

A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN FOR SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN: 2035

There are two efforts currently underway in southeastern Wisconsin considering upgrading to fixed guideway transit. Milwaukee County in cooperation with the City of Milwaukee and Wisconsin Center District is conducting the Milwaukee downtown connector study which is considering implementation of express transit electric bus guideway technology and buses operating in reserved street lanes. Rapid transit commuter rail in the Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha corridor was recommended for implementation at the conclusion of a corridor transit alternatives analysis study. The Counties and cities of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha are currently conducting further study addressing funding and refinement of the proposed commuter rail extension. The 2005-2007 State budget included legislation creating a three County regional transit authority for Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine Counties, which would be the operator or the proposed commuter rail service.

Potential Benefits

The public transit recommendations of the regional transportation plan would, in particular, serve minority and low-income populations within Southeastern Wisconsin. As shown in Table H-18, low-income households and a number of minority populations are particularly dependent upon public transit, as a significant proportion of those populations have no private vehicle available for travel. Driver's license data indicate a similar conclusion. Only about 68 percent of Milwaukee County Black/African American households indicate they have an automobile available for travel, and only an estimated 60 percent of Black/African American adults have a driver's license. Only about 80 percent of Milwaukee County Hispanic households indicate they have an automobile available for travel, and only an estimated 50 percent of Hispanic adults have a driver's license. As shown on Maps H-29 through H-35, the transit service recommendations of the plan would be particularly directed to serving minority and low-income populations.

As shown on Map H-36, those areas of the Region with the highest job densities would be directly served by the recommended public transit plan. Map H-37 shows that almost all of the major economic activity centers in the Region, which are defined as those areas containing a concentration of commercial and/or industrial land having at least 3,500 total jobs or 2,000 retail jobs, would be served by the public transit recommendations of the regional transportation plan. Thus, the transit element of the regional transportation plan would in particular connect minority and low-income populations with jobs. Also, the public transit recommendations of the regional transportation plan are directed towards improving transit service in central Milwaukee County and those areas with minority and low-income populations.

- **Rapid Transit Service**

The existing bus rapid transit routes serving central Milwaukee County typically operate only during the peak periods in the peak direction with headways ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. The public transit recommendations of the year 2035 regional transportation plan include bus rapid transit routes providing service in both directions during all periods of the day. Thus, the recommended rapid transit would provide better connectivity between central Milwaukee County residents, including minority and low-income populations, and employment and other opportunities in the outlying communities within the Region.

- **Express Transit Service**

Currently, there is no express bus transit service provided in the Region. The recommended transit plan includes 17,000 revenue vehicle-hours of express transit service operating in both directions during all periods of the day and evening with service frequencies of about 10 minutes during the peak periods, and about 20 to 30 minutes during weekday off-peak periods and on weekends. Thus, the recommended express transit would provide better connectivity between central Milwaukee County residents, including minority and low-income populations, and employment and other opportunities within Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties.

- Local Transit Service

The existing local transit service serving central Milwaukee County generally provides service frequencies between 5 and 20 minutes during peak periods, between 10 and 30 minutes during the midday period, and between 15 and 30 minutes during the evening period prior to 10:00 p.m. and on weekends. The recommended local transit service would improve the frequency of service for those central Milwaukee County residents, including minority and low-income populations, to 5 to 15 minutes during peak periods, 10 to 20 minutes during the midday period, and 15 to 20 minutes during the evening period and on weekends. The recommended local transit service also includes expansion of the existing transit service area.

Maps H-38 and H-39 measure the accessibility provided by public transit under the existing public transit system and the recommended public transit plan during peak and midday periods. As is shown on the maps, the preliminary recommended transit plan provides substantially better accessibility during peak and midday periods for central Milwaukee County residents, including minority and low-income populations, than does the existing system. Moreover, a comparison of the improvements in accessibility under the transit element of the plan (see Maps H-38 and H-39) to the improvements in accessibility under the highway element of the plan (see Map H-24) clearly indicates that the transit element of the plan may be expected to result in substantial increases in transit accessibility to jobs, and the highway element of the plan may be expected to result in only modest increases in highway accessibility to jobs.

