



Trends prove the Gateway Connector is unnecessary

By Richard Skillings

This is the second in our three part series covering cultural, demographic, and transportation trends affecting the motoring public for the next 20 or more years.

Baby boomers in the US started retiring in 2008 and will continue to so for the next 15 years. Research by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute showed that as retirees age, they drive less and less until they drive only half as much as they did when they were working. It is also particularly important to note that baby boomers have been more intrigued by the automobile than subsequent generations, so their driving reduction will have an especially significant effect. Demographics for the MetroEast show that people here are actually older than the nationwide average. That means per capita mileage will decrease faster in this region than within the country at large.

At the same time, the increase in driving as young drivers age is much less than it was when boomers first started driving. This phenomenon reduces the per capita miles driven even more.

More to the point, of the 30 percent increase in population by 2040, a huge percentage will be in the group over 65—those driving less! As people live longer, 40% of those dying between now and 2040 will be replaced by other elderly, while only 60% will be replaced by new births.

Not only does this imply fewer miles driven and less demand for roadways, it underscores the change in the kind of housing that will be built in the next 30 years—smaller and more densely packed—meaning less need for highway expansion.

According to the Belleville and O’Fallon comprehensive plans, such development is expected, and will be supported by the cities into the future. These smart growth approaches include adding more bike trails, walkable neighborhoods, and mixed use communities.

Not only is the population aging, but the rate of its growth is slowing. While the US Census Bureau predicts the global rate of population increase is going to drop from 1 percent today to 0.5 percent by 2050, they also predict the US growth rate could even drop to -0.1 percent (net contraction) by 2050, depending

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Trends prove GC is not needed
- 1 IDOT hearing scheduled
- 3 Calendar of Events
- 3 Connected2045
- 4 Classifying local roads impacts assistance available

IDOT announces Gateway Connector Hearing

IDOT announced the 10-year review of the Gateway Connector protected corridor. Hearing dates are:

December 10, 2014 4:00pm – 7:00 pm
The Falls Reception & Conference Center
300 Admiral Weinel Blvd.
Columbia, Illinois

December 11, 2014 4:00pm – 7:00 pm
The Regency Conference Center
400 Regency Park
O’Fallon, Illinois

Stop 158 *Citizens for Smart Growth’s* position has been clear from the beginning. There is little benefit to individuals, and no benefit to the regional community from the Gateway Connector. We have built a strong case to prove that assertion which can be viewed at www.stop158.org. The case is objective, far-reaching and thorough. It may take a long time to review all the material but afterward you will be convinced.

Common sense tells us that there’s a point of diminishing returns even in transportation—money should be spent where it will do the MOST good, even if projects which might have some good in them cannot be done. The cost of the Gateway Connector means dozens of other projects/repairs will not get done.



After the last round of hearings, the consultant graded your written comments. Those who were merely skeptical of the project, didn’t fully support it, or who said to move the highway out of their back yard, were considered to be “supporters” of the project. That’s a bit of irony, because NIMBY (not in my back yard) opposition is routinely dismissed. Only those expressing specific opposition were so counted. Moreover, all but one politician, developer, and banker/insurance agent/construction company who commented also “supported” the project. (NOTE: The southern Illinois Builder’s Association launched a write-in campaign for its members to counter the perceived opposition.) The reported conclusion was that the public supported the project (Tally: 217 for; 187 against). The hundreds of emails and late letters were discounted in the tally, as were the thousands of petitioners who contacted us. Our objective assessment showed a 93% opposition rate (again, not counting the petitioners). ●

upon international migration activity. That is consistent with a Millikin Institute presentation in a 2012 international conference in London; Millikin Institute also predicted that the US and other developed countries may experience a negative population growth rate by 2050. If true, the US population may fall after reaching 500 million people around the year 2070.

The most likely scenario according to the census bureau is that the growth rate will drop to around 0.47 percent. Their most recent report showed that the US population growth rate was 0.71 percent in 2013—the lowest in 75 years. If unchanged, that growth rate would put the US population around 400 million by 2050.

A University of Utah study showed people living in ten (10) megapolitan regions that will evolve, and the share of the total US population would increase in each of them. The Utah model described growth along the two coasts, in Texas and Colorado, the Great Lakes, and the southwest. While the St Louis region was identified, owing to its relative size today, its importance as a population center in the future diminishes over time, owing to minimal population growth. By the end of the study period in 2100, the St. Louis region is just another part of the broad Midwest.

That assessment is consistent with Brookings Institutes expectation that urban areas will continue to grow and become the focus for much of the new transportation infrastructure. It is also consistent with East-West Gateway’s observation about the St Louis MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)--that “growth in the region lagging far behind anticipated growth in the rest of the country.” That prediction followed the observation that its 30-year growth rate (1970-2000) was 0.1 percent for the region, compared to 0.82 percent (or 8 times higher!) for the rest of the country.



The only reasonable conclusion one can draw from the current literature, including the US Census Bureau’s forecast is that the St Louis region will have less demand for new infrastructure than the rest of the country for the foreseeable future.

Another trend adding to the reduction of miles traveled is the increased number of people telecommuting. A study by the US Public Interest Research Group noted that in every one of the top 100 cities, there was an increase in the number of workers working from home, while in 99 of those 100 cities, there was a decrease in the number of people commuting to work.

The St. Louis region promotes its technology sector as one of the growing segments; it is in that segment where much of the telecommuting is taking place. The implication is that stresses on highway driving will diminish in the future. The same can be extended to the MetroEast.

