

Minutes of the 7th Meeting of the

WAUKESHA AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DATE: September 13, 2022
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
PLACE: Waukesha City Hall, Virtual

Members Present

Kathy GaleExecutive Director, Eras Senior Network
Chair
Jennifer Andrews Director of Community Development,
City of Waukesha Community Development
Alex Damien Interim Director of Public Works, City of Waukesha
Dan Ertl.....Director of Community Development, City of Brookfield
Tom Hagie Administrator, Town of Brookfield
Evonne JohnsonTransportation Manager, School District of Waukesha
Amanda Payne Vice President, Public Policy, Waukesha County Business Alliance
Mary Check Smith Manager, Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services
Aging and Disabilities Resource Center

Guests and Staff Present

Rhiannon Cupkie Administrative Manager, Waukesha County Public Works
Brian Engelking Transit Director, City of Waukesha Metro
Kevin Muhs..... Executive Director, SEWRPC
Christopher Hiebert.....Chief Transportation Engineer, SEWRPC
Xylia Rueda Senior Transportation Planner, SEWRPC
Jennifer Sarnecki..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Gale called the seventh meeting of the Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee to order at 1:03 p.m. Ms. Gale thanked everyone for participating. Attendance was taken by verbal rollcall.

CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 2, 2021, MEETING

Ms. Gale indicated that the Committee is being asked to consider approval of the minutes of the February 2, 2021, meeting. She asked if Committee members had any changes, and upon hearing none, called for a motion. Ms. Payne made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting held on February 2, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Andrews, and the Advisory Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

REVIEW OF RELATED WORK EFFORTS INCLUDING BLUEMOUND ROAD TRANSIT ENHANCEMENTS

At the request of Ms. Gale, Mr. Muhs provided a review of work efforts that have occurred since the last committee meeting including the bus stop inventory for the Waukesha Metro Transit System, a Bluemound Road Transit Enhancement study which focused on the Waukesha Metro Transit Route 1 enhancements, Waukesha Metro Transit's route review, and implementing the on-demand pilot program – FlexRide Milwaukee. Mr. Muhs noted that Mr. Engelking (Waukesha Metro Transit) and Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) staff have been working to continue the transit service connection between the two systems, which will provide an opportunity to enhance transit service that connects to the new East-West Bus Rapid Transit (E-W BRT). Mr. Muhs stated that the Bluemound Road Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Concept Plan (available [here](#)) was completed under the guidance of the City of Brookfield, City of Waukesha, and Waukesha County and is now being studied in greater detail to identify specific improvements and funding strategies. Mr. Muhs thanked the committee members for their patience during this process. The following questions and comments were raised by the Committee members following the review:

1. Responding to Ms. Payne's inquiry, Mr. Engelking stated that the BRT along Bluemound Road should be active in late spring 2023 due to supply chain issues of electrical parts for the buses. He mentioned that there would be a demonstration of the buses in the following week. Mr. Muhs added that this follows closely to the original timeline but that it leaves minimal time for testing.
2. Responding to inquiries made by Mr. Hagie, Mr. Muhs and Mr. Engelking confirmed that the BRT buses would be electric buses and that they would utilize their standard diesel-powered buses as backups. Mr. Engelking indicated that based on experience with battery electric buses in Duluth, Minnesota, it is anticipated that heating the bus cabin in the winter will require utilizing a diesel-powered heater.
3. Regarding to inquiries from Ms. Gale about the FlexRide Milwaukee pilot program, Mr. Muhs stated that Commission staff learned that transportation is a barrier for transit-dependent individuals when seeking employment. Additional challenges included training riders to use the smartphone app interface and explaining that rides are intended to be shared with other passengers, rather than what is experienced when using Uber or Lyft. Ms. Payne added that Employ Milwaukee was a critical partner to connect job seekers to employment opportunities and sharing that the new service was available to their clients. Mr. Muhs and Mr. Engelking also pointed out that since FlexRide Milwaukee started as a research project, the pilot program required people to apply to use the service and that ridership was initially low as this service is something new to the region. In response to an inquiry from Ms. Check Smith, Mr. Muhs stated that the Workforce Innovation Grant funds will help continue and expand the service through 2024, while planning for the next stages of funding, which may also include contributions from municipalities and employers. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Payne, Mr. Muhs stated that 20 percent of FlexRide Milwaukee applicants indicated that they did not have a credit card. Ms. Gale noted that addressing payment options for passengers without access to a credit card would help remove a barrier for those individuals.

