

RAIL TRANSIT AND COORDINATION IN ORLANDO IN THE 1990s AND 2000s:  
A STUDY IN CONTRAST

By

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To my Family

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Rail transit systems are becoming increasingly popular as cities push to revive mass transportation systems, but the inherent capital intensive nature of these systems create a climate of intense public discourse and debate. As a result, some localities require multiple attempts before a rail transit system is finally implemented. This study examines the Orlando area's pursuit of rail transit in the 1990s and 2000s, and seeks to explore the reasons why the 1990s project failed while the 2000s version is close to implementation.

Through the use of a two pronged case study analysis, utilizing a categorical content analysis of local newspaper articles and information interviews consisting of current and former planners along with local and state officials, an overall picture of the climate surrounding the two proposals is developed. This picture is used to determine what has changed, if anything, in the rail transit proposals that have caused such dichotomous outcomes. By looking at factors including popular reasons for selecting rail transit and intergovernmental and public-private coordination, this study finds that a commonly held vision and a commonly held perception of need for rail transit is necessary for the successful implementation of a rail transit system. With these mechanisms in place, coordination increases across the board and ultimately facilitates the

successful implementation of rail transit. These findings have the potential to be applied in similar situations throughout the United States and ultimately assist in the realization of rail transit systems.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

With the growth of the sustainability movement and an increased consciousness of congestion and sprawl, public mass transit systems have recently become a politically trendy topic. Besides the traditional bus transit system existent in most metropolitan areas, other forms of transit exist including rail transit, bus rapid transit, and informal systems such as private commuter vans, or jitneys. This thesis is primarily concerned with rail transit, as it is the most capially intensive of all transit systems.

Rail transit is an integral part of many of the world's largest cities' intermodal transportation systems, with systems in Paris, London, Tokyo, Madrid, New York, and Chicago whisking commuters to work every morning and providing reliable transportation to those that cannot, or choose not, to operate a private automobile. Rail transit is divided into three categories:

- Light rail- streetcars and trolleys that usually contain between one and four cars.
- Heavy rail- subway or similar systems that usually are run by a third rail and consist of four to ten cars.
- Commuter rail- diesel powered locomotives that often utilize existing freight lines.

Each of these systems has been successfully implemented in various cities depending on institutional needs and goals. Generally speaking, rail transit requires high density in order to sustain ridership and legitimize the enormous capital costs, which explains why it has been successfully implemented in large cities with highly dense urban cores. In the last 50 years, the United States has seen sharp growth in the number of rail transit systems in use, and there appears to be no slow down in sight with countless projects waiting to be funded.

Extensive literature exists documenting why people and ultimately governments choose rail transit, as well as why this is a wise or unwise choice. This literature discusses several

possible reasons, from rational choices that use the best available data to make informed decisions (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999), to faults in the ridership and cost projections that may falsely inform decision makers about the advantages of rail transit (Pickrell, 1992; Flyvbjerg, 2005), to purely emotional decisions that are based on symbolism and commonly held values (Richmond, 1998; Wachs, 1976). However, there is limited literature available about what happens after an area decides to build a rail transit system, specifically what happens between the first time a decision is made to pursue rail, and the final and fully implemented project. The literature that does exist acknowledges the need for intergovernmental coordination for a successful rail transit project, and discusses the results that the politicking has on a proposed system. This thesis serves to further explore this need, and focuses on a city that is currently pursuing rail transit, Orlando, Florida.

Orlando serves as an excellent candidate for this study because there have been two attempts at creating a regional rail transit system. The first one took place in the 1990s and eventually failed due to Orange County's decision to withdraw all funding from the project. The more current rail transit proposal, started in 2002, awaits final legal liability approval from the Florida State Legislature before construction can begin. However, all funding sources have been identified and a broad spectrum of public agencies and private companies has committed valuable resources to make it a reality.

These two proposals have a strictly dichotomous relationship that assists in understanding the necessary climate for successful implementation of a rail transit system. While the reasons for pursuing rail transit remain relatively consistent throughout, an overall negative attitude towards the rail transit proposal of the 1990s as compared with a general public and institutional understanding of the necessity of rail transit in the 2000s reflects the very different outcomes.

This understanding of necessity ultimately leads to unprecedented intergovernmental and public-private coordination that was sorely lacked throughout the 1990s. With this level of coordination, differences were set aside to pursue what Central Florida holds as the common good: A regionally significant commuter rail system aimed at improving mobility and mitigating congestion along major thoroughfares.

Although the second attempt at rail transit in Central Florida is the main focus of this study, the 1990s project can serve as a lesson to other municipalities and regions and can possibly be used to explain what is often seen as shortcomings in fully implemented rail transit systems. The politicking and self-serving demands that were made throughout the rail transit planning process may explain why gross cost and time overruns as well as ridership and service shortfalls exist in other rail transit systems throughout the United States. It may show that the idea for rail transit is not flawed as some planning writers assert, but that the process is responsible for the creation of poorly planned systems.

Immediately following this introduction is the review of literature, where literature discussing why rail transit is chosen.. Both positive and negative arguments are given as a caution that rail transit is not always the answer, and in many times is chosen against all rational judgment. After this, intergovernmental relations as related to rail transit systems are discussed by highlighting several case studies where intergovernmental relations played a pivotal role in the overall form of the rail transit system. Intergovernmental politicking is also discussed in terms of economics and growth. This background literature forms an essential knowledge base to understand the intricacies of the two Orlando rail transit proposals and the important factors that may have created the different outcomes.

Following the Review of Literature is a description of the methodology used to conduct this study. Two different qualitative methods were used to ensure the greatest understanding of the topic. A content analysis of the *Orlando Sentinel* newspaper editorials and policy articles was first conducted to understand the important factors involved in both rail transit proposals, followed by interviews of planning professions and policy makers used to confirm the factors identified by the content analysis and to identify any other information that was not discovered through the detailed content analysis.

After the methodology chapter is a description of the data collected throughout the study. This section contains detailed time lines for both rail transit proposals that provide valuable step-by-step information about the process. Following that is the detailed results from the content analysis as well as the resulting factors identified as crucial to the rail transit proposals. The results from the interviews are also included, with the identified important factors to the difference in the two proposals. Immediately following the data section will be a discussion and analysis of the data, combining everything collected to create a clear picture of why exactly Orlando has seen such different results. Recommendations are also made with assistance from the interview participants on what is necessary for the successful planning and implementation for rail transit systems, and advice to other areas planning rail transit systems.

The discussion of this topic is particularly timely, with the United States Federal Government passing a groundbreaking stimulus package that features large sums of federal funding available for infrastructure and transit projects. It is the intent of the researcher that with this discussion other municipalities and regions can take heed of the barriers that Orlando faced in the 1990s and utilize their experiences to ensure a successful rail transit project is fully implemented.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The implementation of a rail transit system, like any large capital-intense project, is a lengthy process that has multiple steps. The first step in this process is the initial commitment made by cities to pursue rail transit as the preferred alternative. There are several reasons that rail transit may be chosen as the preferred alternative, most substantially as a result of socially held images and perceptions of rail transit itself. Once a rail transit system has been selected, a complex planning process begins that includes two main parts: design and finance. The design of the system relies heavily upon model forecasts that predict ridership and the total cost of the system. Financing a rail transit system is slightly more complicated and involved many parties at the federal, state, and local levels. During this planning process numerous problems can occur, mostly stemming from jurisdictional competition and other difficulties brought about by private interests seeking the best outcomes for their respective interests.

There is a plethora of literature available speaking to the motives behind rail transit as a preferred system, and they are discussed in this chapter. However these studies, while many of them based in the United States, discuss systems which have been held by their respective authors to be failures, with cost and time overruns prevalent along with inaccurate information in the form of both ridership and service. There is limited literature present about the effects of intergovernmental and public-private coordination, with which this study is concerned. What is available however, discusses the competition that exists naturally between jurisdictions and what drives jurisdictions to compete, occasionally to the detriment of the rail transit system.

This chapter first introduces the ongoing debate surrounding rail transit systems by discussing commonly held advantages and disadvantages of rail transit. Next, the major social influences on rail transit choice are introduced, including imagery and perceptions of rail transit

systems that are consistently seen, followed by the largest perceived problem with existing rail transit systems, model inaccuracies, that cause inflated ridership estimates and undervalues cost estimates. Finally, the major theories of public decision making, along with jurisdictional competition and why competition exists is introduced.

### **Debate**

The debate over rail transit has raged for some time, with economists and planners leading the way in the argument. Both sides have extensive literature that explores the positive and negative sides of rail transit and both have significant research that supports these claims. Rail transit proponents such as Newman and Kenworthy (1999), Todd Litman the Victoria Transport Policy Institute (VTPI) (2008), and representatives in the United States Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 2002 contend that rail transit is a way to respond to central city decay, urban sprawl, traffic congestion, and air pollution. Others argue that high capital and operational costs far outweigh the benefits brought by rail transit, and that it is a wasteful and irresponsible expenditure of taxpayer money (Kain, 1990).

The Victoria Transport Policy Institute (Litman, 2008) analyzed US cities by dividing them into three categories:

- *Large Rail*- Rail Transit is a major component of the transportation system.
- *Small Rail*- Rail transit is a minor component of the transportation system.
- *Bus Only*- City has no rail transit system.

When VTPI did their analyses they found that Large Rail cities have a significantly better performance in their transportation system. In comparison with Bus Only cities, Large Rail cities have:

- 400% higher per capita transit ridership (589 versus 118 annual passenger-miles)
- 887% higher transit commute mode split (13.4% versus 2.7%)

- 36% lower per capita consumer transportation expenditures (\$448 average annual savings)
- 19% smaller portion of household budgets devoted to transportation (12.0% versus 14.9%)
- 21% lower per capita motor vehicle mileage (1,958 fewer annual miles)
- 33% lower transit operating costs per passenger-mile (\$0.42 versus \$0.63)
- 58% higher transit service cost recovery (38% versus 24%)

They acknowledged that not all of the benefits seen in Large Rail cities over Bus Only cities can be contributed to solely to rail transit and are partly a function of the size of the city, with Large Rail cities of larger average size than Small Rail or Bus Only cities. Large Rail cities are typically older, well established cities that have a long history of successfully integrating rail transit into their overall intermodal transportation system (Litman, 2008).

Furthermore, rail transit assists in the reduction of congestions costs consisting of delays, stress, vehicle operating costs, and the pollution imposed on other road users. Although rail transit may not reduce congestion as significantly as some ardent supports would like, a 5% reduction in peak-hour traffic on a road at 90% of its capacity can reduce traffic delays by over 20% (Litman, 2008). With a reduction in congestion associated costs decrease, resulting in a less stressed public with lower vehicle operating costs and a cleaner environment.

In conjunction with congestion costs decreasing, transit investment has double the economic benefit to a city than highway investment does, and allows cities to take advantage of market forces to increase densities around rail transit stations where services are located, thereby creating an area that is densely developed while minimizing sprawl. It also facilitates corridor-oriented development, decreasing the total area a city must provide with essential services such as water, sewer, and electricity and decrease the total road network necessary to sustain the city. Overall, transit encourages dense cities with less car use, resulting in citizens spending less of

their income on transportation per year, thereby allowing greater spending on nearly everything else (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999).

In contrast, rail transit opponents challenge nearly everything the pro rail take as fact. They take issue with the transit ridership and operational cost arguments by reminding that rail transit requires high subsidy levels to operate in cities across the board. U.S. rail transit requires approximately \$12.5 billion annually in subsidies to remain in operation, equating to, in terms of the VTPI study, about \$90 per Large Rail city resident (Litman, 2008). It is commonly held that a mile of light rail in one direction costs approximately \$25 million, while heavy rail consistently costs more than twice as much. In contrast, highways cost on average between \$5 and \$10 million a mile, a stark difference for roughly the same capacity if constructed correctly. In addition to exorbitant initial capital costs and continued levels of government subsidy, evidence exists that frequently the system that rail transit is installed to replace, often busses, has the potential to be more effective both financially and service-wise if similar attention fell upon it as the new system receives (Richmond, 1998; Kain, 1990).

In response to the claim that rail transit reduces highway congestion, anti-rail scholars argue that these reductions in congestion are only temporary by invoking the theory of induced traffic. They believe, and have evidence to support, that the level of congestion reduction quickly evaporates when other drivers, usually on non-essential or pleasure trips, quickly take up the available capacity, thus returning congestion nearly to its pre-rail levels (Richmond, 1998). With all of the arguments against rail, there are reasons that rail transit is still chosen as the preferred transit in many cities.

### **Social Influences**

Social pressure has a measurable impact in selecting rail transit as the preferred method of transit for many cities. What the public thinks has a large influence on what elected officials

do, and as such when the people of a city favor rail transit, so do the elected officials. Although many of the perceptions the public has are a product of the marketing employed by rail transit proponents, they are none the less important in understanding why rail transit is chosen. There are two complementing arguments in this area based on different assumptions:

- Human decisions are based on their individual attitudes (Wachs, 1976).
- Human decisions are made based on the simplest possible explanation, and then acting upon that explanation (Richmond, 1998).

These assumptions form the basis of these two men's arguments, that rail transit choice is based on attitudes and images promulgated by rail itself.

Attitudes toward travel time and reliability are often large reasons for choosing rail transit systems. Traditional transportation planning employs total travel time as the most reliable predictor in determining demand for alternative transportation modes. In many transit forecasts, travel time for rail transit is shown to be considerably less than bus and automobile transit. However this oversimplifies the complexity of the problem by only estimating the travel time from origin to destination, as attitudinal studies have shown. These studies show that the perception of the importance of travel time was compounded by the reliability in the travel time. Arriving consistently on time was seen as more important for rail patrons than having a consistent travel time (Wachs, 1976).

There exists another, more complex component to total travel time and the reliability of travel that consists of attitudes toward relative components of travel time. Surveys reveal that time spent waiting, walking, transferring modes, or parking is consistently considered more burdensome than the actual time spent on the transportation system. As the automobile contains little to no time reaching the travel mode and waiting, as well as eliminating the need to transfer, it creates a real barrier to rail transit ridership. Studies have been conducted that prove that

consumers value their time spent in transferring and waiting anywhere from two to four times as valuable as the time spent on the actual transit system (Wachs, 1976).

