

MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2007-2011



NEWSLETTER 1

FEBRUARY 2007

OVERVIEW

At the request of Milwaukee County, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, together with the Milwaukee County Transit System and the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Public Works, is preparing a short-range transit development plan for the Milwaukee County Transit System for the period 2007-2011. Work completed to date on the plan includes a review of population, employment, land use, and travel patterns in Milwaukee County and the four-county Milwaukee metropolitan area; review of the existing transit system and trends in its operation; definition of transit objectives and standards to evaluate system performance; assessment of transit system and route performance and identification of unmet transit travel needs of Milwaukee County residents; review of a comparison of the Milwaukee County Transit System to peer transit systems; and evaluation of the system's future financial condition. After obtaining public comment on the work completed to date and responding to the comments received, the remaining elements of the plan will be completed, including the development of recommendations for operating and capital improvements to be implemented over the next 5 years.

The short-range transit development plan has produced to date the following key findings:

- The Milwaukee County Transit System performs significantly better than comparable peer transit systems nationwide with respect to service efficiency and effectiveness.
- Within Milwaukee County, the Milwaukee County Transit System provides excellent coverage of residential areas, employment locations, and major activity centers.
- Although the transit system provides excellent service coverage within Milwaukee County, the transit system does have deficiencies with respect to limited hours and frequency of service provided on many routes, particularly on weekends, and has slow transit travel times.
- Transit service is not available for Milwaukee County residents to travel to many jobs and activity centers in

surrounding counties, or if available, is very limited in hours of service and frequency of service, and has lengthy travel times.

- The transit system is heavily dependent on State operating funding, which in recent years has not kept pace with inflation. The Milwaukee County Transit System has had to increase fares, reduce service, and utilize for operating funding about two-thirds of its "bank" of Federal funds intended for capital project funding.
- Without increases in State transit assistance funds sufficient to address cost inflation and the enactment of dedicated local funding for public transit, the transit system can expect to deplete its "bank" of unspent Federal capital funds, and face implementing dramatic service cuts—up to a 35 percent reduction in service by the year 2010.

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

Milwaukee County residents will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the transit development plan and comment on the work performed to date at public information meetings scheduled in February and March. Comments will help guide the development of alternatives and potential recommended operating and capital improvements for the transit system over the next five years.

The dates and locations for the information meetings in Milwaukee are listed below. Staff will be available in an "open house" format from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to individually answer questions and provide information about the transit development plan. A short presentation will be given at 6:00 pm. Persons with special needs should contact the Commission offices a minimum of 72 hours in advance so appropriate arrangements can be made. Contact information is on the back of this newsletter.

Date	Location
February 27, 2007	Downtown Transit Center Harbor Lights Room 909 E. Michigan Street
February 28, 2007	United Community Center, Conference Rooms 1 and 2, 1028 S. 9 th Street
March 1, 2007	HeartLove Place Auditorium 3229 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

A good public transit system is essential in the Milwaukee area:

- to provide a necessary and desirable alternative to the automobile in heavily travelled corridors and areas;
- to contribute to efficiency in the transportation system, including reduced highway traffic volume and congestion and attendant air pollutant emissions and energy consumption;
- to support and encourage higher density development, which results in efficiencies for public infrastructure and services;
- to meet the travel needs of the significant portion of the population (16 percent of households) without access to an automobile; and
- to meet the needs of business and industry, enhancing economic development and enhancing the quality of life of County residents by providing job and labor force accessibility and permitting a reduction in household expenditures on transportation, enabling greater household savings, other expenditures, and a higher standard of living.

Study Organization

Work on the Milwaukee County Transit System development plan is overseen by the Milwaukee County Public Transit Planning Advisory Committee, whose members have been appointed by the Milwaukee County Executive (see Committee roster on this page). After careful study and evaluation, the Advisory Committee will propose to Milwaukee County a recommended transit system development plan, identifying the operating and capital improvements for the Milwaukee County Transit System which should be implemented from 2007 through 2011. The Advisory Committee guides the technical staff in the preparation of the plan, including the design and evaluation of transit improvement and funding proposals.

Study Scope and Area

This transit system development plan is intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of, and recommended service changes which have the potential to be implemented over the next five years for the fixed-route bus services provided by the Milwaukee County Transit System. The plan will not provide a comprehensive analysis of the performance of the Milwaukee County Transit Plus service for disabled individuals. Also, given the plan's short-term five year focus, the study will not consider service options that propose fixed-guideway transit facilities.

LAND USE AND TRAVEL PATTERNS

As part of the transit development plan, information was gathered and reviewed on historic and current population, employment, land use, and travel patterns in Milwaukee County. The following paragraphs present some of the key findings.

Population

Since 1960, Milwaukee County's total resident population has decreased by about 9 percent, while the total population in adjacent Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties has increased by about 138 percent. The decline in County population has modestly reduced the size of the market for public transit service. Meanwhile, average household size has decreased, resulting in an increase in total County households of about 21 percent.

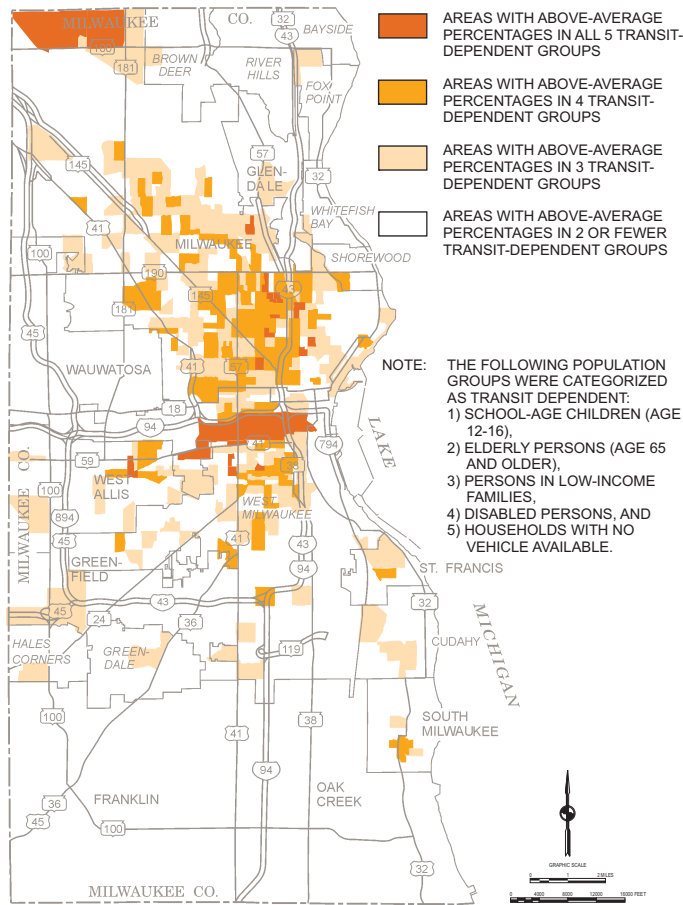
Five population groups whose access to the automobile is more limited than the population as a whole may be categorized as "transit dependent": school-age children (age 12-16), elderly persons (age 65 and older), persons in low-income families, disabled persons, and households with no vehicle available. The highest residential concentrations of transit-dependent persons are in the east-central and northwestern portions of the County, as shown on Map 1. This transit-dependent population generally coincides with the minority population of Milwaukee County (see Map 2).

MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Peter W. Beitzel	Vice President, International Trade, Transportation, and Business Development, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Rodney A. Clark	Director, Bureau of Transit & Local Roads, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Anita Gulotta-Connelly	Acting Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System
Leticia Keltz	Support Services Manager, United Migrant Opportunity Services
Don Natzke	Director, Milwaukee County Executive's Office for Persons with Disabilities
Beth Nichols	Executive Director, Downtown Milwaukee Management District (Business Improvement District 21)
Jeffrey S. Polenske	City Engineer, City of Milwaukee
Gary Portenier	Program Planning Coordinator, Milwaukee County Department on Aging
Richard Riley	Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 998
Nancy Senn	Transportation Planning Manager, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Public Works
James G. White	Supervisor, Milwaukee County

Map 1

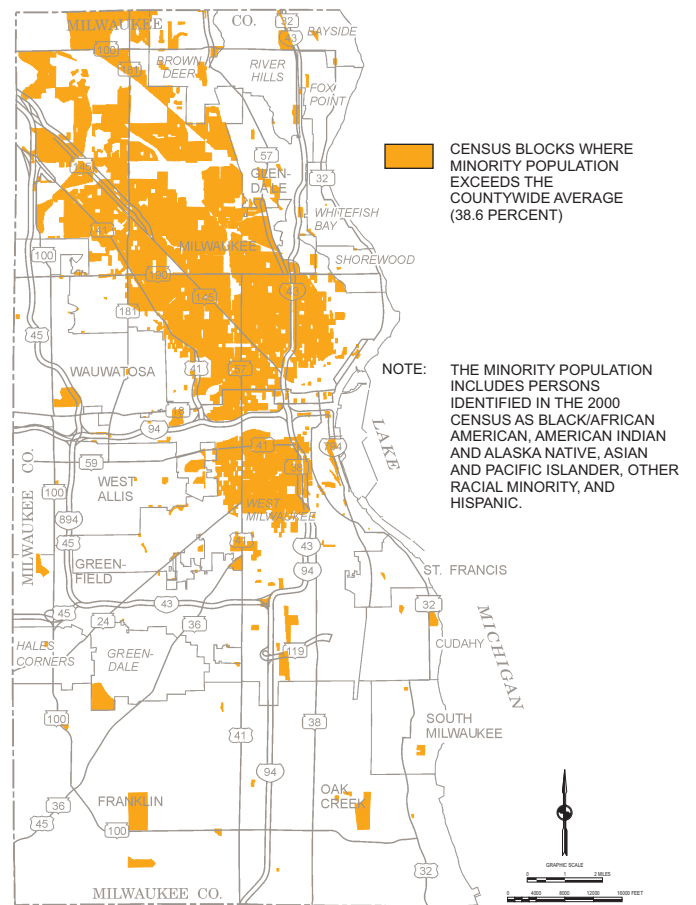
**TRANSIT-DEPENDENT POPULATIONS
IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY: 2000**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and SEWRPC.

Map 2

**MINORITY POPULATION IN
MILWAUKEE COUNTY : 2000**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and SEWRPC.

Employment

Total employment in Milwaukee County has increased by about 17 percent from 1960 to 2003, a much lower rate of growth than in adjacent Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties, where the number of jobs increased by 550 percent during the same period. The significant job growth in bordering counties and in the northern, western, and southern portions of Milwaukee County has led to the creation of new transit services, largely sponsored and funded by Waukesha and Ozaukee Counties, designed to connect Milwaukee County residents to jobs.

Land Use

Research on transit-supportive land uses indicates that fixed-route bus service may be supported by employment densities of at least four jobs per acre and residential densities of at least seven dwelling units per acre. Areas with transit-supportive residential and/or employment density can be found throughout Milwaukee County, except for the far southern portion, as shown on Map 3.

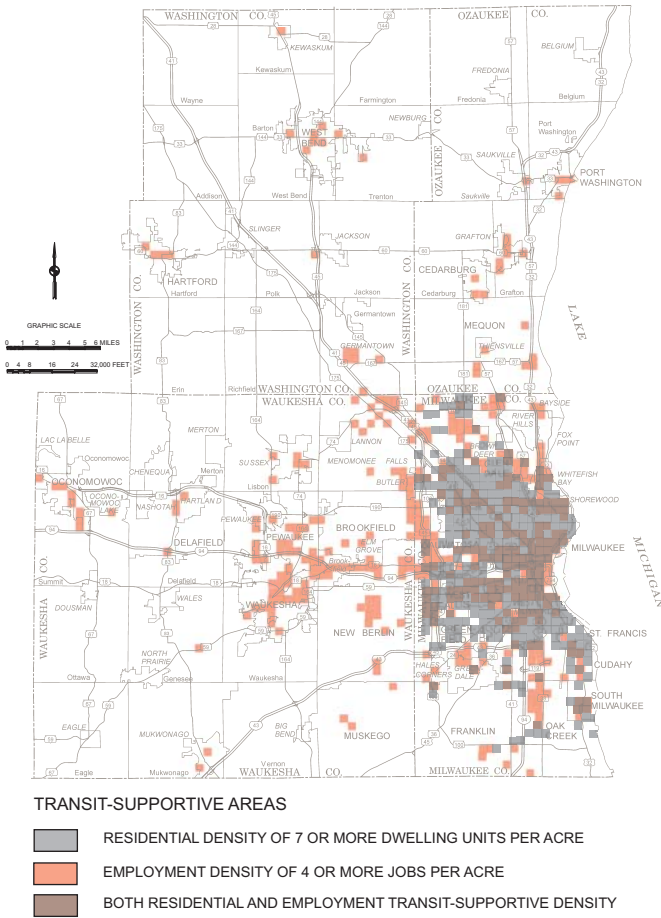
Most Milwaukee-area major activity centers for medical, school, shopping, government, recreation and intercity rail and bus passenger transport are located within Milwaukee County. Many of these centers therefore, are currently served by the Milwaukee County Transit System. However, the major activity centers related to employment (large employers and major office and industrial parks) are widely dispersed throughout the four-county Milwaukee area, as displayed on Map 4. Of the 134 Milwaukee area employers with 500 or more employees, 48 are located in surrounding Ozaukee, Washington, or Waukesha County. Of the 89 major office and industrial parks identified in the Milwaukee area, 64 are located in the surrounding counties.

Travel Habits and Patterns

Travel surveys undertaken by the Regional Planning Commission indicate that average weekday total intra-county person trips—those made entirely within Milwaukee County—increased by about 14 percent from 1963 to 2001. Inter-county trips—those made between

Map 3

**TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE AREAS
IN THE MILWAUKEE AREA: 2000**



Source: SEWRPC.