CONSIDERATION OF MAKING THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF CHAPTER V, "TRANSIT SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAUKESHA METRO TRANSIT SYSTEM AND THE WAUKESHA COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM," OF SEWRPC COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PLANNING REPORT NO. 336, "WAUKESHA AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2023-2027" AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

At the request of Ms. Gale, Ms. Sarnecki reviewed the draft of Chapter 5 (chapter available [here](#), presentation available [here](#)) of the transit service recommendations for the Waukesha Metro Transit System and the Waukesha County Transit System.

The following questions and comments were raised by the Advisory Committee members following Ms. Sarnecki's overview of the draft chapter:

1. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Payne, Ms. Sarnecki stated the Waukesha County Transit System Route 904 currently stops at the Pewaukee Kiwanis Village Park parking lot.
2. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Gale regarding the potential impacts to County paratransit services if bi-directional transit service along the Route 901 is eliminated, Mr. Engelking responded that passengers would have to transfer to complete their trip. He stated that this would impact under 10 paratransit riders and that there are approximately 5 regular riders. At the request of Ms. Gale and Ms. Check Smith, Ms. Sarnecki indicated that this impact would be added to Chapter 5.

[Secretary's note: Following the Advisory Committee meeting, Chapter 5 was updated to include the following text, "If complementary paratransit service is no longer operated along Route 901, current County paratransit passengers would no longer have direct transportation between the City of Waukesha and destinations in Milwaukee County. Rather, County paratransit passengers would be required to transfer to another wheelchair accessible vehicle operated by MCTS or request a ride through the RideLine program if the trip is for medical purposes. Based on the most recent ridership information provided by Waukesha County Transit, there are less than ten passengers that utilize Waukesha County paratransit services to access destinations in Milwaukee County."]

3. Regarding proposed reductions in County commuter bus services, Mr. Muhs added that Commission staff are working with other counties, specifically Washington and Ozaukee counties to study potential commuter transit options, such as more flexible service and smaller vehicles. Ms. Payne noted that due to the availability of remote work and flexible hours, some office jobs no longer lend themselves to the current commuter bus schedules.
4. Regarding the recommendation to consider fare policy changes, Mr. Muhs stated that MCTS currently utilizes the WisGo app, which is intended to connect with other regional transit systems, including Waukesha Metro Transit and will allow MCTS to cap fares, which would ensure that frequent riders would not be charged more than the daily fare for multiple trips. In response to an inquiry made by Ms. Payne regarding a fare-free transit system, Ms. Sarnecki and Mr. Muhs stated that Chapter 5 includes a discussion about considering the potential financial impacts of eliminating fares, such as the farebox recovery ratio, or the percentage of farebox revenue compared to operating expenses, and the costs associated with collecting fares. Mr. Muhs noted that based on this comparison, Waukesha Metro's current costs for processing fare payments is relatively low, but fare-free programs can be a potential opportunity to enhance social equity and increase ridership. Ms. Andrews asked if, from an equity perspective, fares could be eliminated for those with a lower income to avoid subsidizing fares for those that can afford it. She added that the process of applying for subsidized fares could pose as a barrier for transit riders. Ms. Sarnecki and Mr. Engelking stated that, considering the current demographics of the current transit riders, it would be equitable to subsidize fares for a majority of riders and noted that based on information in Chapter 2 of the plan, about half of Waukesha Metro transit riders earn under \$20,000 per year.

Ms. Gale stressed the importance of being able to maintain subsidized fares, including seniors and people with disabilities.

