Minutes of the Seventh Meeting

OZAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DATE: June 5, 2018
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
PLACE: Auditorium
Ozaukee County Administration Center
121 W. Main Street
Port Washington, WI 53704

Members Present
Kathy Geracie ............. County Board Supervisor/Chair Public Works Committee, Ozaukee County, Chair
Dr. Wilma Bonaparte ........................................................................... Vice President, MATC Mequon
Raymond deBruijn (alternate for Dawn Wagner) ........ Public Works Superintendent, Village of Saukville
Steve Pericak (alternate for Carole Stuebe) ................................................ Portal, Inc
Doug Pinzer (alternate for R.J. Blast) ................................................... GO Riteway Transportation Group
Kathleen Schilling .......................................................... Executive Director, Ozaukee Economic Development
Carol Schneider ....................................................................... Chief Executive Officer, Seek Staffing
Jeff Sponcia .......................................................... Manager of Planning, Milwaukee County Transit System
Maureen Squire ....................................................................... Executive Director, Interfaith Caregivers
Kim Tollefson .......................................................... Director of Community Development, City of Mequon
Jason Wittek ............................................................................. Policy and Budget Analyst, Ozaukee County
Jessica Wolff ............................................................................. Director of Planning and Development, Village of Grafton

Guests and Staff Present
Jennifer Andreas ...................................................... Executive Director, Cedarburg Chamber of Commerce
Joshua W. Depies ........................................................................ Senior Transportation Engineer, SEWRPC
Nicole Duppler ........................................................................................ Pace Industries
Kevin J. Muhs ............................................................................. Deputy Director, SEWRPC
Jennifer B. Sarnecki ..................................................................... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairwoman Geracie called the meeting of the Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee to order at 10:08 a.m. Attendance was taken by circulating a sign-in sheet. She then asked the Committee members, guests, and staff to introduce themselves.

CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 2017, MEETING

Chairwoman Geracie indicated that the second item on the agenda was the consideration and approval of the minutes for the previous meeting of the Advisory Committee held on November 14, 2017. Ms.
Schneider made a motion to approve the November 14, 2017, meeting minutes. Ms. Schilling seconded the motion and the Advisory Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

**CONSIDERATION OF “RECORD OF PUBLIC COMMENTS: OZAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2019-2023”**

Mr. Muhs noted that agenda items No. 3 (Consideration of Record of Public Comments: Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan: 2019-2023) and No. 4 (Consideration of the preliminary draft of Chapter VI, Recommended Transit Service Plan for the Ozaukee County Transit System) will be discussed using the PowerPoint handout distributed during the meeting (available here). Mr. Muhs briefly reviewed the two rounds of public involvement conducted by Commission staff to assist with the development of the Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan. He stated that the first round of outreach focused on developing alternatives and was conducted in June 2017 with three meetings, including one business-focused meeting and two public meetings; and the second round of outreach, which took place between February and March 2018, with a total of four meetings, including one business-focused meeting and three public meetings, was used to gather input on the potential transit service alternatives under consideration. The second round of public outreach also had a formal public comment period from February 15, 2018, through March 19, 2018.

Mr. Muhs indicated that during the first round of outreach, a total of 38 people attended the business-focused meeting on June 20, 2017, and based on notes provided by the facilitators as well as comment cards, there were three main themes that emerged from the discussion: (1) employers are facing a worker shortage; (2) employers need transit service that covers all potential shifts and is reliable; and (3) interest in a shuttle service in Ozaukee County. Mr. Muhs then stated that 17 people attended the public information meetings held on June 21 and June 22, 2017, and based on small group discussions at each meeting, Commission staff determined that participants were most concerned with the on-time performance of the Ozaukee County Express and that some bus stops were not accessible by people with disabilities. Concerning the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi, participants indicated that the service should be more on-demand, similar to Uber or Lyft; that the service hours needed to be extended; and that there were challenges connecting to Washington County.

