

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Efforts for Milwaukee County

August 2023

The following provides a summary of work recently completed or underway 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 OR A MUNICIPALITY WITHIN THE COUNTY

Transportation Planning

- **North-South Transit Enhancement Study:** In May 2020, Commission staff initiated work for Milwaukee County on a transit enhancement study for the 27th Street corridor generally between Brown Deer Road (STH 100) on the north and Oakwood Drive on the south. The study corridor connects a racially and economically diverse set of communities and has involved a significant public involvement effort. Commission staff completed the study in January 2023, after analyses of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route alternatives and station locations, resulting in a recommended alternative with BRT serving Bayshore Town Center in Glendale to Ikea in Oak Creek. Milwaukee County has begun the next phase of the project with more detailed engineering and environmental review of the recommended alternative. It is expected that the BRT service will open in 2028.
- **Milwaukee County Jurisdictional Highway System 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 2025.
- **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 Milwaukee County North-South Transit Enhancement Project; the IH 94 E-W Corridor Study; the IH 794 Lake Interchange Reconstruction Study; the STH 175 Reconstruction Study; and the IH 894 Milwaukee Bypass No-Build forecasts (ongoing).

Land Use Planning

- **County Park and Open Space Plan:** At the request of Milwaukee County, and in coordination with the Milwaukee County Parks Department, the Commission has completed an update and extension to the year 2050 of the County Park and Open Space Plan. The 2050 plan 1) includes a description of existing population, households, employment, land use, natural resources, and park and open space sites; 2) addresses park system and facility use and preferences, provides composite park facility level of service information, and estimates the costs of capital maintenance of Milwaukee County parks and park facilities; and 3) includes a needs analysis for park sites and facilities, a park and open space plan for the year 2050, and the actions needed to implement the plan. The plan was the subject of a public informational meeting hosted by the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee on December 7, 2021, was recommended for adoption by the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee on January 25, 2022, and was adopted by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors on February 3, 2022. The plan was adopted as an amendment to the Regional Park and Open Space Plan by the Commission on September 14, 2022. Final formatting, printing, and publishing of the report was completed in fall 2022.

Economic Development Planning

- **EMSI Data Requests:** Commission staff is available to provide Economic Modeling Specialist International (EMSI) data by request, although no such requests were received during the past year.
- **Redevelopment District Project Plans:** At the request of the City of Cudahy, the Commission assisted the City with an update of its project plans for Redevelopment District #1 and Redevelopment District #2 to ensure the plans are consistent with the City's recently adopted comprehensive plan update. These project plans are components of the City's ongoing community planning and development efforts and were 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 in order to address blight. These plans were adopted by the City of Cudahy in June 2023.

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 and the West Branch of the Root River and its two tributaries. Work continues on the Root River mainstem hydraulic model. This project involves lands in Milwaukee County Parks 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.

- **Fish Creek Floodplain:** Draft floodplains were completed for Fish Creek as part of the MCLIO effort and staff continue to provide technical support to MMSD as they have a consultant develop flood mitigation alternatives. Work impacts the Villages of Bayside and River Hills.
- **Beaver Creek Watercourse System Plan:** Staff memorandum was completed for the Beaver Creek watercourse system plan for MMSD. The plan addresses flood mitigation in the Village of Brown Deer. Alternatives investigated include daylighting of a portion of the creek, structure floodproofing, and structure acquisition and removal.
- **Milwaukee County Hazard Mitigation Plan:** Commission staff began work on the hazard mitigation plan, which will include information from the City of Milwaukee hazard plan and be a true countywide plan. This will streamline future plan updates.
- **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 continued to serve on the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) Fish and Wildlife Technical Advisory Committee.
 - Commission staff provided technical assistance to the Milwaukee County Parks Wehr Nature Center staff on water quality issues, potential restoration, and management of Whitnal Park Pond.
 - Commission staff continued to serve on the Southeastern Wisconsin Watershed Trust's Policy Board and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences Academic Programs Advisory Board.

