Is transit the answer?

Transit Feasibility Study Progress Report for the KCMR January, 1974

Why was the plan developed?

The Kansas City Metropolitan Region has grown rapidly over the past two decades. With this growth has come many problems—one of the greatest: Transportation. Traffic on streets and highways frequently slows to a crawl. Traffic jams increase. On top of it all the gasoline shortage is reaching serious proportions.

By the year 2000 the KCMR will have increased in population by nearly 50 percent—to about 2 million persons. Employment will increase 66 percent to almost 940,000 jobs.

A fast, effective means of public transportation is needed, to complement the street and highway system... to guarantee freedom of movement to everyone.

Understanding the need for a better transportation system, the elected officials of the region asked the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) to conduct a rapid transit feasibility study.

MARC coordinates government services in the eight metropolitan counties of Johnson, Wyandotte and Leavenworth in Kansas and Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray in Missouri. The directors are elected officials who are directly responsive to the needs of the citizens.

What assumptions were made?

MARC, working with the two state highway departments, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, local governments of the KCMR and a consultant team—the Kansas City Transit Associates, is developing two alternative regional development proposals.

One proposal, Plan A, assumes a continuation of present policies and trends and continued urban decentralization and a continued spread of development.

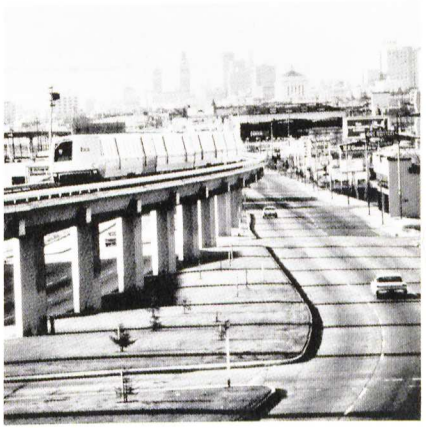
The other proposal, Plan B, assumes a major rapid transit system with aggressive redevelopment in the core and along the transit corridors. It implies a more efficient use of existing and committed public services and facilities.

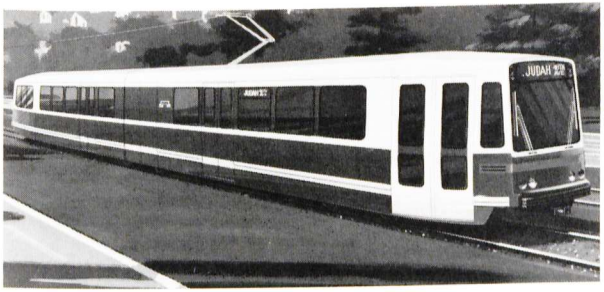
What alternatives were considered?

Modern technology has developed many kinds of new vehicles and systems. It has improved existing ones. Some are still in the experimental stage. Others, already in operation, have been fully tested.

