

Preliminary Draft

SEWRPC Staff Memorandum

**SCOPE OF WORK FOR RACINE COUNTY
PUBLIC TRANSIT PLAN: 2010-2014**

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum outlines a proposed scope of work for a public transit service study and plan for Racine County. The study would include an in-depth evaluation of the operations of the City of Racine Belle Urban System, an identification of unmet transit travel needs, and recommendation for transit service and capital improvements for the City bus system. The study will also identify and evaluate all other existing public and human services transportation in Racine County, identify potential unmet transit travel needs within Racine County and between Racine County and other counties, and potentially recommend new transit services to be provided within Racine County, and between Racine County and other counties. The plan will include recommendations for the coordination of all public transit services recommended for Racine County.

In addition to outlining a study scope of work, this memorandum outlines the need for the study and plan, and presents an organizational framework for conducting the study. The study, if requested, would be carried out under the Commission's regional transportation planning program at no cost to Racine County.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Since 1975, the Regional Planning Commission has routinely prepared short-range transit system development plans for the City of Racine and surrounding area east of IH 94. The last short-range plan prepared for the City of Racine was for the period 1998-2002 and outlined a plan for improving and expanding local transit service in the Racine area, including operating the bus routes using pulse scheduling to facilitate transfers, and extending service hours to include evening operations.¹ The City has requested that the Commission prepare an updated transit system development plan for its transit system.

¹ See *SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 233, Racine Area Transit System Development Plan: 1998-2002, October 1997.*

Over the last few years, concerns have been expressed over the potential need for public transportation in western Racine County, including service within western Racine County, service connecting Racine County to Milwaukee, Kenosha, Waukesha, and Walworth Counties, and service connecting western and eastern Racine County. This study, at the specific request of Racine County, would evaluate the need for such service, and potential alternatives for providing this service.

STUDY ORGANIZATION

This transit study effort could be organized as follows:

1. Study Sponsor: The study would be jointly sponsored by the City of Racine and Racine County. The County and City will rely on the staff of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to organize and conduct the study.
2. Study Staffing: The Regional Planning Commission will provide the technical staff for conducting the study, with the Commission's Deputy Director designated as the principal staff member responsible for the study. The staff of the Racine County Department of Planning and Development, the City of Racine Mayor's office, and the City of Racine Department of Transportation will work with Commission staff on each element of the study.
3. Advisory Committee: The Racine County Executive will create a Racine County Transit Study Advisory Committee to provide policy guidance to the staff conducting the study, particularly in identifying unmet needs, evaluating transit system alternatives, and selecting a recommended plan. The Advisory Committee should include representatives of county, local, and state government; public and private agencies and organizations which affect, or are affected by, public transportation services in the area; and organizations representing potential transit system users. Special efforts should be made to include agencies and organizations representing the business community and transit dependent population groups. Table 1 lists the organizations that could be represented on the committee.

Table 1

**SUGGESTED ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION
FOR THE RACINE COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY AND PLAN**

Racine County Government

Racine County Executive's Office
Racine County Board of Supervisors, Heath and Human Development Committee
Racine County Human Services Department
Racine County Department of Planning and Development
Racine County Workforce Development Center

Other Government

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| City of Racine Mayor's Office | Village of Waterford |
| City of Racine Department of City Development | Village of Wind Point |
| City of Racine Transportation Department | Town of Burlington |
| City of Racine Transit and Parking Commission | Town of Dover |
| City of Burlington | Town of Norway |
| Village of Caledonia | Town of Raymond |
| Village of Mt. Pleasant | Town of Rochester |
| Village of Rochester | Town of Yorkville |
| Village of Sturtevant | Town of Waterford |
| Village of Union Grove | |

Business Organizations

Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce
Greater Union Grove Area Chamber of Commerce

Educational Institutions with Student Transportation Needs

Burlington Area School District
Racine Unified School District
Union Grove High School District
Waterford Union High School District

Non-Profit Organizations Representing Populations Affected by Transit Services

Alliance on Mental Illness of Racine County
American Red Cross
Careers Industries, Inc.
First Choice Pre-Apprentice Jobs Training
Love, Inc.
Racine County Opportunity Center
Society's Assets, Inc.