Mr. Muhs explained that a series of possible alternatives for future transit services were developed in careful consideration of the comments and ideas received from the Advisory Committee, Ozaukee County businesses, and the public. At a meeting on November 14, 2017, the Advisory Committee approved the potential transit service improvement alternatives for public review and comment. During the second round of outreach, 45 people attended the business-focused meeting held on February 6, 2018. Mr. Muhs noted that a survey taken at the business-focused meeting and feedback also provided on comment cards indicated that participants were very interested in extending the Shared-Ride Taxi service hours, reducing the reservation window for the Shared-Ride Taxi, expanding marketing of transit services, and providing more on-demand service using the Shared-Ride Taxi. He also noted that 14 people attended the public meetings held on February 28, March 1, and March 6, 2018, including one meeting held in Milwaukee County, as requested by the Advisory Committee. Mr. Muhs shared that two people provided input using comment cards while other attendees spoke directly to Commission staff during these meetings. The participants were most interested in an on-demand Shared-Ride Taxi, flexible shuttles, extending hours on the Ozaukee County Express, and extending the $1.00 transfer fare to Shared-Ride Taxi passengers transferring at the three MCTS bus stops.

Mr. Muhs also indicated that Mayor Dan Abendroth and City of Administrator William Jones, both of the City of Mequon, wrote a letter to the Commission expressing support for the extension of MCTS Route 12,
a new MCTS Route 68, flexible shuttles, expanded on-demand services, and expanded reverse commute service.

During the review of the “Record of Public Comments: Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan: 2019-2023,” Committee members had the following questions or comments:

1. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Wittek, Mr. Muhs stated that turnout at the public meetings was slightly lower than expected but within the range of previous outreach efforts. Mr. Muhs added that public turnout can be driven by concerns about potential reductions in service, which were not an issue at the public meetings held for the Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan. However, the turnout at the business-focused meetings was very high and the conversations at those meetings were very informative.

2. Chairwoman Geracie agreed that the two business meetings had very high attendance and provided very informative feedback. In addition, Chairwoman Geracie asked if business meetings were held for other transit development plans completed by Commission staff. Mr. Muhs responded that meetings with businesses were held as part of other transit development plans in the past, but not recently. He further noted that determining whether meetings will be held with businesses depends on local needs, and is influenced by the prevailing economic conditions at the time.

With no further discussion, Ms. Schilling made a motion to approve the “Record of Public Comments: Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan: 2019-2023.” The motion was seconded by Ms. Schneider and carried unanimously by the Advisory Committee.


Mr. Muhs reviewed the sections of the preliminary draft of Chapter VI with the Committee members and referenced the corresponding tables, figures, and maps that related to specific sections of the chapter, which were organized into three funding scenarios and two additional categories: (1) if funding is maintained; (2) if funding is reduced; (3) if funding is increased; (4) requires further study; and (5) not recommended. He explained that Chapter VI summarizes the recommended service alternatives to the existing Ozaukee County Transit System that have been developed with input from the Advisory Committee, Ozaukee County businesses, and the public over the past year-and-a-half. He noted the Map 6-1 handout given to Committee members entitled “Potential Bus Stop Improvements for the Ozaukee County Express along Port Washington Road in the City of Mequon” was omitted from the draft and would be added in the final report.

During the review of Chapter VI, Section 1.2, “Recommended Transit Services if Funding is Maintained,” Committee members had the following questions or comments:

1. Regarding the recommended alternative of providing an on-demand service for a premium fare, Ms. Schneider asked how much the premium fare would be and how it compares to the average fare of the Shared-Ride Taxi. Mr. Muhs responded that the premium fare was assumed to be $10.00 and Mr. Wittek added that the average fare of the Shared-Ride Taxi is between $3.00 and $6.00. Mr. Muhs explained that the on-demand service is recommended to be pursued as a pilot so that the fares, recommended to start at $10.00 per trip, could be adjusted to ensure the service remains revenue neutral. Chairwoman Geracie asked if the $10.00 premium fare could be charged to everyone, including seniors. Mr. Muhs responded that based on research conducted by Commission
staff and input from the Federal Transit Administration, Federal regulations allow charging a premium fare to everyone, including seniors and people with disabilities, for the Shared-Ride Taxi service. Regarding the recommended transit service that would provide on-demand service for a premium fare, Mr. Muhs stated that input from the business-focused meetings indicated concerns regarding the long wait times for the Shared-Ride Taxi and that the public indicated a preference for same day service.

2. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. deBruijn, Mr. Muhs stated that Commission staff did not consider dedicating a part of the Shared-Ride Taxi vehicle fleet to the on-demand service. He explained that dedicating a part of the vehicle fleet to the on-demand service could present challenges, including limiting the availability of taxis, maintenance, and ensuring wheelchair accessibility to passengers. He added that vehicles that can offer wheelchair access would be needed for both the regular service and on-demand service. Chairwoman Geracie indicated that providing dedicated vehicles for the on-demand service could be considered after a pilot program.

3. Responding to an inquiry from Ms. Wolff regarding the recommended transit service which would increase fares on the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi at the rate of inflation, Mr. Muhs stated that the County’s level of funding would increase annually, with a total increase between 2019 and 2023 of $63,300.

During the review of Chapter VI, Section 1.3, “Recommended Transit Services if Funding is Reduced,” Committee members had the following questions or comments:

1. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Wittek regarding the recommendation to increase fares at a rate greater than inflation for the Ozaukee County Express and Shared-Ride Taxi, Mr. Muhs stated that the Federal Fiscal Year 2018 funding levels for operating assistance increased by approximately 3 percent while the Federal funding levels for capital expenditures increased significantly, providing additional funds for transit capital needs. Mr. Muhs further noted that raising fares was not preferred during the public outreach process but the recommendations under this funding scenario provide Ozaukee County with options in the event funding is reduced.

2. Regarding the recommendation to increase fares at a rate greater than inflation for the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi, Mr. Wittek indicated that the farebox recovery for the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi is more efficient when compared to the Washington County’s Shared-Ride Taxi. Mr. Wittek added that Ozaukee County has increased funding to avoid fare increases in the past but indicated that the County could raise the agency fare from $12.00 currently to $16.00 in order to fully capture the cost per ride. Mr. Wittek requested that an increase in agency fares be added to the assumptions for this recommendation and Mr. Muhs indicated that Commission staff would incorporate the increased agency fare in this recommendation, as requested.

[Secretary’s Note: Based on the input from Mr. Wittek, Commission staff revised the recommendation related to increasing fares at a rate greater than inflation for the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi. The recommendation now includes an increase in the agency fare from $12.00 per trip to $16.00 per trip in the year 2019 and an increase of the regular fares by $0.25 in 2019. As a result, the text and corresponding table have been revised and are attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

During the review of Chapter VI, Section 1.4, “Recommended Transit Services if Funding is Increased,” Committee members had the following questions or comments:
1. In response to a comment by Mr. Muhs regarding the potential extension of weekday service hours on the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi, Ms. Schneider asked for a clarification regarding recent changes to Washington County’s Shared-Ride Taxi service hours. Mr. Muhs indicated that it was his understanding that Washington County piloted extending Shared-Ride Taxi service hours until 11:30 p.m. but they eventually changed their service hours to 11:00 p.m.

[Secretary’s Note: After the Advisory Committee meeting, Commission staff verified that in 2015, Washington County changed the Shared-Ride Taxi service hours from ending at 10:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday to ending at 11:00 p.m. on Monday through Saturday. In addition, service hours on Friday and Saturday were reduced following the completion of the pilot period from ending at 1:00 a.m. to ending at 11:00 p.m. These same service hours are currently in effect.]

