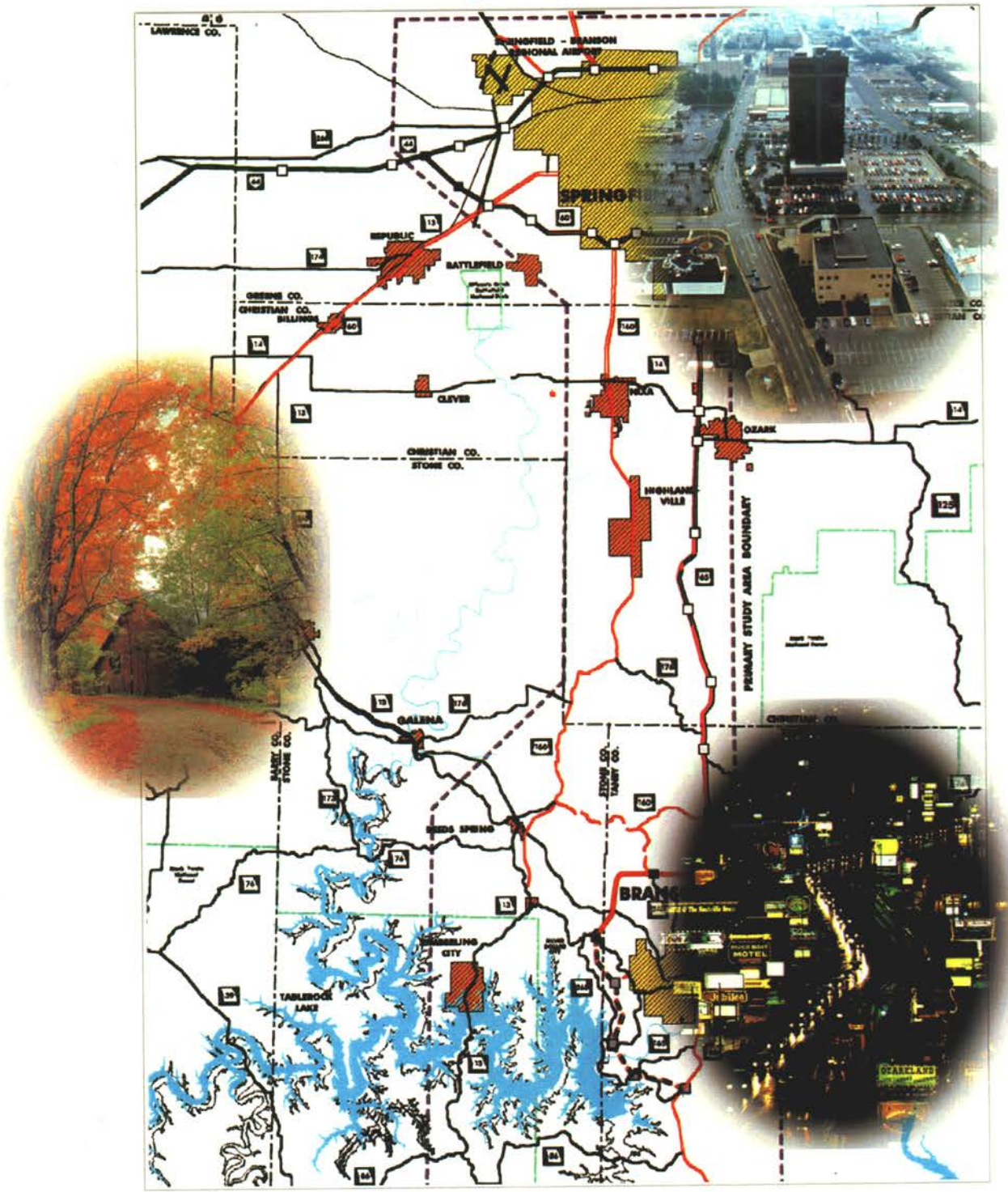
Springfield – Branson Corridor Transportation Study
Summary Report
May 2000



SPRINGFIELD
CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION STUDY
BRANSON

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June 20, 2000

The Springfield - Branson Corridor Transportation Study, initiated in November of 1998, is the Region's most comprehensive examination ever of travel projections and future transportation needs. The Study's Final Report summarizes the two-year effort to develop a long-range plan to address the Region's transportation needs, and ensure that anticipated growth in population, employment and economic development can be achieved.

The Final Report outlines recommendations for needed improvements to the Region's transportation system over the next twenty years. These conclusions and recommendations were approved at the April 26, 2000 Steering Committee meeting. The work of the Study Committee, consisting of the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee, represents an important step in developing a long-range transportation plan for the Region.

The Study was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of state and local governmental agencies, and representatives of various civic organizations. This group had overall responsibility for the Study and approved all major decisions and recommendations during the past two years. As Governmental Relations Attorney for the City of Branson, I also served as Chairman of the Steering Committee.

A Technical Committee comprised of governmental staff involved with transportation planning and operations worked closely with the detail of the Study. David Awbrey, Assistant Administrator for Transit, Missouri Department of Transportation, served as Chairman of the Technical Committee.

The final report reflects the results of literally thousands of hours of work by members of the Steering Committee and Technical Committee.

A consultant team of nationally recognized transportation and planning firms assisted the Study Committee and MoDOT in this effort. John Dobies of TranSystems Corporation served as project manager.

Even though the Final Report closes out the Study, the real challenge of conveying these ideas and securing funding starts now. This document is a valuable tool to be used in addressing this challenge.

I would like to thank all who contributed to this important project. I look forward to the realization of the Long Range Transportation Plan for the Springfield – Branson Corridor.