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 – 3 Projects

- S. 6th Street Bridge Replacement Over an Unnamed Tributary to the North Branch of Oak Creek (City of Oak Creek) – Wetland Delineation

- S. 6th Street Bridge Replacement Over the North Branch of Oak Creek (City of Oak Creek) – Wetland Delineation
- E. Oakwood Road Improvements at the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing (City of Oak Creek) – Wetland Delineation

Public Park Sites – 1 Project

- Abendschein Memorial Park Proposed Driveway and Parking Lot Improvements (City of Oak Creek) – Wetland Delineation

Residential/Commercial Development Parcels – 2 Projects

- Robert Montgomery Property at 8570 S. 116th Street (City of Franklin) – Wetland Delineation
- Switchback Enterprises, LLC - Proposed Edgemont Estates development at 10670 S. Nicholson Road (City of Oak Creek) – Primary Environmental Corridor Review

Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Assessments – 4 Site Visits

- Heydey Development Site (City of Oak Creek) – Critical Species Relocation
- Sheridan Park Clay Bluffs (City of Cudahy) – Natural Area Assessment and Critical Species Surveys, two visits
- Bradley Woods (City of Milwaukee) - Natural Area Assessment and Critical Species Survey
- Warnimont Park (City of Cudahy) - Natural Area Assessment and Critical Species Survey

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 33 corner monuments.

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. This new procedural step detected a systematic discrepancy that led the County Surveyor to observed a significant number of USPLSS corners in Township 7 North, Ranges 21 and 22 East. This resulted in approximately 183 USPLSS corners being readjusted.

Lastly, an additional 232 corners that either required routine field maintenance or state plane corner validation in 2022 to ensure the USPLSS remains intact. The Commission is also on track to complete approximately the same in 2023 to ensure the resulting survey network support public works, engineering, and land surveying.

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 1,885 copies of new land surveys in 2022.

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, provided special surveys to evaluate the horizontal and vertical accuracy of the orthoimagery and LiDAR data captured in 2020 to ensure the mapping services by the aerial contractor met the expected accuracy.

- **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 in 2022. The Commission assisted the County by providing Federal planning funds for a portion of the orthoimagery, planned review of the delivered orthoimagery to ensure it is consistent with the specifications of the regional project and providing independent features to ensure the horizontal accuracy. During the past year, the Commission has coordinated with the County on the latest acquisition of aerial imagery in 2022 and has currently evaluated the horizontal accuracy using the independent features that were tested and found to exceed horizontal specifications. The Commission is currently working with the County and other counties in the region that increases the interval to every other year acquisition. The Commission is currently preparing for a 2024 acquisition and will again support independent survey control to assist in validating the horizontal accuracy of the acquired imagery

LiDAR: The Commission along with the County and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District used the existing high-density LiDAR collected in 2020 to reprocess the above ground LiDAR points in the establishment of 3D buildings. Furthermore, the Commission provided the County 1ft Contours using the same 2020 high-density LiDAR data set. This high-density data set has been 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 will acquire 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 will review provided LiDAR tiles and also provide survey test points in Milwaukee and the region that will be used to verify the vertical accuracy of the high-density solution.

REGIONAL OR MULTI-COUNTY EFFORTS THAT DIRECTLY BENEFIT MILWAUKEE COUNTY

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 and, on June 17, 2020, adopted the 2020 Review and Update (the first interim review and update of the plan). Staff subsequently 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. In August 2023, Commission staff initiated another interim review and update and anticipates the Commission adopting this update in June 2024.

As updated in 2020, 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 Review and Update process, with input from the EJTF. This 2020 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 in recent years that impact the plan. The 2020 Update identified plan changes based on review of this information and two rounds of public input, which included engaging constituents of the Commission's now nine community partners. The 2020 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. 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.

- **Transportation Improvement Program:** In December 2022, the Commission adopted the 2023-2026 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 to obtain project funding from the USDOT Federal Highway and Transit Administrations. Through August 2023, Commission staff has processed an amendment to revise regional emission reduction targets for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program, 6 TIP amendments for Milwaukee County, and 91 amendments for municipalities in the County.
- **Surface Transportation Block Grants:** In March 2022, 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 \$42.3 million in available years 2025-2026 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 \$22.4 million of the available funds during this most recent round were awarded to fully or partially fund projects located within Milwaukee County.

