

What is the Milwaukee County Transit System Development Plan?

- Short-range transit development plan for next 5 years
- Focuses on the County's fixed-route bus system
- Evaluates the performance of the County bus system
- Identifies unmet transit service needs of County residents
- Identifies alternative transit service improvements
- Will recommend service and capital improvements for the next five years (2009 - 2013)

Who is preparing the plan?

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) has been asked by Milwaukee County to develop the plan. The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) are also directly involved with plan preparation.



Advisory Committee

The Milwaukee County Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee oversees work on the Milwaukee County Transit System Development Plan: 2009-2013

- Members of the Committee were appointed by the Milwaukee County Executive
- The Committee has guided technical staff in the preparation of the plan, including the design and evaluation of transit improvement proposals.
- The Committee will propose to Milwaukee County a recommended transit system development plan, identifying improvements for MCTS which should be implemented over the next five years.

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	Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System
Leticia Keltz	Support Services Manager, United Migrant Opportunity Services
Michael Mayo	Supervisor, Milwaukee County
Don Natzke	Director, Milwaukee County Office for Persons with Disabilities
Beth Nichols	Executive Director, Downtown Milwaukee Management District
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
Peggy Schultz	Citizen Member
Nancy Senn	Transportation Planning Manager, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Public Works

Steps in the Plan Process

Steps Completed to Date

- ☑ Inventory 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 operation
- ☑ Development of transit objectives and standards to evaluate system performance
- ☑ Assessment of transit system and route performance
- ☑ Comparison of MCTS performance to similar transit systems
- ☑ Identification of unmet transit service needs
- ☑ Projection of the transit system's future financial condition
- ☑ Obtain public opinion on transit system performance, unmet needs, and service improvement ideas
- ☑ Develop alternative transit service improvement plans, including costs of different plans

Next Steps

- ☐ Obtain public input on alternative service improvement plans
- ☐ Develop the final recommended transit service improvement plan, reflecting public input
- ☐ Document the final recommended transit service plan and distribute to Milwaukee County officials for approval and adoption
- ☐ Begin Implementing Service Improvements

Key Findings to Date

Major Findings of Work Presented at First Public Meetings

- ☑ MCTS compares well with peer transit systems for ridership and financial performance measures.
- ☑ System provides good coverage of residential areas, employment locations, and major activity centers in County
- ☑ Existing service periods and frequency of bus service are inadequate, particularly on weekends.
- ☑ Transit travel times are lengthy, largely because most service is provided by local buses in mixed traffic with frequent stops.
- ☑ Service to surrounding counties is very limited
- ☑ Because State operating funding has not kept pace with inflation, MCTS has had to increase fares, cut service, and use up its “bank” of Federal capital funds for operating expenses.
- ☑ Potential service cuts of 35 percent may be needed if current funding trends continue.

Additional Work Completed

- ☑ Public comments from first public meetings are documented and reviewed the study Advisory Committee
- ☑ Study Advisory three approves three alternatives service improvement plans developed by Commission and transit system staffs
- ☑ Milwaukee County decides to pursue Federal Funding for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service over Fond du Lac, National, and Greenfield Avenues following an alignment similar to one identified in two of the alternative improvement plans

Why Do We Need A Strong Transit System in Milwaukee County?

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

- To provide a necessary and desirable alternative to the automobile in heavily traveled corridors and areas
- To contribute to efficiency in the transportation system, including reduced highway traffic and congestion, air pollution, and energy consumption
- To support and encourage higher density and infill development and redevelopment, which results in efficiencies for public infrastructure and services, including transit
- To meet the travel needs of the significant portion of the population (16 percent of households) without access to an automobile
- To enhance economic development and the quality of life of County residents by:
 - Connecting workers with jobs
 - Providing access to opportunities for higher education
 - Providing for choice in travel modes
 - Reducing household expenditures on transportation, permitting greater savings, other expenditures, and a higher standard of living.

