

MEMPHIS AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

# Midtown

## Alternatives Analysis

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM: **10**  
Brand Strategy Report



T H E  
**MAC**

**Midtown Area Connector**

*Connecting Memphis from the Inside Out*



September 2015

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Section 1  Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>Section 2  Brand Strategy</b>	<b>2</b>
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Brand Story.....	2
Who and What? .....	2
MATA in the Middle .....	3
Midtown Area Connector (The MAC) .....	3
The MAC Next .....	3
Study Website .....	4
Existing MATA Brand Perception.....	4
Recommended Brand Strategy.....	5
Rationale .....	5
Brand Identity .....	6
Brand Personality Traits.....	7
Brand Promise .....	7
Branding Tactics .....	7
Brand Extension.....	8

## LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 1: The 'MAC' Logo .....	2
Figure 2: MATA in the Middle Logo.....	3
Figure 3: The MAC Logo Development Process.....	4
Figure 4: The MAC Logo.....	6
Figure 5: The MAC Project Website.....	8

## Section 1|

## Executive Summary

In April 2014, the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) initiated the Midtown Alternatives Analysis (AA) study. The grant for the study was provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under federal legislation which stresses the importance of the linkage between metropolitan planning and environmental processes. The legislation also places a strong emphasis on the local planning process influencing the ultimate selection of a mode of transit along a preferred corridor. Conducting an AA provides essential information to make the case to local decision-makers addressing the needs, benefits, issues, and costs of a given corridor of a local high capacity or fixed guideway transit project.

The Study's primary purpose is to examine transit needs and the potential for providing a higher quality transit service within Midtown Memphis and surrounding neighborhoods. The following study goals and objectives were developed:

- **ENHANCE:** Make transit service more compelling
- **CONNECT:** Connect neighborhoods/improve local circulation
- **DEVELOP:** Support local and regional economic development goals
- **THRIVE:** Strengthen neighborhoods and business areas
- **SUSTAIN:** Create a long-term sustainable environment.

One of the ways of achieving these goals is to develop a branding strategy not just for the study but for the product of the study.

## Section 2|

# Brand Strategy

### Brand Story

MATA began the Alternatives Analysis Study in 2014 with the purpose to look at better ways to connect Midtown Memphis with other areas of the city. HDR, a consulting firm with extensive experience working with transportation systems globally, was selected to lead the process. Riders, stakeholders, community leaders, political leaders, employers, and the general public all participated through a public involvement process that lasted over 18 months. Public input was received regarding:

- 1) Selection of routes and corridors of service most desired and necessary; and
- 2) The preferred mode of transportation (i.e. Buses and Streetcars).

The name 'The MAC' is the acronym, name, and function of the Midtown Area Connector that was developed for the Alternatives Analysis Study. This brand is meaningful and memorable, with a character and spirit that is definitely Midtown Memphis.

Figure 1: The 'MAC' Logo



### Who and What?

Our experience has shown that branding is a matter of name and fame. We believe that branding is the effective establishment of who something or someone is; that is, their name and what they represent.

This definition was taken into consideration from the very beginning of the Study. Right from the onset, MATA staff determined that the Midtown Alternatives Analysis study process itself needed to be appropriately branded. In order to more effectively reach, affect, and engage people in the Midtown/Overton Square/Cooper Young/The University of Memphis/North and South Memphis areas, it was recognized that the MATA brand message needed to be made more applicable and more compelling. This understanding was essential to the Study scope of work and engagement with the community.



## MATA in the Middle

The initial branding recommendation for the Alternatives Analysis Study was “MATA in the Middle,” with a tagline of *Connecting Memphis from the Inside Out*. This branding was intended to have the feel and appeal to a targeted, special audience of Midtowners by tying MATA into the pride, logistical and geographic importance of the Midtown area.

While it was catchy and succeeded in capturing the attention and interest of Midtowners early on in the process, upon further review, “MATA in the Middle” was rejected for another choice. In addition, it was decided that this brand should be something new, separate, and different from the traditional MATA’s brand, logo, colors, etc.

Figure 2: MATA in the Middle Logo



## Midtown Area Connector (The MAC)

The branding strategy process eventually resulted in a new designation for the Study: Midtown Area Connector, or *The MAC*. As part of the process, a new color (purple) was selected and the letters (MAC) were redesigned to reflect speed, but the tagline was maintained essentially as the brand promise. The Alternatives Analysis process involved the identification of an initial twenty-six alignments to provide a High Capacity Transit service along a corridor in the Midtown area that would connect Downtown Memphis with key destinations in the metro area. After subsequent technical analysis of the alignment and appropriate mode of service, the alternative that performed best is one which connects downtown Memphis with The University of Memphis through Midtown Memphis, along Poplar and Union Avenues. This corridor is recommended to be served by a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system.

