

Purpose and Need Statement

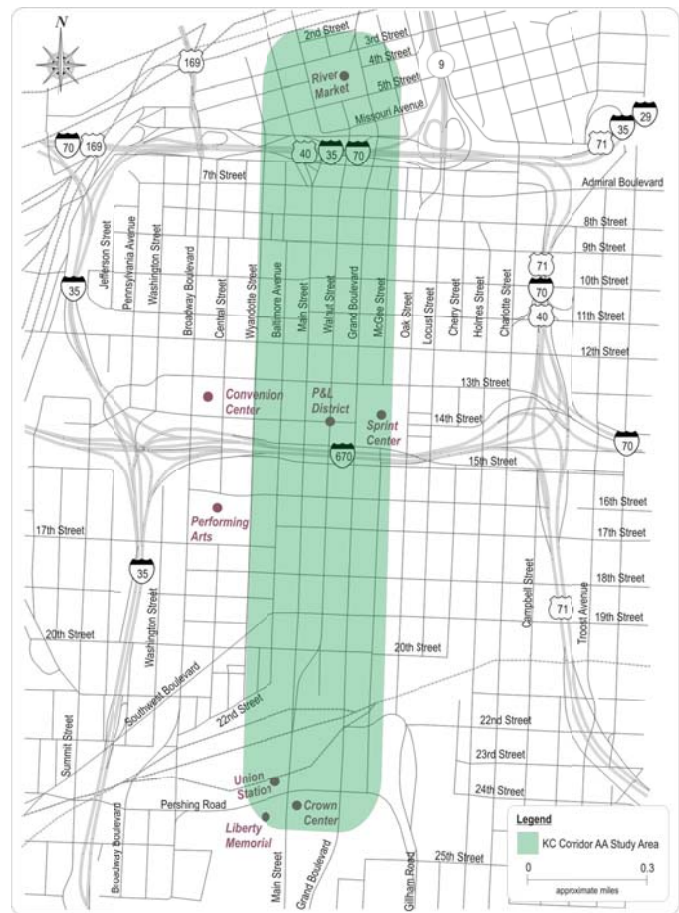
1. Introduction

This purpose and need statement provides an overview of the Downtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis Study, which is examining transit improvements between downtown Kansas City and the Crown Center Union Station area. This document provides a summary of key project information:

- Background on the study and a description of the corridor.
- An overview of the study’s policy foundation.
- A description of purpose and need based on both transportation and non-transportation factors.
- Goals and Objectives.

This draft Purpose and Need Statement will be subject to further discussion and comment from the community, the general public and the regional partnership team that is guiding the project, and will become the basis for defining the study alternatives. It will be the basis for determining the evaluation criteria that will be used to evaluate the alternatives, and will lead to the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative route and mode.

Downtown Corridor



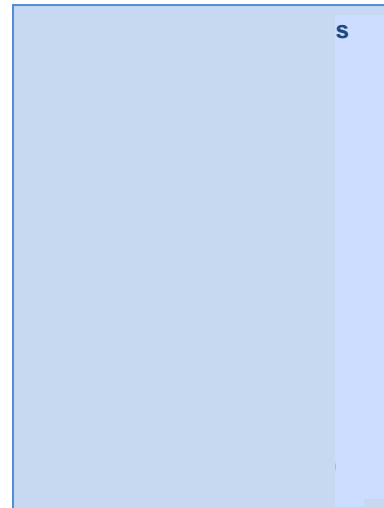


2. Project Background and Corridor

A partnership of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and Jackson County, Missouri is undertaking an Alternatives Analysis study that will examine enhanced transit solutions in Kansas City's Downtown Corridor. The study area for Kansas City's Downtown Corridor extends from the River Market area on the north, through the Central Business District and the Crossroads areas to Crown Center on the south.

This Alternatives Analysis will be consistent with FTA's Section 5309 New Start/Small Start funding program requirements and The study will evaluate and compare the costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of transit alignment and technology alternatives.

The study is planned to take approximately eight months and is expected to result in the recommendation and selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The process will include extensive input from the public, stakeholders (e.g., residents, business owners, etc.), and local, regional, state and federal agencies.



