

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

W239 N1812 ROCKWOOD DRIVE • PO BOX 1607 • WAUKESHA, WI 53187-1607 • TELEPHONE (262) 547-6721

Serving the Counties of:

KENOSHA
MILWAUKEE
OZAUKEE
RACINE
WALWORTH
WASHINGTON
WAUKESHA



Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Efforts for Milwaukee County

September 2025

The following provides a summary of work recently completed or underway in Milwaukee County at the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, including regional planning, efforts for Milwaukee County, and work with municipalities in the County.

EFFORTS AT THE REQUEST OF THE COUNTY (C) OR A MUNICIPALITY (M) WITHIN THE COUNTY

C/M Transportation Planning

- **Milwaukee County Arterial Utilization and Jurisdictional Plan:** At the request of MCDOT, Commission staff initiated work on an update to the jurisdictional highway system plan for Milwaukee County, which was completed in the late 1960s. Because travel patterns within Milwaukee County and the Region have changed over the last 50 years, Commission staff will be reassessing the capacity needs of the arterial streets and highways in the County from a multimodal perspective. This will include the identification of roadways with extra capacity that could be rededicated to other uses and recommendations to reduce reckless driving through design and infrastructure solutions. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.
- **Traffic Forecasting:** In support of preliminary engineering for highway and transit projects, the Commission provides long-range traffic forecasts to municipalities, counties, and the State of Wisconsin. Recent work has included forecasts for the IH 94 E-W Corridor Study; the USH 18 Connecting Highway Re-Route Evaluation Study, the IH 794 Lake Interchange Reconstruction Study; the STH 32 (Prospect Avenue/Farwell Avenue) Alternatives Study, and the IH 43 and National Avenue Interchange Study.
- **Transit Benefits Study:** At the County's request, Commission staff initiated a study to quantify the benefits related to public transit such as increased job access, improved roadway safety, and a positive return on investment. The report is anticipated to be completed in fall 2025.
- **Paratransit Taxi Task Force:** At the County's request, Commission staff continued to participate in the Paratransit Taxi Task Force and the Transit Plus Service Subcommittee.
- **Human Services Transportation Planning:** Commission staff are preparing plans for all seven counties in the Region, including Milwaukee County, to ensure eligibility for Federal Transit

Administration funds to support transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities. A regional workshop was held in August and final plans will be completed in 2025.

M Land Use Planning

- **Redevelopment District Project Plans:** At the request of the City of Cudahy, the Commission is assisted the City with preparing a project plan for a new Redevelopment District (District #3, South Packard Corridor). This project plan is a component of the City's ongoing community planning and development efforts and is being prepared under Section 66.431(5)(a)1 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, which authorizes cities to prepare redevelopment plans and implement redevelopment projects within the community, and further authorized cities to establish redevelopment programs and create a community development authority to implement such programs to address blight. This effort has included preparing various inventories and databases for the proposed district, preparing a blight analysis, and ensuring the plan is consistent with the City's comprehensive plan. After receiving input from a public hearing on this matter, the Community Development Authority (CDA), decided to put the project on hold.

C/M Economic Development Planning

- **Lightcast Data Requests:** Commission staff is available to provide Lightcast economic data by request. During the past year, staff provided such data for one request in the County by a consultant assisting Milwaukee Area Technical College.

C/M Environmental Planning

- **Floodplain Mapping Program:** Under the floodplain mapping program for the Milwaukee County Land Information Office (MCLIO) and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), the Commission continued work on developing the hydrologic and hydraulic models for the Root River watershed. The project involves mapping the ten-, two-, one-, and 0.2 percent annual-probability (10-, 50-, 100-, and 500-year recurrence interval) floodplains along 28 streams in the watershed, including the mainstem of the Root River. The updated Root River hydrologic model has been approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Draft floodplain mapping has been completed for Hale Creek, West Branch of the Root River and its two tributaries, East Branch of the Root River and its tributary, three Unnamed Tributaries to the Root River, and Wildcat Creek. Work continues on floodplain mapping for Ryan Creek, Whitnall Park Creek, Dale Creek, and Scout Lake Creek. Work also continues on the Root River mainstem hydraulic model. This project involves lands in Milwaukee County Parks and lands in the Cities of Franklin, Greenfield, Milwaukee, Oak Creek, and West Allis, and the Villages of Greendale and Hales Corners.
- **Menomonee River LOMR Submittal:** Commission staff began preparing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) submittals for streams within the Menomonee River watershed completed under the MCLIO effort. Floodplain work is first submitted to the WDNR for their review and then the analyses can be submitted to FEMA as a LOMR. Milwaukee County streams approved by the WDNR include Dretzka Park Tributary in the City of Milwaukee; Grantosa Creek in the City of Wauwatosa; Honey Creek in the Cities of Greenfield, Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, and West Allis; Woods Creek in the City of Milwaukee; and the Menomonee River mainstem upstream of North Avenue, Little Menomonee River, and Little Menomonee Creek in the Cities of Milwaukee and Wauwatosa. The Honey Creek model was updated for stream restoration work in Konkel Park in the City of Greenfield and resubmitted to the WDNR for approval.

