

CITY OF WAUKESHA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2013-2017



NEWSLETTER 1

AUGUST 2012

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), at the request of the City of Waukesha, is preparing a short-range transit development plan for the Waukesha Metro Transit (WMT) system covering the years 2013-2017. This study includes:

- Evaluating the existing transit system to review its characteristics and identify areas of good and poor performance;
- Identifying alternative transit service options and capital improvements for the transit system; and
- Preparing a planning document that will help City officials implement the transit recommendations of the study through annual transit budgets and capital and operations programming.

WAUKESHAMETRO TRANSIT (WMT)

Currently WMT operates 11 fixed bus routes and paratransit service for disabled individuals unable to use the bus routes. All 11 fixed routes pass through the Downtown Transit Center located on the north side of the Waukesha Central Business District. WMT buses meet at the Transit Center on a “pulse” schedule to facilitate transfers between routes.

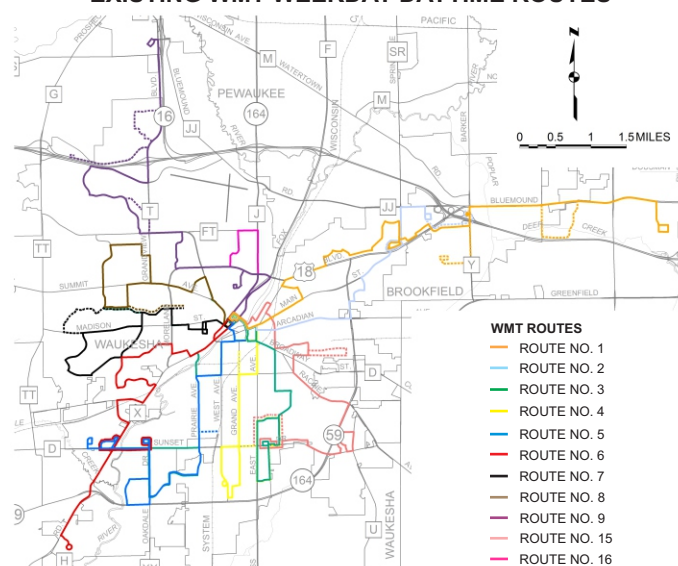
- **Service Hours:** The fixed routes run from 5:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, from 8:15 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. on Saturdays, and from 9:15 a.m. to 7:15 p.m. on Sundays.
- **Service Frequency:** Buses on Route Nos. 1, 4, and 8 depart every 30 minutes on weekdays while buses on the other routes depart every 30 minutes during weekday peak periods, and every 60 minutes during weekday off-peak periods. On Saturdays, buses depart every 30 minutes on Route No. 1 and every 60 minutes on the other routes. On Sundays, buses depart every 30 minutes on Route No. 1 and every 60 minutes on the other routes (Nos. 2, 4, 5/6, and 7/8) operated.
- **Fares:** Adults pay \$2.00 cash fare. Seniors and people with disabilities pay \$1.00 and students pay \$1.35.

CITY OF WAUKESHA TRANSIT COMMISSION

The City of Waukesha Transit Development Plan is being developed under the guidance of the City of Waukesha Transit Commission. The Waukesha Transit Commission will make the study's final recommendations. A list of the Transit Commission members can be found on the City of Waukesha Transit Development Plan Website: www.sewrpc.org/sewrpc/transportation/transitdevelopmentplans/citywaukesha.htm.

The City of Waukesha operates the Metrolift paratransit service to fulfill the travel needs of those unable to use the WMT fixed-route bus service. The curb-to-curb transportation service is available to persons with disabilities during the same hours as the fixed-route service and serves the entire area within a three-quarter mile distance of all bus routes. The service complies with Federal requirements that fixed-route transit systems provide paratransit service to disabled persons as a complement to fixed-route service. Metrolift service is available during the same hours as the fixed-route service for a fare of \$4.00 per one-way trip.

EXISTING WMT WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTES



Source: SEWRPC

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

The following transit service objectives provide a basis for measuring the performance of the transit systems, identifying unmet transit service needs, and designing and recommending improvements:

1. Public transit should serve those areas of the City and its immediate environs which can be efficiently served, including those areas which are fully developed to medium or high densities and, in particular, the transit-dependent population in those areas;
2. The public transit system should promote utilization of its service by being safe, reliable, convenient, and comfortable;
3. The public transit system should be economical and efficient, meeting all other objectives at the lowest possible cost.

Key Findings from the Evaluation of WMT

- In 2011, WMT provided excellent coverage of the population, employment, and activity centers in the Waukesha area. The existing transit system served the vast majority (89%) of both the population and jobs in the City of Waukesha. Limited service was provided outside the City.
- A 2012 State management performance audit found that the system is about average for ridership and financial performance when compared to similar peer transit systems in Wisconsin and around the country, but its practices and programs make it one of the best transit systems in the Midwest.
- Six routes (Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9) have performance measures that generally exceed the acceptable performance levels and could continue to be operated without change, while the remaining routes (Nos. 2, 6, 7, and 15) have some performance measures that do not meet targets and merit study of possible changes.
- The highest passenger activity occurs on route segments that serve the Downtown Transit Center, major commercial areas, or multi-family housing complexes.
- Overcrowding is not generally a problem on WMT buses. Passenger loads indicate that buses with as few as 20 seats could be operated on some routes.

