.



The region's has a population of **1,912,453** that travels a total of **41.3 million miles** daily.



Key transportation issues

Elected officials and planners must deal with important decisions regarding the increased cost of energy and infrastructure in addition to the changing demographics in the region.

According to MARC's economic model, the metro is projected to grow by about 500,000 people over the next 25 years — from just under 2 million people to about 2.5 million people. We also expect to add 300,000 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?

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?

Government

The **federal government** distributes federal Highway Trust Fund dollars annually on a formula basis to every state. Congress can also pass legislation to allocate funds for specially designated projects needed by local congressional districts. The federal government administers laws and regulations to ensure national standards are being met during a project's planning and construction phases.

State departments of transportation (DOTs) are largely responsible for building and maintaining our highway systems, and are the main recipients of Federal Highway Administration dollars. Some state DOTs also support public transit, ridesharing, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. State DOTs set transportation goals for their state by working with both public and private transportation agencies, other state agencies, MPOs, local governments and others.

Local governments develop comprehensive plans that lay out long-term visions and plans for transportation in their jurisdictions. 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.

Other organizations

The U.S. government requires urban areas larger than 50,000 people to designate **metropolitan planning organizations** (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.

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, Unified Government Transit, city of Independence and Kansas City Streetcar Authority are major public transit operators in the Kansas City region.

More than **250 million tons** of freight goods move through the region daily.



The planning process lifecycle

Step 1.
Develop/revise vision and goals
for transportation system

Step 2.
Create/develop a Metropolitan
Transportation Plan

Step 3.
Identify near-term projects in
the Transportation Improvement
Program

Step 4.
Determine project details and
conduct an environmental analysis

Step 5.
Implement
transportation projects

Step 6.
Evaluate progress toward
regional vision and goals

Transportation planning process

Transportation planning at the local, regional and state levels is cyclical, with designated schedules for short- and long-range plan updates.

The state develops a state long-range transportation plan and local governments pass a comprehensive plan.

States also develop a transportation improvement program (STIP) and local governments use a capital improvement program (CIP).

Public involvement is encouraged throughout the entire transportation decision-making process. The best opportunities for the public to get involved are during the first four stages of the transportation decision-making process.

The decisions are made at each level of government, and each point in the planning process has implications for the others.

1. Visioning and Goals

Transportation investments are most effective and have the strongest community support 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, creating quality public spaces or preserving existing infrastructure.

2. Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) serves as a long-range blueprint for managing, operating and investing in a transportation system over a period of 20 to 30 years. 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. It includes strategies and major projects to help make progress toward the region's vision and goals. MARC updates the plan at least every five years, using an extensive public participation process with local communities.

3. Transportation Improvement Program

Every two years, MARC works with KDOT and MoDOT, local governments and public transit agencies to update the 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. State DOTs develop similar Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs). At the local level, cities develop Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs).

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 1970, requires all projects using federal dollars to undergo an environmental analysis of potential impacts before construction occurs. This requires agencies that use federal funds to evaluate and address social, economic and environmental concerns.

5. Implementing projects

After visioning and project development have 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 MTP 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.



The eight-county region has **3,514 bridges** and more than **15,500 miles of roadway**.



How projects are developed

Federal planning requirements and 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, other alternatives emerge, or because they are simply 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.

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

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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 that identifies 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 household 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 66 percent of estimated revenues over 25 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.

Infrastructure operations and maintenance

The majority of funds expected to be available to the region over the life of *Transportation Outlook 2040*, \$33.1 billion, will mostly be used for operations and maintenance (O&M) of the current system.

65.8%

Operations and maintenance costs: **\$21.78 billion**

34.2%

Remaining funds: **\$11.31 billion**

Figures are based on 25-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.

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 online by local or state agencies. Be sure to ask questions and contribute thoughtfully with the good of your community in mind.

Find ways to get involved!



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 MTP 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: transportation@marc.org

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

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

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
JCT	Johnson County Transit
KCATA	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
KDOT	Kansas Department of Transportation
MARC	Mid-America Regional Council
MoDOT	Missouri Department of Transportation
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TTPC	Total Transportation Policy Committee
UGT	Unified Government Transit
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation

***Did you know notes:**

- pg. 6 Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), Urban Mobility Reports.
- pg. 7 U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 American Community Survey.
Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT); 2013 State DOT Roadway Databases.
- pg.9 Source: Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) – Import/Export Freight Analysis Framework (FAF3).



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