

Chapter 4:

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Public outreach and engagement was critical to the Beyond the Loop PEL and informed every step of the process. At each decision point, the project team paused to gather the public's input to inform next steps. There are a vast array of opinions and ideas for the future of the Study Area. The public outreach approach sought both to understand what the public wanted while balancing a diverse set of needs and wants.

It was important for stakeholders to be actively engaged in the process and see their input reflected in how and why decisions were made. The bridge and Downtown Loop are community assets. They both currently serve many roles and their functions have evolved over time.

Originally, the river crossing was constructed to serve a growing industrial city. It evolved to carry commuters to post-war suburbs. Now it splits a growing neighborhood and it serves a corridor the surrounding community is now re-imagining.

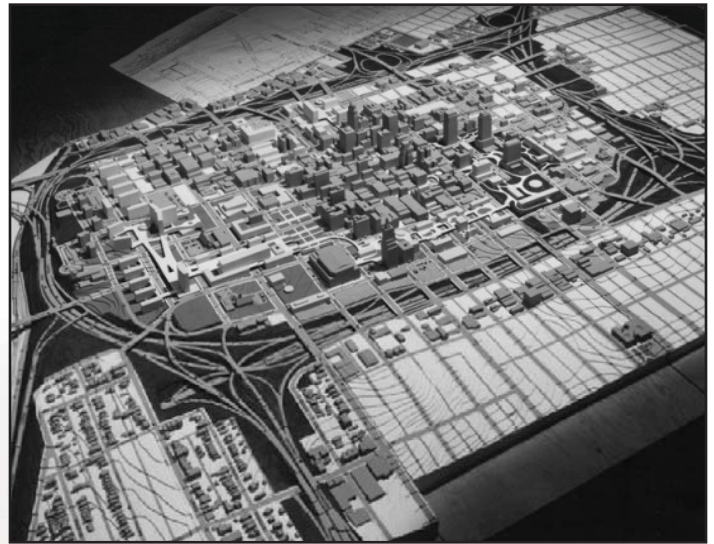
The O'Neil Bridge carries thousands of cars and trucks every day. But the impact of the bridge goes beyond traffic counts and patterns. Concentric rings of impact fan out from the bridge and study area. Each of those areas has a different relationship to the bridge. To some it is simply the means to cross the river. For others, it is part of their neighborhood. Each relationship carries different expectations and needs for the bridge.

The northern section of the Downtown Loop was built to serve a different kind of Downtown. Constructed in the mid-50s, the Downtown Loop was an "urban renewal" project and its right-of-way acquisition cut through the Central Business District, River Market, Columbus Park, and historic northeast neighborhoods. As a consequence of its construction, nearly half of the Columbus Park neighborhood was demolished. When complete, the 4-mile loop, was known as the Alphabet Loop - it featured 23 named exits, using every letter of the alphabet but I, O, and Z.

Similar to the O'Neil Bridge, the northern segment of the Downtown Loop serves a different purpose for those who are moving through the corridor from one freeway connection to another, than it does to those for whom it bisects where they live. It serves a function of national and international importance as a freight corridor and is a significant transportation corridor for the bi-state region. Each of those stakeholders with their different relationships to the corridor provided meaningful input to the study team.



Construction of the original Broadway Bridge in 1955.



Model of the Downtown "Alphabet" Loop proposal prior to construction.



Right-of-way acquisition for the northern half of the Downtown Loop consumed a corridor of existing structures, separating the River Market from the Central Business District along 6th Street in Downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

A wide variety of opportunities for interested parties to become involved were deployed, and the process was transparent and effective. The plan was consistent with the strategies and goals documented in MARC's Public Participation Plan (PPP). All meetings, workshops and charrettes were open to the general public, and allowed for full and meaningful participation for anyone in attendance, regardless of knowledge or ability level. All meetings were well-publicized and information about the project and process was distributed to the media in an effort to keep the general public informed. Additionally, community organizations responded to requests for dozens of presentations from the project team. The mobile-friendly ADA compliant project website was deployed to provide access and further public participation. In summary, the study process included the following public outreach activities:

Government Outreach Activities

Technical Advisory Group

Coordinated with a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that served as the primary means of agency coordination for the PEL Study. The TAG included local, state, and federal staff to provide technical input and expertise throughout the study. TAG meetings also included representatives from local businesses, environmental advocacy groups, and representatives from major regional institutions. Letters of invitation were prepared and sent to local, state, tribal, and federal agencies seeking participation and feedback throughout the PEL process.

Study Management Team

Engaged with a Study Management Team (SMT), comprised of local individuals who bring unique knowledge and skills that complemented those of the TAG. The SMT's role was to make recommendations and/or provide key information and materials to the Study Team.

FHWA Coordination

Representatives of FHWA were included in the study process at various checkpoints, including concurrence with the Purpose & Need, development of the reasonable alternatives, and at the conclusion of the Implementation Plan and FHWA Questionnaire.



Over 150 people gathered at the Kansas City Library Central Branch in Downtown as part of the project's kick-off Visioning Workshop.

Public Outreach Activities

Visioning/Scenario Planning Workshop

A Visioning/Scenario Planning Workshop was conducted to obtain early feedback and develop a foundation for continued community outreach. The workshop informed the development of the Purpose and Need. Stakeholders had the opportunity to incorporate their ideas and priorities for the study corridor. The workshop focused on what the community wanted for the corridor in 60 years.

Open House Meetings

Three large public open houses (in addition to the Visioning Workshop) were held in conjunction with key project goals, such as the development of the Purpose and Need, and transportation goals and objectives. The public meetings were also utilized to obtain input and feedback on the evaluation analysis methodology and development of strategies. Thousands of stakeholders were engaged as part of the PEL process.

