EASTERN CORRIDOR TRANSIT STUDY SUMMARY

The purpose of the Eastern Corridor Transit Study (ECTS), completed in 2003, was to identify public transportation needs in a study area defined as being bounded by the Golden Triangle in downtown Pittsburgh to the west, the western suburbs of Westmoreland County on the east, the Allegheny River to the north, and the Monongahela River to the south. With the recent completion of the East Busway extension, no future transit improvements had been proposed in the region's long-range transportation plan over the next 20 years. Thus, the study sought to identify the next set of public transportation improvements to address the needs of the study area.

Study Area Needs

Through public involvement activities, agency coordination, and technical analysis, project stakeholders developed a statement of needs to guide the study's various phases of analysis. The statement of needs included the following:

1. Improve transit choices in the study corridor.
2. Improve the quality of service and amenities at station stops and transfer points.
3. Preserve, protect, and utilize existing transportation resources.
4. Enhance environmental quality.
5. Reduce congestion with effective transit solutions.
6. Coordinate transit and community planning to enhance economic development and quality of life.
7. Develop a transit network that conveniently and continuously links people and activity centers.

Alternatives

The ECTS project team developed 29 transit alternatives in five corridors of the study area based on the identified transportation and community needs and a previously suggested list of investment corridors. Each Long List alternative was evaluated against the transportation and community needs of the study in a qualitative format to effectively identify those that would be most likely to lead to improved transit opportunities in the study area. A short list of alternatives was evaluated based on ridership potential, capital costs, operating and maintenance costs, and potential alignments. The alternatives are summarized in the following list and table.

- **Allegheny Valley Commuter Rail (AV-CR):** Commuter rail service between downtown Pittsburgh and Arnold, Westmoreland County utilizing the existing Allegheny Valley Railroad (AVR) right-of-way. Service would be provided via an at-grade alignment with diesel locomotives pulling coach and cab cars. A bus shuttle would transport riders from 16th Street to downtown Pittsburgh. The study also identified two lower cost options that incorporated reductions in service levels and capital investments.
- **Allegheny Valley Light Rail (AV-LRT):** Light rail line between downtown Pittsburgh and Arnold, Westmoreland County, utilizing existing AVR right-of-way.
- **East Busway Light Rail (Monroeville & Murrysville) (EB_LRT)**: Consists of a light rail line from downtown Pittsburgh to Monroeville with a spur to Oakland. The service would begin at the existing Steel Plaza Station and follow the North Shore Connector's underground extension of the "T" to the Convention Center Station where it would emerge into the Strip District and then join the East Busway near 26th Street converting the busway to light rail out to Swissvale. An extension would be constructed from Swissvale to Monroeville Mall via Norfolk Southern and Union Railroad right-of-way. This alternative also included an investigation of an elevated extension from Monroeville to Murrysville.
- **East Busway Extension (EB_BW):** Consists of an extension of the East Busway from Swissvale to Monroeville Mall via primarily NS and Union Railroad rights-of-way. Service would be provided with standard 40-foot and articulated diesel buses similar to current operations.
- **Spine Line Light Rail to Wilkinsburg** (SL-LRT-Wilkinsburg): Consists of an underground light rail line from the North Shore through downtown Pittsburgh to Wilkinsburg following the general alignment of Centre Avenue, Forbes Avenue, and Braddock Avenue to the East Busway Wilkinsburg Station. Three options were developed to reduce the level of capital investment including phased implementation and at-grade infrastructure.

- **Mon Valley Light Rail (MV-LRT):** This alternative consists of a light rail line from Steel Plaza in downtown Pittsburgh to McKeesport and Etna via the North Shore Connector's underground extension to the Convention Center, the Strip District, and existing CSX right-of-way. An option to extend from downtown Pittsburgh to Etna as a first phase and McKeesport as a second phase were explored.
- **Norfolk Southern Commuter Rail (NS_CR):** This alternative consists of a commuter rail line from the Amtrak Station in downtown Pittsburgh to Greensburg in Westmoreland County along existing Norfolk Southern right-of-way. The study also identified two lower cost options that incorporated reductions in service levels and capital investments.

