

All-Bus Approach Is Recommended

Criteria that will determine which cities receive federal funding for rail components of mass transit systems hopefully will be established by the end of this year, Lee Waddleton, regional representative for the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, said today.

Addressing a meeting of the Total Transportation Advisory Committee of the Mid-America Regional Council (M.A.R.C.), Waddleton asked that M.A.R.C. make a rail proposal for the Kansas City area an alternate possibility and at this point refer to the public an all-bus proposal.

"I'm not saying there is not going to be a rail or rapid transit system here," Waddleton said.

He said that application of the yet-to-be established criteria would determine what system Kansas City gets.

Richard Davis, executive director of M.A.R.C., explained that the all-bus approach was asked at this time so as to make sure that M.A.R.C. would not eliminate a chance for federal funding by asking only for a rail proposal.

The M.A.R.C. committee recommended that M.A.R.C. authorize the initiation of a public referral program for an all-bus plan, with a fixed guideway option.

Waddleton predicted that because of a crunch on federal spending financing rail transit in cities would be more difficult than under different economic conditions.

Mayor Richard King of Independence spoke out against making rail part of the key proposal here, expressing concern that a proposed rail corridor along I-70 might be too far south and that commitment to the rail component now by M.A.R.C. would prevent the availability of funds for more flexible bus routes.

King also noted that cities of eastern Jackson County question M.A.R.C. projections as to future growth there and that by adopting a bus, instead of a rail approach, changes could be made if M.A.R.C. projections proved incorrect.

Joel Pelofsky, a Kansas City councilman, said the people he represents in the Country Club district want a fixed guideway approach to rapid transit and oppose making the route along the former Country Club street car tracks an automobile corridor.

When King said he thought that an asphalt street down the old street car corridor would be satisfactory, Pelofsky replied, "Not if you're running for election."

Robert Snowber, transit planning director, said that a 24-mile fixed guideway of some type should be part of a long-range transit plan, at least as an alternate, but said that planners had agreed to follow the UMTA suggestion that the all-bus approach be made the key proposal at this point.

Arthur Asel, cochairman of the M.A.R.C. committee, said what was important was that the old street car route property was under the control of the Area Transportation Authority. He cited the importance of getting control also of the old interurban rail route that goes by the Kansas City International Airport before developers make its acquisition too costly.

The decision whether to have a fixed guideway approach to the rapid transit plan of the future here can be delayed until the middle of next year, after the municipal elections in the spring, Davis said.

He said a mass transit system never would be built here without federal money.