Urban Land Institute

Coordinated with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as part of a national Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). The PEL team reached out to the ULI to provide national expertise to engage with local stakeholders as part of the planning process. Public input was analyzed and gathered as part of the TAP. Interviews with 100 stakeholders were conducted as part of the ULI activity.

Web Site and Social Media

A study-specific website was created and resides at www.beyondtheloopkc.com to communicate project information and public involvement activities throughout the PEL process. In addition to the web site, the study included both a Facebook page and updates via Twitter. The public utilized the social media applications to provide feedback and to complete surveys hosted and promoted on the website.



Small Group Meetings

Other outreach tools and events, such small group and agency coordination meetings/briefings, were prepared and conducted throughout the duration of the PEL Study. The Study Team held monthly meetings with the neighborhood association presidents and industrial area representatives throughout the planning process. All totaled, 53 small group meetings were held as part of PEL public outreach effort.

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

Groups that were given presentations or their representatives were part of ongoing meetings with the study team with as part of the study:

- American Institute of Architects Kansas City Section Board
- City of Parkville, Missouri (Governing Body)
- City of North Kansas City, Missouri (Governing Body)
- City of Gladstone, Missouri (Governing Body)
- City of Liberty, Missouri (Governing Body)
- Clay County
- Columbus Park Neighborhood Association*
- Downtown Council of Kansas City*
- Downtown Council of Kansas City Executive Committee
- Downtown Council of Kansas City Infrastructure Committee
- Downtown Neighborhood Association*
- Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City
- Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City Executive Board
- Fairfax Drainage District*
- Fairfax Industrial Association
- Federal Highway Administration
- Kansas City, Missouri*
- Kansas Department of Transportation**
- Mid-America Regional Council**
- Missouri Department of Transportation**
- Missouri Department of Transportation Statewide Area Engineer Meeting
- Missouri TEAM Conference
- MOVITE 2018 Spring Conference
- Northland Chamber of Commerce*
- Northland Neighborhoods
- Northland Democrats Club for Platte & Clay County
- Platte County
- Platte County Economic Development Corporation
- River Market Neighborhood Association*
- Strawberry Hill Neighborhood Accusation*
- Transportation Research Board
- Unified Government of Kansas City, Kansas/ Wyandotte County**
- Urban Land Institute-Kansas City Chapter*

**Representatives of these groups met monthly as part of the study*

***Representatives of these groups were also part of the Study Management Team*

PUBLIC OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS

The public outreach activities reached a wide range of people through various efforts. In total, the numbers include:

Activities:

- Five Public Meeting Activities 578 participants
- Two Online Surveys 1957 participants
- 53 Small Group Meetings 700+ participants
- ULI National TAP Visit 100+ participants
- Twitter 415 Followers
- Facebook 125 Followers
- Two Presentations at TRB 250+ participants
- Over a dozen local news stories
- Thousands of data points collected
- Thousands of community members engaged.

NEWS RELATED TO THE BEYOND THE LOOP PEL



The local press was actively engaged throughout the entire study process. A sampling of the press coverage from a variety of media outlets, including the Kansas City Star, KSHB, KCUR, among others, include:

- **Can you see the future? Planners summon help in replacing KC's** - Kansas City Star-Feb 24, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article134769674.html>
- **Kansas City's Buck O'Neil Bridge could face a two-year shutdown** - Kansas City Star-Mar 2, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/business/development/article136102083.html>
- **Editorial: Keep the public in the loop on highway changes downtown** - Kansas City Star-Mar 20, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/opinion/editorials/article139727088.html>
- **Tough Decisions Ahead As Kansas City Grapples Over Future Of Buck O'Neil Bridge** - KCUR-Apr 13, 2017; <http://kcur.org/post/tough-decisions-ahead-kansas-city-grapples-over-future-buck-oneil-bridge>
- **Repair or replace: Future of Buck O'Neil Bridge** - KSHB-Apr 14, 2017; <http://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/repair-or-replace-future-of-buck-oneil-bridge>
- **Ominous Buck O'Neil Bridge report reveals KC, MoDOT split** - Kansas City Star-Apr 19, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article145551219.html>
- **Your turn: Online survey seeks reviews on potential remake of KC's North Loop and O'Neil Bridge** - Kansas City Star-Aug 23, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article168880897.html>
- **Pedestrian safety glaring issue for future of Buck O'Neil Bridge** - KSHB-Jun 2, 2017; <http://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/pedestrian-safety-glaring-issue-for-future-of-buck-oneil-bridge>
- **Beyond the Loop Offers Alternatives for O'Neil Bridge and North Loop Freeway** - City Scene KC-November 3, 2017; <https://cityscenekc.com/beyond-the-loop-offers-alternatives-for-oneil-bridge-and-north-loop-freeway/>
- **Experts Recommend Kansas City Wait On North Loop Redevelopment** - KCUR-Sep 22, 2017; <http://kcur.org/post/experts-recommend-kansas-city-wait-north-loop-redevelopment-now>
- **KC And State Officials Agree To Repair Buck O'Neil Bridge To Buy Time for Full Replacement** - KCUR-Nov 2, 2017; <http://kcur.org/post/kc-and-state-officials-agree-repair-buck-oneil-bridge-buy-time-full-replacement>
- **Breathe easy, Northland commuters: A new plan for Buck O'Neil bridge** - KC Business Journal-Nov 3, 2017; <https://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/news/2017/11/03/breathe-easy-northland-commuters-a-new-plan-for.html>
- **How an agreement to repair the Buck O'Neil Bridge could affect your commute** - Kansas City Star-Nov 9, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article183660706.html>
- **Should KC get rid of I-70 on north side of the downtown loop?** - Kansas City Star-Nov 28, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article186871238.html>
- **KC, still \$60 million short on new Buck O'Neil Bridge** - Kansas City Star-Dec 20, 2017; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article190776994.html>
- **With tolls off the table, here's how KC hopes to pay for the new Buck O'Neil Bridge** - Kansas City Star-Jan 9, 2018; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article193745589.html>
- **Fate of the Buck O'Neil bridge could be decided by voters** - KMBC Kansas City-Jan 10, 2018; <http://www.kmbc.com/article/fate-of-the-buck-o-neil-bridge-could-be-decided-by-voters/15056608>
- **MoDOT Has A Plan To Improve I-70 Around Kansas City But No Timeline** - KCUR-Jan 22, 2018; <http://kcur.org/post/modot-has-plan-improve-i-70-around-kansas-city-no-timeline>
- **'Beyond the Loop' Seeks to Relieve Downtown Freeway Damage** - City Scene-March 13, 2018; <https://cityscenekc.com/beyond-the-loop-transportation-study-holding-two-public-meetings/>
- **Voters set to decide future of Buck O'Neil Bridge, North Loop in Kansas City** - fox4kc.com-Mar 21, 2018; <http://fox4kc.com/2018/03/21/voters-set-to-decide-future-of-buck-oneil-bridge-north-loop-in-kansas-city/>
- **Help design changes to Buck O'Neil Bridge and downtown loop at workshop today** - KSHB-Mar 22, 2018; <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/help-design-changes-to-buck-oneil-bridge-and-downtown-loop-at-workshop-thursday>
- **Past, present, future of Buck O'Neil Bridge** - KSHB-Apr 2, 2018; <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/the-past-present-and-future-of-the-buck-oneil-bridge>
- **O'Neil Bridge Begins Short-Term Repairs May 19; Replacement Could Open by 2023** - City Scene KC, May 2, 2018; <https://cityscenekc.com/oneil-bridge-begins-repairs-may-19-replacement-could-open-by-2023/>

