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Preliminary Draft

SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 286

RACINE COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSIT PLAN: 2013-2017

Chapter VII

RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the final recommended public transit plan for the City of Racine and Racine County for the years 2013-2017. The final plan may be considered an initial stage in the implementation of the transit element of the regional transportation plan, which proposes a substantial improvement and expansion of transit service in southeastern Wisconsin over the next 25 years. The previous chapter (Chapter VI) presented a preliminary recommended alternative for the City of Racine Belle Urban System, three transit service alternatives that could be considered by Racine County, and four alternatives to improve transit service between Racine County and surrounding counties. The following sections of Chapter VII present final recommended plans for consideration by the City of Racine and Racine County. The first section that follows includes recommendations specific to the City of Racine related to restructuring the routes of the City's Belle Urban System, improving coordination with the County on paratransit services, improving transportation to the UW-Parkside campus, and integrating the existing Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha commuter bus route with City bus routes. The second section that follows includes recommendations specific to Racine County related to meeting transit needs in western Racine County, establishing a commuter bus service between Burlington and Milwaukee, improving coordination with the City of Racine on paratransit services, continuing the existing County shuttle service, and establishing guidelines for a possible future vanpool program. Following the sections describing recommendations for the City and County, the actions required to achieve plan implementation are identified. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

FINAL RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF RACINE

City Recommendation 1:

Restructure the Routes of the Belle Urban System

Most of the comments received regarding the preliminary recommended alternative for the City of Racine Belle Urban System (BUS) were related to specific proposed changes under the alternative system. Some expressed concern that the proposed changes would make it difficult or inconvenient for them to continue to use the BUS or that the changes would confuse existing users of the BUS. Others expressed support for specific proposed changes under the alternative system or for continuing to serve specific destinations or certain groups of people. In general, nearly all comments on the preliminary recommended alternative indicated a desire to preserve and improve the transit system.

The final recommended short-range transit plan for the BUS is based on the changes to the transit system proposed under the preliminary recommended alternative. At the direction of the City of Racine, the recommended plan is “financially-constrained”. The total annual transit operating budget would remain relatively flat over the five-year planning period, and maintain the local share of the necessary operating assistance between about \$1.52 and \$1.65 million. Financial constraint is achieved by reducing inefficiencies in the existing transit system and maintaining the transit system’s year 2012 reduced service hours. The plan recommends that over the next five years, the City of Racine should pursue a revised structure for its regular routes that addresses the key issues and inefficiencies in the system identified during plan development. The revised route structure would accomplish this through the combining of poor-performing routes, the reconfiguring of routes to serve recent development, and the equalizing of route running times between the Corinne Reid-Owens Transit Center and the outlying route endpoints. Associated with the revised route structure, the plan also recommends that routes be designed to improve transfers at a southwest transfer point to be constructed in the Regency Mall area.

As discussed in Chapter VI, urban development in the City of Racine has historically spread south and west of the City’s downtown and the Corinne Reid-Owens Transit Center, partly due to the Root River and nearby steep slopes. This unbalanced development pattern makes it difficult to design a transit system with routes of near-equal lengths between the Transit Center and the routes’ outlying endpoints. As a consequence, most existing routes serving the northern part of the City take 15 minutes to travel from the Transit Center to the northern route endpoint, 15 minutes back to the Transit Center, then 30 minutes to the southern route endpoint and 30 minutes back to the Transit Center—a round-trip running time of 90 minutes. The premise of the revised route structure recommended in this final plan is to establish a longer

round-trip running time of 120 minutes for all regular routes serving the Transit Center. Achieving these equalized round-trip running times of 120 minutes would require segments of some routes that serve the northern part of the City to be longer and require segments of some routes that serve the southern part of the City to be shorter.

There would be significant benefits to the transit system associated with equalizing running times. It would allow all regular routes to “pulse” at the Transit Center on each trip, result in a more understandable midday schedule, and reduce some of the excessive layover times currently experienced during evenings and weekends. In addition, having each route fit into the same round-trip schedule allows the City more flexibility during times when a significant budget shortfall is anticipated for the transit system. At those times, City and BUS staff could evaluate each individual route’s performance and reduce service frequencies only on certain lower-performing routes, as opposed to cutting service on entire routes or during entire time periods.

Recognizing the benefits of a revised route structure with equalized route running times, the Commission staff and City and BUS staff worked jointly to develop a detailed route structure. As discussed above, the City’s uneven development pattern makes it difficult to achieve that goal given the location of the Transit Center. Initial estimates of running times on the routes proposed in the preliminary recommended alternative indicated that each proposed route could likely travel from the Transit Center to its outlying endpoint—on either the northern or southern end of the City—and back to the Transit Center within 60 minutes. This would be expected to result in the attainment of 120-minute round-trip schedules for each route that serves both the northern and southern parts of the City and 60-minute round-trip schedules for each route that serves only the southern part of the City. As City and BUS staff conducted more detailed running time estimates, through field checks performed by driving the proposed routes with buses, they became concerned that some of the proposed routes, particularly in the southern part of the City, would experience running time difficulties making it difficult for those routes to pulse with the other routes. In recognition of these concerns, it should be noted that further refinements to the revised route structure included in this final recommended plan for the BUS may be necessary. As such, the plan should be used as a guide by City and BUS staff as they make these refinements, with the ultimate goal being the achievement of consistent round-trip schedules for each route so that each route is able to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip. There may also be a need for additional refinements to appropriately serve new developments and land uses in and around the City of Racine.

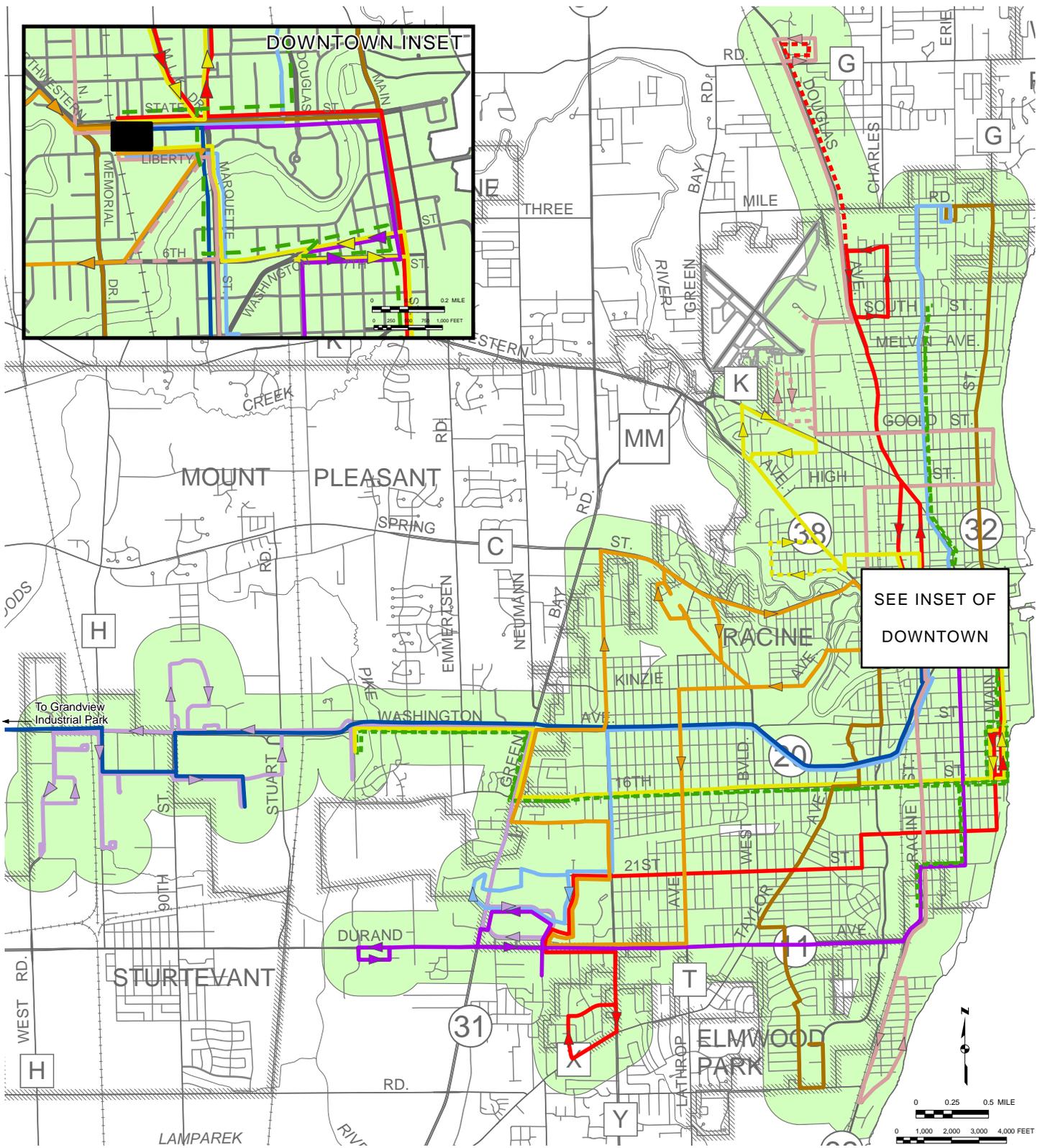
Route Alignments under the Recommended Plan for the BUS

As indicated above, the revised route structure recommended for the BUS is based on the route restructuring proposed under the preliminary recommended alternative, and may require refinements by City and BUS staff as they work to implement the recommended changes. The recommended route structure involves combining poor-performing routes, reconfiguring routes to serve recent development, and attempting to equalize route running times between the Corinne Reid-Owens Transit Center and the outlying route endpoints. Route segments on the northern part of the City are generally longer than those of the existing system so that they fit into a 60-minute round-trip schedule. Routes and route segments serving the southern part of the City are generally shorter so that they fit into a 60-minute round-trip schedule. When northern and southern route segments are paired to form individual routes that operate from their northern endpoints through the Transit Center to their southern endpoints and back, each of these routes has a total round-trip schedule of 120 minutes. The purpose of these uniform running times is to allow all regular routes to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip. The route structure is also designed to improve transfers between routes at a southwest transfer point to be constructed in the Regency Mall area.

Map 7-1 presents the current routes of the transit system through the end of 2012. Table 7-1 and Map 7-2 present a detailed explanation of the routing and service changes under the recommended plan. The recommended changes to route alignments, to be further refined by City and BUS staff as they attempt to implement routing changes, are summarized below.

- Route No. 1: North of the Transit Center, this route would provide service between the Transit Center and Greentree Center on every trip, primarily along Douglas Avenue. It route would divert from Douglas Avenue to serve Horlick High School and the Rapids Plaza shopping area. South of the Transit Center, the route would remain unchanged from the existing Route No. 1.
- Route No. 2: This route would be a combination of the existing Route Nos. 2 and 5. North of the Transit Center, the route would serve downtown via Marquette Street, 6th/7th Streets, and Main Street, and would operate on Goold Street to serve the Rapids Plaza shopping area, the Amaranth Meadows (Jacato Drive) neighborhood, and Huck Industrial Park. South of the Transit Center, the route would serve most of the southern areas previously served by the two individual routes. The existing Route Nos. 2 and 5 were among the weakest-performing routes in the evaluation of the transit system in Chapter V.

**Map 7-1
EXISTING ROUTE CONFIGURATION FOR THE BELLE URBAN SYSTEM: 2012**



- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| ALL-DAY BUS ROUTES | SPECIAL COMMUTER BUS ROUTE | TRANSIT CENTER | ONE QUARTER-MILE WALK ACCESS AREA AROUND ALL-DAY LOCAL TRANSIT ROUTES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — ROUTE NO. 1 — ROUTE NO. 2 — ROUTE NO. 3 — ROUTE NO. 4 — ROUTE NO. 7 — ROUTE NO. 27 — ROUTE NO. 86 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — ROUTE NO. 20 — ROUTE NO. 30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ TRANSIT CENTER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |

Source: City of Racine Department of Transportation and SEWRPC.