Priorities for Transit Service Improvements

Potential service improvements were developed in response to the findings of the performance evaluation and public comments. Staff focused on improvements that could feasibly be implemented over a five-year period and would make transit more competitive with travel by private automobile:

- Extend routes to unserved areas in Milwaukee County with significant population or employment concentrations
- Convert local bus service to express bus service in three corridors
- Upgrade Freeway Flyer service
- Increase frequency of service to provide for desirable frequency on more routes
- Expand weekday and weekend hours to 20 hours of service on more routes

Is MCTS Currently in a Funding Crisis?

The MCTS budget depends heavily on State financial assistance for operating expenses. The annual assistance did not keep pace with inflation between 2001 and 2007. The County has spent most of its \$40 million “bank” of Federal funds intended for capital project funding on operating expenses in an attempt to avoid service cuts.

- The financial crisis has caused the County to cut total vehicle hours of service by about 19 percent since the year 2000. Even more severe cuts are likely by 2010 if property taxes continue to be the sole source of local funding.
- Even prior to the service cuts, MCTS performed significantly better than comparable peer transit systems nationwide with respect to efficiency and effectiveness. The service cuts were not necessary to improve efficiency
- Service improvements would reverse some of the cuts and provide transit service that is competitive with travel by private automobile and address the priorities for service improvements.
- Potential new local revenue sources for transit operating expenses could provide the funding for service improvements. An additional 0.5 percent County sales tax would be sufficient to provide the local funds to maintain the existing transit system and implement the needed transit service improvements.

Alternative Service Improvement Plans

The Commission developed three potential service plans, or “alternatives”, for making short-term improvements to the transit system. Alternatives 1 and 2 propose two levels of investment in addressing the priorities for service improvement. Alternative 3, which maintains service at 2008 levels, represents a baseline for comparison against the other alternatives.

The table below compares the proposed service expansions, estimated ridership, and equipment needs under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.

COMPARISON OF SERVICE LEVELS, ESTIMATED RIDERSHIP, AND CAPITAL NEEDS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1, 2, AND 3

Service Characteristic	Alternative 1: Extensive Service Expansion	Alternative 2: Limited Service Expansion	Alternative 3: Maintain Existing System
Fixed-Route Service Annual Vehicle Hours, Year 2013	1,701,000	1,613,000	1,394,000
Percent increase over 2008	22	16	--
Average Annual Percent Increase	4.1	3.0	--
Transit Plus Paratransit Service Annual Vehicle Hours, Year 2013	437,000	437,000	437,000
Percent increase over 2008	3	3	3
Estimated Total Annual Bus and Paratransit Ridership, Year 2013	47.6 million	45.4 million	40.5 million
Percent Increase over 2008	11	6	-5
Expansion of Transit Service Area	New routes and route extensions to northern and southern portions of County	New routes and route extensions to northern and southern portions of County	No change
Express Bus Routes	3 express bus routes	3 express bus routes	No express routes
Freeway Flyer Service	10 freeway flyer routes; each route would make 10 trips every a.m. and p.m.; two midday round trips on each route	10 freeway flyer routes; each route would make 10 trips every a.m. and p.m.	9 freeway flyer routes; routes make between 4 and 10 trips every a.m. and p.m.
Turn-back Points on Local Routes	Eliminate turn-backs on weekdays and weekends	Eliminate turn-backs on weekdays only	No change
Headway Improvements	15 local routes and 3 new express bus routes would meet headway standards for all time periods	10 local routes and 3 new express bus routes would meet headway standards for all time periods	3 local routes meet headway service standards for all time periods
Hours of Service	Expand weekday hours on parts of Routes 35 and 80. Provide 20 hours of service on Saturdays and Sundays on 15 local routes (in addition to express buses)	Expand weekday hours on parts of Routes 35 and 80.	No change
Bus Fleet Purchase Requirements	204 buses to replace aging fleet plus 75 buses to expand fleet	204 buses to replace aging fleet plus 60 buses to expand fleet	204 buses to replace aging fleet

Source: SEWRPC.

