

INTRODUCTION

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Credit: Waukesha Metro Transit

At the request of the City and County of Waukesha, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is preparing a transit system operations analysis and short-range service plan. The transit development plan includes both Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit to effectively evaluate the current systems and potential alternatives to meet current needs, including studying the potential for different bus sizes to meet demand, exploring additional partnerships between the two transit systems to gain efficiencies, and evaluating the feasibility of implementing demand responsive service in areas of lower transit demand.

The last short-range transit development plans prepared by the Commission in Waukesha County include a plan for the City that covered the period from 2013 through 2017¹ and a plan for the County that covered the period from 2002 through 2006.² A new plan is needed in order for Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit to effectively respond to changes in demographics, land use, and mobility options occurring within the City, County, and Southeastern Wisconsin.

This operations analysis and short-range service plan for Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit is being conducted within the context of the continuing regional transportation planning program. In 2016, the Commission adopted VISION 2050, a regional land use and transportation plan with a design year of 2050. The plan was reaffirmed and updated in 2020.³ The plan includes a public transit element that recommends significant improvement in and expansion of transit service in the Region over the next 30 years. Map 1.1 shows the public transit element from VISION 2050, including changes made as part of recent amendments.

¹ See *SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 311*, Waukesha Metro Transit Development Plan: 2013-2017, December 2012.

² See *SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 245*, Waukesha County Transit System Development Plan: 2002-2006, November 2001.

³ See *SEWRPC Planning Report No. 55*, VISION 2050: A Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, July 2016, and updated in *SEWRPC Memorandum Report No. 243*, 2020 Review and Update of VISION 2050, June 2020.

Map 1.1 Public Transit Element: VISION 2050

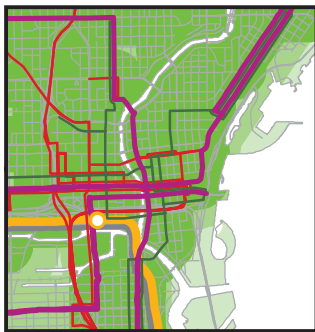
TRANSIT SERVICES

- RAPID TRANSIT LINE
- EXPRESS BUS ROUTE
- COMMUTER RAIL LINE & STATION
- COMMUTER BUS ROUTE & PARK-RIDE
- INTERCITY RAIL
- STREETCAR LINE

LOCAL TRANSIT SERVICE AREA AND PEAK FREQUENCY

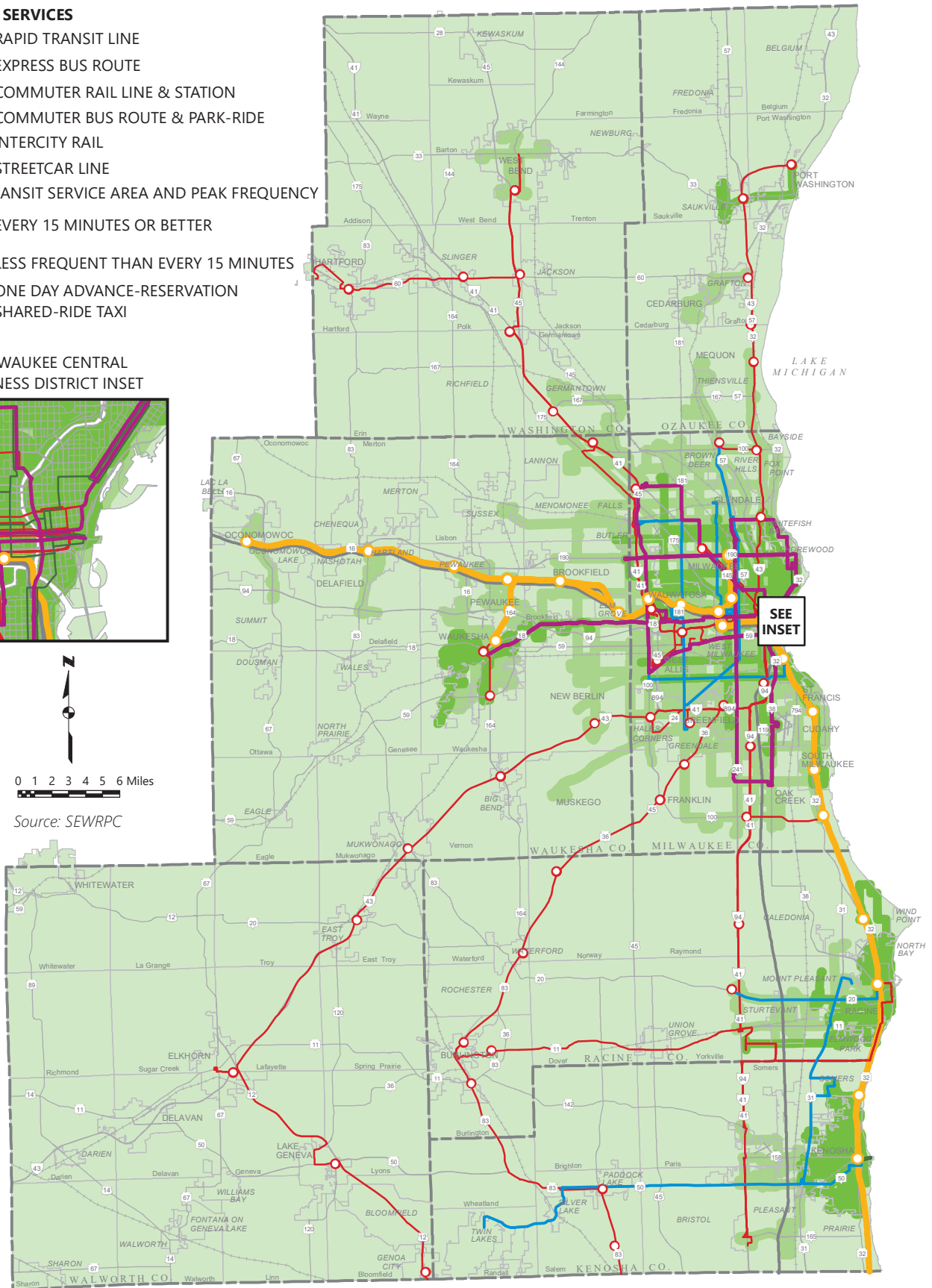
- EVERY 15 MINUTES OR BETTER
- LESS FREQUENT THAN EVERY 15 MINUTES
- ONE DAY ADVANCE-RESERVATION SHARED-RIDE TAXI