Sincerely,

Sam F. Hamra
Chairman

Cc: Technical Committee

SFH/ah

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Executive Summary
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Springfield – Branson County Transportation Study

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TRANSPORTATION STUDY SUPPORTS $800 MILLION INVESTMENT TO EXPAND SPRINGFIELD-BRANSON CORRIDOR HIGHWAYS

Phase II of the Springfield - Branson Corridor Transportation Study was completed in April 2000. The Study, initiated in November 1998 to determine the transportation needs of tourists, workers and residents moving between the Springfield and Branson areas, was directed by the Springfield - Branson Corridor Transportation Study Committee in collaboration with the Missouri Department of Transportation.

The Study represents the Region's most comprehensive examination of travel projections and future transportation needs. Phase I focused on the impact of astonishing and continuing growth in the Springfield - Branson Corridor during the next 20 years, and provided an analysis of the area's transportation and related community development needs and opportunities. The objective of Phase II was to provide a detailed blueprint to ensure that the transportation system is commensurate with community growth opportunities into the 21st century.

A Steering Committee representing state and local governmental agencies and various civic organizations had overall responsibility for the Study and approved all major decisions and recommendations during the past two years. The entire Springfield-Branson Corridor Study area is represented on the Steering Committee, making the Study truly regional in nature.

A Technical Committee comprised of governmental staff involved with transportation planning and operations worked closely with the consultant team to review the detail of the Study. As with the Steering Committee, the Technical Committee has a regional perspective.

A consultant team comprised of transportation engineering and planning firms assisted the Study Committee during the course of the Study.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Develop transportation improvement plans to support anticipated economic development in Springfield and Branson.
- Ensure that transportation plans maintain the quality of life in the Corridor.
- Develop multi-modal transportation systems that provide a choice for travelers in the Corridor.
- Improve coordination of land use and transportation decisions in the Corridor.
- Develop alternative financing approaches for new and upgraded transportation facilities.
- Develop consensus and support for the Study's recommendations.

The Study Process

The Study was divided into two phases. Phase I included data collection and the preparation of 20-year projections of traffic levels and transportation patterns in the Corridor. Phase I was designed to determine the viability of the Corridor's transportation system to meet future transportation and economic development needs.

Study objectives were developed during Phase I to guide the work of the Study Committee and the consultant team during the course of the Study.

Phase II involved the evaluation of transportation needs and the detailed analysis of alternative strategies for addressing these needs. The consultant team performed technical planning and engineering analyses including transportation system design, benefits and costs. The Study evaluated all modes of transportation that could reasonably address the Region's current and future needs, including new and improved highways, new bus service, passenger rail systems and even high technology people movers.

An important companion to the technical work was an intensive public involvement and community outreach program. This effort to inform and involve all segments of the community included eight public meetings, a Corridor-wide "newspaper public meeting" and over forty meetings with community groups. The result has been the most "community involvement" ever included in a transportation Study for the southwest Missouri Region.

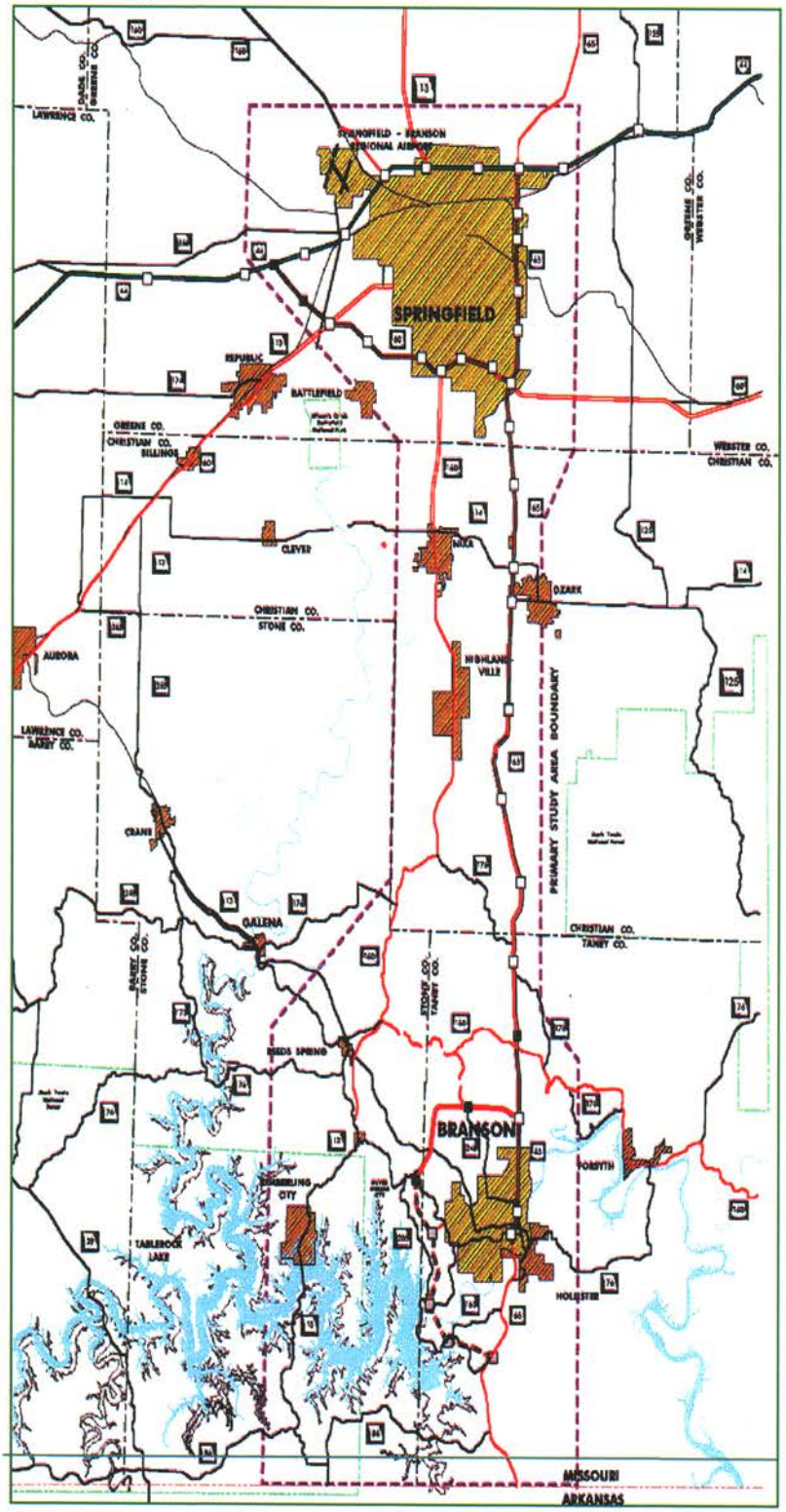
The Technical Committee developed an evaluation process to reduce the candidate transportation improvement solutions to a preferred transportation strategy for the Region. This evaluation process considered all of the technical engineering and planning data and the input from the intensive public involvement campaign. The evaluation process used objectives and criteria developed by the Technical Committee and approved by the Steering Committee.