Alternative 1: Extensive Service Expansion

Of the three potential service improvement plans, Alternative 1 represents the most aggressive attempt to address the priorities for service improvement. Overall, the plan would:

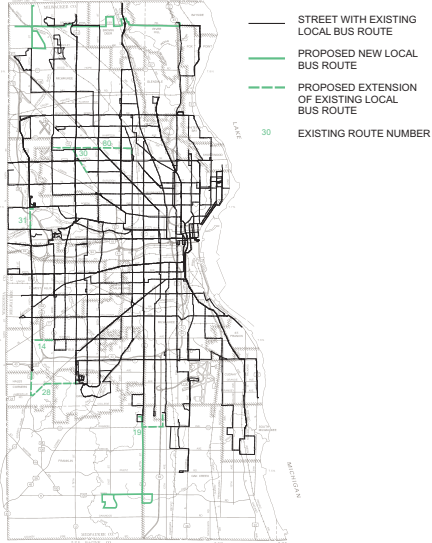
- Expand fixed-route bus service by about 22 percent (4 percent per year) from 1,340,000 bus hours budgeted for in 2008, to 1,629,000 bus hours in 2013.
- Increase Transit Plus paratransit service by about 3 percent by 2013 (keeping pace with anticipated growth in ridership).
- Boost annual ridership by an estimated 10 percent, from 42.8 million (in 2008 budget) to 47.1 million in 2013.

Specifically, Alternative 1 proposes the following improvements. Refer to the maps on the following boards.

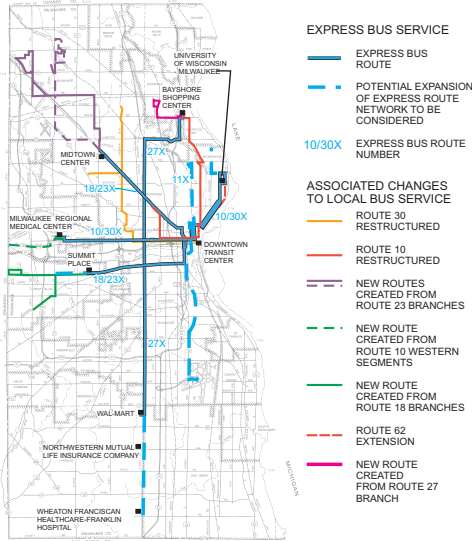
- Add new local routes and adjust alignments of existing local bus routes to provide service in the far northern, western, and southern portions of the County.
- Convert local bus service to express bus service in three high-ridership corridors.
- Improve Freeway Flyer service by providing a minimum of 10 trips over each route during a.m. and p.m. peak periods, and two midday round-trips to each freeway flyer route.
- Eliminate bus turn-back points on weekdays and weekends over the entire lengths of Routes 35, 57, and 64.
- Increase service frequencies on the 15 highest-ridership local routes, in addition to the five routes converted to express service.
- Provide 20 hours of service a day on weekdays and weekends on the 15 highest-ridership local routes

Alternative 1: Extensive Service Expansion (continued)

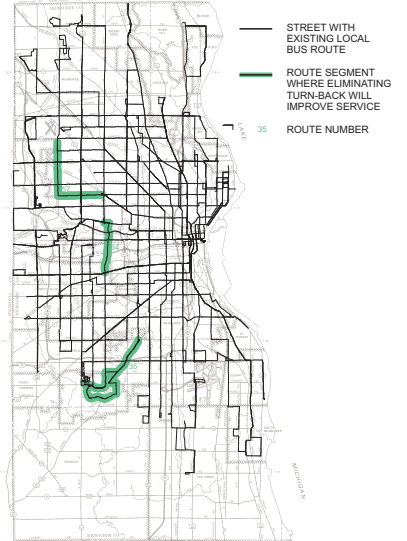
NEW LOCAL ROUTES AND ROUTE CHANGES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2



