

## Convention Center Expansion Plan Shifts To South

■ GENE MCNARY balks at plan for a new, downtown arena..... Page 3A

tween Seventh and Ninth streets.

The change in the direction of the expansion was announced at a meeting of the city's Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority, which holds title to the convention center. The Land Clearance Authority voted Wednesday to seek appraisals for the four blocks of property targeted for the expansion.

"We are getting a bigger bang for our buck," said Bruce T. Sommer,

convention center director. "This has all the advantages of building it eastward, plus several more. The southward expansion would tie it more into the heart of downtown."

The plan does not include a new downtown stadium. Mayor Vincent C. Schoemehl Jr. has said that the most likely site for a new stadium would be east of the original expansion site to Interstate 70 and that the two could be connected.

Sommer said Wednesday that a southward expansion "leaves us with much more land to consider for a possible new stadium or a new arena."

The tax increases adopted in November allow the city to use some of the money to buy land in that general area.

The current convention center is on a tract bounded by Convention Plaza (Delmar Boulevard) and Seventh, Cole and Ninth streets.

Under the new plan, a wig shop, a bookstore and other shops along Washington between Seventh and Eighth streets would be demolished, but the Lennox apartment building and its parking garage would remain as they are.

Dillard's parking garage, at Sev-

enth and Convention Plaza, would be incorporated into the expansion and provide it with parking.

Convention Plaza would become a four-lane underground street from just west of Sixth Street to just east of 10th Street, according to the plan. A new main entrance to the convention center would face Washington, and another new entrance facing east at Convention Plaza would replace the current main entrance.

Officials are sticking with plans to increase the center's meeting area to 360,000 square feet from 240,000 square feet and to open the expansion

in late 1991.

In all, the cost of the land purchases, construction and renovation of the current center is estimated at \$72 million, officials said.

Norbert A. Groppe, president of the city Board of Public Service, said money would come from an increase in the city's restaurant tax and a new hotel tax approved by voters in November. Those taxes are expected to generate \$60 million.

The additional \$12 million will come from money left from a refinancing of existing convention-center

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## 240 Radioactive Drums Found

By Louis J. Rose  
and Carolyn Bower  
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Construction workers doing excavation at Lambert Field have uncovered 240 rusted metal drums containing radioactive material that were secretly buried, federal and state officials said Wednesday.

The 55-gallon drums contained a liquid substance contaminated by two radioactive substances that scientists say can cause cancer. But a state official said he doubted that the contamination posed any serious health risk.

Officials said they didn't know when the drums had been buried or who was responsible.

The drums were found with parts of two trucks near the 94th Aero Squadron restaurant off McDonnell Boulevard. The site is in an area of the airport where Midcoast Aviation Inc. is preparing to build a fourth hangar. Midcoast, which services non-commercial aircraft, leases the 20-acre property from the city of St. Louis.

The site where the drums were found is less than a mile from a 21.7-acre site just north of the airport. That site had been used for the storage of radioactive waste from the processing of uranium in the 1940s and 1950s.