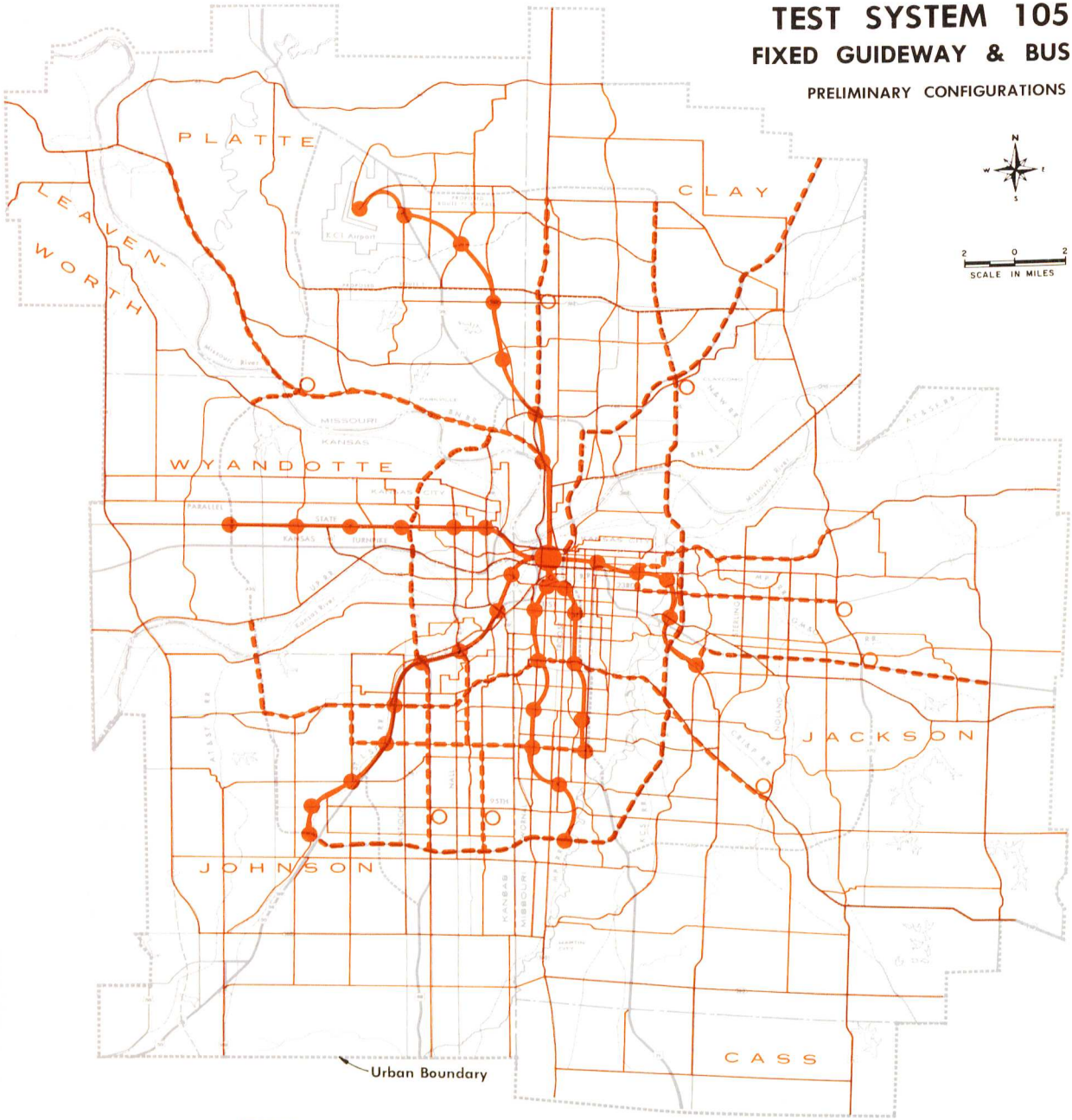
Several were considered for the KCMR: modern rail rapid transit and other people-movers using fixed guideways; the use of existing rail facilities for a commuter railroad system; electrically-powered tram cars operating on their own rights-of-way or in streets; an express bus system using existing highways or, perhaps, exclusive busways or lanes.

An important objective in evaluating the alternative systems was to help determine which is the most appropriate one for this region.