EXPRESS BUS ROUTES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2

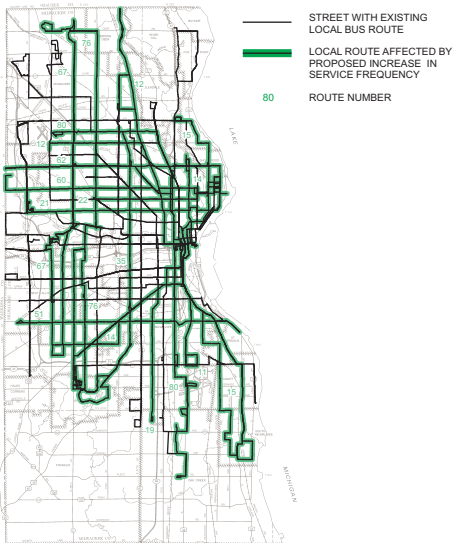


LOCAL ROUTE SEGMENTS WHERE TURN-BACKS ARE PROPOSED TO BE ELIMINATED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2

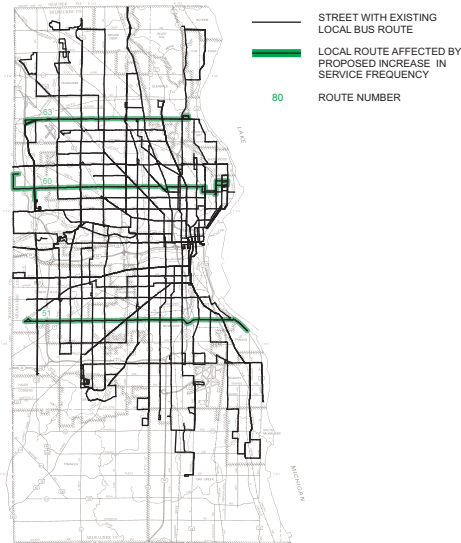


INCREASED SERVICE FREQUENCY ON LOCAL ROUTES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVE 1 (OUTSIDE OF EXPRESS BUS CORRIDORS)