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

As the PEL Study progressed, the project partners and public had the opportunity to review the following four PEL milestones during public meetings: Purpose and Need, evaluation screening methodology, PEL recommendations, and final PEL report.



Visioning Workshop

The O’Neil Bridge and the northern section of the Downtown Loop do not exist in isolation, they are linked to the region’s future and new ideas, for it should reflect a shared vision. To kick-off the PEL, the Study Team developed a scenario planning workshop in partnership with the Foresight 750 Series from the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences. The Visioning Workshop asked participants to imagine different scenarios that may happen 60 years into the future.

The facilitated discussion encouraged stakeholders to “stretch” and grapple with challenging decisions that reflect unique potential futures. First, the group provided input on what both Downtown and the region might evolve into, in the decades ahead. Then the group was asked a critical question: To achieve the future we want, what infrastructure will we need?

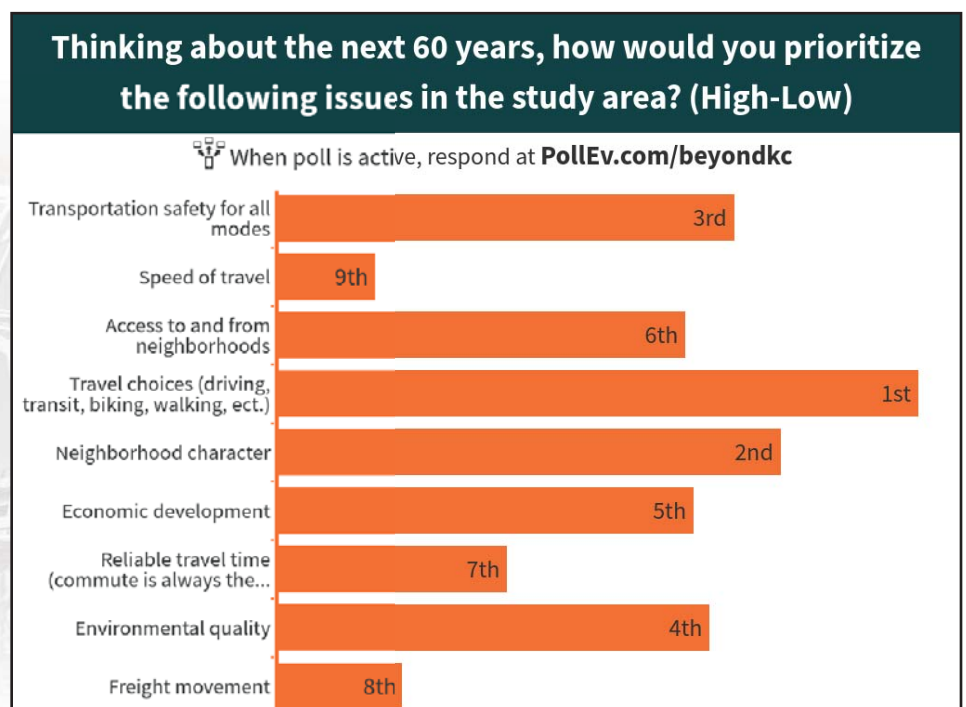
When asked about their vision for the future, the group of 156 attendees used their phones to connect to a real-time, in-room poll. The answers from each attendee for the 10 poll questions was displayed in aggregate for all attendees to review and discuss.

The group was asked about their transportation priorities for the future, and the top five priorities identified were (Figure 5.1):

1. Travel Choices (driving, transit, biking, walking, etc.)
2. Neighborhood character
3. Transportation safety for all modes
4. Environmental quality
5. Economic development

In a near plurality, 48 percent, of those participating believed that the Downtown will continue to grow in population at the high rate of 20-30 percent through 2040. The group was less bullish on population projection in the Northland. Current projections indicate that 20,000 homes could be added north of the

Figure 4.1 - Transportation Priorities Identified at Visioning Workshop



river by 2040, a growth rate of 18 percent. Forty-two percent of participants in the Visioning Workshop believe the Northland will grow at a more modest 10 percent. Nearly one-third of participants agreed with projections that growth would continue at 10-20 percent.