- **Milwaukee County Hazard Mitigation Plan:** Commission staff completed the hazard mitigation plan, which included information from the City of Milwaukee hazard plan for a true countywide plan. The plan was approved by FEMA and adopted by the County.
- **Ongoing Work:**
 - Commission staff continued to provide technical assistance to MMSD and its consultants for watercourse work in the Kinnickinnic River watershed.
 - Commission staff continued to provide technical assistance to the MMSD initiative to improve aquatic habitat and ecological connectivity within the Milwaukee River between Capitol Drive and Bender Road.
 - Commission staff continued to provide assistance to the MMSD Greenseams® innovative flood management program and the Reforestation and Wetland Restoration program.
 - Commission staff provided technical assistance to the Milwaukee County Parks Wehr Nature Center staff on water quality issues, potential restoration, and management of Whitnall Park Pond, including training to conduct aquatic plant surveys.
 - Commission staff provided technical assistance to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources by participating in a wetland condition and functional value assessment at a site in the City of Franklin.
 - Commission staff continued to serve on the Southeastern Wisconsin Watershed Trust's Board.
 - Provided letters of support to UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, and Root Pike WIN for various grant initiatives.
 - Commission staff continued to serve on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School Freshwater Sciences Academic Programs Advisory Board.
 - Serving on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) Fish and Wildlife Technical Advisory Team and Citizen Advisory Committee
 - Staff have begun a review of the extreme rainfall event of August 9-10, 2025, with the purpose of determining recurrence intervals for highest 1-hr to the 2-day rainfall totals experienced in the four northern counties in the Region, including Milwaukee County.

C/M Environmental Field Work

Upon request, Commission staff provide wetland and environmental corridor delineations for public lands, projects, and on private property (if requested by a unit of government).

Transportation – 5 Projects

- Root River Parkway Proposed Oak Leaf Trail Improvements (City of Greenfield) – Wetland Delineation
- Cupertino Park Proposed Oak Leaf Trail Improvements (City of Milwaukee) – Wetland Delineation
- Warnimont Park Proposed Oak Leaf Trail Improvements (City of Cudahy) – Wetland Delineation

- Riverside Park Proposed Oak Leaf Trail Improvements – Riverside High School Connection (City of Milwaukee) – Wetland Delineation
- Lincoln Park Proposed Oak Leaf Trail Improvements – Lincoln Park (Cities of Glendale & Milwaukee) – Wetland Delineation

Public Park Sites – 1 Project

- City of Franklin-Owned Property Proposed Park Development (City of Franklin) – Wetland Delineation

Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Assessments – 12 Site Visits

- **MMSD Greenseams Program**
 - Granville Low Woods (NA3) co-owned by MMSD and Milwaukee County
- **MMSD RWR Program**
 - Firefly Ridge Park (City of Wauwatosa)
 - Whitnall park woods-South (City of Franklin)
 - Watertown Park (City of Franklin)
 - Tom Best Property (City of Franklin)
- **NOAA/WCMP Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding**
 - Hart Park Woods (City of Wauwatosa)
 - Scout Lake, Whitnall Park Pond, McGovern Park Pond, and Jackson Park Pond (Milwaukee County Parks) water quality and aquatic plant assessments
- **WCMP Phase IV Natural Areas Plan Implementation**
 - Pleasant View Park (City of Franklin)
 - Countryside Woods (City of Franklin)
- **Restoring Lands**
 - Three botanical surveys sites within Milwaukee County proposed.

C Surveying and Mapping Assistance

The Commission has, since its inception, provided and supported surveying and mapping services to Milwaukee County. As a part of such services, the Commission has, since 1984, provided a County Surveyor for Milwaukee County. The County Surveyor is responsible for perpetuating corners of the U.S. Public Land Survey System (USPLSS) that may be subject to disturbance, removal, or burial through construction or other activities, and for maintaining a record of the surveys required for such perpetuation. The U.S. Public Land Survey corners, as monumented, provide the basis for land and engineering surveys within the County. The Commission reset 42 corner monuments over the last year.