Transit Service Providers and Users

First Transit, Inc.
Racine Belle Urban System
Users of Public Transit and Human Services Transportation (particularly representatives of the elderly and disabled populations)

^aOther agencies with an interest in public transit and human services transportation in Racine County would be invited to participate in the study including the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transit, Local Roads, Railroads and Harbors and the Department's Southeastern Wisconsin Region Office.

Source SEWRPC.

MAJOR WORK ELEMENTS

The principal work elements of the study are described in the following sections.

Objectives and Standards

At the beginning of the study, the Advisory Committee and Commission staff will work together to define transit service objectives and standards for public transportation in Racine County. The objectives are essentially the goals that public transportation services should attempt to fulfill. Each objective would have an accompanying set of standards, or measurements, which would assist in identifying unmet needs, proposing and designing transit service alternatives, and determining to what extent existing and proposed transit services meet the transit service objectives.

Inventory and Analysis

In this work element, Commission staff will collect and analyze the following data:

1. Characteristics of Existing Public and Private Transportation Services: The report will list and describe the current public and private transportation services operating in Racine County. Transit stations for long-distance intercity services provided by private bus companies and Amtrak will also be identified.
2. Population: The study will analyze the demographic characteristics and distribution of the resident population in Racine County, including the location of potential transit-dependent population subgroups.
3. Employment: The inventory will include data on the number and location of jobs in Racine County and southeastern Wisconsin, including a map of geographic concentrations of employment and the location of the largest employers in the County and southeastern Wisconsin.
4. Urban Development and Land Use: Maps will be prepared that display the density of urban development in Racine County, and identify the location of major activity centers that could attract or generate transit trips. This information, along with the population and employment data noted above, will assist in the identification of the areas in the County where transit service needs exist and where it can be efficiently operated.

5. Travel Habits and Patterns: The study will include an analysis of travel characteristics of Racine County residents collected from the last such survey conducted in the County, the Regional Planning Commission's 2001 regional travel survey. Ridership data for the City of Racine Belle Urban System and the County elderly and disabled transportation service will be reviewed.
6. Performance Evaluation of Existing Transit Services: The report will include an evaluation of the performance of the existing Belle Urban System, including the effectiveness of the existing route structure and schedules, and the financial performance of the system and its component routes so as to identify areas of effective and efficient transit service operation, along with areas of ineffective and inefficient operations. The performance of the other existing public and private transit services in the County will also be evaluated.
7. Identification of Unmet Needs: The report will document the results of special efforts undertaken to identify unmet travel needs. The efforts will include providing various forums to identify these needs, including public meetings and a website. Brochures and newsletters to increase awareness of the study will also be prepared and widely distributed. Focus groups and interviews will also be conducted with representatives of public and private agencies serving individuals who use existing Racine County elderly and disabled human services transportation, as well as the users of the County's service and the Belle Urban System users.

Alternative Transit Service Configurations

At this stage of the study, a range of potential transit service configurations will be identified that attempt to address the identified unmet transit service needs. For each alternative, potential ridership and operating and capital costs will be estimated. The following alternatives could potentially be considered:

1. Better Coordination of Existing Services: This alternative could propose high levels of coordination between non-profit agencies and County agencies providing transportation services. As an example, Walworth County's transportation services for the elderly, disabled, and consumers of County public assistance programs will be described.
2. Shared-Ride Taxi: This transit alternative could consider a taxi system serving areas not served by the fixed transit routes of the Belle Urban System. The service would likely require an advance reservation, and could operate as a subscription service during peak periods. Shared-ride taxis can stop to pick up or drop off passengers with different trip destinations. Both Washington

and Ozaukee Counties operate shared-ride taxi services essentially countywide; their systems could to some extent be used as examples for the description of this transit service alternative.

3. Flex-Route, Fixed Schedule: This alternative could consider a route deviation service, in which transit vehicles would stop at scheduled checkpoint stops along a route, but would leave and return to the route to pick up and drop off passengers within a limited geographic area, or “corridor”, along the route. Passengers may call in advance for a route deviation, or may board the bus at the scheduled checkpoint stops. The Western Kenosha County Transit bus routes are an example of this type of service, since they operate with scheduled stops and offer door-to-door service with advance reservation. This service could be considered to provide service throughout Racine County, and between Racine County and Kenosha, Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Walworth Counties.
4. Extending Belle Urban System Routes: This alternative could consider adding to, or the extension of, City of Racine transit routes to serve targeted areas with unmet transit service needs. Waukesha County’s arrangement with the City of Waukesha Metro Transit System and the Milwaukee County Transit System could be used as examples.
5. Improvement and Expansion of Belle Urban System: Based upon the transit system performance evaluation and assessment of unmet needs, modification of the Belle Urban System could be considered with respect to routes, service days and hours, and service frequency.