2. Regarding the recommended alternative for extending the Shared-Ride Taxi services hours from 10:00 pm to 11:30 pm on weekdays, Mr. Wittek indicated that the annual local cost of $3,000 estimated in draft Chapter VI could be requested in the County’s 2019 budget. Ms. Schneider inquired if this recommendation could be implemented sooner. Chairwoman Geracie responded that additional service hours on the Shared-Ride Taxi cannot be implemented sooner due to the budgeting process, which requires Ozaukee County to apply for Federal and State funds in November, and the Ozaukee County budget will not be in effect until January 1, 2019. Responding to an inquiry from Ms. Schneider regarding how the cost of this recommendation differed from a previous estimate provided by Ozaukee County staff to extend Shared-Ride Taxi service to 12:00 a.m. on weekdays and weekends, Mr. Wittek explained that the projection developed by Commission staff would be less, as it assumes that, due to initiating service at the beginning of a calendar year, state and federal funding would be available to help offset costs. Chairwoman Geracie added that the projected cost for the Commission’s recommendation to extend service hours to 11:30 p.m. would cost less because it only applies to weekdays.

3. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. deBruijn regarding the recommended alternative for expanded marketing of transit options, Mr. Muhs indicated that Ozaukee County can apply for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Program (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) funding to hire a mobility manager to promote transit options. Mr. Muhs added that the FTA Section 5310 application process occurs annually and would require the County to reapply for the Federal grant every year. Chairwoman Geracie added that Interfaith Caregivers of Ozaukee County does a great job serving as a mobility manager for seniors and persons with disabilities, however, connecting current and future employees to jobs will require additional effort and funding. Responding to an inquiry from Ms. Schneider, Mr. Muhs stated the responsibilities of the mobility manager recommended in this alternative would be the first of its kind in the Region and that the Commission could research the effectiveness of such positions across the country to identify best practices.

[Secretary’s Note: After the Advisory Committee meeting, Commission staff, in coordination with Milwaukee County and potential applicants, determined the Section 5310 Program application process would be changed from an annual cycle to a two-year cycle. The two-year application cycle could benefit applicants by expediting the reimbursement process for certain expenses and reducing the time spent preparing application materials.]
Mr. Muhs further indicated that the Commission is considering a mobility manager position focused on workforce transportation. He noted that Commission staff may request a regional mobility manager position for the Commissioners’ consideration and if approved, Federal transportation planning funds may be able to assist with 80 percent of the cost of this position. Mr. Muhs explained that two major transit issues the Region currently experiences include the lack of access to jobs in the Region that are not currently well served by transit and the lack of knowledge of existing transit options; both issues could be addressed with a mobility manager position that serves the entire Region.

Chairwoman Geracie and Ms. Schneider indicated that as a starting point, this role would be best fulfilled at the regional level. The next step would include determining how to coordinate with local mobility managers in the Southeast Region. Mr. Muhs added that this position would likely work with workforce development and economic development staff in the region. Chairwoman Geracie and Ms. Schilling agreed that a mobility manager position could focus on regional needs first, and consider adding staff at the local level at a later date, if needed. Ms. Schilling added that the salary for the position may be more competitive if it is a regionally-focused position. Mr. Muhs agreed and further stated that retaining a mobility manager is more effective if the salary is set at a higher rate.

4. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Wittek and Ms. Wolff regarding the recommended alternative of increasing the service frequency and hours of the Ozaukee County Express, Mr. Muhs clarified that the recommendation is to have an existing vehicle make an additional run (from Grafton Commons to downtown Milwaukee in the morning period and from downtown Milwaukee to Grafton Commons in the afternoon period) and not to purchase a new bus for an additional run. He explained that based on public feedback, there was interest in providing more schedule flexibility to the Ozaukee County Express, and that some buses at the time were running at or near capacity. Chairwoman Geracie asked if the request for additional service on the Ozaukee County Express was expressed by residents from Ozaukee County. Mr. Muhs responded that the request for increased service frequency and hours came from Ozaukee County residents. Mr. Muhs added that Commission staff held one of the three public involvement meetings in the City of Milwaukee and two attendees were Ozaukee County residents, who both supported increased service frequency and hours on the Ozaukee County Express.