Additionally, the County Surveyor implemented a new procedure to validate the NAD83/2011 computed coordinates from the Commission developed technique. Every time a USPLSS corner is located for any reason a direct GPS measurement is made on that corner. The newly implemented procedural step has provided a beneficial quality check on evaluating the network integrity and overall geodetic accuracy. In 2024, the procedural step required 70 USPLSS corners to be readjusted. This step has been extremely beneficial and has further strengthened the overall geodetic quality of Milwaukee County.

Lastly, a total of 101 additional USPLSS corners involved field work completed in 2024 in preparation for future work on street and highway or utility reconstruction proposed to be carried out in 2025.

Also pursuant to State Legislation, a copy of each land survey plat prepared by a land surveyor must be filed with the County Surveyor, and through that office made available to other surveyors, engineers,

realtors, assessors, and the public in general. The County Surveyor received, indexed, and filed 877 copies of new land surveys in 2024.

In addition to meeting the statutory responsibilities of the County Surveyor, the Commission provides related technical assistance in survey and mapping in response to County requests. Most recently, the Commission has, at County request, completed special surveys in support of the 2024 ortho imagery and 2025 Regionwide Lidar project along with administrative, QA/QC, and technical support for these projects.

- **Orthophotography:** Since 1995, the Commission has assisted Milwaukee County in the acquisition of digital orthophotography as part of the Regional Orthophotography Program with the latest acquisition occurring last year in late 2024. The Commission assisted the County by providing federal planning funds for a portion of the orthoimagery, planned review of the delivered orthoimagery that pointed out three minor issues with the delivered data that the contractor needed to correct, and provided independent features to ensure the horizontal accuracy. During the past year, the Commission has started coordination with the County on the latest acquisition of aerial imagery in 2026 and the specialized independent survey control to assist in validating the horizontal accuracy of the acquired imagery.
- **LiDAR:** The 2020 high-density data were successfully received by many engineers and GIS users and has become not only a template for other counties in the Region but in the State of Wisconsin. In 2025 due to the successes of the data collected in 2020, Milwaukee County has acquired high density LiDAR along with all other counties in the Region. This will be the first time that all counties in the Region are collected in the same year. Again, the Commission staff will review provided LiDAR tiles, provide survey test points in Milwaukee and the Region that will be used to verify the vertical accuracy of the high-density solution and generate 1ft contours.

REGIONAL (R) OR MULTI-COUNTY (MULTI) EFFORTS THAT DIRECTLY BENEFIT MILWAUKEE COUNTY

R/MULTI Transportation Planning

- **General Metropolitan Planning Functions:** Commission staff continued to serve as the Region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning purposes, including preparing and maintaining the up-to-date, federally required regional transportation plan and transportation improvement program, and ensuring all necessary federal transportation planning and programming requirements are met to permit the continued use of U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) funds on Milwaukee County's streets, highways, and transit system. USDOT funding expenditures within Milwaukee County are approximately \$250 to \$400 million annually. These funding levels are higher in more recent years due to COVID-recovery aid received by the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) and an overall increase in USDOT funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) enacted in November 2021.
- **Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan:** VISION 2050, the long-range land use and transportation plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, was originally adopted by the Commission on July 28, 2016. The periodic (approximately every 10 years) major reevaluation of the regional transportation plan, incorporating new U.S. Census population, employment, and travel survey data and maintaining a minimum 20-year future timeframe, is required for State and local governments to continue to obtain highway and transit project funding from the USDOT. An interim review and update is also required every four years. Since the plan was first adopted, the Commission has adopted three needed plan amendments, the 2020 Review and Update (the first interim review and update of the plan), and the 2024 Review and Update (the second interim review and update of the

plan). Following the 2020 Update, staff prepared a second edition of Volume III of VISION 2050, which contains the full recommended plan as updated and can be accessed on the VISION 2050 website (www.vision2050sewis.org). The plan website includes additional information about the updated plan recommendations and interactive map applications for several main elements, including land use, public transit, the bicycle network, arterial streets and highways, and freight transportation. The Commission adopted the 2024 Update in June 2024 and is in the process of preparing a third edition of Volume III of VISION 2050 and updating the plan website to reflect the 2024 Update.

As updated in 2024, VISION 2050 makes recommendations to local and State government to shape and guide land use development and transportation improvement. In addition to recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, streets and highways, and freight facilities, the transportation component recommends a more than doubling of transit service in the Region; recommending increasing the speed, frequency, and reach of transit services. The plan also identifies possible ways to address an ongoing funding gap for both transit and streets and highways so that VISION 2050 can be fully implemented, although State legislative action would be required.