Milwaukee County and one of the other six counties in the Southeastern Wisconsin Region—increased by about 210 percent from 1963 to 2001. Despite the large increase in inter-county trips, the large majority (77 percent) of all Milwaukee County person trips in 2001 were made entirely within the County. Of the inter-county trips, those made between Milwaukee and Waukesha County accounted for about two-thirds of all the Milwaukee County inter-county person trips in 2001, as shown on Map 5. A majority of the trips made between Milwaukee and Waukesha counties occurred between central Milwaukee County and eastern Waukesha County.

EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM

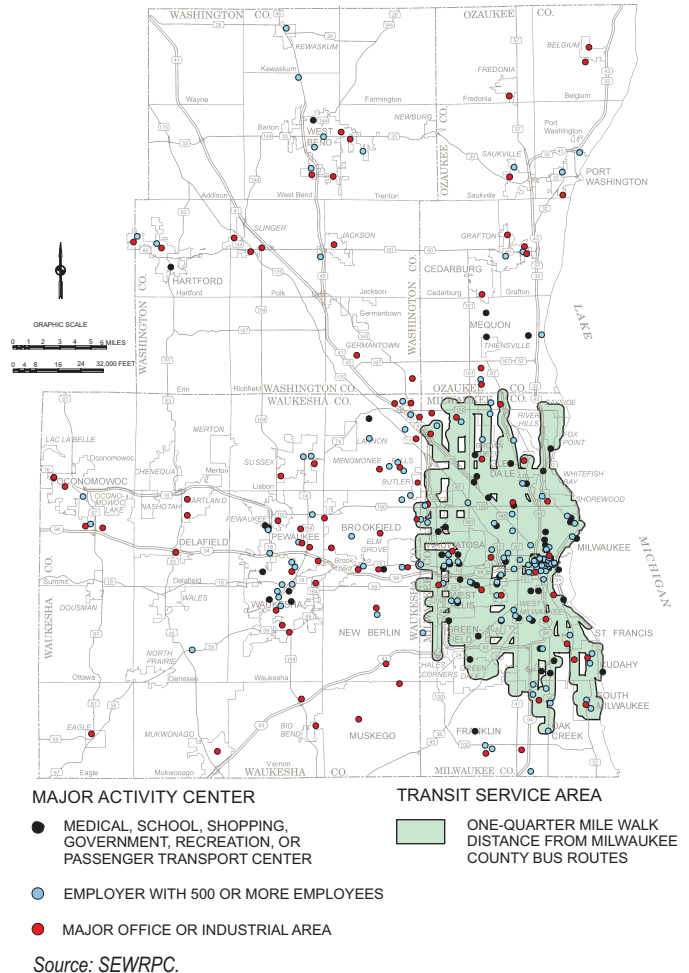
The following section describes the Milwaukee County Transit System's fixed-route and demand responsive services, fares, ridership, and costs.

Fixed Route Bus Service and Fares

The fixed-route bus service provided by the Milwaukee

Map 4

**MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTERS IN THE MILWAUKEE
AREA IN RELATION TO THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY
TRANSIT SYSTEM SERVICE AREA: FALL 2004**



Source: SEWRPC.

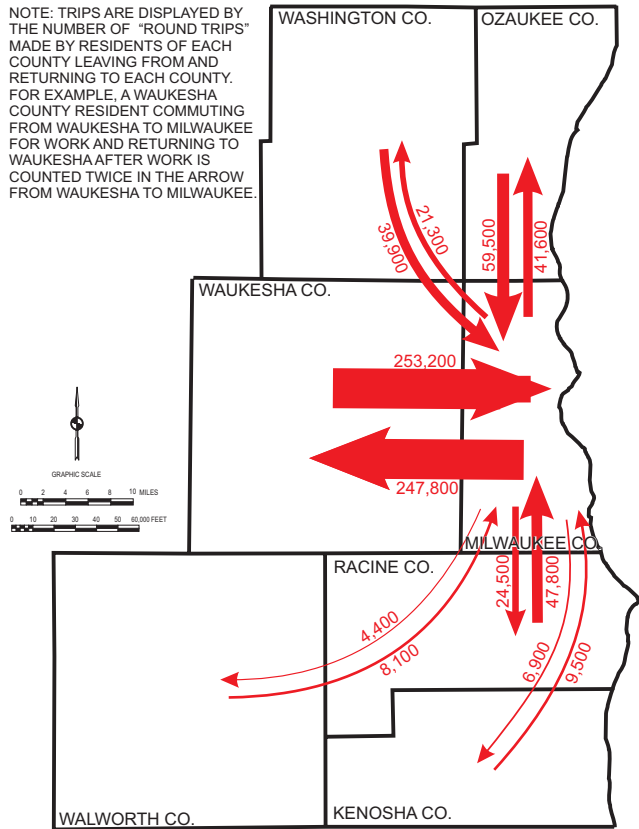
County Transit System is illustrated on Map 6. The regular transit services provided by the system include:

- Freeway flyer service, which consists of nine high speed direct routes between downtown Milwaukee and outlying residential areas or park-ride lots in the County. Service is provided only during weekday morning and afternoon peak periods;
- Regular local and shuttle bus service, which consists of 31 local and shuttle routes operated over arterial and collector streets with frequent stops; and
- Special school day bus services, including nine high school and middle school routes and three UBUS routes. The UBUS routes operate over freeways and arterial streets between outlying areas and park-ride lots to and from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus.

Map 5

DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE WEEKDAY INTERCOUNTY PERSON TRIPS BETWEEN MILWAUKEE COUNTY AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES: 2001

NOTE: TRIPS ARE DISPLAYED BY THE NUMBER OF "ROUND TRIPS" MADE BY RESIDENTS OF EACH COUNTY LEAVING FROM AND RETURNING TO EACH COUNTY. FOR EXAMPLE, A WAUKESHA COUNTY RESIDENT COMMUTING FROM WAUKESHA TO MILWAUKEE FOR WORK AND RETURNING TO WAUKESHA AFTER WORK IS COUNTED TWICE IN THE ARROW FROM WAUKESHA TO MILWAUKEE.



ONLY TRAVEL BETWEEN MILWAUKEE COUNTY AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES IS DEPICTED, REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY 764,500 PERSON TRIPS. APPROXIMATELY 2.5 MILLION PERSON TRIPS WERE MADE BY RESIDENTS OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY ENTIRELY WITHIN MILWAUKEE COUNTY ON AN AVERAGE WEEKDAY.