Cost is often cited as an important component to the choice of rail transit; however there is little evidence to suggest that cost plays as large a function as rail transit activists contend. This may be explained by the fact that as many as 75 percent of drivers have never actually stopped to calculate the cost of their trip, and as such have nothing to compare transit fares to. However, cost impact should not be discounted as cost has very real impacts on certain socioeconomic groups, such as the elderly and low income households. For these people on a limited and strict budget, cost plays a very real role in their transportation decisions (Wachs, 1976).

Cost has the potential to play a large role when it is explicitly defined to the consumer, something that can be done in the form of parking fees. There are very few parking places in the United States that charge for the privilege to park, but there is evidence to suggest that those places that do charge for parking are much more likely to encourage transit use than those places where parking is ample and free of charge (Wachs, 1976).

Attitudes toward safety have the potential to play an important role in transportation mode choice. The majority assumes safety in their journey at any given time, but when safety concerns arise, it immediately becomes the single largest factor in transportation mode choice (Wachs, 1976). The existence of crime and the possibility of a terrorist attack on the transit system or the incidence of accidents all play a large part in determining transportation mode choice for consumers.

In addition to consumer attitudes toward rail, images perceived by people have a considerable impact on which transportation mode they ultimately decide to use and in turn use

public investment for. First, trains hold an image that people are inherently attracted to. Trains are not something that Americans are regularly near, when taken as a whole there are very few cities that boast rail transit as a mode of transportation. In contrast, Americans throughout the country see gridlock every day, they smell the fumes of buses as they are waiting in traffic and with that they develop an emotional attachment, of the negative kind, to these forms of transportation. The train is seen as being of mythical proportion, something that normal Americans cannot feel or touch, but nonetheless they are fascinated by its existence. The image of the train and the negative image of the bus cannot be overcome by analytical research; the images are retained by consumers and are hard to change (Richmond, 1998).

In conjunction with the travel time attitude mentioned above, trains encompass the image of speed. The total travel time including wait times and transfer times are not taken into account by elected officials when they talk of the speed of rail transit, and as such disappointments occur when the system becomes operational. In the case of Los Angeles, public officials were obsessed with the idea that one could board rail transit and, "...woosh..." would be whisked away to work. This is not uncommon among cities vying for rail transit, and is directly involved with image of speed (Richmond, 1998).

Rail transit also engenders the image of efficiency, also known as the image of the single driver. Rail transit activists are quick to emphasize that, as the *Los Angeles Times* (Oct. 20, 1985) put it, "One of the arguments made most often for the rail line is that it will be cheaper to operate because a single driver on a train can carry up to five times as many passengers as a bus." They later revised their estimate to state that a rail operator can drive more than ten times the number of passengers that a bus driver can. However, the cost of the initial capital and the maintenance is much more significant than the offsetting cost of drivers (Richmond, 1998).

Rail transit is also seen by some as technological sex symbols on rail, wherein the train is referred to both as “she” and as a penis. The mayor of Santa Monica, as interviewed by Richmond (1998), stated that it was a personal affront that the much smaller city of San Diego, “...whipped a trolley system out, kabloom, like that.” This harkens to institutional ego, known colloquially as penis envy, where every city feels the need to outdo others. Trains are referred to as sexy, curvaceous things to be lusted after, much like an attractive woman to men. Trains are seen as being powerful and fast, much like comparing a Honda Civic to a Ferrari (Richmond, 1998).

An image is also held that trains are a social connection that keep people together, a permanent lifeline to sustaining a people, and in this case, a region. Trains are used in many spirituals as representative of the way of life, death, and redemption. The train had a role in the formation of this country in bringing people to the west to start new lives, and as such it is still seen as a way to start over and revive areas deeply in need of assistance (Richmond, 1998).

In addition the images and attitudes, certain metaphors can be used to explain why rail transit is becoming an increasingly popular choice for rail transit. The first such metaphor is one that is being heard repeatedly as of late, the metaphor of addiction. American’s are consumed with the idea that as a country, they are addicted to foreign oil, and that the addiction needs to be broken, just as if it was an addiction to some form of narcotic drug. This addiction is seen as threatening the American way of life and the independence of an entire nation, of which the antidote is the return of rail to prominence in transit. The turn of the century street cars are perceived as the way America can get back to its roots and break free of foreign oil dependence (Richmond, 1998).

The other metaphor being used frequently is that of balance. Balance, an experience coming from our body according to Johnson (1987) as cited in Richmond (1998), is something that everyone inherently seeks. When something falls out of balance, in the form of too much or not enough, the body responds with an appropriate physiological action. The same holds true in society, for example, when there is not enough housing on the market to meet demand, there is a rush to build more housing. In terms of transportation, there is a thirst to balance the transportation network. There are two types of balance that can be seen as interconnected, when traffic is free-flowing, it is said to be in balance. However, when gridlock occurs it falls out of balance, and a solution must be sought. In this instance, the solution to balance is to create a substantial rail network to balance out the highway network, providing multiple transportation solutions to put the system back into balance (Richmond, 1998).

There is also the metaphor of natural order, in which all things have their place in life and in society. The transportation systems is not seen as an exception to this rule; there is a place for busses, rail, air, and automobiles, and it is up to society to decide where each of these belongs. With the images and attitudes mentioned above, it is held by some that rail transit is the proper solution to many problems, and that its proper place is incorporated into a successful multimodal network that relies on no one transportation system (Richmond, 1998).

The above theories explain why cities and regions choose rail transit as the preferred transit option, but it neglects to speak about all of the process required to make rail transit a reality. The FTA will fund up to 60% of rail transit projects, but requires the establishment of a local funding plan before federal money will be released. It is in this establishment of a local funding plan that much of the problems that arise with rail transit begin. Agencies are inherently reluctant to commit large sums of capital unless they are given the opportunity to have input on the system in

which they are paying in to. This section reviews how public governments make decisions, and establishes why governments find it frequently hard to agree on the details of rail transit projects.

In addition to the public images and notions that are held about rail transit, there are other areas that support and even add credence to these images. Computer models that produce ridership projections and cost estimates are relied upon heavily when a municipality or region begins to consider rail transit, and these projections are used repeatedly through the rail transit planning process. These models add to and support many of the images held about rail transit.

### **Inaccuracies in Transit Forecast Modeling**

Frequently, transit forecast models are held responsible for the poor decisions made by elected officials in choosing rail transit systems in place of traditional bus transit or additional highway capacity. Researchers who have asserted as such include Don Pickrell, Bent Flyvbjerg, and John Kain, each providing markedly different angles on the problem of transit forecast modeling.

Rail transit systems are often the largest public investment municipalities have undertaken, promoting intense pressure to ensure the greatest return on the investment possible. This need to promote efficiency and positive returns facilitates the creation of transit forecast models to predict the future of the proposed transit system. As a result, transit ridership forecasts form the basic rationale for the installation of rail transit systems, creating evidence whereby it is “proven” that these systems are more effective and efficient than alternative methods of mass transit. However, even slight variations in projected values of a select few variables can result in inaccuracies in the long term model (Pickrell, 1992).

Rail transit ridership can be misleading; the actual benefits of the addition of a rail transit system must be taken in a context of total transit ridership which includes all existing transit in addition to the new rail system. Pickrell found that rail transit riders consist mainly of diverted

bus riders and only secondarily of new transit riders, an often overstated advantage of rail over other transit modes (Pickrell, 1992).

While it is evident that rail forecasts are chronically inaccurate, the extent to which they are is alarming. Flyvbjerg, Holm, and Buhl sought to answer this question, researching 210 transportation infrastructure projects with comparable data for the actual and forecasted traffic. They looked at 27 rail projects and 183 road projects being completed between 1969 and 1998, taking them from 14 countries on 5 continents. They discovered that rail passenger forecasts were inflated for nearly every project: 72% of all rail projects passenger forecasts were overestimated by more than two thirds. On average, forecasts were inflated by 105.6%, resulting in traffic that was 51.4% lower than was originally forecasted (Flyvbjerg, 2005).

Forecast inaccuracies are a large problem in transit planning, yet much of these problems are contributed to poor technology, resulting in arguments that as technology continues to evolve, transit forecast models will inevitably improve over time (American Public Transit Association, 1990). There is little evidence to support this claim, and Flyvbjerg's study suggests that there is no correlation between model accuracy and time (Flyvbjerg, 2005). The reasons for these inaccuracies are different according to different researchers.

One reason that model inaccuracies exist is based on the method in which they are funded: there is intense competition for rail transit funding while highway funding is far more accessible. As such, it is politically savvy for rail promoters to show their system is a way the overestimates benefits and underestimates costs in order to position themselves in the best possible place for government funding. There is also the possibility that in areas where it is politically prudent to transfer riders from cars to rail that rail ridership will be overestimated and

highway ridership will be underestimated in order to facilitate funding swings to promote this goal (Flyvbjerg, 2005).

When 234 project managers were interviewed regarding the inaccurate ridership forecasts for the transit projects they constructed, by far the two most common answers were trip distribution inaccuracies and deliberately slanted forecasts. Trip distribution is unfortunately all too often created to fit national and urban policies designed to increase rail ridership and not on factually collected local data (Flyvbjerg, 2005).

One example of purposely inaccurate forecasts can be found by looking at the Dallas area in their attempt to get a rapid rail transit system off the ground. Although the Dallas area does have rail transit today, the planning process in attaining that system was long and arduous and involved questionable at best ridership modeling forecasts.

In 1983, Dallas area voters, under the advisement of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit district (DART), created a permanent regional transit authority charged with using a one percent sales tax to build and operate a 161-mile rail rapid transit system. In 1988, DART returned to ask for funding for a pared down 92-mile light rail transit system. The ballot referendum was only concerned with asking for authority to issue long term bonds, but it was interpreted by many to be a vote on the light rail transit system itself. There is evidence to suggest that DART did not take into account any other systems other than the rail system they inevitable decided on (Kain, 1990).

In the Dallas example, Central Business District (CBD) employment projections were incredibly important to the transit ridership projections. Several projections of CBD employment were carried out, all with varying results. When forecasts were made by the North Central Texas Council of Governors (NCTCOG) that projected little growth in the CBD for the 30 year horizon

that was recognized by DART's own forecast, it was refused by DART and intense negotiations were held. The results were a revised "alternative" projection that matched closely with DART's own projections. Later, another projection was done by NCTCOG and the result was a forecast that was 48% less than what was being used by DART for model analysis (Kain, 1990).

In 1988, DART released a report that described the 2010 ridership forecasts using NCTCOG's "alternative" forecast and their improved travel forecasting model. This ridership projection displayed a decline in total transit ridership of 15%, yet many concentrated on the rail-only estimates and ignored the effect on the total system. In an effort to minimize the effects of the 15% decline in total transit ridership, DART requested NCTCOG prepare two additional forecasts, which were then labeled as "moderate" and "aggressive". Obviously, DART officials hoped that the media and public would focus on the projection labeled "moderate", which was actually aggressive, instead of the first projection created by NCTCOG (Kain, 1990).

What was not discussed however was the existence of a study that was never released to the public; this "nonexistent study" consisted of an all-bus alternative using the same projections used by the rail transit forecast. This study, released only days before the referendum vote took place revealed that only 3 percent fewer riders were projected for an unimproved bus system than the new rail transit system. In response to this study, DART officials quickly denounced its accuracy and argued that the study "stacked the deck" in favor of bus transit (Kain, 1990).

Another factor contributing to over-forecasting is the connectivity between the new rail transit system and the existing transportation modes of feeder busses and automobile travel. Overestimation in feeder bus service is commonplace, producing an overestimation in rail transit ridership by lowering access to the actual system. In addition, underestimation in the cost and maintenance of park-and-ride lots often result in diminished capacity in these lots, and again

decreasing the overall access to the rail transit system. Given the suburban low-density construction of many US cities, connections between less dense areas and the rail transit system is incredibly important for its success (Pickrell, 1992).

In addition to errors in ridership forecasts, capital forecasts also are routinely underestimated. Seven of the eight projects analyzed by Pickrell (1992) were, when all was said and done, well above the forecasted capital outlay costs. Overruns ranged from 17 percent to 150 percent of the originally forecasted cost. As with overestimation in ridership forecasts, the underestimation of capital costs greatly affect how the purposed rail transit system is perceived, and has a real impact on the decision made by officials.

Elected officials, as a result of the democratic system, routinely do not make decisions based on their own beliefs and assumptions, but are instead responsible to their constituents, including citizens, businesses, and private interest groups. With this taken into consideration, it is important to understand how governments make decisions.

### **Public decision making process**

Altshuler and Luberoff (2003) examined many leading theories of urban politics to determine if any commented on the politics of mega-projects. The result of this process was the development of five theories that aggregated the numerous urban political theories into five major groups. These groups consist of:

- Elite-Reputational- Argues that corporate elites dominate local politics.
- Pluralist- Argues that influence in local politics is very widely distributed.
- Public Choice- Argues, that politics is the expression of rational choice by actors within frameworks of incentives. The two versions of public choice theory are broken into “hard” and “soft”. Hard public choice portrays a world where self-interested individuals, acting on their own behalf, tend to produce outcomes that are collectively irrational. Soft public choice sees the actors as more enlightened about their self-interest and as so can come to collectively rational outcomes.

- Elite-Structural- Argues that the corporate elites tend to dominate local politics, and that they do so as a result of the structure of local politics such as capitalism, state and national governance, and culture.

Historical-Institutional- Argues that collective choices are deeply influenced by the institutional arrangements of politics, which often result from long past decisions.

These theories, taken together, form an overall picture of the mega-project political scene, albeit each one is involved to varying degrees in different instances (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003).

Richmond (1998) relies heavily upon the hard public choice theory, where the decision for rail transit is made solely as a function of personal images of the train, which aggregate to decide what he considers to be an irrational choice in transit options. However if these images of the train are held by other important players, such as corporate elite or elected officials themselves, the theory of political power may shift. Kain (1990) seems to employ the elite-structural theory of political decision making in that the process strategically misled the public from official institutions (the transit authority) due to the choices that the elite had made in favor of rail transit over other modes.

