

Regional Planning News

Land Use

Transportation

Environment

Parks & Open Spaces

Housing



A publication of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Volume 2, Issue 3, June 2015

ARTICLES

Groundwork for Vision and Plan Development,
page 1

How Metro Milwaukee Compares to its Peers,
page 3

Implementation of the 2035 Plans,
page 5

Travel Survey Results,
page 9

LOOK ONLINE

Find new and updated information at
www.sewrpc.org and
www.vision2050sewis.org.

[Reports and resources](#)

[*A Comparison of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area to its Peers*](#)

[*A Regional Transportation System Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035*](#)

[*A Regional Land Use Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035*](#)

SPECIAL ISSUE

In this themed issue of *Regional Planning News*, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission focuses on **VISION 2050 — the effort to prepare the next major advisory regional land use and transportation plans for the Region for the year 2050.**

The plans will provide recommendations to the Federal, State, and local governments in the Region, and the private sector, with respect to future land use and transportation development, including public transit, streets and highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and demand management.



While much of the focus in VISION 2050 is on future land use and transportation system alternatives and recommendations that will be considered and evaluated, an initial essential prior step is understanding current conditions in Southeastern Wisconsin and historic trends.

In this newsletter, we will describe the inventory data gathered and analyses conducted to obtain an understanding of current land use and transportation in the Region and historic trends. This description is followed by a summary of the key findings from three of these inventories and analyses.

GROUNDWORK FOR VISION AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Before consideration can be given to the preparation of updated and extended regional land use and transportation system plans, a great deal of effort needs to be made to develop a comprehensive base of information that is essential to the preparation of forecasts of regional growth and change and the actual design of alternative future development plans. This groundwork for the development of VISION 2050 included the following major inventory and analytical work steps:

- **Population and Household Trends And Projections**

This activity included an in-depth examination for both the Region and each individual county of the size, distribution, and

Continued on page 2



Photo by Meg Miller

Continued from page 1

characteristics of the regional population as well as the number, size, and type of households. Relevant population characteristics were also evaluated, including age, gender, and racial composition. Analyses were undertaken with respect to the two basic components of population change: natural increase and migration. The analysis of this data provided an important base for the preparation of projections of future population and household levels in the years 2050 in the Region and each county.

- **Economic Activity Trends and Projections**

This work effort looked in-depth at key measures of the Region's economic base including labor force; employment level, distribution by county, and industry classification; and personal income levels. The analysis of this data provided an important base for the preparation of projections of the future regional employment level by industry category and the distribution of that employment by county.

- **Land Use, Public Utility, And Natural Resource Base Inventories**

Work efforts were undertaken to identify recent changes in the use of land within the Region and any attendant impact on the Region's natural resource base, as well as an analysis of the provision of those public utilities—sanitary sewerage and water supply—that are particularly important to the proper functioning of urban development areas. These inventories provided important

information on such matters as the amount of land committed to urban development of various types; changes to such important natural resource base elements as wetlands, woodlands, and agricultural lands; and the extent to which new urban development is provided with sanitary sewer and water supply services. This work effort also included a component that identifies and quantifies the type of future urban development activities as envisioned in the plans and zoning ordinances adopted by the Region's many municipalities. Analyses of these data sets provide an additional important basis for the preparation in particular of a new regional land use plan.

- **Transportation Facilities and Services Inventories**

This work effort addressed recent changes in the regional transportation system, including arterial streets and highways, public transit, intermodal parking facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and transportation system operations and management systems. Included in this work effort was the collection of updated information on such items as arterial street and highway traffic volumes, arterial street and highway congestion, measures of traffic safety, transit system ridership, the utilization of park and ride facilities, recent efforts to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian trip making, pavement and bridge condition, and arterial highway and transit travel times. All of this information provides an important base as efforts move forward to prepare a



Photo by Lisa Conley

new regional transportation plan that would be fully compatible with and serve to support a new regional land use plan.

- **Travel Survey**

Travel surveys identify the origins and destinations of trips made by residents of the Region, made by those who make trips to the Region from points outside the Region, and made by those who travel through the Region without stopping. Typically, depending upon available funding, comprehensive surveys of travel are conducted at about 10-year intervals and timed insofar as possible to coincide with the U.S. Census decennial efforts. The results of these surveys provide an important basis for constructing a simulation model of travel within the Region. The ability to accurately simulate tripmaking activity within the Region greatly informs the transportation management and improvement recommendations that find their way into an updated regional transportation plan.