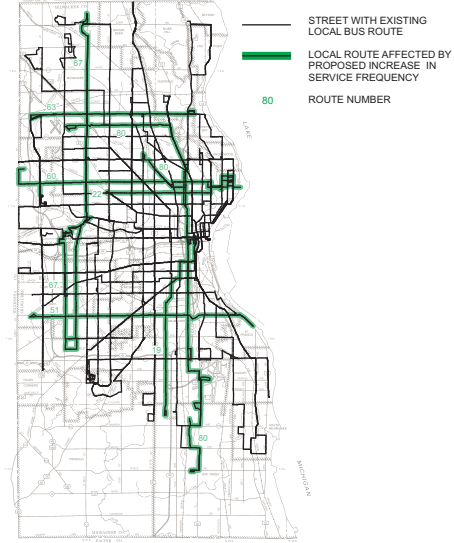
WEEKDAYS



SATURDAYS

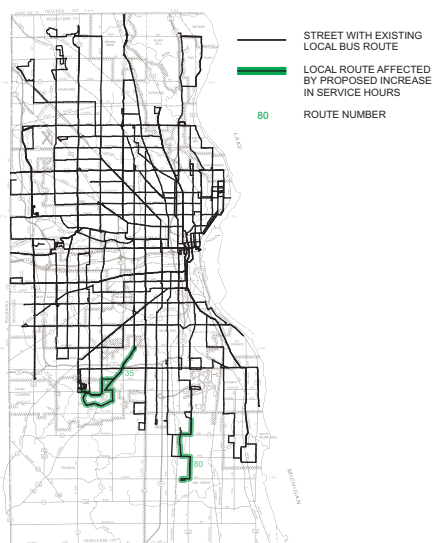


SUNDAYS

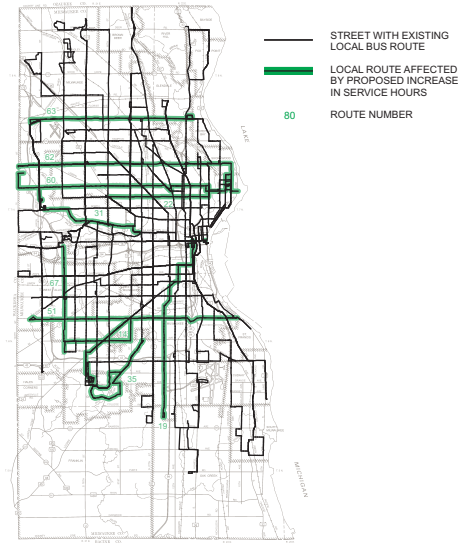


EXPANDED SERVICE HOURS ON LOCAL ROUTE SEGMENTS PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVE 1

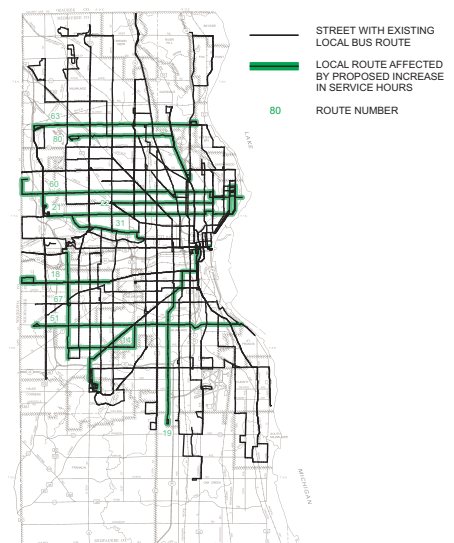
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SATURDAYS



SUNDAYS



Alternative 2: Limited Service Expansion

Alternative 2 represents a scaling back of the proposals in Alternative 1, but would still address most of the priorities for service improvements. Overall, Alternative 2 would:

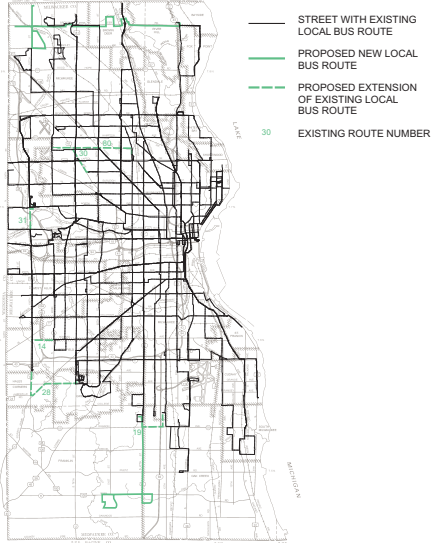
- Expand fixed-route bus service by about 15 percent (3 percent per year) starting from 1,340,000 bus hours budgeted for in 2008 and increasing to 1,540,000 bus hours in 2013.
- Increase Transit Plus paratransit service by about 3 percent by 2013 (keeping pace with anticipated growth in ridership)
- Boost annual ridership by an estimated 6 percent, from 42.8 million (in 2008 budget) to 45.3 million in 2013.

Specifically, Alternative 2 proposes the following improvements. Refer to the maps on the following boards.

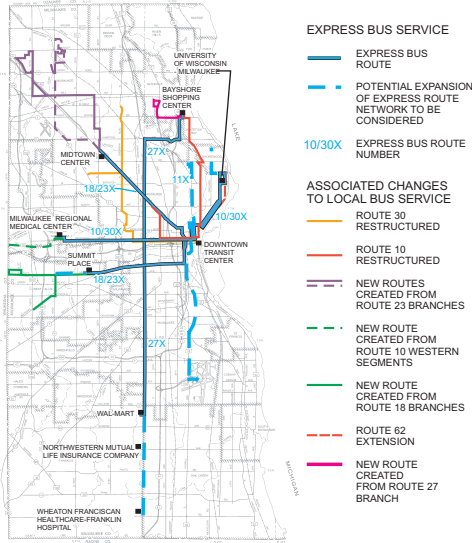
- Add new local routes and adjust alignments of existing local bus routes to provide service in the far northern, western, and southern portions of the County.
- Convert local bus service to express bus service in three high-ridership corridors.
- Improve Freeway Flyer service by providing a minimum of 10 trips over each route during a.m. and p.m. peak periods
- Eliminate bus turn-back points on weekdays only over the entire lengths of Routes 35, 57, and 64.
- Increase service frequencies on the 10 highest-ridership local routes, in addition to the five routes converted to express service.
- Provide 20 hours of service a day on the 10 highest-ridership local routes on weekdays.