In April 2022, Commission staff also assisted the Milwaukee TIP Committee in the evaluation, prioritization, and recommendation of candidate projects for \$7.3 million in additional year 2022 STP-M funding that was made available from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), that was enacted in November 2021. The \$7.3 million of the available funds were awarded to fully or partially fund two projects located within Milwaukee County. In addition, the Commission staff assisted in the Milwaukee TIP Committee in the evaluation, prioritization, and recommendation of candidate projects for \$29.1 million in years 2023-2026 in STP-M funding made available from the BIL. Of this amount, \$2.4 million was awarded to fully or partially fund six projects in Milwaukee County.

Commission staff is currently working with the Milwaukee TIP Committee in the consideration of potential changes to the process utilized to evaluate and prioritize years 2028-2029 STP-M projects. Following completion of this effort, Commission staff will work with the Committee to evaluate, prioritize, and recommend projects for the years 2028-2029 with its completion expected late 2023/early 2024.

- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Grants:** In Winter 2022, the Commission staff, working with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), completed the evaluation and recommendation of projects for \$24.4 million in available 2025-2026 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. Approximately \$21.8 million in 2025-2026 CMAQ funds during this most recent round were awarded to fully or partially fund projects located in Milwaukee County. Commission staff also worked with WisDOT and WDNR to evaluate and prioritize candidate projects for \$24.0 million in additional years 2023-2026 CMAQ funding that was made available from the BIL legislation. This work was completed in the winter of 2023. Of this amount, \$15.9 million in additional years 2023-2026 funding was awarded to fund 10 projects in Milwaukee County. During the fall of 2023, Commission staff will be working with WisDOT and the WDNR in evaluating and recommending projects for years 2027-2028 CMAQ funding.
- **Transportation Alternatives Grants:** In April 2022, the Commission staff assisted the Milwaukee TIP Committee in selecting projects for \$8.9 million in available years 2022-2026 FHWA Transportation Alternative Program – Milwaukee Urbanized Area (TAP-M) funding, including \$1.6 million in year 2022 TAP-M funding made available from the BIL legislation. 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 \$6.8 million in TAP-M funds during this most recent round were awarded to projects located in Milwaukee County. The Commission staff also assisted the Committee in April 2023 in selecting projects for \$6.9 million in additional years 2023-2026 TAP-M funding that was made available from the BIL legislation. Of this amount, \$6.4 million in additional years 2023-2026 funding was awarded to fund eight projects in Milwaukee County. During the fall of 2023, Commission staff will be working with the Milwaukee TIP Committee in evaluating and recommending projects for years 2027-2028 TAP-M funding.

- **Carbon Reduction Grants:** In April 2023, Commission staff worked with the Milwaukee TIP Committee to evaluate and recommend projects for available \$7.7 million in years 2022 and 2023 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 available \$7.7 million, \$6.9 million in years 2022 and 2023 CRP-M funding was awarded to 10 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, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties, and the Cities of Milwaukee and Waukesha. A total of \$27,603,113 in Section 5307/5340 funds were allocated to the area as part of the 2023 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 \$1,782,474 in 2023, was 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 at seniors and people with disabilities and go above and beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Commission staff presented the Section 5310 Program of Project for years 2023 and 2024 to the Transportation and Transit Committee in April 2023. The next cycle for Section 5310 project selection will begin in summer 2024.

FTA Section 5337 funding for capital projects, of which the urbanized area received \$720,846 in 2023, 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 \$3,926,299, 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).
- **Workforce Transportation:** Commission staff continued to support the work of MobilISE to address regional connectivity challenges and achieve a multimodal transportation system. Staff serves on MobilISE's Executive Advisory Committee and continues to coordinate with MobilISE to assist Southeastern Wisconsin employers in identifying ways to better connect workers to jobs through the Workforce Mobility Team. Commission staff supported employers in the Region, including Milwaukee County employers that experience challenges attracting and retaining employees due to lack of reliable transportation, which included meeting with the Milwaukee Downtown Business Improvement District and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center.
- **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 and has continued to support MobilISE and partners in the service's ongoing operations.
- **Transportation Demand Management:** Commission staff developed 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 worked with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Greater Madison MPO to update the statewide Rideshare Etc. online platform, which is a key component of the CommuteWISE initiative. Commission staff provided an introduction to staffs at Milwaukee County and the Milwaukee County Transit System and continue to collaborate on multiple TDM-related initiatives, including working with partners at WisDOT and the Greater Madison MPO, and supporting the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center as they implement TDM strategies for their campus.
- **Bluemound Corridor Transit Enhancement Study:** Following work completed by the Commission, at the request of the Cities of Brookfield and Waukesha, on a Bus Rapid Transit Concept Plan for the Bluemound Road Corridor, Waukesha County requested a transit enhancement study along and near