The initial process to develop VISION 2050 was guided by the Commission's Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use Planning and Regional Transportation Planning, with input also provided by the Commission's Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF), Jurisdictional Highway Planning Committees for each county, and VISION 2050 Task Forces on key areas of interest. Broad public input from thousands of residents was also incorporated during a three-year visioning and scenario planning process, intended to identify a long-range future vision for land use and transportation for the Region. The Commission also partnered with eight community organizations during the public input process, with these partnerships designed to reach and engage people of color, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals.

The Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use Planning and Regional Transportation Planning again guided the 2020 and 2024 Review and Update processes, with input from the EJTF. The most recent 2024 Update assessed the progress in implementing the original VISION 2050 recommendations, the performance of the transportation system, year 2050 forecasts underlying the plan, and changes that impact the plan. The 2024 Update identified plan changes based on review of this information and public input, which included engaging constituents of the Commission's now nine community partners. The 2024 Update includes an updated financial analysis for the recommended transportation system, which confirmed a funding gap for the recommended system, and a gap to continue to operate the existing transit system over the long term. It also includes updated equity analyses, which include evaluations of potential benefits and impacts to people of color, low-income populations, and people with disabilities related to the plan's updated land use and transportation components. Notably, the transportation equity analysis concluded that without additional funding to implement the VISION 2050 public transit element, a disparate impact on these population groups is likely to occur.

After VISION 2050's initial adoption, the complete three-volume report for the original plan was sent to each affected unit and agency of government requesting their consideration and endorsement. In December 2020, the Commission distributed the second edition of Volume III of that report, along with the 2020 Update report and summary. The Commission will distribute the third edition and 2024 Update report materials upon their completion. In support of plan implementation, staff has continued concerted efforts to communicate the plan and its recommendations across the Region, including providing presentations to numerous groups, widely distributing summary materials, and maintaining active social media accounts for the Commission and the plan.

Commission staff will initiate a major update of the regional land use and transportation plan in 2026. The major update will extend the plan design year to 2060.

- **Transportation Improvement Program:** In December 2024, the Commission adopted the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP lists transportation projects intended to be undertaken by State, County, and local governments in Southeastern Wisconsin. The preparation of a TIP every two years, and amendments as necessary, is needed so that State, County, and local governments can obtain project funding from the USDOT Federal Highway and Transit Administrations. Through August 2025, Commission staff has processed 38 TIP amendments/administrative modifications for Milwaukee County and 33 amendments for municipalities in the County. In the summer of 2024, the Commission staff worked with a vendor to complete the development of the new enhanced online version of the TIP that provides more robust searching capabilities of the project listings and an interactive map.
- **Surface Transportation Block Grants:** In March 2024, Commission staff assisted the Advisory Committee on Transportation Planning and Programming for the Milwaukee Urbanized Area (Milwaukee TIP Committee) in the evaluation, prioritization, and recommendation of candidate projects for \$76.2 million in available years 2028-2029 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Milwaukee Urbanized Area (STP-M) funding. This federal funding source can be used for transit capital and arterial street and highway capital projects, at up to 80% federal cost share. Approximately \$56.2 million of the available funds during this most recent round were awarded to fully or partially fund 10 projects located within Milwaukee County. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is currently soliciting projects for years 2030-2031 FHWA STP-M funding. Following the solicitation, the Commission staff will work with the Milwaukee TIP Committee to evaluate projects for this funding in late 2025 with approval of the projects expected to occur in early 2026.
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Grants:** In Winter 2024, the Commission staff, working with WisDOT, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), completed the evaluation and recommendation of projects for \$22.4 million in available additional years 2025-2028 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funding, which can be used for certain transportation projects that are intended to reduce congestion and air pollution emissions. The additional funding was made available as part of a special solicitation by WisDOT in late 2024. Approximately \$14.0 million in 2027-2028 CMAQ funds during this most recent round were awarded to fund 10 projects located in Milwaukee County. WisDOT is currently soliciting projects for years 2029-2030 CMAQ funding with applications due at the end of September 2025. Following the submittal of the projects, Commission staff will work with WisDOT and WDNR staff to evaluate and recommend projects for this funding in late 2025 with approval of the projects expected to occur in early 2026.
- **Transportation Alternatives Grants:** In April 2024, the Commission staff assisted the Milwaukee TIP Committee in selecting projects for \$5.6 million in available years 2027-2028 FHWA Transportation Alternative Program – Milwaukee Urbanized Area (TAP-M) funding. TAP funding can be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects, and the Commission staff working with the Milwaukee TIP Committee is responsible for project selection in the Milwaukee Urbanized Area. Approximately \$4.9 million in TAP-M funds during this most recent round were awarded to five projects located in Milwaukee County. WisDOT is currently soliciting projects for years 2029-2030 FHWA TAP-M funding. Following the solicitation, the Commission staff will work with the Milwaukee TIP Committee to evaluate projects for this funding in late 2025 with approval of the projects expected to occur in early 2026.