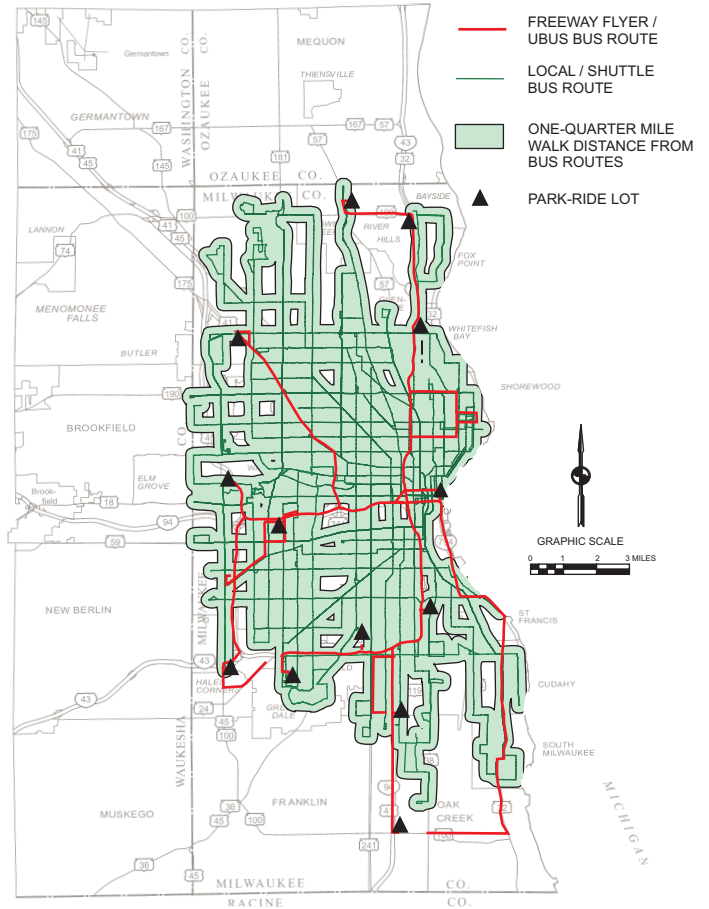
THE COUNT INCLUDES TRIPS FOR WORK, SCHOOL, SHOPPING, AND OTHER PURPOSES.

Source: SEWRPC.

The routes of the transit system also connect with other bus routes sponsored by other local governments in southeastern Wisconsin (see Map 7). Some of these routes provide reverse commute service that Milwaukee County residents can use to access jobs and major activity centers outside Milwaukee County, including Milwaukee County Transit System routes funded by Ozaukee and Waukesha Counties (Route No. 143 and Route Nos. 8, 9, and 10 west of the Milwaukee-Waukesha County line); routes operated by Wisconsin Coach Lines, Inc. and the Waukesha Metro Transit System funded by Waukesha County and/or the City of Waukesha. There are also connecting bus routes sponsored by other local governments which do not provide for reverse commute travel, including the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee service sponsored by the City of Racine; the West Bend-Milwaukee service sponsored by Washington County; and the Oconomowoc-Milwaukee, Mukwonago-Milwaukee, and Menomonee Falls - Milwaukee services sponsored by Waukesha County.

Map 6

EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM: FALL 2006



Source: SEWRPC.

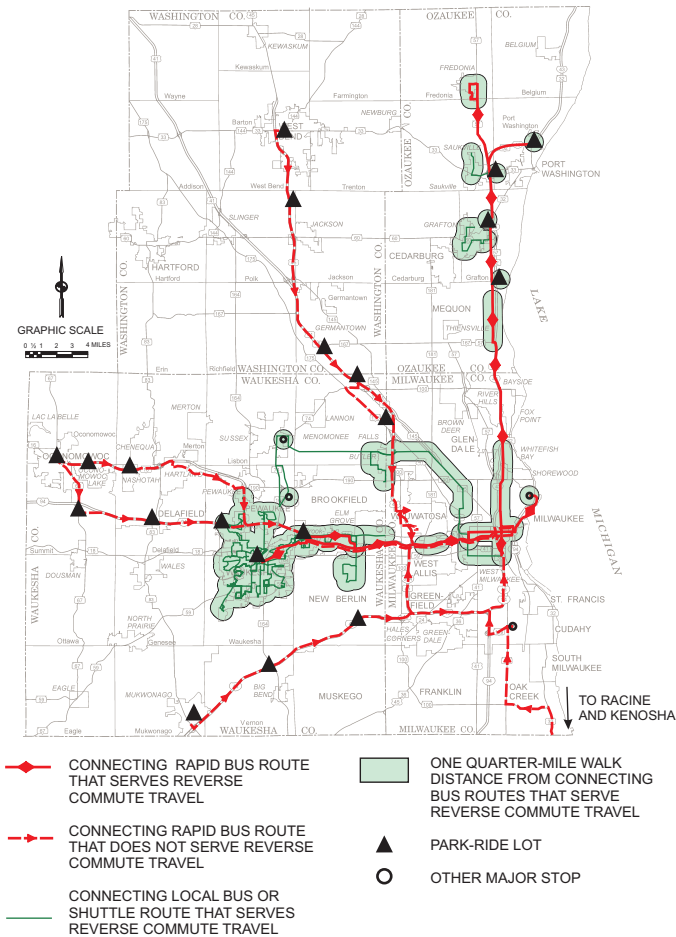
In 2006, the base adult cash fare was \$1.75 for local routes and \$2.25 for freeway flyer routes. Elderly and disabled individuals paid reduced fares of \$0.85, and students paid \$1.30. Tickets and passes were available at a discount from cash fares.

Transit Plus

The transit system also provides Transit Plus paratransit service throughout Milwaukee County for disabled individuals who are unable to use the fixed-route bus service. Transit Plus provides curb-to-curb taxicab service for ambulatory disabled individuals, and door-to-door van service for disabled individuals who require an accessible vehicle and/or some driver assistance. Transit Plus is available during the same periods as the Milwaukee County Transit System fixed-route bus service. Disabled individuals can also use the accessible bus service provided on all regular routes of the transit system.

Map 7

CONNECTING BUS SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHER TRANSIT OPERATORS OUTSIDE MILWAUKEE COUNTY: FALL 2006



Source: SEWRPC.

