



VOLUME 6
TIER 3 EVALUATION



Milwaukee County **North-South**
Transit Enhancement Study

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NUMBER 340



MILWAUKEE COUNTY NORTH-SOUTH
TRANSIT ENHANCEMENT STUDY

**VOLUME 6:
TIER 3 EVALUATION**



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INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has undertaken a feasibility study, at the request of Milwaukee County, to consider enhanced transit alternatives along and near 27th Street. Enhanced transit service would reduce travel times, increase frequency, add amenities, and potentially expand the existing Milwaukee County Transit System's (MCTS) PurpleLine service area to better serve the high proportion of transit dependent populations in this area and attract new riders.

The Tier 3 Evaluation is the final report in this study and is intended to make any necessary refinements to the recommended alternative, outline how it satisfies federal guidance criteria for transit grants, and describe next steps as the effort moves forward into project development as defined by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

OVERVIEW

This study uses an incremental evaluation process, described in the following three steps, which will progress to the final phase of the analysis and result in a recommended alternative.

- The first step (Tier 1 Evaluation) defines the alternatives to be evaluated and recommended, including the transit technology and the identification of alignment options. This evaluation step results in the elimination of some of the alternatives considered and is the subject of this report.
- The second step (Tier 2 Evaluation) will further assess the alternative alignments defined in step one and identify potential station locations along the alignments, using the evaluation criteria outlined below. This evaluation step may also result in the elimination of some of the alternatives considered.
- The third step (Tier 3 Evaluation—this document) builds upon any alternative still under consideration after the second step. Any remaining alternative will be evaluated against federal criteria for transit projects to determine if refinements should be made.

At the conclusion of this report, a recommended route alternative will be finalized and included in a letter to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requesting to enter project development. If approved, Milwaukee County will enter the next phase of this project, which will include design and engineering as well as additional public involvement. The next phase will help to further refine the route alignment, location of dedicated lanes, and detailed station siting.

ADDITIONAL EVALUATIONS AND REFINEMENTS

Since the Tier 2 Evaluation report included a recommended alternative that identified a route alignment with generalized potential station locations and roadway configurations (including running-type and bike facility recommendations), there are no additional alternatives still under consideration and therefore, additional evaluations are not included in this report.

A preliminary draft of the Tier 2 Evaluation report—including the draft recommended alternative—was made available to the public to review and provide feedback prior to finalizing that report. The following changes were made as a result of suggestions provided by the public:

- Information was added about recommendations for bicycles on buses for the proposed BRT service (Chapter 2)
- A note was added that Milwaukee County may consider a future east-west transit connection in southern Milwaukee County if the recommended route alternative does not already include one (Chapter 2)
- A recommendation was added that co-locating bikeshare stations near BRT stations be considered as detailed station siting is completed (Chapter 2)
- A recommendation was added that public and driver education efforts be considered to help bus drivers and bicyclists understand how to use the shared bus-bike lanes correctly (Chapter 4)

Public and stakeholder feedback also pointed to concerns that the draft recommended route alternative would not serve several major job centers in southern Milwaukee County, including the Franklin Business Park. However, the recommended alternative does not extend into these areas due to the lack of supportive density and the increased cost associated with extending the route to these areas. In response to those concerns, this study recommends that a series of last-mile solutions be considered to connect riders of the proposed BRT service to these job centers. More details about options that could be considered are included in Appendix A of this report. Additional details about public feedback are available in the Public Involvement Summary report.

Beyond the modifications described above, no changes or additional refinements to the recommended route alternative or roadway configurations are being made at this time. Further refinements will be necessary as the project moves into the next phase of project development and more detailed design, engineering, and environmental work is completed, in addition to more public involvement.