I:\Tran\WORK\Racine TDP\Maps\Transit System Map\Rac TDP Map 7-1 BUS existing.mxd

Table 7-1

**ROUTING AND SERVICE CHANGES BY ROUTE UNDER THE
RECOMMENDED BELLE URBAN SYSTEM ROUTE STRUCTURE: 2013-2017**

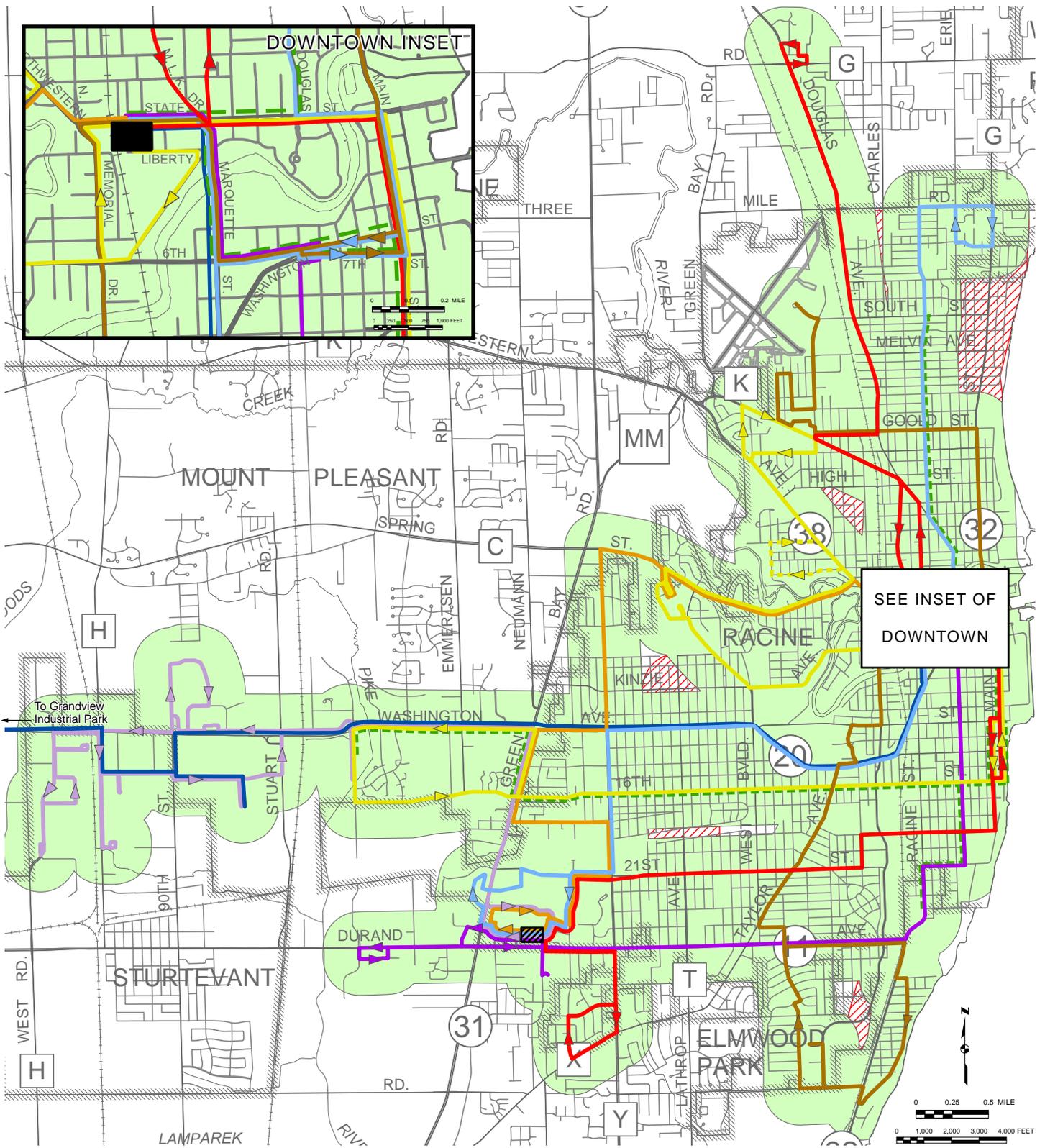
Route No.	Recommended Restructuring of Routes (See Map 7-2)	Recommended Route Schedule and Service Period Adjustments
1	<p>North of the Transit Center, remove the loop along South St., Charles St., and Carlton Dr. and divert from Douglas Ave. to serve Horlick High School and the Rapids Plaza shopping area.</p> <p>No change south of the Transit Center.</p>	<p>1. Maintain year 2012 service hours.</p> <p>2. Weekday peak service: maintain 60-minute frequencies on Rt. 6 and 30-minute frequencies on all other routes.</p>
2	<p>Combine Rts. 2 and 5. North of the Transit Center, the new route serves downtown via Marquette St., 6th or 7th Sts., and Main St., and also operates on Goold St. to serve Horlick High School, the Rapids Plaza shopping area, the Amaranth Meadows (Jacato Drive) neighborhood, and Huck Industrial Park.</p> <p>South of the Transit Center, create a one-way loop over Durand Ave., Sheridan Rd., and Lakeshore Dr. to Olsen Industrial Park, then via Knoll Pl. to Durand Ave.</p>	<p>3. Weekday midday/evening service: set frequencies to uniform 60 minutes on all routes^a, instead of alternating 30- and 60-minute frequencies.</p> <p>4. Saturday service: set frequencies of 60 minutes on all routes.</p> <p>5. Sunday service: set frequencies of 60 minutes on new Rts. 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7.</p>
3	<p>North of the Transit Center, operate on 6th St., Kinzie Ave., Osborne Blvd., and Spring St. instead of Hamilton St. and Marquette St. or Dr. Martin Luther King Dr., serving each entrance of St. Mary's Hospital.</p> <p>South of the Transit Center, operate via State St. and Main St. to/from the Transit Center, instead of Marquette St. and 6th St. or 7th St., and operate inbound to the Transit Center from Case High School via 16th St. between Oakes Rd. and Green Bay Rd., instead of Washington Ave.</p>	
4	<p>North of the Transit Center, serve downtown via Marquette St., 6th or 7th Sts., and Main St. and operate further east of Shorecrest Shopping Center on Three Mile Rd.</p> <p>No change south of the Transit Center.</p>	
5	Eliminate the route. Replace it with parts of the reconfigured Rt. 2.	
6	Convert the existing Rt. 86 from a one-way loop to a two-way out-and-back route via Spring St. to St. Mary's Hospital. Between St. Mary's Hospital and Regency Mall, operate in both directions via Ohio St., Washington Ave., Green Bay Rd., and Byrd Ave.	
7	After leaving the Transit Center, operate via Marquette St. and 6 th St., instead of State St. and Main St. Provide service to Ridgewood Care Center of Racine only on inbound trips to the Transit Center.	

^a Evening service would not be operated on Route No. 2, similar to the existing Route Nos. 2 and 5.

Source: SEWRPC.

Map 7-2

ROUTE CONFIGURATION FOR THE BELLE URBAN SYSTEM UNDER THE RECOMMENDED PLAN



- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| ALL-DAY BUS ROUTES | SPECIAL COMMUTER BUS ROUTE | TRANSIT CENTER | ONE QUARTER-MILE WALK ACCESS AREA AROUND ALL-DAY LOCAL TRANSIT ROUTES |
| ROUTE NO. 1 | ROUTE NO. 6 | ROUTE NO. 20 | |
| ROUTE NO. 2 | ROUTE NO. 7 | | |
| ROUTE NO. 3 | ROUTE NO. 27 | SCHOOL-TRIPPER BUS ROUTE | AREAS THAT WOULD LOSE TRANSIT SERVICE UNDER RECOMMENDED PLAN |
| ROUTE NO. 4 | ROUTE NO. 30 | PROPOSED SOUTHWEST TRANSFER POINT | |

Source: City of Racine Department of Transportation and SEWRPC.

- Route No. 3: North of the Transit Center, this route would provide service to each entrance of St. Mary's Hospital, operating on 6th Street, Kinzie Avenue, Osborne Boulevard, and Spring Street. It would operate on Northwestern Avenue to Golf Avenue and Rapids Drive, serving Horlick High School. South of the Transit Center, the route would operate on State Street and Main Street instead of on Marquette Street, 6th/7th Streets, and Main Street. It would also operate inbound to the Transit Center from Case High School on 16th Street between Oakes Road and Green Bay Road, instead of on Washington Avenue and Green Bay Road, in order to shorten its round-trip running time.
- Route No. 4: North of the Transit Center, this route would serve downtown via Marquette Street, 6th/7th Streets, and Main Street. It would also operate further east of Shorecrest Shopping Center on Three Mile Road. South of the Transit Center, the route would remain unchanged from the existing Route No. 4.
- Route No. 6: This route would be a conversion of the existing Route No. 86 from a one-way loop to a two-way out-and-back route serving St. Mary's Hospital, Ohio Street, Green Bay Road, and the Regency Mall area.
- Route No. 7: This route would operate on State Street and Main Street instead of on Marquette Street, 6th Street, and Grand Avenue. It would also not serve the Regency Mall area on its inbound trip to the Transit Center. These changes are designed to reduce the round-trip running time on the route between the Transit Center and the route endpoint at Walmart.
- Establish a southwest transfer point in the Regency Mall area where passengers can conveniently and comfortably transfer between Route Nos. 4, 6, 7, and 27.

The plan does not recommend specific changes to the alignments of Route Nos. 20, 27, and 30 at this time. Route No. 20 would continue to operate as a special commuter route providing express peak-hour service to Grandview Industrial Park and the Waxdale complex in the Village of Mt. Pleasant. Route No. 27, which recently underwent considerable changes in September 2012, is being monitored by City and BUS staff to determine whether further changes are necessary and whether the route should be expanded to operate on Saturdays and/or Sundays. Although no changes to the alignments of Route Nos. 20 and 27 are recommended at this time, the plan recommends that, should the revised Route No. 27 continue to perform poorly despite the changes made in September 2012, City and BUS staff should consider the

possible combination of Route Nos. 20 and 27—discussed in more detail in Chapter VI—to avoid the existing duplication of service on portions of the two routes in the western portion of the BUS service area during peak periods. Route No. 30 would continue to provide service to and from middle and high schools, with the addition of one bus dedicated to the route to accommodate anticipated future demand for school service.

Given the potential running time difficulties on certain routes under the recommended plan, City and BUS staff should explore creative solutions that could address running time difficulties and aid in achieving a system of routes of approximately equal running times. A series of possible solutions that could be considered are identified below, along with foreseeable advantages and disadvantages of each solution. City and BUS staff may identify additional solutions as they attempt to implement routing changes, and it should be noted that a combination of solutions may be necessary to achieve the plan’s ultimate goal of achieving consistent round-trip schedules for each route so that each route is able to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip. Possible solutions may include:

1. Increase the round-trip schedules for all route segments from 60 minutes to 70 minutes so that all routes pulse at the Transit Center every 35 minutes in peak periods—instead of every 30 minutes. During off-peak periods, where routes would experience fewer running time difficulties, routes could likely still pulse every 60 minutes.
 - Increasing scheduled time for all routes would provide additional time for those routes expected to experience running time difficulties, allowing them to more easily complete their round-trips in the same amount of time as all other routes.
 - However, the schedule would be more difficult to understand and the routes that are not expected to experience running time difficulties would experience increased layover times at their route endpoints.

2. Realign Route No. 27 to serve the Wal-Mart in Sturtevant and shorten Route No. 7.
 - Shortening Route No. 7—which is the longest route in the system and is expected to have the most running time difficulties—would likely allow the route to achieve a 60-minute round-trip schedule and pulse every 30 minutes with all other routes at the Transit Center.
 - However, travel times would increase for a significant number of passengers who would need to travel from the City to the Wal-Mart in Sturtevant, as they would need to transfer to Route No. 27, which does not connect to all routes.

3. Shorten the routes with running time difficulties so that they all fit into 60-minute round-trip schedules.
 - Shortening these routes would allow all routes to pulse every 30 minutes at the Transit Center.
 - However, some major destinations currently being served would either be unserved or would need to be served by other means, such as a less expensive shuttle service or by modifying other routes.

4. In addition to the shortening of routes with running time difficulties in No. 3 above, modify and expand Route No. 7 to fit into a 120-minute round-trip schedule—instead of a 60-minute round-trip schedule—with the modified route serving areas currently served by the shortened routes.
 - Combining the shortened routes with the longer Route No. 7 would allow all routes to pulse every 30 minutes at the Transit Center and maintain service to major destinations currently being served.
 - However, service to many locations on the revised Route No. 7 would be less convenient and passenger travel times on the route would likely increase significantly. In addition, the longer Route No. 7 would require the BUS to provide twice as many service hours on that route in order for the route to pulse with the other routes, which would result in increased operating expenses and require additional local funding assistance. If the City wants to avoid increasing local funding for the transit system, service would need to be reduced elsewhere in the system.

5. Pursue street improvements, such as utilizing traffic signal preemption for buses at select locations, to reduce the travel times of routes that would be expected to experience running time difficulties.
 - If successful in sufficiently reducing travel times on routes expected to experience running time difficulties, street improvements could allow the recommended route structure to be implemented with the proposed 60-minute round-trip schedules with few downsides, resulting in all routes able to pulse at the Transit Center every 30 minutes during peak periods and every 60 minutes during off-peak periods.
 - However, it may be difficult to implement the desired street improvements and they may require initial capital investments by the City.

6. Operate without pulsing all routes at the Transit Center at all times of the day so that when the routes that would be likely to experience running time difficulties are running late, the other routes can remain on schedule.
 - o Operating without pulsing at all times would allow most routes under the recommended route structure to pulse every time.
 - o However, some passengers would likely experience extensive waiting times when needing to transfer to or from a route that is running late and is unable to pulse with the other routes.

