

SELLING TRANSIT: PERCEPTION, PARTICIPATION, AND THE POLITICS OF TRANSIT
IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

by

JAMES PATRICK WOOD

B.A., University of Missouri, 2011

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning
College of Architecture, Planning and Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2014

Approved by:

Major Professor
Huston John Gibson, Ph.D.

Copyright

JAMES PATRICK WOOD

2014

Abstract

Informed and robust stakeholder participation in the transit-planning process gives residents and communities a remarkable opportunity to take ownership of the shaping of their city's future form and function, and allows planners to design transit networks that serve the full range of citizen needs. Therefore, the degree to which citizens are permitted to participate in the formation of a city's transit plan has a significant influence on both its final design and its subsequent adoption by civic and political leaders. Concurrent with the influence of citizen input is the role of political strategy, since many urban transit plans must meet voter approval and a poorly-run political campaign can sink even the most substantial of transit plans. In seeking to analyze both the role of public participation and the role of campaign strategy, this study employs descriptive historical research and stakeholder surveys to assess the impact and perceived importance of inclusive design practices, as well as the political impact of a transit campaign's general strategy, on the voter approval of transit-related ballot initiatives in Kansas City, Missouri. There are two central implications of this project. One is that the failure of transportation planners and civic activists in Kansas City to accommodate the wishes and input of diverse groups of residents and community leaders in the planning process has led to repeated defeats whenever said plans are presented to Kansas City voters for approval. The other is that urban politics and campaign strategies play a larger role in selling transit proposals than many leading figures in Kansas City have realized, and that the city's unique political and geographic structure requires a more nuanced and technologically-diverse approach to voter persuasion than has been applied thus far. It can be theorized that reversing both of these trends will increase the likelihood of future voter approval of transportation initiatives. In addition to a political and historical analysis of transit in Kansas City, this study seeks to examine whether deliberate public participation in the transportation planning process has a direct impact on citizen support for transportation-related ballot initiatives in Kansas City.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	x
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Background	2
Statement of Purpose	3
Research Overview	3
Chapter 2 – Review of Literature.....	5
Chapter 3 – Historical Overview of Light Rail Elections.....	17
1997 Initiative	20
1998 Initiative	21
1999 Initiative	23
2000 Initiative	25
2001 Proposition	26
2002 Initiative	29
2003 Initiative	30
2006 Initiative	31
2008 Proposition	37
Chapter 4 – Research Methodology.....	40
Chapter 5 – Analysis of Transit Elections	44
The Slotterback Metric	44
The Haas Metric.....	48
An Ideal Campaign: Kansas City’s 2008 Transit Campaign Redux.....	57
Chapter 6 – Survey Results.....	59
Chapter 7 – Discussion	68
References.....	73
Appendix A – Text of Clay Chastain’s Successful 2006 Initiative	79
Appendix B – Text of Citizen Survey.....	80

Appendix C – Documentation of Survey Responses	82
Postscript.....	84

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Public Participation	8
Figure 3.1 Map of 2006 Initiative’s Light-Rail Component.....	33
Figure 6.1 Comparison of Existing versus Desired Places on Arnstein’s Ladder	60
Figure 6.2 The Comparative Importance of Scheduling versus Public Input.....	63

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Comparable Analysis of Selected Studies	6
Table 3.1 Light-Rail Initiatives and Proposals, 1997-2008	18
Table 5.1: The Slotterback Metric in Kansas City’s Transit Elections.....	45
Table 5.2: The Haas Metric in Kansas City’s Transit Elections.....	49
Table 5.3: Haas Metric for Hypothetical Future Transit Election	57

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank the members of my family, who have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams and to use my time and talents to leave the world a better place than I found it.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Huston Gibson, for his excellent guidance and patience throughout my time at Kansas State University. More than a professor, he was a friend and role model as I began a career in academia. He taught me a great deal about how to be an effective teacher, a public servant, and a good citizen, and this project serves as a testament to his abilities as a guide in our profession. I am forever grateful to him.

I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Kate Nesse and Dr. Michael Babcock, for their invaluable insights and assistance with this project.

My education, and thus this project, was made possible and enjoyable thanks to the contributions of my academic family at K-State: Professor Stephanie Rolley, Professor Larry Lawhon, Maxine Ganske, and Jody Fronce. Each of them had a hand in shaping who I have become as a planner and as a citizen, and I deeply thank them.

I would like to thank many of my closest friends and peers for their support and counsel. Brian Pack, who was as patient as he was brilliantly rational, kept me on my academic toes and never let an unfounded statement go unchallenged. John Scott, Andy Thomason, and Chase Johnson were my first genuine colleagues, and I'll never forget our time together.

Lastly, I am thankful to Clay Chastain. Without his colorful tenacity, the saga of transit in my hometown would be remarkably different, and a lot less exciting to study.

Financial support for this project was provided in part by the Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship Program, administered by the National Highway Institute and the Federal Highway Administration. I am thankful for their confidence and support.

Dedication

For my mother, Susan.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Visionaries are most successful when they find community consensus.”

–Warren Erdman, rail executive and Kansas City transit advocate

Within the national discussion of transportation planning and urban policy, the question of designing efficient, equitable, and well-used public transit networks remains an issue of growing interest. While public transit nothing new to cities, the postmodernist approach of involving citizens and community stakeholders in the transit-planning process is a relatively new phenomenon. Still, given the high costs of urban mass transit, a system’s dependence on frequent riders, and the ways in which transit systems are funded with taxpayer dollars, robust community buy-in is essential to a system’s political survival and ultimate success. Political feasibility is particularly important in North American cities, as most transit initiatives there must seek voter approval in order to fund and construct systems. If transit in North America depends in large part on political capital, and on the sustained approval of voters and taxpayers, then the ways in which transportation planners engage citizens in the planning process is key. Furthermore, if citizens have ample opportunities, both formal and informal, to participate in the planning and design of transit systems in their cities and to obtain “ownership” of the proposals, then it logically follows that those same citizens would be more likely to support transit initiatives when they came up for a public vote. This project aims to examine the relationship between citizen engagement and subsequent voting attitudes regarding transit initiatives and referenda in Kansas City, Missouri. That city’s lengthy track record of mass-transit initiatives that have failed to gain voter approval or political traction makes it an ideal location for examining the correlation between citizen input and the making and marketing of plans that voters accept.

This project seeks to be a major contribution to the understanding of the ways in which citizens, as stakeholders, can and should play a role in the transportation planning process. As the planning profession grows more inclusive of citizen input in the conceptual stages of plan-making, those working in the field will have a greater demand for evidence on whether seeking said input will lead to more effective planning down the line. This study is an attempt to meet some of that demand, and to better understand the role and benefits of inclusion in the planning process. The data gathered by this study will advance the notion that transportation plans that

earnestly incorporate the desires of the populations they serve tend to have a better chance of being approved by voters and accepted by passengers and political officials.

Background

The story of mass transit in Kansas City is as much about geography as it is about urban history. As a prototypical American city, Kansas City features a dense downtown, several aging inner-ring suburbs once serviced by streetcar lines, and a growing outer belt of suburban developments. But unlike many other American cities, Kansas City features a single-mode transit network that has struggled with both ridership figures and regional connectivity. The region is both vast and well-populated, indicating an optimal site for a multimodal transit network. According to federal data, the Kansas City MSA has an area of 7,952 square miles, and is home to over 2.3 million people (ACS 2009 Population Estimate). The Kansas City area also hosts more lane-miles of freeway than any other American city (Spivak, 2007). Given the region's vast geographic size and easy access to highways, it can be plainly seen how the automobile is the dominant form of transportation in Kansas City. The region is not without mass transit, however, with the bi-state Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) administering a network of over sixty bus and two BRT routes throughout the five core counties of the region.

While it will not be studied as a part of this research project, the Kansas City Downtown Streetcar is a recent transit development that will likely have a political impact on the region's transit reputation (Alonzo, 2013). This new mode of transit, funded by a special-purpose sales tax enacted by voters in August of 2012, will initially link the River Market district to Union Station. As of this project's publication, phase one of the streetcar remains under construction, and extensions linking downtown to the Country Club Plaza and the Northland are in the planning stages. While the construction of a new mode of transit in the study area presents a unique opportunity to study citizen-planner interactions, the streetcar's limited scope (phase one is a 2.2-mile starter line) distinguishes it from the region-wide transit proposals of prior years. Also, the funding mechanism for the Streetcar, a special-purpose district centered on the initial line, is a legally-distinct entity from the City of Kansas City. This would likely prevent the Streetcar, or at least its revenue source, from being included in future citywide transit plans proposed by Kansas City or MARC.

Statement of Purpose

Given Kansas City's unique transportation situation, as well as the growing desire both there and nationally to transition to a transportation network based less on automobiles and more on mass transit, a study such as this may be instrumental for helping policymakers in the region take proper actions to solve the problem that has plagued the region for decades. As the historical research will show, the voters of Kansas City have had ample experience with unworkable and unpopular transit initiatives that were backed by controversial activists and were soundly defeated at the ballot box. As a new generation of politicians and technocrats takes over the administration of the region, projects such as this, with hard data and substantive policy recommendations, may help the area's leaders to take the sort of measured, rational, and inclusive actions needed to design and market a next-generation transit network that voters will both approve of and support with strong ridership.

Research Overview

As stated previously, the research component of this project will feature both a descriptive study of the politics of transit in Kansas City and a survey of voter perceptions regarding the same. The mixed-methods approach outlined here will be instrumental in exploring the intersection of transit and politics in this American city.

Historical and Political Analysis

The analysis will explore and describe transportation and transit in Kansas City. It will provide a historical overview of the city's public transit systems over the past several decades, as well as a detailed study of the nine ballot initiatives and proposals regarding transit that have been placed before Kansas City voters in the past twenty years. The purpose of this portion of the project is to explain the ways in which Kansas City's unique geographical, cultural, and political environment have contributed to the performance of transit-related ballot questions there. The nine initiatives and proposals will be analyzed using two existing methodologies first presented by Slotterback (2010) and Haas and Estrada (2011). The findings from this analysis will serve to demonstrate the importance of voter perception and political reputation in the process of selling a transit plan to the taxpaying public.

For the purposes of clarity, this project shall distinguish between a ballot initiative and a ballot proposition. According to the Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California's School of Law, an initiative is generally a proposal placed on the ballot by way of citizen petition, which is permitted by both the Missouri Constitution and the Charter of Kansas City. In the case of Kansas City, all petition-driven proposals are reviewed by the City Council, and generally appear on a citywide ballot only if the Council does not pursue the matter to the petitioners' satisfaction. On the other hand, a proposition is generally placed on the ballot by a legislative body, in this case the City Council of Kansas City, after having been first approved by a majority of councilmembers. Of the nine ballot questions examined in this project, seven were petition-driven initiatives and two were city-sanctioned propositions. The distinction between these two types of ballot questions – activist-supported initiatives versus government-sponsored propositions – is essential to understanding this project's findings regarding voter perceptions of transit proposals.

Stakeholder Survey

The stakeholder survey was administered to citizens residing in a variety of neighborhood and community associations throughout Kansas City, Missouri. It will consist of a handful of questions designed to gauge citizen perception of the transit-planning process in Kansas City. The survey will also feature an example of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969), and respondents will be asked to indicate which of the eight stages of public input best signifies where they believe their existing working relationship with city planners lies. On the whole, responses from the survey will contribute much-needed quantifiable evidence that voters do indeed value public participation, and the degree to which they might value public input over other variables such as project timelines or budgetary concerns.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

From a planning and policy perspective, a transit campaign in a political context hinges on two factors that often run their course before ballots are even cast: The degree to which the public is engaged in the planning and programming of the proposal (Beale et al., 1996), and the marketing of the campaign itself (Middleton, 1998). Existing research regarding voter attitudes toward transit funding frequently falls into one of these two categories, and both must be examined for the role they play in the process. The study of public engagement in the planning process was in many ways launched with Arnstein's seminal work (1969) on the topic, and many subsequent studies by other researchers, with similar findings, are explored here. While each focuses on a different region, methodology, or public service being offered, all of the public engagement studies featured here demonstrate the immense political value in including citizen input in the planning process. For the latter portion of this review, the study set focusing on campaign strategies is smaller (due partly to a smaller number of easily-generalized findings), but the authors have drawn similar conclusions regarding the vital need for a transit campaign to follow a tried and true set of strategies in order to succeed. On the whole, research into both halves of this topic has tended to be regional in scope and only somewhat generalizable, which is expected and preferred considering the unique makeup and history of each human settlement.

Research into public participation, or P2 for short, in the planning and policymaking process has been well documented. Numerous metrics and guidelines exist to assist planners and citizens in determining whether their project's process of gathering and integrating citizen input matches the desired level of all parties. Many of the studies exploring and explaining these metrics can be found in Table 2.1. In spite of the volume of current research on the topic, however, transportation planning in the United States has still not reached a uniform level of public participation and stakeholder involvement. In addition to the research being done on the subject, numerous state and federal statutes have been in effect since the 1950s to mandate open and vigorous citizen participation in the planning process. Yet some cities and states still struggle with obtaining and absorbing substantive public input in their plans. The historical analysis examined within this project – the process of planning a light-rail network for the Kansas City metropolitan area – is one such example of a flawed process that has, year after year, failed to make it past the conceptual stage and into the accepting minds of voters and taxpayers.

Table 2.1: Comparable Analysis of Selected Studies

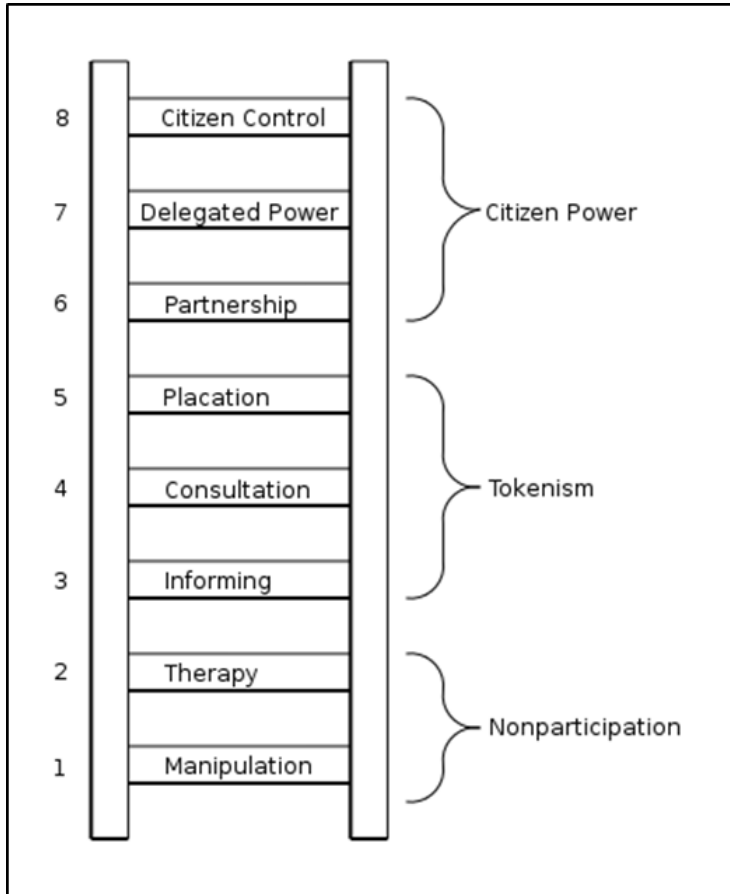
AUTHOR	SUBJECT	SAMPLE	PURPOSE	KEY FINDINGS
Brabham, et al. (2009)	Crowdsourcing public input online to select bus shelter design	338 citizen designs 6,892 page visits	To examine if the Internet can solve for time/distance flaws in P2.	Online P2 worked well for this task. Internet may solve P2-input dilemmas
Brody, et al. (2003)	Examining state public-input mandates and their effect on the planning process	Ten state mandates, two with contrasting P2 requirements	To find ways to refine state P2 mandates to gain richer input	Mandates matter, but should be recalibrated in four uniform changes.
Slotterback (2010)	Impacts of P2 on transit design and policymaking process	Three TOD projects and three CSS projects	To seek common variables/inputs and form a guide for proper P2	Identifies 6 components of effective P2 in transit planning
Arnstein (1969)	Citizen Participation	Disadvantaged areas in New York City	To illustrate power roles in decision-making	Few governments granted real authority to citizens in 1960s
Grossardt, et al. (2003)	The realization of equitable P2 in planning processes	Three case studies using SPI to improve P2 in planning	To apply Structured Public Involvement to the P2 process	SPI can provide a structured framework for enhancing P2
Grossardt, et al. (2010)	Collaborative planning that seeks public input	Case study of a Superfund site in western Kentucky	To gather and rank public preferences	The public desires technical expertise from planners
Bailey, et al. (2011)	Gap in Arnstein's Ladder between expected/actual input	Applied SPI to a small city's comp-planning process	To use SPI in an attempt to close the Arnstein Gap	SPI works well for increasing stakeholder satisfaction/input
Denhardt & Denhardt (2000)	Relations between public administrators and citizen activists	—	To give public actors new guidelines for serving citizens	"Seven Principles of New Public Service"
Haas, et al. (2000)	Voter approval/rejection of transit finance initiatives	Four U.S. communities plus USDOT data	To find common factors affecting voter approval of transit finance	A set of consistent actions can lead to voter approval
Werbel & Haas (2001)	Voting results of rail-focused transit funding initiatives	Eleven U.S. communities	To apply the Haas metric to additional cities	The prior factors were vindicated, and new ones were postulated
Haas & Estrada (2011)	Factors influencing success of rail-focused transit initiatives	Eight U.S. cities, several where multiple initiatives had taken place	To apply the Haas metric a decade later to cities in a different political and tax climate	Ten years later, factors still apply to cities; Compiled final list of 17 factors for success

To begin to understand how public participation has evolved over time as a matter of governmental concern, one must first examine the federal laws that were among the first in North America to mandate the participation of citizens in the process of planning public facilities and infrastructure. In the first decade following the passage of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956, massive Interstate highway projects were constructed in both rural and urban areas across the U.S., often very near to existing homes and neighborhoods, and virtually no public input was sought by the planners of these highways (Connerly, 2002). It would not be until the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 that the federal government would require projects using federal funds to seek public participation in the planning process, particularly in the area of environmental-impact analysis. NEPA would later be augmented by the next two federal laws to overhaul surface transportation in the U.S.: The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005. Each of these federal acts called for increased public involvement and spurred the states to pass similar mandates for projects receiving state transportation funding (Slotterback, 2010). The most recent federal surface-transportation legislation, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), advanced no new reforms in public involvement, but retained the government's stated view that the public's participation should be an integral part of the transit-planning process. Taken together, these mandates have greatly contributed to the modern-day ethos of planners as respondents to public demand, rather than as Promethean technocrats bringing the rational science of city-making to urbanites in need.

While a cursory overview of the federal laws governing public participation in transportation projects are a good first step in assessing the literature of public involvement in the planning process, such an assessment would be woefully incomplete without discussing the publication that effectively began the conversation in the literature. The seminal article on measuring the effectiveness of citizen participation – the article that has formed the heart of this discourse for over forty years and remains relevant – is Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Public Participation" (1969). Arnstein made two key assertions in the paper. The first, that the relationship between citizen-activists and governments was one of power-distribution, is less useful for this research than her second assertion, the "Ladder of Public Participation" (Figure 2.1). This simple illustration of Arnstein's theory of an eight-point spectrum of public

participation in the policymaking process set forth a metric that is still being used more than four decades after it was published. Contemporary applications of Arnstein's Ladder are legion, and many will be examined over the course of this paper. The Ladder itself will also play a major role in the surveys and the analysis of historic participation.

