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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN KANSAS CITY

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Abstract

This project creates a planning and policy foundation to integrate transportation and environmental planning in the metro Kansas City area.

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the metropolitan planning organization for the Kansas City region, is in the process of advancing a series of initiatives to help promote and incorporate broadened environmental consideration as a part of its regional transportation planning processes. This presentation will describe several interconnected strategies designed to accomplish the agency's long range transportation plan goals related to access, mobility, safety and the natural environment.

In 2004, MARC completed a comprehensive, geographic information system (GIS)-based regional natural resources inventory (NRI). This effort compiled all existing and relevant GIS data pertaining to the Kansas City metropolitan area to facilitate more integrated and proactive environmental planning in a variety of arenas. Data described the distribution, quality and extent of natural habitat types throughout the eight county region. The data serve to facilitate and spatially integrate planning efforts related to transportation, land use, air and water quality and greenways.

Subsequently, NRI data has been used to help prioritize and focus greenway planning, design and acquisition efforts. Beginning with the highly regarded regional greenway plan known as MetroGreen, new natural resource data has been used to prioritize open space conservation needs and opportunities. All analysis has been conducted within an integrated, multiple purpose framework, in pursuit of air and water quality protection, habitat restoration, reduction in flood risk, recreation and alternative transportation.

Planning for prioritized greenways and natural areas will adopt a green infrastructure framework, seeing to maximize connect key areas on a landscape scale to maximize ecological values and ecosystem services. Importantly, the final regional green infrastructure plan will be presented as a draft regional environmental mitigation plan in compliance with new SAFETEA-LU requirements. Mitigation in this venue is broadly construed, though intended to complement other state and federal mitigation requirements as well.

Development and final adoption of the plan will be accomplished through rigorous public participation efforts, including key natural resource management organizations and agencies. Ultimately the objective is to formally articulate via our transportation plan policy how this valuable environmental data can and should be used in helping to prioritize and define the region's investment in the transportation system. All data, planning, design and implementation efforts will be incorporated into MARC's next long-range transportation plan, which is slated for formal kickoff in 2007.