The pluralist model takes into account that numerous people and agencies are involved with most rail transit projects. These countless parties that are involved are in part a function of the federal government subsidy system, whereas localities are encouraged to seek broad political and financial support for a system before a subsidy will be given.

### **Government Subsidies**

The structure of federal grants and subsidies are said by some to serve as a disincentive to pursue options other than rail transit, citing the large amount of government funding available for new rail projects while little is available in the way of bus transit grants and subsidies. In addition, these grants and subsidies encourage broad political and financial support for a system, essentially forcing jurisdictions and private interests to coordinate to ensure a system becomes a

reality. More information is available on the history of transit funding by researching the line of Transportation Efficiency Acts (TEAs) through the last two decades. The following are some of the grant programs currently available to localities who wish to undertake a rail transit project.

The Transit Capital Investment Program (49 U.S.C. 5309) provides for a program called “New Starts”, providing funding for the construction of new fixed guideway systems or extensions to existing systems. The purposes listed as eligible are: light rail, rapid rail (heavy rail), commuter rail, monorail, automated fixed guideway system (such as a “people mover”), or a busway/high occupancy vehicle (HOV) facility (FTA, 2008).

Statutorily, the federal government is authorized to fund up to 80 percent of any project approved under the New Starts program with a required 20 percent local match. Local matches can come from cities, interlocal agreements or private investment, and are frequently funded by long term bonds. However, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) strongly encourages localities pursuing this grant to make the federal portion of the funding as little as possible. In fact, the Department of Transportation Appropriation Act, signed in 2002, instructs the “FTA not to sign any new full funding grant agreements after September 30, 2002 that have a maximum Federal share of higher than 60 percent” (FTA, 2008). In 2008, \$1.55 billion was allocated to the New Starts programs.

In addition to the New Starts program, two more programs have been created to fund mass transit, the Small Starts and Very Small Starts programs. Both programs are designed for, as with the New Starts program, grants for capital costs involving new fixed guideway systems and extensions. However, these programs allow grants to be spent on bus corridor improvements as well, allowing for in traffic bus lanes as opposed to only fixed guideways. The requests for the Small Starts program must be under \$75 million, and the total project must not exceed \$250

million. The Very Small Starts must have a total project cost of under \$50 million, and the cost of the system must be less than \$3 million a mile excluding the vehicle costs. These systems help to promote alternatives to rail transit such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), but as can be seen, they have significantly less funding available for local projects (FTA, 2008).

All of these programs fully encourage as much local participation as possible, to ensure that the federal government pays the smallest share possible. Although not solidly stated, there is some evidence to suggest that the Federal Transit Administration favors projects that have broad local political and financial support, and may choose to fund these over similar projects requiring more federal subsidy. As a function of this broad support necessary for federal funds, jurisdictions naturally have to work together to reach a mutually favorable deal. However, these deals are not without concern and often lead to intense competition between invested parties.

### **Interjurisdictional Competition**

Altshuler and Luberoff (2003) introduce the idea of interjurisdictional competition as an integral part of mega-projects. They argue that competition exists between jurisdictions that have an interest in a rail transit system. This competition is a result of local governments striving to improve themselves by becoming attractive to private investment. What form this private investment takes depends on the type of city in question: Bedroom communities seek private investment with suburban development companies to boost their citizen population and thereby increase their tax base while for cities that consider themselves major employment centers seek to draw large companies who control large amounts of capital to their cities. It should be noted that while growth is unquestionably the largest source of interjurisdictional competition, competition can come from other sources as well, such as community and cultural development.

The tools cities use to obtain their growth aspirations fall into two main categories: “inducements to private investors” and “direct public investments” (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003).

Inducements to private investors are anything a city does to make their community more attractive to potential developers and businesses including zoning variances, tax incentives, low interest loans, and in select circumstances the use of eminent domain. Direct public investment is concerned with large public expenditures, usually in the form of infrastructure that draws investors to the area. This can include road networks, airports, seaports, convention centers, and, in this case, rail transit systems. Since direct public investment concerns large amounts of taxpayer money, it is subject to intense scrutiny of motives and method. This interjurisdictional competition doubtlessly arises in many circumstances, but is most notably represented in Richmond's (1998) idea of institutional ego, in which cities compete with each other to have the biggest or best transit system. With this constant attempt to best the "competitors", errors may be made in transit mode choice or scope of the system.

### **Rent-seekers**

Interjurisdictional competition inherently implies that cities seek to maximize their condition by encouraging investment and growth. This idea of maximizing conditions for the best possible investment and growth harkens to a core tenet of land economics. Land economics takes traditional economic policies and extends them to the land, which ultimately has an impact on urban form and land uses. Townsend (2003) discusses Urban Transportation Planning (UTP), which results in the most efficient and realistic transportation policies and then uses rent-seeking and special interests to explain why these policies are not always realized. Townsend asserts that, "according to economics, this occurs because vested interests benefiting from "incorrect" policies engage in lobbying of decision-makers and other means in order to maintain or increase the benefits ("rents") they receive" (Townsend, 2003, 29). As a result of this lobbying, superior transportation policies remain unimplemented, often to the detriment of the city in question. This type of behavior, where the best policy is not the one desired by officials, is referred to by

economists as rent-seeking. It is categorized as irrational, value driven, and completely subjective, resulting in policies that are economically deficient as a whole, although some actors may benefit from them tremendously while most others reap little to no rewards (Townsend, 2003).

Townsend continues to assert that the special interests involved with transit, specifically the central city property owners and business interests, act irrationally by advocating fixed rail transit despite the economically savvy decision of an alternative mode. They do so for their own benefit, and as such are acting as rent-seekers in the true sense of the concept (Townsend, 2003). Hamer (1976), responding to the growing interest in fixed rail transit systems in the 1970s, said that:

Many of the influential interest groups [downtown property owners, contractors, and consultants who might be called on to build the recommended systems] promoting rail rapid transit are convinced that the spinoffs of such a system are as important as the movement of persons. Land owners in areas blessed by stations and central city mayors hungry for new tax revenues are allied with those who see in rail a panacea for every conceivable urban ill. The transportation aspect is often obscured even in the so-called cost-benefit analyses made to rubber stamp the decision already taken. ... In all cases, feeble evidence is marshaled to champion the rail lines as job creators for the poor, mobilizers of the elderly and handicapped, and harbingers of a more vibrant, civilized city (Hamer, 1976:249).

Hamer (1976) in saying this correlates with Kain, Richmond, and Townsend, who all identify errors in the decision making process of rail transit, whether that be in the form of inflated ridership and cost forecasts, images of rail as depicted as saviors of the urban lifestyle, and rent-seekers who wish to obtain the largest personal economic gain from the new rail system.

Townsend (2003) continues to apply this rent-seeking approach to three major metropolitan areas in Southeast Asia (Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore). These cities are analyzed by identifying the major interests, and in some case the lack of interest, in specific

policy areas such as the use of land, transportation equipment, infrastructure construction and operations, and environmental quality. In Singapore these interests changed little over the length of the study, most likely due to the constant government at the time. In contrast, Kuala Lumpur had large interest shifts overtime, indicating that government can, and in this case did, play a large part in the deciding interest in transit projects (Townsend, 2003).

Townsend outlines different groups with varying interest within each city, and shows that these interests ultimately decided the fate of the proposed transit systems. Officials in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok showed little interest in rail transit investment, and turned to public profit seeking ventures to build the systems. As a result, the system in Bangkok competes with state sponsored bus services leaving the private rail system far too expensive for the common resident of Bangkok. Similarly, the rail transit system in Kuala Lumpur has become increasingly extensive as of late, but remains poorly integrated into the transportation system as a whole, with very little connectivity with the existing bus service. This again leaves the system widely unused and reserved mostly for the privileged. In contrast, the rail transit system in Singapore is state sponsored and as such has been integrated into the existing transportation network, creating a largely successful system that is used by a relatively high level of riders (Townsend, 2003).

In another example from abroad, Siemiatycki (2006) analyzes the new metro system in Delhi, India. In this case study, many of the images identified by Richmond (1998) are present, lending more credence to that argument. The portion of this case study that is particularly interesting deals with the politics of the Delhi Metro system. The public agency that was responsible for making the final recommendation on the technical aspects of the transit system had a special contract to consult on rail-based projects, by selecting rail transit as the most viable option this agency ensured itself as the technical consultant on the project (Siemiatycki, 2006).

This company played a large role in the decision to pursue rail as the preferred transit mode, and by doing so acted as a rent-seeker to maximize its own benefit from the project.

In addition, 3% of the Delhi Metro system was planned to be financed by property development, leaving there to be large incentive to align the metro system where development could easily turn a profit. In addition, the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation provided 64% of the funding for the metro. In doing so, they stipulated that a number of general contracts had to be outsourced to Japanese companies. At every turn during the process politicians sought to take credit for the metro system, and there was constant debate on whether the local government or the state government was the agency responsible for the metro, each of which was controlled by rival political parties. However despite the hotly contested political rhetoric, Siemiatycki (2006) noted, “even amidst the political wrangling for credit, the fact that cooperation had been achieved between the rival political parties was a symbol to the public that the metro was an important effort to address one of the most pressing societal issues.”

This proves that political cooperation, regardless of the situation, has a great effect on the construction of rail transit systems. Where there was no political cooperation, in places like Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, rail transit systems were never built by the government, and as such have been largely ineffective. However in places where political cooperation was achieved, like Singapore and Delhi, large and relatively successful rail transit systems have been created to the benefit of the entire populace.

### **Summary**

While there is still heavy debate on the merits of rail transit, it is clear that many jurisdictions choose it as a preferred transportation choice for many reasons. With compelling evidence to support rail transit’s effectiveness, strong images are held by citizens and officials alike that lead to the choice of pursuing rail transit. However this choice does not come without

concerns, with serious questions about the reliability of model forecasts and the validity of rail transit in doubt by some. This choice is ultimately influenced by different groups, each with their own best interests at heart. It is these interests, and a mandate by the Federal Transit Administration to include as many local financiers as possible, that often leads to intense interjurisdictional competition. It is natural for competition to exist between jurisdictions because they are acting as rent-seekers wishing to maximize their return on investment and make their community as attractive as possible to outside investors. However, examples from abroad provide evidence that government coordination and involvement in large scale rail transit projects are essential to the success of the systems. It is with this literature in mind that this study was conducted to determine the differences between the 1990s and 2000s version of the Central Florida rail transit system and to determine what role intergovernmental coordination played in its success and failure.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research is primarily to determine what factors in the planning and implementation process caused the dichotomous outcomes that are seen, along with the reasons for rail transit being chosen in the Central Florida region. Through this information, valuable information is identified to assist other localities in implementing their own rail transit projects successfully.

This study uses a combination of two different methodologies acting in conjunction to provide a detailed analysis of the Orlando area rail transit in the 1990s and the 2000s. Through this case study, the researcher was able to observe two distinct rail transit proposals while keeping a constant population and geographic location. In addition to the case study, a detailed content analysis was conducted using over 250 newspaper articles throughout the entirety of both projects. The content analysis allowed the researcher to construct valuable time lines for both proposals as well as assisted in identifying the key players to be interviewed. The research utilized informational interviews with key players in the Orlando area bid for rail transit in the form of planners and decision makers to identify important factors involved in the two rail transit proposals as well as clarify the intricacies of the rail transit planning process in both cases.

### **Case Study Selection**

Once the case study methodology was chosen, an in depth selection process was completed to determine the location of the case study. Cities were considered throughout the United States, but special consideration was given to states located within the southeast, the location of the researcher. The qualifications to be considered for study were:

- A rail transit system must have been planned within the last 10 years.
- The system must be built, in construction, or in the final stages of the implementation process.

- Preference was given to cities that had not had many recent academic rail transit studies completed.
- The system must have information readily available to the general public.

Once these qualifications were set, a list of three candidate cities was constructed. These cities consisted of Orlando, Florida, Tampa, Florida, and Charlotte, North Carolina. Tampa, Florida did not meet all of the qualifications, but was initially included in the short list as a result of its long history of rail transit discourse. However, due to its lack of a well developed rail transit plan, it was the first to be eliminated. Charlotte, North Carolina recently completed a light rail system that utilized the money Orlando was seeking from the Federal Transit Administration in the 1990s. Orlando was a unique situation as a result of its two different attempts at rail transit, and is located less than two hours from the University of Florida. Due to Orlando's unique condition and proximity to the University of Florida, Charlotte was eliminated and Orlando was chosen as the preferred case study.

### **Interview Selection**

The selection of interview subjects was carefully considered to provide the most information and the largest variety of viewpoints on the Orlando area rail transit projects. A research protocol was submitted to the University of Florida Internal Review Board to allow for these interviews to be held. The informed consent document is attached in Appendix A. The first step in this was to identify the major stakeholders and players intimately involved with the projects. The primary stakeholders consist of public and private agencies and organizations:

- Counties of Orange, Volusia, Seminole, and Osceola
- Cities of Orlando, Winter Park, Altamonte Springs, Eatonville, Maitland, Sanford, Winter Gardens
- Private rail companies of CSX and Amtrak
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

These primary stakeholders were each contacted to determine availability and interest in being interviewed for the purpose of this study. Parties that agreed to be interviewed included local and state planners and officials, and current and past consultants for the rail transit projects. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, with a predetermined question list that was used as a form for the interview, but was not strictly adhered to to ensure that the greatest amount of pertinent information was mined from the interview subjects.

### **Content Analysis**

A content analysis was used to analyze the major factors involved in the Orlando area rail transit projects. Initially a call was placed to the Orlando Public library to determine if public records were retained from the rail transit planning process in the 1990's. They instructed the researcher to come to the main downtown library in Orlando to search the vertical files for any documents that had been retained. Upon inspection of the files, no record was kept of the public documents used in the 1990's, and as a result public documents were excluded from the content analysis. The public library has access to a database that contains the archives for the Orlando Sentinel, and a search for 'rail transit' was run through the archive database. The results were then taken and examined for rail transit articles relating to Orlando. These articles were then used to perform the content analysis. A similar process was performed for the 2000s, yet this search was performed with a database that is available at the University of Florida. These results were then pared down in the same method.

