



# North Kansas City Light Rail Ballot Issue

## *November 4, 2008 Election*

On November 4th, residents of North Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Missouri will decide if the Kansas City region will join over 35 cities across America with commuter light rail systems, and dozens of other communities, which have systems under development.

Both the City Council of North Kansas City and the City Council of Kansas City, Missouri will ask voters to consider a sales tax to fund a 14-mile light rail starter route. The proposal was developed from dozens of public meetings, various technical / financial studies, and close collaboration with numerous public entities.

The benefits of light rail include:

- Decreased reliance and costs associated with petroleum-based energy.
- Reduction of carbon monoxide and other pollutants, especially within smog-prone, traffic congested urban areas.
- Improved economic development opportunities through: enhanced feasibility of higher density development along the route; improved access to urban employment centers by the regional workforce; and new job and investment creation by the project's construction and operation.
- Generally, greater transportation options for the entire population – whether they be young or old, rich or poor, public transit riders or private vehicle users.

The proposed route would run from a northern-most stop near Vivion Road, south down North Oak Trafficway and Burlington Road, through the downtown and midtown districts of Kansas City, Missouri, and continue as far as 63rd Street. Portions of the alignment will not be determined until additional cost and traffic analysis are complete. The project has been referred to as a "starter route" because it has been designed to serve a larger regional light rail system in the future. As neighboring communities consider light rail, the ability to connect to this proposed spine will be important. Existing bus service and commuters will be able to connect to this starter route immediately after completion via a network of park-and-ride lots and transfer stations.

After considerable review and discussion, North Kansas City leaders determined the Burlington Road corridor as the preferred route through the city. Funds from the proposed one-half cent sales tax would provide North Kansas City greater influence on the number of local stops, as well as, how and where they are constructed. North Kansas City has a long tradition of being a regional leader. For instance, North Kansas City's financial participation in the construction of the Heart of America and Chouteau Bridges are just a couple of the joint partnerships that have kept the core of the Greater Kansas City region vibrant and growing.

North Kansas City has already begun an intensive Burlington Road Corridor Study. This process includes participation from a wide diversity of city residents, elected officials, corporate leaders, and expert consultants. The study's scope considers that light rail may become a new major mode of transportation and it could help the city achieve benefits commonly realized by other region's already

using light rail. Light rail's ability to bring consumers and employees to the City without the need for expensive new parking structures or the removal of existing buildings is an important consideration – given North Kansas City's landlocked geography and lack of parking in many areas,

Preliminary capital costs to build the 14-mile route are estimated (in 2008 dollars) at \$815.9 million, or a per mile average of \$59.3 million per mile. Annual operating costs are estimated at \$13.2 million. Operating figures are based on 21-hour, 7 day per week service with 10-minute daytime frequency and 15-minute service on evenings and weekends. Fares are expected to recover 25% of operating costs. A sales tax funding mechanism is viewed as a preferred option, as opposed to property taxes, since it will spread collections to those most likely to use the system, even if they do not own taxable property in North Kansas City or Kansas City, Missouri.

Federal funding could provide 50% of the cost to build the system. The process to request federal funds requires a series of studies and community involvement to determine light rail's feasibility here. The Alternatives Analysis Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) is currently in process. It includes a series of technical studies which are being conducted simultaneously, along with public involvement to get citizen input. A Citizens' Task Force worked diligently for months to assist in determining the route light rail will travel. The AA/DEIS is set to be completed in the Spring of 2009, at which time KCATA will begin the New Starts Application, which begins the actual request for federal assistance in the start-up of a new rail system. Pending federal approval, at this stage, KCATA will be permitted to move into preliminary engineering.

Bringing light rail to Kansas City is a formidable and complicated task. However, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), City of North Kansas City and the City of Kansas City, Mo. have worked diligently with community partners to identify the route most likely to maximize economic development, provide effective and efficient transportation services, and gain approval of local and federal funding sources. You are invited to share your thoughts on the light rail initiative with your local government representative or at the many public forums being held in neighborhoods across the metropolitan area.