- **Plan Implementation Evaluation**

This work effort seeks to identify the extent to which recommendations made in a previous regional land use and or regional transportation plan have been implemented. The results of this activity enlighten elected officials and other interested parties in the Region as to the extent of plan implementation activity (or in some cases lack of activity) and also provide a basis for building new sets of recommendations to be included in the next generation of regional land use and transportation plans.

- **Peer Group Analyses**

This work effort provided a statistical comparison of the Milwaukee metropolitan area to a group of peer metropolitan areas selected from across the nation. This comparison relates to a wide range of measures that deal with population growth and characteristics, the local economy, and transportation system performance. Such analyses provide another important perspective for elected officials and other interested parties as to the relative well-being and competitiveness of the Region as a place within which to work and live.

The remainder of this newsletter focuses on the results of the Milwaukee area peer analyses, the extent to which the recommendations of the 2035 regional land use and transportation plans have



Photo by Gregory Patin

been implemented, and a summary of the results of a comprehensive survey of travel in the Region.

HOW METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE COMPARES TO ITS PEERS

A statistical comparison was completed examining how well the Milwaukee metro area compares with 26 other metro areas on over 85 measures, including population growth and characteristics, the economy, and transportation. Thirteen of these peer metro areas were from the midwest, and the other 13 were located across the nation. The comparison included data on existing conditions as well as changes primarily between 2000 and 2013, and largely drew from U.S. Census data.

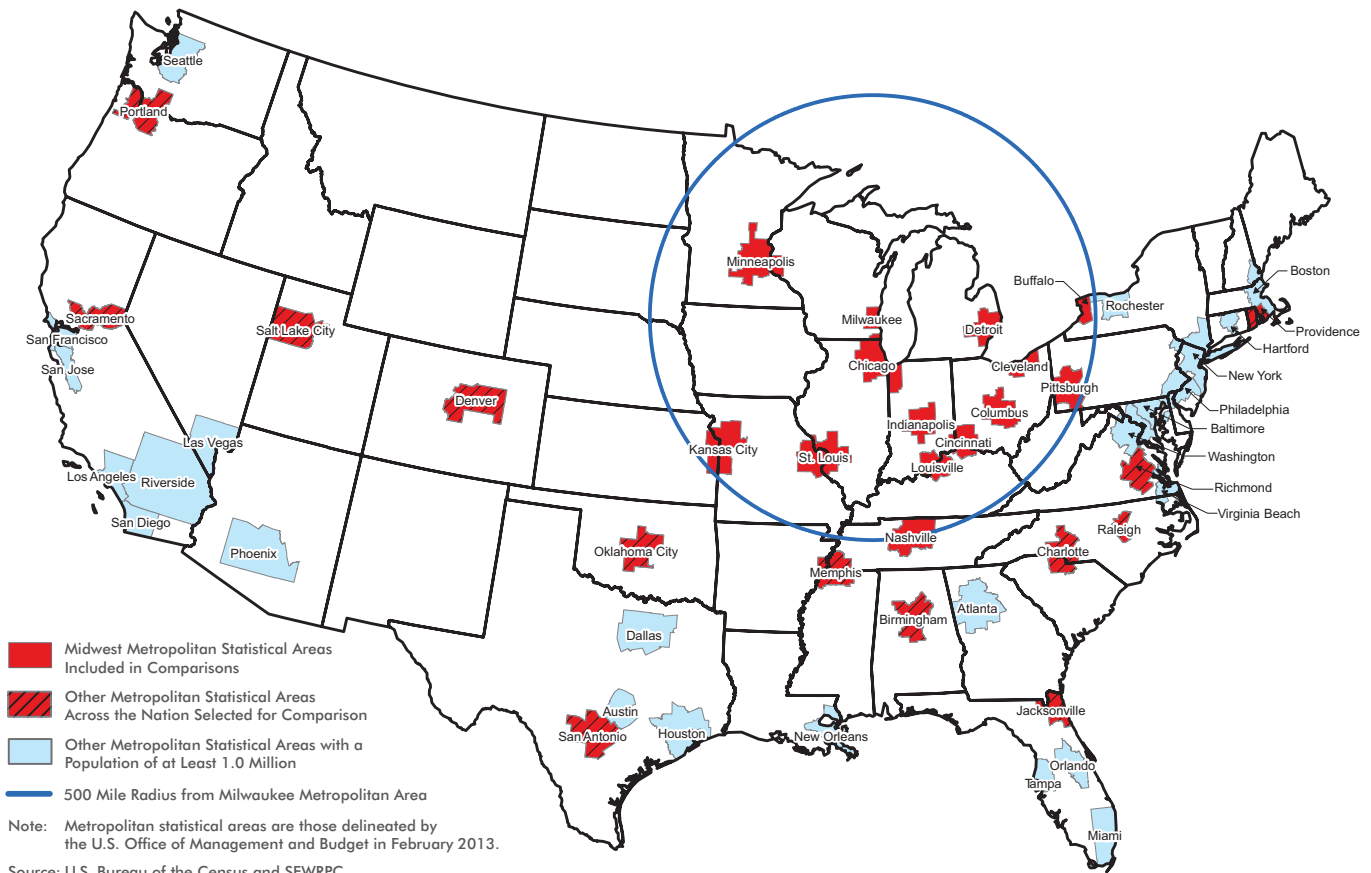
Major findings include the following:

A slow-growth area

The Milwaukee metro area had slower population growth than 21 of the 26 peer metro areas. Of the 26 peers, 17 grew by 10 percent or more from 2000 to 2013, compared to about 5 percent growth for the Milwaukee area.

In terms of job “growth,” the recession had nationwide impacts, but only two of the 26 metro areas (Cleveland and Detroit) fared worse than the 5 percent overall job loss in the Milwaukee area from 2001 to 2013. Manufacturing employment in the Milwaukee area also continued its long-term decline from 2001 to 2013, as it did in other metro areas. Manufacturing continued to account for

Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States with a 2010 Population of at Least 1.0 Million Persons



For VISION 2050, SEWRPC conducted a statistical comparison of the Milwaukee metropolitan area to these metro areas:

<u>Midwest</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
Buffalo	Birmingham
Chicago	Charlotte
Cincinnati	Denver
Cleveland	Jacksonville
Columbus	Memphis
Detroit	Oklahoma City
Indianapolis	Portland
Kansas City	Providence
Louisville	Raleigh
Minneapolis/St. Paul	Richmond
Nashville	Sacramento
Pittsburgh	Salt Lake City
St. Louis	San Antonio

15 percent of total employment in the Milwaukee area, ranking the Milwaukee area first among its peers.

Even though the Milwaukee area experienced slower population growth and above average job loss, housing values and home selling prices in the Milwaukee area were among the highest in the midwest and near the middle of metro areas outside the midwest.

Strong evidence of disparities

There are significant disparities between whites and minorities in all of the metro areas, with whites having higher educational attainment and per capita income, and lower rates of poverty. However, the Milwaukee area had by far among the greatest disparities of the 26 areas. Similar disparities were found between whites and minorities within the City of Milwaukee itself, and these disparities were somewhat higher than those of the principal cities of other metro areas.

There were also significant disparities for education, per capita income, and poverty between the City of Milwaukee residents and residents of the rest of the Milwaukee area. These geographical disparities in the Milwaukee area exceeded the disparities between central cities and their suburbs in almost all other metro areas.

A transportation system losing balance

Several indicators show that the highway system in the Milwaukee metro area performed well in comparison to other metropolitan areas. Travel time delay and congestion costs for auto commuters in the Milwaukee area were among the lowest of all metropolitan areas. The increase in travel time delay for auto commuters in the Milwaukee area over the past three decades was also among the lowest compared to all other metro areas.