- **Carbon Reduction Grants:** In early 2025, Commission staff worked with WisDOT to recommend projects for \$6.1 million in years 2025-2028 Carbon Reduction Program – Milwaukee Urbanized Area (CRP-M) funding. This program was created in the BIL legislation, enacted in November 2021, to reduce transportation emissions—defined as carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from on-road highway sources—nationwide through the development of state carbon reduction strategies and through the funding of projects designed to reduce transportation-related CO₂ emissions. Of the \$6.1 million awarded, \$1.7 million in years 2025-2028 CRP-M funding was awarded to 3 projects in Milwaukee County.
- **Federal Transit Administration Funding:** The Commission works with the transit operators in the Milwaukee urbanized area (MUA) to distribute Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Section 5307/5340 formula program funds among the transit operators in the Milwaukee urbanized area—Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties, and the Cities of Milwaukee and Waukesha. A total of \$28,805,690 in Section 5307/5340 funds were allocated to the area as part of the 2025 annual apportionment.

Commission staff worked with the transit operators in the Milwaukee urbanized area to distribute FTA Section 5310, FTA Section 5337, and FTA Section 5339 formula program funds among the transit operators. FTA Section 5310 funding, of which the urbanized area received \$1,683,311 in 2025, will be distributed using a competitive selection process managed by the Commission staff, in collaboration with Milwaukee County. This program is intended to support transit services that are specifically targeted to seniors and people with disabilities and go above and beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In 2025, Commission staff, in close coordination with Milwaukee County, completed the selection process for the Section 5310 Program for years 2025 and 2026. The final program of projects was delivered and presented in April 2025.

FTA Section 5337 funding for capital projects, of which the urbanized area received \$758,468 in 2025, was distributed to Waukesha County because the funds were allocated to the urbanized area due to the exclusive bus lanes located on W. Bluemound Rd. in Waukesha County. FTA Section 5339 funding for bus and bus facility capital projects, of which the urbanized area received \$4,167,514, was distributed to operators that provide bus service.

The funds are allocated based on the distribution method selected by the transit operators in April 2021, which was considered to be the most equitable distribution of funds among the transit operators, by ensuring that no transit operator in the urbanized area receives less from the local distribution formula than the incremental amount of funding that their transit service brings to the urbanized area through the FTA formula. This distribution methodology is the same process utilized since 2007, except that it provides the City of Milwaukee, now a designated recipient of Section 5307 funds, with the increment of MUA Section 5307/5340 funds attributable to the transit services provided. The remaining funds are distributed to the other transit operators based on the most recent transit ridership and service data—revenue vehicle miles of transit service, revenue vehicle hours of transit service, revenue passengers, and passenger miles—reported by each transit operator to the FTA and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), with 25 percent of the urbanized area apportionment distributed using each criterion.

- **Air Quality Standards:** Continued work with local governments and counties to ensure that the plan and TIP conform with national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) for ozone and PM_{2.5}. This work includes assisting with the development of data regarding the sources of criteria pollutants, which largely are generated outside of the Region and the State of Wisconsin, and briefing local officials on the impacts of US EPA decisions regarding attainment or nonattainment of NAAQS standards, and

conducting the requisite conformity demonstrations to support a conformity determinations by United States Department of Transportation (USDOT).