Dial-A-Ride Transport (DART) Paratransit Service

The revised route structure recommended for the BUS would not be expected to result in any changes to the current service area for the City's Dial-A-Ride Transport (DART) paratransit program, the Federally-mandated paratransit service for persons with disabilities provided in an area within three-quarters of a mile of the regular routes of the transit system. The revised route structure for the BUS would not expand the service area of the transit system, considered to be the area within one-quarter mile of a local bus route. There would be a few small areas no longer within the transit system service area, but those areas would continue to be within the DART paratransit service area. No other changes are envisioned to be needed for the DART paratransit service.

Service Frequency and Time Periods under the Recommended Plan for the BUS

The proposed adjustments to the route alignments, schedules, and service hours for all the routes under the recommended plan were presented in Table 7-1. Table 7-2 presents the operating and service characteristics of each of the proposed routes under the recommended plan. All routes shown in the table would have running times of 30 minutes between the Transit Center and the outlying route endpoints. As indicated above, Route Nos. 20 and 27 would continue to be operated as they do as of September 2012, and Route No. 30 would continue to provide service to and from middle and high schools, with the addition of one bus to accommodate anticipated future demand for school service. The following key points can be made about the proposed frequency and service periods for the routes under the recommended plan:

- Nearly all of the regular routes would have morning and afternoon peak service frequencies of 30 minutes, with off-peak service frequencies of 60 minutes. These service frequencies would allow the routes to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip. The only exception would be Route No. 6,

Table 7-2

OPERATING AND SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS BY ROUTE UNDER THE RECOMMENDED BELLE URBAN SYSTEM ROUTE STRUCTURE: 2013-2017

Weekday Service										
Route Number	Round-Trip Route Length (miles)	Service Hours	Service Frequency				Buses Required			
			A.M. Peak Period	Midday Period	P.M. Peak Period	Night Period	A.M. Peak Period	Midday Period	P.M. Peak Period	Night Period
1	25.6	5:40 a.m. – 10:10 p.m.	30	60	30	60	4	2	4	2
2	22.9	5:40 a.m. – 7:10 p.m.	30	60	30	--	4	2	4	--
3	27.3	5:40 a.m. – 10:10 p.m.	30	60	30	60	4	2	4	2
4	22.5	5:40 a.m. – 10:10 p.m.	30	60	30	60	4	2	4	2
6	14.6	5:40 a.m. – 10:10 p.m.	60	60	60	60	1	1	1	1
7	15.1	5:40 a.m. – 10:10 p.m.	30	60	30	60	2	1	2	1
Other ^a	Varies	Varies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	1	8	1
Systemwide	--	--	--	--	--	--	28	11	27	9

Saturday Service ^b			
Route Number	Service Hours	Service Frequency	Buses Required
1	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
2	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
3	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
4	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
6	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	1
7	5:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	1
Systemwide	--	--	10

Sunday Service ^b			
Route Number	Service Hours	Service Frequency	Buses Required
1	9:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
3	9:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
4	9:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	2
6	9:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	1
7	9:40 a.m. – 6:40 p.m.	60	1
Systemwide	--	--	8

^a"Other" refers to Route Nos. 20, 27, and 30. Service levels on Route Nos. 20 and 27 would not be changed under the recommended plan. One bus would be added to Route No. 30 in the peak periods to provide additional school tripper service.

^bThe Saturday and Sunday round-trip route lengths would not differ significantly from the Weekday round-trip route lengths.

Source: SEWRPC.

which would operate with 60-minute service frequencies all day as the Route No. 86 currently operates as of September 2012.

- The reduced service hours established in January 2012 would be maintained¹. On weeknights, the last trips would leave the Transit Center at 9:10 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, the last trips would leave the Transit Center at 6:10 p.m.
- Under the 2012 transit service schedule, a total of 28 morning and 27 afternoon buses are required during weekday peak service. The recommended plan would require the same number of peak period buses, allowing the BUS to utilize the current 35 heavy-duty buses in its fleet. For weekend service, the number of buses required on Saturdays would decrease from 11 to ten, and the number of buses required on Sundays would decrease from nine to eight.

The recommended changes should be implemented simultaneously in order to maintain service to all areas currently served by the routes and maintain the pulse schedule system.

Operating Funding Needs of the Recommended Plan for the BUS

Commission staff developed forecasts of service levels, ridership, operating costs, operating revenues, and transit assistance needs of the transit system under the recommended plan, using the assumptions summarized in Figure 7-1. Table 7-3 shows estimated systemwide performance measures and costs for the transit system under the recommended plan. Under the recommended plan, the transit system would undergo some significant changes in level of service provided, performance measures, and costs:

1. The annual miles and hours of service would be about five percent lower than the miles and hours in the 2012 budget. Most of the decrease is due to reductions in midday service frequency and the combination of Route Nos. 2 and 5. Ridership is expected to increase by about one percent per year, from the current estimate of 1,059,000 in 2012 to 1,113,000 by the fifth year of operating under the recommended system, based on the potential for the recommended route structure to make the system more attractive to existing and potential riders.
2. The total cost of operating the transit system with the recommended service changes is estimated to decrease by about three percent in the first year, from \$7.14 million in the 2012 budget to

¹ Prior to the January 2012 service cuts, the last trips for most of the BUS routes left the Transit Center at 11:40 p.m. on weeknights. On Saturdays, the last trips left at 10:10 p.m.; on Sundays, at 6:40 p.m.

Figure 7-1

**ASSUMPTIONS USED IN DEVELOPING FORECASTS OF RIDERSHIP, EXPENSES,
AND REVENUES FOR THE RECOMMENDED BELLE URBAN SYSTEM ROUTE STRUCTURE: 2013-2017**

Commission staff developed forecasts of ridership, expenses, and revenues under the recommended plan for the Belle Urban System for the years 2013-2017 based on the following assumptions:

- For every one percent decrease in revenue miles of service, ridership would decrease by 0.5 percent. This measure of elasticity of demand for transit service has been established through many studies and is widely accepted in the transit industry. The measure of elasticity of demand was applied to the ridership on the system during different periods of the day. Most of the service reductions under the recommended plan would occur during the midday period, which has lower ridership than the morning and afternoon peak periods.
- The operating cost per revenue vehicle hour of fixed-route service would be expected to increase by about five percent during the first year (due to the system's contraction) followed by increases of 1.5 percent per year over the five-year planning period (due to inflation). On average, the operating expense per vehicle hour on the Belle Urban System increased by 1.5 percent annually between 2007 and 2011. The operating expense per unit of service tends to increase during system contraction because, even though the transit system is providing less service, there are still fixed costs that must be paid, including salaries for the system's dispatching, administrative, and mechanic positions.
- Fares would not be increased above the January 2012 levels.
- The combination of Federal Section 5307 and State Section 85.20 transit operating assistance funds will be available to cover 55.3 percent of the system's operating expenses in 2012. The share of operating expenses covered by State and Federal transit assistance funds will decrease to 55.0 percent in 2013 and remain flat throughout the five-year planning period.

Table 7-3

**ESTIMATED OPERATING EXPENSES, REVENUES, AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOR
THE RECOMMENDED BELLE URBAN SYSTEM ROUTE STRUCTURE: 2013-2017**

Characteristic	2011 Estimate	2012 Budgeted	Forecast ^a	
			Year 1 (2013 \$)	Year 5 (2017 \$)
Fixed-Route Annual Service				
Revenue Vehicle-Miles	1,120,000	1,039,000	983,000	983,000
Revenue Vehicle Hours	88,000	81,200	77,000	77,000
Systemwide Ridership				
Revenue Passengers	1,217,000	1,059,000	1,070,000	1,113,000
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle-Mile	1.09	1.02	1.09	1.13
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle-Hour	13.8	13.0	13.9	14.5
Systemwide Operating Costs, Revenues, and Assistance				
Operating Expenses	\$7,567,000	\$7,141,000	\$6,907,000	\$7,330,000
Passenger and Other Revenues	1,712,000	1,571,000	1,586,000	1,648,000
Required Public Assistance	5,855,000	5,570,000	5,321,000	5,682,000
Farebox Recovery (percent)	22.6	22.0	23.0	22.5
Sources of Public Assistance				
Federal	\$2,445,000	\$2,132,000	\$2,146,000	\$2,278,000
State	2,049,000	1,816,000	1,652,000	1,754,000
Federal/State Share of Operating Expenses (percent)	58.6	55.3	55.0	55.0
Local				
City of Racine	\$1,100,000	\$1,101,000	\$1,037,000	\$1,130,000
Town of Yorkville	6,000	5,000	7,000	7,000
Village of Caledonia	29,000	29,000	25,000	27,000
Village of Mt. Pleasant	173,000	174,000	154,000	167,000
Village of Sturtevant	53,000	52,000	39,000	42,000
Other ^b	--	261,000	261,000	277,000
Subtotal Local Assistance	\$1,361,000	\$1,622,000	\$1,523,000	\$1,650,000
Total	\$5,855,000	\$5,570,000	\$5,321,000	\$5,682,000
Per Passenger Trip Data				
Operating Costs	\$6.22	\$6.74	\$6.46	\$6.59
Total Public Assistance	\$4.81	\$5.26	\$4.97	\$5.11

^a The forecasts of ridership, revenues, and costs were based on the service levels provided under the recommended plan with the following assumptions: 1. operating cost per revenue hour would increase by 1.5% annually; 2. revenue passengers would increase by 1.0% annually; fares would not be increased above the January 2012 levels; and 4. the combined Federal/State share of operating expenses would be 55.0% each year.

^b Other sources of local public assistance include the Racine Unified School District and a local radio station. Prior to the year 2012 budget, the amount that the Racine Unified School District paid the transit system for student transportation was counted under "passenger revenues". In the year 2012 budget and later, this contribution is counted under Local Public Assistance. This change will not affect State or Federal funding levels, but will make the transit system's farebox recovery rate appear lower than it actually is.

Source: City of Racine and SEWRPC.

\$6.91 million (year 2013 dollars). By the end of the five-year planning period, the increases in operating costs per revenue hour of transit service would be expected to increase total operating expenses to \$7.33 million (year 2017 dollars).

3. Federal and State funds may be expected to provide about 55 percent (\$3.80 million in year 2013 dollars) of the total operating expenses in the first year. The remaining public assistance needed (\$1.52 million, or 22 percent) would be provided by local sources—including the City of Racine, the surrounding municipalities served by transit, and the Racine Unified School District—with the City of Racine providing about \$1.04 million. By the fifth year, Federal and State funds may be expected to provide about \$4.03 million (year 2017 dollars), likely requiring local sources to increase their contributions to \$1.65 million (25 percent of expenses), including about \$1.13 million from the City of Racine.

In terms of local funding assistance, the plan recommends that the methodology currently utilized by the City of Racine to distribute the local share of the necessary public assistance among the Town of Yorkville and the Villages of Caledonia, Mt. Pleasant, and Sturtevant, be re-examined to more equitably distribute the local share among the above communities. The current method—used to develop the transit system’s estimated operating costs under the recommended plan—is based on the communities’ respective shares of the total annual revenue vehicle-miles of fixed-route transit service provided. The plan suggests that representatives from each of the four local governments meet with City of Racine staff to discuss whether and how the current methodology should be modified.

Capital Investments under the Recommended Plan

Significant capital investments must occur over the next five years to maintain the existing transit system equipment and facilities. As noted above, the recommended plan would not require any additional buses, with the system operating the same total of 28 morning and 27 afternoon buses currently required during weekday peak service. Maintaining the existing BUS fleet of 35 heavy-duty buses will allow the BUS to continue to have at least seven spare buses on hand, which represents a desirable “spare ratio” of 0.25. The following capital investments will be necessary over the next five years to achieve a fleet of 35 buses, maintain the transit system facilities, and establish a southwest transfer point in the Regency Mall area:

- A total of 20 buses are planned to be replaced between 2013 and 2017. A total of 14 vintage 1997 Nova buses that had exceeded their service life were recently replaced and the new buses were put in service in early 2013. The BUS used a Federal transportation grant of \$4.76 million for the

14 buses and City funding was provided for the required 20 percent match of \$1.19 million. Six additional buses are planned for replacement in 2016 and 2017, as part of a total of 10 Gillig buses that went into service in 2004, each with a service life of 12 years, that are planned to be replaced over a three-year period between 2016 and 2018. The remaining four buses would be replaced in 2018.

