



Transit Stop Transformation Project at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center

Partners:

- St. Clair County Transit District
- Citizens for Modern Transit
- AARP in St. Louis
- Bi-State Development
- Employment Connection
- Bywater Development Group

Project Description

Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT), AARP in St. Louis, St. Clair County Transit District and Metro Transit – in partnership with Bywater Development Group and Employment Connection – unveiled the “Transit Stop Transformation Project” at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center, located at 150 N. 6th Street in

East St. Louis, Ill on July 25, 2023. With the permission of Bi-State Development/Metro Transit as the property owner, partners initiated the project in Fall 2022 with community engagement.

This project converted the large grey, concrete areas between the bus bays and MetroLink entrance into an interactive and engaging urban oasis, featuring hundreds of plants and bushes and a “City of Champions” theme. A large central shade structure, seating, a gathering space and art – with a nod to influential East St. Louisans throughout history – were also incorporated into the revitalized space.

The “Transit Stop Transformation” Project at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center was led by Citizens for Modern Transit, AARP in St. Louis, St. Clair County Transit District and Metro Transit. St. Louis-based architectural firm Trivers completed the planning and design, while Arbolope Studio did the landscape plan, and Added Dimension, LLC, oversaw community engagement.

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Before



The artwork was created by Design Lab 443. Other contractors and vendors involved in the project included Lake Contracting, Inc., Warning Lites of Southern Illinois, LLC, Anova Furnishings, Muralist Michael Killeen, United Ink, Weiss Monument Works and Dintlemann's Nursery.

There was significant community engagement which empowered residents, riders and stakeholders to influence the design of their station.

This project was funded by the St. Clair County Transit District, Citizens for Modern Transit's Placemaking Pilot Funds Program, AARP in St. Louis, Bi-State Development, Bywater Development Group and Employment Connection.



Community engagement for the transformation at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center ran through March 2023.



Dozens of volunteers rolled up their sleeves and planted nearly 450 flowers and bushes to create an urban oasis at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center in East St. Louis.

Community Engagement

The first step in this process was the opportunity to garner public engagement around the idea of placemaking around transit. In winter 2022, AARP in St. Louis and CMT, through a partnership with the consulting team, engaged with community members/residents, elected officials, stakeholders, transit riders, students, transit operators, transit agency and other interested parties in visioning events.

Events and outreach included onsite surveying of transit riders at the station, Engagement Street Team, attendance at community events, pop-up events, social media outreach, engagement with operators at the bus garage in Illinois, engagement with elected officials, direct mail to households within one mile of the station, local newspaper ads, transit ads, and a web survey to determine the following:

- Possible design elements
- Theme
- Critical components
- Ideas for permanent art/installation at the site
- Amenities for riders
- Ridership from surrounding residents
- Transit usage at station

Ideas/themes generated:

- List of homegrown Champions from East St. Louis
- Theme – City of Champions
- Shade as a top priority
- Necessity for seating and updated bus shelters
- Green space including trees and other vegetation to create oasis from the sea of concrete
- Words that emerged through community engagement to describe East St. Louis from residents and riders:
 - Champions
 - Home
 - Family
 - Nice
 - Resilient
 - Happy
 - Fun
 - Improvement
 - Memory
 - Hopeful

Community engagement resulted in a vision around the theme, “East St. Louis: City of Champions.” To build further ownership, a Community Plant Day was held at the station on Juneteenth (June 19) which brought the community together to celebrate the transformation and help bring it to life.

Final transformation opened in July 2023.

Coverage included:

- Earned media
- Social media – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Blogs/websites
- Video
- Presentations

Funding Partners:

- St. Clair County Transit District
- CMT
- AARP in St. Louis
- Bi-State Development
- Employment Connection/Bywater Development Group

PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities:

1. Transit Transformation Projects are replicable. The Transit Stop Transformation Project at the 5th & Missouri Transit Center was the fifth transformation project completed in the St. Louis area, continuing to showcase how transit placemaking projects born of local partnerships benefit transit riders and create valuable assets for local communities.

2. Public Partners. St. Clair County Transit District was a critical partner on this project. They provided capital assistance as well as agreed to maintain the site in partnership with Metro Transit. Maintenance can be a hurdle unless the local government or a local partner agrees to take on ongoing maintenance of site.

3. Catalyst for further investment. The Transit Transformation project catalyzed the transit agency to replace all 7 bus shelters at the station in partnership with St. Clair County Transit District at a value of \$38,500.

4. Private Partners. AARP continues to be a key partner moving forward. AARP represents thousands of constituents across the region. In addition, they are a respected organization which provides credibility to these placemaking efforts.

Challenges:

1. Funding. This was the largest transformation to date. The initial concept provided by the designer reflected a capital budget three times the amount of available funds. While these projects are not large-scale Transit Oriented Development sites, there are costs associated with developing a light rail stop into a more permanent, substantial piece of the fabric of the community. Partners were required to scale down this project and tweak design provided to ensure viability of final product.

2. Finding a local artist. It was necessary to find an artist who understood the scope of the project and the importance of art to this community.

3. Project Oversight. There are many moving pieces including consultants which require project oversight from one or several organizations spearheading the project.

4. Staff Time. The projects are time consuming with many moving parts. It requires a certain amount of dedicated staff time to make these projects possible.