- **Milwaukee Area-Racine-Kenosha (MARK) Passenger Rail Study:** In 2024, Commission staff began assisting in a study exploring the possibility of establishing passenger rail service in the corridor between Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee. The City of Racine obtained \$5 million in Congressionally Directed Spending and is using part of those funds to complete the current study. While the study incorporates previous studies and their results, the study differs in important ways to reflect changes since the previous studies were completed in 2011. Among the differences, the study is exploring alternative service designs, station locations, organizational structures, and funding mechanisms. The Commission's role in the study has been to provide project management support through an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Racine. The study has been guided initially by an advisory Steering Committee initially made up of representatives from the Cities of Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee; the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT); and the Commission. To guide and shape the technical aspects of the project, a Technical Working Group was also formed, which is made up of representatives from the three cities, the Milwaukee County Transit System, Kenosha County, WisDOT, and the Commission. In late summer 2025, the Cities of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha began pursuing creation of a MARK passenger rail commission that would have the authority to apply to the Federal Railroad Administration to enter the Corridor Identification and Development program, which could potentially provide funding for subsequent service development planning work.
- **FlexRide Milwaukee:** In Fall 2022, Commission staff, in partnership with UW-Milwaukee professors and multiple partners, completed a pilot on-demand transportation program called FlexRide Milwaukee (www.flexridemke.com). The pilot's goal was to address first/last-mile transportation challenges between the City of Milwaukee and locations with high job densities in the Menomonee Falls area in Waukesha County. Key partners included Employ Milwaukee, Waukesha County Business Alliance, Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board, Milwaukee County Transit System, MobiliSE, and the service provider Via. Following the pilot, Commission staff worked to transition the FlexRide service to MobiliSE and assisted MobiliSE in a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, which resulted in selecting Via as the operator for the service in 2023 and 2024. Staff worked with MobiliSE, Via, and other FlexRide partners to launch an updated and expanded FlexRide service in April 2023. Staff has continued to support MobiliSE and partners in the service's ongoing operations, including providing temporary support in January and February 2024 in overseeing the FlexRide service and assisting MobiliSE in transitioning to a new FlexRide program management firm. MobiliSE has been working to identify funding to sustain FlexRide service past the end of 2025 when a large portion of grant funding for FlexRide ends.
- **Transportation Demand Management:** Commission staff continued to operate a commute program, called CommuteWISE, to encourage Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies and promote multimodal transportation options. CommuteWISE is a regionwide initiative that provides tools and resources to encourage a shift from drive-alone commuting to cost-effective and sustainable options like riding the bus, carpooling, or biking. The program aims to enhance mobility by connecting workers to job opportunities, providing transportation options, reducing traffic congestion, and improving air quality. Staff continued to collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Greater Madison MPO to update the statewide rideshare online platform, including adding a 'trip type' option and improving site accessibility. Commission staff also hosted two commute challenges – spring and fall - to encourage new registrations and engagement with the platform. Among other businesses and organizations, Milwaukee County Transit System and Milwaukee County employees are active participants in the challenges. Staff continue to meet regularly with the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center as they implement TDM

strategies for their campus and support their efforts. In addition, Commission staff meet quarterly with MobilISE to support addressing regional connectivity challenges and achieving a multimodal transportation system. Staff serves on MobilISE's Board of Directors and continues to coordinate with MobilISE to assist Southeastern Wisconsin employers in identifying options to better connect workers to jobs. Staff also regularly meet with Milwaukee Regional Medical Center representatives and other employers as requested. A Commute Challenge is being held in September 2025 to encourage transportation alternatives such as carpooling, riding the bus, biking, and more.

- **Nonmotorized Count Program:** In May 2015, the Commission was selected as one of ten metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around the nation to participate in the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Bicycle-Pedestrian Count Technology Pilot Project. Since the pilot project concluded, Commission staff have continued collecting count data primarily on the long-distance off-street paths in the Region. The regional count program currently consists of short-term two-week counts that are conducted between March and November each year. There are over 60 locations that are counted on the regional off-street path system. Count data summary reports are provided to the individual local government agencies that own and manage the respective trails and through the Commission's website.

Other entities in the Region also manage nonmotorized count programs—including Milwaukee County, Ozaukee County, the City of Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Commission staff coordinates with these local agencies to develop annual count schedules and to share count data. A standing committee organized through the Milwaukee County Trails Council provides further opportunity for the representatives from each of these agencies to discuss their count programs and to develop counting strategies that benefit the entire Region.

- **Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant:** The Commission, in close coordination with the City of Milwaukee's Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO), received a \$1 million non-competitive planning grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program. The grant provides funding for a climate pollution reduction plan covering the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), including Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. In addition to developing a climate pollution reduction plan, this grant will support efforts to develop and implement greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies, with an emphasis on communities overburdened by pollution. A climate pollution reduction plan funded under this program will position government agencies in the four-county Milwaukee metro area, including Milwaukee County, to compete for future Federal funding to implement projects related to reducing GHGs and other harmful air pollutants. Staff from Milwaukee County are participants in the coordinating workgroup, which oversees the project. The Metropolitan Milwaukee Priority Pollution Reduction Action Plan was submitted to the U.S. EPA on February 28, 2024, which includes six priority strategies that can achieve significant GHG reductions. These strategies are based on Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan and were developed with stakeholder input and outreach to counties and municipalities within the Milwaukee MSA. In 2025, staff met with the Milwaukee County Office of Sustainability to review the draft Milwaukee County emission inventory, draft strategies, and share updates. In addition, staff provided a status update to the City-County Advisory Board on Climate and Economic Equity in July 2025 and shared the online survey. The Comprehensive Pollution Reduction Action Plan is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025.