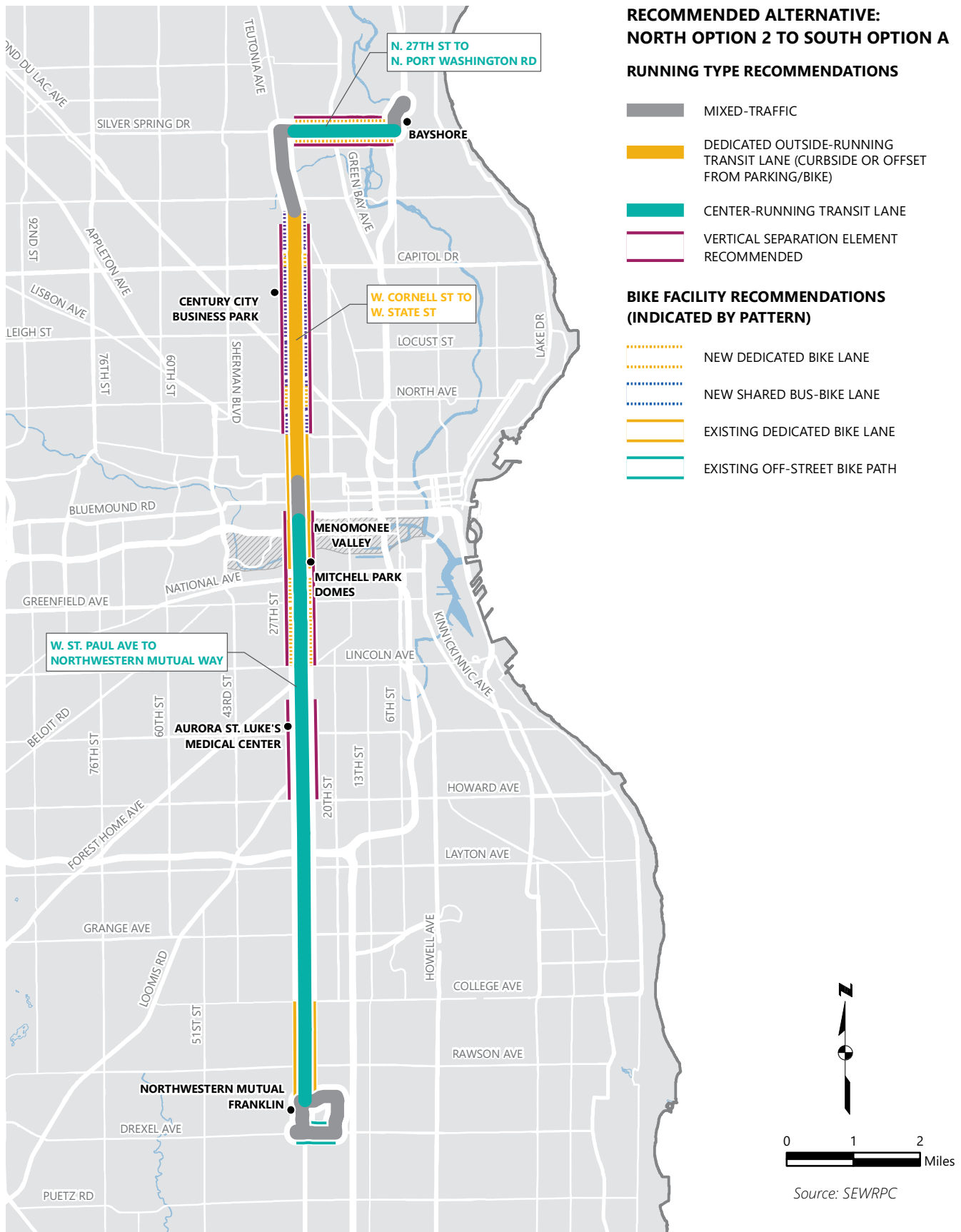
THE RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE

The final recommended route alternative with potential station locations is shown on Map 1 and recommended roadway configurations are shown on Map 2—all of which are unchanged from the Tier 2 Evaluation report recommendations.

Map 1
Recommended Route Alternative and Potential Station Locations



Map 2 Recommended Roadway Configurations



NEXT STEPS

The following section outlines how the recommended alternative provides the improvements and opportunities to comply with the guidance and requirements of the FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program and the next steps for implementing the proposed BRT service.