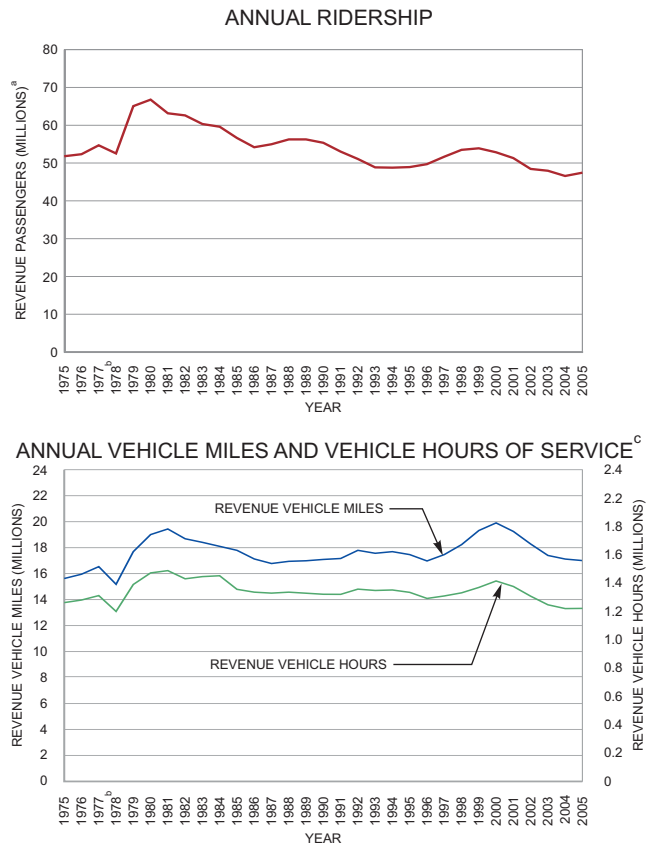
Ridership and Service Levels

Transit ridership is highly linked with the level of service provided, such as hours of operation, and frequency of service. Vehicle miles and vehicle hours of bus service are commonly used to measure the total service level provided by a transit system. Figure 1 shows historic ridership and service levels for the Milwaukee County Transit System. Transit ridership increased from 1975 through 1980—a period of major transit service improvement and expansion and increasing price of motor fuel. In most of the 14 years that followed, ridership and service declined. Then, from 1995 through 1999, expanded service and new bus pass programs contributed to increased ridership. Since the year 2000, the transit system has cut annual vehicle miles by 17 percent and annual vehicle hours by 16 percent; increased adult cash fares twice; and raised the price of weekly passes four times. Ridership on the bus system declined by 12 percent between 2000 and 2005.

Several factors have contributed to the general decline of ridership on the transit system since the early 1980's.

Figure 1

ANNUAL RIDERSHIP AND SERVICE LEVELS FOR FIXED-ROUTE BUS SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM: 1975-2005



^a Ridership data for 1975 through 1977 have been adjusted to include passengers using a weekly pass to transfer to make the ridership comparable to that reported from 1978 to the present.

^b Ridership and service data for 1978 reflect less than 12 months of operation due to a bus operator's strike.

^c Service data for 1975 through 1984 have been adjusted to remove deadhead vehicle miles and vehicle hours to make the service comparable to that reported from 1985 to the present.

Source: Milwaukee County Transit System and SEWRPC.

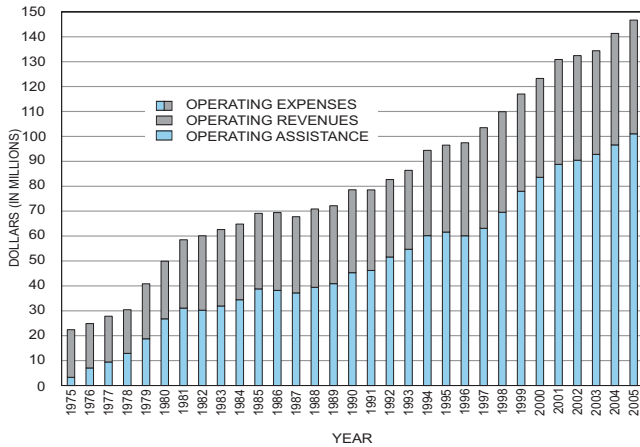
These factors include the drop in population in Milwaukee County, the decline in residential and employment density, and an increase in automobile ownership and use. Fare increases and service reductions implemented by the transit system during the period also resulted in drops in ridership. Finally, a lack of funding has contributed to the inability to significantly expand transit to better serve Milwaukee County and more of the metropolitan area, provide faster service with more express and rapid routes, and increase service frequencies to make it reasonably convenient and attractive to use transit.

About 45 percent of the travel made on the transit system is to and from work, 25 percent to and from school, 10 percent for shopping, and the other 20 percent for medical, social, recreational, and other purposes.

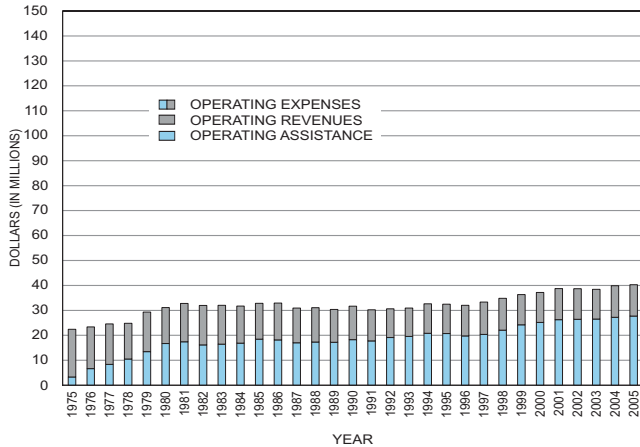
Figure 2

ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES, OPERATING REVENUES, AND OPERATING ASSISTANCE FOR THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM: 1975-2005

ACTUAL DOLLARS



CONSTANT 1975 DOLLARS



Source: Milwaukee County Department of Public Works, Milwaukee County Transit System and SEWRPC.

Operating and Capital Costs

Total operating expenses for the transit system have risen since the system began public operation in 1975, as displayed in Figure 2. The increase in operating expenses since 1990 reflects the bus service expansion between 1995 and 2000, and changes to the paratransit service to comply with Federal ADA service requirements. Over the past five years, fares and other miscellaneous operating revenue paid for about 32 percent of the average annual operating expenditures for the combined bus and paratransit system, and about 12 percent was provided by Federal transit funding; 43 percent by State transit funding, and 13 percent by County funds generated through local property taxes. The transit system is heavily dependent on State funding, with the State providing about 63 percent of all Milwaukee County Transit System public operating funding. In those same budgets, about 80 percent of capital expenditures came from Federal transit capital assistance programs, and the remaining 20 percent came from Milwaukee County.

Milwaukee County increased the amount of Federal transit assistance funds used by the system for funding operating expenditures from 2001 to 2005. This increase was possible because the transit system had not fully spent Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 transit assistance funds it had been allocated in previous years, and those unspent funds were still available to Milwaukee County. The transit system has used these carryover Section 5307 funds, intended principally for capital projects, to limit the need for increases in County tax levy funding, fare hikes, and service reductions. As the County increased its use of these funds, the balance, or “bank”, of these funds decreased from about \$37 million at the beginning of 2001 to about \$12 million at the beginning of 2006.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

The Advisory Committee adopted the following five transit service objectives to provide a basis for assessing the performance of the transit system, identifying unmet transit service needs, and designing and recommending improvements:

1. The public transit system should effectively serve the existing land use pattern and support the implementation of planned land uses, meeting the demand and need for transit services, and particularly the needs of the transit-dependent population;
2. The transit system should promote effective utilization of transit service and operate service that is reliable and provides for user convenience and comfort;
3. The transit system should promote the safety and security of its passengers, operating equipment and facilities, and personnel;
4. The public transit system should promote efficiency in the total transportation system; and
5. The public transit system should be economical and efficient, meeting all other objectives at the lowest possible cost.