Rapid transit service would be significantly expanded from a largely peak-period, peak direction, weekday service to an all day and evening, bi-direction, weekday and weekend service. The proposed express and local transit service would also be expanded to all day and evening, bi-direction, weekday and weekend service. Table H-19 illustrates the proposed expansion of transit service hours under the regional plan.

The transit element of the plan would provide a substantial increase in transit service and accessibility by expanding service coverage, expanding service hours, increasing service frequency, and reducing service travel time by expanding rapid and express transit service (See Maps H-40 through H-43). A doubling of transit service overall is recommended with rapid transit to more than triple and express transit to be initiated. Accessibility would be improved not only to hospitals, colleges and universities, recreational facilities, major passenger terminals, retail centers, and parks, but to most activity locations and centers including jobs and employment centers, medical offices and centers, and schools as shown in Maps H-44 through H-48.

The plan also includes a number of recommendations beyond service improvement and expansion to further enhance public transit service and ridership. These recommendations include provision of reserved surface street lanes for express bus routes, provision of bus bypass lanes at metered freeway on-ramps, provision of priority traffic signal systems for express and major local routes and the surface arterial portion of rapid transit routes, expansion of the regional network of park-ride lots from 49 to 74, development of a single website for all public transit information within southeastern Wisconsin, and the expansion of annual transit pass programs to additional colleges and universities and employers throughout the Region.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

All elements of the year 2035 regional transportation plan are considered to be of equal priority, and each element needs to be fully implemented to meet existing and forecast future year 2035 transportation needs and to provide a comprehensive, multi-modal, balanced, high quality transportation system in southeastern Wisconsin.

- Public Transit
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Transportation Systems Management
- Travel Demand Management
- Arterial Streets and Highways
 - Freeways
 - Surface Arterials

Table H-19 (continued)

Service Type	Existing Year 2005		Recommended Plan	
	Service Hours	Service Headways	Service Hours	Service Headways
Local Transit Service (continued)				
Racine Area	<u>Weekdays</u> 5:30 a.m.-12:00 a.m. <u>Saturdays</u> 5:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m. <u>Sundays</u> 9:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.	<u>Weekdays</u> 30-60 minutes peak periods 60 minutes off-peak periods <u>Weekends</u> 60 minutes	<u>Daily</u> 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. <u>Daily</u> 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.	<u>Weekdays</u> 15-30 minutes peak periods 30 minutes midday 60 minutes evening <u>Weekends</u> 30-60 minutes Saturday 60 minutes Sunday
Waukesha Area	<u>Weekdays</u> 5:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m. <u>Saturdays</u> 8:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. <u>Sundays</u> 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.	<u>Weekdays</u> 35-70 minutes peak periods 30-60 minutes off-peak periods <u>Weekends</u> 30-60 minutes	<u>Daily</u> 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.	<u>Weekdays</u> 20 minutes peak period 30 minutes midday 60 minutes evening <u>Weekends</u> 30-60 minutes Saturday 30-60 minutes Sunday

Source: SEWRPC.

The plan recommends about a 100 percent expansion of public transit and, with respect to arterial streets and highways, about a 12 percent expansion of capacity in terms of route-miles and 4 percent in terms of lane-miles. A review conducted as part of this year 2035 planning effort of the implementation to date of the previous year 2020 plan concluded that about 15 to 20 percent of the recommendations of each element of the plan had been implemented—public transit expansion, arterial street and highway capacity expansion, and off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Looking over the past 30 years, significant progress has been made with respect to implementation of previous regional plan recommendations. With respect to public transit, the overall improvement and expansion achieved from 58,000 bus-miles of service in 1975 to 69,000 bus-miles of service in 2005 has been limited by reductions in service which have occurred during periods of economic downturns and recessions, specifically during the early 1980's and the early 2000's. For example, between 1987 and 2000, public transit bus-miles of service expanded from about 61,000 to 81,000 bus-miles of service, about 33 percent or about 2.3 percent annually. But with the economic downturn and attendant State and local budget problems since 2000, bus-miles of public transit service have declined by about 15 percent. To fully implement the regional plan, there will be a need to assure that progress in plan implementation particularly with respect to public transit continues during economic downturns, and is not eroded through service reductions. As minority and low income populations disproportionately use and are dependent upon, public transit, these populations are disproportionately impacted by reductions in transit service. The Commission will monitor and report on progress in plan implementation as part of plan review conducted every four years.