Evidence that the evaluation process was effective can be found in the Steering Committee's action on the Study's recommendations. The Steering Committee, with representatives of communities throughout the Region, unanimously approved the final recommendations on April 18, 2000.

Overview: Springfield - Branson Transportation Corridor

The Springfield - Branson Transportation Corridor is defined as the area between the cities of Springfield and Branson approximately 50 miles in length and eight to 15 miles wide. The Corridor is largely rural, running through the Ozark Mountain region of southwest Missouri. Topography is severe, reflecting the character of the region. Figure 1 on the following page shows the Study Corridor.

Figure 1 - Springfield–Branson Transportation



The Corridor encompasses parts of Greene, Christian, Stone and Taney counties. Springfield at the north end of the Corridor is the third largest city in Missouri with a population of 150,500. Branson, a city of fewer than 4,000, is the center of an entertainment and tourist area that attracts seven million annual visitors and supports a work force of over 20,000. The Branson-Lakes area is rated as the 20th largest **leisure time destination in the United States.**

Highways

US Route 65 is the primary link between the two cities in the Corridor. The roadway is being improved by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and will be a four-lane facility for the entire distance in the Corridor by the year 2001. US Route 160 also provides an important highway link from the west side of Springfield to the west side of the Branson-Lakes Area through connections with routes 13 and 248 in the south part of the Corridor. Route 14 is the primary east-west state highway in the Corridor. Route 60 is another east west link in the north part of the Corridor. Interstate 44 is an important highway link into the region, framing the Corridor on the north.

Railroads

Historically, Springfield was an important rail center; however, railroads are less important to the region's economy today. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) has a single-track line that crosses

the north portion of the Corridor. The BNSF also has a track from Springfield to Ozark, a distance of about 16 miles. The Missouri and North Arkansas (M&NA) leases two lines in the Corridor from the Union Pacific Railroad, including a line from Aurora to Branson, and south into Arkansas. There is no regularly scheduled passenger rail transportation in the Corridor.

Airports

Springfield-Branson Regional Airport, located on the west side of the City of Springfield, is the only commercial aviation airport in the Corridor. In addition, general aviation airports are located at the College of the Ozarks just south of Branson, in Ozark and in Branson West.

Transit

City Utilities (CU) in Springfield operates fixed route transit and paratransit services within the city, however CU does not provide transit service between the cities of Springfield and Branson. OATS, Inc. provides paratransit services for the general public in the Corridor area with approximately twelve vans assigned to the area.

A number of private transportation companies operate bus service in the Corridor, including airport ground transportation between Springfield-Branson Regional Airport and destinations throughout the Corridor, particularly Branson. This service is operated on a charter basis; there is currently no scheduled bus service between Springfield and Branson.

Transportation Problems

Based on interviews with key persons, prior studies and the consultant team's observations during Phase I of the Study, the following transportation problems were identified:

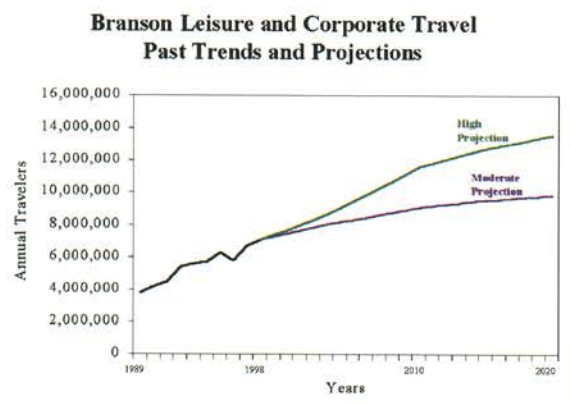
- Traffic congestion, characterized by significant delays during peak travel periods, on the north - south highways in the Corridor, particularly routes 65 and 160.
- Inadequate ground transportation for air travelers arriving at Springfield-Branson Regional Airport with destinations in Branson.
- A lack of transportation alternatives to travel by private auto in the Corridor.
- Inadequate transportation for employees of the Branson-Lakes Area, and increasing commuter-oriented traffic congestion on major arterial roadways serving Springfield.