R Land Use Planning

- **Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan:** VISION 2050, the long-range land use and transportation plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, was originally adopted by the Commission on July

28, 2016. More information on the plan, including a description of efforts completed over the past year, is included in the previous section titled Transportation Planning.

- **Inventories:** On a regular basis, Commission staff work on updating the Region's inventory files of land uses and environmental features. This past year, staff continued working on the creation of digital files for use in evaluating historic trends. These files include planned environmental corridors for the year 2020 (underway) and historic urban growth (underway). In addition, during 2024/2025, Commission staff completed work on the year 2020 regional land use inventory and the year 2020 regional environmental corridors inventory.
- **Projections:** In 2025, Commission staff initiated work on population, household, and employment projections to the year 2060 in support of the next major update of the regional land use and transportation plan.
- **Regional Food System Plan:** Work has continued on a Regional Food System Plan. The Plan, the development of which is a recommendation of VISION 2050, will address the food system from a regional planning perspective and is aimed at identifying how to achieve several objectives including connecting existing stakeholders, increasing food access, reducing economic and health disparities, improving and expanding transportation option, supporting local and sustainably operated farms, continuing stewardship of land and resources, and increasing education and food literacy in the Region. Work was completed on drafts of Chapter 2, *The Food System*, and Chapter 3, *Consumers*, in 2023. Chapter 2 presents information on the various stages of the food system from production to food waste. Chapter 3 presents information on the population, economy, health and nutrition, food literacy and education, and food security (including mapping of food establishments). Ongoing outreach is being conducted to residents in Milwaukee County and throughout the seven-county Region. Work in 2025 included initiating updates to the webpage, outreach materials, and background data.

R Economic Development Planning

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** In 2020 and 2021, the Commission and Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership (M7) prepared the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Region, which was completed in late spring 2021. The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires regions to update their CEDS every five years. The new CEDS includes an Action Plan with five goals, each with a set of strategies and actions to achieve the goals, along with ongoing and proposed economic development projects from across the Region. Numerous public and private stakeholders contributed to the plan, including guidance and input throughout the process from M7's Regional Economic Partnership (REP) working group, which includes representation from each of the seven Counties in the Region, the City of Milwaukee, WE Energies, and the Commission. The new CEDS was presented to each of the seven Counties for consideration over the summer of 2021. Milwaukee County considered and adopted the CEDS on July 29, 2021. The 2021-2025 CEDS replaced the previously adopted 2015-2020 CEDS and was submitted to the EDA following Commission adoption on September 15, 2021. County Board adoption of the CEDS makes the County and local governments in the County eligible to apply for EDA funding for infrastructure projects, revolving loan funds, and other business assistance programs that benefit economically distressed areas. EDA identifies economically distressed census tracts based on unemployment rates of 1 percent or more above the national average, or per capita incomes 80 percent or less than the national average. About 59 percent (178 of 300) of the census tracts in Milwaukee County meet these criteria. Adoption of the CEDS by each county and the Commission also enables the Region to apply to EDA for designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). Preliminary materials for EDD designation were

submitted to the EDA and are currently under review. Commission staff has also been preparing to develop a new CEDS in 2026. In summer 2025, Commission staff submitted an application to the EDA for a planning grant to prepare the CEDS and met with the REP to discuss the CEDS development process, including engagement with staff and elected officials representing each county.

- **Business Park Inventory:** In late 2014, the Commission initiated work on an inventory of existing and proposed business parks in the Region for use in Commission land use, comprehensive, and economic development planning. The information compiled by Commission staff was provided to planning or engineering staff in each city and village in the county for review in coordination with staff meetings on the MMSD facilities planning work described in the following Environmental Planning section. The final inventory has been posted on the Commission website.
- **Lightcast Economic Data:** The Commission, in cooperation with WEDC, has made Lightcast (formerly Economic Modeling Specialist International) Developer software available to county and local governments and economic development organizations. Lightcast Developer is a web-based economic development tool that includes extensive industry, occupation, and workforce data, and is used in business and industry analysis and attraction. County and local economic development organizations and units of government can ask Commission staff to apply the software to conduct analyses for any state, county, ZIP code, MSA, or areas defined by multiple states, counties, and/or ZIP codes. Requests for Lightcast data during the past year included one request by a consultant firm assisting the Milwaukee Area Technical College.