- Starting in 2014, the transit system will need to replace the seven paratransit buses that have been in service since 2009 with new paratransit buses. These buses typically have an estimated service life of about five years. Under the transit system's current Capital Improvement Plan, the City plans to purchase 10 new compressed natural gas (CNG) paratransit buses in 2014 at an estimated cost of \$100,000 per vehicle. The City plans to utilize a current City-owned CNG fueling facility, and does not expect significant additional costs to retrofit the facility to serve the new CNG paratransit buses.
- In order to establish a southwest transfer point, the City will need to lease or purchase land in the Regency Mall area and construct one or two large passenger shelters. The capital needs assume this will occur by 2014, and the City is currently discussing possible sites with the owner of Regency Mall.
- Various repairs, renovations, and upgrades to BUS facilities (currently scheduled in the transit system's Capital Improvement Plan) will be needed, including replacement bus cameras, a replacement fueling system at the Kentucky Street Complex, and funds for the repair or replacement of maintenance equipment.
- In addition, City and BUS staff identified a potential capital need associated with the existing park-ride lot located at IH 94 and STH 20 in the Town of Yorkville. Route No. 20 buses currently experience difficulties serving the lot due to cars parking illegally during times when the lot is filled above its current capacity of 76 vehicles. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) would be responsible for determining whether the lot would require expansion, which could possibly occur on adjacent County-owned land. Should an expansion be pursued, Federal capital assistance could cover 80 percent of the cost of the expansion, with the remaining 20 percent to be provided by WisDOT, the Town of Yorkville, and/or Racine County. WisDOT staff has indicated that the issue may be able to be resolved by other means, such as additional signage.

Table 7-4 shows the capital investment required for the recommended transit system, as well as the projected breakdown between Federal and local funding. The anticipated Federal share for capital funding is 80 percent, or \$8.78 million, over the five-year period, with \$4.76 million in Federal capital funding already obtained and used to purchase 14 new buses in 2013. The City of Racine's projected local share for the necessary capital investments would be \$2.20 million over the five-year period, of which \$1.19 million in City funding was already provided for the required 20 percent match for the 14 new buses purchased in 2013. It should be noted that historically Federal funding of 80 percent of transit system capital costs has been available; however, there is some uncertainty regarding the continuing availability of Federal transit capital assistance during the five-year planning period and beyond. Under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)—the two-year Federal transportation reauthorization bill which was passed in October of 2012 and expires in September of 2014—discretionary grant funding for fixed-route bus systems through Federal Section 5309 was replaced with a formula program through Federal Section 5339. There is some concern that Section 5339 funding levels may not provide an adequate level of funding for necessary capital expenditures. There is the possibility that the additional needed funding could be provided through other Federal programs, and there has also been discussion of creating a State of Wisconsin transit capital assistance program. Alternatively, the City may need to contribute a higher local share of funding for the necessary capital expenditures.

The plan recognizes the need to provide passenger shelters of an attractive design along BUS routes, but there are no capital expenditures for new passenger shelters included in the recommendations for the BUS over the next five years. Currently, the BUS has a total of 48 passenger shelters, which provide excellent coverage of stops serving facilities for seniors and persons with disabilities, stops with high boarding volumes, stops serving major passenger transfer points between routes and with other transit services, and stops in wide open space where waiting patrons are unprotected from harsh weather conditions. In addition, most of the 48 total shelters were recently constructed, including two existing shelters that were replaced and 27 new shelters that were added using a grant obtained in 2011 by the City of Racine through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative Program. Although capital expenditures for shelters are not currently recommended, Commission staff worked with City and BUS staff to prepare a priority listing of additional locations with high passenger boarding volumes that could be considered for future shelters. This list was developed using daily boarding passengers obtained from automatic passenger counts collected by the transit system during the week of April 1-7, 2012, and is presented in Table 7-5. Implementation of future shelters would depend on the ability to obtain additional Federal capital assistance funding and to secure the required local matching funds.

Table 7-4

**PROPOSED CAPITAL EQUIPMENT EXPENDITURES
 FOR THE BELLE URBAN SYSTEM: 2013-2017**

Year	Equipment or Project Description	Quantity	Unit Cost ^a	Total Cost ^a
2013	Replacement 35-foot Buses	14 ^b	\$425,000	\$5,950,000
	Maintenance & Operating Equipment ^c	--	--	120,000
	Subtotal	--	--	\$6,070,000
2014	Replacement 35-foot Buses	--	--	--
	Shelters, Lighting, and Improvements for Southwest Transfer Point	--	--	\$150,000
	Paratransit Bus Replacement	10	100,000	1,000,000
	Maintenance & Operating Equipment ^c	--	--	240,000
	Subtotal	--	--	\$1,390,000
2015	Replacement 35-foot Buses	--	--	--
	Paratransit Bus Replacement	--	--	--
	Replace Supervisory Van	1	45,000	45,000
	Replace Scheduling Software	1	160,000	160,000
	Maintenance & Operating Equipment ^c	--	--	102,000
	Subtotal	--	--	\$307,000
2016	Replacement 35-foot Buses	3	\$442,000	\$1,326,000
	Replace Asphalt Paving at Kentucky Street Complex	--	--	320,000
	Maintenance & Operating Equipment ^c	--	--	104,000
	Subtotal	--	--	\$1,750,000
2017	Replacement 35-foot Buses	3	\$451,000	\$1,353,000
	Maintenance & Operating Equipment ^c	--	--	106,000
	Subtotal	--	--	\$1,459,000
Total Capital Project Costs				\$10,976,000
Federal Capital Assistance Funds				\$8,781,000
Local Share of Costs				2,195,000
Average Annual Costs over Planning Period				
Total Costs.....				\$2,195,000
Federal Share.....				1,756,000
Local Share.....				439,000

^a Costs are expressed in estimated year of expenditure dollars.

^b These 14 buses were replaced using a Federal transportation grant of \$4.76 million, with the City of Racine providing the required 20 percent match of \$1.19 million, and the new buses were put into service in early 2013.

^c The maintenance and operating equipment expenditures include replacement bus cameras, a replacement fueling system at the Kentucky Street Complex, and funds for the repair or replacement of maintenance equipment.

Source: Racine Belle Urban System and SEWRPC.

Table 7-5

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR FUTURE PASSENGER SHELTERS ALONG BELLE URBAN SYSTEM ROUTES

Shelter Location	Route(s) Served	Direction of Travel	Average Daily Boarding Passengers ^a	Adjacent Land Use
Main St. at Tenth St.	1,3	South	38	Racine Masonic Center
Main St. at Fifth St.	1,7	South	31	Monument Square
Durand Ave. at Drexel Ave.	7	East	29	Gas station
Rapids Dr. at Mt. Pleasant St.	3	South	29	Horlick High School
Golf Ave. at Cecelia Pk. Dr.	3	South	22	Single-family residence
Goold St. at Mt. Pleasant St.	5	East	14	Single-family residence
Grand Ave. at Eleventh St.	7	West	14	Head Start Center
Sixteenth St. at Perry Ave.	3	West	14	Starbuck Middle School
Washington Ave. at Valley Dr.	4,20	West	14	Open church parking lot
Grand Ave. at Thirteenth St.	7	North	13	Single-family residence
Main St. at Eighth St.	1,3	North	12	Methodist Church
N. Memorial Dr. at Sixth St.	2	North	12	Open area
Sixteenth St. at Taylor Ave.	3	West	12	Single-family residence/furniture store
Washington Ave. at Warwick Way	3	East	12	Open car dealership parking lot
Byrd Ave. at Perry Ave.	86	West	11	Giese Elementary School
Douglas Ave. at Hagerer St.	1	North	11	Bookstore/apartment building
Byrd Ave. at Skyline Dr.	86	West	10	Single-family residence
Grand Ave. at Eighth St.	7	South	10	Open municipal courthouse parking lot
Lasalle St. at North St.	4	North	10	Single-family residence
Washington Ave. at Emmertson Rd.	3	East	10	Bank

^a Estimated based on total daily boarding passengers—including revenue, free, and transfer passengers—obtained from automatic passenger counts collected by the transit system from April 3 through 5, 2012.

Options for Service Improvements or Reductions if Funding Levels Change

The recommended plan for the BUS presented above was developed assuming the total transit operating budget would remain relatively flat over the five-year planning period and local funding also would need to remain at about the year 2012 funding level. Chapter VI of the plan presented a detailed evaluation of several potential desirable service improvements—which could be considered beyond the recommended changes above should additional funding become available—and additional possible service reductions and fare increases—should the City determine that it become necessary to further reduce the local funding that it provides to the transit system over the planning period. The year 2016—toward the end of the five-year planning period—was used for illustrative purposes as the year that the necessary additional funding for any of the service improvements is assumed to become available and as the year that any service reductions or fare increases would be implemented.

The following potential service improvements could be considered should additional funding become available:

1. Add service on the new Route No. 6 in one of two ways:
 - Provide a new branch west of Green Bay Road on Spring Street and Sunnyslope Drive during weekday peak periods.
 - Provide 30-minute service frequencies during weekday peak periods, resulting in common 30-minute frequencies on all regular routes during the peak periods.

2. Provide service to the Village of Sturtevant in one of two ways:
 - Extend Route No. 7 west of Oakes Road on Durand Avenue during weekday peak periods.
 - Provide shuttle service over Durand Avenue between Regency Mall and the Village of Sturtevant during weekday peak periods (using a BUS paratransit vehicle and driver).

3. Establish an express bus service between the Cities of Racine and Kenosha.

4. Extend Saturday service hours, providing later service on all routes recommended to operate on Saturday, extending service for an additional three hours from 6:40 p.m. to 9:40 p.m.

These service improvements could be considered and implemented at any time during the planning period if additional funding becomes available. If the maximum improvements were implemented—30-minute peak period service frequencies on Route No. 6, extend Route No. 7 to the Village of Sturtevant, establish an express bus service between the Cities of Racine and Kenosha, and extend Saturday service hours—the total estimated annual operating expenses for all improvements would be about \$1.2 million (year 2016 dollars), requiring an additional \$1.0 million in net operating assistance.

The following possible service reductions or fare increases could be considered if local funding needs to be reduced:

1. Eliminate Route No. 2 service on Saturdays.
2. Eliminate Route No. 1 south of the Transit Center after 6:30 p.m. on weeknights.
3. Eliminate Route No. 1 south of the Transit Center on Saturdays and/or Sundays.
4. Increase cash fares by \$0.25 (about 12 percent).

These service reductions and fare changes could be considered and implemented at any time during the planning period if local funding needs to be reduced or if additional funding is needed due to shortfalls in Federal and State aids. If all four service reductions or fare changes are implemented the amount of net operating assistance needed could be reduced by about \$291,000 (year 2016 dollars). An additional service reduction option evaluated in Chapter VI at the direction of City of Racine staff, that could be implemented should the system face even more severe funding problems, would involve cutting back from 30-minute peak period service frequencies to 60-minute service frequencies during all time periods. This service reduction would be expected to reduce the amount of total operating assistance needed by about \$720,000 (year 2013 dollars), with the City of Racine saving about \$170,000. It should be noted that this option represents a drastic and undesirable change to the level of service provided, but it does present an illustration of a potential system that would only provide essential services and could possibly serve as a foundation for future improvements if funding levels were to increase. As a less drastic option, the recommended route structure provides City and BUS staff the ability to selectively cut back individual routes to 60-minute all-day service frequencies—as opposed to all routes—because the routes would have uniform round-trip schedules.

City Recommendation 2:

Improve Coordination between City and County Paratransit Services

Currently, both the County and the City provide demand-response specialized transportation services east of IH 94. The City's Dial-A-Ride Transport (DART) is a Federally-mandated paratransit service for persons with disabilities provided in the area within three-quarters of a mile of the routes of the City bus system. DART serves people who cannot use the City's fixed-route service as a result of their physical or mental impairment. The County's demand-response transportation service provides transportation to persons with disabilities outside the DART service area, and also to seniors (without disabilities) within the DART service area.

In Chapter VI, County Sub-alternative 1B proposed that the County contract with the City DART paratransit to provide transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities east of IH 94, similar to how these services are provided in Kenosha County. This would create a single coordinated paratransit service for seniors and persons with disabilities, thereby making it easier for both seniors and persons with disabilities to travel in eastern Racine County because they would only have to deal with a single service provider. It would be a convenient, one-stop transportation service, meaning one phone number and one transportation provider, regardless of the passenger's trip origin and destination in the greater Racine area. Since many of the County's demand-response passenger trips start or end within the BUS service area, combining the service makes sense from an efficiency standpoint.

However, there were limited public comments supporting this concept, and it was recognized as being a very complex task for the City and County to undertake. There were also concerns over how the combined service would be funded. If it were operated by the drivers for the BUS, rather than the County's contracted service provider for demand response service, any efficiencies gained from having one service could be cancelled out by the higher cost per hour for the BUS. The BUS's costs per revenue hour for operating the City's DART paratransit service are more than twice that of the cost per revenue vehicle hour of the current private contactor (First Transit, Inc.) for the County's demand-response service. City of Racine staff expressed concern that a combined service may require an increase in the City's funding contribution to provide paratransit service. Racine County and the City of Racine would also need to reach agreement on how any unexpected increases in costs would be covered.