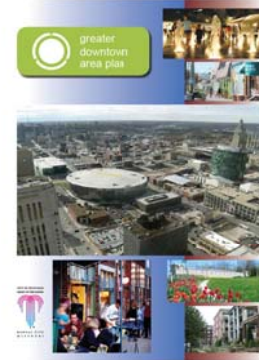
3. Policy Foundation

A strong multimodal transportation system will be critical for economic growth and the development of a sustainable future, and a large number of adopted regional and local policies support improved transit circulation in the Downtown Corridor. Key plan and policy initiatives include:



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Greater Downtown Area Plan (City of Kansas City, MO), which presents a vision for the Greater Kansas City Downtown Area designed to improve quality of life in the region's core, protect precious natural capital, and strengthen economic vitality to competitively position Downtown as the region's cultural, economic, and activity center. The plan explicitly reinforces and embraces dense, mixed-use development in the Central Business Corridor – maintaining downtown as the densest area of the region, a regional office/employment center, the center of government, the most important cultural destination, the center of entertainment/convention/tourism activity, and a significant retail destination. The plan recommends a transit corridor with rail down Main Street or Grand Boulevard. It also recommends some type of trolley circulator in the downtown area. The plan also calls for increased connectivity between neighborhoods and activity centers, focused on mixed-use activity centers to serve as nodes for the transit system. Transit-Oriented Development is encouraged.



Smart Moves (MARC), which presents the Kansas City region's vision for expanded and enhanced regional transit service. These regional services will need to be supported by effective local transit circulators services, especially in the Downtown corridor. The plan explicitly recognizes that transit service in key corridors needs to evolve to more intensive operational modes, such as bus rapid transit (BRT) and rail transit, as development intensifies over time.



KCATA Comprehensive Service Analysis (KCATA), designed to develop short-term transit improvements to existing Metro services. Work to date has determined that service in downtown Kansas City is overly complex, and that the development of a Downtown – Crown Center “spine” would provide the foundation for simpler and more efficient service with downtown and in the Downtown corridor.

Transportation Outlook 2040 (MARC), which is the Kansas City Region's long-range transportation plan guiding how the Kansas City region will manage, operate and invest \$18 billion in its multimodal transportation system over the next 30 years. It is designed to help the region grow more efficiently, maintain a competitive economy and





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preserve the health of the environment, while enabling everyone to access opportunity. The plan lists “Place Making” as one of its nine system goals driving policy, with such objectives as walkability, density/mixed uses, transportation options, and infill/redevelopment.

Climate Protection Plan (City of Kansas City, MO), which lays out goals for the City of Kansas City to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously improving the economy and quality of life for the City’s businesses and citizens. Several of the plan’s recommendations are in harmony with the goals of the Downtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis, including the following: expand and further develop alternative transportation programs, develop a plan to implement light rail as part of a healthy overall public transit system, promote and incentivize development patterns that support alternative modes of transportation and avoid sprawl, reduce emissions by reducing net vehicle-miles traveled, enact a “complete streets” policy, and create a seamless regional transit system.

Rail-based transit has also been envisioned in transportation plans, land-use plans and previous studies for the Downtown Corridor. Downtown voters have consistently supported rail transit; for example, although the November 2008 light-rail ballot failed citywide with only 45 percent of voters in support, 64 percent of the voters of Ward 1 (most of the downtown area) voted in support. In addition, an Alternatives Analysis is being undertaken concurrently to evaluate potential commuter rail service between the eastern suburbs and downtown Kansas City. Such service would likely intersect with, and be complementary to, a downtown circulator.

4. Statement of Purpose

For much of the last 20-plus years, Kansas City’s core, although it remained the most important economic engine of the region, has declined as more business and residents have moved to newly developing areas surrounding the core, or elsewhere in the region. A major emphasis of many regional efforts is to revitalize and grow the core, and improved transit within the Downtown corridor must be an essential part of these efforts. The purpose of the project is to provide an attractive transit option that will more conveniently connect people and places within the Downtown Corridor, and support regional and city efforts to develop downtown Kansas City and the Downtown Corridor as a more attractive and successful urban center.



5. Statement of Need

The need for this project is best encapsulated through four themes related to mobility and connectivity, economic development and growth, community and livability, and sustainability. This project is needed to help the Downtown Corridor **connect, develop, thrive, and sustain**.

5.1. Connect

In downtown Kansas City, there is a need for enhanced linkages between activity centers to improve transportation options for local circulation. Transportation and transit issues include:

Improve Circulation within the Downtown Corridor. The Downtown Corridor includes a number of activity centers—River Market, Downtown, Crossroads, and Crown Center—that are geographically isolated. The existing transit system is configured to connect core areas with the larger region; the downtown portions of these radial routes do not function well as local circulators. In particular, the Main Street MAX BRT line serves the corridor, but is designed primarily to connect the Main Street corridor south of Crown Center with Crown Center and downtown, rather than provide circulation within the corridor. A major function of Downtown Corridor circulator service would be to serve trips within the corridor, including by visitors and attendees at special events such as First Fridays, Sprint Center events, and conventions.