Compliance with Capital Investment Grant Program Requirements

Federal requirements for CIG funding include several identifiable and measurable characteristics of BRT service, defined below in the FTA's CIG Small Starts program policy guidance:¹

"A bus system that meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) Over 50 percent of the route must operate in a separated right-of-way dedicated for transit use during peak periods. Other traffic can make turning movements through the separated right-of-way.
- (2) The route must have defined stations that are accessible for persons with disabilities, offer shelter from the weather, and provide information on schedules and routes.
- (3) The route must provide faster passenger travel times through congested intersections by using active signal priority in separated guideway, and either queue-jump lanes or active signal priority in non-separated guideway.
- (4) The route must provide short headway, bidirectional service for at least a fourteen-hour span of service on weekdays and a ten-hour span of service on weekends. Short headway service on weekdays consists of either (a) fifteen-minute maximum headways throughout the day, or (b) ten-minute maximum headways during peak periods and twenty-minute maximum headways at all other times. Short headway service on weekends consists of thirty-minute maximum headways for at least ten hours a day.
- (5) The provider must apply a separate and consistent brand identity to stations and vehicles."

The recommended alternative incorporates these defined characteristics of enhanced transit service in the following ways:

- Approximately 79 percent of the recommended BRT route will operate in a dedicated transit lane.
- High-quality stations will be ADA-compliant, with ramps up to the level-boarding station platforms.
- Seating, lighting, real-time bus arrival information, and off-board ticketing will be provided at the BRT stations.
- Travel time savings for the BRT is expected to be approximately 15 minutes during congested periods with:
 - Queue-jumps or active signal priority at signalized intersections
 - 10-minute headways during peak hours on weekdays, 15- and 20-minute headways during nonpeak hours on weekdays, and 15- to 30-minute headways on weekends
 - BRT Service will run for 23.5 hours on weekdays, 21 hours on Saturdays and 20.5 hours on Sundays
- Milwaukee County is committed to identifying specific branding for the BRT service to ensure the buses, stations, signage, and amenities have a consistent and distinguishable appearance. It is expected that, along with Milwaukee County's first BRT service, the brand name would be "CONNECT," followed by a designated number.

As noted above, the recommended alternative and identified transit enhancements fulfill the Federal requirements for a BRT service. The next step in the process begins with a request to FTA to enter project development.

¹ www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FAST_Updated_Interim_Policy_Guidance_June%20_2016.pdf

Project Development

Given the estimated cost for the recommended alternative of approximately \$148 million, the cost of the project would be less than the CIG Small Starts grant limit of \$400 million in total project cost and would require less than the threshold of \$150 million in the Federal share of CIG funding. Therefore, Milwaukee County will submit a letter to FTA to request to enter project development in pursuit of an FTA CIG Small Starts grant.

If approved, FTA requires that significant progress is made in a timely manner during project development. In addition, 50 percent of non-CIG funds must be committed within three years of entering project development and a feasible cost estimate, scope, and schedule must be determined. The detailed analyses provided for the recommended alternative, as part of this feasibility study, has already demonstrated progress on these requirements prior to entering project development. The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approved \$20 million on November 8, 2021, to fully fund project development, engineering, and environmental clearance, and the project has also been included in the regional transportation improvement program (TIP).

NEPA and Engineering

During project development, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document, and preliminary and final engineering would be completed. As part of the request to enter project development, project sponsors typically provide an expectation for the level of environmental documentation required for the project. The Tier 2 analyses showed very few impacts on the natural and human environment for the recommended alternative, so Milwaukee County will recommend the FTA determine that the appropriate NEPA class of action be a categorical exclusion (CE) document.

Considering the level of analyses performed in the feasibility study, the project's preparedness for future phases is high and risk to the project schedule and budget is low. The NEPA document will confirm the recommended alternative as the locally preferred alternative (LPA), however, it is expected that further refinements will be made to the recommended alternative during the NEPA and engineering phases. Final design of the LPA will take place to define design details, amenities, costs, including the bus purchase cost, and schedule. With no real estate acquisition expected for the project, Milwaukee County is prepared to complete the project development phase in 2024/2025.