Recommendations

Given the above considerations and the complexities involved with combining paratransit services east of IH 94 in Racine County, the plan recommends that the City of Racine and Racine County work

incrementally to improve coordination between their services, which could have significant benefits to the County, the City, and to the seniors and persons with disabilities that use either paratransit service.

One area of coordination could be in attempting to address a gap that currently exists between the City and County paratransit services. The City's DART paratransit service provides specialized transportation to persons with disabilities for trips made entirely within 3/4 mile of City fixed-route, non-commuter service. The County's existing demand-response transportation service provides specialized transportation to persons with disabilities residing outside the City's DART paratransit service area, and also to seniors (without disabilities) within the DART paratransit service area. Given the way that the current service areas are defined, it would appear that trips by persons with disabilities from within the DART paratransit service area to outside the DART paratransit service area are not currently being served by either the City or the County. This type of unserved trip was identified in a public comment received regarding the plan alternatives from a person with a disability who resides in the City of Racine. The commenter indicated that neither public nor specialized transportation was available from their residence in the City of Racine to the Aging and Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC) in Ives Grove located just west of IH 94. Given this potential gap, the City and County should each examine potential locations not currently being served by either the City or County service—such as the ADRC in Ives Grove—and determine if demand to those locations would be anticipated. Should certain locations be identified with sufficient perceived demand, the County and City should pursue an agreement for which party would be responsible for serving those locations.

In addition, as part of the recommended coordination efforts, the plan recommends that the City and County work to improve coordination and collaboration between the call centers for the City's DART paratransit service and the County's demand-response transportation service. An initial step would involve reviewing current call center operations to determine the level of coordination between the City and County services, and areas of potential improvement. One possible improvement could be to have staff at the call center for each service educated on the eligibility and process for the other service. Staff at each call center would then be able to better instruct callers on how to schedule a trip using the other service. It may also be beneficial for City and County staff to prepare materials describing each service and how to schedule trips on each service, and display those materials prominently on each service's website and in other appropriate locations.

As the City and County work to improve coordination and collaboration, it may be desirable to work toward establishing an integrated call center using existing staff from either or both services. An

integrated call center would provide a single point of contact for information and/or dispatching for users of both the City DART paratransit service and the County demand-response transportation service. A call center could have benefits to the City and County as well as users of each service. Sharing a call center has the potential to reduce operating costs for the City and County services, as there should be efficiencies related to having each service represented in one shared location. Users would benefit from only needing to call one phone number to get information they need on either service, making it easier to use each service. The location for the call center, as well as how it should be staffed and what specific functions it should be responsible for performing, would be mutual decisions made by the City and County.

City Recommendation 3:

Improve Transportation to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Campus

In Chapter VI, Inter-County Alternative 2 presented three possible ways for improving transportation service between the City of Racine and the UW-Parkside campus in Kenosha County. Two sub-alternatives proposed providing local public transit service to the UW-Parkside campus and one sub-alternative proposed extending and increasing the existing University shuttle service, which is operated by the University Police within campus on weekdays when class is in session. The existing shuttle also makes two round-trips between the UW-Parkside campus and the McDonald's located at the intersection of Taylor Avenue and Meachem Road in the City of Racine (the terminus of BUS Route No. 1) as part of its daily route. The three sub-alternatives presented in Chapter VI were as follows:

- Sub-alternative 2A: Operate a shuttle between Regency Mall and UW-Parkside using a BUS paratransit vehicle
- Sub-alternative 2B: Extend the proposed BUS Route No. 1S to serve UW-Parkside
- Sub-alternative 2C: Extend and increase the existing UW-Parkside shuttle service

Under all three sub-alternatives, connecting to the proposed southwest transfer point at Regency Mall would provide access to more BUS routes. Each sub-alternative was proposed to operate with certain service frequencies. Sub-alternative 2A proposed that an extended BUS Route No. 1S would provide 15.5 weekday round-trips, Sub-alternative 2B proposed that a City shuttle would provide six weekday round-trips, and Sub-alternative 2C proposed that an extended and increased University shuttle would provide three weekday round-trips. Providing a higher frequency service, regardless of which service type is selected, has the benefits of providing better service to UW-Parkside and allowing convenient transfers to

Kenosha Area Transit (KAT) routes. Compatibility of each proposed service with existing services should also be a consideration. An extended BUS Route No. 1S may cause operational issues because the route would be longer than the other proposed BUS routes under City Recommendation 1 above. A City shuttle service would need to be scheduled into the operation of the Racine DART paratransit service.

In terms of ridership and financial performance, the extended BUS Route No. 1S proposed under Sub-alternative 2B would have significantly higher operating expenses than either Sub-alternative 2A or 2C, and would require additional local funding. While the City shuttle service proposed under Sub-alternative 2A would not represent the most desirable option for improving transportation to UW-Parkside, it would be a more affordable option than Sub-alternative 2B, as a BUS paratransit vehicle is less expensive to operate than an urban bus. The City would need to purchase an additional BUS paratransit vehicle for the City shuttle service, however, because the existing paratransit vehicle fleet already operates at capacity.

The improved University shuttle proposed under Sub-alternative 2C would be the least expensive option and would not require any local funding because the annual cost to operate the shuttle service would most likely be funded by the University's operating budget or student fees.

Recommendations

Given the considerations above and the funding constraints currently experienced by the City of Racine and the other municipalities served by the BUS—which are likely to continue throughout the five-year planning period—the plan does not recommend implementing a local public transit service at this time. The plan does, however, recommend that the City of Racine work with UW-Parkside to attempt to extend and increase the University shuttle service as proposed under Sub-Alternative 2C.

Specifically, the plan recommends that the City encourage the University to extend its two current round-trips between the campus and the City of Racine (by about 1.2 miles in each direction) from the McDonald's located at the intersection of Taylor Avenue and Meachem Road north to the proposed southwest transfer point at Regency Mall. The City should also encourage the University to operate an additional extended round-trip to the southwest transfer point during the midday period, resulting in a total of three daily round-trips.

While the improved University shuttle service would not involve the implementation of a local public transit service between the City of Racine and UW-Parkside, it would result in increased public transportation options accessible by UW-Parkside students and staff. This service improvement would

provide students and staff access to the four or five BUS routes proposed to serve the southwest transfer point, as opposed to existing connections only to BUS Route No. 1, which are not necessarily coordinated to allow transfers. The City should collaborate with the University to ensure that the improved University shuttle service is coordinated with the schedules of those BUS routes in order to allow transfers between the two services at the southwest transfer point. Ultimately, since the annual cost to operate an improved University shuttle service would most likely be funded by the University's operating budget or student fees, the University would need to determine whether to improve the University shuttle service.

City Recommendation 4:

Integrate Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha Commuter Bus Route with Belle Urban System Routes

In Chapter VI, Inter-County Alternative 1 proposed an increase to the service frequency of the commuter bus route currently operated by Wisconsin Coach Lines (WCL) between Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha. The increased service frequency would be expected to increase annual ridership by about 25 percent, but would be expected to increase the total annual operating expenses by about \$545,000, to \$1.98 million, requiring an estimated additional \$483,000 in total public operating assistance. Federal Section 5307 program funds and State Section 85.20 urban mass transit operating assistance program funds may be assumed to cover about \$275,000 of the additional total public operating assistance, resulting in an increase in required local match of about \$208,000. The additional local match would likely need to be provided by WCL or by the Cities of Racine and Kenosha. It was recognized that this additional local funding may not be available at this time given current financial constraints. In fact, due to the current financial constraints, WCL determined to reduce the number of weekday round-trips from eight to seven in May of 2012.

Recommendations

Given that current financial constraints are likely to continue throughout the five-year planning period, making it difficult for WCL or the Cities of Racine and Kenosha to provide any additional local funding, the plan does not recommend increasing the service frequency on the Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha commuter bus service at this time. However, the plan does recommend that the City of Racine take steps to integrate the route with existing BUS routes, which was suggested as part of Inter-County Alternative 1. These steps would promote coordination between commuter and local transit services by making it easier and more attractive to use the two services. The plan recommends that the City take the following three actions:

- Add the commuter route alignment to the BUS route map and request that the City of Kenosha also add the alignment to the KAT route map.
- Establish consistent charges for transfers between the commuter route and the local routes of the Racine and Kenosha transit systems.
- Provide information about the commuter route and its schedule at the Racine transit center, on the Kenosha and Racine transit system websites, and anywhere else information about the two Cities' transit systems is displayed.

FINAL RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE PLAN FOR RACINE COUNTY

The final recommended short-range transit plan for Racine County is based on the evaluation of the alternative transit service improvements proposed in detail in Chapter VI, and consideration of the public comments received on the alternative improvements. The final plan has also been prepared within the constraints of expected available funding. No substantial increase may be expected over the next five years in the Federal and State funding programs currently used by the County, although the County may be able to obtain some additional Federal and State funding by accessing programs they do not currently use. In addition, the plan recognizes that the County may not be expected to increase the funding it currently provides for transportation services over the next five years. The recommendations set forth in the plan for the County to pursue in order to provide or improve transportation services within the County, and between the County and surrounding counties, have been developed accordingly. These recommendations for the County are presented below.

County Recommendation 1:

Continue Current Approach to Meeting Transit Needs in Western Racine County

Background and Considerations

The Racine County Human Services Department currently provides demand-response transportation service for seniors and persons with disabilities outside the BUS paratransit service area, and for seniors (without disabilities) within the BUS paratransit service area. In Chapter VI, two service improvements were proposed that would replace and expand the existing eligibility-limited demand-response transportation service west of IH 94—County Sub-Alternative 1A (expand eligibility of County demand-response transportation service west of IH 94 to all Racine County Human Services clients) and County Alternative 2 (public shared-ride taxi service west of IH 94). The expanded eligibility under County Sub-

alternative 1A would substantially increase the ridership, amount of service, and cost of the demand-response service, without increasing the availability of Federal and State operating assistance, resulting in a significant increase in the required level of County funding. A shared-ride taxi service open to the general public under County Alternative 2 would be expected to generate even more ridership, approximately a tripling of the ridership on the existing County service west of IH 94. The miles and hours of service would need to increase significantly in order to accommodate these additional trips, resulting in annual operating expenses of nearly four times those of the existing service. Despite the increased operating expenses, the costs to operate a shared-ride taxi service to the County would likely be limited in the short term, because Federal and State transit assistance available to transit service open to the general public would be expected to cover about 58.5 to 60.5 percent of operating expenses. In the long term (beyond the five-year planning period), the operating budget of the shared-ride taxi program would be expected to grow for several more years, as ridership continues to increase along with the service levels to accommodate that ridership. Eventually, a shared-ride taxi service may be expected to require a much higher level of County funding than the existing service, similar to the experiences of operating public shared-ride taxi systems in Ozaukee and Washington Counties.

Recommendations

Given the potential to require significant additional County funding during or beyond the five-year plan period, County Sub-Alternative 1A and County Alternative 2 are not recommended at this time. Instead, the plan recommends that the County continue the current approach to meeting transit needs in western Racine County, which involves implementing transportation services on a trial basis in communities with anticipated demand. After evaluating the performance of each trial service, the services that experience high enough demand should be continued and those that experience low demand should be eliminated. Recently, the County has used this approach to implement several new transportation services within and between communities in the County. One such example was the Racine County Link, a cross-county shuttle service operated from June of 2012 through January of 2013, funded with Federal Section 5317 New Freedom funding. The Link experienced low ridership and did not receive Section 5317 funding for 2013, so it was subsequently eliminated. Another more successful example has been the Shuttling People Around Racine County (SPARC) program initiated by the County in 2011. Three initial SPARC shuttle routes were attempted in the Burlington, Mt. Pleasant, and Waterford areas. In August of 2012, the County determined to eliminate the Waterford and Mt. Pleasant shuttles due to low ridership, but decided to increase service on the Burlington shuttle, which had experienced higher ridership. County Recommendation 4 below recommends that the County continue to operate the SPARC shuttle program, monitoring the level of County funding required to operate the service as it does currently and possibly

seeking Federal and State transit operating assistance in the future should there be enough demand by the general public.

County Recommendation 2:

Establish Commuter Bus Service between Burlington and Milwaukee

Background and Considerations

In Chapter VI, Inter-County Alternative 4 proposed that the County establish a commuter bus service between downtown Burlington and downtown Milwaukee over STH 36 and IH 43. This service would address a need for transportation service between western Racine County and the City of Milwaukee, which was identified in an evaluation of existing transit services in Chapter V and comments made at public meetings and discussion groups during development of the plan. Participants in the development of the Racine County Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan specifically indicated that individuals commuting from western Racine County to the Milwaukee central business district (CBD) along the STH 36 corridor needed public transportation services and amenities, including park-ride facilities along STH 36, between western Racine County and the Milwaukee CBD.