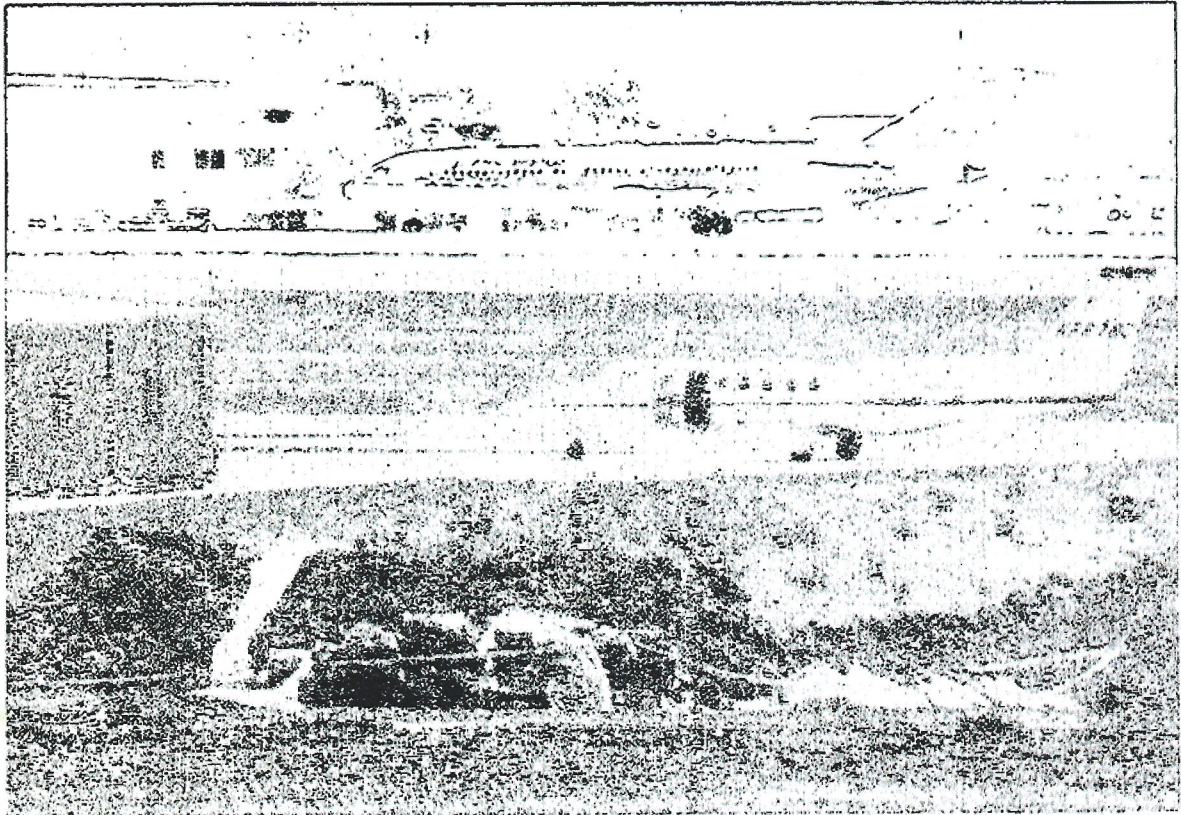
Federal regulations require that burial of radioactive waste be approved by a federal agency such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission or the Department of Energy. Neither agency knew about the site.

Thomas F. Fussell, a spokesman for Midcoast, said the contamination "will probably cause an extensive delay in the construction" of his company's \$2 million hangar.

The discovery surprised officials of St. Louis, Berkeley and Midcoast. Mayor Bill Miller of Berkeley reacted with dismay.

"I don't think anybody in the city is about this," Miller said. "If it dumped there, it was done without our knowledge."

In Washington, U.S. Rep. Jack



Larry Williams/Post-Dispatch

A yellow warning ribbon surrounds a construction area at Lambert Field where workers uncovered drums containing radioac-

tive waste. At left is a hangar belonging to Midcoast Aviation. The view is from Airport Road.

Buechner, R-Kirkwood, said he had told Department of Energy officials that he wanted an investigation to determine the source of the radioactive material.

"I want to make sure the Energy Department provides the assistance needed to analyze this material and to keep the area cordoned off," Buechner said.

"And I asked that they use whatever resources are necessary to find out who is responsible for dumping this stuff."

Donald W. Bennett, director of the

airport, said he had been advised about three weeks ago that a number of drums had been uncovered. But he said he first learned last weekend

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# Drums

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about the radioactive contamination. "I am concerned that somebody would have dumped stuff over there," Bennett said. "We had no indication whatsoever that there was anything over there." He added, "Everybody agrees it has to be cleaned up."

Midcoast and St. Louis officials disagree about who should pay for the cleanup. Each says the other should pay. No estimate of the cost was given.

Nicholas L. Campbell, a vice president of Midcoast, said his company had no intention of paying for the cleanup.

Referring to the contaminated drums, he said, "Obviously, they were not put there by Midcoast."

An environmental firm that was hired by Midcoast emptied the liquid from the rusted drums into 81 new metal containers. The new drums were put in an isolated area several hundreds yards west of the site, Fussell said.

The old drums were cleaned, crushed and placed in a cordoned-off area near their original location. Dirt from the contaminated area also has been piled near the drums.

Robert Morby, chief of the regional Superfund branch for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the contaminants were the same type as those at the waste site north of the airport.

James T. Alexander, a spokesman for the Department of Energy in Oak Ridge, Tenn., said officials did not know where the contaminated drums came from or when they were dumped.

"Some additional samples of liquids and solids were taken today," he said Wednesday. "We will try to determine the radioactive material involved."