Projections of Future Travel in the Corridor

An important Phase I work task involved developing projections of travel to the Branson-Lakes Area for the purpose of leisure and tourism. The methodology and assumptions were fashioned from information provided by individuals in the Branson area familiar with markets, trends and future developments. The market segment assessment relies heavily on information prepared for the Branson-Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, and information such as demographic projections for the Springfield - Branson region, and the Midwest region of the United States.

To properly analyze travel patterns in the Corridor and develop projections of future travel patterns and volumes, it was necessary to segment the travel market in a manner consistent with strategic and marketing plans in the Corridor. Growth assumptions were developed for various market segments for four time periods within the 20-year horizon of the Study.

Figure 2



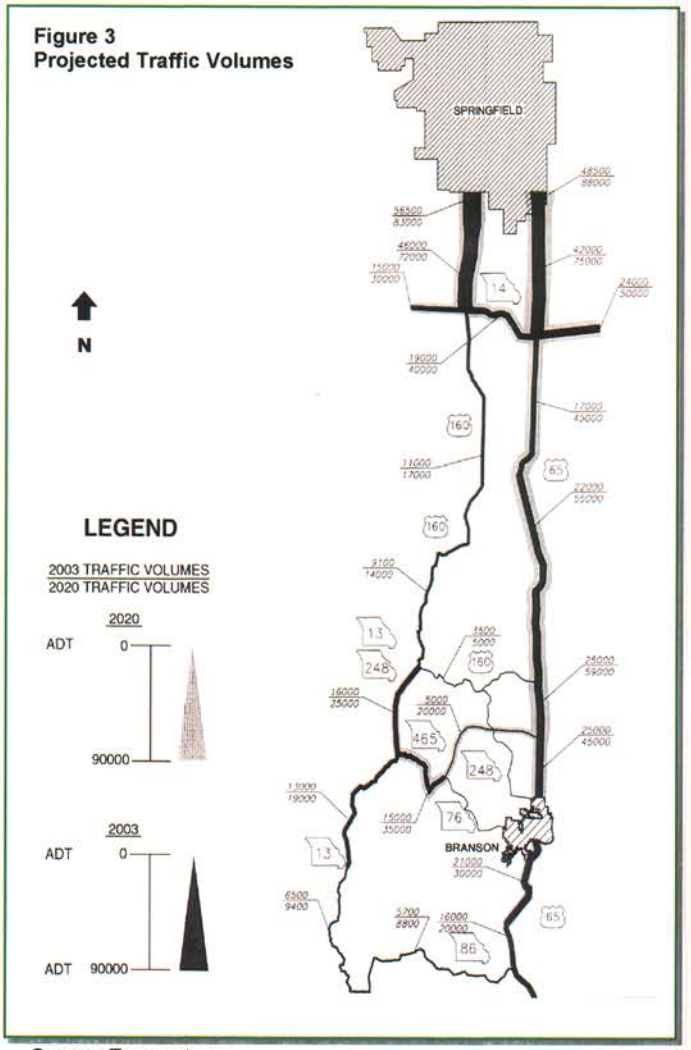
High and moderate growth projections were developed for each market segment. The projections are shown in Figure 2. Leisure and corporate travel to the Branson-Lakes Area is expected to grow from today's level of approximately seven million annual person trips to 9.8 million (moderate projection) or 13.5 million (high projection).

FUTURE HIGHWAY PERFORMANCE

During Phase I a preliminary evaluation of the highway system's ability to accommodate future travel requirements was performed. The evaluation was based on the "committed" highway system, which includes highway improvements that are funded and will be implemented within the next five years. Estimates of projected traffic volumes along the Corridor were made for the short term (2003) and long term (2020). The traffic volume estimates for the year 2003 are based upon historical growth trends extended over the five-year period.

The estimates for the year 2020 were based upon historical growth trends and the projection of annual visitors to the Branson-Lakes Area. The traffic volumes projected on the committed network for 2003 and 2020 are shown below.

Figure 3
Projected Traffic Volumes



Source: Transystems

The quality of transportation service deemed acceptable on highways will vary based on the type of facility. While the factors that transportation professionals measure to assess quality vary by type of facility, the results are often presented by assigning a grade from A to F, much like a child's report card from school. A generic description of each of these service levels is provided in the following table.

Level of Service Descriptions

A	Drivers have freedom to maneuver and travel at desired speed.
B	Reasonably free flow conditions.
C	Stable operations but travel speeds might be inhibited somewhat.
D	Lower speed range of stable flow. Passing opportunities decrease and delays at intersections become extensive.
E	Traffic flow becomes unstable as practical capacity is reached. Continuous queuing at intersections; passing is extremely difficult.
F	Flow is forced and congestion becomes extensive and unpredictable.

Most transportation agencies select a level of service as a target for traffic operations at the end of the 20-year planning horizon. Level of Service C is usually adopted as the desired target for roadways like the ones in the Corridor. In recent years and particularly in urban areas, Level of Service D has been deemed acceptable, as travel demands have progressively increased.

To assess the level of service in the Corridor the projections of traffic for years 2003 and 2020 were compared with the capacity of the arterial roadways.

In the short term, completion of the US 65 freeway improvements is anticipated to provide excellent levels of service generally from Evans Road to Route 76. Other highway segments in the Corridor, however, are projected to experience significant problems. On US 65 south of Route 76, the 2-lane highway will be operating at or beyond the capacity of the facility. On US 160, severe congestion is projected to continue between Nixa and Springfield, while Route 14 through Nixa will also experience demands beyond the capacity of the facility.