Alternative 2: Limited Service Expansion (continued)

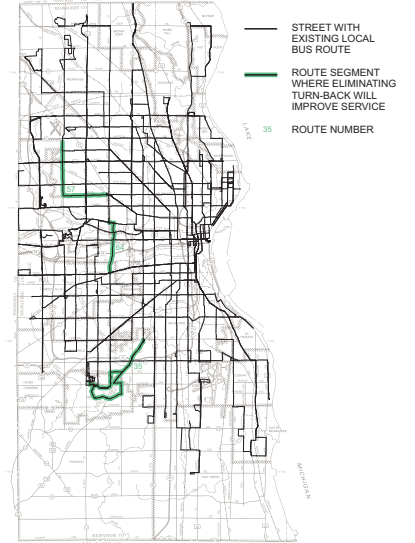
NEW LOCAL ROUTES AND ROUTE CHANGES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2



EXPRESS BUS ROUTES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2

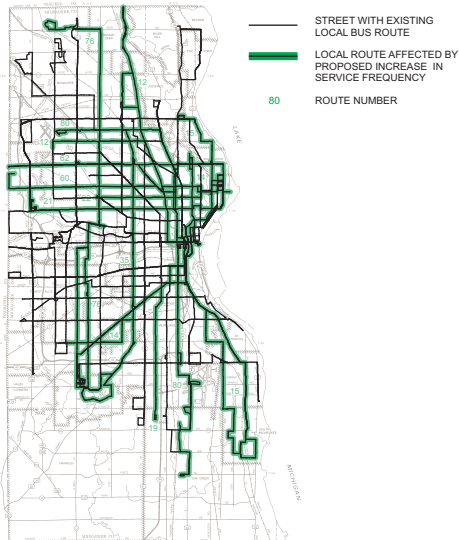


LOCAL ROUTE SEGMENTS WHERE TURN-BACKS ARE PROPOSED TO BE ELIMINATED UNDER ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2

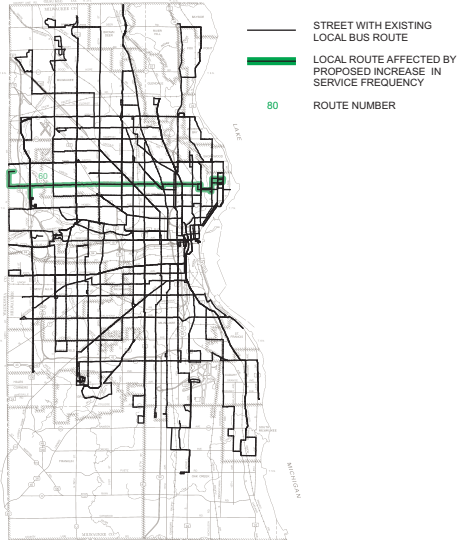


INCREASED SERVICE FREQUENCY ON LOCAL ROUTES PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVE 2 (OUTSIDE OF EXPRESS BUS CORRIDORS)