With respect to public transit, the Milwaukee area continued to have among the highest transit service levels per capita compared to midwest and other metro areas. However, the Milwaukee area also has experienced among the most severe declines in transit service and ridership — 20 percent and 40 percent, respectively, since 2000 — compared to its peers. The root of this decline is its unique method of funding transit, which is heavily dependent on State and Federal funds and uses local funds coming from property taxes. Only one of the 26 metro areas is more dependent on State funding than the Milwaukee area. Two-thirds of the peer metro areas have a local dedicated source of funding — typically a sales tax — which provides the bulk of their funding. Milwaukee has by far the largest transit system of its peers not supported by dedicated funding. The other peer metro area transit systems without dedicated funding provide 1/2 to 1/5 the transit service per capita provided in Milwaukee. This would suggest that action is needed to provide dedicated local transit funding, or at least increase State transit funding, to avoid Milwaukee's transit levels shrinking to the much lower levels of those peers without dedicated funding.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2035 PLANS

Also as part of the groundwork for Vision 2050, Commission staff **reviewed the extent to which the existing year 2035 regional land use and regional transportation plans had been implemented, focusing on development and preservation activity over the past decade.**

The SEWRPC regional land use plan has long been based upon the following three fundamental recommendations:

1) The accommodation of new urban development through both infill and redevelopment activities within existing urban areas and the orderly expansion of such areas; 2) the preservation of the best remaining elements of the natural resource base of the Region found in primary and secondary environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas identified in the plan; and 3) the preservation of prime agricultural lands, as defined in county plans, together with the avoidance of substantial residential development in the remainder of agricultural areas, with a particular emphasis on totally avoiding the creation of new low-density residential development having typical lot sizes of two to three acres.

Key findings of the regional land use plan implementation analysis include the following:

- **New Urban Development**

Of the 54 square miles of incremental urban development that took place between 2000 and 2010, 40 square miles, or about 75 percent, were substantially consistent with the recommendations in the regional plan.

- **Housing Units with Sanitary Sewer Service**

Of 84,100 housing units built between 2000 and 2010, about 86 percent, or 72,100 housing units, were provided with public sanitary sewer service within urban areas consistent with regional plan recommendations.

- **Rural Residential Development**

Over six square miles of land were converted between 2000 and 2010 in rural areas to low-density residential development with typical lot sizes of two to three acres in a manner inconsistent with the regional land use plan.

- **Primary Environmental Corridor Protection**

About 450 square miles of land, representing 94 percent of 487 square miles of primary environmental corridors that exist in the Region, were found to be substantially protected from incompatible urban development.



Photo by Lisa Conley

- **Unplanned Loss of Prime Farmland**

The most productive soils for agricultural purposes — Federally identified Class I and Class II soils — continue to be converted to urban use at locations beyond planned urban service areas. About five square miles of such land were converted to urban use between 2000 and 2010 in locations not consistent with the regional land use plan.

- **Reduction in Commitment to Preserving Prime Farmland**

The Region's counties updated their farmland preservation plans in recent years and in so doing have significantly cut back (by about 468 square miles, or nearly 50 percent, from 947 square miles to 479 square miles) on the amount of farming areas with Class I and Class II soils that are designated for farmland preservation and potential State income tax credits for landowners. The resulting use of less restrictive agricultural planning and zoning districts, while seeking to maintain control of rural densities and rural character, will not be as effective as exclusive farmland preservation districts in preserving the most productive soils for agricultural purposes.

The SEWRPC year 2035 regional transportation plan is guided by a statement that envisions the development within the Region of a multimodal transportation system with high quality public transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and arterial street and highway elements which add to the quality of life of Region residents and support and promote expansion of the Region's economy. The plan has five basic elements: public transit, bicycle and pedestrian, transportation system management, travel demand management, and arterial streets and highways. The plan seeks to serve the regional

land use plan. Hence, transportation improvements are derived from the projected travel associated with the pattern of development identified in the regional land use plan. The plan development process is structured to ensure that, before any consideration is given to proposals associated with arterial street and highway expansion, the probable impacts on regional travel that would be associated with implementation of the public transit, bicycle and pedestrian, transportation systems management, and travel demand management plan elements are taken into account.

Key recommendations included in the five-year 2035 regional transportation plan elements are:

- **Public Transit**

Public transit improvement recommendations focus largely on the development within the Region of rapid transit and express transit systems and the integration of improved local bus services with the rapid and express transit services. The plan envisions that by the year 2035, the number of revenue transit vehicle miles of service provided would double from about 69,000 to about 137,300.