Participants were also asked to assess the impact of connected and autonomous vehicles on the number of cars and drivers using the transportation network. There was little consensus, other than it has the possibility of changing both how we travel and what is needed from our surface transportation system. Forty-two percent of participants thought there may be fewer cars and fewer drivers. Nearly as many, 39 percent, thought there may be more cars and more drivers. Two opposite ends of the spectrum, endorsed as equally plausible. Despite the uncertainty, there was agreement that the impact of connected and autonomous vehicles was an important part of this study and should impact the planning process.

As part of the Workshop, participants were asked about the economic development potential of investments in the O'Neil Bridge and north side of the Loop. An extraordinary 88 percent of polled in the room believed that economic potential was high (55%) or very high (33%).

Participants in the room were also asked to weigh where the focus of the project should be, in a spectrum between economic development and transportation needs (Figure 5.2). The group leaned toward the primary focus on the PEL should be economic development.

We next asked some region-specific questions. The average commute in Kansas City is 22 minutes in length. Twice as many participants accessed the commute as short (42%) rather than too long (21%). Overall, a wide plurality thought the region's average commute was either short or acceptable (67%). However, there is a threshold for the public's tolerance for commute times. Fifty percent of participants polled want their commute to be 30 minutes or less.

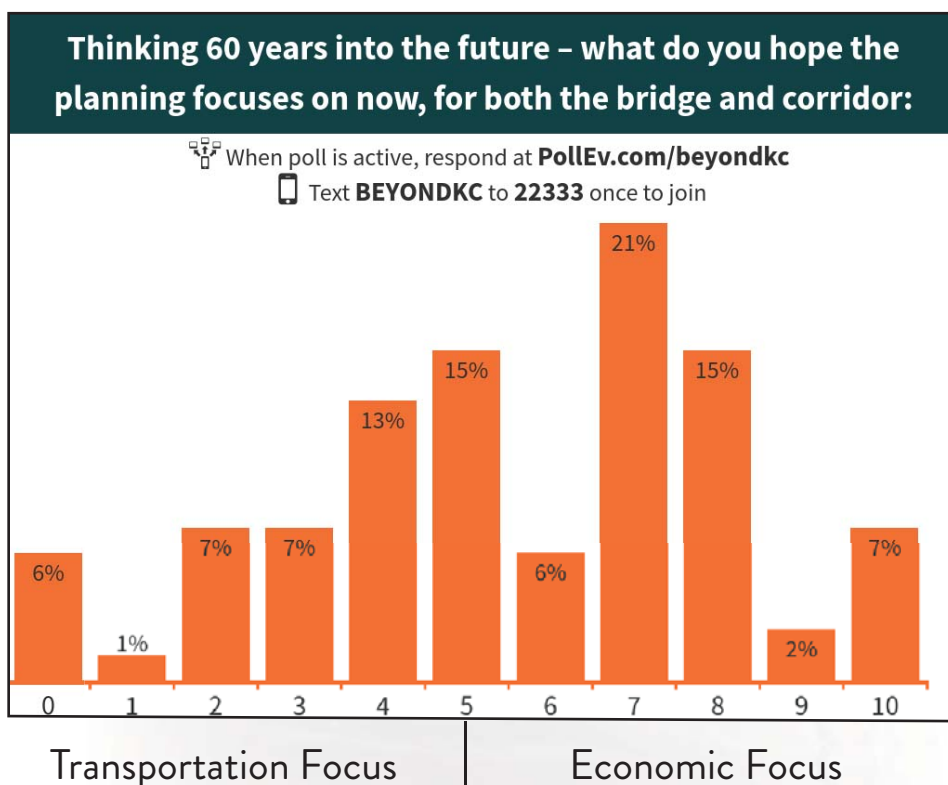
When asked to rank which area of the region would be impacted most by changes in the study area, the group ranked the affected areas:

1. Northland
2. River Market/Columbus Park
3. Downtown
4. Jackson County
5. Kansas City, Kansas
6. Johnson County

Finally, the group was asked to assess the safety of the Loop particularly. Very clearly, participants believe the Loop is not safe. Nearly all participants called the Loop "Not Safe" (69%) or "Dangerous" (19%).

The results of the Visioning Workshop became the building blocks for the formation of the project's Purpose and Need statements (Figure 5.3). After draft statements were written, the Study Team responded to comments from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and converted the statements to reflect Needs and Goals.

Figure 4.2 - Transportation versus Economic Development Focus



These Needs and Goals are examined in detail in Chapter 1. Their direct tie to the Visioning Workshop and results from public input is clear. Draft Purpose and Goals were posted on the project website and available for comment. Ultimately the project’s Purpose and Goals were approved and adopted by both the SMT and TAG, included in this final document, and advanced into the NEPA process for the replacement of the O’Neil Bridge.

Meeting materials for the Visioning Workshop, results from the in-room polling, a informational brochure about the project, and a post event press release of results were all posted for public review on the project website.

Figure 4.3 - Public Input Helped Establish Project Purpose & Need



NEEDS & GOALS

1

NEED 1: Improve Physical Conditions – Ensure that existing and new transportation assets in the Study Area better serve the region and are maintained in a state of good repair.

Does it improve the condition of the O’Neil Bridge, the US-169 Corridor, the I-70 North Loop, or the Lewis & Clark Viaduct?

2

NEED 2: Optimize System Performance – Manage the operations of the existing transportation facilities to achieve reliable and efficient performance.