Project Rating and Capital Investment Grant Agreement

After NEPA and preliminary engineering are complete, Milwaukee County can request preliminary project justification rating from the FTA prior to final design and preparation of a construction bid package. Before construction of the LPA, project justification ratings will be prepared for mobility, environmental benefits, congestion relief, economic development, land use, and cost effectiveness. During the feasibility study, the FTA Small Starts template spreadsheet² for projects was used to calculate the initial results regarding the effect of the travel forecasts, mobility, and the environmental factors. For those factors, the spreadsheet returned an expected medium rating for the project.

The project justification accounts for 50 percent of the project evaluation and rating, and a local financial commitment makes up the other 50 percent. Local financial commitment includes the identification of the local share of funds, which need to be a minimum of 20 percent of the total project cost, as well as evidence that Milwaukee County has stable and dependable financial resources. For the East-West BRT project, Milwaukee County was able to provide the appropriate financial documentation to move forward with the Small Starts grant, and the same is expected for this project, with \$20 million already committed to the project.

Construction

After completion of project development, it is reasonable to expect the project justification and the local financial commitment would be granted a medium rating, which is an acceptable rating to move forward with a Small Starts grant agreement. Milwaukee County expects to have a Small Starts grant agreement in place in 2025 and will solicit bids for construction of the LPA, which can begin with the grant agreement in place. Construction is expected to last for two years with the service expected to open in 2028.

² www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/small-starts-templates-part-1.

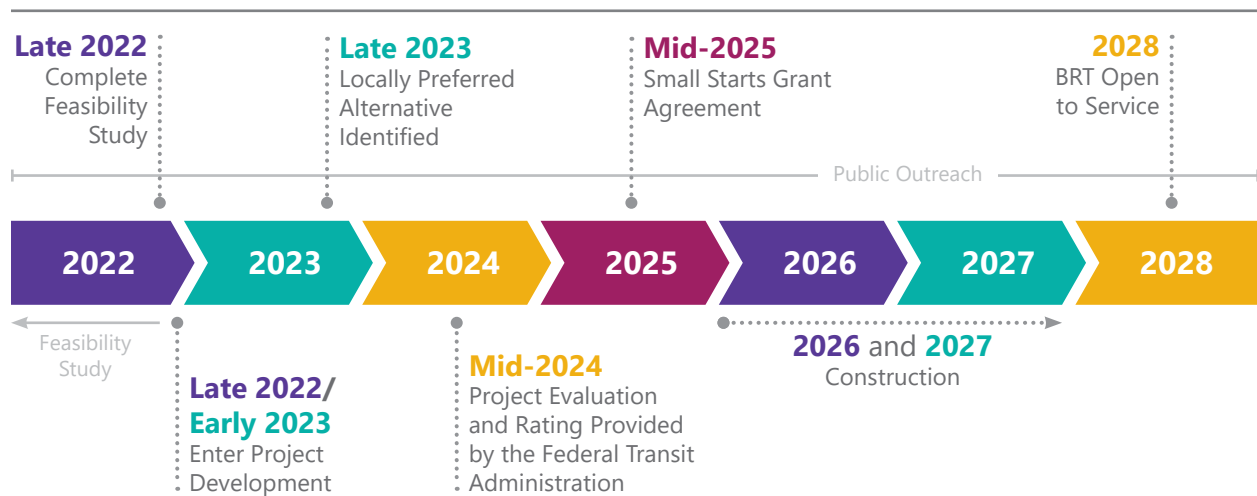
Public Involvement

The extensive public outreach effort that was undertaken as part of this feasibility study will continue throughout the next phases of the project. The project website address, mkenorthsouth.com will be used to extend the continuity for stakeholders as will the project email address, info@mkenorthsouth.com. The list of stakeholder contact information that was collected throughout the feasibility study will be used for outreach as the project development phase begins.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Milwaukee County expects to enter project development in late 2022/early 2023 and to have an LPA in late 2023 with a project evaluation and rating provided in mid-2024, and a Small Starts grant agreement in mid-2025. Construction is expected to last two years, and the BRT service is expected to open in 2028. Figure 1 illustrates the expected schedule for the project.