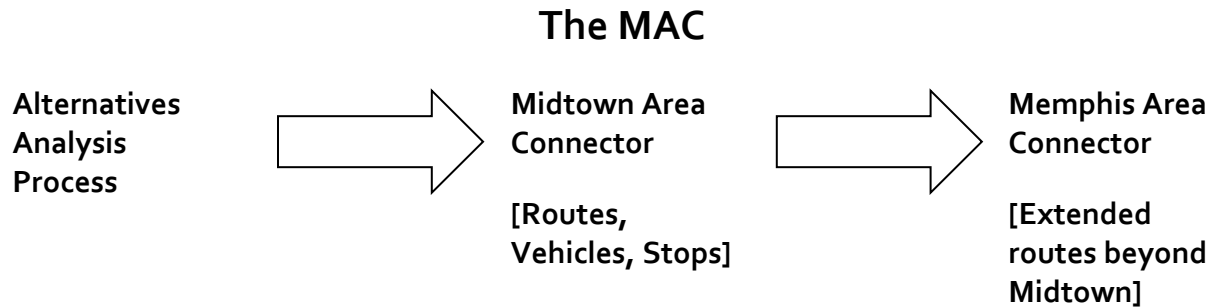
It was recommended that this service be branded as the Midtown Area Connector so that the community would recognize the higher quality of transit service connecting Midtown Memphis to key destinations in and around the area. It was envisioned that this new type of service would attract different groups of riders from across metro Memphis.

## The MAC Next

The existing MATA brand as a stand-alone is plagued by age, image, and perception issues in Memphis, and is not generally viewed as conducive to attract new riders.

While it is being decided what the ultimate branding fate of Memphis’ public transportation system will be in the future, *The MAC* branding can be established as the “next new thing.”

Figure 3: The MAC Logo Development Process



## Study Website

A website, [www.macmemphis.com](http://www.macmemphis.com), was specifically created for the Study. The website, branded with the MAC logo, has been updated with project information.

## Existing MATA Brand Perception

Based on the feedback we received from the public and at different meetings with the community and stakeholders, the general public perception of the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) brand is poor. It is considered poor in terms of:

- Service
- Funding
- Ridership
- Routes
- Vehicles
- Common Public perception of the MATA brand include:
- Riders
- Political leaders
- Business/Community/Civic Stakeholders

- General public

The emotional liabilities of the MATA brand perception on their users are:

- Unreliability
- Inconvenience
- Poor Customer Service
- Lack of information
- Limited options
- Lack of improvements, change, or progress

Confronted with this poor perception, one of MATA's goals for the Study is to build on it as a means of addressing this negativity. In the corporate realm, this type of branding challenge typically would be addressed with one of three (3) brand strategies:

- A. Total Rebranding (New brand)
- B. Brand Upgrades
- C. New Products/Enhancements

The preferred strategy, of course, relies on:

- Desire
- Budget
- Timing

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## Recommended Brand Strategy

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The brand strategy recommended for MATA is **C) New Products/Enhancements**.

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## Rationale

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The Main Street Trolley has its own brand identity separate from that of MATA. It is viewed as another product/service, altogether different than a typical bus experience.

The establishment of a separate and similar branding will be required to effectively position *The MAC* as a new, exciting service serving the heart of MATA's customer base.

Neither **A) Total Rebranding** of the entire Memphis Area Transit Authority nor **B) a Brand upgrade** is feasible or advised for MATA. This is because budget will not allow for a complete rebranding, and system-wide Brand upgrades are not possible at this point in time.

Regarding branding, the HDR team stated in the AA study scope:

*The HDR team believes that a branding strategy is a critical component of what MATA envisions...A branding strategy will deliver an outline to help MATA riders differentiate a new or improved transit service. The branding strategy will allow transit riders to identify with the new service as "their transit", forming a personal relationship with the brand.*

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## Brand Identity

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The HDR team decided that we should "begin with the end" in mind. Although it is formally called the Alternatives Analysis Study, something much more catchy and compelling was needed in order to spark public participation and interest in the process. Therefore, The MAC acronym for Midtown Area Connector evolved. The thinking behind this was to develop a brand identity that could be jointly applied to the process as well as the end product (service).

Figure 4: The MAC Logo





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## Brand Personality Traits

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Since this is a Midtown Brand, the brand personality is designed to reflect on people who live, work, visit and play in the Midtown area. These personality traits include:

- Hip/Trendy
- Urban/Urbane
- Diverse/Eclectic
- Fast-paced/Popping
- Current/New
- Convenient/Connected
- Rejuvenated/Revamped
- Reliable/Relevant

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## Brand Promise

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***"Connecting Memphis from the Inside Out."***

Just as a backbone is the body's center for activity and movement, Midtown is Memphis' center of activity and movement for our public transportation system. We must get public transportation right. First, for the heaviest users, who are the people who live, work, play, study, and travel to and from: Downtown, Midtown, Overton Square, Cooper Young, North Memphis, South Memphis, The University of Memphis, and other areas? The MAC promises to do better by them.

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## Branding Tactics

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- A website URL address ([www.macmemphis.com](http://www.macmemphis.com)) has already been secured for the project.
- **The MAC** should become the branding for all references to the selected Midtown route by MATA, internally and externally.
- The **MAC** logo should be used in all applications for the service and selected Midtown route including, but not limited to:

- all bus insignia
- all bus stop signage along new routes
- all bus shelters along new routes
- MATA website, Facebook, MATA mobile app, etc.
- All marketing/publicity and advertising materials about new routes

## Brand Extension

It is possible that additional corridors would provide branded bus services in the future. As new services are added and extended into areas beyond Midtown and the core city, there is a tremendous opportunity to extend The MAC branding into those areas.

MAC routes could ultimately serve other areas. In order to accommodate this, we propose that *The MAC* acronym could be modified to stand for **M**emphis **A**rea **C**onnector. Alternatively, each service could be separately branded as deemed appropriate by the community and MATA Board of Commissioners.

Therefore, all routes have the potential to be reviewed, upgraded, and relaunched with improved service standards, higher reliability, dependability, and greater positive perception based on the success of The MAC service delivery in other areas.

Figure 5: The MAC Project Website