A detailed content analysis was conducted on both data sets. Each article was assigned a document number in consecutive ascending order to reflect the date of the document. It was determined if the article was positive toward rail, neutral, or negative. Each article was then

assigned a 1, 0, or -1 respectively. The categories used in the content analysis were first selected by identifying common themes developed in the review of literature. Furthermore, each data set was read through in its entirety three times, the first time to determine what additional categories should be added, the second time to record the data, and the third time to confirm that the data was recorded correctly. By using this method, the following categories were selected in analyzing the documents:

- General Information: the document contains information that is associated with the rail transit project, but does not reflect any polarizing content. Examples include meeting notices and proposed votes or elections.
- Government Coordination: the document discusses the relations of governments with each other or different level of governments.
- Public-Private Relations: the document discusses relations of private companies or special interests with governments or government agencies.
- Information Dissemination: the document discusses problems or opportunities related with the dissemination of information to the public or other government agencies.
- Technology: the document discusses the technology associated with the rail transit system.
- Economic/Residential Development: the document discusses economic or residential development that may occur as a result of the rail transit system.
- Quality of Life: the document discusses the impact on the quality of life of residents in the Orlando area by the rail transit system.
- Environment: the document discusses the impact on the environment of the rail transit system.
- Safety: the document discusses the safety of the proposed rail transit system, occasionally in the context of alternative transportation means.
- Equity/Service: the document discusses issues associated with equity or level of service to different areas or groups.
- Model: the document discusses issues associated with model projects of ridership or cost.
- Finance: the document discusses financial issues associated with the rail transit system, including both costs of the system to governments and consumers and cost benefits received therein.

- Traffic/Congestion: the document discusses the effect of the rail transit system on traffic and congestion.

The documents were also recorded as to what type of document they were, either news, editorial, or column. The documents were then statistically analyzed to determine which factors were discussed the most, and whether the overall rhetoric was positive or negative.

### **Summary**

The Orlando Area was selected for study due to its dichotomous attempts at rail transit in the 1990s and 2000s. After this case was selected, a detailed content analysis was conducted to determine the differing factors in both the 1990s and 2000s which was developed into a spreadsheet for easy access. From this a picture of the important features in the 1990s and 2000s is formed giving the researcher insight into what the region considered important for both systems as well as what led to the failure of the 1990s project and the anticipated success of the 2000s proposal. After the content analysis several stakeholder interviews were held to confirm or refute the researcher's findings and to identify any other factors that were not discovered through the content analysis.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This section provides the results found through the content analysis and informational interviews in the Orlando Area rail transit projects. First, a detailed background of the specifications of both projects is given to provide a source of comparison for the discussion section to follow. Then a chronology of events in the rail transit system process for the 1990s and 2000s is provided. The results of the content analysis are then given by category and the major factors involved in each project are identified. A summary of the informational interviews is then provided to identify any additional factors that were not discovered through the content analysis.

### **Project Specifications**

Figures 4-1 and 4-2 illustrate the proposed rail transit system alignment for the 1990s and 2000s respectively. It is important to note the considerable difference in technology used, the 1990s proposal utilizes light rail transit while the 2000 proposal features commuter rail. Light rail systems carry fewer passengers, but stop more frequently. Commuter rail systems utilize existing freight tracks as opposed to constructing new as light rail requires.

In the 1990s, the preferred north-south alignment was along existing CSX right of way, but did not utilize the existing tracks and did not divert any freight traffic from the area. The 2000s proposal also used CSX right of way but involves the purchase of the existing tracks for use for commuter rail. There are fewer stops on the proposed commuter rail system compared to the light rail system.

It is also important to note that the originally proposed system in the 1990s and the final form before it was killed are very different. Figure 4-1 shows the end result, after it was shortened several times and alignment was shifted to reflect interests of businesses and some cities. As a result, the 2000s version incorporates more counties and is more of a truly regional

system than the 1990s proposal was. Figure 4-1 does not show the timing of the construction, as the northern portion was pushed back to focus on the southern portion from SeaWorld to downtown Orlando.

## **Rail Transit Process**

### **1990s**

Planning for rail transit occasionally occurred in public discourse in the Orlando area, but discussion gained momentum when Lynx formally merged with the Central Florida Commuter Rail authority in March of 1994 (Fuchsia, March 11, 1994). Two years later, the Orange County Convention Center unveiled a plan for a \$212 million light rail system that would travel along International Drive, designed to serve the popular tourist destinations along that road (Stratton, Sept. 11, 1996). At the same time, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) was planning a passenger rail system that would run along Interstate 4 from Sanford to Celebration Florida in Osceola County (Orlando Sentinel, August 23, 1995). From the initial unveiling of the rail transit plans, there was dissent among the region's jurisdictions. Residents of Osceola County objected to FDOT's proposed system because Celebration was the only part of the county benefiting from the system, and the population centers of Kissimmee and St. Cloud were being all but ignored in the passenger rail transit system (Millican, Oct. 19, 1996).

Numerous hearings were held throughout the duration of the planning process. In November of 1996, FDOT and Lynx held a hearing in Kissimmee to address the concerns of Osceola county residents (Staff Writer, November 16, 1996). This meeting did little to quell the concerns of Osceola residents, with major concerns arising from the total cost of the system, estimated at the time to be somewhere around \$2.7 billion, and concerns about the lack of service to most of Osceola County, with Celebration being the only population center served by the proposed route (Bouma, Nov. 22, 1996).

While Osceola County was expressing deep concerns about the rail transit projects, Orange County heavily supported both projects by committing \$65 million for the two projects (Lancaster, December 11, 1996). In an effort to increase public participation, the consultant for FDOT scheduled 11 public meetings through April and May to discuss rail station design and placement (Stratton, April 28, 1997).

During the middle of 1997, Lynx began looking for a new executive director after the previous director left for a similar position in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Lynx quickly zeroed in on an executive director from northern Virginia with a unique level of experience in planning passenger rail systems. This decision was considered key in the future of Lynx transit, but especially so in the pursuit of rail transit (Stratton, May 8, 1997). The new executive director, Leo Auger, worked in Dallas, Texas when the light rail system was being planned there, and also had other stints in Richmond, Virginia (Stratton, August 17, 1997).

In the next several months, money remained at the height of public discourse, both in the positive and negative. The House transportation appropriations subcommittee awarded the system \$31.8 million to key elements of the rail transit plans (Lytle, November 4, 1997). Meanwhile Orange County was rethinking its commitment to rail transit and Lynx in general, demanding ridership numbers be accurately developed in response to what many commissioners viewed as wildly inflated ridership figures (Lancaster, July 26, 1997).

The problems with Winter Park and Maitland remained a constant concern for rail transit planners, as many residents of these cities believed that the light rail transit system would destroy their communities, and demanded further studies be undertaken to discover alternate alignments. Concerns included increase congestion at rail road crossings and the effect the noisy and speedy trains would have on downtown shopping districts (Parrish, September 21, 1997). In addition to

Maitland, the cities of Altamonte Springs and Eatonville demanded more information about the rail transit system, insisting that their requests had been ignored thus far. These cities drafted a letter complaining of a “recurring pattern of misinformation and noninformation” that thoroughly left the elected officials dismayed (Stratton, October 5, 1997). These cities continued to disagree with the proposed system, passing resolutions asking for another six months to study alternate routes (Taylor, December 8, 1997).

Despite the growing unpopularity of the rail transit project with the smaller cities to the north, Lynx continued on its plans and hired a light rail veteran from St. Louis, Missouri to be the director of engineering and construction, a position Lynx created solely for the proposed system. This newly hired employee was deputy executive director of a transit company in St. Louis and oversaw the construction of the light rail line that opened in 1993 in St. Louis (Stratton, January 8, 1998).

Early in 1998, Winter Park escalated its opposition to light rail in Central Florida. The city commission voted 4-1 to oppose “unequivocally” any plans for a light rail line to run through their Central Park, accompanied by a petition signed by 1,500 Winter Park residents (Bloodsworth, January 14, 1998). Winter Park continued its efforts by considering a lawyer to fight the light rail plans (Orlando Sentinel, January 29, 1998).

Public governments and citizens weren’t the only parties to be making the pursuit of rail transit difficult. Confusion with the awarding of a large consulting contract, possibly up to \$30 million, was contested when questions were raised about the method of selection. The firm ultimately not chosen, originally preferred by more members of the transit board, at one time threatened legal action unless the process was fixed. This never actually occurred, but it slowed the process nonetheless (Stratton, January 22, 1998).

The northern communities of Winter Park, Maitland, Eatonville, and Altamonte Springs got their wish in February 1998 when the light rail project consultants recommended to Lynx that the northern route be pushed back, and focus be placed on the line from Sea World to downtown Orlando. Although the aforementioned cities considered this a minor victory, consultants stated that the reason for focusing on the southern route rested on the stable funding sources, not requiring a tax increase, and that doing so would allow Lynx to meet the goal of having the system up and running by 2001 (Stratton, February 13, 1998).

Although the northern route was officially put on hold, discussions continued on what could be done to improve the alignment of that part of the system. Many contended that the alignment along I-4, originally selected as the preferred route until it was switched to existing CSX corridors, continued to be the preferred route by critics in Winter Park, Maitland, Eatonville, and Altamonte Springs. They believed that the I-4 alignment would be less expensive and serve more citizens and tourists than the CSX alignment (McClure, February 16, 1998). While Lynx was ramping up advertisements and information for the light rail system, concern about the total cost of the project grew. Estimates stood at \$32 million per mile and nearly \$29 million a year to operate. Despite the state's firm contribution of 25% of the costs, and the anticipated federal contribution of 60%, fear remained high over the affordability of the project (Stratton, February 22, 1998).

In March the delay recommended by the consultant firm on the northern portion of the system was endorsed by the agency that ultimately controls the funding for the rail system, Metroplan Orlando. They voted to approve the plan put forth by Lynx that delayed the northern section and allowed designers to draft final plans for the system from Sea World to downtown

Orlando. They had earlier agreed to a 90 day “cool down” period after which a decision about the northern part of the system would be made (Stratton, March 12, 1998).

While as much as 80% of the rail system was coming through state and federal sources, and local financing plan was formed that included local municipalities and large private businesses that would directly benefit from the proposed rail transit system. One of the largest private businesses was Universal Studios, headquartered in California. Local leaders went on a trip to Universal’s headquarters in June 1998 to persuade the company to help pay for the first leg of the rail system. In late April, Universal’s chief executive officer said that the \$40 million they were expected to contribute was too much (Stratton, June 2, 1998). The issues with Universal continued, while Universal offered to contribute \$10 million to the project, local leaders rejected the offer and countered with \$20 million (Smyth, June 12, 1998). Universal did not budge, threatening to put a large deficit in the local financing plan.

As Universal was complicating the light rail plans, things were further complicated when Winter Park finally decided to sue, alleging that Metroplan Orlando did not follow the state requirements in adopting its long range transportation plan. Along with this, International Drive merchants who were expected to contribute a good part of the local funding agreed to ante up \$22 million, about \$11 million less than was originally expected (Parrish, June 13, 1998). Later, International Drive Businesses decided to pay for a private study to determine if light rail was in fact the best mass transit option, taking the process back to the initial question (Stratton, June 27, 1998). Universal finally agreed to pay up to \$20 million towards the light rail system, although many lofty requirements threatened to alienate other big businesses in the area (Stratton, July 1, 1998).

In addition to questions regarding local business and municipal support, CSX rejected a deal with Lynx, citing that putting light rail lines next to freight trains is dangerous to passengers. Lynx insisted that extra safety features would be employed to protect light rail passengers from passing freight trains, but CSX believed that that was far too little to ensure the safety of all involved (Stratton, July 17, 1998). Soon after the snag with CSX, Orlando and Orange County decided to slow down the project because of lingering financial concerns. This decision came hours after the federal government gave a large check to continue the planning of the Sea World to downtown Orlando alignment (Stratton, July 23, 1998). Disagreements continued between Lynx and International Drive business leaders, especially when Lynx raised the expected contribution level from \$23 million to \$25.3 million, not including financing costs incurred from borrowing the money to give to Lynx (Lancaster, July 30, 1998).

When election time came, some became worried about the future of rail transit. Several Orange County chairman candidates considered themselves to be anti-rail, something that had the potential to be detrimental to the future of rail transit in Central Florida (Maxwell & Stratton, August 23, 1998). In the end Mel Martinez was elected Orange County Commission Chairman. Chairman Martinez was not fundamentally opposed to rail, but undoubtedly critical of the finance plan that had been constructed previously (Stratton, November 18, 1998).

Rail planning continued with Lynx seeking name for the new rail system, but deadlines began to loom again. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) wanted Lynx to submit a sound local financing plan by the middle of November 1998, leaving many to fear that the federal money could be lost soon (Stratton, October 23, 1998). As a result of the impending deadline, Orange County and Orlando voted to tentatively approve the construction of the light rail system from Sea World to downtown following international drive. These decisions were not binding,

and were not required to be so until February 1999, when then President Clinton's budget assembled the national budget (Tracy & Maxwell, 1998).

Shortly before the FTA mandated deadline, International Drive business leaders said that they would not support the light rail system as it was planned, instead demanding an alternate alignment that would shift the rail line to slightly off of International Drive, supposedly to prevent business lost to the lengthy construction of the light rail system (Stratton, November 18, 1998). In time Lynx agreed to take a second look at the alignment along International Drive, but stated that the new alignment could cost \$12 million more. By agreeing to pay for the extra study, Lynx stated that should the new alignment be chosen and cost more than the original one, the International Drive businesses would be expected to pay for the difference (Stratton, December 18, 1998).

As a result of widespread financial concerns, Orange County Chairman Mel Martinez contracted an economist to analyze the proposed rail transit system. He found that for every \$1 in benefit would cost about \$3.40 to tax payers (Stratton, January 5, 1999). This report was quickly countered by Lynx officials, and came under heavy fire from pro-rail supporters as inaccurate (Stratton, January 9, 1999).

Orange County in the next few months became increasingly leery of the rail transit system. Orange County developed concerns about the relationship it was having with Orlando and Lynx, leading one meeting to become heated with name calling and finger pointing in both directions (Maxwell, March 3, 1999). Orange County, unhappy with the way the planning was heading, detailed a new finance plan where the costs to the city of Orlando nearly tripled, prompting state and federal officials to publicly state that the city and the county needed to work things out (Maxwell, March 12, 1999). This bickering culminated with Orange County voting to

cut off all of the money set aside for the planning of the rail project (Maxwell, March 17, 1999). This move did not kill all hope for light rail in the Orlando area, but left fewer options on the table to ensure the success of the system.

