

May 22, 2023

Dear Jessica,

Thank you again to your team and the consultants leading the Northside-Southside Study for attending the April Community Mobility Committee meeting and sharing more about the ongoing planning efforts. We write to you today to emphasize the feedback provided by many of our members at the last meeting, and ask you to consider these needs, both in this planning process and in operations more broadly. Please share our commentary with others at Bi-State who are involved in critical decision-making, and reach back out to us for any additional clarification.

St. Louisans need better bus service, now and into the future

While we commend any effort to expand public transit in St. Louis, MetroLink alone is not sufficient to serve the needs of St. Louis residents, no matter how close it is to high-density housing locations. We **must** have a robust bus system, with frequent, consistent service that people can rely on, in order for public transit to be successful in St. Louis. You mentioned in the meeting that workforce riders have not yet returned to the system. The best way to encourage people to ride transit is to provide reliable transportation that people can count on, with frequent service and a network of bus stops. While we hear the challenges of a workforce shortage, we expect Bi-State to take action: publish a schedule of buses that can successfully run, limit the number of expected and yet missed trips **and** change the conditions for operators to recruit more.

Prioritize serving low-income and no-car households, while avoiding displacement

While the new Jefferson alignment through downtown serves many residents, this adjustment moves away from high density public housing on both the near north and near south side, which is a disappointing and yet understandable evolution. Bi-State must continue to work closely with SLDC and the City to prioritize both creating new affordable housing on the new alignment and supporting preservation of existing affordable housing, particularly for long-time renters and owners who may be displaced by rising costs.

Integrate access for people biking, walking, and rolling into MetroLink plans

As you heard in our meeting in April, it is critically important that any new alignment works for people who are biking, walking, or using mobility devices to get to transit. This includes ensuring that the City has a complete sidewalk and bike network that integrates with stations. Creating a good experience for people walking or biking to a transit station is in the details, such as having ample space to make turns with a bike or a motorized wheelchair, smooth transitions from one surface from the next, lighting at a pedestrian scale, and bicycle parking that is safe, secure, and near the station. Outside the stations, bus shelters must be installed and maintained to support people who are getting to the new line via bus. In addition, we expect that access for people walking or taking the bus will be safe, well lit, and well maintained through any upcoming construction.

Consider alternatives to light rail if funding is not available

Should there be insufficient local funding for a federal match, or conditions at the federal level change, we still need expanded and improved north-south transportation in St. Louis. We encourage the Bi-State team to consider alternatives such as bus rapid transit with dedicated lanes, signal priority, and boarding stations, which could be built more quickly and at a lower cost.

Prioritize transit over automobile travel throughout the alignment

Finally, investment in transit moves us closer towards a culture that is less auto-centric and works for all St. Louisans, and we expect to see this reflected in the decisions made about this new alignment. For example, we expect to see signal prioritization for the new MetroLink along the corridor. This should be carefully balanced with the need to support walking and biking in this corridor as well.

Thank you for your work on this important expansion of transit. We look forward to hearing more about the next steps.

The voting members of the Community Mobility Committee

Aamna Anwer
Judith Arnold
Aubrey Byron
Liz Kramer, co-chair
Kevin McKinney
Kaleena Menke
Michael Ridenhour
Tiffanie Stanfield
Kea Wilson

CC:

Scott Ogilvie, City of St. Louis
Laurina Godwin, Vector Communications
Taylor Bardsley, Vector Communications
Kristen Lueken, AECOM