Each of the above transit service objectives is supported by a planning principle and a set of standards intended to quantify the achievement of each objective. For example, the service standards specify:

- The land uses which should be connected and served by public transit, based on their density and type and size of activity center;
- The desirable hours of service operation;

Table 1

COMPARISON OF RIDERSHIP AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS BETWEEN THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM AND PEER GROUP: 2000

Performance Measure ^b	Operating Data ^c				
	Milwaukee County Transit System	Peer Group Descriptive Statistics			
		Minimum	Average	Maximum	Milwaukee County Transit System Rank ^e
Service Effectiveness					
Passengers per Capita	71.2	13.9	30.4	48.0	1
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Mile	3.5	1.7	2.3	3.1	1
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	45.5	25.3	30.7	41.2	1
Service Efficiency					
Operating Expense per Revenue Vehicle Mile	\$ 5.35	\$ 4.89	\$ 6.32	\$ 8.72	5
Operating Expense per Revenue Vehicle Hour	\$69.41	\$63.56	\$85.52	\$102.04	3
Cost Effectiveness					
Operating Expense per Passenger	\$ 1.52	\$ 2.30	\$ 2.81	\$ 3.44	1
Total Operating Assistance per Passenger	\$ 1.01	\$ 1.49	\$ 2.22	\$ 2.81	1
Farebox Recovery Rate for All Service	33.8	15.2	21.5	35.0	2

^a Based on data obtained from the Federal Transit Administration National Transit Database for 2000, published in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Transit System Management Performance Audit of the Milwaukee County System, August 2002.

^b Key performance indicators were developed based on information reported by thirteen other urban bus systems selected in the Performance Audit.

^c Rank of 1 is best, 14 is worst.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation and SEWRPC.

- The desirable frequency of transit service; and,
- The comparability of travel time by transit to that by automobile.

EVALUATION OF EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM AND IDENTIFICATION OF UNMET NEEDS

Using the transit service objectives and standards, a systemwide and route-by-route evaluation of the Milwaukee County Transit System was conducted. The evaluation identified areas of excellent performance of the transit system, as well as areas of travel needs not being met by the transit system. Milwaukee County Transit System has excellent performance with respect to area within Milwaukee County served, bus loading standards, and on-time performance.

- The Milwaukee County Transit System has excellent overall coverage of residential areas and employment in Milwaukee County. About 90.5 percent of the total County population resides within convenient walking distance of the existing transit system. Virtually all of the census block groups with concentrations of transit-dependent persons and census tracts with above-average minority populations within the County are within a one-quarter mile walk of the system routes. About 94 percent of the jobs in the County are within a one-quarter mile walk of the system.

- Activity centers and transit-supportive land areas are served well within the County. In total, 81 of the 86 major employers, 22 of the 25 office and industrial parks, and 68 of the 70 other activity centers were served by existing transit system routes, as was shown on Map 4. The majority of the transit-supportive areas in Milwaukee County—areas with the residential and employment densities considered necessary to support fixed-route bus service—are served by the local routes of the Milwaukee County Transit System.
- The transit system generally does not experience overcrowding on buses, that is, there is a seat for every passenger on freeway flyers and there are no more than four passengers for every three seats on nearly all local bus routes at peak periods. There are only limited problems during weekday peak hours when student transit use overlaps with that of the general public.
- Bus on-time performance is excellent, with 90 percent or greater on-time service.
- Of the 31 local routes, 26 meet or exceed the performance standard for route effectiveness (which is defined as 22 boarding passengers per revenue bus hour for weekday service). These routes serve areas with high concentrations of minority and transit-dependent populations, operate for more than 20 hours on weekdays, and offer the most frequent service. On weekends, 25 routes exceed the route effectiveness performance standards defined for Saturday (15 passengers per bus hour) and Sunday (10 passengers per bus hour).

Comparison to Peer Transit Systems Nationwide

A management performance audit of the Milwaukee County Transit System was completed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) in 2003. The performance audit compared the Milwaukee County Transit System to a peer group of 13 similar transit systems in the United States. The peer transit systems all operated within metropolitan areas with populations similar to Milwaukee County, were located in a northern climate, and had a similar bus fleet size. The peer comparison concluded that the Milwaukee County Transit System outperformed its peers for all measures of ridership and financial performance, as shown in Table 1. While noting the exceptional performance of the Milwaukee County Transit System, the audit referred to the service reductions which were implemented since 2000, principally due to budgetary constraints, and warned that further transit system reductions could potentially damage the system's performance.

Unmet Transit Service Needs

While Milwaukee County Transit System performs well in many areas, and compared to peer transit systems is very efficient and effective, the transit system does not fully meet all transit service needs of Milwaukee County residents. The unmet needs fall into four specific areas: service area, hours of operation, service frequency, and transit travel times. In addition, there is limited transit service connecting Milwaukee County residents to outlying counties. The Milwaukee County Transit System has in the past implemented service improvements which addressed at least in part these unmet needs—service area, hours of operation, and service frequency—but service reductions of recent years have eliminated these service improvements. Service improvements to meet these unmet needs generally are less efficient and effective than existing base transit service.

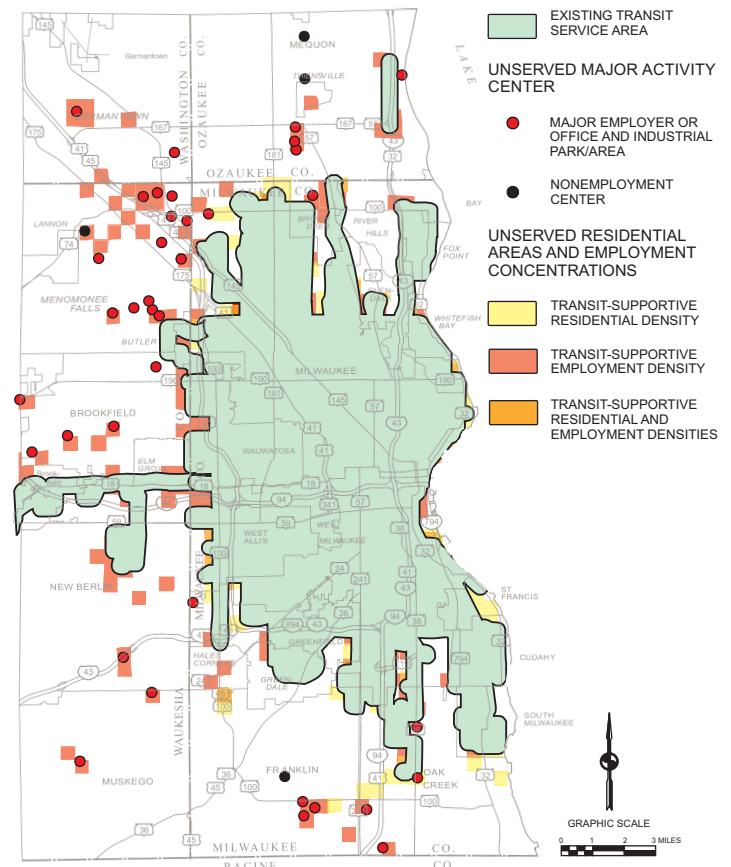
Areas Not Served. Some areas in the western, southern, northwest and northeast portions of Milwaukee County with transit-supportive residential and employment densities and/or major activity centers are not served at all by the routes of the transit system. Map 8 shows these areas which are not served by transit.

