



# *Milwaukee County Transit System Development Plan: 2007-2011*



**February/March, 2007**



# *Introduction*

## **Milwaukee County Transit System Development Plan**

- **Evaluation of existing transit system**
  - **Assessment of transit system and route performance**
  - **Comparison to “peer” transit systems**
  - **Identification of unmet transit service needs**
- **Preparation of short range (5 years) plan of improvements and expansion**



## *Introduction—continued*

### **Plan being developed by Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)**

- **At request of Milwaukee County**
- **Together with Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) and Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Public Works**



# *Milwaukee County Transit Planning Advisory Committee*

**Guiding and directing this planning effort is the  
Transit Planning Advisory Committee**

- **After careful study and evaluation, the committee will propose to Milwaukee County a recommended plan**
- **Members have been appointed by the Milwaukee County Executive, including representatives from:**
  - **Transit-dependent populations, minority groups, and business associations**
  - **Wisconsin Department of Transportation**
  - **City and County Public Works Departments**
  - **MCTS**



## *Outline of Presentation*

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- **Executive summary**
- **Findings: Inventory and analysis of existing transit system**
- **Findings: Evaluation of transit system performance and identification of unmet transit travel needs**
- **Findings: Projection of future financial condition of transit system**
- **Next steps in the transit system development plan**



## *Summary: Key Findings to Date*

- **MCTS performs significantly better than peer transit systems in service efficiency and effectiveness**
- **Within Milwaukee County, excellent coverage of residential areas, employment, and major activity centers**
- **Limited hours and frequency of service on many routes, particularly on weekends**
- **Lengthy transit travel time on the system, since local bus routes with low overall speed provide majority of service**
- **Few transit services exist for Milwaukee County residents to travel to jobs and activity centers in surrounding counties. Those that are available have limited hours and service frequency.**



## *Summary: Key Findings to Date— continued*

- **Transit system depends heavily on State operating funding, which has not kept pace with inflation.**
  - **MCTS has had to increase fares, cut service, and use Federal capital funds for operating expenses**
- **Potential service cuts of 35% may be needed by 2010 if State transit assistance funds do not increase sufficiently to address cost inflation, or if there is no new dedicated local funding source for transit.**



# *Inventory and Analysis of Existing Transit System*

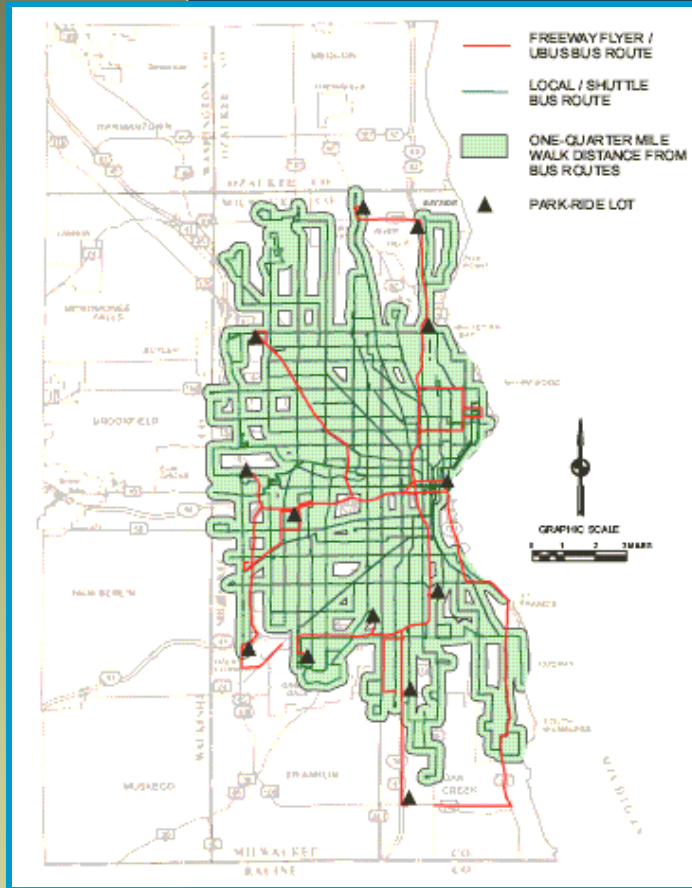
**First stage of study—analysis of existing system and service area. Report examined:**