Figure 2.1: Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation



Note: graphic originally created by T. Grossardt, 2003

Beginning in 2003, the research team of Grossardt and Bailey applied Arnstein's Ladder to collaborative planning efforts in the post ISTEAs/SAFETEA-LU era. The authors observed contemporary methods of citizen participation and synthesized a framework of principles around which more effective participation could be organized. They called their process Structured Public Involvement, or SPI. This protocol calls for, among other things: a clear statement of responsibilities and goals by both parties, using mixed methods that allow the public to take ownership of both the process and the outcome, and utilizing transparency at all stages. In their initial publication, the authors explained that SPI could greatly improve existing negotiation

tactics, but cautioned against using a one-size-fits-all approach to engaging the public in the planning process. In a subsequent publication, the authors surveyed professionals and members of the public during a community-planning exercise in western Kentucky. Upon examining the responses, Grossardt and Bailey observed what they coined the “Arnstein Gap” (2010). This gap was illustrated largely through the discrepancy between where on Arnstein’s Ladder the citizens and professionals desired public participation to be, versus where both felt it was in practice. Members of the public desired to be at stage six (partnership) but felt they were actually below stage four (consultation). The planning professionals at the same event also desired to be at partnership-level, but felt they were actually somewhere above Consultation but below stage five (placation). The main takeaway from this gap, as it relates to involving the public in the planning process, is that the planners and technocrats felt the public participation process was more democratic and citizen-driven than the citizens did. They examined this further, and questioned whether the use of SPI would help to mitigate, or even close, the Arnstein Gap. In follow-up interviews with members of both groups, the authors found two consistent patterns that would seem to confound the Arnstein Gap. In speaking to members of the public, they noted a general consensus in favor of technocratic input on the part of planners. That is, respondents stated a clear desire to see technically-skilled planners take a leading role in the design-build process. The public, at least in this instance, did not desire total control over the process. At the same time, when interviewing the planners involved in this meeting, Grossardt and Bailey observed a tendency for policymakers to exhibit what Rawls called “Risk-averse behavior” (1971) and listen more closely to the input of the technocrats than of the general public. The authors submit that these contentions are common at other public meetings, and can be lessened with proper use of SPI. The structured transparency, they argue, would allow citizens to openly state what level of technical management they are comfortable with in the process, while SPI’s reliance on simple and citizen-driven benchmarks would keep planners and facilitators from casually disregarding the input of the public. Both of these fixes are essential to equitable transit planning. Most citizens lack the technical knowledge to design and build transit systems, so they must be comfortable working with engineers and planners who do. And since the citizens will be the ones using the transit and paying for it, policymakers must in turn take citizen concerns seriously. This research project will argue that part of the reason that transit elections have so consistently failed in Kansas City is that most of the ballot initiatives lacked a clear and productive

relationship between residents and professional planners. Furthermore, it will be argued, and tested with the survey, that citizens place a measurable degree of political trust in city-led planning efforts that they do not extend to citizen-led (non-technical) efforts.

In seeking to improve public participation in the planning process, one must be prepared to engage a new generation of residents with a new generation of methodologies. In 2009, Brabham, Sanchez, and Bartholomew conducted a successful public input exercise that incorporated both technological innovation and grassroots community creativity. The study authors sought to examine the effectiveness of open-source Internet methods (crowdsourcing) in gaining public input from diverse groups of residents who might not otherwise be interested in or able to attend traditional public meetings. They initially posited two factors that affect the quality of traditional public participation arrangements: First, that traditional methods of soliciting and integrating public input are usually condensed and/or selective, and never truly representative of a community. Second, contextual factors such as location, scheduling, and identity politics are easily able to impede the discussion process and silence the contributions of some community members. The authors therefore sought a small-scale project in which to test their hypothesis that crowdsourcing could lead to a more representative consensus. Using a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant, they applied crowdsourcing to the public-input process of selecting a design for bus stops in the Salt Lake City area. A small subject was chosen due to the experimental nature of this process, as well as the reduced potential for a contentious debate and/or a costly mistake on the part of the authorities. The experiment was arranged so that members of the general public (anyone on Earth with an Internet connection) could submit bus stop designs, and each design would be voted on by the same open-access general public. The authors theorized, and the experiment showed, that using the Internet can allow for a freer transfer of concepts and ideas, both top-down and bottom-up. Using an open-source website allowed for a modern version of what Surowiecki called “the wisdom of crowds,” where groups of individuals are “often smarter than the smartest individuals in them” (2004). When the authors published their paper on this project, it was only partially completed. A final design had not yet been selected, but submissions had been uploaded from as far away as India and Germany. The project had, however, produced enough data to validate the theories made by the authors. In terms of generating website visits and submissions and feedback from participants, the project was successful. However, the study’s authors were quick to point out the limitations of

crowdsourcing's success as an effective way to increase quality public participation. They noted that crowdsourcing works best with simple and clear proposals, as well as on projects with a limited financial, regulatory, and environmental impact. Therefore, this method, while revolutionary and quite useful in obtaining more effective public input, has limited appeal as the dominant means of gathering residents' input for a project as massive as planning a major city's light-rail network. Planners cannot simply outsource (or crowdsource) their role as the technical and policy minds behind designing such a network. It would, however, be prudent to consider crowdsourcing at a later point in the planning process, possibly after the routes have been plotted. For example, officials could use crowdsourcing to gain public input on the color and general appearance of the transit vehicles, or even the system's name. While Grossardt et al. (2010) may be correct in asserting that voters desire to trust the technical know-how of their city planners, there is certainly room in the process for direct citizen-based approval of key components. And if said approval can be obtained in the diverse and confrontation-free confines of the Internet, then so much the better.

As Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) argue, increasing the effectiveness of community participation can hinge on the motivations and skillsets of those public administrators who organize and moderate discussions with the general public. These two have authored a set of professional standards for dealing with the public, what they call the Seven Principles of the New Public Service. These principles command, among other things, that administrators serve the public's desires rather than try to steer them toward an outcome preferred by public officials. The authors also suggest that administrators think strategically, but act democratically. By following these principles uniformly, it is argued, public officials and planners should be able to approach public meetings with an open mind and a willingness to alter plans to suit the desires of the communities they serve. While the Denhardt and Denhardt study does not specifically relate to transit and elections, it makes a valid contribution to the ways in which planning professionals should conduct themselves when interacting with the voting public. In a profession where overlapping jurisdictions and governmental functions are common, being mindful of these kinds of best practices can lend great credibility and trust to planners within their communities, and can help to sell a proposal to a skeptical public.

Part of the reason for the uneven application of best practices in the public participation process is the patchwork of various state and federal mandates regarding the subject. As

mentioned previously, the federal government has had citizen-input language in legislation since the mid-1950s. The fifty states also have similar mandates within their borders. As Brody, Godschalk, and Burby (2003) argue, many of the mandates currently in effect at both levels of government are outdated and/or too vague to be effective in the twenty-first century. For example, they cite statutes in a few states that mandate public participation in the preplanning stage only, whereas other states require public input only at the very end of the process. Some state mandates do not even specify a timeframe. A similar patchwork exists for what public input methods are considered acceptable for a given state. The authors argue that this inconsistency has greatly harmed both the planning profession and the role of ordinary citizens nationwide in the transportation-planning process. They recommend the nationwide adoption of uniform state standards, with four key updates: Planners should incorporate a wide range of methodologies to reach varying stakeholders, agencies should train and retain staff skilled in mediation and public participation, planners should be required to seek public input at all stages of the process, and they should provide the public with clear and complete data at all stages. Missouri was not one of the states studied, but the adoption of such standards there would ensure that whatever transit system might eventually be planned for Kansas City would be done with ample public input.

One of the two metrics that will be applied to Kansas City's transit proposals comes from an article by Slotterback (2010), that effectively fuses together many of the conclusions presented above and lays out a specific path to studying the effectiveness of sound transportation planning. This metric is focused mostly on the public-engagement side of a proposal. For her research, Slotterback examined the planning process for both transit-oriented developments (TODs) and context-sensitive solutions (CSS). For all projects she analyzed, Slotterback found a set of six consistently-applied factors that she argues have the potential to make or break a planned project. The factors are listed below. Without any one of these, Slotterback argues, a project's integrity among voters can be greatly compromised and it likely will not succeed. A portion of this research project will incorporate Slotterback's six principles in analyzing and evaluating the light-rail planning process in Kansas City. Given that the majority of the proposed plans over the years were citizen-led initiatives that lacked either municipal backing or engineering and planning input (Spivak, 2007), it can be inferred that the process did not meet the technical or communications standards of the Slotterback method. Whether these six factors are the key explanatory variables for the Kansas City case will be determined in chapter 4.

The Slotterback Metric's Six Factors for Transit Proposal Success

- The presence of a local (and reputable) champion
- A mixed-methods approach to gathering and integrating public input
- A clearly defined sense of the desired outcome(s)
- A local political establishment willing to stake credibility on the proposal
- A planning team with significant design expertise
- The use of effective visual tools when presenting the proposal to the voters

Note: List originally compiled by Slotterback (2010), compiled here by Wood (2013).

While Slotterback's methodology explores the factors affecting the interaction between planners and residents, and works well in examining the quality of the citizen/policymaker relationship in the case of transit in Kansas City, an additional metric must be applied to the political campaigns of these transit initiatives and proposals. One such metric, created and later applied by Haas, Massey, Valenty, and Werbel (2000), functions much like Slotterback's metric and is tailored to assess the probability of a proposal/initiative's success based on a set of criteria that grew over the course of several research projects using the same formula. In each case, Haas and his colleagues examined multiple cases of transit-related tax increases in various American cities. The studies focused primarily on the campaign strategies of the pro-transit factions, and also examined each city's demographic data for context. While the first project bore only a few general findings, each successive replication produced more specific and verifiable conclusions that could thus be used as criteria to determine the likelihood of success in a given city.

The first paper by Haas et al. (2000), found six explanatory variables, two regional- and four campaign-specific, that showed promise in assessing a transit campaign's effectiveness and likelihood of success. For regional factors, they found that campaigns are more likely to succeed if at least nine percent of the region's population is elderly or retired. Also, campaigns are unlikely to succeed in regions with already-high sales taxes. Regarding the proponents' campaign strategies, the authors concluded that a campaign wishing to succeed should follow their four key findings: First, a budget cap and/or "sunset" provision should be provided in detail, so voters understand the limits of their fiscal contribution. Second, construction and service priorities should be based on a wide range of passenger inputs, so the plan could appeal to voters of all demographics and living situations. Third, the proposal should include a multimodal list of improvements, again so it could appeal to voters of all stripes. Finally, they found that organized opposition to the transit proposal should be anticipated and always rebutted

rationally, so that voters are not misled by irrational statements or rumors. The authors concluded by advising that gaining voter approval for a transit-related tax hike is an uphill battle for policymakers, despite the continued trend of polling data in favor of transit. However, the consistency of the initial six findings and their presence in cities that approved transit plans (or their absence in cities that rejected plans), make for a good set of transit campaign benchmarks.

A year after the initial study, Haas and Werbel (2001) applied the explanatory variables from the initial paper to eleven additional cities where transit campaigns had recently taken place. The initial variables produced few anomalies in the analysis, further proving their effectiveness at assessing the viability of a transit campaign. In addition to analyzing the performance of the existing factors, Haas and Werbel were able to draw eleven additional findings from this study. These supplemental findings were generally more specific but still closely related to the original variables. This initial vindication of the Haas metric, further confirmed by the subsequent study, indicates its validity in assessing the past and future performance of a transit-tax ballot proposal in a city such as Kansas City.

The third and most comprehensive study undertaken by this group (Haas and Estrada, 2011), was both a replication and an expansion of the 2001 study. This project, undertaken a decade after the previous iteration, examined the original research questions in a vastly different political and economic climate. In contrast to the prosperous period of the 2001 study, the United States of 2011 was in the midst of significant economic turmoil, casting reasonable doubt on the previous assumptions about voters' willingness to fund large capital projects. The nation's politics had also changed in those ten years. While the advent of social media in the late 2000s revolutionized the ways in which governments and political campaigns communicated with ordinary citizens, the emergence of organized opposition to taxation and government expansion (the Tea Party movement) added a new dynamic to the political process in the United States, particularly among campaigns seeking to levy new taxes to fund government-administered transportation. In further contrast to the previous two studies, this project directly analyzed the study cases with the seventeen factors. This third paper was able to further confirm many of the trends that emerged in the second paper, namely the importance of consensus and support among a region's business and political leaders as well as the value of hiring experienced strategists to oversee the campaign. One notable new finding in 2011 that applies directly to Kansas City is the potential impact of what Haas and Estrada termed a "rebound election," in which a losing

campaign re-engages voters for the next available election. The results from the 2011 study are mixed, with some of the “rebound” cases succeeding on the second try and others not. Kansas City was featured in the project, and the case study focused on the curious period between Kansas City voters’ approval of a citizen-authored regional LRT network in 2006 and their subsequent rejection of a pared-down and city-designed proposal in 2008. The factors leading to the shift were outlined to a certain extent by Haas and Estrada in their analysis, and will be more thoroughly investigated as part of this project.

The Haas Metric’s Seventeen Factors of a Successful and Politically-Viable Transit Proposal

- Robust public participation during the development of the proposal
- An existing transit provider with a reputation for reliability and efficiency
- A wide geographic distribution of benefits for users
- Citywide traffic congestion at a “tipping point”
- Support from the region’s business community and chamber of commerce
- Support from elected officials and city employees
- A well-funded (\$1 million or more) marketing campaign
- Experience/familiarity with similar proposals in recent elections
- Visible support from environmentalists
- Funding for multiple modes of mass transit
- Funding for highway and arterial improvements
- Sunset of twenty years or less if a proposed tax
- Extending an existing network (versus starting a new system)
- Concurrence with a congressional or presidential election
- An experienced consultant leading the marketing campaign
- Multimedia advertising
- An unorganized and/or underfunded opposition

Note: List originally compiled by Haas and Werbel, 2001.

On the whole, research into these two aspects of the transit-campaign process has thus far demonstrated several points of consensus. Regarding public engagement, the studies explored here all declare public participation in the planning process to be a noble, and even essential, part of urban planning in the current era. Beyond simply fulfilling the various state and federal mandates requiring planners to seek and integrate public input into capital projects, the literature seems to place public input at the forefront of the planning process. True to the post-Jane Jacobs era, the studies presuppose (and are frequently designed with the explicit understanding) that the needs and desires of city residents are the primary force behind urban planning, and that the role of planners is to influence and guide, but never to compel, this public energy toward the equitable and efficient solutions that the general public may or may not know they desire. In the

spirit of this ethos of the “benevolent planner,” this research project will focus many of its diagnostic tools on the flaws in the steering phase of Kansas City’s many transit proposals.

Less evident from the literature, but no less important to the understanding of Kansas City’s transit story, is the assertion by several of the above authors that transit tax campaigns, no matter how dry or technical they may be, must be administered with victory in mind. This aspect of the literature, while rarely labeled as such in the existing literature, requires a level of political analysis not often applied in transportation-planning circles. The interdisciplinary approach required to solve this dilemma gives this project unique potential to expand the knowledge base of the literature of both urban political affairs and transportation planning. Much of the above literature alludes to the inherent connections between political action and transportation planning, but the body of research on these linkages is both limited and difficult to generalize. It is hoped that this project will produce quantifiable results that apply both locally and nationally.

Chapter 3 – Historical Overview of Light Rail in Kansas City

In 1992, at the behest of recently-elected Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, Kansas City and the Mid-America Regional Council (the Kansas City region's Metropolitan Planning Organization) created an ambitious new comprehensive plan for the city. The FOCUS (Forging Our Comprehensive Urban Strategy) Plan was designed to guide the city's growth and infrastructure for fifty years, and was Kansas City's most inclusive and citizen-led planning effort to date (Menninger, 1998). Thousands of participants from across the city provided input and survey data, and the resulting plan featured broad goals on land use, redevelopment, and urban infrastructure. The transportation section is particularly noteworthy, in that it recommended the creation of a network of commuter rail, light-rail, and urban bus and trolley lines. While the FOCUS Plan provided ambitious goals for transit in Kansas City, few of the proposed lines were seriously considered by the city or KCATA. Part of this can be attributed to the political and legal distinction between the government of Kansas City, Missouri and the bi-state KCATA. One agency's plan, no matter how detailed or well-intentioned, may not be accepted or implemented by another agency's planners. The city's auto-oriented ethos and often gridlock-free highway network may be another explanation for the failure of these plans to see serious consideration by the relevant authorities. Still, it was this document's proposed routes that would provide the core of what planners, civic boosters, and one pugnacious citizen-activist would suggest for Kansas City's first light-rail line over the course of a decade of controversial elections. A summary of these elections is shown in Table 3.1.

While light-rail transit, in its modern-day form, has been a part of Kansas City's regional transportation plan since 1975 (Menninger, 1998), it was not until the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 that regional planning authorities were given the impetus and federal funding to conduct a formal feasibility study. The text of the Act explicitly provided funds for a regional engineering and analysis-of-alternatives study to further the planning of a light-rail system for metro Kansas City (ISTEA, 1991). The study was completed the following year, without much controversy or fanfare, and proposed a series of generally-vague routes throughout the city. Many of these routes were similar or identical to those mentioned in the FOCUS plan. However, a follow-up study commissioned by a downtown business association suggested specific streets and neighborhoods for the aforementioned

system, and it was at this point that the concept of light-rail planning became contentious among neighborhood and civic leaders (Menninger, 1998).

Table 3.1: Light-Rail Initiatives and Proposals, 1997-2008

Year	Proponent	Date of Election	Description of Transit Improvements Proposed	Projected Cost	Vote Tally
1997	Clay Chastain	11/04/97	To construct a transit hub at Union Station	\$30 million	33%-67%
1998	Clay Chastain	11/03/98	25 miles of light-rail, from Union Station to KCI	\$600 million	45%-55%
1999	Clay Chastain	11/02/99	50 miles of light-rail in three spurs spanning the metro area	\$1.5 billion	37%-63%
2000	Clay Chastain	11/07/00	32-mile light-rail line from Waldo to KCI	\$980 million	39%-61%
2001	City of Kansas City	08/07/01	24 miles of light-rail, from Kansas City Zoo to Northland	\$793 million	40%-60%
2002	Clay Chastain	11/05/02	Short-run trolley routes, and citywide bike/pedestrian trails	Not Specified	35%-65%
2003	Clay Chastain	11/12/03	Same route as 1998 initiative, fed by bus rapid transit network	\$650 million	36%-64%
2006	Clay Chastain	11/07/06	27 miles of light-rail, from Kansas City Zoo to KCI	\$1.5 billion	53%-47%
2008	City of Kansas City	11/04/08	14 miles of light-rail, from Country Club Plaza to Northland	\$815 million	45%-55%

Note: Bold-italics indicates ballot measure was successful

By late 1996 and early 1997, KCATA was ready to design and seek funding for the first light-rail line in the city. However, complications arose once they announced their intentions, and KCATA soon found itself engaged in a very public debate with the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, and area business leaders over the mere concept of light-rail (Abouhalkah, 2003). After months of acrimonious back-and-forth between transportation planners and some of the city’s wealthiest businessmen, the final starter line was announced: From the River Market to the Country Club Plaza. This route, which would have run directly adjacent to the downtown offices of major Chamber officials while connecting the city’s main urban tourist draws, drew immediate consternation from civic leaders and Mayor Cleaver, who denounced the line’s lack of linkages between area residents and their jobs. His labeling of the project as “touristy frou-

frou” would overshadow the debate over light-rail for the next decade. Still, KCATA, with the help of then-congresswoman Karen McCarthy (D-MO), secured \$162,000 to conduct fresh engineering and feasibility studies on the now-finalized starter route. At the same time, Congress authorized a further \$1.5 million in initial funding for the system, which was to have been disbursed upon adoption of a formal light-rail plan by the city council (Roth, 1997). Such approval would not come easily, as Mayor Cleaver had already derided the six-mile route in public and had refused to devote city resources to the project or to seek direct federal funding from U.S. Senator Kit Bond or Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater. Without the support of Kansas City’s mayor or business establishment, the six-mile proposal never got past the planning stages. Still, this public battle went on for months, and by November, Kansas City residents were ready to head to the polls to vent their frustrations at the one item on that year’s ballot that so much as mentioned “light-rail.” Unfortunately for one local citizen-activist, the item targeted for defeat was his hard-fought initiative seeking a citywide vote to bring a new transit-based purpose to the city’s iconic Union Station.