By the year 2020, traffic operations on the Corridor's highways will deteriorate to undesirable levels with increases in travel. The table on the following page shows the level of service for various highway segments in the Corridor based on the traffic volumes projected for 2020. No other highway improvements, other than those committed and funded, were assumed to have been completed by 2020.

The level of service analysis clearly indicates that nearly all highway segments in the study corridor will be operating at less than desirable levels of service; many of which will experience travel demands well beyond their physical capacity.

Projected Highway Performance in 2020

Roadway	From	To	Roadway Type	2020 Traffic Volumes	Level of Service
US 65	Evans Road	Route 14	4-Lane Freeway	75,000	F
US 65	Route 14	Route F	4-Lane Freeway	60,000	E
US 65	Route 160	Route 465	4-Lane Freeway	59,000	E
US 65	Route 465	Route 76	4-Lane Freeway	45,000	D
US 65	Route 76	Route 165	2-Lane Super	30,000	F
US 160	Weaver Road	Route 14	4-Lane w/signals	72,000	F
US 160	Route 176	Route 248	2-Lane Super	14,000	E
US 160	Route 248	US 65	2-Lane Rural	5,000	D
Route 13	Route 76	Table Rock	2-Lane Rural	19,000	F
Route 14	US 160	US 65	2-Lane Rural	40,000	F
Route 465	Route 76	US 65	4-Lane Freeway	20,000	B
Route 76	Route 13	Route 465	3-Lane Urban	35,000	F

Source: Transystems

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS IN THE CORRIDOR

The first step in the process of prioritizing transportation needs required the general identification of unmet needs today and in the future. Transportation objectives and attendant needs defined by the Steering Committee are shown in Figure 4 on the next page

The second step was to identify more specific needs by segment in the Corridor. These more specific needs were outlined as follows:

1. SPRINGFIELD TO BRANSON/LAKES AREA REGIONAL TRAVEL

- Today there is congestion on US 65 south and east of Springfield, particularly at the interchanges with I-44 and US 60. The result is a safety deficiency, as well as a capacity deficiency. This deficiency is an immediate need.
- Widening portions of US 65 in Greene County and northern Christian County to six lanes may be required within the next 10-year period as travel demand continues to grow.
- US 160 north of Nixa into Springfield is currently at capacity.
- US 160 on the west side of the Corridor requires better connections to the existing highway system on both the north end and south end to allow US 160 to be a more viable link in the Corridor highway system.
- With the projected growth in tourism and population, interchange improvements along US 65 in southern Christian County and Taney may be required after 2015.
- With the projected growth in tourism and population, widening and other improvements to the US 160 Corridor may be required after 2015.
- There is no alternative to auto travel in the Corridor for most travelers.

Figure 4

Springfield-Branson Corridor: General Transportation Needs

1. Springfield to Branson/Lakes Area Regional Travel

Efficient and convenient transportation must be provided for tourists and area residents between the two main focal points in the Corridor. The transportation system in this Corridor must be capable of accommodating growth in leisure travel to tourist destinations within the Corridor as well as resident travel by the Corridor's growing population. Failure to properly balance transportation capacity and demand may impose a constraint on economic development in the Corridor.

Need: Highway transportation improvements currently underway will provide significant benefits to motorists in the Corridor. However, several highway segments in the Corridor are already at or near capacity. Continued growth in population and tourism will exacerbate the congestion-related problems. In addition to these immediate and short-term needs, continued growth will result in a need for highway capacity improvements in the period five to ten years into the future.

2. Springfield/Branson Regional Airport to Branson/Lakes Area

This is very similar to the first priority except that number two is focused on providing good intermodal connections for air travelers with final destinations in the Branson/Lakes Area. The proposed airport expansion project will likely distinguish this priority from priority one.

Need: Establish highway connections between the airport and the regional highway system. As air travel becomes more important in the region the result may be the need for added capacity and possibly new routes to destinations in the Branson/Lakes area.

3. Improved Transportation Connections for East/West Travel in the Corridor

The Corridor's transportation system has developed along the north/south axis and east/west connections are inadequate. These east/west connections are important to effectively distribute traffic throughout the Corridor.

Need: East-west travel throughout the Corridor is limited by the inadequate connections and links between the north-south arterial highways. A complete highway system must include these shorter, sub-regional links.

4. Interstate Travel

It is recognized that I-44 and US 65 serve important functions beyond those associated with the region. Travel through the region should be accommodated in an efficient manner. Connectivity with the Midwest's highway system is an important consideration.

Need: The two-lane section of US 65 south of Hollister to the Arkansas state line represents a constraint on the statewide highway system.

2. Springfield/Branson Regional Airport to Branson/Lakes Area

- A new access roadway to the airport with connections to the regional freeway system will be required.
- Other improvements to the US 160 Corridor may be desirable with the western orientation of airport-related travel.
- There is no scheduled airport ground transportation between the airport and destinations in the Branson/Lakes Area.

3. East/West Travel Corridors

- A need has been identified in southern Greene County for an east/west roadway to augment the James River Freeway (US 60) and to provide better connectivity with the north/south arterial roadways in the Corridor.

Figure 5

PRIORITY TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Immediate Priorities (1 to 5 years)

Address the capacity and safety deficiencies along US 65 between I-44 and US 60, including the major interchanges at I-44 and US 60. This may involve interchange improvements, or improvements along the entire segment of US 65, for example widening to six lanes.

Address the capacity deficiency on US 160 (South Campbell) between the James River Freeway and Nixa. This may involve the widening of existing US 160, a new roadway to the west, or a new transportation corridor.

Complete improvements to the West Bypass to improve access to Springfield-Branson Regional Airport.

Improve Route13 from Reeds Spring to Kimberling City.

