

Appendix I:

- 1) June 12 public hearing public comment summary**
- 2) Emails and letters sent directly to County staff or which were forwarded to staff by BRC Commissioners**

Public comments from the Blue Ribbon Commission's June 12, 2008 meeting:

- St. Louis County Circuit Court Judge Carolyn C. Whittington discussed both the need for a new family courts building and renovations to the existing County Courthouse.
- Maplewood Mayor Mark Langston expressed his concerns about current plans that call for a Hanley Road "fly-over" to be built over Manchester Road. He asked that any re-construction of the intersection be "at grade."
- Tim Fischesser, Executive Director of St. Louis County's Municipal League, explained that the League endorses the idea of placing a "use" tax on the ballot for public vote, but that it had no desire to conflict with any ballot measures St. Louis County may be contemplating. He also discussed the need for an interoperable communications system and the need for an expanded Metrolink.
- Richard Dockett, a University City resident, spoke on behalf of St. Louis Area Concerned Taxpayers. Mr. Dockett encouraged St. Louis County to do what it could to generate greater levels of African American workers in future construction projects. He also expressed his concern with Metro's spending.

Public comments from the Blue Ribbon Commission's June 17, 2008 meeting:

- Bill Hartmann, an instructor at Forest Park Community College, described himself as a spokesman for both his students and residents who live north of Olive Boulevard. Hartmann was concerned that St. Louis County would reduce its portion of Metrolink funding if voters reject Prop M. He said many of his students from North County use public transportation to get to and from school. "We need 'Plan B' in the event that Prop M fails," he said.
- Ann Mack, Executive Director of Trailnet encouraged St. Louis County to develop an improvement plan for Hanley Road that placed more of an emphasis on pedestrians and bicycle riders. "If you design for cars, you'll get more cars. If you design for people, you'll get more people," Mack said. "Is the goal really to move cars as fast as we can through our communities? If we get this wrong, it's a 50-year-plus mistake."

- Ginger Harris suggested that the County's Department of Highways and Traffic place a quarter-cent sales tax initiative on an upcoming ballot – with the funds generated dedicated exclusively for highways use.
- Gary Higgs shared his concerns about the lack of a “harmonized addressing system in St. Louis County.”

Saint Louis County Capital Investment Blue Ribbon Commission July 7, 2008

Chairman Mange and Honorable Members of the Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my comments about Saint Louis County's capital investment proposals. I attended the public forum on June 12, where a presenter stated that capital investment in public infrastructure leads to job creation. That is certainly true in many capacities, but there is another thing that leads to more job creation: low taxes. A lower tax rate leads to an increase in private investment in the county, which grows the tax base and expands revenues without the heavy hand of a tax increase.

The infrastructure needs discussed in the presentation are no doubt real, but the tax increases proposed to pay for them are not without costs of their own. These proposals, if implemented, would have counter-effects for the county's economy. Saint Louis County might well get more money after passing its proposals, but residents and businesses in the county would have less money to spend and invest as they see fit. In some cases, the higher taxes could encourage people or businesses to shop less, or even to move out of the county, thereby achieving the exact opposite of the proposals' goals. To quote famed economist Frederic Bastiat about the effects of any tax increases, you should consider both "What is seen and what is not seen."

Passing a new transportation sales tax, a park sales tax, and a use tax in close proximity, all while issuing bonds that will require bonding property tax rates to remain consistent — or, perhaps, increase — would have a detrimental impact on Saint Louis County as a whole. It is not my place here to debate whether or not voters would pass these proposals. I would, however, like to remind the members of this commission about the dangers of initiating a cycle similar to the one the city of Saint Louis has experienced in recent years, constantly asking voters for, and usually receiving, a small sales tax increase here or a minor property tax increase there. Since 2000, the city of Saint Louis has placed 11 citywide tax increases, tax renewals, or bond issues on the ballot, and nine of them have passed. This cycle turns vicious as the small increases add up over time and harm the very economic environment that many of the taxes were intended to help improve, under the guise of "investment."

A use tax aimed at businesses could be a particularly harmful proposal. Saint Louis County needs to make itself *more* inviting to *all* businesses. Increasing general business taxes, and then giving some back to chosen companies as subsidies, is not the way to accomplish this. Saint Charles County provides a useful contrast. Although it has generally lower property tax rates than Saint Louis County, the differences particularly stand out in the commercial tax surcharge, which is just \$0.53 per \$100 dollars of assessed valuation in Saint Charles, while in Saint Louis County it is \$1.70. That difference of \$1.17 can mean thousands of dollars each year to a commercial enterprise. One competitive advantage Saint Louis has over Saint Charles, though, is its lack of a use tax. If Saint Louis County were to institute a use tax, this important competitive advantage would disappear — serving as another incentive for businesses to move outside the county, as Mastercard did several years ago. Private capital flows to the areas in which it is subject to fewer taxes; that is a fact of economics at all levels.

Saint Louis County should continue to look for opportunities to work with the private sector in providing services, such as its extremely successful privatization of pharmacy services. The emergency communication system is one such area, in which private companies could be asked to submit proposals (although this has, admittedly, been very rare in the United States for this field). Metro should be encouraged to allow competitive bidding on its bus routes and consider using private companies to provide a portion of the area's transit operations, as Denver has done. One of the currently proposed tax increases is a sales tax for the parks. Has the county considered contracting out security services for county parks to a private security company? More radically, the county should work with the city to have Saint Louis re-enter the county as its 92nd municipality, significantly expanding the county's tax base and allowing for both revenue increases and tax reductions.

As you move forward in your considerations, the substantial amount of bonding authority available to Saint Louis County should be the primary vehicle for addressing the county's infrastructure needs. The county benefits from an excellent combination of the low level of current bonding (just 3 percent of the county's legal limit), the county's excellent bond rating (for which current county leadership deserves credit), and the upcoming retirement in 2013 of many current bonds (plus the Edward Jones Dome bonds, ten years later). This allows for bonds to be a reasonable and valuable way for the county to meet many of its legitimate infrastructure goals. Property taxes are less mobile than sales taxes, and in any event the county bond retirement property tax might only be extended, but not necessarily increased, in order to pay off the bonds. Furthermore, bonds paid off via property taxes are readily deductible from taxpayers' state and federal income taxes, unlike sales taxes.

Strong consideration should be given to further expanding county operations outside of the Clayton central business district. There is no absolute need to keep the Family Court Center in Clayton. The city of Saint Louis has its family courts located in midtown, away from the other courthouses. The election board in Maplewood and the police and fire academies in Wellston provide excellent examples of how county offices can operate successfully outside of Clayton. The buildings at 121 and 111 South Meramec may well need to be replaced, but they should be sold by the county to private business interests. Some of the most valuable real estate in the county could then go back on the tax rolls, helping to fund improvements to such needs as the crime lab, which could certainly be redone close to — but not in the heart of — downtown Clayton.

Saint Louis County and this commission must consider the economically harmful aspects of tax increases alongside the infrastructure needs that those increases are proposed to finance. Thank you again for this opportunity to share my thoughts and ideas. Please feel free to contact me if I may be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

David Stokes
Show-Me Institute

July 8, 2008

To: Skip Mange, Chair, Blue Ribbon Commission

From: Joan Bray, Missouri Senate, 24th District

Re: Draft report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Capital Investment

I am heartened by the fact the commission was formed to address the capital needs of St. Louis County. I have long been concerned that the huge investments of previous generations are being allowed to deteriorate or become obsolete. Unfortunately, residents of not only St. Louis County, but the entire country, have gotten the misconception that life can continue, even get better, without investing in basic infrastructure and services. We are reaching crises in many areas - health care, transportation, education, to name three -- that bring the reality of neglect to our attention.

I just want to mention my observations in a few areas your work addresses:

1. The campaign to levy an additional ½-cent sales tax for MetroLink should be very honest with the voters. The tax should go to augment the current tax to enable the system to operate and expand. Any plan to back out existing funding and divert it to other uses, such as roads, should be very clear to voters. If the plan includes taking money away from Metro, then voters have the right to ask why additional funding is needed. The cleanest, clearest message is the one most likely accepted by voters. Metro needs a larger funding source in order to meet the public's expectations; the case can be clearly made. If the county wants more money for roads, make the case to the voters separately for that.

The Prop M campaign will have its best chance of succeeding if it is run locally with the engagement of grass roots groups experienced in getting folks to the polls to vote for a tax.

2. The remarks of Mayor Mark Langston of Maplewood and Ann Mack of Trailnet are right on target. Any reconstruction of Hanley Road south of Highway 40 must be very sensitive to all modes of transportation - cars, trucks, transit, bicycles and pedestrians. The region invested tens of millions of dollars in the Brentwood and Maplewood MetroLink stops; to render them irrelevant and unusable with an outmoded, inaccessible highway would be folly.

St. Louis County has a remarkable opportunity to make Hanley Road state of the art in multi-mobility and inner-urban transportation. It should rise to the occasion and not be burdened by unfulfilled desires of the past or pressure to sacrifice the accessibility of mid-county communities in order to facilitate gamblers from North County getting to the gambling boat in South County.

3. A countywide interoperable communications system is critical. Regional coordination through East-West Gateway is a must. The state began a multi-year, multi-million-dollar appropriation commitment this fiscal year for a statewide communication system that many of us state office holders insist must ultimately be interoperable with all governments' communication systems statewide. **Coordination on this effort at all levels is essential.**
4. The green building requirement is a great recommendation. Among the provisions passed by the Legislature in Senate Bill 1181 this past session is: The act requires that by January 1, 2009, the Department of Natural Resources shall modify the minimum energy efficiency standard so that it is at least as stringent as the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (2006 IECC), or the latest version of the Code rather than the current standard of American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Standard 90. The act modifies the date to July 1, 2009, by which all design for state buildings over 5,000 square feet involving new construction or substantial renovation and any building over 5,000 square feet considered for purchase or lease by a state agency shall comply with the minimum energy efficiency standard.

If the state can set a standard, so can St. Louis County.

I attended a panel discussion a couple of weeks ago on green buildings where the experts said payoffs for green construction were generally happening even faster than forecast.

5. Research must be done about how to inform and educate the voters about the use tax; it's a murky concept. Voters must feel the collection and use of this tax will be relevant to their lives.
6. Taxes for parks are popular. But is this the highest priority? We already have 1/10-cent regional parks tax. Would a parks sales tax free up money to go to other needs? If that's the case, the voters need to understand that an earmarked tax for parks means backing out existing funding for parks.

Wrone, David

Subject: FW: Blue Ribbon Commission

Attachments: blueribbon.doc; ATT1008154.htm; tnet.jpg; ATT1008155.htm

From: Ann Mack [mailto:annmack@trailnet.org]

Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 3:44 PM

To: McLaughlin, Matthew; Fraser, Barbara

Subject: Re: Blue Ribbon Commission

Blue Ribbon Commission Members:

Thank you for including language in the DRAFT report to the County that recommends planning for all modes of transportation. I would like to add that to design Hanley Road to be more of a 'complete street' (designed for all modal types), no additional right-of-way needs to be acquired and therefore the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities requires nominal additional costs. While dedicated bicycle lanes are well-received by cyclists and cars alike, we are not advocating for a distinct bicycle lane, but instead a wider outer lane (and slightly narrower inner lanes) that better accommodates the safe passage of cycles, particularly as they utilize Hanley to access the MetroLink and MetroBus stations. It is a matter of re-design which our engineer has already looked into and proposed improvements.

I strongly believe that when the County and County Department of Highways and Traffic truly prioritizes all modal types, they will begin to indicate that they can and will design for pedestrians, bicyclists and connections to Metro. On behalf of the Trailnet members, staff and board, we appreciate your support for better-designed roads.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information.

Ann Mack

Fraser, Barbara

From: egolterman@charter.net
Sent: Sunday, June 08, 2008 9:30 PM
To: Fraser, Barbara
Cc: Wasinger, Colleen
Subject: No tax increases for buildings and improv.

No tax increases or bond repayment extensions to pay for the County's new buildings and improvements. Not necessary. Redirect money that is wasted, year after year...to the important projects:

1.) Stop payment of \$50 million a year to the Zoo Museum District. Divert \$25 million to the improvements projects over 7 years- that's \$175 million. \$25 million a year goes back to the taxpayers of St. Louis County. The institution members of the Zoo Museum district no longer need tax money from St. Louis County. They have money to burn.

2.) St. Louis County ends payment on the dome and ballpark/village bonds because both programs were fraudulently sold to County officials and neither has improved convention and tourism. 7 years time 8 million from the county hotel and motel tax yields-\$56 million

\$175 Million and \$56 million=\$231 Million. You are more than halfway.

It is massively unfair to level more taxes to use or to support St. Louis County Parks when you pour \$50 million a year into attractions in Forest Park.

Look at the Great River Trails Tax...has that tax money been 'raided' by Danforth for his Arch ground scheme? May be there is 4-5 million a year from that tax to apply here. Another 25 million over 7 years.

Look at the Casinos public subsidy. Has any contractual agreements been broken to the extent St. Louis County could recover some money?

Look at waste and possible corruption in how St. Louis County money poured into the Airport Authority or Commission, into METRO, into the Sewer District, into the SLCVC, into the RCGA...is used.

See if there are dollars to recover here.

My guess is you can find and redirect \$425 million over the 7 years from money already collected from the people and businesses of St. Louis County.

All of the four tax increase proposals and extensions of bond retirements are regressive, burdensom to St. Louis County residents.

So...find something I have not covered..some waste or money poured into the failed, corrupt City, and retain that in St. Louis County.

ed golterman

Fraser, Barbara

To: Bowser

Subject: RE: Newsletter from Barbara Fraser

For Commission -----

Barbara,

. I believe the Commission should give very high priority to new construction or improvements that incorporate LEED standards for energy conservation and use of renewable energy technologies. Many exciting things are happening around the country on this front resulting not only in environmental improvements but also in significant cost savings. I am concerned that the St. Louis area is falling behind and not being nearly aggressive enough in pursuing new technologies. The work of this Commission would seem to offer an opportunity to move forward on this front.

Thanks,

Nancy Bowser