The story of Clay Chastain, the activist who in a few short years went from being a small-scale real-estate developer and architectural preservationist to the most polarizing Kansas Citian since Depression-era political boss Tom Pendergast, is an interesting chain of events that has scarcely been examined in an academic context. Trained as an electrical engineer, Chastain immersed himself in the role of petitioner and urbanist throughout the early 1990s. In 1992 and 1993, he gathered enough petition signatures to place an initiative on the city ballot to fund the restoration and reuse of Union Station. This building, once a grand Beaux-Arts railway terminal and a quintessential architectural icon of Kansas City, was by this time disused and in poor structural condition. Chastain’s petitions sought public funds to restore the building for use as both an Amtrak station and a community space with a museum and conference center (Chastain, 1998). In both 1992 and 1993, the petitions submitted by Chastain were accepted as valid by the City Clerk of Kansas City, but were rejected and struck from the city ballot by the City Council. Soon after the second rejection, Chastain launched a third petition drive, this time to recall Mayor Cleaver from office. After falling far short of the required amount of signatures for a recall, Chastain ended his campaign and resumed his efforts at restoring and reusing Union Station. In these early years, he was supported by a small but vocal base of residents, largely in the upper-class Brookside neighborhood south of the Country Club Plaza. Brooksidiers signed his

petitions based largely on their shared affection for historic preservation and the arts, but also because it was outside the grocery store in the Brookside shopping center that Chastain usually stood to gather petition signatures (Chastain, 1998).

1997 Initiative

Chastain began his fourth petition drive in 1996-97, in the midst of the public battle over light rail and “touristy frou-frou,” only with a notable change. In 1996, a coalition of city officials and business leaders outmaneuvered Chastain and drew up a detailed proposal for the restoration and reuse of Union Station, calling for architectural restoration, the relocation of Amtrak’s terminal back into the old station, and the construction of a children’s science museum at the site. The plan sailed to victory in that year, and Union Station was quickly abuzz with new construction. While Chastain had lost ownership of his original goal of restoring the old terminal, he quickly found a new concept on which to base his next move. He examined both the language of the city’s successful Union Station proposal and of the FOCUS regional plan, and found wording that suggested the station be used as a multi-modal transit hub for the city (Chastain, 1998). He wrote this concept into the language of his proposal, which called for Union Station to be transformed into a regional transit hub, hosting Amtrak platforms as well as facilities for commuter rail, city bus, and regional light-rail. The plan was light on technical details, had no accompanying engineering study, and lacked a clear funding mechanism beyond the extension of an existing citywide sales tax and nebulous goals of securing federal matching dollars for the estimated \$30 million cost. As the city government and local business leaders burned up the airwaves and editorial pages with arguments for and against light-rail, Chastain’s petition drive was drumming up support for the concept among many of the city’s wealthiest and most civically-active residents. And so, whether by coincidence or by design, it happened to be that these two ostensibly unrelated, yet somehow mutually-informing, light-rail discussions were taking place in Kansas City for most of 1997. However, by November, the wave of curiosity about light-rail in Kansas City had become a tsunami of skepticism, and Chastain’s ballot initiative was wiped out in a 33-67% defeat on November 4.

In the wake of the 1997 debate, civic and city leaders undertook a strategy of passively supporting the concept of regional light-rail transit in speeches and campaign literature, while at the same time declining to help area planning agencies secure new federal funds for studies or

conceptual designs. Planners in Kansas City were faced with a deteriorated situation: The city was as transit-poor as it had ever been, but they now had to contend with a risk-averse political establishment unwilling to expend political capital on transit, as well as a voting public that, year after year, came to associate any public discussion of light-rail with the controversial character of Clay Chastain instead of with the data-driven aspirations of MARC or KCATA. This guilt-by-association would endure for the next decade, and would more than any other single factor lead to defeat for all but one light-rail question that appeared on city ballots in that period.

1998 Initiative

Mere weeks after the 1997 initiative failed, Chastain set to work gathering fresh signatures for an initiative to be placed on the 1998 ballot. This time, he undertook a more detailed approach. First, to increase turnout, he hoped that sharing the ballot with the congressional midterm election. Second, instead of focusing on Union Station and leaving the light-rail routes for later planning, he proposed building a specific route from Union Station to Kansas City International Airport, nearly thirty miles to the north. Third, he was more detailed in his funding proposal. For this concept, funding would have come from extending a half-cent city sales tax from Jan. 1, 2001 to Dec. 31, 2005, which would have raised an estimated \$150 million. Half of this would have been spent on repairing the city's decaying stock of bridges, and the other half would have been used to leverage state/federal matching funds for light-rail. Chastain estimated, based on unnamed sources, that construction of the line from Union Station to the airport would cost \$600 million (Rodgers, 1998). While he launched his second light-rail attempt from a more solid base of facts, he still proceeded without technical input from planners or engineers. He relied solely on the city's FOCUS documents, which, like nearly all comprehensive plans, was written in intentionally vague aspirations rather than concrete and data-driven directives. Chastain provided no study of suitable alignment options, and aside from suggesting which bridge the line should use to cross the Missouri River, his plan made no mention of what neighborhoods the line would go through or where potential stops would be placed (Rodgers, 1998). This initiative was opposed by the Neighborhoods First Committee, a coalition of suburban neighborhood associations, several suburban-based members of the City Council, and by the Greater KC Chamber (Bogdon, 1998). The suburban neighborhood organizations, even those in the vaguely-defined Northland area through which the line would

pass, opposed Question 2 because the funding mechanism – the half-cent city sales tax that would have been extended through 2005 – was originally created to fund neighborhood improvements across the city, and the bulk of those funds would have been redistributed to the light-rail line instead (Rodgers, 1998). Mayor Cleaver maintained his position that the city government would only support a light-rail network that connected residents to jobs, and by that standard, this concept was no different than the KCATA alignment from 1997 (Menninger, 1998). In promoting Question 2, Chastain argued that light-rail was “Kansas City’s ticket to a better future,” while also promoting the energy savings of his proposal (Rodgers, 1998). While gathering signatures to get Question 2 onto the municipal ballot, Chastain framed the petition as a “citizen veto” of the Chamber’s vocal assertion that year that the Kansas City business and political establishment had no reason to support light-rail in the city. Despite the improved strategy employed by Chastain, or perhaps because of it, Question 2 failed at the ballot box, 45-55%. This would for the next eight years be the high-point of popularity for Chastain’s light-rail ideas, although there would be several more attempts at improving his odds.

Alongside his lack of technical specifics, one glaring flaw in Question 2 was, as in Chastain’s other proposals, the expectation of massive sums of matching funds from the federal government and the State of Missouri. While Chastain’s assertion that the federal government often did fund up to 80% of an urban transit project may have been somewhat accurate, he overlooked the fact that the United States Department of Transportation, particularly under Secretaries Rodney Slater and Norman Mineta, tended to be wary of transit plans that lacked technical expertise or the support of local elected officials (Burby, 2003). Another noteworthy omission, which will be explored in Chapter 5, was his lack of public input in the process. While Chastain’s initiatives were by definition backed by the signatures of thousands of Kansas Citians, his ideas were never explicitly formulated by groups of engaged Kansas City residents. He conducted his own research, he gathered signatures personally, and he was the sole designer of the routes proposed in his initiatives (Chastain, 1998). While this direct approach may have helped increase the speed of the notoriously-slow petition process, it also served to place the entire citywide discussion about light-rail under the name and increasingly-polarizing ego of Clay Chastain. Slotterback argues that a transportation election may live or die by the reputation of its local champions (2010), and in the case of light-rail in Kansas City, the issue became less

about transit and more about Chastain himself. The quantifiable impacts of this will be examined further in Chapter 5.

1999 Initiative

After the close defeat of the 1998 initiative, Chastain did what he would do several times in this period: He started a fresh petition drive for the same idea. Working closely with his previous concept, only this time changing the general areas of the starter lines, he quickly obtained the necessary 3,900 signatures and set to work selling his third light-rail plan in as many years. For this plan, he proposed extending a half-cent sales tax from 2000 to 2012, in order to raise \$500 million for a multi-modal system crisscrossing the metro area. Again drawing from the FOCUS plan for regional light rail, Chastain designed the system to have four main lines radiating outward from Union Station and Crown Center in the central city (Dobson, 1999a). Chastain's plan was designed to meet the selection criteria for the Federal Transportation Livability Initiative, a competitive transportation and Smart Growth program that was being heavily promoted by the Clinton-Gore administration in their final two years in office. Applications for the nationwide program were expected to be fiercely competitive, and since Chastain's plan would have sought nearly a billion dollars in federal matching funds, he was eager to persuade voters to approve his idea and thus legitimize it in the eyes of FTA officials.

As with the 1998 initiative, Chastain would pursue political victory without the endorsement of City Hall or the Chamber of Commerce. However, this was not because those organizations had lost interest in light-rail. In fact, mere days after Chastain's 1998 initiative was rejected, MARC and the Kansas City Chamber released a joint study showing that an improved and multi-modal transit network in Kansas City, much like the one outlined by the FOCUS plan and Clay Chastain, would more than double transit trips in the region, from 14.7 million to 34.2 million or more (Dobson, 1999b). This report further concluded that Kansas City residents would see "permanency and efficiency" in a rail-based system, and would be willing to support it with tax dollars and ridership. Based on this input, MARC and the Chamber continued to stress their support for light-rail in the abstract, while continuing to blast the technical failings of Chastain's plans. Chastain also had a fresh detractor in Kansas City's new mayor, Kay Waldo Barnes, who had been elected in the spring of 1999. Barnes had spent several years on the City Council, and was supportive of light-rail in the same abstract sense as most city leaders, but was openly

critical of Chastain's plans from the start of her administration. She was particularly critical of Chastain's lack of public involvement in his designs, arguing that something as expensive and expansive as the proposed light-rail network should receive voluminous input from the public (Dobson, 1999b). Barnes would refine this criticism throughout her eight years as Kansas City's mayor, pointing out again and again that Chastain's concepts never sought the public's input beyond the act of signing his petition forms. This direct critique of his methodology struck the core of the colorful populism that was evolving within the man and his tactics as he continued to lose both elections and goodwill among the voters. What had begun as a seemingly genuine effort to move a bold idea through the grassroots of Kansas City's voting public evolved within a few years into a quasi-Quixotic and increasingly vitriolic campaign against the civic leaders Chastain perceived as obstacles to his concepts' success. Rather than heed the direct criticism that his plans were grandiose and unworkable, he kept drawing them bigger and more elaborate. Rather than trust in the sluggish but legitimate bureaucracy involved in planning a transit network from scratch, he derided technical reports from MARC and accused his detractors of colluding with the Chamber of Commerce to keep Kansas City sprawling and dependent on autos and new suburban-home and freeway construction (Chastain, 1998). By November of 1999, his public relationship with City Hall and the new mayor had sunk to a depth of negativity and mutual distrust that would become permanent. His 1999 initiative failed, 37% to 63%, and Clay Chastain cemented his reputation among city leaders as a volatile and intractable force not to be aided, or even debated, by city resources. The gulf between these two voices was, for better or worse, what defined the conversation over light-rail in Kansas City until at least 2008. The city's transit system, and the city's residents themselves, would bear the direct cost of this political stalemate, and it was far from over in 1999.

2000 Initiative

After his nearly 2-1 defeat in 1999, Clay Chastain vowed very publicly to stop his petition drives and leave Kansas City for good. He sold the last of his properties in Kansas City and traveled to several small towns in the Southeast, purportedly looking for a fresh start (Dobson, 2000). But mere months later, Chastain returned to Kansas City to try again. His plan for 2000 was bigger and bolder than anything he had envisioned before. To improve his odds of success, he timed that year's initiative for the November general election, which was to feature

both a close presidential election and a high-profile senate race in Missouri. Also, in contrast to previous years, Chastain researched and mapped city-owned rights-of-way that he integrated into his proposal as a way to reduce acquisition costs. While his proposal focused once again on a route from downtown to the airport, this was the first of his light-rail initiatives to delineate, down to the specific tracts of land, where the system would be built. Finally, the funding mechanism for this proposal was unlike his previous suggestions. This time, instead of extending and re-appropriating an existing tax, he suggested a 20-year, half-cent sales tax dedicated exclusively to light-rail.

Still, Chastain's proposal lacked that vital connection to the city's political establishment, even as civic leaders grudgingly admitted that his efforts were a strong presence in the city's discussion of light-rail. One leader of the Regional Transit Alliance (RTA), a local organization of transit advocates, applauded Chastain's tenacity in promoting the concept of light-rail in Kansas City, but lamented his continued unwillingness to compromise or work with city planners or transit advocates outside of his core base of supporters (Dobson, 2000). Around the time of Chastain's 2000 initiative, the RTA had over 600 members, many of them influential business and neighborhood figures, and an alliance between Mr. Chastain and this advocacy group would have given substantial gravitas to a push for light-rail that year. However, Chastain never attended RTA meetings or sought their endorsement for his plans in 2000 or any year afterward. In interviews, he generally defended his lone-ranger tactics as taking immediate action to solve a major problem that the city's political leaders were content to study and discuss *ad infinitum* (Dobson, 2000). On Election Night that November, as Missouri voters elected a dead candidate over a living incumbent senator, and as Americans realized it would be several weeks before they knew who their next president would be, Chastain's fourth initiative in as many years was defeated almost as soundly as the previous year's, 39%-61%. In the aftermath of this defeat, Chastain finally did take the break from petition-gathering that he had promised the year before. He was not finished making his attempts, though he did spend most of the following eighteen months involved in a series of acrimonious libel lawsuits against several Kansas City pundits who criticized his light-rail initiatives in print and on air (Rodgers, 2000). These lawsuits, against some of Kansas City's most visible media personalities, caused significant political fallout for Chastain, and journalists like Rodgers openly wondered whether Chastain's increasingly public pettiness might be the ultimate undoing of this heretofore unstoppable activist. After Chastain's

fourth defeat, the city government finally appeared prepared to launch a proper political campaign to get a professionally-designed light-rail system on a citywide ballot. But at this point, it was an open question as to whether city voters would be willing or able to make the distinction between the two.

2001 Proposal

For most of 2000, planners at MARC were quietly laying the groundwork for a serious city-backed campaign for light-rail. Mayor Barnes appointed over a hundred Kansas City residents to a mix of route-planning committees, and the city sought and obtained “placeholder” funding in the 2002 federal budget, to be spent if and when the city’s plan was approved by voters (Logan, 2001). Part of the city’s increased interest in light-rail was due to the new mayor, who was an outspoken advocate of building capital projects to enhance the city’s national profile, but another motivation for City Hall’s suddenly-energized push was witnessing four years of Clay Chastain’s self-designed light-rail plans garner a steady stream of 30-45% of “yes” votes in successive years. The city likely reasoned that they could muster at least that much support for their in-house plan, and gain a solid majority of votes by incorporating professional design, proper public outreach, and a marketing campaign with far more resources than any of Chastain’s attempts. As they did in 1996-97, the city settled upon a starter-line and quickly announced it to city voters. The timing was a critical component. Since the project would depend on vast sums of federal matching funds, it would have to be approved by voters and submitted for FTA consideration before Congress finalized transportation appropriations in the fall of 2001, or else wait until the next window of mass-transit grants, which was projected for 2007. Also, unlike Chastain’s first four initiatives, this vision for light-rail in Kansas City laid out precisely where each stop would be placed, and how each segment would interact with existing and future transit connections.

Kansas City’s 2001 light-rail proposal included the following projections:

- A total length of 23.8 miles
- A total capital cost of \$793 million
- Federal funding match of \$475 million
- Funded by a half-cent sales tax levied citywide
- 15,700 daily riders
- An operating budget of \$15 million per year
- \$1.1 billion in future private investment adjacent to stops

Note: Figures in 2001 dollars

An overview of the proposal can be seen above. The route would have been 24 miles long, and run from a proposed park-and-ride in the Northland suburbs almost due south across the River, through downtown, and ending several miles south of the CBD near the Kansas City Zoo. The city also touted the robust involvement of the citizen committees that helped design the route (Logan, 2001). One key strategic choice for the city's campaign was a focus on redevelopment potential along the starter route. In addition to showing where the specific stops would be, the campaign also informed the public about transit-oriented development at key nodes along the route. The hefty 77-page proposal drawn up by the design team touted the statistic of 150,000 Kansas Citians residing within a mile of the route, along with an estimated 254,000 jobs ("Kansas City's Light Rail Option," 2001). The city engaged focus groups during the route-selection phase, organized a skilled design team of planners and developers, and gave presentations to neighborhood associations and chamber of commerce meetings across the metro area. In essence, the city set out to do everything that Clay Chastain neglected to do when it came to selling transit to car-dependent and tax-wary Kansas City voters. Still, it was another contentious summer as the debate rolled toward the election in early August of 2001, and many of the improved tactics used by the city's transit campaigners would be deftly matched by improved criticisms from the business community and several vocal residents along the proposed route. City officials would quickly learn that being the "anti-Chastain" would only amount to so much political progress among the voters.

As with the last time the city attempted to foster a discussion about light-rail, the most vocal opponent was the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. While the Chamber had for years maintained their vague support for effective transit in the metro area, they came out strongly against the city's proposal based largely on the city's figures illustrated in Table 4.2. In an open letter to the city, published four weeks prior to the 2001 election, the Chamber argued that the system under consideration would cost far too much in tax dollars for far too little public benefit (P. Levi, letter to Chamber members, July 11, 2001). They pointed out that the line in question was projected to carry less than 16,000 passengers per day, most of whom were already riding buses on the same general route. They then strongly urged the city, and the voters, to focus on the city's backlog of infrastructure repairs and the existing network of buses. The Chamber's very public rejection of the city's plan stirred controversy in the weeks leading up to the vote, and the very specific critiques of the city's figures and goals greatly undermined the 2001

proposal's status as a light-rail plan drawn up by mindful experts. The Chamber was not alone in publicly blasting the plan. Neighborhood associations along all segments of the proposed route spoke out against the plan, with several homeowners in one neighborhood claiming their area was already being scouted by developers known for gaining eminent-domain powers to redevelop high-density residential properties (Logan, 2001). This public fear of a potential land-grab, which was compounded by the city's apparent unwillingness to dispel the rumors at a set of public meetings throughout that summer, swayed many of the Midtown and Brookside homeowners (many of whom had eagerly supported Chastain's initiatives) against the city's proposal. As the election grew nearer, and as public opposition to the plan swelled only to meet silence from City Hall, the proposal appeared destined for defeat. On August 7th of 2001, the carefully-crafted but poorly-defended city plan for light-rail was defeated by Kansas City voters, 40%-60%.

Even though the city employed several tried-and-true tactics to win the election, their efforts lacked a lot of what Slotterback would later characterize as a proper transit-issue campaign. Just as a successful political campaign presents a candidate and defends his or her positions against partisan attack, so too should a successful transit campaign be prepared to rebut criticism and allay public concerns. The organizers of the city's transit campaign were much more adept at presenting a well-planned route than Clay Chastain, but they seemed to devote few resources to defending it politically. The charges laid out in the Chamber's open letter were obvious and well-reasoned critiques of the proposed starter line, but no one from City Hall appears to have rebutted them publicly. Nor was any attempt made by planners or councilmembers to put to rest homeowners' fears that a land-grab would result from building light-rail stations in their neighborhoods. This last point sheds light on a curious behavior of urban voters, namely that they seem to expect a much greater degree of transparency and honesty from their government than from an activist with a petition sheet, even when the two parties are proposing essentially identical ideas. There is scant evidence that the Brookside and Midtown homeowners, many of whom supported Chastain for four years prior to this, were at all concerned about eminent-domain and land-grabs when he was proposing light-rail for several Kansas City neighborhoods. It was not until the city produced a data-packed report on the subject that residents found reason to worry. And therein lies another curious double-standard for city-backed versus citizen-initiated transit proposals: Voters ostensibly value expertise and

transparent information, but it would also seem that presenting them with new and detailed information also leads to new questions and the potential for fresh controversies. It was in this twisted mire of undefended accusations, unanticipated controversies, and a baffling catch-22 on the part of voter expectations that the city's first full attempt at a light-rail proposition became immobilized. In the wake of its proposition's defeat, the city's political establishment moved on from light-rail. Mayor Barnes and the Chamber were able to unite in pursuit of downtown redevelopment and a new downtown arena, both of which would be well-accomplished by the close of the 2000s. When the city and its moneyed/technocratic resources left the light-rail debate in 2001, it left an outsized void in the discussion that not even Clay Chastain could fill. But he would try nonetheless.