Figure 1
Project Schedule



APPENDICES

LAST-MILE CONNECTIONS TO SOUTHERN MILWAUKEE COUNTY JOB CENTERS APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION

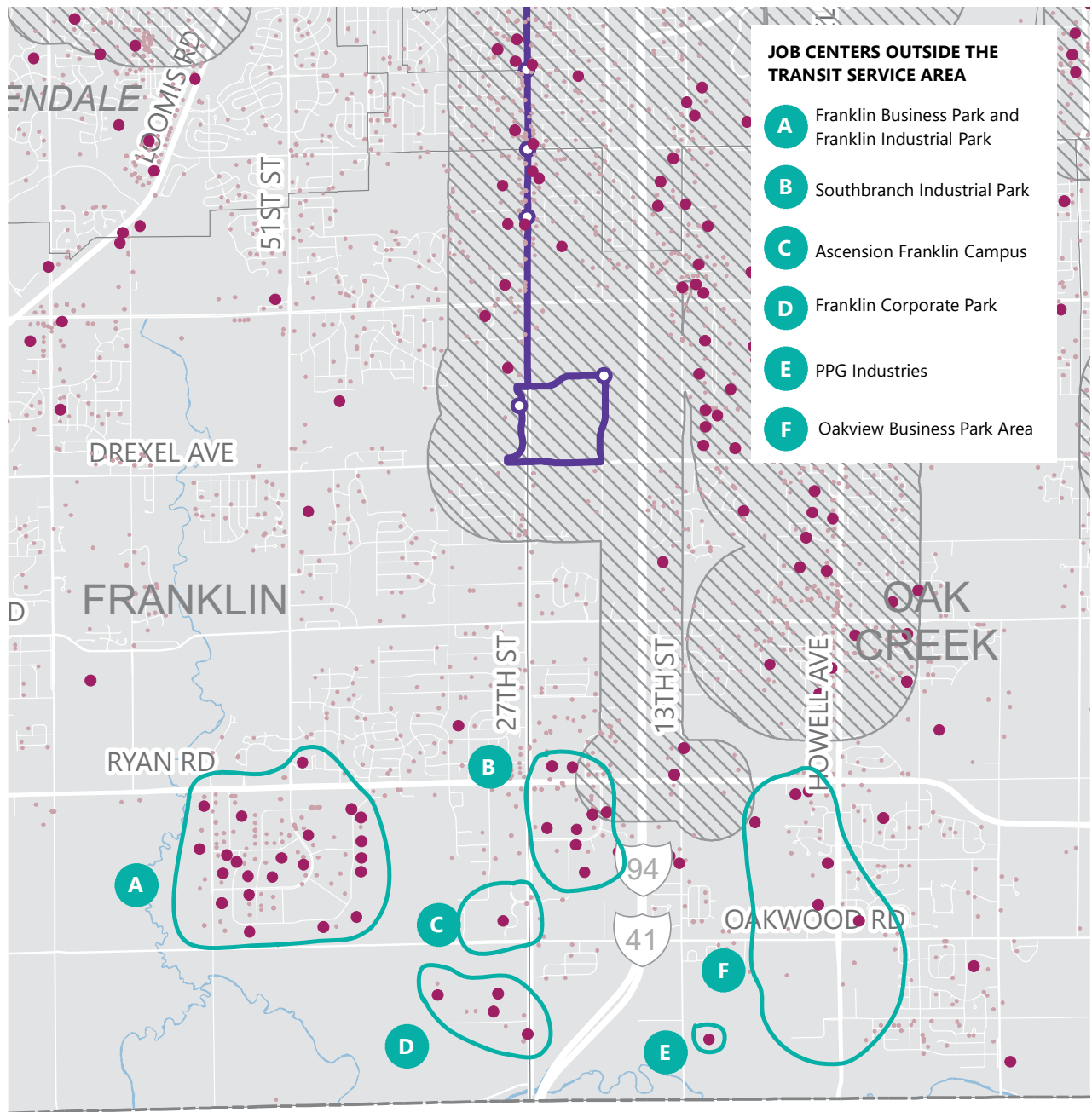
The “last-mile connection,” as far as the movement of people is concerned, refers to the beginning or end of an individual trip made primarily by public transportation. For most public transit trips, the last-mile connection is made on foot, by walking between an origin or destination and a transit station. If walking to or from a transit station isn’t feasible or desirable, alternative modes of transportation can be used for that portion of the trip, such as bicycles, scooters, or vehicles. Depending on existing transportation options in an area, new transportation solutions may be necessary to make a last-mile connection more feasible.

