

METRO LINK AIMS RADAR TO SCAN TUNNEL PROBLEMS

By Thom Gross **St. Louis Post Dispatch**
January 28, 1993

Metro Link contractors began aiming ground-penetrating radar at a downtown tunnel Wednesday to explore 15 potential voids found in a previous study.

The radar study is expected to last a week. It expands on a survey that used infrared photography and identified 33 potential voids and 10 leaking steam lines near the tunnel.

The radar will help engineers calculate the depth and other dimensions of the 15 potential voids that had no obvious cause or explanation. Metro Link contracted with Entech Engineering Inc. for both surveys.

Metro Link is a light-rail, rapid-transit system being built by the Bi-State Development Agency for \$351 million. The 18-mile line will run from East St. Louis to Lambert Field and is scheduled to open in July.

The rail line will cross downtown through a 4,400-foot-long tunnel built in the 1870s. Metro Link officials ordered the first survey after a 175-foot section of the tunnel collapsed July 27 at Broadway and Washington Avenue.

Authorities have theorized that a large void outside the tunnel walls led to the collapse.

A void is an underground area where dirt fill has eroded to leave a gap. Voids adjacent to the tunnel are undesirable,

engineers say, because they could destabilize the archway structure. Most of the voids are adjacent to utility lines and could be caused by leaks, EnTech's report noted.

On Wednesday, Bob Patterson of Bi-State told the agency's Metro Link committee that Bi-State sent copies of the infrared survey last month to city agencies and utility companies for their comments. But he said he had received little response.

A second mailing asks the utilities to send, by Feb. 8, a plan for repairing the sites near their lines.

Stephen Willis, Metro Link project manager, told the committee that he would like

to see all 33 sites checked out before July but that the system could start running before repairs are made.

Willis said the infrared survey had found no impending emergencies. Bi-State will use it to identify places to watch in a long-term monitoring program, he said. He noted that interior improvements already complete in the tunnel would prevent another collapse like the one at Broadway.

Also at the committee meeting Wednesday, officials said the transit system would begin operation in July even if a lawsuit about a graveyard forces it to stop temporarily three miles short of Lambert Field.

In the suit, Metro Link seeks a court order allowing it to relocate about 2,500 bodies from a portion of Washington Park Cemetery in Berkeley, just east of the airport. The issue has held up construction

of a 1,500-foot segment of the line.

Judge Harry Stussie in St. Louis County Circuit Court has set a hearing on the suit for March 19. If everything goes Metro Link's way, the 1,500-foot section still could be built in time for the opening in July, said Thomas Sturgess, a Metro Link spokesman. But Sturgess called that scenario "very optimistic."

If construction through the cemetery is incomplete by July, he said, the trains will turn around at the North Hanley Road station. Buses then can shuttle passengers across the last leg to the airport, he noted.