2002 Initiative

For 2002, Chastain mounted an uncharacteristically quiet initiative. While there may have been some political vindication in witnessing the city's attempt at light-rail sink as easily as his own repeated attempts, the nation's political priorities changed in the fall of 2001. With the visible prosperity of the dot-com boom now gone, and with a population now focused on the new War on Terror, there was virtually no place in Kansas City politics for a discussion about transit. Also occurring during this time was Clay Chastain's move out of state. The man who had for years pledged to leave town after each of his ballot initiatives failed had finally done so, resettling in rural Tennessee (Martin, 2006). Despite having left the city, Chastain still was not finished with Kansas City's transit needs. He returned to gather petition signatures for a 2002 initiative, one that was focused primarily on building a network of bicycle and pedestrian trails throughout the city. There was a transit component attached, but it was limited to short-run trolleys and a small streetcar line. Examining the press coverage of local politics in that year, one finds virtually no mention of Chastain or his 2002 initiative. Even the Kansas City Star, which had for years harshly editorialized against every one of his proposals, was silent that year. Clearly, Chastain had finally crossed into political exile, and even Chastain himself seemed resigned to defeat that year. His 2002 trails and trolleys initiative, though it gathered enough signatures to appear on the ballot that year, failed 35%-65%. Again uncharacteristically for a man whose outspoken narcissism often led him to compare himself to Jesus Christ in media interviews (Martin, 2006, et al.), Chastain left Kansas City quietly after the defeat, granting no

interviews to area journalists who had long since become accustomed to his media savvy and omnipresent self-promotion. During this initiative drive, and the one that would follow the next year, Chastain seemed to be operating on automatic-pilot. He proposed the same sort of transit networks, funded by the same sources of tax dollars, and sought public input from the same Brookside neighborhoods he always had. For a man who seemed to thrive on public attention and controversy, Chastain seemed to have little energy for a prolonged fight once the media and the political establishment stopped caring.

2003 Initiative

Much of this disinterest carried over to Chastain's 2003 initiative, which consisted of his typical airport-to-downtown light-rail route, plus provisions for bus rapid transit (BRT) and a long-term transit endowment. This was the first of Chastain's plans to make use of BRT in Kansas City, the groundwork for which had been laid that year through a federal grant to establish the city's first BRT route in Midtown (Martin, 2006). What was most remarkable about this initiative, aside from Chastain's temporary relocation from another state, was its unexpected inclusion of bus-based transit options. For years, Chastain had blasted buses as "old-fashioned" and a mode incapable of attracting white-collar commuters (Chastain, 1998), but in this instance, he seemed willing to try the novelty of BRT if it would improve the viability of his proposed system. As mentioned previously, Mayor Barnes and the Chamber of Commerce were devoting great attention to downtown redevelopment and a new NBA/NHL-capable downtown arena, and the city's urban planning community was still reeling from the 2001 defeat. Virtually no one spoke out in favor of light-rail at this time, nor did anyone prominent take the time to rebut Chastain's latest idea or warn the public to vote it down that year. For the second year in a row, Chastain met the city's expectations while at the same time defying his own personality for a second time. His 2003 attempt received a vote typical of Chastain's ideas, 36%-64%, and he quietly left Kansas City once again.

After the 2003 vote, Clay Chastain would take a break from light-rail politics. In 2004, downtown Kansas City's congresswoman, Karen McCarthy, retired. Chastain temporarily moved back to Kansas City to run for the seat as a Republican, all the while touting his experience and expertise in urban design and Kansas City politics. In media appearances, Chastain expressed a burning desire to once again face longtime rival Emanuel Cleaver, the former Kansas City mayor

who had easily secured the Democratic nomination in what was at the time Missouri's second most Democratic congressional district (Martin, 2006). Chastain was soundly defeated in the primary by Jeanne Patterson, the wife of billionaire Kansas City businessman Neal Patterson, but Cleaver would easily win the election in November of 2004. The former mayor, whose three-word derision of a transit proposal in 1997 had overshadowed light-rail debates almost as much as Clay Chastain's narcissistic rants and back-of-the-envelope designs, had bested Clay Chastain once again, likely for the last time. Chastain moved back to Tennessee, and Kansas City effectively forgot about light-rail for the next few years. The city's first quasi-BRT line opened during this period and was quickly touted as a transit success among planners and local residents. It ran along Main Street, approximately where the Kansas City Streetcar will one day operate, and while it was surprisingly successful for KCATA and quickly spawned a second route nearby, the city remained politically ambivalent about expanding or revamping transit beyond bus-based options in the urban core.

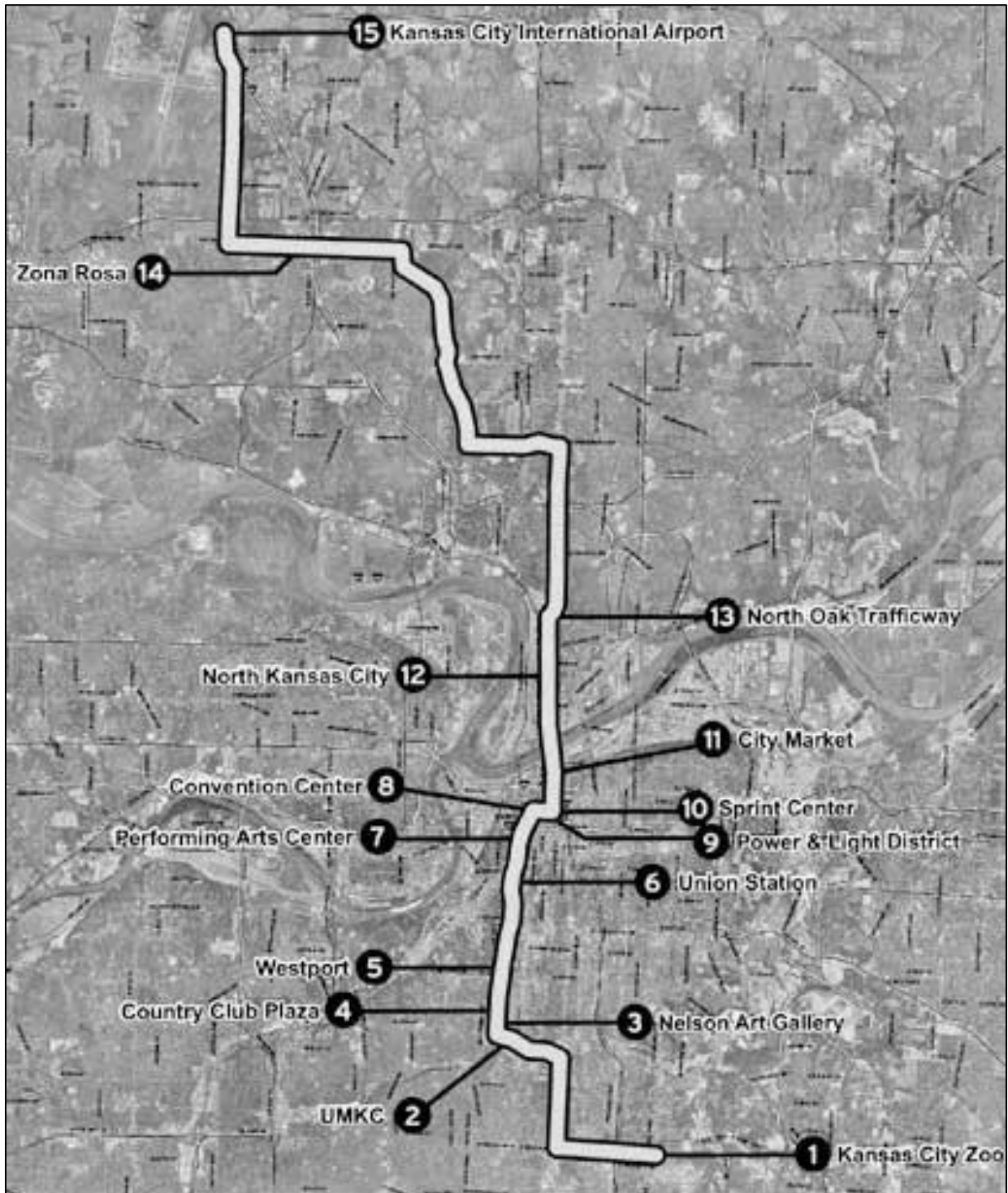
2006 Initiative

The most remarkable moment of Kansas City's light-rail saga occurred on the night of November 7, 2006. That night, as America watched both houses of Congress flip to Democratic majorities, and as a prominent former Kansas Citian became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from Missouri, Kansas City voters approved a light-rail initiative sponsored by Clay Chastain, 53%-47% (Horsley, 2006). Three years after the 2003 initiative slipped quietly beneath the political waves in Kansas City, Chastain shocked the city by winning approval for a project he had touted for nearly a decade. This initiative bore a resemblance to most of his previous light-rail plans, with a lengthy yet linear light-rail starter route stretching from KCI to Swope Park. A map of the proposed route is illustrated in Figure 4.1. As in years past, Chastain proposed extending the existing transportation sales tax, although this initiative also suggested shifting existing funds from KCATA's bus network to help cover costs. He estimated that the light-rail portion would cost \$900 million.

Much of the controversy and media derision surrounding this year's initiative was the provision in the initiative calling for the revamping of Penn Valley Park, which overlooked downtown and Union Station from picturesque bluffs (Martin, 2006). Since Kansas Citians and most media figures were by now well-versed in Chastain's brand of light-rail, he spent much of

the 2006 campaign focusing on the park provision, which involved rerouting all vehicular through-traffic – including the arterial Broadway Boulevard – around the park and installing a set of aerial gondolas to ferry visitors up the hillside from Union Station to the Liberty Memorial within the park. Penn Valley Park had been designed by George Kessler, and like Union Station it was a beloved Kansas City location that had fallen into obvious decay. And, as he had attempted with Union Station, Clay Chastain attached the renovation of the park to his broader light-rail plan, thus again attempting to ride a wave of nostalgia and civic pride to a victory for his otherwise-unpopular transit scheme. The aerial gondolas, which had been mentioned in previous initiatives but were made a central element of this year’s plan, were mocked in the print media for their Disneyesque whimsy and impractical design as a method of urban transportation (Martin, 2006). Still, the light-rail component of his 2006 plan was considerable, as Figure 4.1 indicates. The light-rail component connected most of the city’s major tourist attractions, as well as a terminus at Kansas City International Airport. The proposed route also included connections to North Oak Trafficway and Zona Rosa, two major commercial nodes in the city’s northern suburbs. Noticeably absent from Chastain’s proposed route were connections to Kansas City’s growing eastern suburbs, as well as the low-income Northeast neighborhoods. The Kansas suburbs were not included either, though this was likely due to the state boundary preventing a bi-state election on the matter.

Figure 3.1: Map of the 2006 Initiative's Light-Rail Component



Note: Numbers indicate sequence of stops on northbound route.

Map created by KCATA, 2007

Leading up to the 2006 election, the city's major elected officials steered clear of public comment on Chastain's plan, but a few feature articles in the print media managed to expose the opinions of local transit advocates (Martin, 2006), and senior city engineers (Campbell, 2006). These individuals were openly dismissive of Chastain and his latest plan, and regional transit advocate Kite Singleton was more than a little profane in his assessment of the ways in which Chastain's ideas were unworkable and in which they had "poisoned the well" of light-rail planning in Kansas City (Martin, 2006). In that same article by Martin, the urban planner responsible for managing Kansas City's then-new BRT system contended that no experts had ever been able to work with Chastain, because he was always instantly dismissive of the designs of others and always unwilling to let "insiders" slow down his process with technical assessments and public input. Deflecting the criticisms of trained engineers and widely-respected urban activists was something Chastain had not dealt with in some time, and he seemed eager to ignore their arguments and instead focus on his familiar refrain of playing David to the establishment's Goliath. Still, the points raised by those experts are essential to the core argument of this thesis: That a rejection of collaboration and public input in the planning process leads to an insular project that stakeholders neither recognize nor buy into. Additionally, when a proposal relies on gimmicks, nostalgia, or cheap anti-establishment politics, instead of on sound planning and design principles, it is likely to be treated with the derision that met almost all of Clay Chastain's grand ideas. But despite these obvious flaws, and despite Clay Chastain having the political appeal of a tax on puppies, Chastain's 2006 initiative passed that November. Whether the city was prepared or not, it would now be faced with a lengthy and very public discussion of what would happen next.

After the unexpected victory, the Council invited Chastain to Kansas City, and made public overtures to heal some of the political fracas surrounding the issue and work out the specifics of the plan now passed by voters. But Chastain, who was by now living in Virginia and remarried to a litigator, threatened legal action if his light-rail plan were excessively altered or delayed by this process (Cooper & Helling, 2007). The City Council and the outgoing mayor, Kay Barnes, commissioned a feasibility study led by local engineering and planning firm HNTB, Inc. The study was projected to take most of 2007 to complete, and in the meantime, a vocal group of Kansas City businessmen were circulating a petition to put the 2006 initiative on the ballot again, this time to repeal it. Though he wasn't in the city to contribute to it, Chastain had

finally sparked a genuine conversation about light-rail among the major stakeholders in Kansas City. City politicians were being forced to “obey the wishes of voters” and support light-rail. Most of the city’s major planning and engineering firms were involved in studying Chastain’s proposal. Community groups along the alignment (as well as those left out of the plans) were speaking out, and the business community was working to get the concept repealed before any more tax dollars could be committed to it. All in all, the nine months between the election and the presentation of the feasibility study would feature some of Kansas City’s most vibrant discussions on the topic of light-rail. As the latter date drew nearer, engineers began expressing doubts about the physical feasibility of certain segments of the line, and fiscal analysts questioned whether Chastain’s cost estimates were anywhere close to accurate for the project (Cooper & Smith, 2007).

That August, on a single day, the City Council would hear final reports on both the feasibility study and the status of the repeal petition. The day’s events would bring much-needed, yet still ultimately pessimistic, structure to the nine-month debate over light-rail. First, the city clerk certified the repeal petition, meaning the council would have to either repeal Chastain’s ballot initiative legislatively, or else place it on the next scheduled ballot as a plebiscite. This served to give the council a firm deadline in their deliberations, or at the very least, a legal way to quash the Chastain plan if it proved unworkable. It was on that latter point that the engineering report would provide even greater resolution. The report encapsulated much of what urban planners had said about Clay Chastain’s plans for years, but it still jarred the political establishment assembled to read it that evening. Virtually no segment of Chastain’s rosy projections went unscathed. First, and perhaps most importantly, his cost estimates were severely off-the-mark. The team estimated the 26-mile route outlined in his plan would cost \$1.5 billion or more, substantially higher than the \$900 million Chastain had estimated before the election (Cooper & Helling, 2007). The report further estimated that the line would produce operating losses of over \$73 million per year by 2034. There were also suggestions that Chastain’s lack of public workshops or inclusive design practices might open up the project to lawsuits, or some political controversy at the very least. On the technical side, engineers found a litany of major flaws in the concept. For example, none of the existing Missouri River crossings in Kansas City could support the added weight and infrastructure of light-rail track, meaning the city would have to lobby the state and federal governments for an entirely new bridge with approaches. The

engineers also found several points along the proposed route where the slope was too steep or the ground too soft for light-rail tracks. Given these findings, and the tenacity of those seeking to repeal the concept altogether, it quickly became clear that the city would not implement Clay Chastain's voter-backed proposal. While many on the council were quietly relieved at now having quantitative justification for rejecting Chastain's latest idea, the city's planners were openly excited by the publication of so many facts and figures. The general manager of KCATA, for example, was pleased that the city's elected officials finally had a firm grasp on the economic and infrastructure costs of light-rail, which he hoped would better inform their own internal efforts at planning for light-rail in the future (Cooper & Helling, 2007). Three months after they received this damning report, the council voted 10-3 to repeal the plan. Clay Chastain's decade of petitioning had finally resulted in a successful election, but his plan was ultimately undone by the numerous and glaring flaws that came about as a result of his consistent failure to work with community advocates or engineers, any one of whom likely would have helped him correct some of the flaws in his proposal. Therein lies the ultimate undoing of Clay Chastain and of any like-minded urban activist or politician who works only with an eye on the end result, and not on the process by which one gets there. And while he would fight the city's decision in court for several years, Chastain would cease to have a direct impact on light-rail in Kansas City after this point. This historical analysis, much like transit planning in Kansas City, continues based solely on the actions of professional urban planners in that region. For just as the city council was voting to repeal the Chastain initiative, the city and MARC were already well into the planning stages of their second attempt at persuading city voters to approve a light-rail system designed and promoted by the city's professional planning staff. Now that the city had a concrete set of figures and cost estimates, as well as the public-relations lessons learned after the 2001 failure, planners were hopeful that 2008 would bring another voter approval of light-rail, this time of a system truly supported by elected officials and eligible for federal endorsement and funding.

On a side note, the portion of the 2006 initiative dealing with the restoration of Penn Valley Park never got past Chastain's drawing board. The park, which contained the National World War I Memorial, an Interstate right-of-way, and the grounds of two massive and newly-constructed federal office buildings, was far too entrenched in federal control and regulation for the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department to bother redesigning (Cooper & Helling, 2007). Chastain's gondolas were never built, but the added presence of so many government

employees to the park helped to gentrify the area, and Penn Valley Park was revitalized this way. And though he would appear in Kansas City and Jefferson City from time to time after this, usually in pursuit of a lawsuit against the city's repeal of his initiative, Clay Chastain has never again been seen gathering signatures in Kansas City. After 2007's repeal vote, it seems Chastain finally lived up to his longtime promise, and left Kansas City for good.

2008 Proposition

While the saga of Clay Chastain's version of light-rail wound down after the 2007 repeal vote, the impressions he left on Kansas City voters would last for several more years. His coloring of transit policy with identity politics would endure, as would the public skepticism he engendered by promoting vague schemes and fuzzy fiscal calculations. These scars on the body politic would have to be healed or at least addressed by city planners as they geared up for their second formal attempt at a light-rail system for Kansas City.

In the midst of the aforementioned study period for the 2006 concept, Kansas City elected a new mayor, Mark Funkhouser, who would soon bring his own unique brand of personality politics to the city's transit debate. Before becoming mayor, Funkhouser had long served as the city's auditor, and had made a regional name for himself as a numbers-driven policy wonk who also happened to have a healthy dose of personal quirks and egotistical tendencies (Janovy, 2007). As city auditor, Funkhouser had witnessed Chastain's political saga, and he made transit reform a part of his mayoral candidacy in 2007. Soon after taking office, yet still before the council officially repealed Chastain's successful initiative, Funkhouser launched a multi-county effort to propose a regional transit network. After months of meetings involving officials from three Missouri counties, plus planners, residents, and business leaders, Funkhouser's steering committee produced a transit proposal of massive proportions (Spivak, 2008). Dwarfing anything previously proposed by Chastain or MARC, this plan featured five modes of transit and stops in over a dozen suburbs. The heart of the network was drawn as a twelve-mile light-rail route running from south-central Kansas City through downtown and across the River into the Northland. Branching off of this would be regional commuter-rail, BRT lines, a streetcar for the CBD, and express buses connecting the northern end of the light-rail alignment to the airport (Spivak et al., 2008). The mayor's plan also involved public buy-in from people in all three Missouri counties of Kansas City (Jackson, Clay, and Platte), and a city-

commissioned poll showed a majority of respondents supported the regional-transit concept. The main obstacle to the plan was, as with Chastain's 2006 initiative, the cost structure. According to Missouri's authorizing legislation, transportation sales taxes have a statutory limit of fifteen years before they must be reauthorized by voters (Spivak et al., 2008), a time limit which would significantly impact the interest rates on the revenue bonds that would be issued to finance the transit network. The full network was estimated to cost \$1.2 billion, and would be funded by a half-cent sales tax in the three affected Missouri counties. The mayor was anxious to get this plan before voters in November of 2008, but it was unclear as to whether officials and engineers in three counties could organize a unified plan with a final cost estimate in time for that election. Fortunately for the mayor, who had by now invested substantial political capital in selling transit, the city had another plan in the works, one that would gain more publicity as it became clear that Funkhouser's three-county network would not be finalized or approved by necessary political leaders in time for the 2008 election.