Differences with CSX remained as one of the top issues threatening the success of the rail system. They continued to assert their position that safety would be compromised if light rail transit were permitted to travel alongside freight trains. (Stratton, May 19, 1999). Meanwhile, Lynx agreed to the terms of International Drive businesses and shifted the proposed alignment off of International Drive and moving it slightly off to other roads (Stratton, May 28, 1999). Lynx modified their proposal to CSX by offering to operate on only one track through downtown Orlando (Stratton, June 12, 1999). Despite the modifications, CSX still rejected the plan by Lynx, using the safety argument yet again (Stratton, June 15, 1999). CSX offered the alternative of elevated track for the light rail through downtown Orlando, to which Lynx eventually agreed (Stratton, June 24, 1999).

Sea World and Lynx forged a deal changing the alignment of the light rail project in order to appease Sea World, and ultimately save from \$10 to \$15 million (Stratton, June 25, 1999). Weeks later, International Drive businesses reversed their previous position and decided not to demand a change in alignment (Stratton, July 17, 1999). Days later, Orange County commissioners voted to tentatively pay for the transit system, seemingly putting the project back on the right track. However, the vote was a close 4-3, leaving some to question the overall support for the system in a room full of light rail opponents (Stratton, July 21, 1999).

The FTA had established a deadline of August 1 for all of the eight interlocal agreements to be signed. When it was clear that the deadline would not be met, the FTA agreed to extend the deadline saying that it was no way a hard date (Stratton, July 26, 1999). To assist with the

promotion of the transit system, Lynx hired an executive manager of governmental affairs, charged with the task of establishing better communication with local governments (Maxwell & Stratton, August 21, 1999). With key votes approaching for the light rail system, critics stepped up attacks, especially focusing on a new projection by Lynx that said for every ride the rail transit system gave costing \$1 to riders, Lynx would pay \$9.50 (Stratton, September 7, 1999). International Drive businesses agreed to contribute \$23 million to the overall \$600 million project. However, there was evidence that a key member of the Orange County Commission was debating changing his vote on the project (Maxwell & Stratton, September 8, 1999). The next day, the Orange County commission voted 4-3 against contributing money to the light rail system, effectively killing the two year process (Maxwell & Stratton, September 9, 1999).

## **2000s**

Throughout the early 2000s several attempts were made to resurrect the failed rail transit system for Central Florida. In 2003, Orange County attempted to jump start the rail system by adding it to its “Mobility 20/20” plan, a half-cent sales tax that would fund \$400 million of a rail transit system (Powers, September 19, 2003). The plan was vetoed by Orange County residents at the ballot box.

The rebirth of the rail transit system officially began in February 2004 when FDOT planners held workshops in Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Volusia counties to explore the desire for rail transit in Central Florida (Libby, February 15, 2004). Over the next year, local communities slowly came to support the idea of a new rail transit system, with Osceola quickly endorsing the opportunity, followed by Lynx and Metroplan Orlando, Volusia and Orange County (Hunt, February 18, 2004; Powers, June 10, 2004; Orlando Sentinel, July 14, 2004; Connolly, August 6, 2004). In early 2005, Orlando and Orange County leaders also reintroduce

the idea of a light rail system to run along International Drive (Garcia & Powers, February 15, 2005).

Also in early 2005, one of the largest concerns about a new rail system was eased when CSX agreed to discuss rerouting freight trains out of downtown Orlando (Fuchsia, February 20, 2005). Discussion followed the two plans, with some saying that in order for the International Drive light rail system to be a success, a comprehensive commuter rail system that served all four local counties (Orange, Volusia, Seminole, Osceola) must be created (Fuchsia, February 20, 2005). In mid 2005, Orange County commissioners began to express concerns about the viability of a commuter rail system running parallel to International Drive, raising questions about how the plan would be financed, and if the County could afford such hefty costs (Powers, June 9, 2005). They attempted to lower the costs to the local communities by using a new source of funding called the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) (Garcia and Powers, June 10, 2005).

Public discourse about the needs for the commuter rail system consisted of traffic congestion reduction, and an overall benefit to the quality of life of central Floridians (Thomas, June 12, 2005). Congressman and senators joined in the clamoring for light rail, with Representative Bob Allen and Representative John Mica leading the charge (Allen, June 29, 2005.)

Volusia County became the first to pledge funding to the proposed commuter rail system in July 2005 (Connolly, July 8, 2005). Meanwhile Orange County was warming to the idea of the system, discussing numerous benefits of the system, including the rerouting of numerous freight trains around Orlando (Powers, July 13, 2005). Orlando was the next to endorse the commuter rail project, however they did not allocate any money to the project at the time, but endorsed

what it meant for Central Florida (Orlando Sentinel, July 26, 2005). Over the next few weeks Seminole and Osceola counties voted to fund the commuter rail project, and finally Orange County committed on August 9, 2005 (Fuchsia, August 10, 2005).

Despite the vote of confidence that the four counties and several cities gave the new commuter rail system, some were still not pleased. The city of Edgewood vowed to fight the proposed rail system, claiming that it would do more to increase congestion in their city than to relieve it (Orlando Sentinel, November 17, 2005). There was also little being done in the way of a deal with CSX, concerning communities and residents that the plan would again fail (Orlando Sentinel, December 22, 2005).

While Edgewood vowed to fight commuter rail, the city of Winter Park decided not to fight the proposed system (Mathers, February 24, 2006). Maitland, another city with doubts about the early rail transit plan, decided to pursue a rail station for its city, signaling support of the proposed system (Sherman, June 14, 2006). And in early August 2006, the largest sticking point with commuter rail was finally solved, with then Florida Governor Jeb Bush riding a sleek train car into Orlando announcing a \$491 million deal with CSX Transportation purchasing 61 miles of track in Central Florida (Hamburg & Horowitz, August 2, 2006).

In fall 2006 however, Winter Park and Maitland began to have second thoughts on the commuter rail. Some citizens in Winter Park questioned what the commuter rail system would do to their village feel (Sherman, August 9, 2006). Both cities formed task forces to determine the cost of commuter rail stops and to evaluate whether they were sound decisions for each city (Sherman, August 16, 2006). To help ease the fears of Winter Park and Maitland, Orange County made an offer to cover a third of the costs associated with the operating and maintenance costs of

the commuter rail stops. However, officials with both cities remained concerned about whether the offer was enough to actually help (Sherman, December 6, 2006).

Winter Park officials decided to let the public decide if commuter rail is what they want, drafting a resolution stating that if commuter rail passed the test of residents, they would support a commuter rail stop in Winter Park. Both Winter Park and Maitland still held that the 30% Orange County would cover of operating and maintenance expenses was not enough (Orlando Sentinel, February 14, 2007). Orange County refused to offer the cities any more assistance, much to the chagrin of city leaders (Damron & Sherman, March 7, 2007). Despite these financial quarrels, Winter Park voters overwhelmingly voted in support of commuter rail in a March election (Copper, March 15, 2007). By doing so, Winter Park became the first city to formally endorse the commuter rail system (Hamburg, March 15, 2007).

Volusia County began to reconsider the commuter rail system shortly after Winter Park endorsed it, citing rising costs – approximately \$40 million – and asking if the system was still worthy of the large expenditure when the county would benefit far less than the other, more populace counties (Horowitz, March 17, 2007). Discussions occurred on the Orange County commission to increase the share paid to Maitland and Winter Park from 30% to 50% (Orlando Sentinel, March 31, 2007). While discussions were occurring, a potential “deal-killer” emerged for Winter Park and Maitland. They required that an opt-out clause be incorporated to ensure that if the cities’ budgets could not support the rail stop, they could be closed without question. Orange County agreed, but only if any negative financial impacts on the system incurred were paid by the cities. Winter Park and Maitland both refused to allow this stipulation to exist (Sherman, April 15, 2007).

Concerns about the bickering came to the front, with some asserting that if agreements were not worked out and signed, federal money could be lost to the plethora of cities in waiting behind Orlando (Hamburg & Sherman, April 24, 2007). In the end, both Maitland and Winter Park signed agreements to allow and fund commuter rail stations in their cities (Copper, May 2, 2007). However Volusia County continued its position reversal, considering abandoning its commuter rail plans altogether (Horowitz, May 29, 2007). Despite all of the concerns and threats, all parties finally agreed and were poised to sign off on the \$615 million deal in July 2007 (Hamburg, July 14, 2007). By the beginning of August, all of the funding agreements were signed and the commuter rail plan was made official.

The final item to be worked out with the commuter rail system is an issue that still holds the project from going forward. In November 2007 CSX requested \$200 million in liability insurance from the State of Florida to protect against injuries occurring on the tracks (Hamburg, November 8, 2007). The deal was expected to go through by the end of the November, but that did not occur. In February 2008 the draft legislation drew much attention from a House panel, with several state officials stating that issuing such an insurance policy would be a terrible policy choice by the state (Orlando Sentinel, February 7, 2008). The legislation quickly drew the ire of Senator Paula Dockery of Lakeland, who first complained that the money the state was giving to central Florida to fund the commuter rail system should be split and given to other areas in Florida as well (Copper, March 13, 2008). In April 2008 it seemed that the plan for liability for CSX was gaining momentum when it passed in the House (Deslatte, April 30, 2008). However, the measure failed in the Senate, pushing the commuter rail system back (Deslatte & Kennedy, May 1, 2008). However, the House resurrected the deal by voting to give CSX the \$200 million in liability insurance it sought, passing the deal again on to the Senate (Deslatte, May 2, 2008). The

Senate failed to sign off on the deal before the legislative session ended, effectively shelving the commuter rail plan for some time as CSX refused to sell its tracks until the liability insurance was in place (Deslatte, Hamburg, and Tracy, May 3, 2008).

Several parties were put to blame for the failure of the liability bill, however most was placed on the Florida Justice Association, a trial-lawyer association that is historically against anything that limits the ability for people to sue. A similar bill was passed in 2002 for south Florida's Tri-Rail commuter system, leaving trial lawyers to object to another proposal occurring in Florida (Deslatte, May 4, 2008). U.S. Representative John Mica and Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer vowed that the commuter rail system was not dead, and that they would do everything in their power to ensure that the system continued on the road to success (Deslatte & Hamburg, May 6, 2008). The major opponent of the system, Senator Paula Dockery, increased her attacks by saying the proposal would be detrimental to Lakeland by increasing the number of freight trains going through that city. The Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission reached out to Lakeland in an effort to smooth the tensions between the two (Hamburg, May 10, 2008).

While the commuter rail system faced trouble in the Florida State legislature, the plan remained on the mind of Central Florida communities. The city of Ocoee mulled supporting the commuter rail system (Sentinel, May 22, 2008), and Winter Park continued discussions about the commuter rail system, first agreeing to design the rail stop destined for their city, and later again questioning the total cost of the system on the city by refusing to pass a resolution requested by Representative Mica showing support of the commuter rail system (Sashin, May 28, 2008). In an effort to resurrect some type of rail system, Senator Paula Dockery, one of the main opponent of the Central Florida commuter rail system, proposed an intercity rail to replace the planned system (Copper, June 20, 2008).

With the progress of the commuter rail system stalled by the legislature, local officials began to devise ways to promote the system to increase overall public support. They began to do so by contracting myregion.org to hold focus groups and community surveys to determine what locals wanted to see in the commuter rail system, from color schemes and body types to the need of a commuter rail system (Tracy, October 14, 2008). Meanwhile a name for the system was being created by receiving submissions from local residents (Tracy, October 30, 2008). Despite the forward thinking and increasing efforts to garner public support, Winter Park again considered pulling their support for a rail stop (Copper, November 12, 2008). As the new system was named, a setback occurred when the company that produced the vehicles for the system filed for bankruptcy, changing the overall look of the system from the eco-friendly self propelled units to the traditional locomotive and passenger car model (Tracy, January 14, 2009).

In the beginning of 2009, the first hurdle to gaining support in the Florida State legislature was removed, when the trial-lawyers association officially dropped its opposition to the commuter rail project (Deslatte, Tracy, and Schlueb, January 15, 2009). To increase local officials support of the rail system, a plane was chartered to fly from Orlando to Charlotte, North Carolina to experience their new commuter rail system that was built with the funds Orlando was seeking in the 1990s (Schlueb, January 15, 2009). At this current time, Florida Governor Charlie Crist has embraced the Central Florida commuter rail system and pledged his support in doing everything possible to get the bill for liability for CSX through the Senate (Sentinel, February 5, 2009). The legislation is set to be voted on when the Florida State legislature reconvenes in March 2009.

### **Content Analysis Results**

The content analysis was divided into two different data sets, one containing 139 newspaper articles from the *Orlando Sentinel* regarding the rail transit plans in the 1990s and one

containing 195 articles regarding the rail transit plans in the 2000s. The following are the results of these content analyses.

### **1990s**

Figure 4-3 depicts the results of the 1990s content analysis. The overall score of this content analysis was -3, meaning more articles were negative than positive or neutral. The most commonly discussed category in the 1990s was the financing involved with the proposed rail transit system, with 59.0% of the articles mentioning this, followed directly by Government Coordination with 50.4%. The least common category dealt with model issues with only 3.6% of the articles speaking about this category. An additional 30.2% discussed public- private relations, mostly concerning the deal with CSX Transportation. The rest of the categories were discussed between 5.0% and 24.5%. Each category was additionally broken down to determine the overall frequency of individual positive and negative responses. The results of this are located within table 4-2. Table 4-1 compares the category frequency rate for the two projects.

### **2000s**

Figure 4-4 depicts the results of the 2000s content analysis. The overall score of this content analysis was +77, meaning that more articles were positive than negative and neutral. The most common category was Government Coordination, with 74.9% of the articles speaking on the topic; close behind was financing the proposed system, with 70.3%. The least discussed category was information dissemination with 1.0%. Public-private relations were covered in 30.8%.