Inadequate Service Hours. On weekdays, 25 of the 31 local routes meet the desirable standard for service hours of 20 hours of service. Freeway flyers do not meet this standard, as they operate only during weekday peak periods, with no midday or evening service. Transit service provided for less than 16 hours a day does not permit travel for the starting and ending times of all work shifts, specifically second and third shifts. There are also large areas served by routes not meeting the desirable 20 hours of service on weekends: only 14 out of 31 local routes meet that standard on Saturday, and only 9 out of 30 routes meet it on Sunday. Moreover, portions of some routes have no service on weekends.

Inadequate Frequency of Service. The Milwaukee County Transit System relies upon a grid system of local routes where transfers between one or more routes are generally required to complete a trip by public transit. The frequency of service on the routes directly affects the convenience of transferring, with longer headways between buses increasing transfer wait times, making service inconvenient and discouraging use. Most local routes do not meet the desirable headway service standards during peak hours. During weekday peak periods, less than 30 percent of the County population, and less than 37 percent of the jobs in the County, are served by routes with desirable headways of 10 minutes or less, as shown in Table 2. During weekday off-peak periods, about 60 percent of the County population and jobs are served by routes and route segments with desirable headways of 20

Map 8

AREAS WITH UNMET TRANSIT SERVICE NEEDS FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY RESIDENTS WITH RESPECT TO LOCAL TRANSIT SERVICE AREA COVERAGE: 2005



Source: SEWRPC.

minutes or less. No freeway flyer or UBUS routes have headways that conform with desirable headways. The low service frequency is largely the result of the service reductions which have occurred over the past five years.

Lengthy Transit Travel Times. Transit travel time is generally between two and four times more than automobile travel time for comparable trips. Ratios of transit-to-automobile travel times between selected locations within the County are displayed on Map 9. The lengthy transit travel time stems from a combination of factors: local bus routes with low overall operating speeds providing the majority of transit service in the system; the lack of transportation system management tools—traffic signal priority and reserved lanes—to increase bus travel speeds; and service cuts enacted since 2000 that increased operating headways and eliminated routes and route segments.

Table 2

MILWAUKEE COUNTY POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT WITHIN A QUARTER-MILE DISTANCE OF LOCAL/SHUTTLE ROUTES OPERATING WITH DESIRABLE HEADWAYS: 2004

Area	Population		Employment	
	Number	Percent of Total County Population	Number	Percent of Total County Employment
Milwaukee County	940,200	100.0	624,600	100.0
Within a Quarter-Mile Distance of All Routes	850,900	90.5	587,100	94.0
Within a Quarter-Mile Distance of Routes Operating with Desirable Headways*				
Morning Peak Period	213,100	22.7	219,800	35.2
Midday Period	583,800	62.1	385,500	61.7
Afternoon Peak Period.....	277,100	29.5	232,400	37.2
Early Evening Period.....	418,400	44.5	308,800	49.4
Late Night Period.....	383,600	40.8	270,600	43.3

*Service Design Standard 8 of Objective 2 indicates that it is highly desirable to have the local routes of the transit system operate on weekdays with headways of no more than 10 minutes during peak periods and 20 minutes during all off-peak periods.

Source: SEWRPC.

POTENTIAL FUTURE DIRECTION OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM

Since 2001, the Milwaukee County Transit System has implemented significant service reductions and fare increases. While some of these past actions may have been related to considerations of transit service efficiency and effectiveness, most were due to limits in State and Milwaukee County operating funding. The transit system is heavily dependent on state funding, and the State has historically provided about 65 to 70 percent of the necessary transit system public operating funding. However, between 2000 and 2005, the State only increased operating assistance funding by less than 1.5 percent on an average annual basis—not enough to keep up with inflation. As described previously, Milwaukee County had a balance of unspent Federal funds, which are intended for capital project funding, but may be used for certain elements of operating funding such as maintenance of capital equipment. Using those funds, Milwaukee County increased Federal operating funding of the transit system by over 80 percent from 2000 to 2005 (even though the annual amount of such Federal funds allocated to Milwaukee County over this same period did not increase). Meanwhile, due to a difficult budget period, Milwaukee County funding of the transit system remained about the same from 2000 to 2005. The substantial increase in Federal funding was unable to offset the marginal increases in State transit funding and the stagnant Milwaukee County transit funding. As a result, between 2000 and 2005, the transit system had to reduce service by 15 percent and increase fares by 17 to 30 percent.

Looking to the future, Milwaukee County's balance of unspent FTA funds maybe expected to be depleted by 2009. Without renewed increases in State transit assistance funds and Milwaukee County funding, severe cuts in service and higher fares may be expected by the year 2010, resulting in a significantly smaller transit system that serves less County population and employment, operates with shorter service hours and with less frequent service, costs more to use for those who must rely on it as their primary means of transportation, and offers less an alternative mode of travel to the automobile.

If State transit operating assistance only increases at about 2 percent per year, and the County property tax levy for MCTS bus and paratransit services is held to 2005 levels, the transit system would need to reduce total vehicle hours of service by about 35 percent by the year 2010. To illustrate what this forecast 35 percent reduction could mean, two service reduction options were developed by the transit system and are identified in Table 3. Option A would cut service hours and eliminate some local routes; Option B would maintain service hours but eliminate more local routes; and both options would also eliminate all freeway flyer and UBUS routes. The options clearly indicate the magnitude of the service and funding problems facing the Milwaukee County Transit System.