Does the strategy improve regional connectivity or improve traffic operations?

3

NEED 3: Improve Safety and Security – Identify reasonable improvements to ensure the safety and security of the affected area.

Does the improvement provide for the safe operation of vehicular traffic, improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, or improve emergency response times and provide improved system redundancy?

1

GOAL 1: Improve Transportation Choices – Provide viable, accessible, multi-modal transportation options.

Does the strategy provide for bicyclist and pedestrian opportunities or improve transit accessibility?

2

GOAL 2: Improve Economic Vitality and Placemaking – Improve transportation and land-use linkages in the Study Area.

Does the improvement provide for additional economic development opportunities, enhance regional freight movements, or promote quality places?

3

GOAL 3: Improve Sustainability – Protect and enhance the region’s natural, cultural, and social resources. Explore ways to mitigate the adverse impacts of the existing system and proposed alternatives.

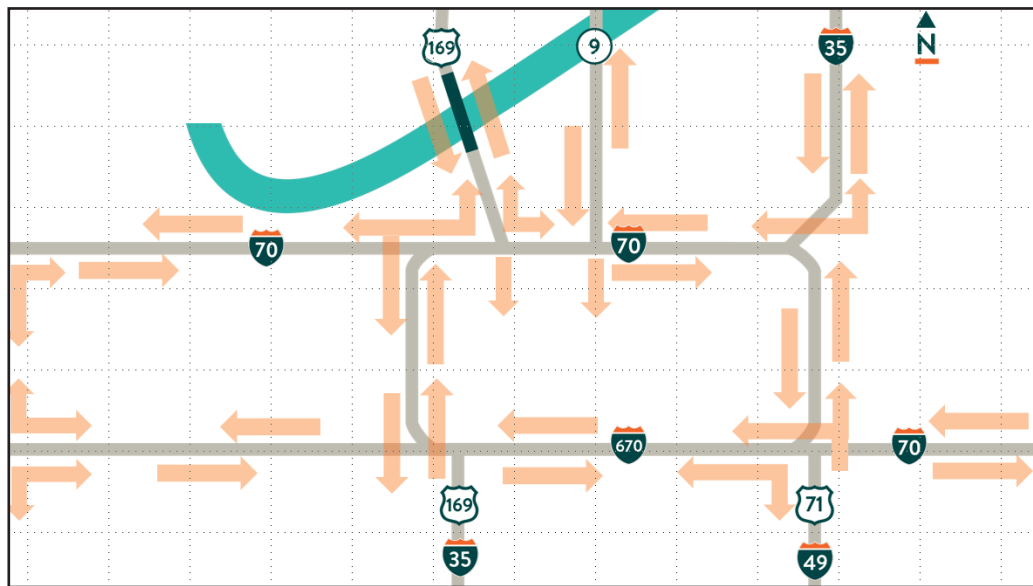
Does the improvement promote social equity and neighborhood revitalization, minimize impacts to historical and natural environmental resources, or integrate new transportation technologies?

Review of Baseline Traffic Data

On two days in the fall of 2016 the Study Team sent helicopters above Kansas City's Downtown Loop. High-definition video was taken to track traffic movements in and out of the Loop. The data, taken once in the morning rush hour and once in the evening rush hour, helped the Team to understand how traffic moves through the Loop, where it turns and travels.

For those passing through the Loop, the data did not indicate where each vehicle's starting origin or final destination was (additional analysis would be used to determine origins and destinations), but it did give the Team an idea of how residents, commuters, businesses, and freight use the downtown loop (Figure 5.4). The data was a snapshot in time that, along with other data, helped to ensure the project's traffic models accurately reflect current movements in the Downtown Loop.

Figure 4.4 - Video Capture of Downtown Loop Traffic Movements



The Downtown Loop is a complex transportation network at the heart of the region. It passes through vibrant neighborhoods while providing critical national and international travel links.

As the Study Team began to look at strategies, this traffic count data was made public as part of an interactive data visualization tool. Promoted on social media, interested members of the public were encouraged to examine the data and provide comments, thoughts or ideas about the data. This data, along with comments received both online and through presentations of the data and tool at small group meetings, was used to populate and calibrate the models used to test the potential strategies presented to the public in future steps.

Open House #1 - Initial Strategies Review

The Study Team presented initial strategies for both the O'Neil Bridge and Downtown Loop to the public in an Open House that asked participants to physically mark a preference for a series of strategies.

Displayed in a series of rooms at the Mid-America Regional Council were three bridge strategies, nine North Loop options, two bicycle and pedestrian illustrations and choices, and initial choices for Route 9 through Columbus Park and the River Market.

Each strategy had been assessed by the project team and given a 1-5 ranking where 1 did not meet the Purpose and Goal criteria, and 5 indicated that the criteria was completely met. For ease of visualization, the rankings were converted to a Harvey Ball matrix which would consistently be used throughout the remainder of the PEL project. Cost was also generally estimated and assessed on a similar 1-5 spectrum.



The public had an opportunity for a first look at potential strategies at the Initial Strategies Review Open House.

A simplified map of each of the strategies was developed and displayed alongside renderings of land-use, building massing, and neighborhood connections, and the above-mentioned evaluation matrix.

After viewing each display board, with all its information, the public was asked to place a dot on a ranking continuum. On one side the public was to indicate if they “did not like the option,” and on the other side if they “really liked the option.”

Prior to the public meeting, members of the SMT and TAG were asked to participate in the same dot assessment of each option on a separate but identical set of illustration boards. This was done to test if the SMT and TAG assessments of the strategies would be different than the public. In the end, there was little difference between the evaluation by the SMT and TAG and the general public.