As with the 1990s data set, table 4-2 depicts the individual positive and negative responses per category. The largest difference seen in change in positive response rate was in the environment category, with an increase of 42.8% from the 1990s to 2000s and a 42.8% decrease in the negative response rate. Other large differences to note were found in government relations,

with a 27.4% increase in positive response rate, public-private relations with a 16% change in positive response rate and no negative responses in the 2000s, and finance with an 18.9% increase in positive response rate and a similar drop in negative response rate. These findings will be discussed in greater detail in the Discussion chapter.

### **Summary of Informational Interviews**

The majority of the information interviews corroborated the findings of the content analysis. However, two additional factors were identified that were not discerned from the content analysis. The first deals with a financing mechanism used in the 2000s that differs from that available in the 1990s, and the second deals with the MyRegion.Org website that was created after the end of the 1990s rail transit proposal.

In the 2000s, the Florida Department of Transportation has agreed to finance the first seven years of the operation of the commuter rail system. This is done because Interstate-4 will be widened after the completion of the commuter rail system, and the commuter rail system will serve as an alternative to the increased congestion caused by the construction on Interstate-4. In the 1990s, the individual jurisdictions were bound to finance the operation of the light rail system upon its completion, with no help from the Florida Department of Transportation.

MyRegion.Org is a website that was created in part to promote a unified vision for Central Florida. Some of the interview subjects attributed this vision, which was created by interviews and surveys of officials, business leaders, and citizens, with the creation of a common goal for all of Central Florida. The board of directors is composed of large business leaders, media, civic institutions, local governments, and citizens.

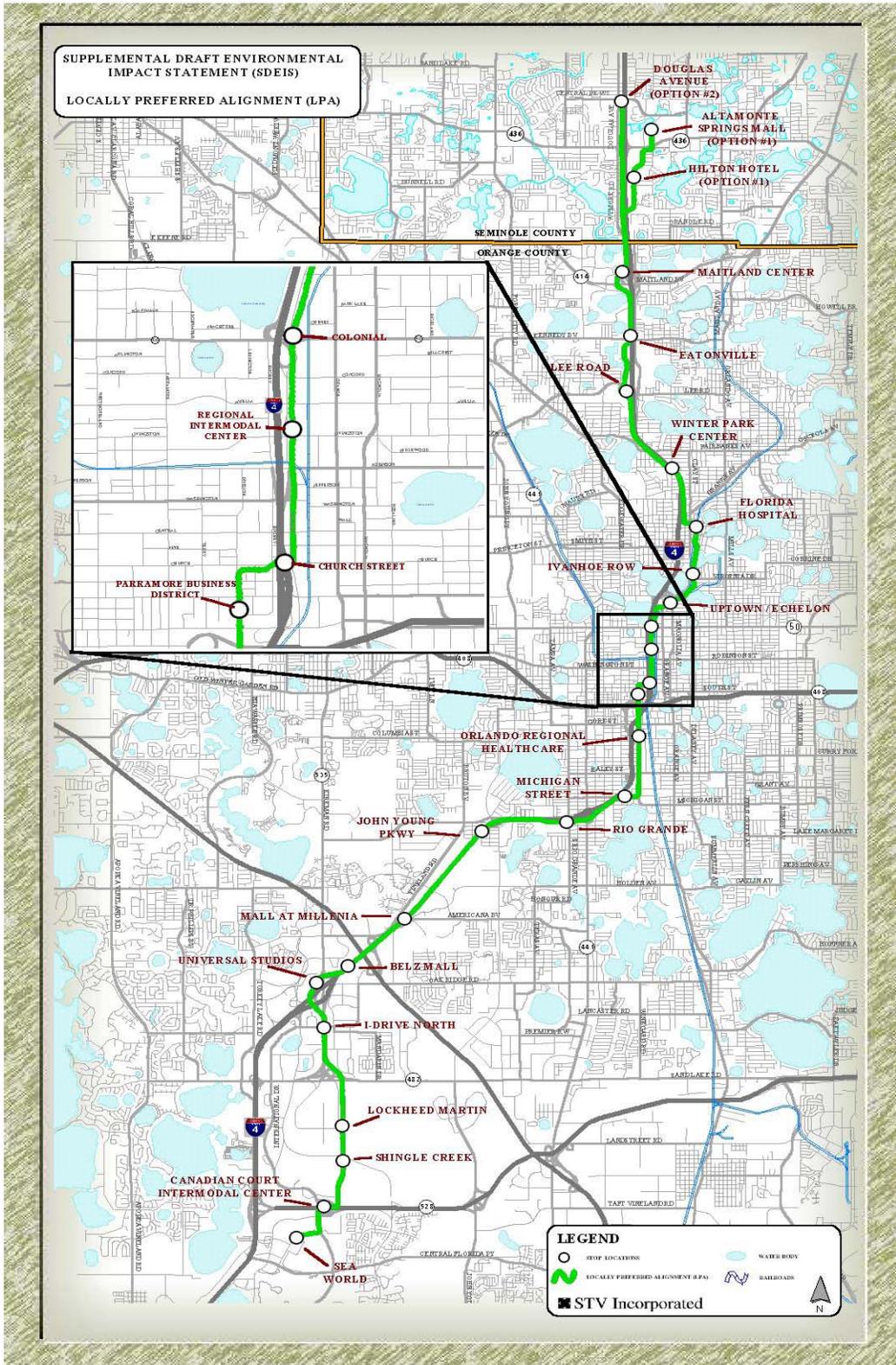


Figure 4-1. 1990s system map. Reprinted with permission from LYNX Transit.



Figure 4-2. SunRail system map. Reprinted with permission from Florida Department of Transportation.

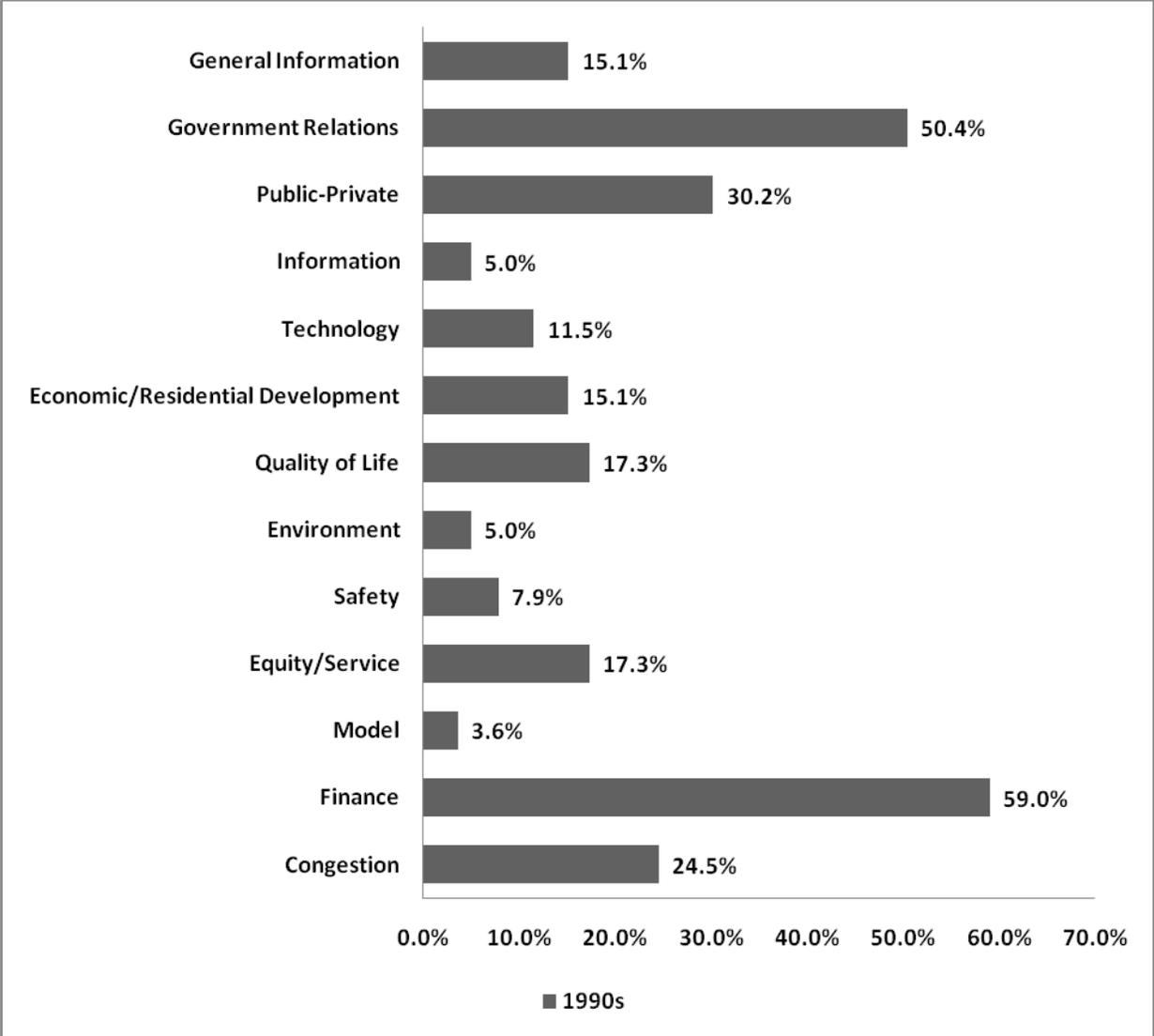


Figure 4-3. Content analysis results – 1990s.

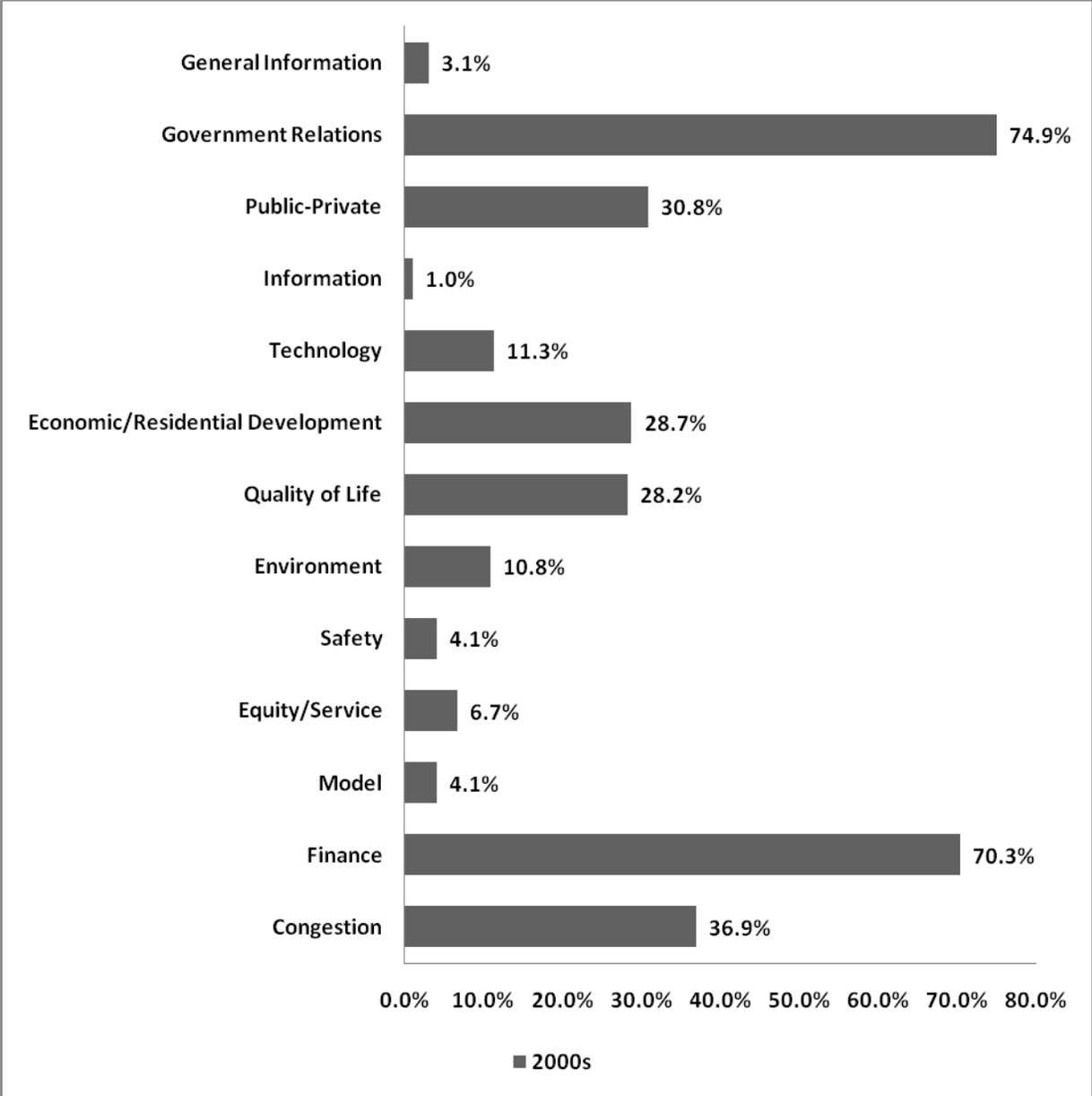


Figure 4-4. Content analysis results – 2000s.

Table 4-1. Comparison of 1990s and 2000s content analysis results.

Category	1990s	2000s
General Information	15.1%	3.1%
Government Relations	50.4%	74.9%
Public-Private	30.2%	30.8%
Information	5.0%	1.0%
Technology	11.5%	11.3%
Economic/Residential	15.1%	28.7%
Development		
Quality of Life	17.3%	28.2%
Environment	5.0%	10.8%
Safety	7.9%	4.1%
Equity/Service	17.3%	6.7%
Model	3.6%	4.1%
Finance	59.0%	70.3%
Congestion	24.5%	36.9%

Table 4-2. Positive and negative categorical results comparison.