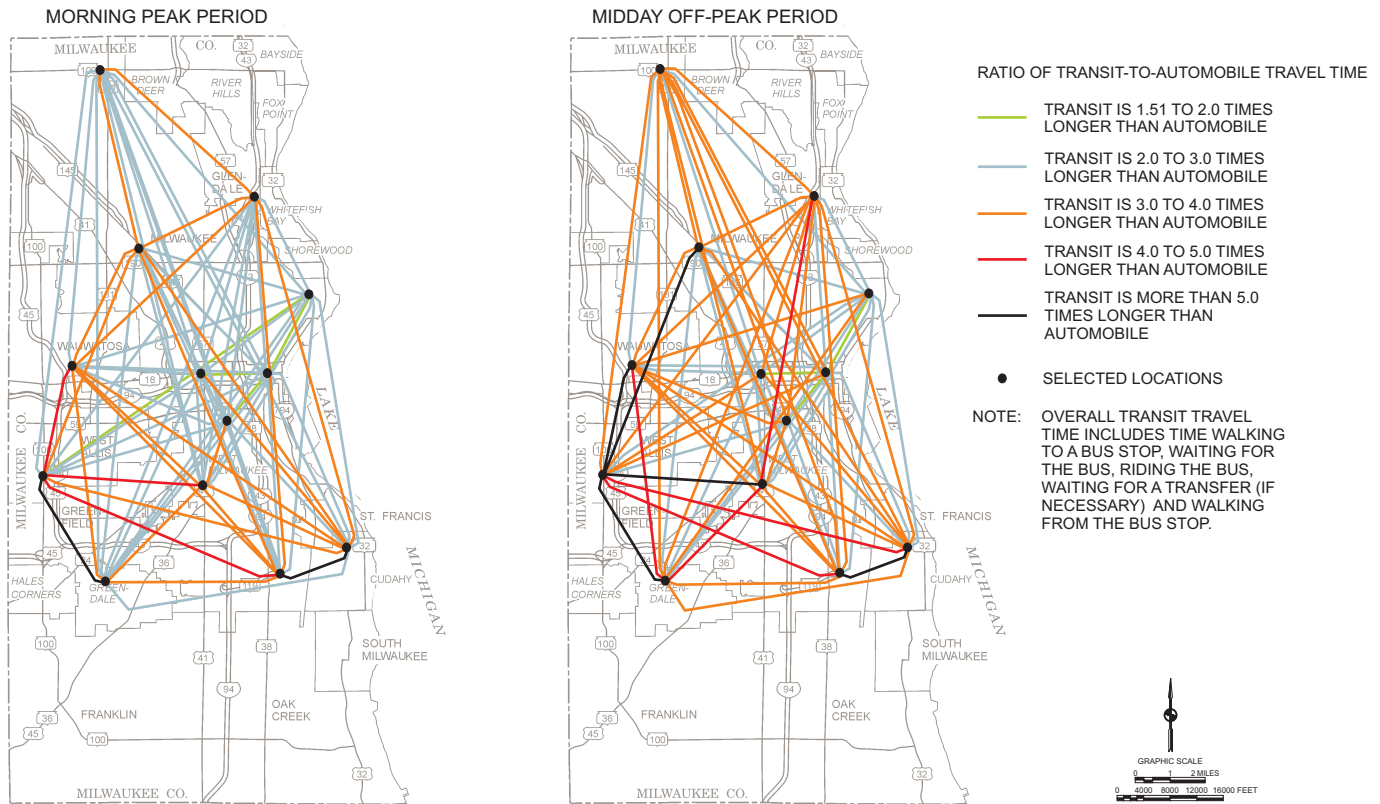
Limited Service Connecting Milwaukee County Residents to Outlying Counties. The unmet needs of County residents for travel between Milwaukee County and the other surrounding counties of Southeastern Wisconsin include:

- **Lack of Service:** Many major activity centers and significant job concentrations outside Milwaukee County do not have public transit service connecting to Milwaukee County residents, as shown on Map 8.
- **Limited Service Hours and Frequency:** The transit services currently available to connect Milwaukee County residents with jobs and activity centers in the surrounding counties with rare exception have limited weekday service hours and are operated with infrequent trips.
- **Lengthy Travel Times:** Transit service connecting Milwaukee County residents with surrounding counties in many cases involves slower local bus service, and/or requires use of a connecting local bus route in Milwaukee County.
- **Transit Fares:** While discounted fares for passengers transferring between the different transit systems are offered, the discounts and transfer arrangements are not uniform among all the transit services connecting with the Milwaukee County Transit System.

The lack of a regional transit authority and adequate transit funding has hindered the implementation of service connecting Milwaukee County residents to the other counties of Southeastern Wisconsin.

Map 9

RATIOS OF OVERALL TRANSIT TRAVEL TIMES TO OVERALL AUTOMOBILE TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN SELECTED LOCATIONS FOR WEEKDAY MORNING AND MIDDAY PERIODS: 2005 ESTIMATED



Source: SEWRPC.

The projections demonstrate the need for the State to return to increasing transit funding sufficient to address transit cost inflation, and for the provision of a dedicated source of local funding for transit to replace Milwaukee County property tax dollars.

SUMMARY

The transit development plan so far demonstrates that the Milwaukee County Transit System outperforms comparable transit systems in terms of ridership and financial performance, and does well at serving population, employment, and activity centers within Milwaukee County. However, there are several areas where the system has deficiencies, including some areas not served within Milwaukee County, limited service hours, lengthy travel times, and limited connections to outlying counties.

Financially, the transit system faces problems. Due to its heavy dependence on State transit operating funds that have not increased with inflation, and the lack of an increase in County property tax levy going to transit, the system has reduced service, increased fares, and used Federal funds intended for capital improvements to pay for operating expenses. Without renewed increases in State transit assistance funds sufficient to address cost inflation and the creation of a dedicated local source of operating funds, the transit system may need to cut service by up to another 35 percent by the year 2010.

Table 3

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE REDUCTIONS NEEDED BY THE YEAR 2010, ASSUMING CONTINUED USE OF PROPERTY TAXES TO FUND THE LOCAL SHARE OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM OPERATING COSTS

Description	Estimated Reduction in Annual Vehicle Hours of Service	Percent of 2005 Annual Vehicle Hours of Service
Option A		
• Eliminate all freeway flyer and UBUS routes	64,000	4
• Eliminate all bus service after 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays; limit Sunday Service to between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. ^a	168,000	12
• Eliminate 7 local routes and cutback or restructure service on 17 additional local routes	<u>286,000</u>	<u>20</u>
Total Reduction	518,000	36
Option B		
• Eliminate all freeway flyer and UBUS routes	64,000	4
• Eliminate 10 local routes and cutback or restructure service on 14 additional local routes	<u>460,000</u>	<u>33</u>
Total Reduction	524,000	37

^aElimination of bus service during these periods would also permit reductions in paratransit service.

Source: Milwaukee County Transit System and SEWRPC.

NEXT STEPS IN THE STUDY PROCESS

The next steps in the transit development plan are to obtain public comment on the work performed to date, and to consider that comment in the development of possible alternatives and potential recommended operating and capital improvements for the transit system over the next five years. The following are the key remaining steps, and when each is expected to be completed:

- First series of public meetings – February/March 2007.
- Development of alternatives and preliminary recommendations for operating and capital improvements, and associated costs – Spring 2007.
- Second series of public meetings – Spring 2007.
- Development of recommended transit development plan – Spring/Summer 2007.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

An electronic version of this newsletter, study report chapters, meeting minutes, public meeting notices, and all other project materials are available at www.sewrpc.org/milwcotdp. More information can be obtained by contacting:

Kenneth R. Yunker, P.E.
Deputy Director
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
(262) 547-6721

Albert A. Beck
Principal Planner
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
(262) 547-6721

Daniel A. Boehm, P.E.
Interim Director of Administration
Milwaukee County Transit System
(414) 937-3272

Ronald J. Rutkowski, P.E.
Transportation Planning Director
Milwaukee County Department of
Transportation and Public Works
(414) 278-4888

U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 1607, Waukesha, WI 53187
E-mail: milwcotdp@sewrpc.org
Fax: (262) 547-1103