More than 100 members of the public provided input on the nearly 20 initial strategies. The in-person participation was augmented by 1,693 members of the public whose “dot-like” votes using the same scale, graphics, and information were recorded online. It was important to the Study Team that the in-person open house and digital experiences were as close to the same as possible. With over ten times the participation online, it not only helped to assess the strategies as presented, but allowed 450 members of the public to leave detailed comments.

Unlike in the public meeting, the Study Team could also map where people who were participating in the online survey lived by their zip code (Figure 5.4). The result of this mapping shows participation in the project across the region, with particular interest in the city’s Northland, Downtown Central Business District, and Ward Parkway corridor, typically some of the most civically active areas.



A “Word Cloud” taken from the over 450 comments submitted by the public.

The public's comments and assessments reflected the diversity of the community and their relationship to different aspects of the project. There were a few points of clarity that the Study Team used to continue to refine strategies.



Regarding the O'Neil Bridge, the overwhelming consensus was that a new bridge was the preferred strategy (median score of 10 out of 10), and that new bridge should be more closely aligned to directly connect to I-35 (median score of 8 out of 10) with exits to Downtown as a secondary, but critical, concern. The public also indicated a desire (56%) for the new bridge to have protected bike and pedestrian accommodations, which include a 10-foot cycle track and separate 6-foot pedestrian sidewalk.



In general, the public responded more positively to strategies that reduced or eliminated the footprint of the existing north side of the Loop. There was little support for options that retained the existing configuration under a "No Build Scenario" (median score of 1 out of 10). More support was identified for making "Safety Adjustments" (median score of 2 out of 10). All the strategies for reducing the footprint of the highway scored higher than the "No Build" scenario (median score of 4-5 out of 10). The highest scoring scenario by a significant margin was the full removal of the interstate (median score of 7 out of 10).



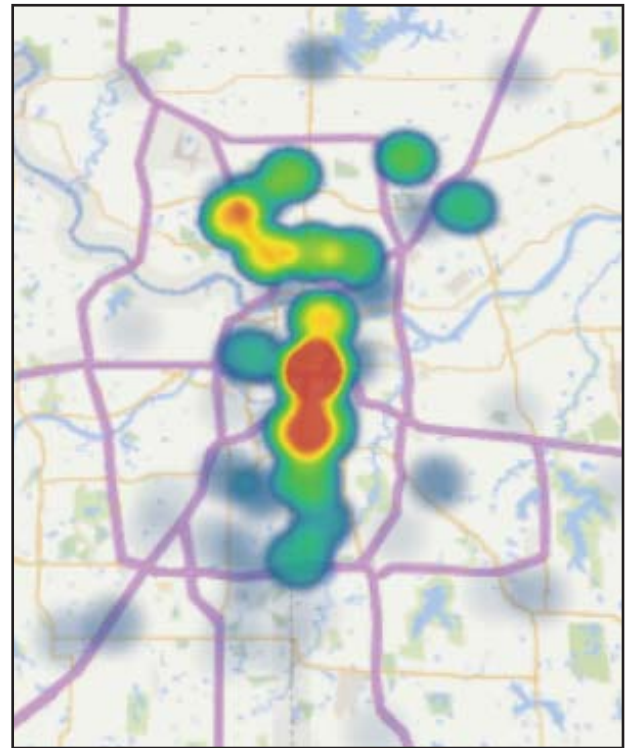
An option that had not been fully considered broadly, but gained significant support in the Initial Strategies Open House, was to bring Route 9 to grade through the River Market and Columbus Park (median score of 9 out of 10). Additionally, this would allow for reconnecting Independence Avenue across the north side of the Loop, reconnecting the historical grid, and reflecting the City's *Kessler Parks and Boulevard Plan*.

Both the consensus on the O'Neil Bridge replacement and the reconnection of Route 9 and Independence Avenue could move forward independently of any decision about the Loop configuration.

Importantly, the input received at the public meeting and online mirrored one another. This was a good indication to the Study Team of the validity of feedback received in the two-pronged (open house and online) approach.

The results of the public's input helped to narrow the options. Those options were then screened for traffic flow, undergo an engineering review, and subjected to a region-wide Dynamic Traffic Assignment (DTA) model, the first of its kind in the area.

Figure 5.5 - Zip Codes of Meeting Participants



Mapping the zip codes of respondents demonstrates region-wide participation.

Urban Land Institute TAP

The results of the Initial Strategies Open House, along with traffic counts, and documentation, became the basis for an analysis of the north side of the Loop by the Urban Land Institute. The week-long effort brought a national panel of experts in land use and development to Kansas City to hear about the PEL study and make recommendations to the community. The panel heard a presentation from the PEL Study Team, took a tour of the study area, and spoke with a cross-section of over 100 local stakeholders to better understand the project and its potential.

The ULI TAP focused particularly on the economic development potential of the project, bringing several development experts to the conversation. This reflected the public input received by the PEL Study Team that saw this project as having significant economic development potential.



A roof-top reception kicked off the ULI's Technical Assistance Panel review of the Loop.

Providing a fresh set of eyes and a national perspective, the TAP included:

- Glenda Hood, Tri-Sect, LLC, Orlando, Florida
- Dean D. Bellas, Urban Analytics, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia
- Bill Clarke, Planning Consultant, Ross, California
- David Greensfelder, Greensfelder Commercial Real Estate LLC, San Francisco, California
- April Anderson Lamoureux, Anderson Strategic Advisors, LLC, Boston, Massachusetts
- Todd Meyer, Forum Studio, Chicago, Illinois
- Adam Weers, Trammell Crow Company, Washington, D.C.
- John Paul Weesner, Kittleson & Associates, Orlando, Florida

Chaired by Glenda Hood, now in private consulting, but previously serving as Florida's Secretary of State and the Mayor of Orlando, the ULI panel suggested a focus on "people infrastructure" as the region contemplates how major infrastructure can reconnect Downtown as the center of Kansas City.

