

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



**Location:** Metropolitan Community College-Maple Woods

**Recorder:** Brian Sifton

### A REGION OF VIBRANT PLACES

1. Maintain and develop healthy downtowns and vibrant places throughout the region. (3)
2. Focus on revitalization and infill projects in older communities. (24)
3. Develop dynamic corridors of economic, business and housing activity along major transit routes. (1)
4. Create major employment centers at strategic locations to maximize the region's competitive advantages. (0)

### *Discussion*

- We're trying to draw people downtown by changing green spaces to roads and buildings?
- What I saw was the renewing instead of moving out and having transit corridors.
- Participant: What do they mean by urban areas ... downtown, villages, etc.?
- Participant: As far as pockets [of activity], when we were shown intro of Imagine KC, I was given the impression we were centering idea on downtown, and not worrying as much as little areas, which are we focusing on? Centralizing the discussion on downtown, I see incredible corporate development by business interests who are not citizens in the area, when we already have these fantastic "downtown" areas ... where is the focus to revitalize for individuals who are already here and not business interests?
- Take the revitalization of Peculiar: it takes farms away from farmers to build houses which are better for corporations and schools and not necessarily for the people who actually live there. All four of these "strategies" are corporate ideas.
- Revitalization requires capital, we must work together ... it is important for people who live in areas to work with their elected officials and developers so that the outcome is something acceptable by all interests.
- We don't have to allow them to make "house farms"...how do we control what is done?
- In ranking these, the focus on revitalization and infill ... we've made investments already and we need guidance ... a top priority is revitalization and infill ... virgin ground is cheap and easy ... but then the cost of infrastructure is something we have to pay for ... leap-frogging is bad.
- Along those same lines—Antioch Center—if we can wrest that property away from builders instead of having it sit there unused, we could take it away and rebuild it...that whole area is deteriorating.
- If we are going to design a focal point, I think we should allow the people who live in places to decide what goes where.
- We need access across the river for bicycles and pedestrians.

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



- Gladstone conversation: Walkability is key, covered bus stops, etc. [We've] already developed as car-based society. It is very difficult to rebuild, revitalize areas to make them walkable.

### A CONNECTED REGION

1. Develop a robust transit system. (20)
2. Develop a regional system of trails. (2)
3. Maintain our existing roads to a high standard. (2)
4. Maximize the use of the region's existing highway capacity. (4)

### *Discussion*

- What does maximize use of existing highway capacity mean?
- For instance: using new tools such as BRT, commuter lanes, pricing lanes, etc., rather than building new roads. Operation Green Light, a seamless transportation system, is a good example.
- Confusion comes from nomenclatures — optimize versus maximize. We need to optimize and not maximize, otherwise we use resources until they are gone.
- It is more, though. They're interrelated: maximizing leads to how we create a robust transit system. Metro Web site: how do I get from Point A to B. Your challenge is going to be amount of time it takes to get places. Optimization must work with mass transit; we are accepting this is a highway system we have, but how does this work with creating new tools and new mass transit?
- What does it mean to maintain roads to high standard?
- Which option gets rid of orange barrels? (laughter)
- Robust transit system: some of the streets cannot be fixed anymore. Double-decker buses would help, light rail works better with cables on top.
- Out of these four, one does not belong: regional trails seem more for recreation rather than transportation; the others are about moving large quantities of people.
- I wanted to say as that relates to transit. The question is "what do we want to spend most money on?" Trails do not cost nearly as much; that is important to keep in mind.
- Kansas City region is very spread out, but it is only 15–20 miles. On bikes you can travel 10 miles an hour; the only way to have connected region for animals is to have trails.
- Trails are also part of transit because you can ride bike to train/bus station. Trails are important because they can augment [transportation costs].
- I spend a lot of time reading about energy. We will not have cheap enough oil to use for long, so a lifestyle based on cheap oil won't work. We need to prioritize transit, but because of the huge area and low density it will be difficult. I don't think we'll need all the roads we have.

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



- We can't afford the infrastructure we already have.
- We aren't getting money for maintenance; we're getting federal dollars for new roads.
- Money from gas tax is being diverted away from maintenance
- Parking lots are a problem, too. These strategies focus on things that are a side issue for surface paving.
- I have a slightly unrelated question: who put the videos together? We are in the Northland. As a Northlander, I saw in the video the airport and Liberty and nothing in between. I know it might just be the maker of the video. What about Northland? Trails weren't there, transit wasn't there, etc.
- I would love to be able for people to ride bikes in town to store, etc. but it doesn't work.
- But the bus is lacking in the Northland doesn't go enough.
- I was having a little difficulty with the question: prioritize [the strategies] compared to what?
- I just moved north and the transit service up here is severely lacking.

### A GREEN REGION

1. Promote energy conservation and use of renewable resources. (13)
2. Develop programs to maintain drinking water quality, reduce runoff and improve stream quality. (6)
3. Generate less solid waste and recycle or reuse the waste we do generate. (4)
4. Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (0)
5. Protect and restore the region's natural amenities. (7)

### *Discussion*

- Strikes me that several are not mutually exclusive; if we protect and restore, you're likely going to improve air quality.
- What's the difference between spending money to solve problems versus the amount spent that causes problems? Businesses have complete access to capital that will cause more problems, but we need more capital to solve the problems. How do we solve that?
- I think through the years, a lot of that capital is less. Education is important, and I understand what you mean, but using less and having different lifestyles, capitalizing on things like Earth Day rather than capitalizing on capital ... maybe we should use our energy differently rather than just spending money.
- CNN has some very good programs right now about what to do about the environment. My son was on about hotel recycling; it's a matter of education and making it available to people. I can't recycle where I live. If it was available, I and others would do it.