5. Mr. Wittek indicated that the Ozaukee County Express is projected to record its lowest ridership ever for the year 2018. Ms. Schilling asked if the low gas prices in recent years explained low ridership numbers and if it was expected that ridership would increase with gas prices increasing in recent months. Mr. Wittek responded that he does not know yet, but noted that Commission staff researched recent trends in demographics as a possible reason for declining ridership. Mr. Muhs further explained that transit ridership is down across the nation and that there are likely a combination of factors that could explain the decline in ridership, as it is difficult to find a single cause. He added that the Ozaukee County Express and the other commuter bus services in the Region have reported anecdotally that many of their riders appear to be retiring and have not been replaced with new riders. In addition, potential new riders may not be aware of the commuter bus services. Ms. Schneider noted that Interfaith Caregivers of Ozaukee County is experiencing a ridership increase given the increase in the senior population.

6. Responding to an inquiry from Chairwoman Geracie regarding the recommended alternative of improving bus stops along Port Washington Road, Mr. Muhs stated the funds would cover bus pads and sidewalks. Mr. deBruijn asked why the bus route does not run through the parking lot of Columbia St. Mary’s/Ascension Hospital. Mr. Wittek responded if the Ozaukee County Express provided service within Columbia St. Mary’s/Ascension Hospital’s parking lot, the travel time
would increase. Mr. Muhs added that the pavement in the parking lot is likely not strong enough to support the weight of a bus, resulting in damage to the pavement. Mr. Muhs further stated that if there is sufficient demand, adding a stop at the Hospital could be considered for reverse commute trips.

7. Regarding the recommended alternative of reduced transfer fares at three MCTS transfer points, Mr. Wittek thanked Commission staff for their assistance determining where the MCTS transfer points should be located, which resulted in an additional 2,516 Shared-Ride Taxi transfer trips in 2017. Responding to an inquiry from Chairwoman Geracie, Mr. Wittek stated that a number of these riders transferring from the MCTS transfer points are traveling to Mequon, Saukville, and Port Washington. Mr. Muhs added that the trip logs indicated many riders utilize the MCTS transfer points regularly to access jobs in Ozaukee County, which may provide opportunities to discuss subscription services with employers to encourage more seamless transfers by scheduling regularly occurring Shared-Ride Taxi trips.

During the review of Chapter VI, Section 1.5, “Transit Services Requiring Further Study,” Committee members had the following questions or comments:

1. Mr. Wittek indicated that the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Transit Association should be contacted regarding the recommendation to further study implementing bus-on-shoulder along IH 43. He explained that notifying this organization would help the County, and the rest of the Region, recommend changes to the State law that prohibits vehicles from driving or passing on shoulders. Responding to an inquiry from Mr. deBruijn, Mr. Muhs stated that the Federal Highway Administration allows bus-on-shoulder implementation but Commission staff and WisDOT would need to meet with the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration to review the requirements. He added that bus-on-shoulder implementation would be a multi-year effort beyond the five-year planning horizon of the Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan.