To achieve those improvements in transit, the plan recommended that State legislation be obtained to create a means of local dedicated transit funding, that annual State financial assistance to transit be returned to a stronger position, and that the creation of a regional transit authority be given serious consideration.



Public Transit Element of the Regional Transportation System Plan: Year 2035

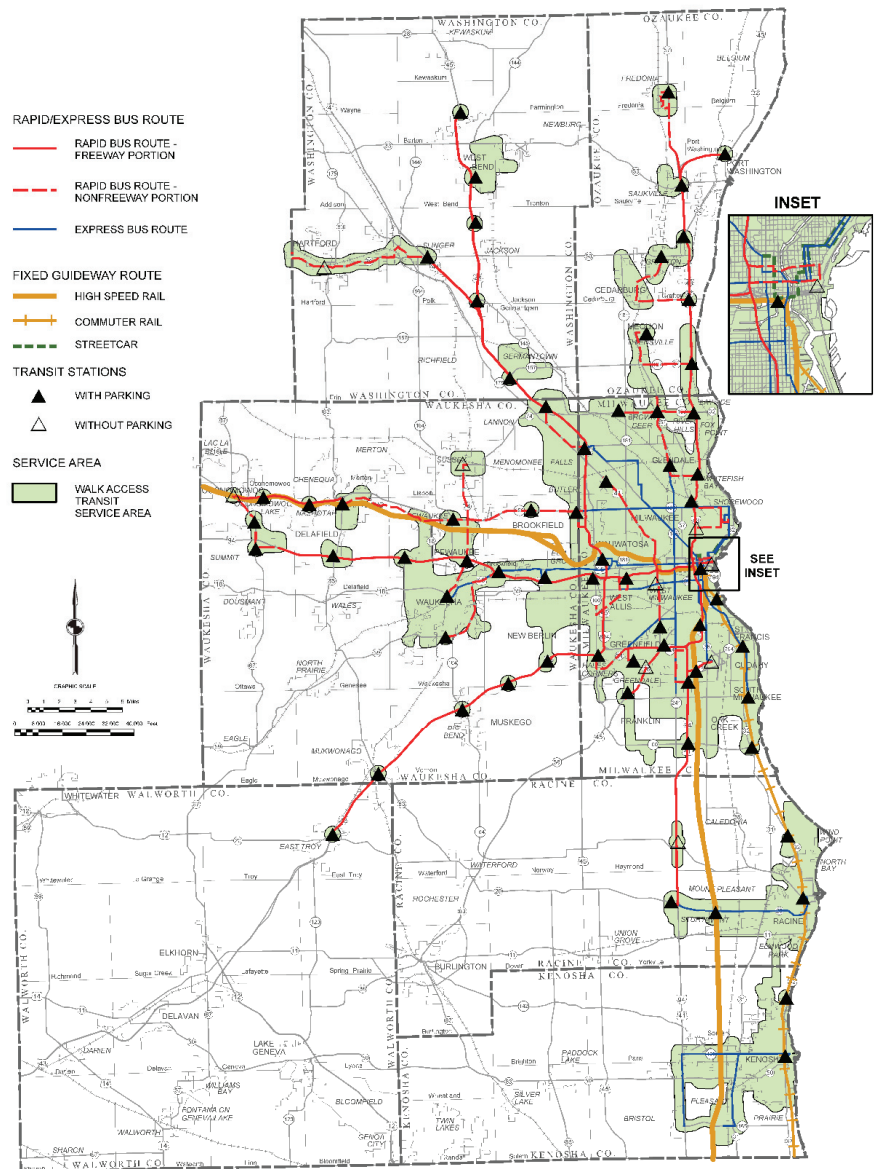
● Bicycle and Pedestrian

Bicycle and pedestrian improvement recommendations focus on facilitating the safe accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian travel. The plan recommends that serious consideration be given to the provision of bicycle lanes, widened outside travel lanes, widened shoulders, and separate bike paths as the Region's surface arterial street and highway system of about 3,300 miles is resurfaced and restructured segment-by-segment over a long period of time.

In addition, the plan recommends a system of off-street bicycle paths largely located in natural resource and utility corridors and intended to provide reasonable direct connections between the Region urbanized and small urban areas on safe and aesthetically attractive routes. A total of 586 miles of off-street bicycle and pedestrian paths are recommended in the plan, of which about 203 miles were in existence at the time of plan preparation.

