



Lenk, Frank; Director of Research Services for the Mid-America Regional Council in Kansas City, Missouri, USA.

Presentation Title: Metro Outlook: A Model-Based Approach to Developing Indicators of Progress

Metro Outlook is a comprehensive set of social, economic and environmental indicators used to measure the progress of the Kansas City metropolitan area, which is uniquely situated near the geographic center of the continental United States. Metro Outlook defines metropolitan progress, not by increases in its size or economic output, but the degree to which quality of life is improving for all its residents and the ability to continue this improvement forever into the future. A universal problem in indicator construction is identifying which indicators are the "right" ones. While most efforts use a highly democratic process to remove the potential for bias, the result is often a set of indicators where the relationships between them are unclear. Instead, Metro Outlook creates a conceptual model of how the social, the economic and the natural systems interact to produce a region's overall quality of life. This model then guides indicator selection as well as providing a framework for interpretation. Moreover, by showing how things are connected, Metro Outlook helps analysts uncover policies with highest impact for the least cost. The presentation will discuss the Metro Outlook model, how Metro Outlook has evolved over time and plans for improving the next version.

Biography for Frank Lenk

Mr. Lenk is the Director of Research Services for the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), Kansas City's Metropolitan Planning Organization, where he has been employed for nearly 30 years. He oversees an 11-person department whose mission is to provide the common analytical framework and factual basis for understanding issues required for consensus-based public policy decision-making. His duties include 1) making long-range (30-year) forecasts of land use, population, household and employment growth for assessing future transportation needs, 2) producing short-range (8-quarter) forecasts of the performance of the Kansas City area economy 3) conducting analyses of the economic impact of large-scale public and private investments or policy choices, and 4) helping decision-makers assess the overall progress of the Kansas City metropolitan area with in addressing economic, social and environmental issues. Mr. Lenk attended Stanford University, where he received Bachelors and Masters degrees in Economics. He is currently enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program at the University of Missouri – Kansas City in Economics and Social Sciences, where he is working on developing an agent-based model of the Kansas City region based on the model developed as part of Metro Outlook.