Connect Downtown Activity Centers. Downtown Kansas City is the home of numerous regional activity centers. As the core of the region, it is the logical and established cultural and civic center. Recent developments (Sprint Center, Power and Light District, Performing Arts Center, etc.) have reinforced downtown’s regional prominence and have initiated a resurgence in the study area’s vitality. Ongoing, complementary transit investments that serve the particular mobility needs of this urban community are needed to sustain this resurgence.

Enhance and Integrate Multimodal Transportation Options. There is a need to further the goals of transit system integration, complement the existing bus and MAX systems, provide “last mile” connectivity for regional transit trips, provide distribution for future commuter rail, provide circulation for visitor and convention attendees, and, reduce the need for short auto trips in the downtown area.



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Improve Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Transit Services. As described above, service in downtown is overly complex, and Downtown Corridor service could provide the spine for an overall restructuring of downtown and corridor services. An effective and easily-understood downtown circulator route could improve the usability of the larger transit system.

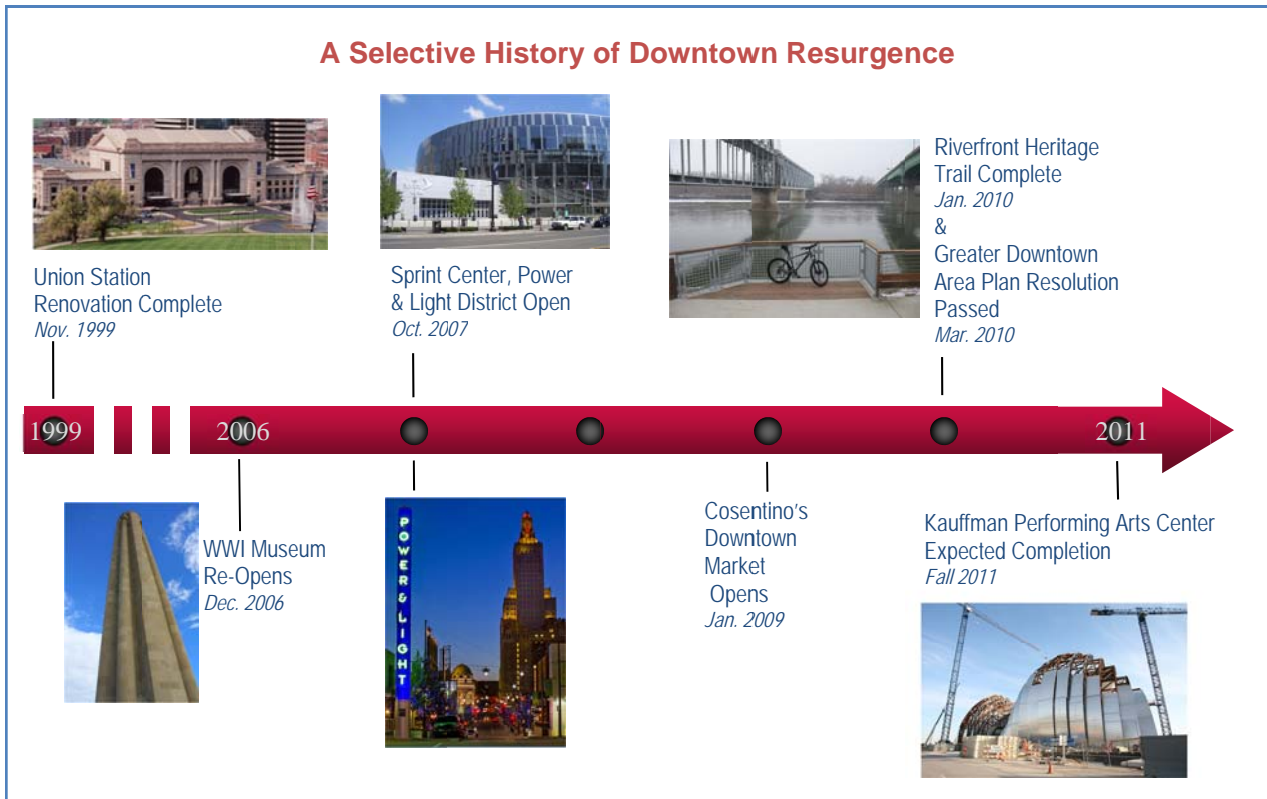
Improve the Pedestrian Environment and Accessibility. Increased walkability and pedestrian activity is a key goal in the downtown area. Even relatively short trips along this corridor are now often taken by automobile. Additional transportation options need be developed that would encourage more walking throughout the study area.