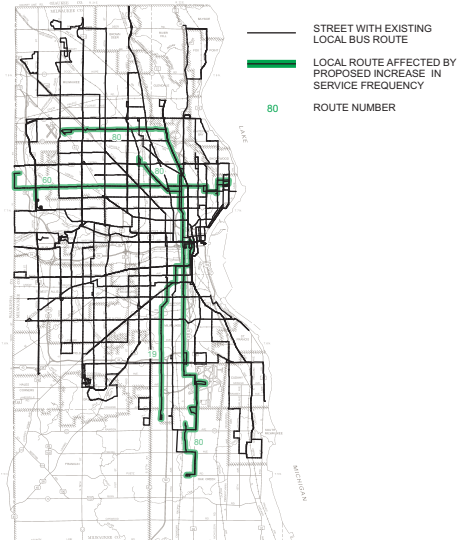
WEEKDAYS



SATURDAYS

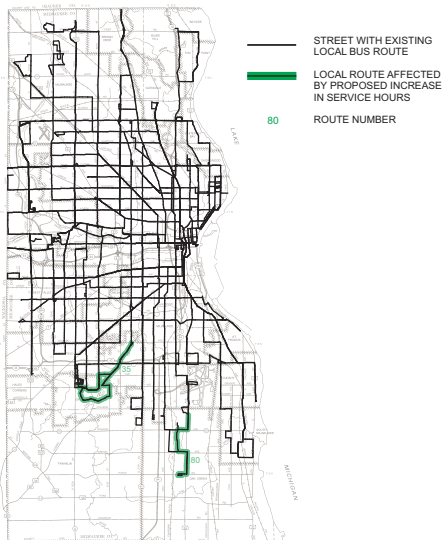


SUNDAYS



EXPANDED SERVICE HOURS ON LOCAL ROUTE SEGMENTS PROPOSED UNDER ALTERNATIVE 2

WEEKDAYS

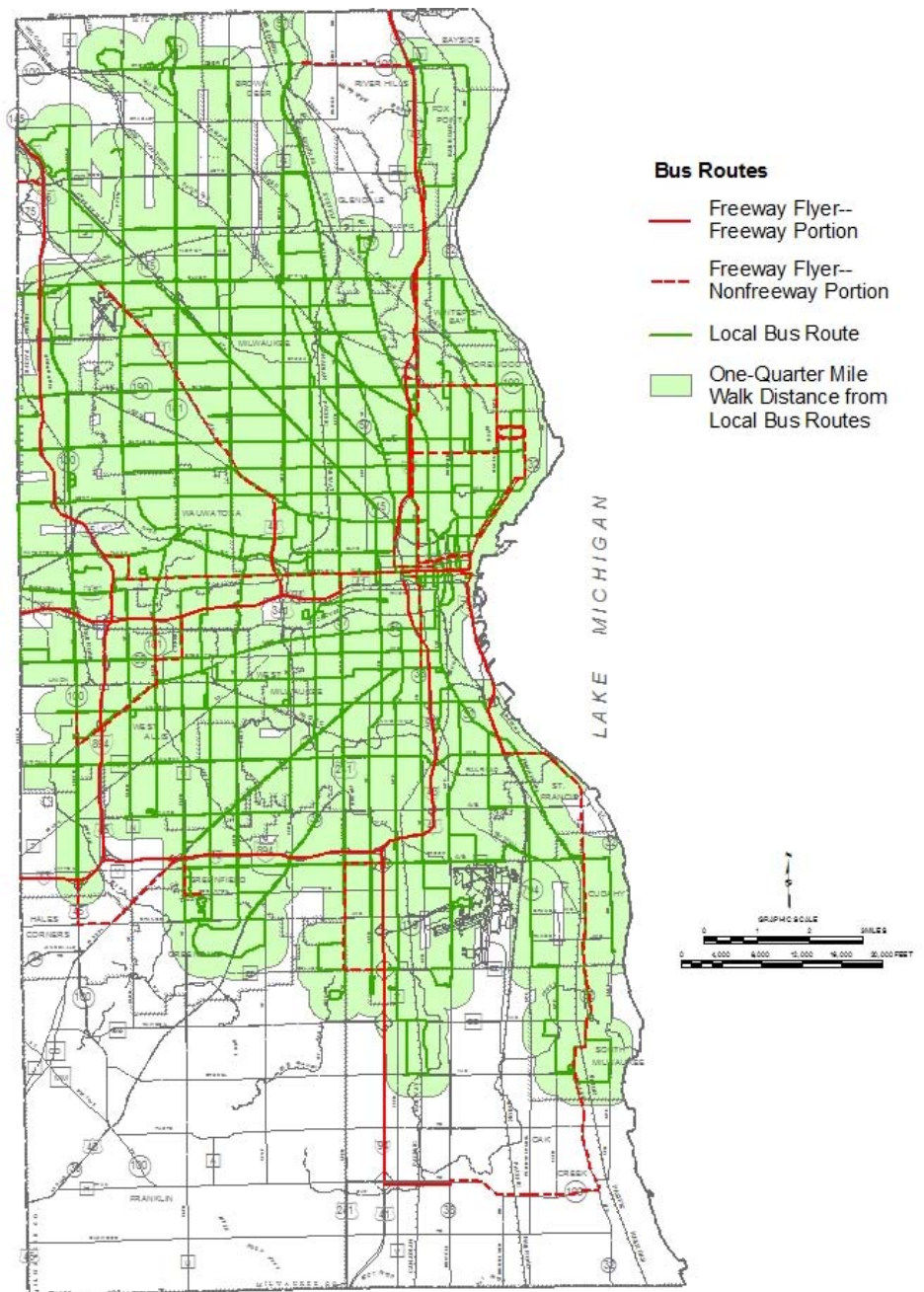


What if the Existing System is only Maintained (Alternative 3)?