There are several job centers in southern Milwaukee County that are located beyond a safe or reasonable walking distance of the recommended route alternative and are otherwise not served by fixed-route transit service. It has been made clear through discussions with stakeholders and public comments that there is a need to expand transportation options to provide better access to these job centers—particularly for employees commuting from the City of Milwaukee, including areas that will be directly served by the BRT service. The *Bridging the Last Mile* report, completed in 2022 by Mobilise, in partnership with SEWRPC, provides several specific recommendations for last-mile solutions in Southeastern Wisconsin, including recommendations specific to this part of Milwaukee County.³ This appendix provides a general list of options that could be used to facilitate last-mile connections between the recommended BRT route alternative and those job centers, which could be coordinated by employers, business consortiums, municipalities, Milwaukee County, or a combination thereof.

The options focus on connections to the job centers shown in Map A.1 and listed in Table A.1. These are areas with concentrated employment of at least 400 on-site jobs in a variety of industries. There are more than 350 employers and nearly 10,000 jobs located in the job centers shown, with further growth expected to occur in this area.





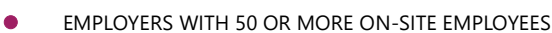

³ *Bridging the Last Mile*, Mobilise, 2022.
static1.squarespace.com/static/6182b45bd4ff3038bd61594c/t/628013c4f826eb6d4e98f58f/1652560842622/Bridging+the+Last+Mile.pdf.

Map A.1
Southern Milwaukee County Job Centers Not Served by Transit

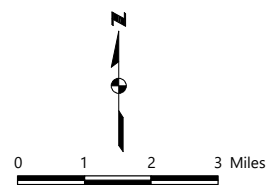


- JOB CENTERS OUTSIDE THE TRANSIT SERVICE AREA**
- A** Franklin Business Park and Franklin Industrial Park
 - B** Southbranch Industrial Park
 - C** Ascension Franklin Campus
 - D** Franklin Corporate Park
 - E** PPG Industries
 - F** Oakview Business Park Area

TRANSIT ACCESS AND SOUTHERN MILWAUKEE COUNTY JOB CENTERS

-  EXISTING AND RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE AREA
-  NORTH-SOUTH BRT RECOMMENDED ROUTE
-  NORTH-SOUTH BRT RECOMMENDED STATION LOCATION
-  EMPLOYERS WITH BETWEEN 2 AND 50 ON-SITE EMPLOYEES
-  EMPLOYERS WITH 50 OR MORE ON-SITE EMPLOYEES
-  JOB CENTERS (AREAS WITH 400 OR MORE JOBS)

Note: The transit service area represents a one-half mile distance from bus rapid transit and high-frequency fixed-route bus services and a one-quarter mile distance from other fixed-route bus services.



Source: SEWRPC and 2019 Infogroup Employment Data

Table A.1
Characteristics of Southern Milwaukee County Job Centers Not Served by Transit

Job Centers	Municipal Location	Distance from BRT Route Termini	Approximate Employers	Approximate On-Site Employees
A Franklin Business Park and Franklin Industrial Park	City of Franklin	5.1 miles	185	4,740
B Southbranch Industrial Park	City of Oak Creek	3.7 miles	72	2,010
C Ascension Franklin Campus	City of Franklin	4.0 miles	33	470
D Franklin Corporate Park Area (including Saputo Cheese)	City of Franklin	4.4 miles	14	1,320
E PPG Industries	City of Oak Creek	4.6 miles	1	700
F Oakview Business Park Area	City of Oak Creek	5.0 miles	61	1,060
Total			366	10,300

Source: 2019 Infogroup Employment Data and SEWRPC

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Chapter 3 of the Tier 2 Evaluation Report of this study analyzed population and job density along all route alternatives under consideration, including possible extensions to southern Milwaukee County, using a combined population and job density score to identify whether areas would meet density thresholds needed to support transit. That analysis showed that there are not consistent, transit-supportive levels of density in southern Milwaukee County, and that extending the route further to serve these job centers would likely not generate the ridership necessary to justify the additional costs and travel time.