Operating Funds

The transit system's operating expenses are estimated

to total about \$5.14 million in 2012. The figure below shows the sources and distribution of the transit system's operating funds.

POTENTIAL WMT SERVICE CHANGES

The evaluation of the transit system concluded that the level of service provided by the system was appropriate, and that the majority of routes performed at acceptable levels. To improve system performance and efficiency, three alternative service plans are being considered for 2013-2017.

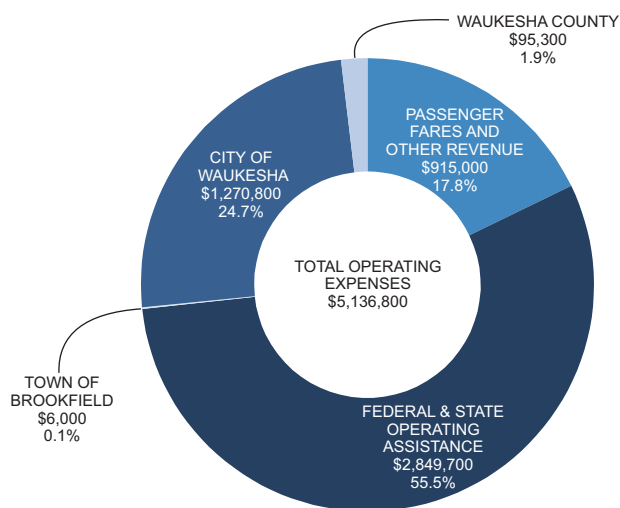
Alternative 1 - No Changes to the Existing System

With the existing system largely performing at acceptable levels, continuing to operate the system in its current state is a viable option. In addition, this "no change" alternative serves as a basis for comparison to the other alternatives. Fares in this alternative (like all alternatives considered) would need to be increased in 2015 to keep pace with higher operating costs. Commission staff estimate a 10% increase in operating costs from the 2012 budget will be needed in 2017 to continue to operate the existing transit system, and an accompanying 33% jump in City funding (from \$1.27 million to \$1.69 million).

Alternative 2 - Desirable Service Levels

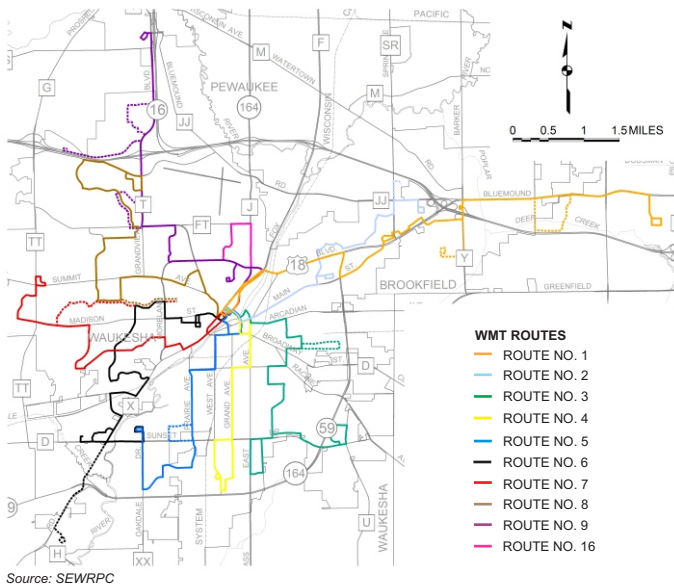
The second alternative details potential routing and service changes to provide a reasonable level of service expansion. This alternative proposes increases in both the quality and extent of WMT transit services by significantly modifying or extending Route Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8 to reach new destinations such as the proposed Woodman's Market, the Majestic Theater (on the weekends), and multiple shopping centers. Some unproductive service (Route No. 15) is eliminated to improve system efficiency.

WHO PAYS FOR WAUKESHA METRO TRANSIT'S OPERATING EXPENSES?



Source: City of Waukesha 2012 Budget

ALTERNATIVE 2 WMT WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTES: 2013-2017



These changes represent a 7% increase in service levels (in bus operating miles and hours) over the expected service levels in 2012, and are projected to generate a 4% increase in ridership by 2017 (to 675,400 revenue passengers). The total cost of operating the transit system is estimated to increase by 17% by the year 2017 under this alternative, with the City of Waukesha's contribution expected to increase 42%, to \$1.80 million.

Alternative 3 - Fiscally Constrained Service Levels

Alternative 3 identifies potential service changes if public funding levels for the transit system were reduced due to decreases in Federal and State funding and City funding remaining at similar levels as in 2012. Due to potential funding limitations, this alternative focuses service on the highest performing routes operating in the core of the City, while reducing or eliminating service to outlying, lower-density areas. This includes eliminating Route No. 15, modifying Route Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 9, combining Route Nos. 5 and 6 to operate in a loop as currently operated on weekday evenings and weekends, combining Route Nos. 7 and 8 to operate in a loop as currently operated on Sundays, and reducing service to Waukesha high and middle schools.