Bluemound Road in Waukesha County. The study report was completed in August 2023 and provides recommendations for an incremental investment approach to implementing transit enhancements including bus rapid transit (BRT) features and pedestrian improvements along the existing Waukesha Metro Route 1 corridor. The recommended enhanced Waukesha Metro transit service will link to CONNECT 1, the Region's first BRT line, opened in June 2023, that connects the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center to downtown Milwaukee via Bluemound Road and Wisconsin Avenue in Milwaukee County.

- **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 50 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, 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.

- **Paratransit Taxi Task Force:** At the County's request, Commission staff are participating in the Paratransit Taxi Task Force, which was established to inform the decision of renewing the paratransit taxi program and other decisions related to accessible transit. Commission staff anticipates conducting related research as requested.
- **Climate 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 plan covering the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), including the counties of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha. In addition to developing a climate action plan, this grant will support efforts to develop and implement greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies, with an emphasis on accelerating environmental justice efforts in communities overburdened by pollution. A climate action plan funded under this program will position government agencies in the four-county Milwaukee metro area, including Milwaukee County, to compete for over \$4.6 billion in 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 will oversee the project.

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 environmental corridors for the years 1963 (completed) and 1980 (completed) and historic urban growth (underway). In addition, during 2021, Commission staff initiated work on the year 2020 regional land use inventory, which is anticipated to be completed in 2023.
- **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 concerned with ensuring accessible and affordable healthy and fresh food options for all residents, reducing economic and health disparities, supporting locally owned and sustainable farming operations, and preserving productive agricultural land and sensitive natural resources. Virtual Kick-Off meetings were held in August 2021 to introduce attendees to the regional food system and obtain input on topics that should be included in the plan. Online and handout surveys were also conducted in conjunction with the Kick-off meetings. During 2022 and 2023, work was completed on a draft of Chapter 2, The Food System, of the report. Chapter 2 presents information related to agriculture, food and beverage manufacturing, food outlets and retail, and food waste. A draft of Chapter 3, *Consumers*. Chapter 3 was completed and is currently in internal review. Chapter 3 will include information related to the food security of the Region's residents. Ongoing outreach is being conducted to residents in Milwaukee County and throughout the seven-county Region.

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, Milwaukee County representation, who provided valuable input along with Donna Brown-Martin, Director of the Department of Transportation. The new CEDS was presented to each of the seven Southeastern Wisconsin counties for consideration over the summer of 2021. Milwaukee County considered and adopted the CEDS on July 29, 2021. The new 2021-2025 CEDS replaces 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 57 percent (170 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 have been submitted to the EDA and are currently under review.
- **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.

- **EMSI Development Tool:** The Commission, in cooperation with WEDC, has made Economic Modeling Specialist International (EMSI) Developer software available to County and local governments and economic development organizations. EMSI 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. No requests for EMSI data were received during the past year.

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). TR-61 has been completed, which documents the field work completed for the Study. Three chapters of TR-62 have been drafted as well, which is a literature review of the impacts of chloride to the environment.
- **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 four site visits to natural area and critical species habitats within the County (see Environmental Field Work section for more details).
- **Sewer Extension Review:** As the areawide water quality management planning agency, the Commission staff reviewed and recommended approval of 13 public sewer service extension projects, all of which were determined to be consistent with the regional water quality management plan. Those projects were located in the Cities of Franklin (2), Greenfield (1), Milwaukee (3), and Oak Creek (2), and the Villages of Bayside (1), Greendale (1), River Hills (2), and Shorewood (1). The Commission staff also reviewed 7 private sanitary sewer extensions. Those projects were located in the Cities of Franklin (2), Milwaukee (3), and Oak Creek (2).