5. At the request of Ms. Gale, Ms. Sarnecki indicated that a copy can be shared with the Advisory Committee of the feasibility of implementing Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in Wisconsin study, which is mentioned on the top of page 27 of the draft chapter. Ms. Gale noted that although the technology is exciting, the senior population would be at a disadvantage given potential lack of smart phones or comfort with the technology and encouraged alternatives.

[Secretary's Note: Following the Advisory Committee meeting, Commission staff emailed the Advisory Committee members the study, entitled "Exploring the Feasibility of Mobility as a Service in Small Urban and Rural Communities: Lessons from a Case Study," (available [here](#)).]

6. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Gale regarding hiring additional staff to drive smaller transit vehicles, Mr. Engelking stated that outsourcing could be an option. Mr. Muhs indicated that determining the number of drivers will be an important step and stated that smaller vehicles would not be recommended if it requires more vehicles and drivers.
7. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Payne, Mr. Muhs stated that the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center could serve as a potential on-demand transit connection once the East-West BRT is operating. Ms. Payne noted that Mayfair Mall currently has good transit service and could be considered as a potential pick-up location for future on-demand service.
8. Regarding the recommendation to implement mobility hubs, Mr. Ertl stated that Brookfield Square Mall is a possible location for a mobility hub and that the City of Brookfield plans to find opportunities to encourage development, such as establishing a tax increment financing (TIF) district. Mr. Muhs noted that a potential mobility hub at Brookfield Square Mall could allow for transit connections along the Bluemound Road corridor.
9. Regarding paratransit and specialized transit recommendations, Mr. Engelking stated that there may be changes in vendors available to implement the service, which could result in future changes, such as a combined procurement as is done in Racine County. Ms. Gale added that the example from Portage County, noted in Chapter 5, was a lengthy process that took over six years. Ms. Check Smith indicated that impacts to volunteer driver programs and funding sources will need to be evaluated. Ms. Gale noted that non-profits in Wisconsin are reliant on Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funds and that they are competing for funds, which could be an additional consideration should combined paratransit and specialized transportation services be pursued in the future.

There being no further discussion, the draft Chapter 5 of the Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan was approved to be made available for public comment on a motion by Ms. Check Smith, seconded by Ms. Payne, and carried unanimously by the Committee.

PRESENTATION OF PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL FOR THE SECOND ROUND OF PUBLIC OUTREACH TO GATHER INPUT ON THE DRAFT TRANSIT SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAUKESHA AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

At the request of Ms. Gale, Ms. Sarnecki reviewed a presentation on a proposal for the second round of public outreach for the Waukesha Area TDP. Ms. Sarnecki stated that Commission staff is seeking Committee guidance, such as possible locations, for outreach efforts.

The following questions and comments were raised by the Advisory Committee members following Ms. Sarnecki's overview:

1. Ms. Johnson offered meeting space at Waukesha South High School and indicated that the Waukesha Transition Academy would have comments on the draft transit recommendations given their use of Waukesha Metro and goals to provide education and employment opportunities to their students.
2. Responding to an inquiry made by Ms. Check Smith, Mr. Muhs stated that the public meeting held at the Waukesha Transit Center during the last transit development plan was well attended. He added that virtual meetings the amount of interaction may be lower at a virtual meeting but could generate greater attendance as it would allow another option for public participation.
3. Ms. Gale suggested that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation may be interested in hosting a meeting about the transit development plan as they understand the transit needs of their clients, specifically those individuals that are aging out of schools and starting work through their career programs.
4. Ms. Payne noted that the Waukesha County Business Alliance can host a meeting targeting businesses in the service area and those who would benefit from on-demand transit services. Responding to comments made regarding reaching out to the Waukesha County Technical College, Mr. Engelking stated that there is decent ridership to the college even though it is located outside of the City of Waukesha.

DISCUSSION OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE WAUKESHA AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Muhs indicated that a meeting date has not been set but that Commission staff will gather public input and set a meeting date after sharing it with the Advisory Committee. Ms. Sarnecki added that Commission staff is targeting before the end of the year.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on a motion by Ms. Andrews and seconded by Ms. Check Smith and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer B. Sarnecki
Recording Secretary