2. Regarding the recommendation to further study merging Shared-Ride Taxi services with Washington County, Ms. Schneider inquired as to why the merger between the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi and the Washington County Shared-Ride Taxi was not approved. Mr. Muhs responded that two County Board Supervisors from each county’s Public Works Committee did not support the measure to continue investigating a transit partnership between Ozaukee and Washington Counties because of the concern that the creation of a Transit Commission would increase the size of government and that implementing a partnership could potentially increase the costs of providing the service in the short-term. Chairwoman Geracie added that the motion would have allowed the two Counties to continue investigating a transit partnership to determine if the costs of the merged service would actually increase. She further explained that the merger could be reconsidered in the future. In response to Ms. Wolff regarding the potential increased costs, Mr. Muhs responded that if the merging of Shared-Ride Taxi services increased ridership, operating costs would increase. He further responded that certain costs needed to be better defined such as the amount of staff time needed to implement a merged system and the potential cost savings at the private contractor currently operating both shared-ride taxi systems. Chairwoman Geracie noted that there were additional concerns raised by Johnson Bus that a single radio tower at a unified dispatch center may not have a strong enough signal to communicate with vehicles in both counties. Mr. Wittek stated that cost savings could also be realized by increasing utilization of hybrid-electric vehicles in the potential merged taxi fleet and that a merged transit system would provide better service to the customers of both counties.

3. Responding to an inquiry from Ms. Wolff regarding the recommendation to further study a new MCTS route along Port Washington Road in the City of Mequon, Mr. Muhs stated that if
implemented, Commission staff estimates that ridership would be about 50,300 in 2023. Mr. Sponcia indicated that MCTS has experienced low ridership on Route 42U, which provides service to Concordia University and MATC in Mequon. He added that the proposed new route to serve Port Washington Road could operate on a similar contractual arrangement as the Ozaukee County Express, allowing costs to be shared between Milwaukee County and Ozaukee County. He continued by stating that MCTS is willing to work with Ozaukee County but cautioned that funding is a major issue.

With no further discussion, Ms. Schneider made a motion to approve the Chapter VI, “Recommended Transit Service Plan for the Ozaukee County Transit System,” of SEWRPC Community Assistance Report No. 331, “Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan: 2019-2023.” The motion was seconded by Ms. Wolff and carried unanimously by the Advisory Committee.

**DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL NEXT MEETING OF THE OZAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mr. Muhs thanked the Advisory Committee for their contribution to the development of the Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan. He further stated that as a next step Commission staff will present the complete Ozaukee County Transit Development Plan to the Ozaukee County Board of Supervisors for their review and consideration. Chairwoman Geracie indicated that she would like to meet with a small group of Advisory Committee members and Ozaukee County businesses to identify next steps in implementing a number of the recommended alternatives. Mr. Muhs stated that the Commission staff would continue to work with the Advisory Committee and Ozaukee County business to help with further discussions and research. Ms. Schneider renewed her suggestion that Ozaukee County businesses assist in the funding of certain alternatives as the funding levels are not as high as was previously thought. Chairwoman Geracie responded that raising money from businesses could be discussed at future meetings.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on a motion by Ms. Schneider, seconded by Ms. Wolff, and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Muhs
Recording Secretary
Exhibit A

Increase Fares at a Rate Greater than Inflation on the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi
Similar to the input received regarding increasing fares on the Ozaukee County Express, a number of commenters indicated that they are not in favor of raising regular fares on the Ozaukee County Shared-Ride Taxi. Therefore, an option available to Ozaukee County should they need to reduce their level of support for the Shared-Ride Taxi includes increasing the per trip fare charged to managed care providers, also referred to as the agency fare, while keeping regular fare increases on pace with inflation. In addition to the fare increase of $0.25 recommended in 2020 to keep pace with inflation, this option would include an additional increase in the per trip agency fare from $12.00 to $16.00 in 2019, to reduce the County’s level of support. As shown in Table 6-5, increasing the agency fare to $16.00 in 2019 and a $0.25 fare increase in 2020 would be expected to reduce the required amount of County assistance by approximately $31,500 between 2019 and 2023.

Table 6.5
Projected Annual Operating Expenses, Revenues, and Ridership for the Ozaukee Shared-Ride Taxi if the Agency Fare is Increased from $12.00 to $16.00 per Trip and Fares are Increased at the Rate of Inflation: 2019-2023

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a Expenses and revenues are expressed in estimated year-of-expenditure dollars.

Source: SEWRPC