Recommendations

The plan recommends that Racine County establish a commuter bus service between downtown Burlington and downtown Milwaukee over STH 36 and IH 43. In order to establish the service with limited financial risk to the County, the County could apply for a grant through the Federal Highway Administration Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, which could fund about 80 percent of the total cost to operate the service for its first three years as a demonstration project. The CMAQ grant funds would require a local match from the County of at least 20 percent, but passenger revenues could be used as local matching funds. Ridership forecasts indicate that passenger revenues may be enough to cover most if not all of the required 20 percent local match.

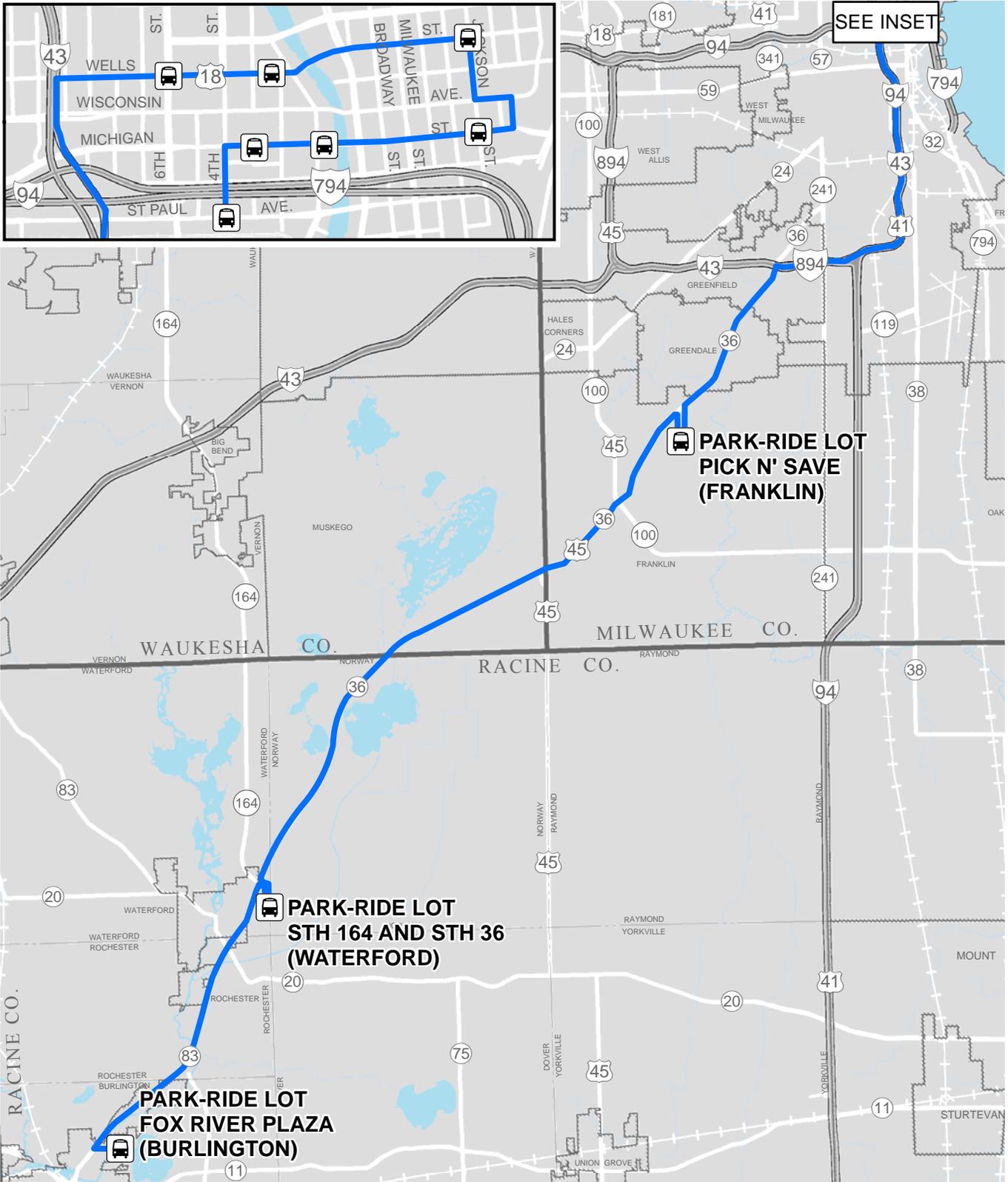
Following the three-year demonstration period, the service should qualify to receive rural transit operating assistance through the State Section 85.20 transit operating assistance program and Federal Section 5311 non-urbanized area formula grant program, with the County required to provide local matching funds. The combination of Federal and State funds available through these programs may be expected to cover about 60.5 percent of operating expenses in 2013. Alternatively, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) may determine that the service should instead receive urban transit operating assistance through the State Section 85.20 program and Federal Section 5307 urbanized area formula

grant program. The combination of Federal and State funds available through these programs may be expected to cover about 55 percent of operating expenses in 2013. When it comes time to transition from CMAQ grant funding to the Federal and State transit operating assistance programs, the County could determine whether to continue or eliminate the service based on its performance and the availability of the necessary level of County funding.

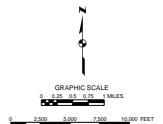
The recommended commuter bus service as proposed would provide two round-trips on weekdays, with two one-way trips from Burlington to Milwaukee during the morning peak period and two one-way trips from Milwaukee to Burlington during the afternoon peak period. Racine County could contract for operation of the route from a private transit operator much like the manner in which Waukesha County contracts for commuter bus service. The proposed route alignment would operate over STH 36 between Burlington and downtown Milwaukee with the characteristics shown on Map 7-3. The route would begin at a proposed park-ride lot at the Fox River Plaza in the City of Burlington and continue north along STH 36 to the proposed park-ride lot southeast of the intersection of STH 164 and STH 36 in the Town of Waterford. The bus would continue north on STH 36, making one stop at a proposed park-ride lot at the Pick n' Save at Rawson Avenue and South 76th Street in the City of Franklin, before merging onto IH 43/IH 894 at Loomis Road and continuing on to the Milwaukee CBD over the freeway system. The bus would exit off IH 43 at N. 10th Street and operate in a local distribution mode over W. and E. Wells Street between N. 10th Street and N. Jackson Street, over N. Jackson Street, E. Wisconsin Avenue, and N. Cass Street to E. Michigan Street, over E. and W. Michigan Street to N. 4th Street, then over N. 4th Street to W. St. Paul Avenue, ending near the Milwaukee Intermodal (Amtrak) Station. It should be noted that this is one potential route alignment, and that the County could consider other route variations depending on demand. For example, possible variations on the route alignment could be to operate the route over S. 27th Street in the Cities of Greenfield and Milwaukee or to operate the route to the industrial and business parks along W. Ryan Road/STH 100 in the City of Franklin.

Two of the three proposed park-ride lots—at the Fox River Plaza in Burlington and at the Pick n' Save in Franklin—would require lease agreements as they would be located in existing privately-owned parking lots. The third proposed park-ride lot—at the intersection of STH 164 and STH 36 in Waterford—would need to be constructed. The County could apply for a Federal CMAQ grant to fund about 80 percent of the total cost to construct the proposed park-ride lot, along with a local match from the County of up to 20 percent. Timing for potentially obtaining a CMAQ grant is discussed below. Commission staff estimates that constructing a park-ride facility with 50 parking spaces would cost about \$350,000 (year 2012

BURLINGTON-MILWAUKEE COMMUTER BUS SERVICE: PROPOSED ROUTE ALIGNMENT



- PROPOSED BURLINGTON-MILWAUKEE COMMUTER BUS ROUTE ALIGNMENT
- PROPOSED COMMUTER BUS STOP
(ADDITIONAL POSSIBLE PARK-RIDE LOT COULD BE CONSIDERED IN WIND LAKE AREA)



dollars). In addition to the three proposed park-ride lots, the County may also want to consider a fourth park-ride lot in the Wind Lake area of western Racine County.

Table 7-6 presents the service characteristics of the recommended commuter bus service between Burlington and Milwaukee. The route length of the service would be about 36 miles one-way from the Fox River Plaza in Burlington to the Milwaukee Intermodal (Amtrak) Station in downtown Milwaukee. The service would consist of two round-trips each weekday, scheduled to arrive in the Milwaukee CBD around 6:55 a.m. and 7:55 a.m. and depart for return trips to Burlington around 4:05 p.m. and 5:05 p.m. The travel time between Burlington and Milwaukee on the bus route would be about 75 minutes. Table 7-7 presents a possible weekday schedule that the County could consider for the route. The commuter bus fares could be set at \$3.25 between Burlington and Milwaukee, with discounts provided to students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and children.

Performance and Costs

Table 7-8 presents projections of the ridership and financial performance of the recommended commuter bus service between Burlington and Milwaukee. Based on an assumption that about 1.2 percent of the approximately 2,010 workers that reside in western Racine County and commute to the City of Milwaukee would use the recommended commuter bus service, the service could be expected to generate about 50 revenue passengers per weekday in its initial year of service. Annual ridership would be expected to increase each year, with an estimated 80 revenue passengers by the fifth year of operations. In the fifth year, about 20,500 revenue passengers would be expected to use the commuter bus service, which would require 144 weekday revenue vehicle miles and five weekday revenue vehicle hours of service.

The projections assume that the County would initiate the commuter bus service as a demonstration project funded with Federal funds potentially available through the CMAQ grant program, which could fund about 80 percent of the total cost to operate the service for its first three years. In terms of timing for a possible CMAQ grant, projects have already been selected for CMAQ funding through 2014. The next selection of projects, initiated in the Spring of 2013, will likely allocate CMAQ funding through 2017 or 2018, so realistically the County should not expect to be able to initiate the recommended commuter bus service using CMAQ funding until that time.

Commission staff estimates the cost of providing the service for the first full year would be about \$203,800 (year 2013 dollars). Assuming a three percent annual inflation rate, operating expenses would

Table 7-6

**RECOMMENDED SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS OF
 BURLINGTON-MILWAUKEE COMMUTER BUS SERVICE**

Service Characteristic	Commuter Bus Service between Burlington & Milwaukee (2017)
Round-trip Route Length (miles)	72
Round-trip Travel Time (minutes)	150
Service Hours	
Weekday (a.m.)	5:39 a.m. - 7:55 a.m.
Weekday (p.m.)	4:05 p.m. - 6:22 p.m.
Saturday	--
Sunday	--
Number of Trips	
Inbound on weekdays (a.m.)	2
Outbound on weekdays (p.m.)	2
Saturday	--
Sunday	--
Passenger Fares	\$3.25 Base Adult Cash Fare
Vehicle Requirements	
Weekday	(2) 40-foot buses
Saturday	--
Sunday	--

Source: SEWRPC.

Table 7-7

POSSIBLE WEEKDAY SCHEDULE FOR BURLINGTON-MILWAUKEE COMMUTER BUS SERVICE

Morning: Inbound from Burlington to Milwaukee

Burlington	Waterford	Franklin	Milwaukee				
Park-Ride: STH 36 & Fox River Plaza	Park-Ride: STH 36 & STH 164	Park-Ride: STH 36 & Rawson Avenue	Wells & 3rd Street	Wells & Jackson	Wisconsin & Cass	Michigan & Plankinton	Michigan & 4th Street
5:39 a.m.	5:53	6:21	6:47	6:49	6:51	6:54	6:55
6:39 a.m.	6:53	7:21	7:47	7:49	7:51	7:54	7:55

Afternoon: Outbound from Milwaukee to Burlington

Milwaukee					Burlington	Waterford	Franklin
Wells & 6th Street	Wells & Jackson	Wisconsin & Cass	Michigan & Plankinton	Michigan & 4th Street	Park-Ride: STH 36 & Fox River Plaza	Park-Ride: STH 36 & STH 164	Park-Ride: STH 36 & Rawson Avenue
4:05 p.m.	4:09	4:11	4:14	4:15	4:40	5:08	5:22
5:05 p.m.	5:09	5:11	5:14	5:15	5:40	6:08	6:22

Source: SEWRPC.

Table 7-8

**RIDERSHIP AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF
 BURLINGTON-MILWAUKEE COMMUTER BUS SERVICE**

Operating Characteristic	Three-Year CMAQ Grant Demonstration Period		Post-CMAQ Demonstration Period
	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5 ^a
Annual Revenue Passengers	12,800	18,400	20,500
Service Provided			
Annual Revenue Vehicle Hours	1,280	1,280	1,280
Annual Revenue Vehicle Miles	36,900	36,900	36,900
Costs and Revenues			
Total Annual Operating Expenses ^b	\$203,800	\$216,200	\$229,600
Total Annual Operating Revenues	35,400	50,900	56,600
Potential Sources of Public Operating Assistance			
Federal CMAQ Grant Share of Operating Expenses	80.0%	80.0%	--
Federal CMAQ Grant Amount	\$163,000	\$165,300	--
Federal/State Share of Operating Expenses	--	--	58.5%
Federal/State Transit Operating Assistance	--	--	\$134,300
Other/Local Match ^c	5,400	--	38,700
Total	\$168,400	\$165,300	\$173,000
Service Effectiveness and Efficiency			
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	10.0	14.4	16.0
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Mile	0.35	0.50	0.56
Expense per Passenger	\$15.92	\$11.75	\$11.21
Revenue per Passenger	2.76	2.76	2.76
Operating Assistance per Passenger	\$12.73	\$8.98	\$8.45
Percent of Expenses Recovered through Revenues	17%	24%	25%

^a The table displays the forecast ridership and estimated public funding in the fifth year of operations, assuming fully developed ridership.