Although development patterns in these areas are not currently a good fit for BRT or traditional fixed-route transit services, there are several other transportation options that can be considered to provide connections to these job centers and other destinations outside of the transit service area. Stations at the southern terminus of the BRT route would provide a convenient transfer point between enhanced transit and more flexible services that could provide the necessary last-mile connection to these job centers, and mobility hubs could be used to provide additional amenities to users at these locations.

Shuttle and Ride-Hailing Services

There are multiple ways shuttle and ride-hailing services could be provided. One option would provide on-demand rides, utilizing routing and ride-matching software to provide on-demand, shared-transport services to an area that includes one or several of the job centers described in this chapter. A second option would provide shuttles on a pre-determined route and schedule, synchronizing with shift times.

On-Demand Shuttle Services

On-demand shuttle services offer flexibly scheduled rides, typically from higher-frequency stops on an as-needed basis. On-demand services typically utilize ride-matching and routing software to enable efficient on-demand, shared rides. An example of an on-demand rideshare platform is Via, which is currently used for the FlexRide Milwaukee pilot program. The FlexRide pilot was funded through a National Science Foundation grant and led by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Urban Planning professors, SEWRPC staff, MobilISE, and several other partners. It currently transports Milwaukee residents to jobs in the Menomonee Falls/Butler area, and, as of the writing of this report, SEWRPC staff is supporting MobilISE in planning for expansion to additional suburban employment centers, including southern Milwaukee County. Expanded service is anticipated to begin in spring 2023, with funding likely available through 2024. The service on the FlexRide Milwaukee pilot program is currently available weekdays between 4:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m., with rides booked through an app or by phone. Rides are free or \$1.50 per one-way trip, depending on where a ride is requested.

Partnerships with Via can vary greatly in program cost, which is dependent on a variety of factors similar to fixed-route shuttle services, including but not limited to, size and scope of the project, service area size, frequency of service, and user interface customization. Depending on the size and scope of the program, on-demand shuttle services may be cost-prohibitive for an individual employer.

Of all options listed in this chapter, an on-demand shuttle service is likely the best solution for this area at this time and is recommended in the *Bridging the Last Mile* report. Barriers to successful implementation include identifying sustainable funding sources, assigning lead people or agencies to operate the service, achieving consensus among multiple stakeholders in the planning phase, and marketing the service to existing and potential transit-dependent employees.

Fixed-Route Shuttle Services

For shuttles provided on an established schedule, a route would be developed with specific stops identified for pick-up and drop-off. The shuttle services could originate from BRT stops, providing direct connections to participating businesses. Fixed-route shuttle operations could be facilitated with an existing private operator.

There are private shuttle operators in Southeastern Wisconsin, including GoRiteway, Wisconsin Coach Lines, and American Transit Team. Fixed-route shuttle services can vary greatly in cost, depending on a number of factors, including but not limited to, number of vehicles, total trip distance, vehicle type, vehicle amenities, number of hours in service, and fuel cost. This option could be an effective solution for an individual employer, or if multiple parties were interested in partnering to coordinate such a service, and shift schedules were amenable to synchronization.

Ride-Hailing

Partnering with a ride-hailing company such as Lyft or Uber to provide last-mile connections could serve as a less-structured on-demand service that would be most beneficial for employees who needed temporary or emergency transportation assistance. Ride-hailing companies offer business accounts that allow organizations to cover or subsidize the cost of employee trips at a reduced rate if they meet certain requirements, often using an employer-specific code in the mobile app. Using Lyft, Uber, or another shared-ride service is flexible and convenient, but drivers may not be available in all locations in the region, and it may be cost-prohibitive to use on a regular basis.

Vanpool Services

Vanpools typically carry between seven and fifteen passengers and operate on weekdays, traveling between one or two common pick-up locations (in this case, likely a BRT station) and the workplace. Vanpool services can be operated in partnership with a third-party provider or be sponsored by an employer(s). Vanpool is typically considered for longer commutes, but it could also be implemented as an employee-organized shuttle for a business or a consortium of businesses in any of these job centers.