Address the deficiency in east-west connections in southern Greene County.

Address the deficiency in east-west connections in northern Christian Country.

Short Term Priorities (6 to 10 years)

Widen US 65 south of Hollister to Arkansas line to four lanes

Improvements may be necessary to the segment of US 65 between US 60 and Route F, including widening to six lanes

A new connection to the airport terminal will be required if the mid-field terminal relocation project is completed.

Address the need for an improved east-west connection in Stone County.

Complete the southern leg of the High Road to Table Rock Dam.

Improve US 160/Route 248 from Reeds Spring to the High Road.

Longer Range Priorities (11 to 20+ Years)

Complete grade separation of US 65 in Christian and Taney Counties.

Improvements to US 65 between Bee Creek Road and Route 76, including interchange improvements or widening to six lanes.

Improve US 160 between Nixa and Reeds Spring.

Complete the south leg of the High Road from Table Rock Dam south to US 65

- A need has been identified in Christian County to serve sub-regional trips in the rapidly developing northern portion of the county and to provide better connectivity between the north/south arterial roadways in the Corridor.
- A need has been identified for an east/west connector between Stone and Taney counties to provide better distribution among destinations in the Branson/Lakes Area, and to augment congested links in the existing highway system, such as Route 76.
- There is no transit service in the Corridor to provide for employment trips to the Branson/Lakes Area from Stone County to the west and Greene and Christian counties to the north.

RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT SOLUTIONS

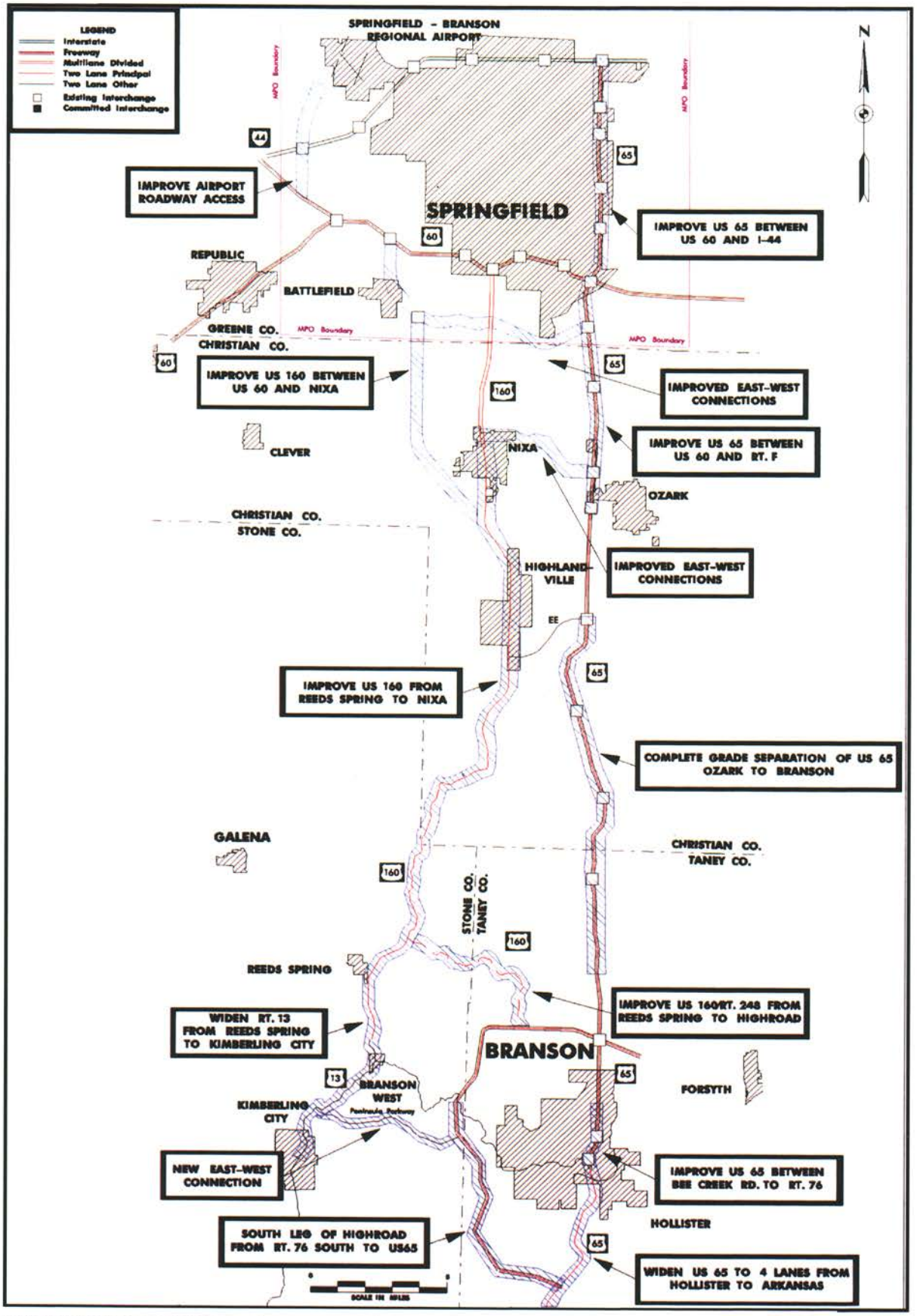
The recommended transportation solutions were prioritized by categorizing the actions as Immediate priorities, Short Range priorities or Longer-Range priorities based on estimates of when the transportation needs would be realized. The priorities identified by the Study Committee are shown in Figure 5 to the left.

These recommendations are also shown on the map of the Corridor in Figure 6 on page 10.

COSTS AND FINANCING

The cost of providing these transportation improvements is substantial. As shown in the table on page 11, the estimated cost of the highway improvements is $885 million in 1999 dollars.

Figure 6



Priority Solutions Highway Improvements

The total cost of $885 million would become nearly $2 billion with the effects of inflation on the projects over the twenty-year implementation period.

The funding for these improvements does not exist in current local or state programs. MoDOT's funding situation is critical. MoDOT expects to have very little funding available for highway capacity improvements because the limited funding must be used for system preservation and maintenance. A new funding initiative employing bonding is being considered by the state legislature. MoDOT is currently conducting a Long-Range Transportation Plan. Even if a new statewide funding program is created, it is unlikely that state funding will be made available to complete all the highway projects developed during the Study.

A strategy has been identified for funding major transportation improvements in the Corridor, including securing federal discretionary funding, and increasing the share of state funding received by the southwest Missouri region. The Steering Committee recognizes that even with increased federal and state funding, it appears likely that an increase in local funding will be required to make all of the improvements.

The Steering Committee has outlined the following approach to financing:

- ▲ Begin the process of vying for discretionary federal funding.
- ▲ Advocate for increased transportation funding from the state.

The adoption of the transportation plan by the Steering Committee is an important first step in accessing increased funding from both the state and federal government. The critical question of increased local funding, and how to achieve the increased funding, will be taken up as part of the "next steps" to achieving the improvements.

Priority Transportation Solutions: Estimated Construction Cost (Millions of 1999 Dollars)

Immediate Priorities (1 to 5 years)	
Improve US 65 to 6 lanes US 60 to I-44	$300
Improve US 160 from US 60 to south of Nixa	$50
Improve Current Airport Access via West Bypass	$10
Improve Rt. 13 from Reeds Spring to Kimberling City	$20
Improve east-west access in southern Greene County	$60
Improve east-west access in northern Christian County	$10
Sub-Total	$450
Short Term Priorities (6 to 10 Years)	
Widen US 65 to 4 lanes between Hollister & Arkansas line	$75
Widen US 65 to 6 lanes between I-44 and Rt. F	$20
New roadway from Airport to James River Freeway	$10
New east-west connection in Stone and Taney counties	$60
South Leg of Highroad Route 76 to Table Rock Dam	$45
Improve US 160/Rt. 248 from Reeds Spring to Highroad	$30
Sub-Total	$240
Longer-Range Priorities (11 to 20 years)	
Complete grade separation of US 65	$35
Widen US 65 to 6 lanes Bee Creek to Rt. 76	$30
Improve 160 from Reeds Spring to Nixa	$90
South Leg of Highroad Route 65 to Table Rock Dam	$40
Sub-Total	$195
Total Highway Improvements	**$885**

Rail Transit Strategy Evaluation

Feasibility Factor	Assumption for Feasibility	2005 Checkpoint	2010 Checkpoint
Total Tourism Level	Growth to 13.5 million annual visitors to the Branson/Lakes area by 2020. Development of significant corporate visitor market.	Tourism at 8.0 million annual visitors with prospects for continued growth of approximately 3% per year. Commitment for new convention facility.	Tourism at 9.3 million annual visitors with prospects for continued growth of approximately 3% per year. Development of new convention facilities.
Air Travel	Substantial traffic growth at Springfield Branson Regional Airport, with an increase in aviation's share of the Branson/Lakes market from 6% to 20% by 2020.	Aviation market share increased to 8% to 9%, with decrease in "leakage" to airports in Kansas City and St. Louis. Prospects for future growth apparent.	Aviation market share increased to 10% to 11%, with no "leakage" to airports in Kansas City and St. Louis. Prospects for future growth apparent.
Intra-Branson Transit System	A transit system must be in place to distribute transit passengers within the Branson/Lakes area.	Branson commitment to a comprehensive internal transit system, along with initiation of advanced planning.	Funding in place for internal transit system and preliminary engineering started.
Bus Transit Precedes Rail	Bus transit, especially for air travelers, will be initiated and test the market for rail transit.	Airport bus service initiated successfully.	Airport bus service achieving a market share of at least 15 % of air travelers to Branson.

Source: Transystems

Public Transportation Strategies

Passenger rail transportation strategies were evaluated as part of the examination of transportation solutions for the Springfield-Branson Corridor. The rail transit strategies in the evaluation included:

- Passenger Rail on Existing Rail Corridor (Commuter Rail)
- Passenger Rail on New Rail Alignment (Commuter Rail or Light Rail)
- The Steering Committee concluded that the passenger rail strategy should be excluded from the Study's recommendations for several reasons:
- The capital cost was found to be very high and ongoing operating costs were a concern.
- Virtually no substantial support emerged during the public meetings and stakeholder meetings held late in 1999.
- The benefits of rail did not include significant traffic congestion relief for the highway system nor a significant share of the commuter market.
- The ridership forecasts for the passenger rail service depended heavily on substantial growth of the air travel market and attendant growth in air travel to/from Springfield-Branson Regional Airport. This component of the overall travel forecasts was judged to be the most tenuous.

The Steering Committee directed that the consultant develop a series "checkpoints" for growth in tourism levels, traffic levels and other factors that the region could use to continually evaluate the advisability of initiating the project development for rail transit. This evaluation strategy is summarized in the table at the top of this page.

The development of a passenger rail project can be expected to require ten years. If advanced planning is initiated by 2010, a rail transit system linking Springfield and Branson could be in place by 2020. It is recommended that the region reassess rail transit in at least five years to determine whether the concept should be maintained in the region's long-range plan.

Two types of bus service were recommended by the Technical Committee to serve the markets in the Corridor. One is an express bus service between Springfield and Branson, primarily focused on providing service to tourists, particularly air travelers with destinations in Branson. The other is local service focused on providing transportation for employees in the Branson/Lakes area.

Regional Transportation Planning

There is general agreement among Steering Committee members that transportation planning in the Corridor needs to be strengthened from a region-wide perspective. Currently, regional planning in the Corridor is limited and the need for a more comprehensive approach increases as transportation needs increase and the individual jurisdictions become more interdependent. The Springfield-Branson Corridor Transportation Study began the task of regional planning, but the work needs to be continued beyond the conceptual stage of the Study. For example, transportation planning employing quantitative modeling techniques that allow for a full assessment of benefits and system wide effects is limited to the immediate Springfield area. This approach should be expanded to the entire Corridor.

The Springfield Area MPO is responsible for transportation planning for the City of Springfield and a small portion of Greene County outside of the city.

The Southwest Missouri Advisory Council of Governments (SMACOG) is a regional planning commission representing ten counties in the region, including Christian, Greene, Stone and Taney. SMACOG contributes to transportation planning in the region through an agreement with MoDOT to assist in the prioritization of highway improvements.

In addition, a future regional transit system will require some type of regional coordination for operations as well as planning.

There are fundamentally three approaches to the issue of regional transportation planning:

1. Adapt an existing organization, such as the Springfield Area MPO or SMACOG to improve transportation planning throughout the Corridor.
2. Create a new agency or organization to deal specifically with regional transportation planning.
3. Address the issue in an ad hoc manner similar to the approach used for the past two years by the Springfield-Branson Corridor Transportation Study Committee.

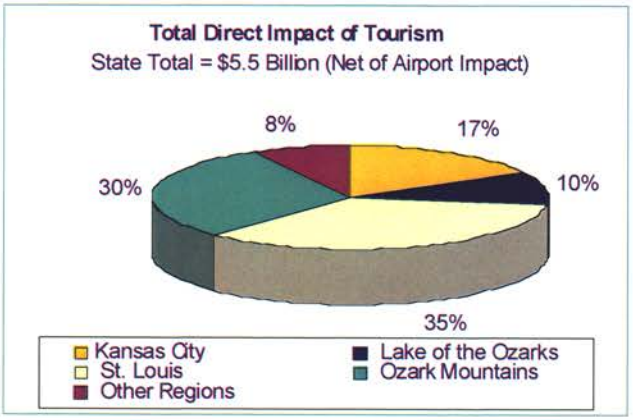
The Steering Committee recognizes that there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. The Committee will serve a valuable

interim role until a permanent organization is identified. The consensus of the Steering Committee is that the effort relative to the matter of regional transportation planning should be continued.

Economic Benefits of Transportation Investments in the Corridor

The Springfield – Branson area is part of Missouri's Ozark Mountain region that accounted for $1.67 billion or approximately 21.7% of Missouri's Direct Tourism and Travel Expenditures. If airport-related expenditures are removed from these totals, the Ozark Mountain region easily surpasses Kansas City and pulls much closer to St. Louis. Netting airport-related expenditures from Total Direct Expenditures produces the following market shares for the top three regions: St. Louis (34.9%), Ozark Mountain (29.6%) and Kansas City (17.4%). Lake of the Ozarks would place fourth with 9.7%. The Springfield – Branson Region accounts for about two-thirds of the Ozark Mountain Region's tourism-related contribution to the State's economy.

The economic impact of the Springfield – Branson area has been estimated at over one billion dollars annually for direct expenditures and $1.6 billion annually when indirect impacts are included.

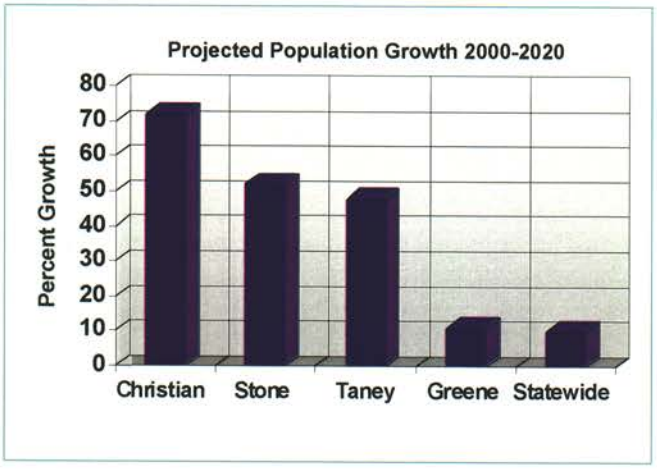


Source: Missouri

In terms of Missouri tax revenues contributed by regional tourism and travel, the Ozark Mountain region is estimated to have provided more than $110 million in FY98 or about 21 percent of the State's total for tourism.

The four counties in the Corridor have been among the State's fastest growing counties, and this growth is expected to continue. Projections prepared by the Missouri Department of Administration show that the population in Christian, Greene, Stone and Taney counties is expected to grow by 26 percent by the year 2020. Statewide population growth is projected at ten percent over the next twenty years.

This rapid growth is led by Christian County's 74 percent rate of population growth and 54 percent in Stone County.



Source: Missouri Dept. of Administration

The rapid growth in population and tourism and population in communities comprising the Corridor can only be supported by the transportation investments recommended by the Springfield – Branson Transportation Corridor Study.

The Region's huge contribution to the State's economy must be protected by continued investment in the Region's transportation system. Without these continued improvements in the Study Corridor, continued growth in population, tourism and economic development is not likely to be achieved.