This second option was initiated by KCATA, and was initially drawn up as a level-of-service report explaining the specifics of the twelve-mile light-rail "spine" of Funkhouser's broader plan. As that plan's backers began to realize that their bold plan was perhaps too ambitious and involved to be ready by November, they sought a ballot-ready alternative and found that this section had been thoroughly researched and planned by KCATA, and was thus the easiest to advertise to voters and federal funding agencies. Since roughly eighty percent of the line was in Jackson County, and the remainder entered only a small part of Clay County, negotiations among jurisdictions could be simplified. Still, while political wrangling was reduced and the plan was simplified, the light-rail portion was still the most expensive mode of the five proposed in the mayor's regional plan. Ultimately, however, the city council settled on this alignment, though they added two miles of eastbound track to the southern end as a way to mollify community leaders from the East Side (Spivak, 2008). The final cost was estimated at \$815 million, or \$58 million per mile (Smith & Horsley, 2008). The city expected to receive half of this funding from the federal government, and the remainder was to be paid by a 3/8-cent sales tax increase for 25 years. The city was able to increase the sunset provision from 15 years after city attorneys assured them of its constitutionality (Spivak, 2008). The council voted unanimously to approve the final plan and cost structure, and the city's second-ever light-rail proposition was set to appear on the ballot on the same day as the 2008 presidential election.

Unlike Chastain's plans, or even the city's 2001 proposition, this attempt included substantial public outreach and coordination with other municipalities. Mayor Funkhouser continued his metro-wide meetings even after the city's proposal was whittled down from its original scope, and the city used social media and YouTube videos to promote the light-rail starter line to voters (Spivak, 2008). Opportunities for public buy-in were legion over the course of this campaign, and the city remained confident that a transparent process, combined with rising gas prices and the recent success of Chastain's plan, would produce enough favorable votes to ensure victory. Yet on election night, the plan was narrowly defeated, 45%-55%.

Academic analyses of why the city's second, and in many ways politically ideal, attempt at light-rail failed are in short supply, though Chapter 5 of this document will attempt one such analysis. It could be argued that the proposed alignment was too small to have any discernable impact on the suburban voters who filled polling places on that landmark election day. Voters may also have been turned off by the high cost of the line, nearly \$60 million per mile. Or it may have been that Kansas City's voters were simply tired of seeing light-rail on the city's ballots year after year. Whether they were supporters of Clay Chastain, or of the city, or of neither, the city's voting and taxpaying public could likely only tolerate so much controversy and inaction before they simply tuned out the conversation. This was likely compounded by the perception that most of these plans were designed by city officials and "downtown interests." Having examined the political history of light-rail planning in Kansas City, this project now proceeds to the analysis phase. As will be detailed in Chapter 5, these various initiatives and proposals will be subjected to two objective analyses, and it is hoped that several driving factors will emerge from the process. These factors will conceivably address the specifics of why so many plans failed over the years, and what city officials should change if they wish to be successful in their next attempt.

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

When examining the repeated failures of a regional planning project over time, it is insufficient to simply chronicle the ways in which past events could have been conducted more effectively. In order to have a true policy impact, a thesis such as this must also describe concrete solutions to very specific problems. It would be simplistic to blame the failure of transit planning in Kansas City on a single politically-toxic stakeholder or a flawed design process. Cities are a complex function of a complex species, and answers such as these are insufficient for understanding the wide array of social interactions at play. Still, reason dictates that an application of the methods and improvements utilized in this project may have a positive impact on the process in the future. Furthermore, the survey responses will greatly inform the application of the above concepts as they are applied to predicting future outcomes as designers and policymakers in the Kansas City region plan for the next phases of mass transit there.

In order to properly examine the political standing of public transportation initiatives in Kansas City, one must understand both the broader history of the subject within the region, as well as survey individual residents and stakeholders to ascertain their preferences and reasons for supporting or opposing public transportation proposals as voters and taxpayers. This paper studies both the context of transit in Kansas City and its reputation among voters. The first portion will be a historical overview and analysis, to be completed independently. The latter portion is a survey to be distributed to numerous Kansas City residents in a “snowball format,” each participant being asked to share the survey with another citizen. In this study, the unit of analysis is the individual Kansas City voter. The unit of measurement, closely related to this, is the degree to which these residents believe public outreach should play in the transportation-planning process. The survey of Kansas City residents gives planners some hard data regarding voter preferences for the planning and building of transit systems. Also, by applying the proven metrics of Haas and Slotterback, this project offers a quantifiable strategy for improving a proposal’s chances of success at the ballot box, giving this project a total of two methods for advancing the notion that public participation is an essential aspect of designing effective transit networks that move people, improve lives, and pass public muster at the ballot box.

The study sample consists of two parts. For the historical analysis portion, the sample is the history of transit initiatives and plans in Kansas City from 1997-2008. For the survey portion,

the sample consists of those Kansas Citians who volunteer to complete the survey. The sampling frame is, therefore, Kansas City residents who, for one reason or another, feel compelled to express opinions on transit. These participants may be regular riders, or may live or work near a proposed route, or they may be suburban motorists who merely dislike funding transit in general. While this sampling frame is likely to provide highly insightful responses to the survey questions, relying on such a self-motivated subset of residents may limit the study's generalizability. Still, this sample of participants actively interested in transit will provide valuable data. The survey was distributed, in both paper and online format, to several neighborhood associations in Kansas City's three Missouri counties.

While the survey responses are vital to understanding the ways in which residents view their role in the planning process, the historical research helps to understand the origins, backers, and political context of each transit initiative or proposal within the study period. The application of the Slotterback and Haas metrics, explained in Chapter 2, will take place in Chapter 5. The survey portion provides essential data on what planning officials in the Kansas City region may or may not be doing correctly vis-à-vis their interactions with ordinary voters in the process of planning for new and improved transit. Further, the analysis of this original data will inform the final plan of action that is presented at the conclusion of this project.

The survey was taken either online or in person at a neighborhood meeting. Most of the responses are on a Likert scale, with options for residents too new to the area to have any firsthand knowledge of the city's many transit campaigns. The bulk of the questions asked participants to evaluate their perceptions of the way Kansas City's government conducts public outreach when planning transit projects. They were also shown Arnstein's Ladder, and were asked to indicate where on the ladder they believed the value of public input currently laid, and where it should lie. Participants were asked to rank the comparative importance of timeliness versus inclusive design, which will provide sure evidence of the degree to which cities should balance public outreach and time/budget constraints if they wish for their project to be approved in a city election.

As mentioned previously, the unit of measurement was the degree to which residents believe public outreach should play a part in the transportation-planning process. Asking participants to rank the two options listed above – timeliness and inclusiveness – helped to

indicate which should be a higher priority for planners and elected officials. The unit of analysis was the individual voter. The key variable in the historical-analysis portion was the electoral performance of each initiative. The analysis also examined whether community members were substantially involved in each initiative in past years, and whether such involvement led to an accompanying increase in popular support at the ballot.

This project's analytic strategy was twofold. As stated previously, the primary analysis was a single-exploratory historical analysis of transit-related ballot actions (initiatives and proposals) in Kansas City over the last twenty years. This study examined each action, its community and civic backers, and its final performance on the ballot. This analysis provided a general framework for the mass-transit climate in Kansas City in a socio-political context, against which the secondary analysis was compared. The secondary analysis more directly examined individual desires, and took the form of a survey. Triangulation between these two methods provided a more complete picture of both angles of the hypothesis: Namely that Kansas City voters admire and expect genuine public participation in the planning process, though perhaps not as highly as factors such as timeliness or cost, but that a lack of such public input in Kansas City's past had at least some influence on the failure of previous proposals.

This thesis adds to the understanding of voter preferences in the Kansas City area. However, its generalizability to other American cities is limited by the factors that make the Kansas City case so unique. Kansas City is a vast, auto-oriented city with a history of suburbanization, frequent car use, and skepticism of public transportation. Each of these factors plays a role in shaping voter preferences in the region, and these are unlikely to precisely match public opinion in other American cities. Still, if it can be demonstrated that voters recognize the trade-offs between efficiency and inclusiveness, and that they still stake out expectations along the range between the two, then that segment of the study may be applied and replicated elsewhere. Kansas Citians and their relationship with public transportation may be unique, but the broader concepts of voter buy-in and public participation in the planning process are not. The results of this thesis, particularly the documentation of what residents viewed as the most important factor in transit design, will thus be somewhat generalizable to the transportation planning process in other North American cities.

The mixed-methods approach employed here was vital to understanding the ways in which both social and individual forces interact to influence voting patterns on the specific subject of transportation. Examining both individual preferences and broader regional sentiments helps to tell the whole story. No matter their opinion of it, Kansas Citians have lived with public transportation in various modes for nearly a century. However, the notion of involving the public in the planning discussion is a relatively new concept. This study helped to introduce this young concept to a community that long ago lost faith in transit planning and to document the resulting reaction at the individual level. Through this process, it was hoped that the voters of Kansas City, and the policymakers who serve at their direction, might have realized new avenues for affecting change in their communities and solving the large-scale planning issues that have plagued that region for decades.

Chapter 5 – Analysis of Transit Elections

As discussed previously, this project analyzes Kansas City’s nine LRT-related elections using the metrics established by Slotterback and the Haas research group. The six factors identified by Slotterback, and the seventeen identified by Haas’ group, are listed in this chapter. Then, each of the nine campaigns is analyzed and scored based on these factors. Virtually all of the factors are dichotomous variables, meaning each factor was either present or not present in the campaigns. If the factor was present that year, it receives a point, marked “X” on the table. If the factor was not present, the space is left blank. The clarity of this method is particularly effective for the Slotterback metric, which consists of six “present/not present” factors with virtually no room for variation. The Haas metric uses a more vague terminology for many of its seventeen variables, and some of them require deeper explanation and analysis. Once each metric is applied, and each transit election given a rough score, the data is further examined to indicate which factors demonstrate the least and greatest potential for increasing a transit plan’s chances of electoral success. In sum, the twenty-three factors utilized here serve to objectively determine which procedures and tactics are vital to persuading voters to support a project, as well as which factors are irrelevant to the process or incapable of being affected by political actors. The success-building tactics that could and should be utilized by political actors are described toward the end of this chapter, and make up a substantial part of the suggested plan of action that this document will constitute.

The Slotterback Metric

The Slotterback metric, as it appears in the literature, consists of six equally-weighted factors that help to determine a project’s viability among voters. All six factors relate to public outreach and voter buy-in, and Slotterback argues that a project that fails to maintain these six values is likely to fail at the polls. The factors are as follows: The presence of a local (and reputable) champion, a mixed-methods approach to gathering and integrating public input, a clearly-defined sense of the desired outcome(s), a political establishment willing to stake credibility on the proposal, a planning team with significant design expertise, and the use of effective visual tools when presenting the proposal to voters. As demonstrated in Table 5.1, these six factors allow for a straightforward ranking of the nine campaigns, with the city’s two light-rail proposals scoring far higher than Clay Chastain’s seven initiatives.

Table 5.1: The Slotterback Metric in Kansas City’s Transit Elections

Campaign Factor	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2006	2008
Presence of a local (and reputable) champion									X
Mixed-methods approach to gathering public input					X				X
Clearly-defined sense of outcome(s)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Political establishment willing to stake credibility					X				X
Planning team with significant design expertise					X				X
Use of effective visual tools in public outreach			X		X			X	X
Total Score	1	1	2	1	5	1	1	2	6

The Slotterback metric, according to Table 5.1, indicates a clear bias in favor of the 2001 and 2008 proposals conducted by the city government. In fact, of the nine campaigns studied, only the 2008 light-rail proposal scored a full six points. The 2001 proposal met five of the six criteria, but that year’s campaign did not feature the visible support of a local champion or political figure. The seven Chastain initiatives scored far lower, largely due to Chastain’s insular campaign tactics and poor political reputation among city voters. Each of the six factors warrants further explanation, as do the scores of each campaign, and this information is listed below.

Presence of a local (and reputable) champion

The first factor examines, from a political and public-relations standpoint, whether the campaign was led by a local and reputable supporter. In Kansas City’s case, local politics is generally dominated by the city’s mayor. As Kansas City has a council-manager form of government, the mayor is removed from day-to-day administrative tasks and is thus free to support and pursue policy directives that impact the entire city. In the case of a transit election, the mayor’s support would constitute a tremendous source of political capital, and would add a great deal of legitimacy to a proposal. Naturally, the support of the city’s mayor would matter most to the 2001 and 2008 city-backed proposals, but the 2001 proposal did not conclusively include the vocal support of the city’s then-mayor. While Mayor Kay Barnes was supportive of

the proposal in 2001, at least in terms of allowing the city manager to devote the substantial city resources required for the project's design and election campaign, a documentary review of that year's media coverage shows virtually no outspoken comment by the mayor, other than the sort of perfunctory support a mayor might give to a municipal sewer-bond proposal. Therefore, if a rigorous examination of the city's 2001 light-rail campaign cannot produce evidence of the mayor's support, then by Slotterback's logic of voter perceptions, it is unlikely that many voters in 2001 were swayed by the mayor's limited public support of the issue. While Barnes' lukewarm public support likely was not the deciding factor in the 2001 proposal's defeat, it is worth documenting as a political lesson for the city. By contrast, the 2008 proposal was prominently led by Mayor Mark Funkhouser, and he personally led many of the negotiations with stakeholders and suburban governments.

While a city's mayor is generally the most visible political actor, he or she is by no means the sole actor. Civic activists also have the potential to champion large ideas like citywide transit plans, and it is not unreasonable to classify Clay Chastain as such a figure. During the timeframe in question, Chastain was one of the city's better-known activists, and had a media profile larger than most city councilmembers. However, his seven initiatives fail under this first factor due to the question of reputation. While Chastain was visible and well-known, he was not generally considered a well-liked or publicly-supported figure in most of the period's media coverage. Further, given the media's frequent repeating of Chastain's lack of technical qualifications, it is reasonable to infer that Kansas City voters were fully aware that Clay Chastain lacked the technical knowledge to design feasible transit networks, as well as the gravitas among elected officials to enact his plans legislatively. Thus, while Chastain was a local and fearless champion of his initiatives, his campaigns lacked the broad public support vital to an initiative's success.

Mixed-methods approach to gathering public input

The second Slotterback factor is also simple to measure and interpret. Since Clay Chastain's seven initiatives did not seek formal public input beyond a petition signature, none of them are awarded a point on this matter. The city's two proposals, on the other hand, had well-documented public input that spanned several established methods. In both cases, the city utilized focus groups and public meetings, as well as direct-mail flyers and surveys. Internet-

based outreach was also used. Slotterback reasons that a mixed-methods approach helps to gain a wide range of resident inputs, and the city appears to have made an earnest attempt to do so.

Clearly-defined sense of outcomes

This factor is the sole one in which every campaign receives a point. For many of Clay Chastain's productions, this was the sole point earned. Presenting voters with a simple and well-explained plan is one of the simpler tasks of a political campaign, and this is demonstrated by the apparent ease with which the non-technical Chastain managed to explain his ideas to the city's voters in plain English. An example of this can be seen in the language of the 2006 initiative, shown in Appendix A. The city was likewise able to easily explain their concepts and outcomes to voters, and media coverage of the campaigns shows few examples of complaints of confusing or vague ballot language. While this factor is as vital to achieving electoral success as the other five, the fact that every campaign scored equally indicates that supporters of transit in Kansas City are not lacking in clarity.

Political establishment willing to stake credibility

This factor is closely related to the first, and refers to whether the city's elected officials and civic boosters are willing to invest their time, money, and political capital on the success of a transit campaign. Since Chastain's seven initiatives were conducted without the support of the city's political leaders, none gained any such devotion from elected officials. The two city proposals, on the other hand, received a point each for this factor. Although the 2001 proposal suffered from having only the tacit support of the city's then-mayor, it was still promoted by the establishment, and the fact that the council, mayor, and city manager all supported it to some degree indicates a willingness to stake their reputations on the campaign that year. As before, the 2008 campaign featured more visible support from elected officials, and Mayor Funkhouser was particularly willing to attach his name and influence to the plan.

Planning team with significant design expertise

This factor is also easily-scored. Since Clay Chastain designed his seven plans himself, none of his campaigns received a point here. The city's proposals, which featured input from planners and engineers from city hall, MARC, and KCATA, as well as the work of paid transit consultants, were better able to promote their teams' expertise in the planning of transit systems.

By Slotterback's logic, this factor helps to persuade voters that a plan has been properly designed and vetted by experts who know what they are doing. Voters tend to be more supportive of plans that are designed by trained experts, and only two of the nine campaigns can claim to have that.

Use of effective visual tools in public outreach

This factor is perhaps the most difficult of the six to define and examine. The question of what constitutes "effective" is an evaluation that goes beyond the scope of this project, but this factor can still be well-studied without that particular adjective. Even though presenting eye-catching visuals as part of a transit campaign is one of the simpler aspects of this process, only two of Chastain's seven initiatives appear to have utilized informative visual tools such as maps or renderings. While he may have produced such graphics for all seven of his campaigns, only two appear in the media's rather extensive coverage of his many campaigns. In keeping with Slotterback's voters-as-media-consumers logic, it is rational to assume that if Chastain did not present visual tools through the mass media of the era, then it is highly unlikely that any such tools were able to sway many voters into supporting his concepts. As in other areas, the city's efforts in this regard surpassed Chastain's. Many of the public outreach methods utilized by the city featured clear visuals of the proposed project, including many of the direct-mail pieces and the project's YouTube page. As technology continues to advance, more and more options for presenting visual tools to voters will become available. While the city seems to have mastered this concept already, planners should remain mindful of the influence that effective visuals has on swaying city voters.

Taken together, Slotterback's six factors represent some direct, if simple, criteria for determining a transit campaign's effectiveness at achieving voter buy-in. While most of these factors pertain specifically to conducting public outreach in the design and campaign phases, they remain applicable to the overall political strategy of a transit campaign that wishes to succeed in a diverse and transit-averse city like Kansas City.

The Haas Metric

The Haas metric was compiled over the course of three major research projects by Haas and his team of researchers. The factors number seventeen, and they are by and large more specific than the terms laid out by Slotterback. The full listing, and each campaign's raw score, can be seen in Table 5.2

Table 5.2: The Haas Metric in Kansas City’s Transit Elections

Campaign Factor	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2006	2008
Deliberate P2 during development					X				X
Existing transit provider with solid reputation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wide geographic distribution of benefits/routes			X	X		X	X		
Traffic congestion at a tipping point									
Support from local business leaders									X
Support from elected officials					X				X
Campaign funds over \$1 million									
Experience with similar proposals		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vocal support from environmentalists									
Funding for multiple modes	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Funding for highway/arterial improvements		X	X			X			
Sunset of 20yrs or less, if a proposed tax	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Extending an existing network									
Concurrence with congressional/presidential election		X		X		X		X	X
Experienced campaign consultant									
Multimedia advertising					X			X	X
Lacked well-funded/prominent opposition	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Score	4	6	7	7	7	8	6	7	8

As indicated by the raw scores on the Haas metric, the city’s campaigns again score more points than Chastain’s attempts, yet none scored higher than eight out of a possible seventeen. There were several factors identified by the Haas metric that no campaign ever featured, and two

that every campaign featured. On the whole, the Haas factors are more direct and complex than the Slotterback factors, allowing for a more precise, yet still incomplete, evaluation of these nine transit elections. As with the Slotterback factors, each will be described below.

Deliberate Public Participation during Development

This factor refers to the degree to which the public's input is sought during the conceptual and design stages of the plan being proposed. As other factors have concluded, the city's substantial public outreach in this regard trumps Chastain's insular approach. In both of their attempts, the city sought public participation through multiple formats and across a wide distribution of neighborhoods and interest groups. Beyond gathering signatures, Chastain did not actively seek the input of residents, and the city should consider this an object lesson. The city should maintain or even expand their efforts at gathering public input, as an inclusive plan is generally a more viable one. Still, there remains a notable difference between involving citizens in the design process and actually implementing the ideas put forth by citizens. The city should be careful not to confuse the two, lest they be accused of ignoring residents' desires.

Existing transit provider with solid reputation

This is one category that could be considered a "non-factor" in this process, as every campaign was affected by this to an equal and unchanging degree. KCATA, which provides transit to the metro area, is one of the least controversial organizations in the region, and the city's bus network has a solid reputation for competence and reliability. A transit campaign to build or expand light-rail, streetcars, or commuter rail would likely benefit from this reputation, but only if it were explicitly connected to KCATA's existing system.