Employer-sponsored vanpools require the employer to purchase or lease vehicles, administer the program, and obtain insurance. Administrative costs associated with vanpool programs include forming groups, replacing lost riders, and monitoring usage. Contracting with a third-party provider, such as Commute with Enterprise, alleviates employer liability and reduces the administrative involvement in program operation. Third-party providers are typically involved in recruiting drivers and riders through marketing and technology, but a point person from the company likely needs to be involved to run a successful program.

Program costs vary depending on fleet size, type of vehicle, total miles driven each day, and amenities. Volunteer drivers reduce overall costs compared to a shuttle service. Most often, vanpool participants pay a fee to cover operating costs with the volunteer driver exempt from fees. An employer may subsidize the cost of a vanpool.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In addition to the more structured options listed here, a variety of transportation demand management strategies could also be used to facilitate last-mile connections by encouraging financial incentives and alternatives to driving alone.

Commuter Benefits

IRS Code, Section 132(f), allows employers to offer commuter benefits through tax-free employer-paid subsidies, pre-tax employee-paid payroll deductions, or a combination of both. Employers may choose to provide commuter benefits to employees as a substitute for taxable salary, as a supplemental benefit, or

as a combination of the two. Qualified transportation costs include up to \$280⁴ per month per employee for qualified transit passes and “commuter highway vehicle” transportation and up to \$280 per month per employee for qualified parking. A commuter highway vehicle is defined as a vehicle that seats at least six adults (not including the driver) if the driver is hired for pay. An example application of commuter benefits could include a payroll deduction that an employee may apply to cover the cost of a shuttle ride.

Rideshare Promotion

An individual employer or a consortium of businesses in any of the job centers listed could consider encouraging employees to rideshare (or carpool) by setting up a business page on WisDOT’s Wisconsin RIDESHARE platform. This solution would work to connect employees who have access to a vehicle to those who need a ride. Contrary to an employer-run shuttle, carpooling relies on commuters to make transportation arrangements independently, including any exchange of payment. The following options could be considered to help promote a successful carpool program:

- Support matching employees to a carpool using tools such as the Wisconsin RIDESHARE platform or posting lists of available drivers and riders in employee common spaces
- Make employees aware of transportation options through marketing and advertising such as tabling during lunch hours or email blasts
- Offer incentives such as preferential parking, commute challenges with prizes/raffles, or a guaranteed ride home in an emergency

Preferential Parking

Converting a small number of parking spaces close to the employee entrance to carpool spaces is great visibility for promoting a carpooling strategy and a nice perk for carpoolers. Parking spaces can be identified with paint, permanent signage, or movable signage (e.g., sandwich board signs). Employers could consider using carpool hangtags, stickers, or other identifiers that a carpool group receives after completing an application process. Staff and administrative costs associated with the process of approving and monitoring preferential parking tend to be moderate.

Emergency Ride Home

Employers may operate an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program as an incentive or benefit for employees who use non-drive-alone commute modes to provide an option to return home if unforeseen circumstances require it at a time when their traditional mode of transportation (carpool, vanpool, shuttle, etc.) is unavailable. The company creates an ERH policy that dictates eligibility and procedure. There are multiple transportation options for an emergency ride including the use of fleet vehicles or a ride-hailing service such as Uber, Lyft, or a local taxi. ERH programs are typically low-cost operationally but require some indirect staff and administration costs. The frequency of use depends on the number of staff who are eligible and how many staff are aware of the program.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

These last-mile options provide opportunities to expand access to destinations beyond the safe or reasonable walk distance of a BRT station, benefiting employers and expanding the return on investment of the BRT service. Coordination between businesses, municipalities, and Milwaukee County will likely be necessary to facilitate successful programming. SEWRPC staff also has a transportation demand management coordinator that can assist with facilitating coordination and programming. In the future, if additional development occurs and density along and around these job centers increases, extensions of the BRT service could be considered.

⁴ Publication 15-B (2022), Employer’s Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits.

Prepared for:

