

REGIONAL RAIL PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PHASE 1 – CORRIDOR SELECTION

Prepared for:

MEMPHIS AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

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INTRODUCTION

The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) completed a Regional Transit Plan (RTP) in June 1997, which includes major rail projects in three corridors by the year 2020. The Memphis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has adopted the RTP as the Transit Element of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

The adopted plan, the most recent component of an ongoing transit planning program, follows the successful efforts by MATA to plan, design and build the downtown rail system that currently operates on Main Street and the Riverfront and will operate in the Medical Center by 2004. A task of the next stage of transit planning will be to determine how best to integrate the downtown and Medical Center components into the regional rail system.

A Regional Rail Steering Committee (RRSC) was established in late 1999 for the purpose of assisting MATA in moving the rail program forward. The RRSC consists of approximately 30 individuals representing a broad range of community interests, including elected officials, private businesses and public agencies.

The current planning effort involves choosing a top priority corridor from among the three in the adopted plan, preparing detailed technical studies (Alternatives Analysis), environmental documentation (Environmental Impact Statement), and financial plan to advance the project toward implementation. The planning effort has been divided into three phases: 1) Corridor Selection; 2) Alternatives Analysis; and 3) Environmental Impact Statement. The financial plan will be developed in conjunction with Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Phase 1 of the evaluation focused on the review of the three corridors included in the RTP to assist in determining the top priority corridor. Phase 1 sets the stage for the task in Phase 2 (Alternatives Analysis), which will focus on the evaluation of mode, general alignment and station locations within the priority corridor.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE CORRIDORS

The three corridors in the RTP are:

North:	Serving Downtown, North Memphis, Frayser, and Millington
Southeast: (formerly East)	Serving Downtown, Midtown, East Memphis, Germantown, and Collierville
South:	Serving Downtown, South Memphis, Whitehaven, Southaven and Horn Lake, including a spur to the Memphis International Airport.

The original designation of the alignment within each of the three corridor areas was based largely on the use of existing tracks and/or rights-of-way owned by existing freight railroads. At that time it was assumed that freight railroad rights-of-way offered the best opportunity to provide a continuous alignment that would not require extensive relocation of businesses and residences. Prior to undertaking the current planning study, MATA recognized that the previous definition of the three corridors based primarily on the use

of the railroad rights of way would need to be assessed. Therefore, the general boundaries of the corridors were expanded to provide opportunities to define a broader range of alternatives for the location of future transit services (see attached map).

MATA and the RRSC developed a list of evaluation criteria that reflect important considerations in the development of a rail system in the Memphis region. Nine criteria were chosen as the basis for screening the corridors in Phase 1.

The following table presents the criteria and the results for the three corridors.

Summary Decision-Making Matrix

Criteria*	North Corridor	Southeast Corridor	South Corridor
1. <i>Mobility to Job Centers</i>	55,300 Jobs 3,275/Mile	174,800 Jobs 7,439/Mile	86,000 Jobs 7,108/Mile
2. <i>Mobility of General Public</i>	4,400 Daily Riders 250 Riders/Mile	20,400 Daily Riders 810 Riders/Mile	8,800 Daily Riders 760Riders/Mile
3. <i>Mobility of Low Income Residents</i>	High Potential	Medium Potential	High Potential
4. <i>Operating Costs (Annual)</i>	\$7.4 Mil.	\$12.0 Mil.	\$6.1 Mil.
5. <i>Transit-Oriented Development</i>	Least Potential	Most Potential	Medium Potential
7. <i>Capital Construction Cost</i>	\$304-388 Mil.	\$443-521 Mil.	\$330-367 Mil.
8. <i>Use of Shared Rights-of-Way</i>	Medium Potential	Medium Potential	Medium Potential
9. <i>Traffic Congestion</i>	Medium Potential	Most Potential	Medium Potential
12. <i>Impact on Sensitive Areas</i>	No Fatal Flaws	No Fatal Flaws	No Fatal Flaws

*Ranked by Regional Rail Steering Committee

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A total of four public meetings were held to inform the public of the progress of the Phase I study and to encourage and solicit public comments. Three meetings were held the week of October 24-26, 2000 and a fourth meeting was held on December 11, 2000.

Additional public involvement activities included:

- Newsletters
- Key person interviews
- Database of regional stakeholders

CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATION

The Corridor Subcommittee of the RRSC met on November 7, 2000 to review the results of the Corridor evaluation. The following factors were recognized in the Subcommittee's deliberations:

- The redefined East Corridor that overlaps with the South Corridor in the vicinity of the Airport serves the southeast part of Memphis and Shelby County as well as the east corridor along Poplar Avenue. The Subcommittee determined the corridor, when viewed as a whole, should be renamed the Southeast Corridor to better reflect its primary service orientation.
- After comparing the three corridors against the information developed for the evaluation criteria, the Southeast Corridor has a predominance of favorable ratings.
- The Airport area was recognized as the largest point of economic generation in the region and should be served in the first phase of the system. In addition, major employers in the vicinity of the Airport should be considered for service as well.
- The next phase of high capacity transit expansion (after the extension of the downtown rail system to the Medical Center) must be effective in attracting riders and contributing to the vitality of the region.

The Corridor Subcommittee resolved to recommend to the RRSC that *the Airport be the primary destination of the next phase of high capacity transit served from the Southeast corridor.*

At the RRSC meeting on January 8, 2001, the Corridor Subcommittee delivered its recommendation. The RRSC voted to recommend the selection of the Southeast Corridor as the priority corridor with the stipulation that *the next phase of the transit plan should be based on a broader service plan that would include expansion of service to the South and North corridors.*

On January 16, 2001, the Council of the City of Memphis adopted a resolution endorsing the Southeast Corridor with a connection to the Airport as the top priority corridor for detailed study of high capacity rail service.

The MATA Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on January 22, 2001 adopting the Southeast Corridor with a connection to the Airport as the top priority corridor.

Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Impact Statement

Selected Corridor

Downtown/Medical Center
Initial Corridor Study Area
Airport