Conclusions

The transit study made preliminary recommendations for advancing one or more transit alternatives to the next phase of project development. However, the intent of the transit study was not to recommend any one specific public transportation investment or corridor. Rather, the study aimed to provide pertinent information, conclusions, and next steps to local decision-makers to identify the best opportunities for making transit investments over the next 20 years. In early 2006, the ECTS project sponsors began an effort to develop public consensus on advancing one or more alternatives developed in the study. This effort is expected to conclude in August 2006.

Attributes of the Short List of Eastern Corridor Transit Study Alternatives

	Alternative	Total Length (miles)	Number of Stations	Service Peak/ Off-Peak (minutes)	Travel Time (minutes)	Daily Boardings (in year 2025)	Annual Incremental O&M Cost (2002 millions)	Capital Cost (2002 millions)
1	**AV-CR**	18.4	9	30 / 90	34 - Strip Dist. to Arnold	6,700	$8.8	$258.7
1a	AV-CR Starter System	18.4	9	60 / 90	34 - Strip Dist. to Arnold	1,900	$5.3	$131.0
1b	AV-CR Minimal Investment	18.4	9	Two AM trains Two PM trains	40 - Strip Dist. to Arnold	800	$2.6	$64.0
2	**AV-LRT**	19.3 (18.9 new)	14 (12 new)	10 / 20	37 - Steel Plaza to Arnold	18,200	$16.3	$803.6
3	**EB-LRT (Monroeville)**	17.4 (16.9 new)	19 (17 new)	10 / 15	39 - Steel Plaza to Monroeville 13 - Steel Plaza to CMU 32 - CMU to Monroeville	42,900	$25.0	$1,273.3 *($1,040 to Keystone Commons)*
3a	EB-LRT Extension to Murrysville	6.2 additional	4 additional	10 / 15	54 - Steel Plaza to Murrysville 13 - Steel Plaza to CMU 32 - CMU to Monroeville	3,800 additional	$8.3 additional	$741.6 additional
4	**EB-BW (Monroeville)**	15.6 (6.6 new)	15 (5 new)	10 / 15	42 - Penn Sta. to Monroeville 8 - Penn Sta. to Centre Ave. 38 - Center Ave. to Monroeville	41,500	$10.9	$367.6 *($230 to Keystone Commons)*
5	**SL-LRT (Wilkinsburg)**	8.8 (7.3 new)	15 (10 new)	5 / 7.5	23 - Steel Plaza to Wilkinsburg 12 - Steel Plaza to Oakland	39,400	$12.3	$2,496.7 *(Phase I: $1,500, Phase II: $1,000)* *(At-grade in Oakland and no extension to Wilkinsburg: $1,200)* *(At-grade Downtown to Oakland $600)*
6	**SL-LRT (Homestead)**	10.3 (8.8 new)	15 (10 new)	5 / 7.5	24 - Steel Plaza to Homestead 12 - Steel Plaza to Oakland	35,700	$23.0	$1,892.5 *(Phase I: $1,430, Phase II: $463)* *(At-grade in Oakland and no extension to Homestead: $1,100)* *(At-grade Downtown to Oakland $600)*
7	**MV-LRT**	21.0 (20.7 new)	16 (14 new)	10 / 20	14 - Steel Plaza to Etna 36 - Steel Plaza to McKeesport 13 - Steel Plaza to Oakland	34,700	$20.6	$1,061.8
7a	MV-LRT Etna Branch Only	5.6 (5.2 new)	7 (5 new)	10 / 20	14 - Steel Plaza to Etna 13 - Steel Plaza to Oakland	14,900	$4.0	$368.9
7b	MV-LRT McKeesport Branch Only	17.7 (17.3 new)	14 (12 new)	10 / 20	36 - Steel Plaza to McKeesport 13 - Steel Plaza to Oakland	19,800	$16.5	$804.7
8	**NS-CR**	30.9	7 (6 new)	30 / 90	49 - Penn Sta. to Greensburg	8,800	$16.5	$232.8
8a	NS-CR Starter System	30.9	7 (6 new)	60 / 90	64 - Penn Sta. to Greensburg	4,400	$12.7	$142.0
8b	NS-CR Minimal Investment	30.9	7 (6 new)	Two AM trains Two PM trains	64 - Penn Sta. to Greensburg	2,500	$4.8	$76.0

* Excludes TSM, which will be evaluated in future phases of study (e.g. AA, DEIS)