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Plan Approval, Adoption
and Implementation

The stakeholders were brought together to review the draft plan. Their suggestions were incorporated into the draft, and the revised document was presented to MRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee for consideration. The TAC then adopted the coordinated plan and recommended it to the Meramec Regional Planning Commission board on Feb. 14, 2008. The board acted on that recommendation and authorized staff to submit the plan to the Missouri Department of Transportation, as the approved Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan for the Meramec Region.

This process was selected primarily because of the planning relationship that has been established in the early 1990s between Meramec Regional Planning Commission and the Missouri Department of Transportation and continues today. As a part of its planning work with MoDOT, MRPC—and other regional planning commissions across the state—formed Transportation Advisory Committees—to identify transportation needs, study issues and recommend transportation priorities in the Meramec Region. The TAC—with three representatives from each county—reports to the MRPC board and advises it on transportation decisions. This is a very grassroots approach to planning and ensures that those most impacted by transportation decisions are a part of the planning and decision-making process.

While the work of the TAC and MRPC has primarily been related to roads and bridges, there has been a growing emphasis at the state level to include other modes of transportation—including public transit—in the needs identification and prioritization process. A recent statewide Investment Priorities process included other modes of transportation, including transit, ports, airports and rail.

In addition to county-appointed representatives, Meramec's TAC also includes ex-officio members—the MoDOT district engineers and representation from the two largest public transit agencies in the region—OATS and SMTS. The TAC meets every other month and meetings are open to the public.

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Two of the top strategies—increase community awareness of transit and increase funding—could benefit from a grassroots effort. The majority of residents are unaware of the issues facing public transit, such as limited schedules, limited funding, insurance and liability issues associated with sharing vehicles and rider restriction because of funding.

Increasing awareness begins with educating citizens—including TAC members—on the issues and encouraging their involvement in implementing strategies that will solve the problems.

Some of the needs are a result of a lack of funding, something that is facing all modes of transportation. Missouri is currently exploring options to better fund transportation. Public transit strategies need to be presented along with road and bridge strategies, if it is to be considered part of the Missouri's total transportation infrastructure. And it must be.

As road construction costs escalate due to the rising oil prices and as Missouri's population continues to grow and live and work longer, it is imperative that the state consider every possible mode of transportation for cost-effective solutions. And given the state's transportation planning process, that message will be better received and more likely heard if it comes from the grassroots level, through transportation advisory committees and regional planning commissions.