^b The operating expenses were calculated based on Wisconsin Coach Lines, Inc. operating costs for the existing Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha commuter bus route. In 2013, the cost per revenue vehicle mile was estimated to be about \$5.53, increasing at an assumed rate of inflation of three percent per year to \$6.23 in 2017.

^c The "Other/Local Match" refers to public funding provided by Racine County.

Source: SEWRPC.

increase to about \$216,200 (year 2015 dollars) in the third year and to about \$229,600 (year 2017 dollars) in the fifth year. Annual passenger revenues would be expected to increase from about \$35,400 in the first year to \$50,900 in the third year and to \$56,600 in the fifth year. Given these estimates, and the fact that passenger revenues may be used to provide the required 20 percent local matching funds for a CMAQ grant, the need for County funding would likely be limited during the first three years. As the projections indicate, passenger revenues in the first year may not be quite enough to completely provide the 20 percent local matching funds, but would be expected to cover the 20 percent match in subsequent years.

Beginning in the fourth year of operations, the commuter bus service is assumed to be funded through the Federal Section 5311 program and the State Section 85.20 mass transit operating assistance program. As previously indicated, there is a possibility that the service could also be funded through the Federal Section 5307 program, which would be expected to cover a slightly lower percent of operating expenses. It is assumed that continuation of the service beyond the demonstration period would be dependent on actual service performance and the availability of County funding to provide the required local matching funds for the Federal and State operating assistance funds. Assuming annual operating expenses totaling about \$229,600 in the fifth year of operations (year 2017 dollars), the County would need to provide estimated local matching funds totaling about \$38,700.

County Recommendation 3:

Improve Coordination between City and County Paratransit Services

This recommendation is described in more detail under City Recommendation 2 above, which recommends that the City of Racine and Racine County work together to improve coordination between their existing paratransit services, which could have significant benefits to the County, the City, and to the seniors and persons with disabilities that use either paratransit service. As part of the recommended coordination efforts, the plan recommends that the City and County work together to determine the trip origins and destinations that are not currently served by either the City or County paratransit services, but for which demand may be expected, and to pursue an agreement for which party would be responsible for serving trips to each location. The City and County could also work together to examine the trips each currently provides to determine if there would be a more efficient way of providing them.

The plan further recommends that the City and County collaborate on the establishment of an integrated call center using existing staff that would provide a single point of contact for information and/or dispatching for users of both the City DART paratransit services and the County demand-response

transportation services. An initial step would involve reviewing current call center operations to determine the level of coordination between the City and County services, and areas of potential improvement. The next step would be for the City and County to work together to identify potential locations for an integrated call center and determine how the call center would be staffed and what specific functions the call center should be responsible for performing.

County Recommendation 4:

Continue Existing County Shuttle Service and Monitor Required Level of County Funding

Background and Considerations

The County's existing SPARC shuttle service is aimed at providing transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities in areas not served by public transit, although it does not have any formal eligibility restrictions and it allows the general public to use the service as space permits. In Chapter VI, County Sub-alternative 1C proposed that the County continue to fund and pursue refinements to the existing shuttle service, and operate the shuttle service as a public transit service open to the general public. There were a significant number of public comments received in support of the existing Burlington shuttle service and in opposition to operating the shuttle service as public transit. The comments primarily cited concerns that the County would not be able to provide the same level of personalized service as the current service if the County were to operate the shuttle service as public transit. In response to those concerns, it should be noted that under Sub-alternative 1C, the County could continue to contract with a private operator to provide the same level of personalized service that is currently being provided.

Operating the shuttle service as a public transit service open to the general public would have the potential to reduce the level of County funding required to operate the service. The service would be eligible to receive rural transit operating assistance through the Federal Section 5311 non-urbanized area formula grant program and State Section 85.20 transit operating assistance program. The combination of Federal and State funds available through these programs may be expected to cover about 55 to 60 percent of the annual operating expenses of a public shuttle service during the five-year plan period. The local share of the operating assistance for the shuttle could come from the combination of the State Section 85.21 specialized transportation assistance allocation to the County and the County's required match for the 85.21 program funds. Commission staff estimated that the combination of these funding sources would be expected to limit the County's annual share of operating expenses to about \$8,000 between 2013 and 2017—compared to County funding for the existing shuttle service of about \$13,000 in

2011. The County could choose to “bank” the savings for possible future use or use the savings to expand the current service to operate on weekends.

An additional consideration related to operating the shuttle service as public transit is the need for public transit operators to meet certain Federal requirements. One such requirement is that the private operator of a public shuttle service would need to be selected by the County through a competitive bid process. Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations also require public transit operators to use vehicles that are accessible to persons with disabilities, including those using wheelchairs. If the County were to use Federal transit assistance to fund the shuttle service proposed under Sub-alternative 1C, the operator of the shuttle service would need to use wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The County’s current contract with Kenson Enterprises, the private operator of the SPARC shuttle service, includes the costs for vehicles provided by Kenson, which are not currently wheelchair accessible. To meet the Federal ADA requirements, the County could require the contract operator of the service to use accessible vehicles under its service contract, which could potentially increase the cost to operate the service. Alternatively, the County could purchase accessible vehicles with Federal capital assistance and provide those vehicles to the contract operator for a nominal fee. For the Burlington SPARC shuttle (and any other shuttle implemented in a non-urbanized area), the County could apply through the FTA Section 5311 non-urbanized area funding program. The County may also be able to apply through the FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program under MAP-21, which makes capital funding available for services that provide public transportation service to seniors and persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the ADA. Federal capital assistance, if obtained from either program, would cover 80 percent of the cost of vehicle purchases. It should be noted that there is often more competition for Federal capital funding than the amount of funding that is available, so it is not guaranteed that Federal capital funding from either program would be available at the time the County needs to purchase vehicles.

Another important consideration is the additional administrative responsibilities that County staff would need to be prepared to take on in order to meet the requirements associated with using Federal transit operating and capital assistance funds. Commission staff recognizes that the necessary additional staff time would have the potential to increase costs, but as noted above, the availability of Federal and State transit operating assistance funds would be expected to reduce the County’s annual share of operating expenses compared to that of the existing shuttle service.

Recommendations

Given the public comments expressing overwhelming opposition to the County operating the shuttle service as public transit and the potential additional responsibilities and costs needed to meet Federal requirements, the plan recommends that the County continue to operate the shuttle service as it does currently, focused on serving seniors and persons with disabilities in areas not served by public transit and allowing the general public to use the service as space permits. However, the County should monitor the level of County funding required to operate the service and could revisit the possibility of operating the shuttle service as public transit open to the general public if Federal capital funding becomes more readily available and if the existing shuttle service can no longer effectively accommodate members of the general public.

County Recommendation 5:

Establish Guidelines for Vanpool Programs in Anticipation of Future Demand

Background and Considerations

In Chapter VI, County Alternative 3 presented two ways that the County could coordinate, or encourage, the formation of vanpools for workers with long commutes for which public transportation is not available. Under Sub-alternative 3A, the County would purchase vans and administer a vanpool program with County staff. Under Sub-alternative 3B, the County would encourage and promote the use of vanpools through a private operator. Given the recent experience with vanpools in Waukesha County, and the fact that limited public comments expressed support for a potential vanpool program, it is recommended that the County proceed with caution when determining whether and how to coordinate or encourage vanpools. Around 2009, Waukesha County terminated a bus route serving a large industrial business park in the City of New Berlin and subsequently purchased eight minivans with Federal American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) stimulus funding, with the intention of providing a different transportation option for the employees of those areas. The minivans were delivered at the beginning of 2011, but the County was unable to find enough employers and groups of employees willing to use the vans to justify operation of a vanpool program. Waukesha County has since terminated its vanpool program and has sold the vans.

Recommendations

The plan recommends that the County not pursue formation of vanpools at this time, but that the County apply guidelines for what would be desirable to start a vanpool program, in the event there becomes demand for vanpools in the future. Proposed guidelines for the County to use are as follows:

- Vanpool eligibility should be limited to individuals with work trips that start or end in Racine County that cannot be made on existing public transit systems;
- Vanpools should have at least five members per van commuting together to and from work;
- Vanpools should serve workers with long work commutes, typically at least 15 miles in length;
- Vanpools should serve workers who share a single employer or who work in an area with a concentrated group of employers with similar shift start- and end- times; and
- Vanpools should serve workers who live near each other or who can independently travel to a common departure points, such as a park-ride lot.

With the above guidelines established, the County should wait to pursue formation of a vanpool program until interest is expressed by a group of employers or employees. Interested employers could be located in Racine County or they could potentially be employers located in Kenosha or Milwaukee Counties that have Racine County residents as employees. If sufficient interest is expressed, the County could minimize its financial risk by working with a private vanpool provider. The private provider would use fees charged to members of the vanpools to cover the cost of the vans and program administration. As monthly user fees would likely be significantly higher under a private vanpool provider than if the program were to be run by County staff, the County could choose to subsidize some of the user fees in the program, or to form a partnership with employers who are willing to contribute to part of the cost of the service.

PLAN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Plan Adoption

Adoption or endorsement of the recommended Racine County Public Transit Plan is important to ensuring a common understanding among the concerned units and agencies of government and to enable the staffs of those governments to work cooperatively toward plan implementation. Accordingly, the following plan adoption actions are recommended:

- ***City of Racine***

The City of Racine Common Council should act to formally adopt the plan as a guide to the provision of transit services in the City and environs. Importantly, this action would not commit the City to implement any of the recommended service changes, but would indicate that the City agrees the plan would serve as a valuable reference document. The adoption action should be certified to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission with a request that the plan be incorporated into the regional transportation system plan.

- ***Racine County***

The Racine County Board of Supervisors should act to formally adopt the plan as a guide to the provision of transit services in Racine County. Importantly, this action would not commit the County to implement any of the recommended service changes, but would indicate that the County agrees the plan would serve as a valuable reference document. The adoption action should be certified to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission with a request that the plan be incorporated into the regional transportation system plan.

- ***Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission***

Upon receipt of notification of adoption of the plan from the City of Racine and Racine County, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission should adopt the plan as an amendment and extension of the regional transportation system plan and formally certify such adoption to all of the local units of government in the study area, to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and to the Federal Transit Administration.

- ***Wisconsin Department of Transportation***

Upon receipt of the certification by the Regional Planning Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation should act to endorse the plan as a guide for the programming, administration, and granting of State transit assistance funds for the City of Racine and Racine County transit systems.

- ***Federal Transit Administration***

Upon endorsement of the plan by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration should endorse the plan as a guide for the programming, administration, and granting of Federal transit funds for the City of Racine and Racine County transit systems.

- ***Local Units of Government***

Upon receipt of the certified plan, the concerned city, village, and town boards in Racine County should act to adopt the plan, thereby indicating support to the City of Racine and Racine County in the implementation of that plan. Such actions on the parts of the communities concerned would indicate general agreement with services proposed under the plan.

Plan Implementation

The City of Racine will have the primary responsibility for implementing the recommended transit plan for the Belle Urban System, as the system's owner and operator, and for the additional City recommendations presented above. Racine County will have the primary responsibility for implementing the recommended transit plan for Racine County. The City and County actions should include the following:

- ***Belle Urban System Service Changes***

Subject to the approval of the Transit and Parking Commission of the City of Racine Common Council, City and Belle Urban System staff will need to prepare detailed operating plans which refine the service changes to the Belle Urban System proposed by the recommended plan. The refinements included in these detailed operating plans should address running time issues that may be expected on certain proposed routes, and ensure that any new developments and land uses in and around the City of Racine following the plan's completion are appropriately served. The detailed operating plans will require Common Council approval prior to implementation of any significant changes to the transit system. The City should also work with the owners of Regency Mall to find a suitable location to accommodate the construction of a transfer facility in the Mall area and work with the Town of Yorkville and the Villages of Caledonia, Mt. Pleasant, and Sturtevant to re-examine the methodology currently utilized by the City to distribute the local share of the necessary public assistance for the Belle Urban System.

- ***Coordination between City and County Paratransit Services***

The City of Racine and Racine County should undertake a cooperative effort to improve coordination between the separate demand-response specialized transportation services provided by the City and County. A first step should include examining potential locations not currently being served by either service, and if locations are identified that have sufficient perceived demand, pursuing an agreement for which party would be responsible for serving those locations. The City and County should review their current call center operations to determine the level of

coordination between their services, and identify areas of potential improvement. Eventually, the City and County may want to consider establishing an integrated call center using existing staff from either or both services.