Access to Parks and Recreation Facilities. Park resources are generally concentrated at the ends of the Downtown Corridor. The Riverfront Heritage trail is currently difficult to access because it is somewhat isolated and disconnected from the more active parts of the downtown area. A new riverfront redevelopment plan is underway that seeks to expand activity in this area, and as new residential projects re-fill the downtown core, residents will need access to these parks.

5.2. Develop

Employment and housing steadily declined in downtown Kansas City for decades, from a high of over 90,000 residents in the 1950s to under 20,000 in 2000. Still, the Downtown Corridor remains home to the greatest concentration of transportation, employment, medical, educational, visitor and cultural facilities in the Kansas City metro area, and the corridor’s economic health and vitality are important to the entire metro area. The past decade has seen major investments begin to transform (and restore) the downtown area into an attractive and vibrant destination (see graphic below). These significant investments need to be coupled with the return of residents and services

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to the downtown area. In recent years, housing stock and population in the Downtown Corridor have increased (2010 population was 22,576), even while the City as a whole has experienced decreases.



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However, the ability for these positive trends to continue is hampered by excessive dependence on automobile travel with resulting issues of parking supply and policies (described more fully below). Much of the redevelopment to date could be described as “urban, but automobile-dependent.” Continuation of redevelopment with high automobile mode usage will be counterproductive to this intended intensity and character of development. In addition, recent significant incentives offered by the State of Kansas have caused some key businesses to move out of the downtown and across the state line, undermining some of the progress that has been made. Meanwhile, the region’s policy initiatives are focused on supporting reinvestment, revitalization and a high-quality pedestrian environment in the study area. An integrated transit system in the urban core will improve mobility, economic development and community livability from both the local and regional perspectives, serving the people who live, work, and visit here, and reinforcing the positive trends now beginning to reverse previous declines.

Land use and economic goals in the corridor include:

Encourage Development and Redevelopment. The Greater Downtown Area Plan and other downtown planning initiatives encourage better utilization of underutilized parcels and surface parking lots, support re-filling empty storefronts and vacant office space, and encourage Transit-Oriented Development.

Provide Catalyst for Redevelopment. Public infrastructure investments are needed as a catalyst for development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels. Although transit investments such as the MAX BRT system have improved downtown transportation options, fixed-guideway transit has been shown to also serve as a catalyst for redevelopment, which traditional bus transit generally cannot accomplish due to the potential impermanence of bus routes.

Increase Number of Downtown Residents. The Greater Downtown Area Plan’s goal is to double the downtown population, which will require building more housing as well as replacing housing that has been lost.

Support Downtown’s Historical Urban Fabric and Form. Downtown Kansas City was built around a vibrant streetcar system. From the late 1890s to the mid 1940s, with peak annual ridership of 136 million in 1922, streetcars were the predominant mode of transportation, and literally shaped the downtown’s urban form. Hence, much of the downtown area was laid out with streetcar-based transportation in mind, and is “under-parked” for access by automobile, and transportation options should support and respect this pattern of urbanism.



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Support Transit-Oriented Development/ Minimize the Need for Parking. Parking policies in downtown Kansas City do not currently support the residential/employment density envisioned by future plans. Currently, new development must be accompanied by parking ratios that reflect an automobile-dominated transportation system. Transit planning in the downtown area needs to be better integrated with parking policy to result in more efficient use of land and recognition of walking and transit as primary transportation modes downtown. As the Study Area develops and redevelops, improved Downtown Corridor transit service can significantly reduce the need for additional parking and attendant automobile traffic and traffic congestion increases.

5.3. Thrive

Strengthen Downtown Districts and Urban Centers. The Downtown Corridor comprises a “string” of distinct districts or centers. Each has a unique character; each is only partially realized since significant redevelopment opportunities remain in each as well:

- The Crown Center/Union Station area contains a mixture of major regional institutions and attractions, including Union Station, the World War I Museum, Penn Valley Park, the existing Crown Center and major additions to it now under development including the Seal Life Aquarium and Legoland Discovery Center, as well as a small amount of housing.
- The Crossroads District is a very urban, but lower-scale mixed use neighborhood, with a lively mixture of art galleries and arts-related businesses, housing, restaurants and small employers.
- The Sprint Center/Power & Light District is a major attractor, with large and small civic and cultural facilities and community gathering places, as well as restaurants, retail and entertainment businesses.
- The Downtown core is, as noted above, the historic center of office employment for the region for both the private and public sectors.
- The River Market district is both an urban residential neighborhood and the venue for the region’s largest public market, with additional attractions and smaller businesses in the mix as well.