MILWAUKEE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT INSET



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Miles

Source: SEWRPC



Specific transit recommendations in VISION 2050, which are described in more detail below, include developing rapid transit, improving and developing commuter rail corridors, and expanding local bus service to suburban job centers. VISION 2050 further recommends implementing programs to improve access to suburban employment centers; enhancing stops, stations, and park-ride facilities with state-of-the-art amenities; implementing “transit first” designs on urban streets; permitting buses to travel on highway shoulders; and implementing a universal fare system and free transfers across all transit operators. Although not detailed below, these additional VISION 2050 recommendations can be considered within the context of the transit development planning process to provide service that is time-competitive with a car and provide those without a car access to jobs, education, and other daily needs.

The specific recommendations in the regional plan that pertain to transit services provided by Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit include the following:

- Develop rapid transit corridors (either bus rapid transit or streetcar extensions operating as light rail) from downtown Waukesha to downtown Milwaukee via the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, predominately on E. Main Street, W. Blue Mound Road, and Wisconsin Avenue. A second rapid transit corridor would travel from Shoppers World of Brookfield at N. 124th Street and W. Capitol Drive to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, predominately on Capitol Drive. The rapid transit corridors would include dedicated transit lanes and transit signal priority or preemption. Stations would be spaced every one-half to one mile and would include off-board fare payment, real-time information screens, and raised platforms. Service would be provided nearly the entire day with frequency of service every 8 to 15 minutes or better during weekdays, and every 10 to 15 minutes or better during the weekends, with service operating up to 24 hours a day.
- Develop commuter rail corridors and significantly improve and expand existing commuter bus services. Both commuter rail and bus services would provide frequent service, with service every 15 minutes in the peak in both directions and every 30 to 60 minutes in both directions at other times. The recommended commuter rail line would connect Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, Brookfield, Waukesha, Oconomowoc, and communities in between by making upgrades to existing freight rail corridors to allow passenger rail at speeds up to 79 miles per hour, providing a fast service connecting many of the larger population centers in the Region. Stops would be located in Oconomowoc, Hartland, Pewaukee, Waukesha, Brookfield, and Elm Grove. Commuter bus services would be extended south to jobs and housing near the intersection of State Highway 164 and Les Paul Parkway (State Highway 59), connecting to the recommended rapid transit lines and commuter rail in downtown Waukesha.
- Improve the frequency of local transit service in corridors and areas not served by rapid and express service. This improved service would provide extended weekday and weekend service from 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.
- Expand local transit service to suburban employment centers, by providing new services to connect businesses and residents to nearby commuter and rapid services. This service can take the form of local fixed-or flexible bus routes, demand-responsive shuttles or vans, or partnerships with private transportation providers.

This operations analysis and short-range service planning study is considered an initial stage of implementation of the adopted regional plan, as it will refine and detail VISION 2050’s transit recommendations. These recommendations provide the basis for potential options to consider during the planning process such as initiating new transit services, modifying existing services, and programming transit projects in future budgets.

The transit development plan is short-range in nature, covering the period of 2023 through 2027, and is based on a performance review of the existing Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit systems and analyses of the travel habits, patterns, and needs of system users based on travel data and surveys collected in 2012, 2018, and 2019. The plan proposes a set of recommended service changes for the transit systems and identify the forecast ridership, service levels, and operating expenses that would be expected from implementing the changes.

This operations analysis and service plan for Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit will be documented in the following chapters of this report:

- Chapter 2, "Existing Transit Services and Travel Patterns," which describes the existing public transit systems, the travel patterns of existing ridership, a summary of other major transit services presently available in the City and County, and a recent history of changes to the systems since previous transit development plans were completed
- Chapter 3, "Public Transit Service Objectives and Standards," which provides a set of transit service objectives, supporting performance standards, and design criteria that will be used to evaluate the performance of the existing bus services, design of any changes to the existing transit services, and evaluate the service alternatives
- Chapter 4, "Evaluation of the Existing Transit System," which describes how well the existing services provided by Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit meet the performance standards, thereby identifying service-related problems, successes, and deficiencies
- Chapter 5, "Recommended Transit Services," which sets forth a description of the transit service improvements that have been considered and recommended by the Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee, and indicates if the transit service improvement would be implemented by Waukesha Metro Transit, Waukesha County Transit, or both transit providers