

Transit Profile: The St. Louis area MetroLink light rail system

Project Description:

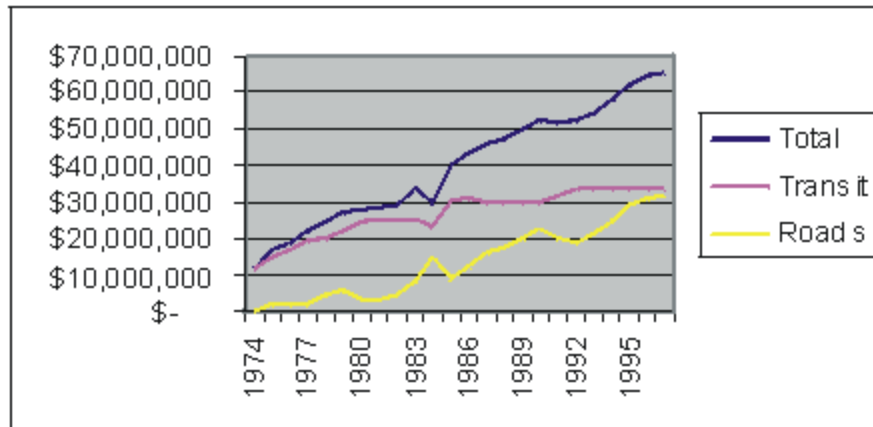
MetroLink, the St. Louis metropolitan region's light rail system, operates on a 17-mile line. The system opened on July 31, 1993. The East Riverfront Station in Illinois and Airport Main Station at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport opened in 1994 and MetroLink's Lambert Airport East Station opened in 1998. The first 17-mile MetroLink line has 19 stations and 31 light rail vehicles electronically powered from overhead wires. About 14 miles of the light rail alignment is built on existing rail right-of-way totally renovated for the state-of-the-art light rail technology. MetroLink ridership continues to grow, averaging 44,500 per day on the light rail system.

The initial phase operates from Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, along I-70, through the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus, along Forest Park, past Washington University Medical Center, under Union Station, through the Washington/ 8th street tunnel under downtown St. Louis, across the rail deck of the historic Eads Bridge to downtown East St. Louis.

Capital Costs:

The capital cost to build the initial phase of MetroLink was \$464 million. Of that amount, \$384 million came from Federal contribution through a one-cent gasoline tax revenue base. The local match of \$116 million came from the asset value of the donated railroad rights-of-way, structures and facilities.

MetroLink operations are subsidized by sales taxes from St. Louis City and County, the Illinois transit district of St. Clair County and from fares paid by passengers.

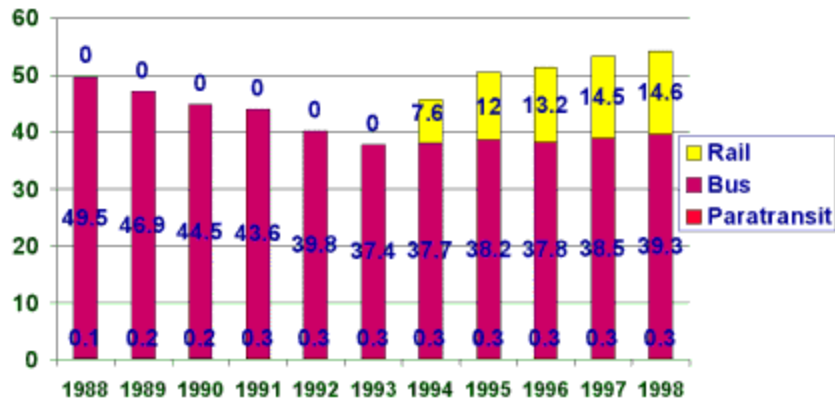


Funding for Bus and MetroLink vs. Highways from St. Louis County

Ridership:

Before service began, ridership was projected at 12,000 per day. In August of 1993, the system's first month of operation, approximately 30,000 passengers rode MetroLink each day. In June, 1998, the average weekday ridership topped 46,750 commuters. MetroLink carried nearly 9 million customers during its first year of operation - almost double the projected ridership of 4.8 million passengers. During Fiscal Year 1995 (July, 1, 1994 – June 30, 1995) over 12.4 million commuters rode MetroLink; in Fiscal Year 1996, over 12.8 million; and in Fiscal Year 1997, 14.5 million rode the system, a 12.5 percent increase over 1996 figures. Fiscal Year 1998 ridership on MetroLink topped 14.48 million. Ridership continues to exceed expectations.

System-wide Ridership *in millions*



Ridership continues to grow, averaging 44,500 per day

Other Project Benefits:

MetroLink provided 54.2 million rides between 1997-1998. MetroLink works because it:

- ?? The average commuter can save about \$1500 a year and 200 gallons of gas a year by using public transit instead of driving to work.
- ?? A full MetroLink train at rush hour removes 125 cars from the highway.
- ?? Helps achieve Clean Air goals.
- ?? Boosts civic pride and bring people together on the train.
- ?? Stimulates economic development and sells St. Louis as a convention destination.

The Land Use Connection:

St. Louis occupies 350% more land today than it did 40 years ago and the population has increased 35% in the same period, sprawl has become a serious threat to maintaining neighborhood connections. Because of this, the Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT) has become a leader in efforts to promote the Smart Growth Alliance, which uses transportation policy towards its vision of fostering neighborhood development through the thoughtful expansion of MetroLink.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) or "New Urbanism" - which means strong transit, compact development, walkable streets, and mixed use development - has been seen in such areas as Portland, OR and San Jose, CA. TOD's build communities and neighborhoods along transit, increasing accessibility, street level activity and opportunities to live and work closer to home. In the light rail corridors of cities like Portland and San Jose, new housing - including single family dwellings and multi-family structures - and commercial opportunities have increased. Experts around the country stand firm in the knowledge that TOD is an incredible way to save and revitalize old neighborhoods.

A good, high quality system encourages walking, thus stimulating storefronts and urban design. The St. Louis region is an area developed from a transit system with basic housing density, street grids and existing retail on a neighborhood scale. By bringing MetroLink back to these neighborhoods, the ridership community and neighborhood development opportunities will abound.

Property Values:

MetroLink's impact on development by all accounts appears to be positive.

What Others Say:

☞☞ "Critics predicted the St. Louis system was going to be a boondoggle, but it has been such a success that it doesn't have the equipment to keep up with the demand."
Paul M. Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Foundation

☞☞ "The people are the reason MetroLink has been so successful. Since opening in 1993, there have been more than 61 million passenger boardings on MetroLink and a 40 percent increase in overall transit ridership in the region."
Tom Irvin, Bi-State executive director

☞☞ "We thought that if we provided something better than the automobile that was affordable, people would use it. The acceptance of MetroLink even surprised us. MetroLink is a national example for light-rail development. We've clearly done something right."
Les Sterman, executive director of the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council

☞☞ "What amazes me, though, is the diversity of the ridership on MetroLink, especially in East St. Louis. We have more than 1,000 cars a day park (on Bi-State lots) over there, with midlevel executives from Faiview Heights taking MetroLink to jobs in St. Louis. It's not that 43,000 people per day are riding MetroLink. Look at who is riding it. That's what amazes me, and it's something to celebrate."
Les Sterman, executive director of the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council

Rail System Map:

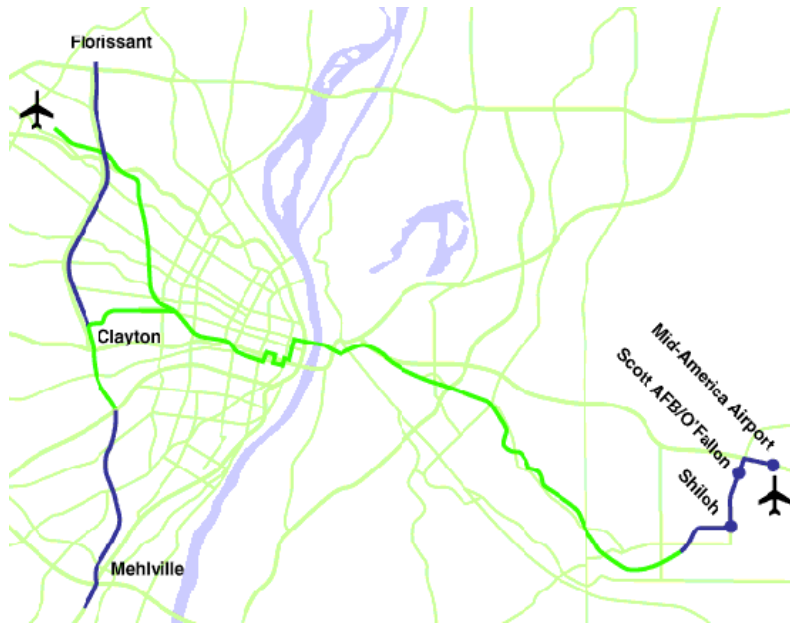


Community Support:

Since its opening in 1993, MetroLink ridership has surpassed initial expectations with an average of 41,000 people choosing light rail service each day. Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT) have helped to rebuild St. Louis communities for over a decade. Through continued efforts, CMT manages to gain funding for expansion and many other transportation improvements in the region. CMT believes rail transit is more than just a means to get from point A to point B, but a means to energize and revitalize existing communities.

Extensions:

Two additional extensions are in progress. The Cross County Line including new feeder buses and an upgraded Forest Park Shuttle is scheduled to open in 2005. The St. Clair County Extension, with no "Missouri" tax dollars going towards this project, is scheduled to begin service in 2001.



The Cross County Line Extension



St. Clair Extension

Links:

- <http://www.cmt-stl.org>
- <http://www.cleanair-stlouis.com>
- <http://www.bi-state.org>
- <http://www.mct.org>

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All information for this profile provided directly from Citizens for Modern Transit and their website located at www.cmt-stl.org.