Wide geographic distribution of benefits/routes

A wide distribution of benefits and routes has the obvious benefit of appealing to the widest possible range of voters and potential riders. Four of Chastain's concepts served a geographically-wide area, and none of the city's final plans did. However, the original 2008 proposal, before it was pared down, would have easily met this criterion. In a city as geographically vast and diverse as Kansas City, designing a plan on a metro-wide scale would greatly improve the odds of electoral success, particularly among crucial suburban voters whose primary mode of transportation is the automobile.

Citywide traffic congestion at a tipping point

The general lack of congestion in the Kansas City area prevents this issue from being a favorable factor in the campaigns. Haas' logic is that a city with chronic traffic congestion will be more willing to vote for mass-transit expansions. While that has certainly been proven in the cities he has studied, it simply would not be a driving factor among voters in Kansas City. This factor should be considered, like the agency reputation factor above, to be a "non-factor" here.

Support from local business leaders

The support of local business leaders, particularly a city's chamber of commerce, can be considered one of the single greatest factors in a campaign's success. According to Haas' research, as well as the specific context of Kansas City's political environment, the public endorsement of a plan by the business community may even hold more sway than local politicians, since businesses are perceived as being more concerned with finances than with politics (Haas & Estrada, 2011). In Kansas City's case, only one campaign had such support, in 2008, and even then it was not well-advertised. The endorsement of the business community would broaden a transit campaign's appeal, but more importantly, it would work to prevent the city's wealthiest interest group from funding an opposition campaign.

Support from elected officials

While the support of elected officials seems like an obvious factor in the furtherance of a transit campaign, but the complexities of the citizen-initiative process means this is not always the case. As was seen with all seven of Chastain's initiatives, it is entirely possible for an issue of this breadth and expense to make it to a citywide ballot, and it might even win, all without the support or approval of the city's elected officials. Still, silence or outright opposition on the part of city politicians can significantly undercut a plan's credibility. Further, as seen in 2001, even if elected officials support a plan, they must be persuaded to sell it publicly if voters are to be convinced that the plan has city hall's endorsement.

Campaign funds over \$1 million

This factor presents a valuable criterion, albeit by using a curiously firm dollar amount. Haas' logic behind this factor was that if a transit campaign were capable of raising a million dollars in contributions, it would represent not only a political powerhouse capable of easily

combatting any opposition through paid media, but also a campaign managed by ambitious and productive staff and supported by deep-pocketed residents and businesses. In that sense, the dollar amount is merely an indication of a campaign's ability to compete as a political entity. None of the nine campaigns raised a million dollars in contributions, and Chastain's seven functioned with basically no funding beyond word-of-mouth and free media. Given the low advertising rates in the Kansas City media market, and the recent boom in free or nearly-free social-media marketing, it seems likely that the city could wage an effective and successful transit campaign with less than a million dollars. Still, the next campaign should strive to raise large donations from start to finish, and its operatives should be mindful of the persuasive power of money and notable campaign donations in urban politics.

Experience with similar proposals in recent past

The question of whether the campaign's backers (or the city's voters) will have had recent experience with similar proposals and elections is a rather moot point in the case of light-rail in Kansas City. In the last two decades, voters there have had nine opportunities to vote on the issue of light-rail and multi-modal transit, and it is unlikely that voters and consultants in the region will soon forget their impressions of those past campaigns. A campaign wishing to be successful should build on this collective experience, but in a constructive fashion. Since voters' perceptions of the past are not easily changed, a more effective campaign tactic would be to persuade voters that the new proposal is an attempt to correct the mistakes of years past.

Vocal support from environmentalists

The support of environmentalists, like that of business leaders, is something that is important for a campaign to garner, both for publicity purposes and to placate another powerful interest group. A well-designed transit system could potentially take thousands of cars off the roads of the metro area, helping to reduce congestion and pollution. This is often a central goal of urban environmental groups, and an alliance between such groups and the city's transit campaign is a natural extension of both groups' political desires. None of the nine campaigns sought or received the endorsement of Kansas City's environmental groups, and this would seem to be a simple correction for a future attempt.

Funding for multiple modes of transit

The logic behind this factor is much the same as the reasoning behind designing a proposal with a wide geographic range of routes and benefits: It broadens the appeal of the potential transit system in terms of both areas and populations served. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the best example of this remains the first draft of Kansas City's 2008 proposal, which featured light-rail, bus rapid transit, streetcar, and commuter rail. Much in the way that inclusive design at the conceptual stage can increase perceptions of public input, so too can a multi-modal proposal convince a wide variety of voters that the system being proposed would truly have something for everyone. For this powerful reason, the city should strive to make its next transit proposal solidly multi-modal, even if it means building the system in phases or finding a more complicated funding mechanism. The fact that Mayor Funkhouser's 2008 concept so excited most of the elected officials in three counties, even after years of indifference and outright hostility to the similar plans of Clay Chastain, indicates the potential power of a multi-modal proposal.

Funding for highway/arterial improvements

Closely tied to the concept of transit plans having a benefit of some sort for every rider is the notion that a proposal should include some funding for highway or arterial-roadway improvements. Three of Chastain's productions, and neither of the city's, included provisions for roadway improvements. This was a crucial misstep on the part of campaign strategists, considering the number of voters who drive on city roads every day. In most cities, particularly Kansas City, transit ridership is well under ten percent of the population (Manzur & Spivak, 2007b). This suggests that most of the remaining ninety-plus percent use private automobiles as their primary mode of transportation. By providing some deliberate support for highway improvements, a proposal could win over many of these auto-oriented voters who would not otherwise support such a transit-focused ballot issue.

Sunset of twenty years or less, if a proposed tax

This was the sole factor under which all of Clay Chastain's campaigns received a point but neither of the city's campaigns did. As was noted at length in Chapter 4, Chastain's plans were known for their vague or incomplete financial estimates, and Chastain's general ignorance of municipal finance likely contributed to every one of his proposals featuring a funding mechanism with a sunset of less than twenty years. By the city's more-informed estimates, a

multi-modal transit network like the one proposed in early 2008 would cost well over a billion dollars. Given this massive cost, and the usual size of a transit sales tax in Kansas City (between a quarter-cent and five-eighths of a cent), it would not be feasible for the city to issue revenue bonds with a retirement period of under twenty years. While the idea of a system's bonds not being retired for twenty-five or thirty years may seem like a poison pill to a transit campaign, an even greater mistake would be shortening this timeframe by increasing the proposed tax increase. Given the choice between these two options, and given Kansas City's historically sound bond rating, the easier solution is to stick with the original, if lengthy, sunset period for the proposed tax increase. The campaign could soften the political blow by stating that this option would help to keep the tax increase as low as possible, but the subject of tax increases versus public debt is a touchy issue politically, and the city should avoid a protracted public discussion over the matter.

Extending an existing network versus starting from scratch

More than perhaps any other factor of the Haas metric, this factor is a non-issue for Kansas City's transit planners. In terms of light-rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit, Kansas City has no existing networks to expand. Unless the transit election in question revolves around expanding KCATA's bus service (the expansion of which has not required voter approval in decades), then the campaign would be launching a new transit system from scratch. Because of this, Kansas City's transit elections must essentially forfeit this factor of the Haas metric. The only exception to this is the Kansas City Streetcar, which is not a subject of this research project. If a transit proposal in the future included funding and plans for an expansion of that system, as well as a sizeable component of bus-route expansion, then the campaign would meet this criterion. Since the Streetcar is funded through a special-purpose district, and not through citywide tax dollars, it is unlikely that it will be easily folded into a citywide transit proposal. However, it may be a powerful public-relations asset for campaign organizers, and it may be worth it for the campaign to find a way to incorporate the existing Streetcar while still respecting the legal and financial obligations of its special-purpose district in the CBD.

Concurrence with congressional/presidential election

Voter turnout is at the heart of a political campaign's success, and given the broader national trend of turnout being highest during national (presidential and congressional) elections, it is vitally important that the next campaign time their proposal to appear on the ballot at one of

these elections. While five of the nine studied campaigns did end on a congressional or presidential election day, the most applicable lesson comes from Mayor Funkhouser's well-reasoned rush to get his proposal onto the city ballot in time for the 2008 presidential election. National elections, especially ones predicted to be as historic, exciting, and/or close as that year's, bring scores of voters to the polls who otherwise take little interest in municipal elections. Funkhouser knew this, and the pressure of time weighed heavily on his proposal's timeline and final design. In addition to the vastly increased turnout during presidential and congressional elections, setting a transit election to occur a year or more in advance would give organizers more time to conduct public outreach, raise funds, and build a coalition of civic support. Kansas City elects its mayor and councilmembers in April of the year preceding presidential election years. If the city chose a presidential election date for a transit campaign to appear on the ballot, then this would give the political establishment over eighteen months between City Hall's campaign season and the election, plenty of time in which to mount a substantial campaign.

Experienced consultant leading the campaign

According to Haas, the intricacies of explaining municipal finance and tax-increase elections to voters are often beyond the skillset of a city's traditional political actors. Transit campaigns tend to be more successful when they hire a leadership team with relevant experience in convincing a city's voters to increase their own taxes to fund transit. In the case of Kansas City, none of the nine campaigns were managed by a consultant with this sort of expertise. While Chastain may have been passionate about his hand-drawn plans, and Mayor Funkhouser may have been skilled at organizing regional consensus, neither was a professional political operative. Furthermore, the mayor championed the 2008 proposal while simultaneously serving in his official post, making him unable to oversee the campaign full-time. That proposal had two paid consultants, but both were fixtures of local mayoral politics and neither had ever overseen an election related to either transportation or taxation (Smith & Horsley, 2008). A future campaign should hire at least one full-time consultant. It has yet to be tried in Kansas City's case.

Multimedia advertising

This factor closely resembles one presented by Slotterback, and the rationale behind it is identical: Utilizing multiple formats of advertising and outreach allows a campaign to reach the widest possible audience. Until recently, political campaigns traditionally relied on direct-mail

and television marketing to distribute information. The rise of social media has expanded this to include Internet-based marketing and communication. For reasons that were likely financial in nature, none of Chastain's campaigns except for 2006 utilized this multi-pronged media strategy. Direct-mail flyers are expensive, and television advertising even more so. His campaigns in those years relied on free media and interviews, although he often managed to entice supporters to pen lengthy editorials in *The Kansas City Star*, which can be considered a form of campaign marketing. By 2006, however, social media had advanced to the point where Chastain could market his latest plan using platforms such as MySpace and YouTube (Martin, 2006), as well as his traditional presence in free media and the editorial pages of newspapers. The city's two attempts were better-funded than Chastain's, and could afford direct-mail and television commercials. The 2008 proposal also featured an online presence. Naturally, since an effective multi-pronged media presence will help to advertise a plan to a wide variety of voters, a future campaign should make this a central goal of its media strategy.

Lacked well-funded/prominent opposition

The final factor proposed by Haas' group is perhaps the most complicated to interpret and explain in the context of Kansas City politics. The original wording of Haas' criterion alluded to a campaign having a better chance of success if its opposition were unorganized, underfunded, or otherwise incapable of posing a serious threat. However, measuring political opposition in Kansas City, or even documenting it formally, can prove challenging. For example, Chastain's seven initiatives evoked very little formal response from City Hall or the business community. Even though actors in both groups were officially and publicly against Chastain's ideas, and openly derided them in interviews, none of the city's institutional forces organized a formal campaign against his many initiatives. The city's two attempts had a higher political profile, and thus attracted more notable opposition, but the handful of suburban-based opposition campaigns mentioned in the literature had very little funding and lacked a coherent message beyond opposing the specific plan in question. In the case of both Chastain's and the city's attempts, opposition was wide but largely unorganized and rather anonymous. This is further confirmed by the fact that eight of the nine campaigns ended in defeat. Still, it is imperative to understand the distinction between political opposition and *organized* opposition. Virtually everything that is done by planners is opposed by one resident or another, but it only becomes a liability when that opposition gains prominence and message-discipline equivalent to the city's campaign.

An Ideal Campaign: Kansas City’s 2008 Transit Campaign Redux

By all measures used in Chapters 4 and 5, it can be clearly argued that Kansas City’s optimal transit plan was the one originally presented by Mayor Funkhouser in early 2008. That plan, which featured five modes of transit and the support of a vast coalition of elected officials across the region, would have met eleven of Haas’ seventeen criteria had it not been pared down in time for the election. A further three could have been met with a more focused campaign strategy, leading to a total possible score of fourteen out of seventeen. The remaining three were items that were not in the power of a political campaign to change. The improved Haas metric can be seen in Table 5.3. The quasi-hypothetical argument presented here suggests that if the city were to attempt a campaign similar to the one initially undertaken in 2008, and if they were to add a few key factors that were missing that time, then the campaign would be in a far better position to be win approval in a future election.

Table 5.3: Haas Metric for Hypothetical Future Transit Election

Haas Metric	2008 Final	Future Attempt
Robust P2 during development/planning	X	X
Existing transit provider with solid reputation	X	X
Wide geographic distribution of benefits/routes		X
Citywide traffic congestion at a tipping point		
Support from Chamber/local business leaders	X	X
Support from most prominent elected officials	X	X
Campaign fundraising near \$1 million		X
Experience with similar proposals in recent past	X	X
Vocal support from environmentalists		X
Funding for multiple modes of transit		X
Funding for highway/arterial improvements		X
Sunset of 20yrs or less, if a proposed tax		
Extending existing network (vs. starting new)		
Concurrence with congressional/presidential election	X	X
Experienced consultant leading the campaign		X
Multimedia advertising	X	X
Lacked well-funded/prominent opposition	X	X
Total Points (out of 17)	8	14

Note: Shaded rows indicate components to be added to a future campaign’s overall strategy.

As seen in Table 5.3, six factors have been identified for improvement in the next campaign. Three of them were part of the initial 2008 plan before that plan was altered, and the remaining three were not attempted in 2008 but should be attempted in the next campaign. The original plan had a wide geographic distribution of service, which helped to gain the support of leaders across the metro area, and this should be attempted again. That plan also included funding for multiple modes of transit, as well as for highway improvements, and both of these should be resurrected for the next campaign. The three factors that were overlooked or not attempted in 2008 could easily be changed with a more effective campaign leadership team. First, large-scale fundraising should be a goal, both to give the campaign some political heft and to fund consultants and designers who would help the campaign to appeal to more voters and fend off criticism from whatever opposition may arise. Second, the outspoken support of environmentalists should be sought and publicized. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the city should assemble a team of skilled campaign consultants, one of which should be solely devoted to the management of the campaign. While Kansas City may never meet all seventeen of Haas' criteria, the addition of these six should greatly add to the effectiveness of a future campaign. At the very least, it would provide the campaign with the resources, endorsements, and management expertise to combat the unforeseen challenges that so often accompany contentious and expensive issues in urban politics.

The analyses and recommendations listed above do not constitute a formula for instant success. Every city is unique, and every election is unique. A campaign could conceivably follow all of Haas and Slotterback's factors for success and still be defeated soundly. As has been examined in this project, rational plans may be rejected by voters, and irrational plans may be approved. The world of urban politics is a world of uncertainty and unknown variables, which is one reason why many scientifically-trained urban planners misunderstand or even avoid the subject when making plans. But to avoid the issue, and the root causes underlying it, is to do a disservice to the public trust. The building and operation of cities is an inherently political task, and planners must recognize the public's varied perceptions and learn to work productively with them. As will be examined in Chapter 6, the deeply-rooted perceptions of individual residents are not always what they seem, though they may account for much of why transit elections in Kansas City so consistently fail at the ballot box.

Chapter 6 – Survey Results

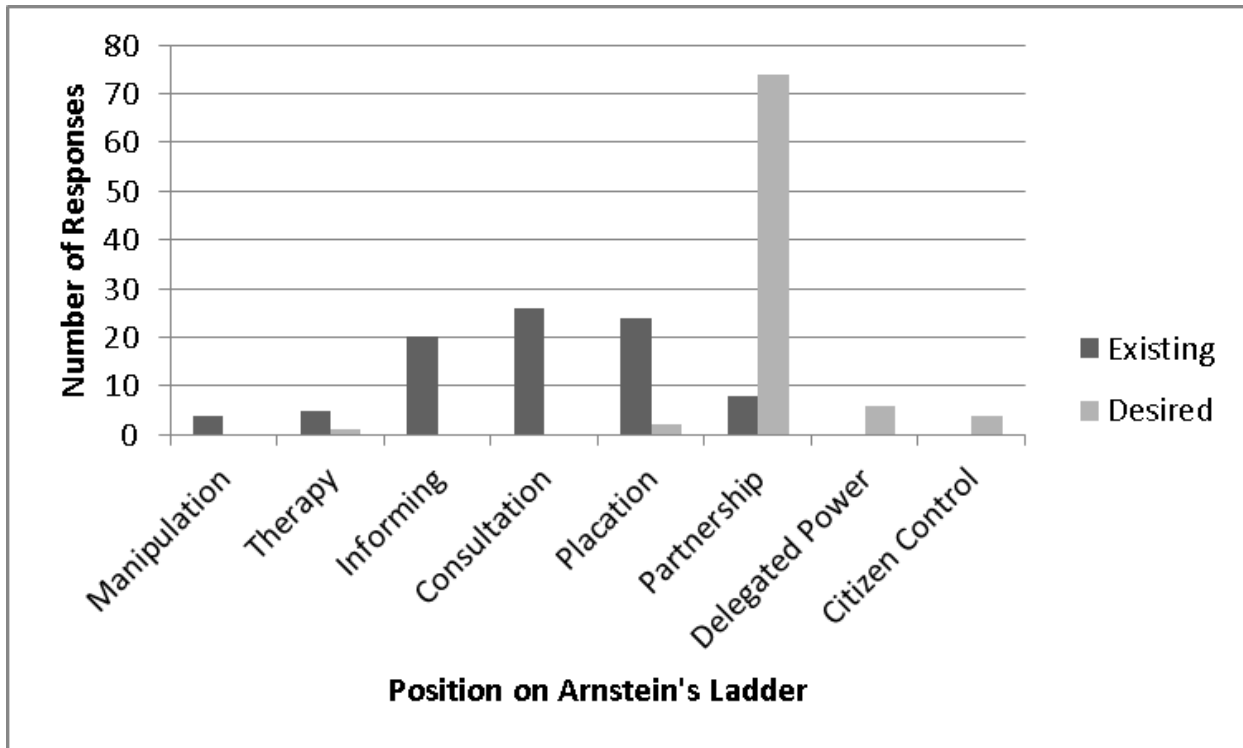
“People don’t want to be informed. They want to feel informed.”

– Chet Collier, co-founder of Fox News

The citizen survey was conducted over a seven-week period in December of 2013 and January of 2014. Participants were asked a total of ten questions designed to assess their views on transit planning and the public’s role in it. A copy of the survey can be seen as Appendix B. The survey was conducted through an online survey program, and it was submitted to a total of nine neighborhood/homeowner’s associations in Kansas City proper. Each association agreed to distribute the survey’s web address to their members, and participants were encouraged to pass along the survey to friends and relatives who also lived in Kansas City. The survey was anonymous, and did not record the respondent’s name, neighborhood, or IP address. Over the seven-week period, a total of eighty-seven responses were recorded. As mentioned previously, one major perception measured by the survey was the participant’s opinion of where on Arnstein’s Ladder they felt the current transit-planning process fell, as well as where on the ladder they felt it ideally should be. The responses to this pair of questions were mostly in line with what was expected, given the city’s record of public engagement as measured in Chapter 3. Another vital interaction examined by the survey was the respondents’ perception of the relative importance of planners’ adherence to a project schedule versus the importance of gathering robust public input (which would conceivably extend the project timeline). The value of these two issues was measured separately as well as against one another, so as to ascertain from participants which goal they perceived to be more important to the planning process. On the whole, the survey responses gathered indicate several key perceptions and opinions about the process that planners in Kansas City would be wise to address before making another attempt at a citywide transit election.