TEST SYSTEM 105
FIXED GUIDEWAY & BUS
PRELIMINARY CONFIGURATIONS



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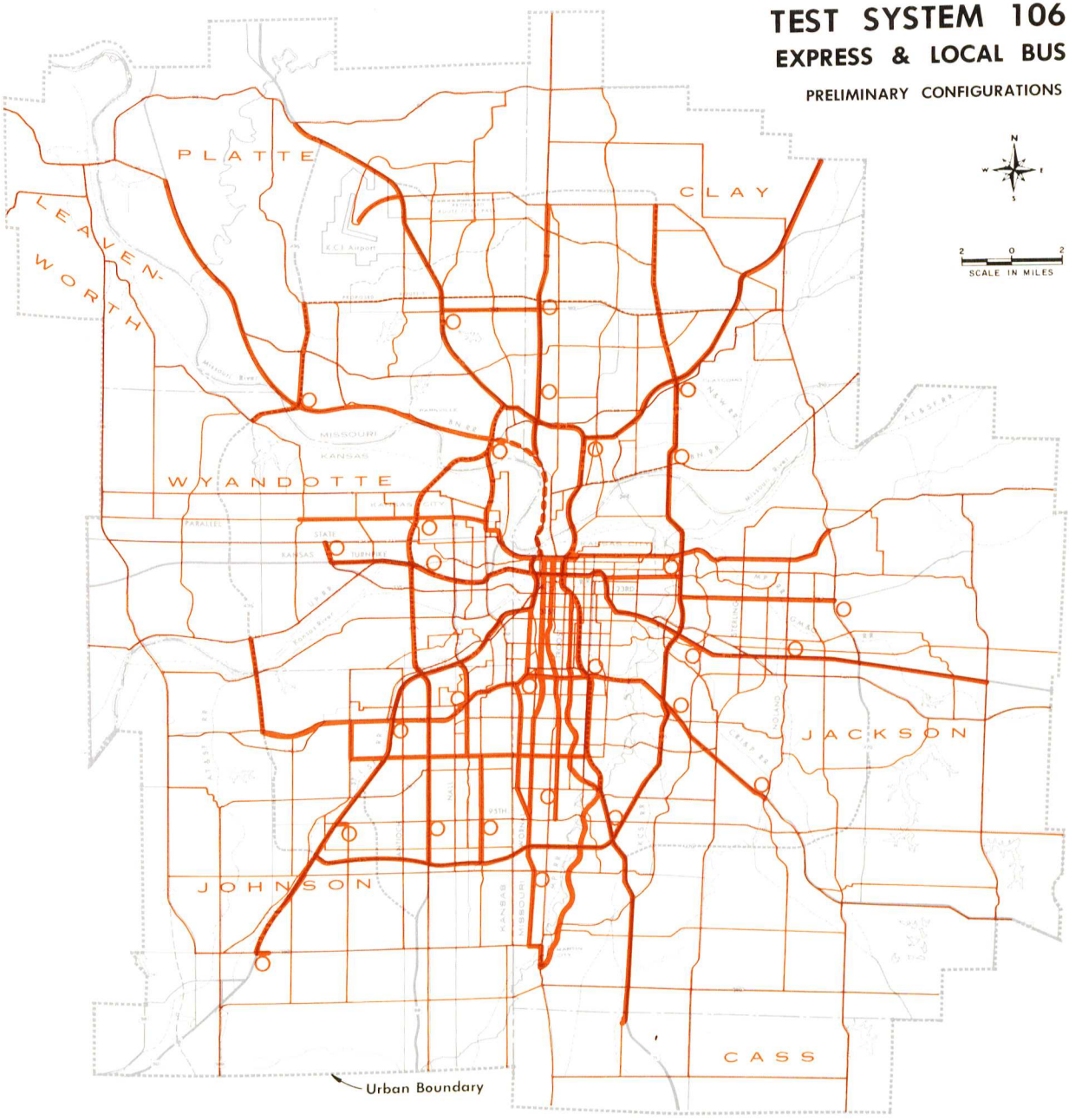
SCALE IN MILES

LEGEND

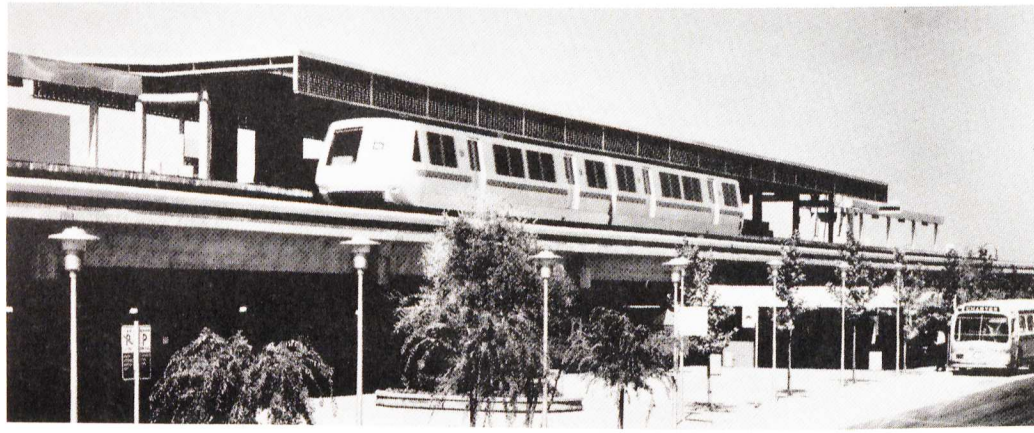
- Fixed Guideway
- Fixed Guideway Stations
- Express Bus
- Local & Feeder Routes
- Park & Ride Sites
- 4 Downtown Stations

TEST SYSTEM 106
EXPRESS & LOCAL BUS
PRELIMINARY CONFIGURATIONS



LEGEND

- Exclusive Busway
- Express Bus
- Local & Feeder Bus Routes
- Park & Ride Sites



What systems were tested?

Assuming the present bus system is not improved, the increase in auto traffic was projected to the year 2000 to determine where on the regional highway network overloads would occur...and how bad they would be.

Based on these projections, two test transit systems were envisioned—two networks that would theoretically lure enough auto drivers to public transportation to ease the projected overloads. (The two test systems—105 and 106—are shown on the preceding pages).

Test System 105—**fixed guideway and bus**—would include 74 miles of grade separated rapid transit in six major corridors with 43 stations. It would include 180 miles of express bus routes serving other corridors. In addition, a network of local and feeder bus routes would connect the main corridor routes with the rest of the urbanized area. There would be areas for drivers to park their cars (park 'n ride) at each station and eight other parking areas as well.

Test System 106—**express and local buses**—is a comprehensive network of bus routes serving the entire area expected to be urbanized by the year 2000. It includes about 330 miles of express bus routes, 28 park 'n ride areas, and a network of local and feeder bus routes. The express buses would use the highways, but would be given preferential treatment if possible. It also might include six miles of exclusive busways linking downtown to the northland.

Both test systems would serve every part of the region. Both would contain more than four times as many miles of transit service as the present bus system. The central business districts of both Kansas Cities could easily be reached from all residential areas. Both could conveniently be used instead of the automobile, or in addition to it. And both could reduce the need for additional highways.

These two test systems are based on Plan A. Others, to be based on Plan B, will be developed when that plan is completed. By the end of 1974, citizens of the region will have numerous choices to consider.

Who would use it?

Forecasts of the number of persons who would use the transit systems were based on estimated population, employment and land use for the year 2000. They are conservative forecasts. It is still too soon to ascertain how many persons will turn to rapid transit because of the energy crisis, although this will be more closely examined in the next phase of the study.

The express bus system is expected to attract 175,000 passengers a day—about three times present levels. The fixed guideway system (which would offer higher speeds along fixed corridors) is expected to attract even more passengers—210,000—three and a half times present levels.

As gasoline grows more scarce, and costly, even more passengers would be attracted to public transit. But public transit will never totally replace the private automobile. It will continue to play a key role in America.

How much would it cost?

Although exact details of a transit system for the KCMR are yet to be worked out, estimates can be made on the costs of the test systems. These estimates include the cost of construction, rights of way, vehicles and support facilities (in 1973 dollars).

A fixed guideway and bus system providing 74 miles of fixed guideways and 180 miles of express bus routes would cost about $1.7 billion. The system would be built in stages. Conceivably, the system could be developed with considerably less mileage—still retaining service to the major corridors—at a cost of about $1.1 billion.

An express bus system, with special bus facilities such as traffic signals and busways, would cost about $200 million. The same system with fewer special facilities would lower the cost to about $120 million.

In building the facilities and buying the vehicles, local governments would be eligible for 80 percent federal aid under the Department of Transportation capital grant program.

But there is presently no federal aid available for operating costs once the system is in operation. Passenger fares would not be adequate to pay for either system. It is estimated they would provide one-third to one-half of operating costs. So local funds would be required to make up the difference. And the subsidy would have to be significantly higher than present levels.

It is probable, judging by the experience of other metropolitan areas, that the operating subsidy for a fixed guideway system would be somewhat less than that for an express bus system, if both are operating at or near capacity.

How can transit help?

A significantly improved public transit service in the Kansas City Metropolitan Region can improve the quality of life for regional citizens.

Many could avoid the financial burden of a private car. Suburban families could probably do without a second or third car.

With fewer cars, congestion on streets and highways would be reduced and there would be less air pollution.

The young, the old, the handicapped and the poor would be able to move freely about the region, for shopping, work, medical needs and recreation.

The building of the system would provide an economic boom to the community, creating many additional jobs for long periods of time.

And in a time of energy shortages, public transit would go a long way in conserving fuel, fuel that is vital to those who must use cars and trucks in their businesses.

Where do we go from here?

The next phase of the transportation study will produce new alternatives, based on Plan B. It is anticipated these will be ready by mid-1974 at which time all the alternatives will be presented to the public and its elected officials, who will make the final decision on what kind of transit system the Kansas City region will have.

The study is progressing cautiously, but this very caution is to insure that the leaders and citizens of the region have time to compare the various transit alternatives, reflect and make suggestions before choosing the one they want.

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