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



- Just an emphasis on the five items, “protect and restore” stands out. They’re all important. Once a resource is gone, the amount of money [needed] to fix [it] is incredible. We have to be proactive about acquiring and protecting them rather than sitting idly by.
- Two things...as our communities are thinking about budgets, we need to think about what services we are cutting back on. Kansas City cutting back recycling is an example. We need to make sure we still do that. When natural areas are lost, it takes a long time to bring the function back.
- I watched them cut down 200-year-old trees and filling streams. If we can, we need to find ways to make it cheaper to redevelop.
- Difficult to prioritize. They all have merit. More interrelated than other categories. I’m an infrastructure guy; I’m interested in developing processes to maintain all water quality [because it] touches the other things. I see how development can be a problem. A lot of problems come from age of infrastructure. It doesn’t matter who built it, [if] it’s broken, we need to fix it.
- I agree with what’s been said. A lot of these overlap with protecting resources. I don’t see how you can vote one over the other. Once they are gone, it is hard and expensive to get it back. Buy it up front and get easements: ties into trails, walkability and human health issues. Those two in particular ... I don’t know if I can prioritize.
- I think generating less trash because you would be surprised how much food is thrown away. Recycling is also important ... Everything is made someplace else.
- I also agree with taking trees down in Liberty. Development happens; parking lots are where water runs off. We [need to] demand that when development happens permeable pavement is used. I was asked to remove my compost bin! When I drive around on trash day I see people putting compostables out at the curb. We can compost those and fertilize our yards and maintain water quality. When developers come in, they make it better for the environment.
- To pick up on that: as someone who gardens, composts and collects rainwater, I’m criticized!
- I agree everything is connected, but we have to prioritize and because of the kind of energy we use and the way it’s being used, energy and air quality are both in tandem: one causes the other. We burn things that are getting more expensive that are causing air problems. Soon there won’t be enough energy to produce all of the trash we are used to throwing away.
- One of the things that is crucial, no matter what we choose as the first priority: we need to make sure these things are personal. Environmentalism is great if someone else is doing it, but somehow we have to shift the paradigm so that personal responsibility is the key!
- These all are hard to sort out because they are connected, but we need to think how we spend our money. ... Doesn’t matter which we select, the message I would like to get to people who decide who spends our money: there are already people doing these things so I would like MARC and governments to not reinvent the wheel and see the successes other places.
- Pertains to all points. In London, in the eco-economy/grain economy, one of the big things is green-helmeted eco-police. Trash cannot be put out except on the day it supposed to be. We need to be careful there is not too much regulation.

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



- I don't want to get a ticket for having a dented gutter.
- For me the Number 2, water quality, seems ... that it is similar to what Frontline was about last night. We can always track things upstream. Water relates to all others. As a councilmember, many of these things are beyond local control. We can do water, but not some of these others.
- That's why I was thinking regional amenities — we can control it.
- I think water quality is critical. I'm looking beyond taste: is it safe? Can we maintain our sources? We have to maintain that for public health. I'm thinking that's critical.
- I think as we tackle all of these topics, we should remember that the responsibility of one person is not transferable among parties. [There] should not be externalities. If we take responsibility to collect water, educate children, etc., and do these things on a local level and avoid bureaucracy, and if we have ability to take responsibility as small groups to take responsibility of provision and maintain amenities.
- Improve stream quality. [It's] flood season, and everyone lives downstream. Not just quality of water, but function of hydrology and water courses and watershed.
- In New York they do have environmental police.
- In a very real sense, we don't have more control over water than others because we are at odds with what is being done in other areas — farm pollution, what is done in other cities and states.

### **General discussion**

- One and four should be merged they are the same almost everyone (25) agree with that statement. There is also a recommendation that 2 and 5 should be combined almost everyone (20) agreed with that, too.
- "Amenities" should be changed to "resources" because amenities are things that are extra...resources are necessary.
- Moving in that direction...resources are used..."ecosystem" should be word used
- Along the same lines...the only thing that is distinct about our region is flora and faunas and ecosystems...
- "Amenities" should be changed to "ecosystem" almost everyone (28) agree with that statement.
- Ecosystem is a scientific, sterile term; what about woodlands and prairies, rivers and streams... (general agreement)
- Ecosystems encompass all biological entities...we as individuals are also enmeshed in ecosystems in different places.
- In the same vein, maybe if we can't fully restore some portion of nature, maybe we can at least improve it.
- I appreciate your point of view...but DO NOT SETTLE!

## NOTES FROM APRIL 22 PUBLIC FORUMS



- People are part of ecosystems...biological world are leaning into that in research, we are so integral to what impacts us as to what we impact.
- Point is to help decision makers prioritize...lumping things together hurts.
- With MARC looking for something for them to look at...we are limiting our ability to have our voices heard because of the things that have been done previously...because of the way the conversation is structured and voting on things that are so integrated it is very difficult to have our voice fully heard...there needs to be another way to have our voices heard.