If this alternative was implemented, the transit system's service levels would decrease about 16 to 20 percent by 2017, and ridership is projected to fall by 10% (to 582,600 revenue passengers). The total cost of operating the system would be \$4.92 million by 2017 (a decrease of 4%). The City of Waukesha's funding level would increase about 10% compared to the 2012 level, to \$1.4 million in funding in 2017. Should no additional City funding be available over from 2013-2017

(holding the current \$1.27 million contribution constant), Commission staff estimate that further service reduction would be necessary, such as shortening the evening service period or eliminating all service on Sundays.

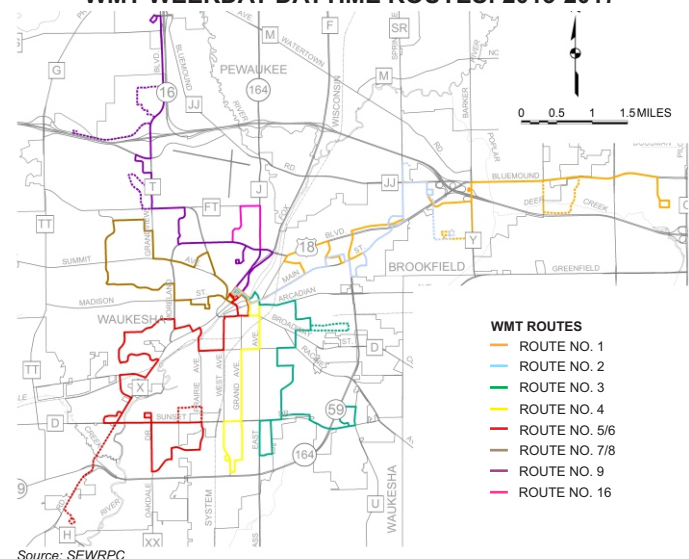
Analysis of Dial-a-Ride Transit (DART) Service

The transit development plan also studied the possibility of replacing all or some of the existing transit system with a shared-ride taxi, or DART, service that would transport passengers between their specific origin and destination on demand without fixed routes or schedules. Metrolift service currently operates in this fashion, and Commission staff reviewed the feasibility of modifying the Metrolift service to provide DART service to the general public.

A comparison between existing WMT service and DART services in Southeastern Wisconsin indicated that WMT costs were on the low end of those experienced by DART systems. WMT spends about \$6.80 per passenger, while DART services across the region spend between \$6.68 to \$22.78 per passenger. In addition, the comparison showed that WMT provides more than 6 times the number of rides of the largest DART service in the region.

Staff noted that due to the operating cost per passenger of WMT, the density of WMT's service area, and the existing Federal labor protection agreement that limits the contracting out of transit services, it would likely not be cost-effective for the City to convert its existing fixed-route service entirely to DART service. DART service may be appropriate as a replacement for bus service in areas or during periods with low transit ridership, but the Federal labor protection agreement would need to be modified first.

ALTERNATIVE 3 WMT WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTES: 2013-2017



Analysis of Alternative Vehicle Types

Commission staff also reviewed alternative vehicle types and sizes for the transit system. While smaller buses (19 to 22 seats) may have enough capacity for the passenger loads on some routes, this analysis determined that the use of smaller diesel buses would not significantly reduce the emission of air pollutants, would require expansion of the vehicle parts inventory to accommodate a mixed vehicle fleet, and would provide no cost advantage due to the shorter lifespan of the smaller vehicles available. Alternative fuel buses (hybrid, CNG, electric) would not be cost-effective at this time, but staff recommended the use of the current 35-foot diesel buses be reevaluated if fuel costs rise significantly in the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You are invited to attend an upcoming public informational meetings on the City of Waukesha Transit Development Plan. At the meeting, you can learn more about the alternatives described in this newsletter, discuss the plan with Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and Waukesha Metro Transit staffs, and comment on the plan and the service alternatives under consideration.

If you cannot attend the meeting, please visit the plan website to view the information presented, request a briefing by project staff, or comment on the project. You can submit written comments via mail, e-mail, or fax through September 7, 2012.

Website: www.sewrpc.org/sewrpc/transportation/transitdevelopmentplans/citywaukesha.htm

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PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING

The public meeting will be in an "open house" format, allowing you to attend at any time during the three-hour timeframe for the meeting. Attendees will have the opportunity to leave written comments, or speak to a court reporter, City of Waukesha staff, or Commission staff to submit oral comments.

Monday, August 27, 2012, 4:00-7:00pm
Waukesha Downtown Transit Center Lobby
212 E. St. Paul Avenue, Waukesha

The meeting location is wheelchair-accessible. Persons with special needs are asked to contact the SEWRPC office at (262) 547-6721 a minimum of 3 business days before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made regarding access or mobility, review or interpretation of materials, active participation, or submission of comments.