● Transportation Systems Management

A range of measures are proposed to better manage and operate existing transportation facilities. Many such measures focus on the regional freeway system, including operational control through ramp meters, advisory information signage, and incident management measures coordinated through a central traffic operations center. Another group of measures relates to the surface arterial street and highway system, including traffic signal coordination, curb lane parking restrictions, intersection traffic engineering improvements, and access management. Other measures include managing parking at major regional activity centers.



● Travel Demand Management

Measures in this plan element attempt to reduce personal and vehicular travel and/or shift travel to alternative times and routes. Specific measures include provision of park and ride lots, high occupancy vehicular preferential treatment, and transit pricing to encourage more ridership.

● Arterial Street And Highway System

This element of the recommended plan applies to 3,662 route miles of facilities.

The plan recommends that 88 percent of these route miles, or 3,209, be resurfaced and/or reconstructed as may be necessary to provide the same carrying capacity. Another 360 route miles, or about 10 percent of the system, are recommended for widening upon reconstruction to provide additional through traffic lanes, including 127 miles of freeways. The remaining 2 percent of the total system, or about 93 route miles, are proposed new facilities. If all of the recommendations were to be implemented, the total arterial system would experience about a 10 percent expansion in terms of the number of added lane miles.

Key findings of the regional transportation plan implementation analysis include the following:

- **Arterial Street and Highway System**

Since plan adoption, nearly 15 miles of planned new arterial facilities and nearly 43 miles of arterial facilities planned to be widened have been constructed and are open to traffic. Together this represents about 13 percent of the planned new and widened facilities.

- **Freeways**

Major commitments have been made by the State of Wisconsin to implement recommendations included in the plan regarding the aging regional freeway system. After completion of the reconstruction of the Marquette Interchange in 2008, major commitments have been made to reconstruct the Mitchell Interchange and IH-94 from there to the Wisconsin-Illinois State line, with the entire project to be completed in 2021. Moreover, reconstruction of the State's busiest Interchange, the Zoo Interchange, is under way and planned to be completed in 2018.

- **Off-street Bicycle Path System**

About 47 miles of additional off-street bicycle paths have been put in place since adoption of the plan. This brings the total of such paths in the Region to 250 miles, representing about 12 percent of the planned additional off-street bicycle paths.

- **Arterial Street Bicycle Accommodation**

Over the initial plan implementation period, bicycle accommodations through paved shoulders, bicycle lanes, or separate paths were made on 199 miles of arterial streets and highways, representing about a 31 percent increase over the base level of 633 miles in 2004.

- **Transportation System Management**

Since adoption of the plan, ramp meters have been extended to 13 additional locations, nine additional freeway variable message signs have been put in place, and the number of closed circuit television cameras on the freeways has been increased by 78, among other activities.

- **Park-Ride Lots**

Since plan adoption, the number of parking spaces in the system of park-ride lots has increased by 1,040 in park-ride lots served by transit.

- **Decline in Transit Service**

The amount of fixed route transit service in the Region has eroded over the plan implementation period to the point where the fixed route transit vehicle miles of service



Photo by Peter McMullen

has declined by about 7 percent. In part, this was offset by a 17 percent increase in shared ride taxi service in selected areas of the Region. Overall, however, the amount of transit service has declined by about 4 percent over the same time period the recommended plan had envisioned a transit service increase of about 12 percent.

- **Transit Fare Increases**

Under the recommended plan, transit fare increases were not to exceed the rate of general price inflation. Recent fare increases in the Region's transit systems have ranged from 15 to 60 percent compared to a general price inflation rate of about 16 percent.

- **Dedicated Transit Funding**

Despite significant efforts, including an advisory referendum in Milwaukee County that approved a 1 percent sales tax of which one-half would be used for public transit, no State legislation has been put in place to provide for a dedicated source of local funding for transit.

- **Regional Transit Authority**

State legislation was put in place that created a Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail authority with dedicated funding from a vehicle rental fee. That authority was subsequently abolished. Moreover, other attempts to secure State legislation for a regional transit authority failed.