- **Existing population and population trends in Milwaukee County and surrounding area**
- **Existing employment and employment trends in Milwaukee County and surrounding area**
- **Activity centers for work, school, employment, shopping, government, health**
- **Characteristics and trends of existing transit system**





# Existing Transit System



## Travel made on transit system

- **Work - 45%**
- **School - 25%**
- **Shopping - 10%**
- **Medical, social, recreation or other – 20%**

## Trends in service and ridership

- **Since 2000, MCTS cut annual miles of service by 17%, annual hours by 16%, and increased fares**
- **Bus ridership declined by 12% between 2000 and 2005**

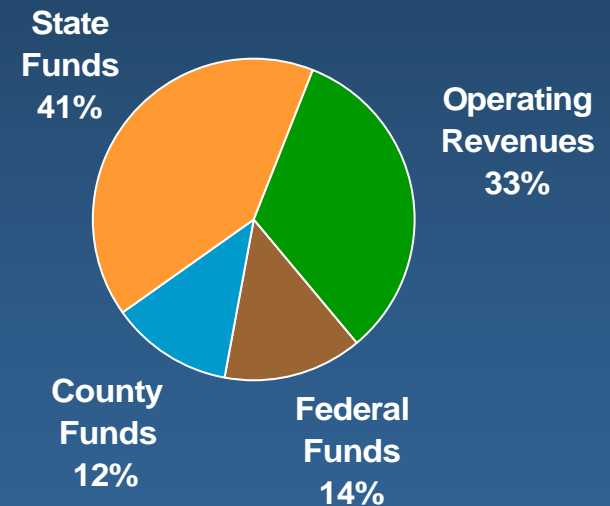


# Existing Transit System: Operating Costs

## MCTS Operating Costs

- **2005 operating costs: \$143 million**
- **Fare and other revenues pay for about 32% of costs**
- **Heavily dependent on State transit assistance:**
  - **41% of operating budget**
  - **63% of public funding**

MCTS Operating Costs 2005

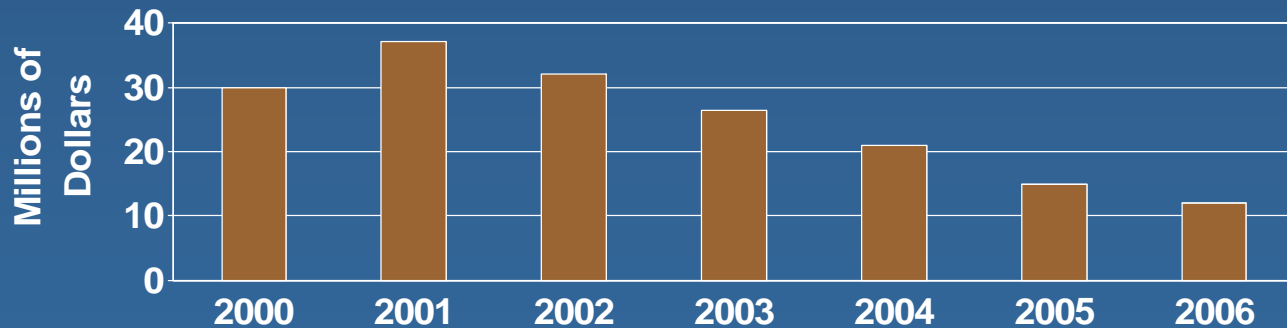




# *Existing Transit System: Drawdown of Federal Funds*

- **In 2001, MCTS had \$37 million of unspent Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds intended for capital projects**
- **From 2001 to 2006, MCTS has used the FTA funds for operating funding to limit increases in County tax levy funding, fare hikes, and service cuts.**
- **The balance of FTA funds declined to \$12 million at the beginning of 2006.**

Drawdown of Federal Transit Capital Assistance Funds





# *Evaluation of Transit System: Comparison to Peer Transit Systems*

- **State study in 2003 compared MCTS to a peer group of 13 similar transit systems**
- **Similar populations, northern climates, and similar bus fleet size**
- **MCTS outperformed peers for all measures of ridership and financial performance**

Performance Measure	MCTS Rank (of 14)
Passengers per capita	1
Passengers per revenue vehicle mile	1
Passengers per revenue vehicle hour	1
Operating cost per revenue vehicle mile	5
Operating cost per revenue vehicle hour	3
Operating expense per passenger	1
Total operating assistance per passenger	1
Farebox recovery rate for all services	2