Category	1990s		2000s	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Government Relations	18.5%	21.4%	45.9%	2.7%
Public-Private	19.0%	9.5%	35.0%	0.0%
Information	0.0%	57.1%	50.0%	0.0%
Technology	12.5%	25.0%	41.0%	9.1%
Economic/Residential Development	42.9%	19.1%	66.1%	5.4%
Quality of Life	58.3%	25.0%	65.5%	9.1%
Environment	28.6%	57.1%	71.4%	14.3%
Safety	9.1%	18.2%	75.0%	0.0%
Equity/Service	4.2%	41.7%	46.2%	30.8%
Model	0.0%	60.0%	12.5%	12.5%
Finance	22.0%	24.4%	40.9%	5.1%
Congestion	53.0%	23.5%	61.1%	6.9%

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Rail transit in Central Florida is essentially a study in contrast. Although the reasons for pursuing rail transit remain somewhat consistent with both projects, as well as with popular literature, the results of both proposals with markedly different. Through government and public-private coordination, the true differences between the two projects come to light. The tremendous difficulties faced by rail transit planners in the 1990s project both with local governments and public companies are far more complex and ultimately debilitating than those found in the 2000s. It is with these difficulties in creating a common vision throughout the region that led to the failure of the 1990s proposal and alternatively to the perceived success of the 2000s project. The generally positive tone to the 2000s literature as reflected in the +77 score when compared to the -3 score of the 1990s reflects the difficulties seen in the 1990s and the relative ease with the 2000s proposal. This section serves to discuss the impetus for rail transit in central Florida, along with the differences between the two systems. Coordination is then addressed, along with ramifications that brought by the lack of coordination that is seen, and may be applied to other systems throughout the United States.

### **Reasons for Rail Transit**

The reasons for pursuing rail transit in Central Florida in both time periods are similar, and overall consistent with existing literature on the topic. The major impetus for choosing rail in Central Florida in the 1990s and 2000s is consistent with current literature and commonly held beliefs about rail as a transit mode. These include: traffic and congestions improvement, economic and residential development, quality of life improvement, and environmental advantages.

## **Traffic and Congestion**

Traffic and congestion were relatively frequent topics of discussion in both rail transit proposals. During the 1990s, traffic and congestion was discussed in 24.5% of the documents reviewed. In contrast, traffic and congestions were topics in 36.9% of the documents in the 2000s. Table 4-2 shows a small gain in the positive arguments made about traffic and congestion and a steep decline in the negative discussion in regards to traffic and congestion as it relates to rail transit in the 1990s and 2000s. The difference between the two can be attributed to several factors that may have played some role in the decision to move forward in the 2000s yet stop the rail transit planning process in the 1990s.

As was expected, many articles spoke of the congestions improvements and reduced commuter times that the new rail transit systems would bring. However, this discussion points followed an interesting yet predictable pattern, as reflected in the overall negative associations with the 1990s project and the overall positive position in the 2000s. In fact, there was some concern about the light rail system actually increasing the congestion in the small towns with residents stating that the increase of trains crossing at grade would lead to congestion at those intersections that could quickly turn into a traffic nightmare when the system is running at full capacity, reflecting the negative rate of the 1990s (Fuchsia, February 1, 1998). Others in the 1990s used evidence from past systems in other parts of the county to provide precedent that a light rail system would never do what the promoters were saying it would do: drastically reduce congestion in Central Florida (Edwards, February 11, 1998). A typical response from rail advocates used in the 1990s was:

Two decades from now, traffic will be pretty bad. But that likely will be worse without light rail... A light rail system, though, could carry the same number of passengers as a six-lane highway- which should eliminate some of that increase traffic on local roads (Arneberg, February 22, 1998).

The belief that a light rail system could hold the same capacity may be true in concept, but in concept only. It assumes that ridership will be at capacity at all times, which has not been able to be accomplished anywhere according to current literature (Pickrell, 1992). Continually throughout the 1990s there is evidence that many doubted the actual ability of a light rail system to decrease overall congestion, which is consistent with what Pickrell (1992) discovered in his studies. When added in the phenomena of induced traffic, discussed by Richmond (1998), any congestion that was reduced by the light rail system would soon return with drivers on nonessential trips.

In contrast to the 1990s, discussion about congestion and traffic improvements were markedly different. In the 2000s, before the official announcement of the second attempt at rail transit in Central Florida, officials were talking about rail in a different tone. Comments about the advantages of rail on congestion spoke of have no other alternative, “The buses just get stuck with the cars, I think that’s why commuter rail is starting to bubble to the top, there really isn’t anything else out there” (Libby, February 15, 2004). United States Representative Corrine Brown said, “Every day it takes commuter longer and longer travel to and from work, and in my estimation, adding more highway lanes is not the answer to this problem.” It was also noted that the “Florida Department of Transportation... said that the commuter line should relieve as much congestion as would adding another lane to Interstate 4 (Hamburg, August 3, 2006).

Ironically, as mentioned above, research suggests that residents in Central Florida had it right in the 1990s by saying that the light rail system would do little to improve their situation, as officials in the 2000s seemingly regressed on this knowledge and touted the system as a semi-savior of commuters in Central Florida. Another interesting thing to note is the design of the system may prove to be another reason to not believe that congestion will be reduced. As

currently proposed, the commuter rail would run every 30 minutes during peak commute times in the morning and evening, but only run every 2 hours the rest of the day. As some writers noted given the nature of business in the world today, a commuter that would leave at 8am and return at 5pm is becoming increasingly rare. The system would not provide adequate transportation to those that went to work late, left work early, or worked longer into the evening, creating a system that may be no use to them.

### **Economic and Residential Development**

Economic and residential development plays a significant role in many decisions for a rail transit system, with transit oriented development becoming a recently popular development goal for many cities. In the 1990s, 15.1% of the articles reviewed discussed elements of economic and residential development. In the 2000s, 28.7% discussed economic and residential development. An overall increase in the positive image of the effects that rail transit would have on economic and residential development seen in figure 4-2 from the 1990s and 2000s also speaks to this effect. The difference may be explained in several ways, mostly as a function of the near decade between the two proposals. At the beginning of the rail transit project in the 1990s, officials from Lynx directly stated that the construction of a rail transit system in the Orlando area would increase the potential for economic development (Lytle, June 25, 1997). Major players in the systems ultimate outcome, namely the International Drive business owners and Universal Studios made used the system to their advantage, and preferred routes that favored their business, and in the case of Universal Studios, stipulations were made that precluded rival businesses from advertising on the trains that they in part funded (Stratton, July 1, 1998). In these two groups doing this, they were acting as rent-seekers, seeking to maximize their business potential within the proposed rail transit system. Others raised issue with spending taxpayer money on the rail transit system when the money could be directly spent on attracting new

businesses to the Orlando area (Koenig, August 24, 1998). This is a direct challenge to the belief that rail transit systems spawn economic and residential development by way of transit oriented development. By far most of the articles in the 1990s discussed situations with businesses acting as rent-seekers, and far less with the development advantages a rail transit system could bring to the Orlando area.

In the 2000s, most of the discourse is consistent with what the 1990s. Arguments were made for rail transit in an effort to increase convention attendance, and Orlando was compared to Las Vegas in its potential to be a popular spot for large conventions (Tracy, April 18, 2005). There was also much discussion about how killing of the rail system in the 1990s hampered the economic development of the region, especially in the context of Winter Park, who were originally concerned with a rail transit system creating a pipeline for unwanted people to come into Winter Park, when in fact the system has the potential to bring in wealthier travelers to shop at Winter Parks upscale downtown (Thomas, June 12, 2005). Many of the articles also discussed the potential for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) leading to the construction of development along the rail transit line as well as the relocation of businesses to allow employees and customers to ride the rail to their location.

The large difference in discussion rate (over 13%) between the two proposals can possibly be attributed to the changing economic climate in the United States. The late 1990s was an economic boom time in the U.S., while from 2007 on the U.S. has seen a deepening recession and historically high fuel prices which may have led to rail transit being discussed as a desirable goal once again.

### **Quality of Life**

The improvement of quality of life for Central Floridians was a somewhat common theme throughout the articles reviewed by the content analysis. Quality of life was discussed

17.2% and 28.2% of the time in the 1990s and 2000s respectively, but components of quality of life were discussed much more frequently when considering congestion and commute time reductions and an overall increase in development.

Common discussions surrounding quality of life improvements included the low cost to riders of the rail transit system, as well as providing laborers without automobiles a way to move throughout the region. Specifically in the 2000s, the discussion of the overall reduction in freight trains routed through Central Florida became a large factor in the improvement of the quality of life for central Florida. The decrease in noise, congestion at railroad crossings, and overall dirty image of freight trains were all common themes discussed.

Improvement of quality of life is rarely disputed by anti-rail literature. Some argue that commute times rarely increase with rail transit, but on the whole it is fairly indisputable that the addition of any type of transit system increases the quality of life of a region. What is not discussed, and is the focus of much of the literature, is the total cost of rail transit, and that the cost does not measure up to the perceived benefits to the quality of life. This factor was discussed frequently in the Orlando area, and will be covered later in this section.

## **Environment**

Environmental advantages are a common thread in pro-rail rhetoric, but were not as common in the Orlando area as would be expected. In the 1990s only 5% of the articles discussed the benefits taking cars off the road would have on the environment. It was a more common topic in the 2000s, with 10.8%, but still was a relatively rare topic in the pursuit of rail transit. What is important to note is the dramatic increase in the positive discussion rate of environmental issues. In the 1990s it was discussed positively only 28.6%, while in the 2000s that number jumped to 71.4%.

One possible explanation for the low rate of environmental discussion could be the lack of current environmental concerns in Central Florida. In places like Los Angeles and Tokyo air quality improvements would have a significant effect on the total populace. However, Central Florida does not currently have any air quality concerns to speak of, resulting in the seemingly low consideration of environmental impact of the rail transit system. The large change seen in the positive discussion rate may be attributed to the changing social and cultural climate of the United States, and a shift from global warming being a hotly debated topic to one that is commonly accepted in nearly every household. This change allowed for the increase in popularity of discussion the positive influences that rail transit may have on the environment of Central Florida.

### **Coordination**

The largest topics of discussion in both the 1990s and 2000s were government coordination, public-private relations, and finance. All three of these topics are intrinsically linked, with finance playing a large role in both the reasons for, and problems with, government coordination and public-private relations. Government coordination and public-private relations will be discussed in this section along with how finance was an important part of, and ultimately complicated, these topics.

#### **Government Coordination**

Government coordination, and in some cases the lack thereof, was discussed in 50.4% and 74.9% in the 1990s and 2000s respectively. This topic was important enough to be discussed in the majority of the documents, and as a result is important to discuss here. There is a notable difference in the level of intergovernmental coordination in the 1990s and the 2000s, from very little in the 1990s to a general institutional understanding of a need to cooperate in the 2000s.

This is reflected in the increase of positive discussion and decrease of negative discussion shown in figure 4-2.

Referring to the timeline of the 1990s rail transit project, problems with intergovernmental coordination are frequent. The cities of Winter Park, Maitland, and Eatonville opposed the rail transit project almost from the beginning, causing the northern part of the system, the part that is similar to the 2000s proposal, to be taken off of the table relatively early in the rail transit planning process. The reasons were fairly similar, and the most common view held against the rail transit system was that the cities were not getting as much from the system as they were being asked to contribute. This essential question of equity and overall level of service was used 17.3% of the time in the 1990s.

In addition to these concerns, Winter Park and Maitland firmly believed that the wrong alignment had been chosen for the system, preferring the originally considered Interstate 4 route as opposed to the proposed CSX alignment. Officials from both cities believed that the Interstate 4 alignment best served their citizens and the entire region, although many arguments were made that a CSX alignment would ruin the small town feel of Winter Park, creating another incentive to oppose the proposed alignment.

In performing the above actions, the cities of Winter Park, Maitland, and Eatonville essentially performed the action of rent-seekers, by seeking to maximize their return from the system regardless of the effect to the total system and in essentially the entire region. They were also acting with jurisdictional competition, fearing that the other cities along the system would benefit more than they would.

However, these three cities were not the only ones to act on jurisdictional competition and rent-seekers. The final act that killed all hope of rail transit in central Florida in the 1990s

was the decision of Orange County not to support any further actions with a light rail system. This action came out of fears that Orange County was not having enough control over the system, in spite of their large contribution to the funding. This is essentially what jurisdictional competition entails, the quarreling over who has the most power over a large government expenditure, and in this case the victim was rail transit in the Orlando Area.

The 2000s were noticeably different in terms of intergovernmental coordination. With the exception of Maitland and Winter Park who, although being the first to officially sign off on the commuter rail project, continually waffled on support of commuter rail, the rest of the region largely held very little opposition and clamored for working together to achieve a common goal. One common thread present throughout the rail transit planning process in the 2000s was rhetoric regarding the mistakes that had been made in the past by letting go potentially billions in federal money, and a common vow to not to let that money get away again. Recently, a commercial flight was chartered to ride the light rail system in Charlotte, North Carolina where the funding central Florida had been trying to get in the 1990s went.

Another factor that was present in the 1990s and all but absent in the 2000s was the idea that jurisdictions weren't receiving the level of benefit they would expect to receive from their investment. This rate dropped to nearly a third less than the 1990s level with only 6.7% of the articles addressing equity and service concerns. Those that expressed these concerns, mainly Winter Park and Maitland, used them much less frequently and only did it truly come to question until Orange County refused to increase their subsidy level of Winter Park and Maitland.

During the informational interviews a common theme was discussed: the regional vision created by MyRegion.Org. This regional vision, established through interviews and surveys of both officials and citizens has had a phenomenal impact on allowing all of the Central Florida

governments to coordinate. By having a vision that all residents and officials in Central Florida are committed to, one that includes dense development corridors that are facilitated by transit oriented development (TOD) established by the commuter rail system, governments feel comfortable supporting an effort that benefits the overall region and all fears are put to rest.

Another part of intergovernmental coordination that has been key to the success of the rail transit plans as identified by the information interviews is the funding agreement created by FDOT. FDOT has agreed to fund the operation of the rail transit system for the first 7 years of the system, giving local governments ample time to develop funding methods once the system is operational. This coordination between the local governments and FDOT has lowered the finance fear that was present in the 1990s, and although it is clear that financing is still an issue, it is far less of an immediate concern and more long-term than it was in the 1990s.