TRAVEL SURVEY RESULTS

An important step in the Vision 2050 plan development process is gaining an understanding of travel habits and patterns in the Region and determining to what extent, if any, these habits and patterns are changing over time. With funding from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Commission conducted a comprehensive regional travel inventory in 2011. The results of this work effort were then compared with previous such inventories conducted by the Commission in 2001, 1991, 1972, and 1963. **The following briefly summarizes the results of this VISION 2050 work effort in terms of four basic categories: tripmaking activities, vehicular travel, travel mode, and travel characteristics.**

A person trip is defined as a one-way journey between a point of origin and a point of destination by a person five years of age or older traveling by public transit, school bus, bicycle, or walking, or as a driver or as a passenger in a personal vehicle — automobile, van, pickup truck, sport utility vehicle — or taxi or motorcycle. To be considered, the trip must have been at least the equivalent of one full city block in length. *Internal person trips* are those trips with both origins and destinations in the Region.

Tripmaking Activities

- **Total Tripmaking**

About 6.7 million person trips were made within the Region on an average weekday in 2011, 60 percent more than were made in 1963. This increase reflects similar rates of change in the number of households and jobs, but is substantially greater than the 23 percent increase in population. Between 2001 and 2011, tripmaking declined by 2 percent, a change that may be largely attributed to employment and income declines associated with the national economic recession during that period.