Preliminary tests of the material disclosed 178 picocuries a liter of radium 226 and 180 picocuries a liter of

thorium 230, said Dean Martin, an environmental emergency response coordinator for the state Department of Natural Resources.

The radium level found exceeds by 28 picocuries U.S. Department of Energy drinking water guidelines of 100 picocuries a liter. The level of thorium found was less than the agency's criteria of 300 picocuries a liter for unrestricted public use.

Reggie D. Cope, a radiological health analyst in the Missouri Department of Health, said the level of radioactivity was relatively mild. He said the chances of someone becoming ill from exposure to the material in the barrels were very low.

Midcoast alerted state officials May 6 that chemical contamination existed at the site.

"They called and said they had found barrels, solvents and so on when they were excavating," Martin said.

Martin said that the company had had 3,000 gallons of liquid tested and had found that it was inflammable. He said that indicated that the material was probably hazardous material.

The company proposed pumping out the liquid from the drums and crushing the drums.

Martin said he had passed the information on to the St. Louis Health Department, which monitored the work at Midcoast.

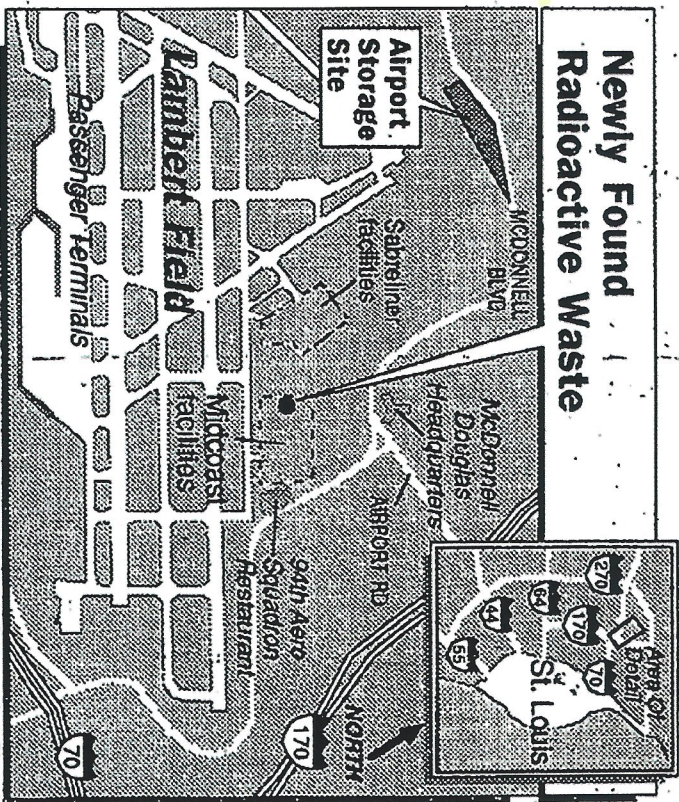
Subsequently, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Energy were notified that the material was radioactively contaminated.

Representatives of both agencies were at the site Wednesday during tests.

Initial surveys of the site did not detect radioactive contamination before excavation began, Martin said. Additional excavation work at the site will be delayed for at least several weeks until the samples are analyzed.

Sources told the Post-Dispatch that excavation crews at the Midcoast site had uncovered a number of rusted metal drums about April 16, along with what appeared to be a large

## Newly Found Radioactive Waste



Tom Bogman / Post-Dispatch

dump truck. On May 7 reporters saw two men wearing white jumpsuits working at the site where the contaminated drums had been found.

Allstates Environmental Services Inc. of St. Charles confirmed Wednesday that it had been at the site May 7 and had equipment there for crushing drums.

Fussell, Midcoast's vice president of administration, said parts of two trucks had been unearthed.

"I think there is a bed of a pickup truck and a frame from some other vehicle," Fussell said.

Department of Energy records examined by the Post-Dispatch indicate that a small truck had been buried on the western end of the nuclear waste site north of Lambert Field.

Kay Drey, a member of the Coalition for the Environment, said the most recent finding could be "just the tip of the iceberg."

"The volumes of radioactive material in the St. Louis area keep growing," she said.

Buechner said that Department of Energy officials had told him that this type of radioactive material would make the site eligible for federal cleanup assistance under the Superfund program — if the party responsible for the pollution cannot be found.

Gerry Everding, a special correspondent of the Post-Dispatch, contributed information to this article.