The panel had a number of findings, but below are the projects it prioritized (bolded priorities have a direct relationship to the PEL project):

1. Develop a Downtown Master Plan
2. Get creative with outreach strategies to bring in a wider, more diverse set of community partners
3. Leverage education program momentum
4. Work on improving regional cooperation

5. Expand KC Streetcar
6. Focus on Downtown infill for immediate development
7. Bring Route 9 back to grade
8. Reconnect Independence Avenue to Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods
9. Integrate the North Loop vision in a city strategic visioning exercise

The evaluation by the ULI panel concluded that the north side of the Loop was not ready for development today, the market in Downtown Kansas City could support (without subsidy) additional commercial and residential parcels by 2028. The panel observed that in a decade the developable land currently occupied by the highway in the Loop could be needed to support the public and private sectors' desire for growth. The panel advised that the City and region prioritize infrastructure investments and preserve maximum flexibility.

Open House #2 - Revised Strategies

The final series of public engagement opportunities provided an opportunity for the public to review traffic data and impacts, more detailed alignment information, and refinements of strategies based on previous public input.

The meetings were targeted to two distinct groups; a neighborhood meeting for those who live directly in the Study Area and a commuter meeting for those who travel through the study area to work. Both meetings were well attended with over 100 at the neighborhood meeting and over 80 at the commuter meeting held north of the river.

The format of the two meetings was the same as the Initial Strategies Open House. A series of informational displays were set up at each meeting, which asked the public to evaluate each strategy or option on a scale of 1-10, with 1 meaning the option was “not liked” and 10 that it was “liked very much.” Again, a corresponding online survey was deployed to extend the reach of the project and allow for those who could not attend the meeting to provide input. Hundreds chose to participate online. Like the first meeting and parallel online survey, the feedback received in-person and online mirrored one another.

Interestingly, the results from both meetings, held in separate locations with very different attendees, also mirrored each other. With very slight variations, the assessments made of the same information at each meeting, were nearly identical.



In the first public meetings, the Study Team heard a desire from the public for a new bridge. In the months between meetings, the Study Team worked with city, regional, state, and federal officials to support a plan to raise the \$200 million required to build a new river crossing. With a 75 percent “yes” vote of residents of Kansas City in April 2018, the funding package for a new bridge was complete and MoDOT initiated the NEPA process.

This meeting, held prior to the public vote, refined and displayed strategies for how to connect a new O’Neil Bridge to I-35 and Downtown. Four primary strategies were evaluated and presented for public assessment. Scoring highest, both in the Open House and online, were the Broadway Direct Connection Strategy (median score of 6 out of 10) and the 5th and 6th Street Connection Strategy (median score of 6 out of 10).

The public continued to strongly support a 16-foot protected bike and pedestrian accommodation on a new bridge.

NORTH LOOP



The public was presented in this meeting four primary strategies and associated renderings for the future of the North Loop which were refined and modeled in response to public input. In response to clear direction from the public, no strategy presented in this Open House increased the footprint of the interstate.

Again, the public responded more positively to removing the interstate. The highest scoring scenario by a significant margin was the Remove and Reclassify Strategy that would eliminate the interstate in the North Loop (median score of 8 out of 10). This score was higher than the full removal option received in the first round of public input (median score of 7).

The North and South Compressed Strategies, that narrowed the interstate's footprint and shifted it either north or south freeing up right-of-way for development, also received more support than in the first public meetings (median score of 5 out of 10). Ramp Consolidation, named "Safety Adjustments" in the first round of meetings, also scored higher, but was the least desired strategy (median score of 4 out of 10). The Study Team took this input not to indicate that the public does not want safety improved, but rather that they were assessing the strategies relative to one another. Thus, the public's assessment of the strategies in order of preference was:

1. Remove and Reclassify
2. South Compressed
3. North Compressed
4. Ramp Consolidation

As this report posits in other chapters, changes to the north side of the Loop could be staged. The Ramp Consolidation strategy could become the first step toward full removal or a compressed footprint.

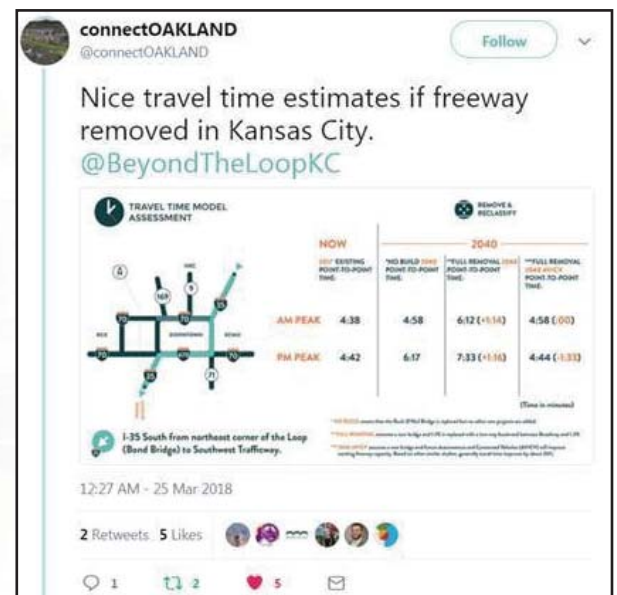
NEIGHBORHOOD



There was continued strong support for bring Route 9 to grade through the River Market and Columbus Park. These meetings asked the public to assess three different potential configurations for a reconnected Independence Avenue. Across both meetings and online, the widest configuration (78 feet, with two lanes each way, and a 16-foot median) for Independence Avenue had the most support (52%). Overheard at the public meetings was a recognition that the wider street provided room for a potential streetcar extension.