However there is one piece of intergovernmental coordination that has yet to fall into place for central Florida, and is causing the delay of the system's construction. While all the agreements have been signed by the local governments, and the deal between CSX and the State of Florida is signed, the Florida State Legislature is left to approve a \$200 million liability insurance policy for CSX Transportation, to protect against lawsuits should an accident occur between a freight train and commuter rail car. In 2008, the bill passed through the House of Representatives, but ultimately died on the Senate Floor when private interests, which will be discussed later, and more pertinently other governmental interests stalled the bill. The city of Lakeland, Florida and its Senator, Paula Dockery, raised large issue with the deal with CSX. Originally a case was made that the large amount of money being spent in central Florida could be spread out through the entire state, but when that argument eventually fell through complaints were raised that opposed to rerouting of freight trains from central Florida to the rail line that

runs through Lakeland. Instead of the project, which opponents contended would be detrimental to Lakeland, Sen. Dockery suggested that an intercity rail system be developed, completely forsaking the central Florida rail transit system. This blatant lack of government coordination, both between the State government and the Lakeland area, could eventually prove to be the end of commuter rail in central Florida.

### **Public-Private Coordination**

Public-Private coordination involves two primary groups in both rail transit proposals, CSX Transportation and the businesses along International Drive. CSX played an integral role in the ultimate failure of the 1990s project, and the perceived success of the current project. International Drive business owners, along with other key players in business in Orlando, played had a much larger impact on the 1990s project than the 2000s, possibly a function of route and technology choice. 30.2% and 30.8% of the time public-private coordination was discussed in the 1990s and 2000s respectively. The most important thing to note is the increase in positive image of public-private coordination from the 1990s to the 2000s, where there are no negative articles written about public-private coordination.

CSX Transportation had a large part to play in both of the rail transit proposals preferred route alignments. In the 1990s, the plan was to run light rail lines in existing CSX right of way next to the existing freight lines. In some cases, CSX tracks were planned to be converted to be compatible with light rail technology. CSX adamantly refused any deal where light rail cars would be traveling alongside freight trains, citing safety concerns over accidents. Although the proposal from FDOT changed several times, CSX refused to accept each time.

In contrast, CSX gladly sold their existing tracks and right of way to the FDOT in the 2000s. An agreement was reached where most freight traffic would be routed around the Orlando Area making room for commuter rail to use the existing CSX tracks. The only sticking point

with CSX, one that stands as the last barrier to construction of the central Florida commuter rail, was the request for \$200 million in liability insurance should any accidents occur between the few freight trains that would still run through central Florida and the commuter rail trains. Regardless of the current stall, CSX's cooperation in the 2000s has been pivotal to continuing the planning of a rail transit system for Central Florida. Without this sale, the result likely would have been similar to the 1990s proposal.

Private company cooperation in the 1990s played a significant part in the failure of that system. While the businesses of International Drive originally supported the project, they became leery of the project and requested additional studies to determine not only if the technology chosen was appropriate for the desired transportation goals, but also if the alignment was optimal for the collective business interest. This not only added to the total cost of the project, but led to further delays to the already lengthy rail transit planning process. In addition, one large company, Universal Studios, created additional threats to the successful implementation of the 1990s rail project. Orange County attempted several times to come to a compromise with Universal Studios on their contribution to the light rail system, and only after significant bartering was a deal struck. The deal resulted in several stipulations that may have easily alienated other large business interests in the Orlando area, strictly the forbidding of advertising by Universal Studios direct rivals and other preferential treatment to businesses that contributed funds to the light rail. Although none of these acts alone dealt the final blow to rail transit in central Florida in the 1990s, they certainly exacerbated the situation and may have led to the overall negative image of the system by many involved.

In the 2000s, there was very little involvement from private companies other than CSX Transportation. This is a result of the proposed north-south alignment that does not serve the

large business interests as the 1990s system did. It can be postulated that the removal of additional players in the rail transit planning process, here Orlando area business interests, simplified the negotiation process. This was not by any means the only reason for the variance in outcomes of the two systems, but it may have played a significant role nonetheless.

A private interest that became important to the fate of the rail transit system was the Florida Trial Lawyers Association. This group launched a campaign opposed to the liability insurance that CSX requested from the state as part of the deal to buy its right of way. This opposition was most likely due to the nature of the trial lawyer profession, where money is made by suing companies, and with the liability insurance in place for CSX, injured passengers could not directly sue CSX, closing a door to trial lawyers. This group, largely influential in the State Capitol due to large campaign contributions has recently decided to back the commuter rail system. Time will tell if this decision remains the same.

### **Policy Implications**

This study has produced valuable policy implications that can be applied in other cities and regions seeking rail transit. Information Interviews revealed that, as mentioned earlier, the existence of a coherent and mutually created regional vision put to rest many of the fears citizens and cities had about rail transit in the 1990s. With a common idea of what the region wants to be “when it grows up”, all parties have been able to work towards this common goal. The existence of such a vision is highly recommended for any area seeking to embark on any capitally intense project, specifically rail transit.

In addition, the existence of a website that displayed this common vision, with valuable resources and tools to help citizens understand what is important to their community as well as contribute their own thoughts undoubtedly assisted the 2000s proposal for rail transit in Central Florida. This technology, while available at the time of the 1990s proposal, was uncommon and

little used by much of the populace. The advent of the internet as a valuable media source has created a way to quickly share and make accessible information to normal citizens and elected officials. This allows people to come to their own conclusions about the validity and value of rail transit as opposed to relying more on editorial and anecdotal information from so-called experts.

Finally, the existence of a coherent financing plan for the operation of the rail transit system also seems to have played a large role in the perceived success of the 2000s system. Many municipalities have taken solace in knowing that they have time to determine how best to finance the operation of the system after it is up and running, allowing for public support to build and making it easier to dedicate large sums of money to the continued operation of the system once the public support is in place. It is highly recommended to any city or region looking to construct a rail transit system to keep in mind that once the system is constructed, the continued maintenance and operating costs often far outweigh the initial capital costs. Having a reliable plan to fund these expenses before the system is built will allow for the continued success of the system as well as undoubtedly save many political careers.

### **Ramifications of Coordination**

It has thoroughly been discussed the differences between the coordination in the two rail transit proposals, and it is clear that these have been the main factor in the failure of the 1990s system and the perceived success of the 2000s system. What has not been discussed is how these differences in coordination affect the overall system, outside of failure or success. Much literature has been written discussing the great let down of rail transit systems once they have been built, and much of the system has been attacked for that reason. Model inaccuracies are often held to be the largest reason for disappointing constructed rail transit systems. Cost and time overruns are also spoken of frequently as ills of not only the rail transit planning process, but of all rail transit construction. However, an assertion might be made that these model

inaccuracies and overruns are a factor of coordination, both intergovernmental and private enterprises.

As is seen throughout the 1990s, the alignment for the rail transit system changed several times. The original consideration was along Interstate 4 going north-south, which was eventually changed to run alongside existing CSX right of way. This shift in alignment drastically changed the areas served and primary function of the rail transit system, automatically creating differences from the originally created ridership projections. In addition, the several minute changes to the east-west lines running alongside International Drive all had the potential to change ridership forecasts. This brings to question how ridership projections can be expected to be accurate with the constant changes in alignment, creating a disincentive to develop a truly accurate ridership estimate when the alignment will likely shift again in the future.

In addition to the ridership problems, each time an alignment is changed new studies must be conducted, from environmental impacts and preliminary engineering to public meetings and all new publication materials. Each time this is changed, a large cost is added to the total price of the transit system. It is no wonder why cost overruns are the norm in large scale rail transit projects. With constant pressure from governments to change alignments and conduct further studies, the cost is seemingly exponentially increasing. Along with governments, public interests also drive constant changes to rail transit system. As is seen in the 1990s example, the International Drive business owners first asked for an additional study to determine if the correct technology. Upon the conclusion of this presumably expensive study, another was requested to analyze shifting the route off of International Drive and onto a parallel street to minimize impact during construction. This, along with other changes brought on by local governments and private

companies, spurred increasing costs in the Orlando projects, and doubtlessly the same is true with other systems throughout the country.

### **Summary**

It is clear that reasons for the rail transit system remain relatively consistent between the 1990s and 2000s proposals, but they played little role in determining the different outcomes in the two rail transit projects. What did have an effect, and ultimately has led to the success of the 2000s project was an institutional understanding that rail transit is needed in Central Florida, brought about most likely because of a regional visioning process that has every government aiming at the same goals. With this belief, it was easy for governments to work together to ensure that funding was available for the rail transit system and all the required elements were in place. On a private level, CSX's willingness to come to the negotiation table in the 2000s project in sharp contrast with the refusal to do so in the 1990s provided a valuable piece to the rail transit system. While they have not officially sold the property yet and are awaiting the Florida State Legislature to approve liability insurance, it is clear that without their willingness to negotiate the system would most likely be dead as it was in the 1990s. However these large strides in coordination will not mean anything if a final piece of coordination does not come to fruition with the Florida State Legislature approving the Central Florida rail transit bill.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The Orlando area acts as an excellent case study for the successes and failures of the rail transit system in the United States today. The two different proposals, in the 1990s and 2000s, were brought about with similar intentions in the same region with largely the same institutional actors involved, but they have seemingly reached very different end results. This study seeks to find an answer as to why these two proposals have come to such different ends, with one a failure and one on its way to be fully implemented in the near future. Through a detailed content analysis and a case study of the two proposals, it has become clear that there are several key differences that have created the different results.

The 2000s proposal has seen an overall institutional understanding of the need for rail transit in Central Florida. This is brought about mainly by the failure of the 1990s proposal, and the repeated wish to not give up federal funding again. As a result of this institutional understanding, many of the problems that plagued the first system were fixed to facilitate the potential success of rail transit in Central Florida. The interjurisdictional competition that was prevalent in the 1990s has been set aside in favor of the institutional understanding of the future of Central Florida, and a cohesive visioning process in which all parties in Central Florida were involved. As a result of decreased interjurisdictional competition, the intense politicking and frequent self-serving demands that persisted throughout the 1990s project all but disappeared in the 2000s and led to a relatively smooth process throughout the local portion of the rail transit planning process.

Through all of these factors, an overall institutional understanding of the need for rail transit, decreased politicking and demands and increased intergovernmental coordination, the 2000s rail transit proposal has been able to be successful and awaits final approval from the

Florida State Legislature. Without these markedly impactful changes between the 1990s and the 2000s, the result may have been similar with the 1990s proposal, resulting in wasted funds on planning and the loss of large FTA grants bringing valuable capital into the region. Even now the success of the Central Florida rail transit system lies in the hands of intergovernmental coordination, relying on the Legislature and other parts of Florida to work with Central Florida to make the rail transit system a reality.

This study was not without limitations. There may be some questions raised about data bias due to the Orlando area having only one major daily newspaper. With only having one information source, the bias of the editors and writers of the Orlando Sentinel may have played a small role in affecting the results of this study. One large and glaring limitation of this study is that the rail transit system in Central Florida has not been completed yet and there are steps left before the system is constructed. If the system does not come to fruition, the study assumptions can be called into question. The study also does not have the advantage of looking back with current knowledge on the 2000s system, and as such the discussion may be different had the study been done several years from now. Information interviews were held to assist in mitigating these limitations.

This study easily lends itself to future research, specifically on the fully implemented Central Florida rail transit system. Should the rail transit system be constructed, an analysis of the overall success of the system would be in order, leading to studies that are more similar to the available literature in the field of rail transit planning. Interesting studies could consist of model projections assessment, accuracy of claims made throughout the process, and intergovernmental coordination when the local governments take over the operation of the system from the Florida Department of Transportation.

In a broad perspective, future research may perfect the methodology used in this study and apply it to other regions throughout the United States, verifying the results found and determining if they are consistent with other cities and regions of similar size and circumstance. It is clear that coordination plays a large role in every rail transit system, but to what degree it plays into other transit systems would be interesting.

With this study, in conjunction with future research, a better picture may be gained on what is necessary for the successful implementation of large scale rail transit projects. With the recent economic stimulus package passed through Congress and endorsed by President Obama, funding more funding will be available for the encouragement of transit. This study is timely and will assist municipalities in understanding the importance of a commonly held view of the need for a system and the willingness to pursue the overall good of the region as opposed to the individual wants of local governments.

APPENDIX  
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

**“Orlando Area Rail Transit Informational Interview” Informed Consent**

Good Morning. My name is, Andrew Batson, from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study to gain information regarding the Orlando Area rail transit proposals in the 1990s and 2000s. You have been identified as a person of experience with the implementation and process involved in the rail transit projects. The questions in this interview will review your experiences and opinions in regards to the Orlando Area rail transit projects.

The interview will take place over the phone and should take no more than 30 minutes. With your permission I would like to audiotape this interview. The tapes will be used for accuracy and will act as a supplement to notes taken during the interview. The principal investigator of this project will be the only individual with access to the recorded tapes kept in the locked research office, and the tapes will be erased at the end of the study. If at any point the questions being asked make you uncomfortable you may choose to pass on the question or request that the voice recorder be turned off. Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. There are no direct benefits, risks, or compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about the research project please contact me, (Andrew Batson) at the University of Florida, Urban and Regional Planning Department, PO Box 115706, Gainesville, FL 32611-5706; phone at 239-822-2208 or email at [andyb86@ufl.edu](mailto:andyb86@ufl.edu), or you can contact my research advisor, Dr. Ruth Steiner at the same address; phone at 352-392-0997 ext. 431, or email at [rsteiner@dcp.ufl.edu](mailto:rsteiner@dcp.ufl.edu).

To learn more about your rights in this study, please contact the UF Institutional Review Board Office at 352-392-0433.

**Thank you.**

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2009-U-0149  
or Use Through 02/05/2010

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew Batson was born in 1986 in Fort Myers, Florida, the eldest of four siblings. He grew up in Cape Coral, Florida and graduated from Cypress Lake High School Center for the Arts in 2005. Upon graduating from high school, Andrew attended the University of Florida and enrolled in the 4+1 program with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, graduating with his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in May 2008 and Master of Arts in urban and regional planning degree in May 2009. He interned with the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization in the summer of 2008, introducing him to and fueling his interest in transportation planning. In addition to transportation, Andrew's planning interests include economic development, community redevelopment, and transit planning with a special focus on rail transit. Outside of school, he enjoys fishing, basketball, football, and spending quality time with friends and family. Upon graduation, Andrew intends to pursue a career in rail transit planning with a private consulting firm in the Northeastern United States.