The first two questions of the survey asked about Arnstein’s Ladder and residents’ perceptions of their role in the planning process. The measurable difference between what respondents perceived as their position in the existing process versus the level at which they desired the process to be was stark. An illustration of the two sets of responses can be seen in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Comparison of Existing versus Desired Places on Arnstein’s Ladder



As can be seen in Figure 6.1, there is a stark contrast between where respondents place the existing public-outreach process and where they desire the process to be. A solid majority of respondents ranked the existing public-outreach process as somewhere between steps three and five (informing, consultation, and placation). No respondent ranked the current system higher than partnership (step six). For the second question, which asked about the desired level of public involvement, the responses were far closer to unanimous. 85% of respondents stated that they would prefer the process be at step six. The remaining fifteen percent stated a desire for delegated power (step seven) and citizen control (step eight). One outlier stated a preference for therapy (step two). The perception of the current relationship being less than equal generally correlates with historical patterns in Kansas City as examined in Chapter 3. Given that seven out of the nine transit elections were led by a citizen-activist who did not actively seek public involvement, it follows that Kansas Citians might not see themselves as having played an active role in the planning of transit in their city. It should be noted here that these two survey questions asked respondents to rate their perceptions of where on the ladder the city-citizen interaction was, not the interaction between Clay Chastain and citizens. While the city government and Clay Chastain were clearly never the same entity, Chastain’s style of promoting plans without any

public input has no doubt colored the views of many citizens who may have come to equate Chastain's style and plans with those of the city government. At any rate, the question carries equal validity regardless of the party with whom citizens are interacting during the planning process. The responses to question one clearly show that Kansas City residents feel the planning process is not as balanced as it should be. This deficit must be remedied by planning officials if they hope to gain faithful citizen buy-in in the future.

One particular result from question two that deserves thoughtful evaluation is the clear minority of responses calling for the process to be located at delegated power (step seven) and citizen control (step eight). Despite residents' clear assertion that the existing process is not open enough to citizen input, few seem eager for citizens to take direct control of the process. This indicates a clear desire for citizens to work in concert with trained planners, and also that they continue to place at least some faith in the expertise of planners and engineers. The fact that eighty-five percent of residents surveyed believe the process should be at step six, which was incidentally the optimal level preferred by Arnstein herself (1969), shows that planners and policymakers in Kansas City need not fear losing the authority to make planning decisions. If the survey data are any indication, then citizens have almost no interest in taking charge of the process.

The third question on the survey examined respondents' perception of how seriously the city government takes their concerns about transit. Twenty-nine percent of respondents agreed that the city takes their ideas and concerns about transit seriously, while precisely double that number, fifty-eight percent, disagreed. The fact that twice as many residents feel ignored as feel influential is indicative of a trust deficit on the part of KCATA and city transit officials, or at least a very strong perception of one. The reasons why residents might feel as though the city's transit authorities do not take their concerns seriously are numerous and varied, and most are not examined as a part of this project, but the responses to this question nonetheless indicate that respondents feel they do not have the attention of KCATA. A trust deficit such as this must be addressed if the city and KCATA hope to expand and improve transit operations in the region. Not only will it improve a transit proposal's chances of passage in a future election, it will also greatly contribute to the improvement of relations between planners and the people who use and pay for transit.

Question four of the survey polled respondents on whether Kansas City residents would vote to approve a light-rail proposal if the public were involved in planning the route. In total, three-quarters of the participants expressed belief that voters would approve such a proposal, thus indicating that the public seems to place political value in the concept of citizen involvement in the planning of transit. While this concept has been heavily examined and promoted within the literature and within this project, its limitations must be understood alongside the survey results. First, the survey question used general terminology rather than a specific example of a transit plan, thus inviting participants to think and respond in the abstract. As has been examined over the course of this project, there exists a distinction between public support of abstract ideas and public support of specific plans as they appear on the ballot. Pre-election polls may indicate a fervent support for transit, particularly transit designed with the input of residents, but that does not necessarily mean that voters will approve a given transit measure. Still, question four provides what may be among this project's most invaluable insights: Voters may be more willing to support a transit proposal if they feel their voices have been heard. As the quote at the start of this chapter suggests, there is a definite distinction between residents *being* informed and residents *feeling* informed. If planners and elected officials in Kansas City wish to move beyond selling transit to the voters, and to truly win the broad base of support needed for their future plans, then they must make a greater effort to establish those emotional linkages between residents and the plans on which they are voting. The results of question four show that voters have the capacity for such connections, and would be swayed in favor of passage based on them. City planners need only foster the growth of emotional-political connections by implementing reforms that not only include residents in the planning process, but that also make them feel as if they truly are a part of it.

In keeping with the stated research question regarding whether timeliness or openness is of more importance to voters, the next three questions focused on the importance of the two variables independently, as well as against one another.

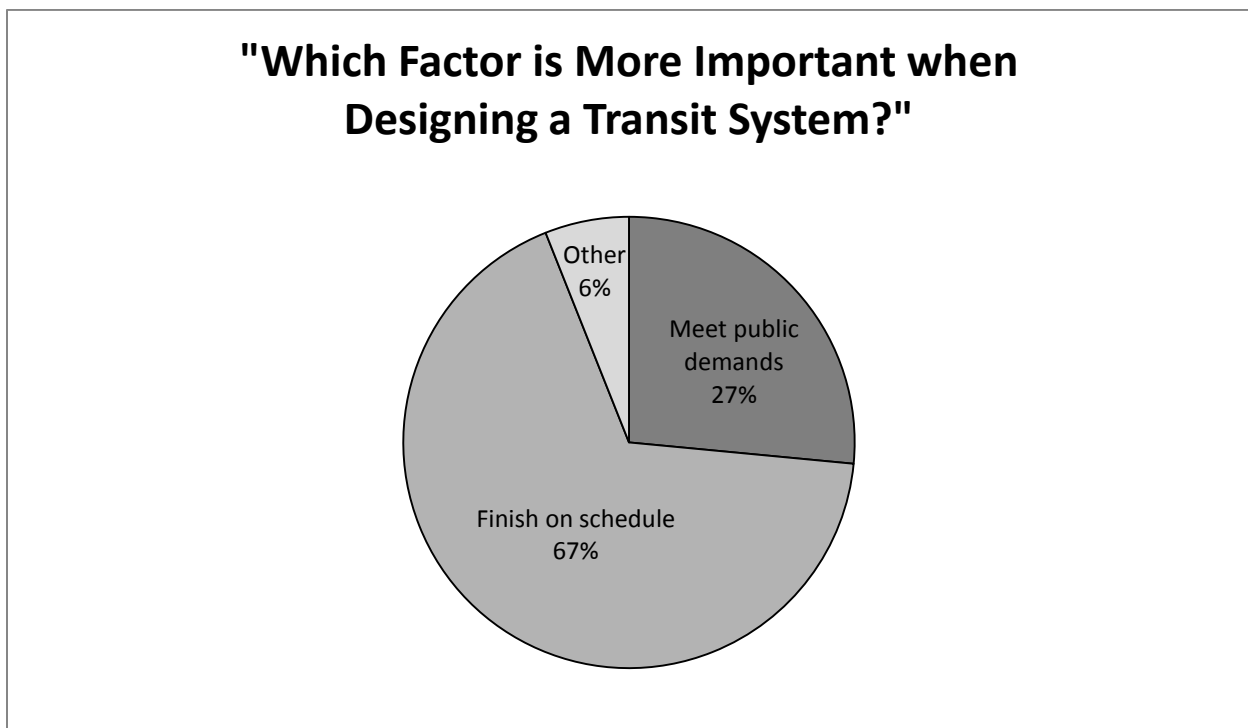
Question five asked respondents to rate the comparative importance of expert versus non-expert contributions, and the results closely mirrored those of the first two questions. Over eighty percent of respondents felt that the best way to design an effective and popular transit system was with a balance of expert (planner) and non-expert (resident) inputs. The strength of the majority responding in this manner further validates the first two questions, and indicates that

residents strongly favor a balanced approach to gathering input and suggestions in the planning process. However, as was indicated by subsequent responses, other factors may influence the relative strength of this belief.

Question six questioned how much time planners should ideally devote to gathering public input during the planning of a transit proposal. By a similar majority of seventy-seven percent, respondents felt that planners should find a balance between the time-intensive gathering of public input and the adherence to a set schedule. As with question five, the fact that over three-quarters of respondents desired a balanced approach to gathering public input shows that citizens realize the limitations of a planning process overburdened by the gathering of input from an infinitely-diverse populace.

Question seven asked respondents to decide whether it was more important for a transit proposal to meet the demands of the public or for it to be completed on-schedule. By a two-to-one margin, respondents said timeliness was more important than the gathering of substantial public input. A graphic illustrating this margin may be seen in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: The Comparative Importance of Scheduling versus Public Input



While it is informative and imperative to gauge the importance of each issue separately, the placement of the two variables in direct competition yielded some insightful results. On the whole, the responses to these three questions both confirm and undermine the responses to the

first two questions. The results of all five questions, taken together, indicate that while public involvement is seen as vital to the process, respondents feel it is much more important for a project to be completed on schedule than to seek a degree of public involvement that might delay the process. While respondents expressed a strong desire for public input to be on equal footing with the expertise of planners, they place a higher value on the timely completion of transit infrastructure.

The next pair of questions focused on credibility in the planning process, and both were designed to ascertain which actors had the public's confidence. Question eight asked respondents to select which actors were most qualified to design transit. Respondents were allowed to select multiple options for this question, and they gave roughly equal weight to private-sector planners, public-sector planners, citizen groups, and frequent riders of transit. While all four were closely-ranked, the two "expert" options received slightly more votes than the "non-expert" options. This distinction, while slight, seems to confirm earlier responses showing that residents trust the expertise of planners and engineers, even though they ultimately desire a process in which non-experts play a role as well.

Question nine posed a similar question, but with more specific actors mentioned. Participants were asked whether Clay Chastain or the city's planners, or both or neither, had been more effective at designing transit options for Kansas City. More than half of respondents believed neither had been effective. The city's planning staff received three times as many votes as Clay Chastain, who scored the lowest out of the four options. This disparity shows that, at least comparatively, Kansas City residents appear to hold their city government in a slightly higher regard than the city's most prominent transit activist. And while a majority of respondents believed that neither the city nor Chastain has designed effective plans in the past, the fact that the city received three times as many votes as Chastain indicates that residents have not entirely lost faith in the city's ability to plan effective transit. The responses to this question confirm the historical and electoral analyses conducted earlier in this project, namely that there has been scant public support for the light-rail proposals of the past. Predicting future electoral success based on this raw data would be difficult, but it is safe to conclude that a proposal put forth by the city would be better-accepted by the public than another attempt by Clay Chastain.

The final question of the survey asked respondents to rank how seriously they believed transit planners should take the views and opinions of ordinary citizens. Over two-thirds

responded that planners should take these views either “seriously” or “very seriously.” This question was selected based on the way it gave greater detail to understanding the degree to which citizens believe they should be involved in the process. Of the two-thirds mentioned above, nearly five times as many chose “seriously” than chose “very seriously.” Some of this may be attributable to the wording of the choices. For example, the “very seriously” option specified that all citizen viewpoints should be treated equally, while the “seriously” option specified that some viewpoints are more realistic or feasible than others. Still, even if it were partially attributable to the phrasing of the choices, the overwhelming popularity of the “seriously” option shows that respondents are willing to make the distinction between workable and unworkable ideas from the general public. This response, coupled with the rest of the survey as a whole, indicates that residents not only want more involvement, they want it to be more effective and useful involvement.

Applicability to Literature

The results of the survey largely fit the findings of the existing literature, with some correlating directly. For example, the finding that respondents trust in the expertise of planners and technicians is in direct agreement with the findings of Grossardt, et al (2010). The series of papers by Grossardt, Bailey, and their associates (2003, 2010, and 2011) are also vindicated by the findings of this survey. While those projects utilized their method of “Structured Public Involvement,” and this project did not, their assertion that a planning process that deliberately incorporates the inputs of ordinary citizens will enrich the process and lead to more politically-acceptable outcomes is validated by the responses to this survey. Respondents strongly agreed that voters would be more likely to approve a transit proposal if the public were involved in planning it. The findings related to Arnstein’s Ladder also mirror that author’s original findings from the 1960s, namely that non-expert citizens generally wish to gain a position of equal authority with policymakers, but do not wish to control the process entirely. The Grossardt and Bailey papers touched on the issue of policymakers ceding some control over the process, and Denhardt and Denhardt mentioned it as a key component of their “Seven Principles of New Public Service” (2000). Planners and policymakers may be reluctant to give up portions of their hard-fought influence in the process, and this may account for some of the shortcomings of existing public-outreach processes. However, if the results of this survey are any indication, it is evident that the general public respects and values the training of planners, and has no interest in

seizing a large piece of the decision-making process. Existing literature on the subject has generally argued, and this survey has confirmed, that the public sees the planning processes of the past to have been exclusive and undemocratic. And while their desired position would hold far more influence than in decades past, it is on the whole a balanced and open dialogue that residents desire. Kansas City's planners and elected officials must adjust the process to provide this level of partnership, and they must also adjust their thinking to no longer see the process as a zero-sum struggle for political influence and power.

Policy Implications of the Survey Findings

Given that the central conclusion of the transit survey was that residents strongly desire a more equitable role in the transportation planning process, a logical administrative adjustment would be to enact policies that strengthen the public's role in that process. While public participation has been mandated in federally-funded projects for decades, and Kansas City's planning department has been incorporating public input since the earliest days of light-rail as a transit option there, it would resonate politically if the city council enacted fresh legislation more explicitly detailing the role of the public in the process. By making a public commitment to working *in partnership* with ordinary citizens, and by showing residents that they truly are a legitimate and fully-empowered part of the process, the city government would make a great stride toward closing the Arnstein Gap shown in this survey's responses.

In addition to closing the Arnstein Gap among Kansas City voters, such a public commitment to partnerships in planning would be helpful in fostering public support for a citywide transit proposal the next time the city wishes to submit one to voters. As was documented in the survey, respondents equate political legitimacy with a process in which citizens are a part. If the city's next transit proposal has such an open process in place, the legitimacy gained will likely sway enough city voters to ensure passage of the proposal. Given that residents are mindful of project timelines and public budgets, the policy changes suggested above should include explicit language ensuring that the enhancements to the public-outreach process shall not substantially impact either construction schedules or capital outlays. While the survey documented evidence that residents do not like an insular process, it also showed that they like delays and added expenses even less. Thus, the challenge for planners and city officials will be to substantially raise the profile of public participants in the planning process while at the same time not permitting the process to be delayed or halted entirely by excessively numerous

public meetings. The surest way to accomplish such a balance will be to focus less on increasing the number of public meetings and more on increasing the quality of each meeting. If city planners can make every meeting a productive contribution to the proposal, and if they can make every participant at each meeting feel as though they are valued in the process, then they will produce a more effective and better-regarded proposal to place before voters. At the same time, if city leaders can enact visible and substantive reforms to the way the city interacts with the public, and if they can show the voting public that neither their opinions nor their tax dollars are being wasted on a boondoggle-on-wheels, then they will help to ensure voter passage of whatever transit proposal the public-planner partnership deems necessary and appropriate for Kansas City.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

As this project drew to a close, several findings of fact emerged that have informed and explained, but have never conclusively defined, the complexities of planning cities in a democratic society. The research questions explored through this project have been addressed, but in the face of their resolution shall continue to emerge fresh questions about the extent to which planners and ordinary citizens can and should interact. The matter will never be entirely settled, the battery of mysteries never fully solved. But such is the nature of the study of human society. Still, this project has contributed some substantive findings regarding the latest iteration of the planner-citizen relationship. It is a study of a contemporary issue of urban planning and municipal governance, and was completed with the skills and acumen commensurate with a master's candidate in Regional and Community Planning. While very little of social-science research is wholly conclusive, researchers must endeavor to find patterns, to explain phenomena, and to seek the most conclusive and productive solutions their training and data can help them to imagine. This final chapter is a reflection on the solutions presented in this document, and the ways in which future research may be able to proceed subsequent to this document's publication.

Policy Recommendations

While abstract questions and suppositions remain at the conclusion of a project such as this, several tangible findings have also been produced that will aid in the better understanding of Kansas City's transit saga. This project provided raw data on how voter perceptions of a transit proposal can influence voter preferences on that issue.

On the whole, the survey responses indicated a trust deficit between voters and planners, but also showed that residents continue to place great trust in the expertise of professional planners and engineers who design transit. In future transit campaigns, the city should pay close attention to voters' perceptions of trust, and strive to portray the proposal under consideration as something that is both designed by qualified experts and supported by a wide array of citizen groups. By building on the existing trust voters have for technical experts, and by salving some of the public's distrust of a politicized process, campaign leaders can more effectively persuade voters that the proposal under consideration is rational, sensible, and above-board.

Building on the issue of trust, and due in no small part to the survey findings indicating massive support for a partnership-level collaboration between planners and the public, transit planners should strive to incorporate genuine public input into the planning and design process.

Planners must be willing to make changes to the plan, provided members of the public can state a convincing alternative. Said changes must be prominently advertised in campaign materials and in the media, so as to show the broadest possible audience that the process is indeed open to suggestions and improvements from ordinary residents.

In terms of public meetings and structured public outreach efforts, Kansas City's planners should avoid the trap of simply scheduling more meetings at more times and locations, and instead focus on taking steps that would produce a higher quality of participation at every meeting. Building on the notion that one productive meeting that can result in substantial dialogue is more effective than ten mere "information sessions," planners must reorient their public-outreach efforts away from simply informing the public to a more open-ended stance that encourages public input and a genuine dialogue between political equals. If residents feel empowered by the process, and feel as though they have a personal stake in the system being planned, then they are much more likely to be engaged during the planning process and likely vote in favor of the project on election day.

Given the enormous political pressures involved in the federal grants process, as well as the even greater pressures related to a citywide transit election, it is vitally important that planners and stakeholders lay out a sequence of events prior to initiating the funding process. One lesson learned from Chastain's 2006 initiative was that, even when the answer is no, the best way to get the formal attention of federal funding authorities is to present a thoroughly-planned concept as a packaged item, complete with cost estimates and the backing of the city's voters and political establishment. The next time Kansas City attempts a transit proposal, planners would be wise to design and finalize a concept before launching the drive for funds. Such a method would have the added electoral benefit of showing city voters a clear and complete picture of what they are voting on and how much it will cost.

As illustrated in Chapter 5, leaders of a future transit campaign should expand their outreach efforts to build a broader coalition of local supporters, as well as expand the proposal to include transportation improvements for a wider variety of modes and geographic areas. The role of campaign strategy is vital to the success or failure of a citywide transit election, and the improvements outlined in Chapter 5 would greatly enhance a campaign's effectiveness at swaying city voters in favor of a transit proposal.

While these recommendations will improve the likelihood of a campaign's success, there are few guarantees in urban planning. A flawless campaign could still result in electoral defeat, while a deeply flawed campaign and proposal could win a citywide vote. Still, as public servants, planners and a city's elected officials must always strive to present the public with the best possible options and the most reasonable guidance they can provide. What the voters do with their newfound power and information is up to them.

Suggestions for Future Research

While the fluid complexities of human society make social-science research an ever-changing field, it also provides researchers with a seemingly endless supply of new questions to ask and new theories to test. This project touched on several aspects of the issue at hand, but others remain ripe for study. For example, the Kansas City Streetcar, which was mentioned at the start of this document and is under construction as of the publication of this document, presents an opportunity for both researchers and Kansas City's planning professionals to study the concepts and conclusions presented by this project as a transit system is being built. The city is planning significant expansion of the system, and future research should be directed there, so as to ascertain whether Kansas City's administrative bodies have made any notable progress in further healing the public-relations wounds left over from the era of Chastain and light-rail.

The concept of social media as a tool for participatory planning was touched upon in Chapter 2, and research into this growing phenomenon has only begun to enter maturity as of 2014. Nonetheless, it is likely to continue to grow in importance, and future research should examine this as applied to Kansas City and other cities. More directly related to this project's findings, however, is the question of whether this new form of public outreach is an effective way to bridge the Arnstein Gap that exists in places like Kansas City. Social media outlets have already proven their ability to connect individuals and demographics not traditionally associated with political activism. The ways in which cities might use social media tools to bring residents, particularly those non-traditional political participants, into the planning process are bound to grow in number and complexity over the next few years. This too is an area that would benefit from further study.

A third option for future study of these issues lies in another major motivator of American voters, an option that was not researched extensively by this project: The role of money in the public's voting behavior. While this research found a solid and conclusive nexus

between voters' emotions and perceptions, and the ways in which those feelings influenced voting choices, an equally serious effort could be made to study the financial considerations of the voters who voted for and against the light-rail concepts proposed in Kansas City over that span of time. Financial considerations have long been cited as a major factor in public opinion polls and voter behavior, and it stands to reason that such theories could be applied to the same political environment that was researched from this project's angle of voter perception.

Analysis of Alternatives

This research project was completed within its desired timeline, and used a wealth of data and analysis to suitably answer the research questions posed. However, some methods and outcomes could have performed differently, and they must be addressed as a part of this project's conclusion. The most prominent outcome that could have been more substantive is the sample size of the transit survey. Over four hundred thousand people live in Kansas City, Missouri, and the survey's sample was eighty-seven responses. While this number was sufficient to draw some useful conclusions for the purposes of this project, a much larger sample population and a longer time period for collection would have been beneficial to the project.

Another technique which may have resulted in a greater response rate, and likely some even stronger participant opinions, would have been to conduct the survey in person at one of the very same public-outreach occasions studied by this project. Surveying residents when the planner-citizen interaction was fresh on their minds could have provided some more insightful data than an online survey. In fact, this project's original survey strategy involved doing this very technique, and would have measured a very different angle of the planner-citizen interaction. This original research plan, and the reasons why the project had to change course, are discussed in greater detail in the postscript at the end of this document.

This project was undertaken as an attempt to understand a vital relationship within the field of urban planning, a relationship that more than any other factor controls the way in which cities are built and expanded. A better understanding of the working relationship between technically-trained planners and the urban residents they serve is vital to the growth of the field. The issue, and this project, was prominent enough to merit the awarding of an Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship, indicating that planners and policymakers in the United States desire to understand and further the research in this project. This project also represents an attempt by the author to understand a very prominent issue in his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri. This

project has been a study of perceptions. Whether it was examining the ways in which one die-hard activist defined light-rail in his own vision, how residents saw their role in the planning process and desired more, or even simply how one planning student saw an unsolved mystery in his hometown and sought an answer, this project represents an examination of the ways in which urban planning can inform human thoughts, and how those thoughts can in turn inform the ways in which we choose to design, govern, and improve our cities.

References

- Abouhalkah, Y.T. (2003, August 28). What could have been: Cleaver's 1997 comments may have killed light-rail. *Kansas City Star*. p. A19.
- Alonzo, A. (2013). KC seeks \$20m federal grant for streetcar [Electronic version]. *Kansas City Business Journal*. Retrieved June 20, 2013, from <http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/news/2013/05/22/kansas-city-seeks-20m-fed-assistance.html>.
- Altshuler, A. (1979). The decision-making environment of urban transportation. *The Urban Transportation Problem*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Arnstein, S.R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. 35(4), 216-224.
- Bailey, K., Grossardt, T., & Pride-Wells, M. (2007). Community design of a light-rail transit-oriented development using casewise visual evaluation (CAVE). *Socio-economic Planning Sciences*. 41(3), 235-254.
- Bailey, K., Blandford, B., Grossardt, T., & Ripy, J. (2011). Planning, technology, and legitimacy: Structured public involvement in integrated transportation and land-use planning in the United States. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*. 38, 447-467.
- Beale, H., Bishop, E. & Marley, W. (1996). How to pass local option taxes to finance transportation projects. *Transportation Research Record 1558*. 74-82.
- Bickerstaff, K., & Walker, G. (2001). Participatory local governance and transport planning. *Environment and Planning A: Planning and Design*. 33(3). 431-451.
- Bogdon, T. (1998, October 21). Former mayor supports light rail. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 8.
- Brabham, D.C., Sanchez, T.W., & Bartholomew, K. (2009). Crowdsourcing public participation in transit planning: Preliminary results from the Next Stop design case. Preliminary report funded in part by the Federal Transit Administration.

- Brody, S. D., Godschalk, D.R., & Burby, R.J. Mandating Citizen Participation in Plan Making: Six Strategic Planning Choices. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 2003, 245-264.
- Burby, R. (2003). Making plans that matter: Citizen involvement and government action. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 69(1). 33-49.
- Campbell, M. (2006, November 28). Give your regards to Broadway, KC. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A1, A5.
- Carp, J. (2004). Wit, style, and substance: How planners shape public participation. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 23(3), 242-254.
- Cervero, R. (1998). *The transit metropolis: A global inquiry*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Chastain, C. (1998). *Tilting at windmills*. Overland Park, KS: Leathers Publishing.
- City of Kansas City, Missouri. (2006). *Charter of Kansas City, Missouri*. Kansas City, MO.
- Collison, K. (2011, January 11). A dose of rail transit reality for KC. *The Kansas City Star*, p. C6.
- Connerly C.E. (2002) From racial zoning to community empowerment: The interstate highway system and the African American community in Birmingham, Alabama. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 22(2), 99-114.
- Cooper, B. & Smith, D. (2006, May 6). Rethinking mass transit. *The Kansas City Star*. pp. C1, C12.
- Cooper, B. & Helling, D. (2007, August 10). Light-rail proposal takes two more hits. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A1, A6.
- Cooper, B. (2009, June 18). Report tells best hope for KC light-rail funds. *The Kansas City Star*, p. A6.

- Corburn, J. (2003). Bringing local knowledge into environmental decision making: Improving urban planning for communities at risk. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 22(4), 420-433.
- Denhardt, R.B., & Denhardt, J.V. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review*. 60(6), 549-559.
- Dobson, P. (1999a, May 12). New light rail initiative underway. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 9.
- Dobson, P. (1999b, September 1). Light rail initiative mirrors FOCUS report, competes with city proposal. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 6.
- Dobson, P. (2000, June 21). Clipboard in hand, again. *Pitch Weekly*, pp. 6, 9.
- Forkenbrock, D. & Stoner, J. (1983). Support for a local transit tax. *Transportation Research A*. 18a(3), 243-252.
- Federal Transit Administration. (1998). Funding strategies for public transportation. *Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 31, vol. 2*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Transit Administration.
- Grossardt, T., Bailey, K., & Brumm, J. (2003). Structured public involvement: Problems and prospects for improvement. *Transportation Planning and Analysis*. 1858(2003), 95-102.
- Grossardt, T., Ripy, J., & Bailey, K. (2010). Use of structured public involvement to identify community preferences for a Superfund site end state vision. University of Kentucky Transportation Research Center, Lexington, KY.
- Haas, P.J., Massey, K.S., Valenty, L.O., & Werbel, R. (2000). Why campaigns for local transportation funding initiatives succeed or fail: An analysis of four communities and national data. Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose, CA.
- Haas, P.J. & Estrada, K. (2011). Revisiting factors associated with the success of ballot initiatives with a substantial rail transit component. Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose, CA.

- Hanna, K.S. (2000). The paradox of participation and the hidden role of information: A case study. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Vol. 66, 398-410.
- Hoover, J. (1998). How to build community support for transit. *Mass Transit*. 24(5).
- Horsley, L. (2006, November 8). Transit plan wins a startling thumbs-up. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A1, A17.
- Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California. (2013). *What are ballot propositions, initiatives, and referendums?* Retrieved May 29, 2013, from <http://www.iandrinstitute.org/QuickFact-WhatisI&R.htm>.
- Janovy, C.J. (2007, July 10). Feeling the pain of Mayor Mark Funkhouser's first weeks. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 8-10.
- Kansas City Streetcar Authority. (2013). *Route Map*. Retrieved July 1, 2013, from <http://www.kcstreetcar.org/kc-streetcar-route-maps.htm>.
- Kansas City's light rail option. (2001, May 9). *Northeast News*, pp. 1, 8.
- Light rail a heavy headache. (2001, July 25). *Northeast News*, pp. 1, 8.
- Logan, C. (2001, July 25). Train in vain. *Pitch Weekly*, pp. 17-22.
- Mansur, M. & Spivak, J. (2007a, October 28). The six principles to a successful start. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A12, A13.
- Mansur, M. & Spivak, J. (2007b, October 28). What it could cost, and where to get the money. *The Kansas City Star*, p. A14.
- Martin, D. (2006, November 1). Crazy train. *Pitch Weekly*, pp. 20-26.
- Menninger, B. (1998, October). Can light rail get back on track? *Kansas City Magazine*, 5(2), pp. 56-59.
- Middleton, W. (1998). Why some voters say yes; why some say no. *Railway Age*. 199(2), G1-8.

- Nordahl, D. (2008). *My kind of transit: Rethinking public transportation in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rodgers, B. (1997, June 25). Light rail challenge. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 4.
- Rodgers, B. (1997, August 20). A development tool and transportation system. *Pitch Weekly*, pp. 6, 8.
- Rodgers, B. (1997, September 10). Engineering a rail change. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 4.
- Rodgers, B. (1997, October 8). Broadway business group restates its position on light rail. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 9.
- Rodgers, B. (1998, July 29). Light rail petition looks to ‘veto’ Chamber of Commerce decision. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 7.
- Rodgers, B. (1998, October 28). A leadership void surrounds light rail issue. *Pitch Weekly*, p. 4.
- Rodgers, B. (2000, November 22). On a rail. *Pitch Weekly*, pp. 9-10.
- Sherman, G. (2014). *The loudest voice in the room: How the brilliant, bombastic Roger Ailes built Fox News – and divided a country*. New York: Random House.
- Slotterback, C.S. (2010). Public involvement in transportation project planning and design. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*. 27(2), 144-62.
- Smith, D. & Horsley, L. (2008, August 8). KC rail plan put on ballot. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A1, A6.
- Spivak, J. (2007, May). Believe it or not: An unlikely city hopes for a transit comeback. *Planning*, 18-21.
- Spivak, J., Cooper, B. & Horsley, L. (2008, May 28). Mayor’s transit idea mapped out. *The Kansas City Star*, pp. A1, A4.
- Spivak, J. (2008, August 8). A closer look at KC’s light-rail vote. *The Kansas City Star*, p. A6.
- Spivak, J. & Mansur, M. (2007, October 28). Putting it on the line. *The Kansas City Star*, p. A1.

- Surowiecki, J. (2004). *The wisdom of crowds: Why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations*. New York: Doubleday.
- Taylor, B. & Schweitzer, L. (2005). Assessing the experience of mandated collaborative inter-jurisdictional transport planning in the United States. *Transport Policy*. 12(2005), 500-511.
- Transportation Research Board, (1987). *Research for public transit: New directions - strategic transportation research study (Special Report No. 213)*. Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board.
- Transportation Research Board, Transit Cooperative Research Program. (2010). Effective use of citizen advisory committees for transit planning and operations (TCRP Synthesis 85). Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board, sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration.
- Transportation Research Board, Transit Cooperative Research Program. (2011). Public participation strategies for transit (TCRP Synthesis 89). Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board, sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *Annual estimates of the population of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009*. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office.
- Walker, J. (2012). *Human transit: How clearer thinking about public transit can enrich our communities and our lives*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Werbel, R. & Haas, P.J. (2001). Factors influencing voting results of local transportation funding initiatives with a substantial rail transit component: Case studies of ballot measures in eleven communities. Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose, CA.
- Womack, J. & Pucher, J. (1981). *The urban transportation system: politics and policy innovations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Appendix A – Chastain’s Successful 2006 Initiative

The following appeared as Question 2 on the Kansas City, Missouri general election ballot on November 7, 2006. The initiative passed, 53% to 47%.

QUESTION 2: SHALL THE FOLLOWING BE APPROVED?

In order to provide for the people of Kansas City a pioneering urban rail passenger system, constituting the foundation of a future regional transit system, offering not only increased energy-efficiency, comfort, mobility, transportation savings, and convenience, but also a greener, cleaner, safer environment, a stronger economy, and a means to help America reduce its dependence on imported oil; shall the City of Kansas City, Missouri extend the current three-eighths (3/8) cent transportation sales tax, due to expire on March 31, 2009, for 25 years, beginning April 1, 2009 and ending March 31, 2034, with said tax to be used solely to fund the construction, operation, maintenance, and beautification of the following transportation improvements under the auspices of the Kansas City, Missouri City Council:

1. Implement Kansas City’s new Heartland Light Rail System consisting of a north/south light rail spine beginning at the Kansas City Zoo in Swope Park and ending at Kansas City International Airport including, but not limited to, stops at UMKC, Nelson Art Gallery, Plaza, Westport, Union Station, Performing Arts Center, Convention Center, Power & Light District, Sprint Center, City Market area, North Kansas City, North Oak Trafficway, and Zona Rosa; with the route following 63rd Street, Troost Avenue, 50th Street, Rockhill Road, Emanuel Cleaver Boulevard, Mill Creek Park, Broadway Boulevard, along the high ridge in Penn Valley Park to the junction of Kessler Road and Pershing Road, the west side of Union Station’s Carriage House, Broadway Boulevard, 13th Street, Oak Street, Heart of America Bridge, Burlington Avenue, N. Oak Trafficway, Englewood Road, Waukomis Drive, the interurban right-of-way, Barry Road, Amity Avenue, and concluding at a transit hub, park & ride lot, and shuttle station near Madrid Avenue at KCI; also including new ground level power supply technology (no overhead wires), and park & ride lots;
2. Implement a green fleet of sixty electric shuttles to provide connecting transit service to all light rail stops making possible the expansion of the light rail system’s service area to nearby job centers, neighborhoods, and other primary destinations not directly served by the rail line;
3. Implement an aerial gondola tram system providing passenger service between Union Station, Liberty Memorial, and Penn Valley Park; remove all thru vehicular roads, including Broadway, in the park and re-route traffic around the park; replace roads with landscaped transportation corridors for new bicycle & walking pathways, the gondola, and a wooden light rail truss bridge; with the funds also to be used to retire bond indebtedness related to the projects, and to help secure additional federal, state, and regional transportation funds?

Appendix B – Text of Citizen Survey

The following is the precise text of the survey submitted to Kansas City residents.

Kansas City Transit and Public Involvement Survey

1. When it comes to the way transit is planned in Kansas City, at which step would you place the decision-making process? Please read all definitions before choosing one.
 - (1) Manipulation – Government initiates change and controls the decision-making process entirely
 - (2) Therapy – Citizens are only indirectly involved, and are not informed of all options/outcomes
 - (3) Informing – Citizens are informed of the process, but their views are not sought
 - (4) Consultation – Citizens are informed and their opinions sought, but their advice is largely ignored
 - (5) Placation – Citizens contribute their opinions to the process, but only token changes are made
 - (6) Partnership – Citizens are consulted, and the result is a negotiation between them and government
 - (7) Delegated Power – Citizens control most of the process, and delegate some tasks to city staff
 - (8) Citizen Control – Citizens initiate change and control the decision-making process entirely

2. At which step do you think the process should be? Please read all definitions before choosing one.
 - (1) Manipulation – Government initiates change and controls the decision-making process entirely
 - (2) Therapy – Citizens are only indirectly involved, and are not informed of all options/outcomes
 - (3) Informing – Citizens are informed of the process, but their views are not sought
 - (4) Consultation – Citizens are informed and their opinions sought, but their advice is largely ignored
 - (5) Placation – Citizens contribute their opinions to the process, but only token changes are made
 - (6) Partnership – Citizens are consulted, and the result is a negotiation between them and government
 - (7) Delegated Power – Citizens control most of the process, and delegate some tasks to city staff
 - (8) Citizen Control – Citizens initiate change and control the decision-making process entirely

3. Please rate the following statement: “The city takes my ideas and concerns about transit seriously.”
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Not Sure
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

4. Please rate the following statement: “Voters would approve a light-rail plan if the public were involved in planning the route.”
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Not Sure
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

5. In your opinion, what is the best way for a city to design effective and popular transit?
 Designed by experts, with little public input
 Designed to meet each citizen’s transit needs
 Designed with a balance of expertise and citizen needs

6. In your opinion, how much time should planners devote to seeking the public's input?
- Planners should seek only the legally-required public input, so the project may be completed on time
 - Planners should seek as many opinions as possible, even if it adds months to the project timeline
 - Planners should balance public input with an established timeline for completion
7. Ultimately, which of these factors is most important when designing/building a transit system?
- Being designed to meet the needs of as many citizens as possible
 - Being completed on schedule
 - Other (please specify)
8. In your opinion, who is qualified to design effective transit for Kansas City? (Select all that apply)
- Engineers and planners from local government
 - Citizen-activists and neighborhood groups
 - Engineers and planners from the private sector
 - People who frequently ride transit
 - Other (please specify)
9. In your opinion, who has been better at designing effective transit ideas for Kansas City?
- Kansas City planners and elected officials
 - Clay Chastain (who initiated several light-rail proposals from 1997-2006)
 - Both have been equally effective
 - Neither has been effective
10. In your opinion, how seriously should transit planners take the opinions and concerns of citizens?
- Very seriously. Every citizen's viewpoint matters equally.
 - Seriously. Some viewpoints and ideas are more realistic than others.
 - Not too seriously. Transit planning is more complicated than many citizens understand.
 - Not seriously at all. The experts know best.

Appendix C – Documentation of Survey Responses

	Response Count	Percentage of Total Responses
Question One:		
Manipulation	4	5%
Therapy	5	6%
Informing	20	23%
Consultation	26	30%
Placation	24	28%
Partnership	8	9%
Delegated Power	0	0%
Citizen Control	0	0%
	87	
Question Two:		
Manipulation	0	0%
Therapy	1	1%
Informing	0	0%
Consultation	0	0%
Placation	2	2%
Partnership	74	85%
Delegated Power	6	7%
Citizen Control	4	5%
	87	
Question Three:		
Strongly Agree	4	5%
Agree	21	24%
Not Sure	11	13%
Disagree	30	34%
Strongly Disagree	21	24%
	87	
Question Four:		
Strongly Agree	21	24%
Agree	44	51%
Not Sure	14	16%
Disagree	8	9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	87	
Question Five:		
Designed by experts	6	7%
Designed for citizens	8	10%
Balance of both	70	83%
	84	

	Response Count	Percentage of Total Responses
Question Six:		
Only min. required	7	8%
As much as possible	12	14%
Balance of both	65	77%
	84	
Question Seven:		
Meet public demands	22	27%
Finish on schedule	56	67%
Other	5	6%
	83	
Other Responses:		
"Designed to secure federal/local funds"		
"Future adaptability and cost-effectiveness"		
"Cost-effective system for the urban core"		
"A balance between two"		
"Both, plus stay under budget"		
Question Eight:		
Local government	64	31%
Citizen groups	45	22%
Private sector	51	25%
Frequent riders	46	22%
	206	
Question Nine:		
KC Planners	20	23%
Clay Chastain	6	7%
Both	12	14%
Neither	48	56%
	86	
Question Ten:		
Very seriously	12	14%
Seriously	58	69%
Not too seriously	14	17%
Not at all seriously	0	0%
	84	

Postscript

The original intent of this project was to study the effect of planning meetings and design charettes on the voting preferences of participants. A more in-depth survey than the one utilized above was designed for this purpose, and it was meant to be conducted both before and after a public meeting related to transit. The two-part strategy would have documented any immediate shift in opinion caused by what was presented and discussed at that particular meeting. The purpose of this would have been to measure the direct impact that city-employed planners, and the language and materials they used in communicating with the public, might have had on the political acceptability of a project then under construction, the Kansas City Streetcar.

This process was to have involved cooperation with city staff. I made arrangements with both city staff and the planning consultants hired to oversee the project's public outreach efforts, and we communicated frequently at the start of this project. While both parties expressed an early eagerness to contribute to this project and to find ways to improve the city's public participation strategies, complications soon arose. The Streetcar project staff requested that I rephrase the questions relating to past transit proposals to more explicitly imply that the city had always taken public participation as seriously as it did in 2014, a notion I knew from my research to be patently untrue. Later, city officials were shown a copy of the original survey, and they asked me to change the wording of Arnstein's Ladder so as to not "give participants the idea that their government could ever be less than democratic," or in other words, to remove the lower half of the Ladder from the survey. I objected to both of these requests on ethical grounds, and was told that without approval from the city government, I would not be permitted to conduct a survey during one of their public meetings. Consequently, the overall direction and research questions of this thesis had to be adjusted, and a new survey approach had to be undertaken. I found these attempts at censorship troubling but also informative, especially considering the original intent of this thesis was to examine the ways city planners can influence public opinion. I was thus able to experience proof positive that the relationship between planners and citizens in Kansas City is in need of a great deal more openness, honesty, and parity.

Still, I conclude this project with some very useful findings, and with my integrity intact.

- James Wood, 2014