Evaluation of Transit Alternatives

This step of the study will consist of the evaluation of the transit service alternatives based on their ability to meet the unmet needs identified in the earlier stages, as well as the objectives and standards defined for the study. The evaluation of alternative plans will consider potential ridership, capital costs, operating costs, public funding requirements, and level and quality of transit service provided. Careful consideration will be given to the financial commitment and actions necessary to implement the transit service options.

Selection of a Recommended Plan

After evaluating the transit alternatives, the Study Advisory Committee will select the plan alternative that it will recommend for implementation. Commission staff will prepare detailed documentation for both the operations and financial elements of the recommended transit system plan for Racine County. Forecasts of operating statistics will be presented that include ridership levels, operating expenses,

operating revenues, and public funding requirements. A program identifying the capital equipment and facility needs associated with the plan will also be presented, showing capital expenses and public funding requirements, including potential Federal, State, and local funding.

Plan Implementation

The last major work element will be the identification of the actions required to carry out the recommended plan by all levels and units of government, especially by Racine County and the City of Racine.

Study Schedule

Figure 1 presents the estimated schedule for the conduct of the study. The study would take an estimated 12 months to complete.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Throughout the study process, Commission staff will work to encourage active participation of public officials, business and civic leaders, community groups, transit users, and interested citizens. In addition, all study materials will be made available on a study website. The public involvement program will include the following efforts:

1. Initial Public Announcement: Commission and County staff will announce the initiation of the study to inform public officials and the general public. An informational website and electronic flyer will be developed and distributed.
2. Creation of an Advisory Committee: The Advisory Committee will guide the preparation of the transit feasibility study and development plan. The suggested membership of the Committee was identified in Table 1.
3. Study Website, Newsletters, and Brochure: A study website will be maintained which will include all study materials and an opportunity for comments. A series of newsletters and a brochure will be prepared to introduce the study and summarize findings at each state of the study.
4. Focus Groups and Interviews: As part of the analysis phase of the study, interviews and focus group sessions will provide Commission staff with in-depth comments and opinions from many different stakeholders regarding transit needs and potential alternative service configurations.

5. Mailing List: An effort will be made to develop and maintain a mailing list of individuals interested in the progress of the study. This mailing list will receive the study brochure and newsletters and notices of public informational meetings and public hearings. The mailing list will include individuals and organizations representing minority and low-income populations.
6. Press Releases: Commission staff will provide the press and electronic media with information about the study throughout the planning process, via meeting announcements, news releases, and background materials and information.
7. Public Informational Meetings: Public informational meetings will likely be held during the study to present information about, and receive comments on the study, preliminary findings, and alternative transit service plans considered. This will allow for public review and comment on the work of the Committee and provide a format in which the comments and opinions of County residents and groups can be obtained and considered by members of the Advisory Committee.
8. Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act: The Commission will ensure that individuals with disabilities will have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of the Racine County Public Transit Study and Plan. All meetings related to the plan will be in accessible facilities. The Commission will also accommodate special needs for meetings and plan materials if requested.

Figure 1

**SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETING THE RACINE COUNTY
PUBLIC TRANSIT STUDY AND PLAN: 2010-2014**

| Work Element | 2008 | | | | | | | 2009 | | | | |
|--|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
| Study Organization and Advisory Committee Formation | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | |
| Inventory and Analysis - Existing Public Transit Services | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | |
| Inventory and Analysis - Population, Employment, Land Use, and Travel Data | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Objectives and Standards | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation of Existing Transit Services and Analysis of Unmet Needs | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Design and Evaluation of Alternative Transit System Configurations | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Selection of a Preliminary and Final Recommended Plan | | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Advisory Committee Meetings | | | | ● | ● | | | ● | | ● | | ● |
| Public Informational Meetings/Public Hearings | | | | | | | | ◆ | | | ◆ | |