8.0 System Plan Issues

The findings from the Uptown-West Loop Alternatives Analysis – Draft Findings Report were used in the development of a regional System Plan. The System Plan identified a regional transit network that includes a wide array of service improvements and some AHCT services to be implemented through 2025. The development of the System Plan will build on the framework established in the 2025 Plan approved by the METRO Board in 2001, which called for an integrated regional transit system that combines bus service and facility improvements, with the need for AHCT in high travel demand corridors.

To determine which transit improvement alternatives or combination of alternatives are most suitable for AHCT, several factors were considered. These factors included: system connectivity, capital and operating costs, use of existing ROW and facilities, and potential to generate increased transit ridership.

These factors were examined in three phases. Phases 1 and 2 of the development process evaluated and compared possible transit improvement alignments and technologies on an order-of-magnitude basis in each individual corridor. The evaluation criteria focused on capital and operating costs, population and employment projections, demand potential, travel times and system connectivity, economic development, and environmental fatal flaws, as well as community and agency support. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 evaluations provided the rationale for eliminating less viable alignments and technologies from further consideration and to carry forward more suitable alternatives into Phase 3.

Phase 3 evaluation determined which System Plan scenario produced the best overall systemwide results, effectively serving the Houston area and generating public support. The System Plan identified alignments, station locations, operating plans, and technologies to be used in the AHCT network, as well as the complementary improvements to METRO's bus service and facilities to support the System Plan.

8.1 System Plan Compatibility

The Uptown-West Loop study area is a key component of the existing and future regional travel network. The existing NWTC would provide convenient connections to potential east, west and northwest lines while a proposed transit center at the southern portion of the study area would provide a key access point for south and southwest lines.
Regional connectivity was an important need expressed by the community. For this reason, improved system connectivity was identified as a major goal of the Uptown-West Loop Planning Study and METRO Mobility 2025. As part of the system plan assembly, each alignment proposed for this corridor, as well as the other AHCT corridors, was evaluated based on improved access to existing and proposed transit services, transit centers, and park & ride facilities. This connectivity would improve the opportunity for transit patrons to transfer and access more service types and geographic locations in the service area.