- ***Transportation to UW-Parkside***

To encourage UW-Parkside to extend and increase its existing shuttle service, City and Belle Urban System staff will need to initiate communications with University officials and determine the level of interest and any requirements by the University for pursuing this improvement. Prior to implementation of an improved University shuttle service, City and Belle Urban System staff should provide to University officials the precise schedules of the Belle Urban System routes that would serve the proposed southwest transfer point in order to ensure that the schedules for the two services are coordinated and to allow transfers between the two services.

- ***Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha Commuter Bus Route***

City of Racine staff should work with the private operator—Wisconsin Coach Lines, Inc. (Coach USA)—of the commuter bus route between Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha to integrate the route with existing Belle Urban System routes and encourage the City of Kenosha to do the same. The actions to be pursued for the Belle Urban System, and encouraged for the Kenosha Area Transit system, should include adding the commuter route alignment to the route maps for the local transit systems, establishing consistent charges for transfers between the commuter route and local routes, and providing information about the commuter route and its schedule at any locations where information about the local transit systems is displayed. This should include providing a link for the commuter route on the websites for the local transit systems.

- ***Racine County Transportation Services***

The plan does not recommend significant changes to the transportation services currently provided by the Racine County Human Services Department, including the County demand-response transportation service limited to seniors and persons with disabilities and the Shuttling People Around Racine County (SPARC) program. It is recommended that the County continue these services, while approaching on a trial basis the provision of new transportation services in western Racine County communities that would be expected to have demand. The County should monitor the level of County funding required to operate the existing shuttle service and consider Federal and State transit operating assistance in the future if the shuttle service can no longer effectively accommodate members of the general public. The County should also apply

guidelines for what would be desirable to start a vanpool program, in the event there becomes demand for vanpools in the future.

- ***Commuter Bus Service between Burlington and Milwaukee***

Subject to the approval of the Racine County Board of Supervisors, County staff should pursue the establishment of a commuter bus service between downtown Burlington and downtown Milwaukee over STH 36 and IH 43. The County should apply for a grant through the Federal Highway Administration Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, which could fund about 80 percent of the total cost to operate the service for its first three years as a demonstration project. The CMAQ grant funds would require a local match from the County of at least 20 percent, but passenger revenues could be used as local matching funds. Prior to applying for Federal CMAQ funds, the County should determine a specific route alignment and locations for park-ride lots along the route and for stops in downtown Milwaukee. For park-ride lots located in existing privately-owned parking lots, the County would need lease agreements. To construct new park-ride lots, the County could apply for a Federal CMAQ grant to fund about 80 percent of the total cost, with a required local match from the County of up to 20 percent. To select the provider of the recommended commuter bus service, County staff will need to undertake one or more competitive procurement processes. The procurement actions should be structured to meet all Federal and State requirements. Following the three-year demonstration period, the County would need to determine whether to continue or eliminate the service based on its performance and the availability of the necessary level of County funding.

- ***Public Hearings***

Federal regulations require transit systems using Federal funds to provide the opportunity for comment through public hearings prior to the implementation of significant service and fare changes. The City of Racine may need to conduct one or more public hearings for the specific service changes identified under the recommended plan and refined by City and Belle Urban System staff. Racine County may also need to conduct one or more public hearings should the County determine to pursue implementation of any services that would use Federal funds.

- ***Federal and State Grant Applications***

The City of Racine—and Racine County if any services are implemented that require Federal and State transit operating funds—should prepare annual operating budgets to support applications for the Federal and State funds needed over the planning period to implement the recommended plan.

Such applications would need to be prepared annually on a schedule that meets the requirements of the agencies concerned.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the recommended public transit plan for the City of Racine and Racine County for the years 2013-2017. The plan includes four recommendations specific to the City of Racine and five recommendations specific to Racine County. These recommendations are summarized below.

The City of Racine recommendations include:

1. Restructure the Routes of the Belle Urban System

The plan recommends that over the next five years, the City of Racine should pursue a revised structure for its regular routes that addresses the key issues and inefficiencies in the system identified during plan development. The revised route structure recommended for the Belle Urban System (BUS) would accomplish this through the combining of poor-performing routes, the reconfiguring of routes to serve recent development, and the equalizing of route running times between the Corinne Reid-Owens Transit Center and the outlying route endpoints. Associated with the revised route structure, the plan also recommends that routes be designed to improve transfers at the southwest transfer point proposed under the plan to be constructed in the Regency Mall area.

The premise of the revised route structure recommended in this final plan is to establish a round-trip running time of 120 minutes for all regular routes serving the Transit Center. Achieving these equalized round-trip running times of 120 minutes would require segments of some routes that serve the northern part of the City to be longer and require segments of some routes that serve the southern part of the City to be shorter. These equalizing running times would have significant benefits, allowing all regular routes to “pulse” at the Transit Center on each trip, resulting in a more understandable midday schedule, and reducing some of the excessive layover times currently experienced during evenings and weekends. Nearly all of the regular routes in the plan’s revised route structure would have peak service frequencies of 30 minutes and off-peak service frequencies of 60 minutes, allowing the routes to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip. The plan assumes the reduced service hours established in January 2012 would be maintained.

The plan should be used as a guide by City and BUS staff, recognizing that they will need to make refinements to the revised route structure recommended under the plan. These refinements may involve addressing potential running time difficulties on some routes as identified by City and BUS staff, which would make it difficult for those routes to pulse with the other routes. As such, the plan identifies possible solutions for addressing the running time difficulties anticipated by City and BUS staff and accomplishing the plan's ultimate goal of achieving consistent schedules for each route so that each is able to pulse at the Transit Center on each trip.

At the direction of the City of Racine, the recommended plan for the BUS is "financially-constrained," keeping the total annual transit operating budget relatively flat over the five-year planning period, and maintaining the local share of the necessary operating assistance between about \$1.52 and \$1.65 million. The plan recommends that representatives from the City of Racine, Town of Yorkville, and Villages of Caledonia, Mt. Pleasant, and Sturtevant, meet to discuss whether and how to modify the current methodology for distributing this local share among the communities receiving service.

The annual miles and hours of service under the plan would be about five percent lower than the miles and hours in the 2012 budget. Accordingly, total operating costs for the recommended system would decrease by about three percent in the first year, from \$7.14 million in the 2012 budget to \$6.91 million, increasing with inflation to \$7.33 million by the end of the five-year planning period. Ridership is expected to increase by about one percent per year, from the current estimate of 1.06 million revenue passengers in 2012 to 1.11 million revenue passengers by the fifth year of operating under the recommended system, based on the potential for the recommended route structure to make the system more attractive to existing and potential riders.

Capital investments under the plan involve maintaining the existing BUS fleet of 35 heavy-duty buses and the existing transit system facilities and establishing a southwest transfer point in the Regency Mall area. The anticipated Federal share for capital funding is 80 percent of total costs, or \$8.78 million, over the five-year period. About \$4.76 million in Federal capital funding has already been obtained and was used to purchase 14 new buses in 2013. The City of Racine's projected local share for the necessary capital investments would be \$2.20 million over the five-year period, of which \$1.19 million in City funding was already provided in 2013 as the required 20 percent match for the 14 new buses.

The recommended plan for the BUS was developed assuming the total transit operating budget would remain relatively flat over the five-year planning period and local funding also would need to remain at about the year 2012 funding level. The plan also identifies several potential desirable service improvements—which could be considered beyond the recommended changes should additional funding become available—and additional possible service reductions and fare increases—should the City determine that it become necessary to further reduce the local funding that it provides to the transit system over the planning period.

2. Improve Coordination between City and County Paratransit Services

The plan recommends that the City of Racine and Racine County work incrementally to improve coordination between their paratransit services provided east of IH 94. One area of coordination would involve the City and County investigating potential gaps between their service areas and making sure one party provides service to any locations with sufficient perceived demand that are not currently being served. The plan also recommends that the City and County work to improve coordination and collaboration between the call centers for each service, perhaps working toward eventually establishing an integrated call center that would provide a single point of contact for information and/or dispatching for users of both the City and County services.

3. Improve Transportation to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Campus

The plan recommends that the City of Racine work with UW-Parkside to attempt to extend and increase the existing University shuttle service. The existing shuttle makes two round-trips between the UW-Parkside campus and the intersection of Taylor Avenue and Meachem Road in the City of Racine as part of its daily route. The City should encourage the University to extend these two round-trips north to the proposed southwest transfer point at Regency Mall. The City should also encourage the University to operate an additional extended round-trip to the southwest transfer point during the midday period, resulting in a total of three daily round-trips. This service improvement would provide students and staff access to the four or five BUS routes proposed to serve the southwest transfer point. The City should work with the University to coordinate schedules in order to allow transfers between the two services.

4. Integrate Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha Commuter Bus Route with BUS Routes

The plan recommends that the City of Racine take steps to integrate the existing Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha commuter bus service with existing BUS routes. These steps would promote coordination between commuter and local transit services by making it easier and more attractive

to use the two services. Three recommended actions include adding the commuter route alignment to the BUS and KAT route maps; establishing consistent charges for transfers between the commuter route and BUS and KAT routes; and providing information about the commuter route and its schedule anywhere information about the BUS and KAT systems is displayed, including on the websites for the two local transit systems.

The Racine County recommendations include:

1. Continue Current Approach to Meeting Transit Needs in Western Racine County

The plan recommends that Racine County continue its current approach to meeting public transit needs in western Racine County, which involves implementing transportation services on a trial basis in communities with anticipated demand. After evaluating the performance of each trial service, the services that experience high enough demand should be continued and those that experience low demand should be eliminated. Examples of recent uses of this approach include the Racine County Link—a cross-county shuttle service operated from June of 2012 through January of 2013—and the Shuttling People Around Racine County (SPARC) program initiated by the County in 2011. The Link and two SPARC routes experienced low demand and were eliminated, but the Burlington SPARC shuttle service has been successful and the County has increased its service. County Recommendation 4 recommends that the County continue to operate the SPARC shuttle program, monitoring the level of County funding required to operate the service as it does currently and possibly seeking Federal and State transit operating assistance in the future should there be enough demand by the general public.

2. Establish Commuter Bus Service between Burlington and Milwaukee

The plan recommends that Racine County consider establishing a commuter bus service between downtown Burlington and downtown Milwaukee over STH 36 and IH 43. The plan proposes providing two round-trips on weekdays, focused on commuters from Burlington to Milwaukee and serving three proposed park-ride lots. The cost of providing the service for the first full year would be an estimated \$203,800, increasing with inflation to about \$229,600 in the fifth year. The County could limit its financial risk by applying for a grant through the Federal Highway Administration Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, which could fund about 80 percent of the total cost to operate the service for its first three years as a demonstration project. The CMAQ grant funds would require a local match from the County of at least 20 percent, but passenger revenues could be used as local matching funds. Ridership

forecasts indicate that passenger revenues may be enough to cover most if not all of the required 20 percent local match. Following the three-year demonstration period, the service would qualify to receive Federal and State transit operating assistance, with the County required to provide local matching funds. When it comes time to transition from CMAQ grant funding to the Federal and State transit operating assistance programs, the County could determine whether to continue or eliminate the service based on its performance and the availability of the necessary level of County funding, which would be an estimated \$38,700 in the fifth year of operations.

3. Improve Coordination between City and County Paratransit Services

This recommendation is summarized under City Recommendation 2 above, which recommends that the City of Racine and Racine County work together to improve coordination between their existing paratransit services.

4. Continue Existing County Shuttle Service and Monitor Required Level of County Funding

The plan recommends that the County continue to operate the SPARC shuttle service as it does currently, focused on serving seniors and persons with disabilities in areas not served by public transit and allowing the general public to use the service as space permits. However, the County should monitor the level of County funding required to operate the service and revisit the possibility of operating the shuttle service as public transit open to the general public if Federal capital funding becomes more readily available and if the existing shuttle service can no longer effectively accommodate members of the general public. Operating the shuttle service as a public transit service open to the general public would have the potential to reduce the level of County funding required to operate the service because the service would be eligible to receive Federal and State transit operating assistance funds. If these funds are used, the County would be considered a public transit operator and as such may have additional responsibilities and costs associated with selecting the operator of a public shuttle service through a competitive bid process and using wheelchair-accessible vehicles to operate the service.

5. Establish Guidelines for Vanpool Programs in Anticipation of Future Demand

The plan recommends that the County apply a proposed set of guidelines for what would be desirable to start a vanpool program in the event there becomes demand for vanpools in the future. With the guidelines established, the County should wait to pursue formation of a vanpool program until interest is expressed by a group of employers or employees. If sufficient interest is expressed, the County could minimize its financial risk by working with a private vanpool

provider. Monthly user fees would likely be significantly higher under a private vanpool provider than if the program were to be run by County staff, so the County could subsidize some of the user fees or partner with employers willing to contribute to part of the cost of the service.