## *Evaluation of Transit System: Areas of Excellent Performance*

- **Excellent coverage of residential areas and employment in Milwaukee County.**
  - **91% of County population resides within 1/4 mile of local/shuttle routes**
  - **94% of County jobs are within 1/4 mile of local/shuttle routes**
  - **81 of 86 major employers (500+ employees) and 22 of 26 office and industrial parks in Milwaukee County are within 1/4 mile of local/shuttle routes**
  - **68 of 70 major school, medical, government, shopping, recreation and passenger transport activity centers are within 1/4 mile of local/shuttle routes**



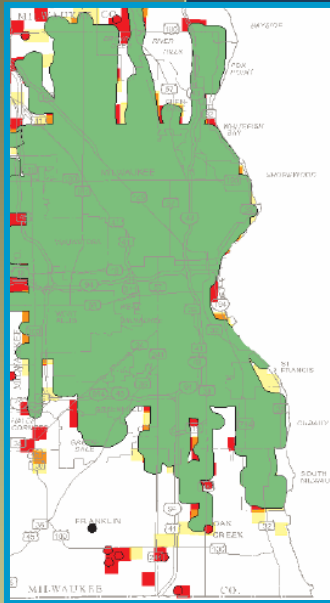
## *Evaluation of Transit System: Areas of Excellent Performance--continued*

- **Buses are on-time more than 90% of the time**
- **Overcrowding is not a problem on buses:**
  - **Freeway flyers have a seat for every passenger**
  - **Local routes have no more than 4 passengers for every 3 seats at peak periods**
- **26 of 31 local weekday routes exceed the ridership benchmark (22 passengers/hour)**



# Evaluation of Transit System: Unmet Needs

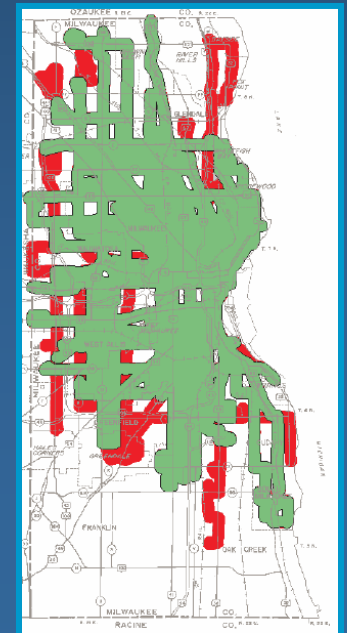
**Areas Not Served - Bus routes do not serve some areas in west, south, northwest, and northeast**



**Areas Not Served**

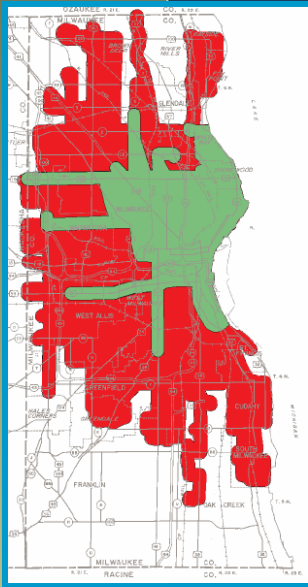
**Inadequate Service Hours - On weekends, large areas of the County are served by bus routes operating less than desirable level of 20 hours a day**

**Inadequate Service Hours  
(Weekday)**





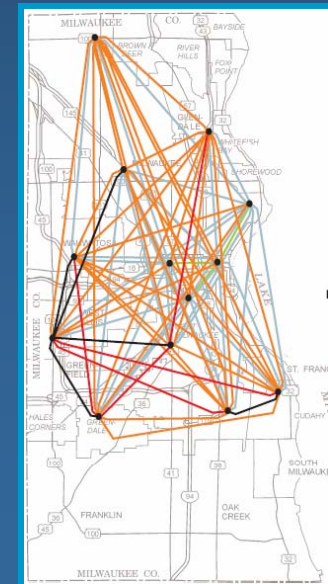
# Evaluation of Transit System: Unmet Needs—continued



**Service Frequency  
(Off-Peak)**

**Inadequate Service Frequency - On weekdays, large areas of the County are served by bus routes operating with longer than desirable headways**