R Environmental Planning

- **Regional Chloride Study:** The Commission has completed the field portion of the study, which collected real-time 5-minute interval water level and conductivity data among seven sites within the County, including periodic seasonal chloride grab samples during melting/runoff events. The streams in Milwaukee County monitored for this effort include Honey Creek, Menomonee River, Oak Creek, Lincoln Creek, Underwood Creek, the Root River, and the Milwaukee River (at the Estabrook dam). Staff are currently working on data analysis and the Study technical reports (TR). Four technical reports have been completed, including TR 61 which documents the field work completed for the Study, TR 62 which is a literature review of the impacts of chloride to the natural and built environment, TR 64 which documents the regression evaluation for conductance to chlorides, and TR 67 which includes the legal and policy considerations for the management of chloride. Draft chapters were completed for TR 63 which included a review of all available chloride data for streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater in the Region. There were approximately 64 stream assessment reaches reviewed for chloride in Milwaukee County, which were located in all the major watersheds (Milwaukee River, Menomonee River, Kinnickinnic River, Root River, Oak Creek, Fish Creek, and the direct drainage streams to Lake Michigan).
- **Regional Natural Areas Plan Update:** The Commission is in the process of updating the Regional Natural Areas Plan, which identifies areas of the Region that are of particularly high environmental quality and are believed to represent the pre-European habitat and environment of the area. This year, the Commission staff continued to collect new information and conducted 12 site visits to natural areas and critical species habitats within the County (see Environmental Field Work section for more details). Staff have completed a draft plan, including an interactive mapping tool, which are both available on the Commission's website.
 - **MMSD Greenseams Program:** The Commission provides support to the Greenseams Program by providing land management recommendations and natural community and

critical species data to assist with prioritization, planning, and implementation of on-the-ground projects with MMSD's service area.

- **MMSD RWR Program:** The Commission provides support to the MMSD Reforestation and Wetland Restoration Program by identifying opportunities to develop projects with other governmental agencies, private landowners, and businesses within MMSD's service area.
- **NOAA/WCMP Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding:** The Commission will conduct biological inventories within coastal counties in Southeastern Wisconsin to inform regional ecological restoration and management planning in terrestrial, wetland, and aquatic natural communities. The work area includes Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Racine Counties. Inventory data will be incorporated into site management and restoration plans at the requests of government entities within the planning area. Plans developed under this effort will provide the framework to restore ecologically significant natural communities, improve landscape scale connectivity, enhance biodiversity, and increase resiliency to natural hazards.
- **WCMP Phase IV Natural Areas Plan Implementation:** The Commission will concentrate on developing site-specific ecological restoration and management plans at the request of municipalities, agencies of government, and conservation organizations. Sites selected for this effort lack a management plan but are protected by public ownership. Once complete, these plans can be used collaboratively by public entities to prioritize and facilitate funding and grant applications in the future. Work will focus on three coastal counties (Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Racine) and one county partially within the Lake Michigan Watershed (Washington). Plans developed under this effort will provide the framework to restore ecologically significant natural communities, improve landscape scale connectivity, enhance biodiversity, and increase resiliency to natural hazards.
- **Restoring Lands:** Supplemented with funding by the WDNR, the Commission will complete 70 botanical surveys on Restoring Lands properties, with the majority of sites included within Natural Areas, Critical Species Habitat sites, or environmental corridors. This work includes three sites within Milwaukee County.
- **Sewer Extension Review:** As the areawide water quality management planning agency, the Commission staff reviewed and recommended approval of 12 public sewer service extension projects in Milwaukee County, all of which were determined to be consistent with the regional water quality management plan. Those projects were located in the Cities of Franklin (4), Greenfield (2), Milwaukee (1), Oak Creek (2), and Wauwatosa (1), and the Villages of Bayside (1) and Brown Deer (1). The Commission staff also reviewed 1 private sanitary sewer extension. That project was located in the City of Milwaukee (1).
- **Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update:** Commission staff started work on a Prospectus to update the Regional Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP) that will be for the entire seven county Region. The purpose of the update is to assess water quality in surface waters of the Region and recommend strategies to work towards fishable and swimmable waters. A Technical Advisory Committee will be formed to guide the prospectus process to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate to complete the update.