There is another factor in the predicted drop in driving that’s partly related to the aging population. The International Transport Forum report notes that working people use cars for commuting, whereas students do not generally need cars while attending college. Therefore, with a larger and larger segment

of the population in school for longer periods, and fewer and fewer people in the work force, car usage is going to diminish.

Trends in Car Usage

Over the last decade there has been a national decline in the number of miles people drive. That trend is mirrored in Illinois. Peaking in 2004, miles driven dropped until a small upturn in 2011 which continued in 2012 and 2013. However, Illinois’ 2013 numbers are still 3.1 percent below the 2004 numbers. That represents 3.3 billion fewer miles of driving in this state, alone! According to the US Public Interest Research Group’s (USPIRG) August 2013 report, that drop does not seem to be related to the price of gas, the 2008 economic recession, or unemployment. There is something more at play than those factors.

The MetroEast area experienced a similar trend, with both Madison and St Clair counties peaking in 2004, and rising over the last three years to a level which is still below 2004 miles driven. Perhaps more pertinent is where that driving is done. Over the last decade, driving in IDOT’s District 8 rose along local roads and interstate highways/freeways but fell dramatically along collector and arterial roads. That indicates more local traffic and through traffic, but less intercommunity travel. And, in turn, that implies that transportation dollars should be directed toward local roads.



Experts predict the overall trend to continue downward. The last decade saw a 23 percent decline in driving in the 18-34 year old demographic, while the number of bike trips went up 24 percent, the number walking was up 16 percent, and the number without a driver’s license was up 24 percent. The trend may not maintain those paces, but neither will they reverse for at least 3 reasons:

1. People in that demographic intend to live in places where they can walk, bike, or take public transportation. The implication for the state is to put more of available transportation dollars into expansion of those modes, and less into highways, where maintaining the existing system is generally sufficient.

2. Technological advancements in communications (social media and apps for public transit availability) and transportation (ride sharing programs like Lyft, and futuristic services like Zipcar) offer appealing alternatives to single passenger, and expensive, auto travel. Too, carpooling arranged through Craig’s list, and other such programs, augment the usual publicly available transportation.

3. New and more rigorously enforced laws make driving unappealing. They include distracted driving laws; longer and more expensive driver’s training and tougher minimum standards; limitations on licenses (under 21, for example); and of course DUI laws.

Part III will investigate trends in transportation planning.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

STOP 158 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Place: 866 Old Enterprise Farms, Lebanon, IL 62254
Regular meetings generally occur on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all interested parties. Please call to confirm meeting time and reserve your seat: 618-632-3158.

SIGN PAINTING

STOP158 actively posts roadside signs. Volunteer opportunities: 1) help with the painting and 2) post a sign in your yard. Visibility significantly helps our efforts. Can you post a sign on your property? What size do you like? Your choice of wording can be used.



EWGCOG

For the calendar of the **East-West Gateway Council of Governments** visit www.ewgateway.org.

**Contributions to support
and this newsletter can be mailed to:**

**STOP158
22 Royal Oaks Dr.
Troy, Illinois 62294**

**Or visit our web site www.stop158.org and
contribute securely online.** This all-volunteer
not-for-profit organization needs your help! ●



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Connected2045 is an East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWGCOG) program to prepare for the 5-year update to the St. Louis region's Long Range Transportation Plan. Members of Stop 158 *Citizens for Smart Growth* attended the third meeting in September. UMSL professor Dr. Wally Siewert moderated a panel of 10 people, each representing demographic groups in the area—skilled trades, city/county residents, minorities, elderly, millennials, and other groups.

The discussion was focused on four possible scenarios for St. Louis in 2045. Not a single panelist suggested that expanding the highway network was the most important action. Rather, each provided logical reasons why their constituency would need more access to public transportation, more walkable communities, and more emphasis on redevelopment rather than new development.

Their opinions seemed to match what O'Fallon and Belleville are doing in planning the future of their communities. Belleville published its new Comprehensive Plan in June, while O'Fallon continues to update its 2006 plan. Both lean toward pursuing smart growth principles in modernization and development efforts. The addition of roundabouts, new green space, wider sidewalks and new downtown ambiance are a few examples of this modernization. ●

ewgateway.org

Our Mission: Stop158 and the Gateway Connector corridor, encouraging instead alternative transportation options which strengthen existing communities where residents in all stages of life may safely live, work, shop, learn, and play, while preserving open space, farm land, and environmentally sensitive areas. ●

**“The whole point of getting things done is
knowing what to leave undone.”**

Oswald Chambers

Classifying local roads impacts assistance available

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWGCOG) is asking cities around the region to review their road network and to apply for any needed changes to the classification of their roads. Cities' applications are due by November 30, 2014.

This is important because only certain classes of roads are eligible for Federal funds allocated through the EWGCOG short-range improvement program. Not eligible for federal funding are local roads which have low traffic counts, are not easily accessible, and may not be well connected to other roads (such as a cul-de-sac which has a single entry). Agencies responsible for maintenance of these roads must rely on local funding sources.

Many local roads fail to be properly maintained

because of the federal restrictions and the resultant absence of state discretion on spending. Annual treatments for lesser local roads, such as oil-chip, is often insufficient as local money runs out, so the road's few users suffer.

We think this is one of the shortcomings of current federal transportation law. A number of transportation experts are working to get Congress to change the law and enable state and local officials to have more say in how transportation dollars, including federal dollars, are spent. When a new law is passed or the current MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century) is extended again, we will see if their efforts paid off. ●

 ewgateway.org

Make your voice heard! Contact your state and federal Congress men and women, your local county councilman, and your mayor and tell them you oppose the Gateway Connector and want it removed from all short and long term plans. Visit www.STOP158.org to learn more. ●

Stop158: **Citizens for Smart Growth**

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