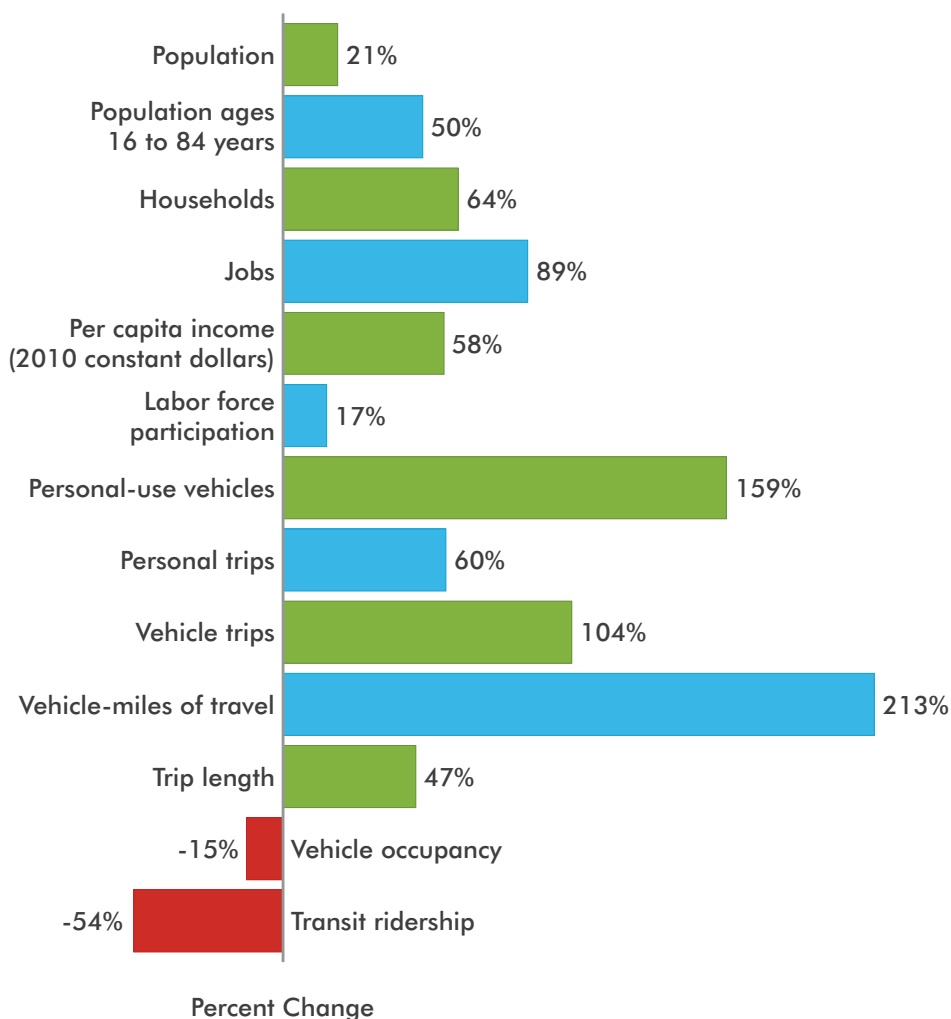
- **Household Tripmaking**

The number of internal person trips per household in the Region remained relatively constant at about eight trips per weekday over the 1972 to 2001 period. During the 2001 to 2011 decade that number declined to about seven trips per household per day. Again, the employment and income declines associated with the national economic recession likely contributed to this change. The relative stability in household trip rates over the long term has occurred despite substantial social, economic, land use, and transportation changes in the Region over the last 50 years, including the increasing participation of women in the labor force, the change in age composition, the change in household size, and the increase in vehicle ownership in the Region.

- **Resident Tripmaking**

Nearly 95 percent of trips made within the Region on an average weekday are made by the Region's residents, a figure that has remained relatively stable over a long period

Relative Changes in Selected Travel and Socioeconomic Characteristics in the Region: 1963 to 2011



of time. Accordingly, the Region does not have a significant number of interregional trips that would substantially impact transportation system needs.

• Generational Tripmaking Patterns

There are some differences in tripmaking based on the age of the head of a household. These differences were observed not only in the 2011 survey, but also in the 2001 and 1991 surveys. Household tripmaking peaks in the 27 to 46 years of age category, and is lower both for households with heads of household that are younger and older. Also, households with heads of household of 16 to 26 years of age use walking, biking, and

transit significantly more than older households.

Vehicular Travel

• Vehicle Availability

In 2011, there were about 1.37 million vehicles available in the Region. This represents an average of 1.71 vehicles per household, down slightly from 1.73 vehicles per household in 2001. By comparison, there were 1.07 vehicles per household in 1963. In 2011, there were 71,800 households in the Region with zero vehicles available, representing about 9 percent of all households.



Photo by Jenna Rosenfeldt

- **Vehicle Tripmaking**

In 2011, there were nearly 4.15 million vehicle trips made on an average weekday by residents of the Region, nearly double the 1963 level. The number of vehicle trips has increased somewhat more than the increase in person trips owing to a decline in the average vehicle occupancy. The average vehicle occupancy in 2011 was 1.20 persons, as compared to 1.42 persons per vehicle in 1963.

Travel Mode

- **Automobile Travel**

Travel by automobile is by far the most dominant mode of travel within the Region. In 1963 automobile travel represented 80 percent of all internal personal travel, increasing to a level of 89 percent in 2001 before declining in 2011 to 86 percent.

- **Transit Travel**

Travel by public transit has declined sharply over the last 50-plus years, from a level of 8 percent of total travel in 1963 to a low of 2 percent of total travel in 2001 and 2011. Such decline has been accompanied by, and to some extent caused by, significant reductions in transit service together with — in recent years — increases in transit fares at an amount greater than general price inflation.

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel**

In 1963 and 1972 about 9 percent of all internal personal trips were made by walking or bicycling. By 1991 only about 4 percent of all trips were made by walking and bicycling. Over the last 20 years, trips made by walking or bicycling have increased by over 50 percent and now represent about 8 percent of all trips.

Travel Characteristics

- **Trip Purpose**

The relative distributions of internal person trips with regard to trip purpose have remained very stable for the past 50 years. Trips between home and work account for 22 to 25 percent of all trips; between home and shopping for 11 to 15 percent of all trips; between home and school for 9 to 13 percent of all trips; between home and social, recreational, and personal business destinations for 30 to 34 percent of all trips; and trips between non-home origins and destinations for 18 to 23 percent of all trips.

- **Trip Length**

The average trip length for trips made within the Region on a average weekday measured in terms of distance traveled increased between 2001 to 2011 by about 4 percent. The average trip length in 2011 was 7.1 miles, representing about a 55 percent increase from 4.7 miles in 1963. The relative increase in the length of trips to work has been even greater. The average length of work trips was 6.1 miles in 1963 and 11.0 miles in 2011.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is the official advisory areawide planning agency for land use and infrastructure for the seven counties in the Region. More information can be found at www.sewrpc.org. Please contact us at sewrpcnews@sewrpc.org.



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
W239 1812 ROCKWOOD DRIVE
PO BOX 1607
WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN 53187-1607

First Class Mail
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 645