Support Existing Businesses. The development of a stronger Downtown Corridor and provision of high-quality local transit circulation will increase business activity, which will increase business for existing enterprises, encourage existing businesses to stay, and attract new business.

Provide Additional Services for Residents. At present, because there are now relatively few residents in the corridor, there are also relatively few services aimed at residents. The development of a stronger downtown corridor that attracts more residents will also attract new services for existing and added residents.

Support Visitor and Tourism Activities. Most of the Region’s convention and tourism assets are in the Study Area. Kansas City’s existing public transit system is designed around employment, and additional mobility options are needed to connect convention facilities, entertainment venues and hotels, which otherwise require short auto/taxi trips or specialized bus shuttle services.



Bartle Hall Convention Center

Avoid Future Congestion. Auto-based congestion will increase with the planned residential and employment growth, if it is developed with parking ratios typical for “urban, but automobile-dependent” development. However, auto-based capacity improvements involving new right-of-way are impractical due to physical constraints and would be counter-productive to the downtown goals.

Serve Transit-Dependent Populations. As housing increases in downtown, transit-dependent populations (including the elderly and those with disabilities) will locate close to accessible transportation if it is available. Provision of an accessible downtown transit system with level-boarding service would attract elderly and transit-dependent populations to the central area.

5.4. Sustain

Downtown planning points to a need to create an environment that will promote long-term sustainable development, with development patterns that are less automobile-oriented and support environmental goals. Achieving a more transit-oriented pattern of development as redevelopment occurs will significantly reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled, the most significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.



6. Goals and Objectives

The goals identified below are consistent with the Kansas City Region’s vision for the future, and address the Purpose and Need for the Project as summarized in Sections 4 and 5 above. Associated with each goal is a related list of objectives. Objectives provide guidance for attaining each goal, represent successive levels of achievement in movement toward the goal, and reflect the expected results achieved by a stated point in time (the planning horizon for the project). These goals and objectives will form the basis for the Evaluation Criteria that will be defined and used to compare study alternatives.

Goal 1: Connect

Objectives:

- Provide more focused and easily-accessed transit options within and between downtown and Crown Center.
- Connect key activity centers and population centers.
- Develop a transit spine around which existing transit services can be more effectively organized.
- Expand transit choices and improve local circulation to attract new riders.
- Serve as an initial “building block” in the region’s desired rail transit system.
- Enhance mobility throughout the corridor; integrate with other elements of the existing transportation system (e.g., automobile, pedestrian, bicycle).
- Facilitate car-free travel by residents, employees, and visitors, including convention attendees.
- Provide effective connections to planned/future commuter rail service.
- Support future system expansion to other neighborhoods.
- Develop an initial system with a capital cost and annual operating cost that are financially sustainable.
- Encourage support (conceptual, political, and financial) for transportation solutions from property owners near the route, including institutions, businesses, and developers.
- Facilitate the development of complete streets and a better pedestrian environment.
- Recognize the expressed intent of voters in the downtown area to build a rail system that serves the Downtown Corridor.

Goal 2: Develop



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Objectives:

- Support existing employment centers in Downtown, Crossroads, and the Crown Center/Union Station area.
- Support existing residential development centers in the River Market, Crossroads and the Crown Center/Union Station area.
- Spur new development throughout the corridor.
- Encourage higher-density, mixed-use land use patterns consistent with local and regional plans and to better support transit.
- Convert surface parking to transit-oriented mixed-use development.
- Reduce the amount of parking that will be associated with new development.
- Prevent future congestion due to new development.
- Refill empty office buildings.

Goal 3: Thrive

Objectives:

- Enhance quality of life and access to corridor destinations for residents, employees and visitors to the downtown area.
- Support the strength and character of existing neighborhoods; provide access to cultural facilities, retail, parks, and entertainment venues.
- Enhance access to, and the vitality of existing activity centers.
- Support convention, cultural, and special event activities.
- Support the development of new activity centers in the corridor.
- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for transit users, vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Goal 4: Sustain

Objectives:

- Preserve the historic character of the downtown area by supporting the re-use of vacant and under-utilized historic buildings and promote appropriately scaled infill development.
- Provide more environmentally-friendly transportation options.
- Reduce the amount of space devoted to parking.
- Reinforce a pattern of development that creates less greenhouse gas emissions through higher residential densities and lower per capita vehicle miles traveled.