Alternative 3 represents a "no expansion" approach. The transit system would maintain fixed-route bus service as operated in 2008. Overall, Alternative 3 would:

- Maintain fixed-route bus service at the 1,340,000 bus hours budgeted for 2008 (about 19 percent less than 1,650,000 bus hours of service operated in the year 2000)
- Increase Transit Plus paratransit service by about 3 percent by 2013 (keeping pace with anticipated growth in ridership)
- Reduce annual ridership by an estimated 5 percent, from 42.8 million (in 2008 budget) to 40.5 million in 2013, due to the fare increases that were assumed for all scenarios

MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM: 2008



Why is Local Dedicated Funding for Public Transit Needed?

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is in a major financial crisis. The County has cut total vehicle hours of service by about 19 percent since the year 2000 and even more severe cuts may be needed by 2010 if property taxes continue to be its sole source of local funding. Factors leading up to the crisis include:

- State and Federal funds, which have funded the bulk of transit operating costs (70 to 80 percent), have not increased with inflation and may not be expected to do so in the future.
- Substantial service reductions and increases in fares have occurred over the past 5 years even though local funding has increased somewhat.
- Nearly all of the Federal funds for the transit system that were intended to fund capital projects have been used for annual operating funding.
 - The county has spent down a bank of about \$40 million in Federal capital funds since the year 2000.
 - The County is now looking at a total capital cost of about \$60 million for replacing 150 buses around 2010. The Federal funds currently used for operations will need to be reduced to help pay for the replacement buses.

The current MCTS funding sources are insufficient to maintain the system at current levels, let alone make needed improvements. Given the estimates of operating and capital expenses and potential local share, Milwaukee County cannot, even in the short term, continue to rely on the local property tax levy to fund the transit system. The future of transit in Milwaukee County depends on securing a permanent source of dedicated funding.

The proposed dedicated funding of a 0.5 percent sales tax would be adequate to maintain the current transit system, and implement Alternatives 1 or 2.

What is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)?

A flexible, rubber-tired transit mode that combines running ways, vehicles, stations, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) elements into an integrated system. BRT services are “branded” to establish their own identity and to promote an image of quality service.



BRT services typically include:

- Reserved bus lanes or dedicated right-of-way;
- Substantial transit stations
- Traffic signal priority
- Next bus information displays
- Customized low floor vehicles
- Special names for the BRT lines
- Very frequent service provided throughout the day (10 minutes peak periods, 15 minutes off-peak periods)



Examples of United States Cities similar in size to Milwaukee with BRT include:

- Louisville
- Pittsburgh
- Charlotte
- Cleveland
- Hartford
- Eugene



What is the Fondy-National BRT Proposal?

The **Fondy-National BRT Project** is a proposed 12-mile long street-running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line that would connect the Midtown Center at 60th Street and Capitol Drive to Downtown Milwaukee and continue through Downtown to operate over National and Greenfield Avenues to Wisconsin State Fair Park. The Fondy-National BRT project would feature:

- Stops spaced about 1/3 of a mile apart with no other underlying local bus service
- 10-minute headways or better during peak-periods and 15-minute headways during weekday off-peak periods
- Shelters at every bus stop/station
- “Real-time” (next bus) passenger information displays
- Consideration for traffic signal prioritization
- New buses, potentially state-of-the-art 60-foot buses
- New fare boxes accepting a wide variety of fare forms (daily passes, weekly passes, monthly passes, credit cards, etc.)

The County anticipates submitting a funding application to the FTA for the project in Spring 2009.

FONDY-NATIONAL BUS RAPID (BRT) TRANSIT PROJECT