**Travel Times  
(Off-Peak)**



**Lengthy Travel Times - Transit travel time is between 2 and 4 times longer than auto travel time for comparable trips**





## *Unmet Needs: Limited Service Connecting to Outlying Counties*

**Unmet needs of County residents for travel between Milwaukee County and the other surrounding counties include:**

- **Lack of Service – Many major activity centers and job concentrations outside Milwaukee County do not have public transit service**
- **Limited Service Hours and Frequency – If transit service does exist, it is very limited in hours of service and frequency of service**
- **Lengthy Travel Times – Transit services connecting with surrounding counties often involve using one or more local bus routes with slow travel speeds**
- **Lack of Coordination of Fares – Transfer arrangements are not uniform among all the transit services connecting with MCTS**



## Potential Future Direction

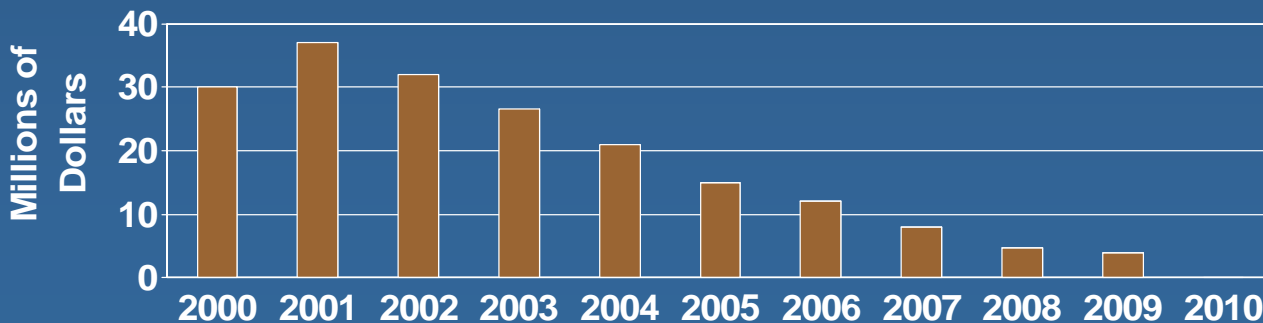
**MCTS is heavily dependent on State funding: the State has historically provided about 65% to 70% of public operating funding.**

**Between 2000 and 2005, the State only increased operating assistance funding by less than 1.5% per year (less than inflation). Milwaukee County funding remained about the same.**

**MCTS tried to offset the marginal increases in State funding and the stagnant Milwaukee County funding by tapping into their “bank” of Federal transit funds meant for capital expenses.**

**Milwaukee County’s bank of Federal transit funds may be expected to be depleted by 2010.**

Drawdown of Federal Transit Capital Assistance Funds





## *Potential Future Direction: Likely Substantial Service Reductions*

### **Potential Future Scenario:**

- **State transit operating assistance increases at 2% per year**
- **County tax levy for MCTS is held to 2005 levels (\$17 million)**
- **Fare increases of 15% - 20% over 5-year period**
- **Drawdown of “bank” of federal transit funds meant for capital projects**

**Result: Transit system would need to cut 35% of service in 2010**

- **Much more extensive cut than the cuts of past 5 years**



## *Potential Future Direction: Likely Substantial Service Reductions-- continued*

- **For example, these are the kinds of cuts needed to achieve a 35% reduction in annual vehicle hours:**
  - **Eliminate 10 of 31 local routes**
  - **Eliminate all freeway flyer and UBUS routes**
- **Need for State to restore transit funding sufficient to address cost inflation**
- **Need for dedicated source of local funding for transit to replace Milwaukee County property tax levy**



## *Next Steps*

- **Obtain your thoughts on transit system performance, your unmet needs, and your ideas for improvements**
- **Finalize identification of unmet transit service needs**
- **Develop alternative service improvement plans, including costs of different plans**
- **Additional public meetings to obtain additional input on service improvement options and plans**
- **Develop recommended transit service improvement plan**



# *Tell Us What You Think*

**Give us your input about the transit system. We are especially interested in:**

- **What transit system does well**
- **What needs are not being met by the system**
- **Potential service improvements**

**Many ways to give your opinion:**

- **Written comment: tonight, or send letter or email**
- **Oral comment with court reporter**
- **Map of MCTS—place a pin where you have a problem or concern with service**
- **Potential service changes board—place a sticker to “vote” your preference for service changes**