Finally, the Study Team asked the public to evaluate a series of gate-to-gate travel times if the North Loop was removed (Figure 5.6). The travel routes were presented graphically alongside existing travel times, "No Build" 2040 travel times, Remove and Reclassify 2040 travel times, and Remove and Reclassify 2040 travel times with autonomous and connected vehicles were assessed.

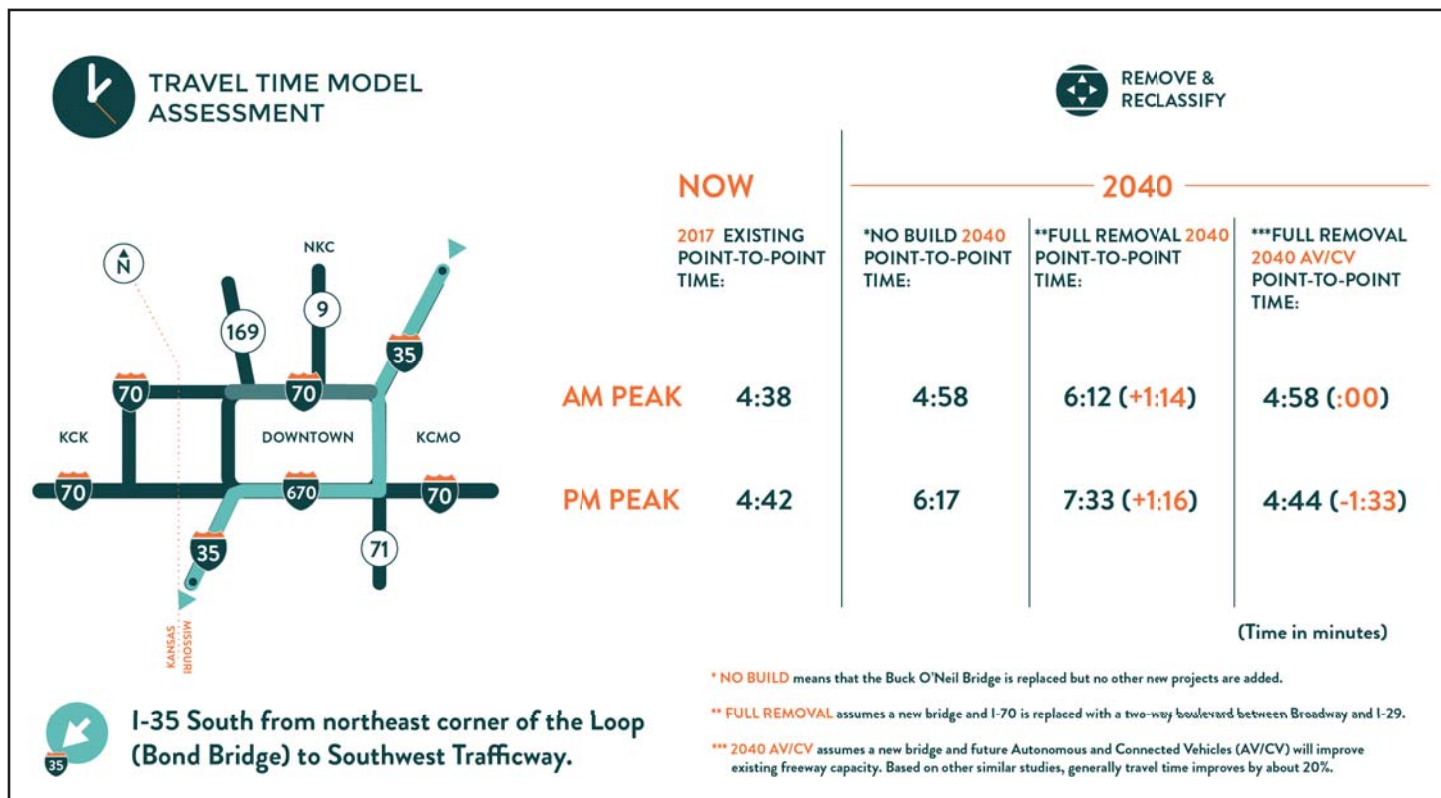
The study's efforts to present travel time data to the public was noticed as far west as Oakland, California. Connect Oakland is a project which shares many attributes with this PEL.



Generally, the model showed a 20 percent decrease in travel time when the effect of autonomous and connect vehicles was included. This was the first time the public in our region has been presented 2040 travel time assessments, with an attempt to account for some connected and autonomous vehicles in the fleet using the transportation network.

Additionally, the Study Team sought as part of this exercise to understand what people thought of specific future delays to routes they currently drive daily. The public was asked whether the future travel time assessments were unacceptable (a score of 1) or seemed reasonable (a score of 10). The public does not seem to be concerned about the delays associated with fully removing the interstate, and indicates travel times, mostly delays, seem reasonable (median score of 7 out of 10).

Figure 4.6 - Gate-to-Gate Travel Times Exercise



Both at the Open Houses and online, the public were presented with estimates of travel time differences across a series of typical routes through Downtown Kansas City.

CONCLUSION

This public process involved neighborhoods, cities, states, and national voices to inform a unique planning process. Thousands of participants from across the region shaped the decisions made during the PEL at each step. Critical decisions were held until the public could weigh in. The public had an opportunity to see the impact their input was making on the project and the Study Team was rewarded with insightful thoughts and comments from the community. The Study Team challenged the public to think about the future they wanted and what infrastructure would be needed to support that future. This PEL document reflects a true partnership between the public, stakeholders, and the Study Team.