

County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

REVISED 17-303

DATE: 3/9/2017
TO: Theodore Liscomb, Sr., Chair, County Board of Supervisors
Michael Mayo, Sr., Chairperson, Transportation, Public Works & Transit Committee
FROM: Brian Dranzik, Director, Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: Informational update regarding the east-west corridor Bus Rapid Transit project.

BACKGROUND

In 2016 a feasibility study was done to evaluate the potential for bus rapid transit (BRT) in the east-west corridor. As a part of that study a locally preferred alternative route was selected and a request to enter the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Small Starts funding program was submitted.

In September of 2016, Milwaukee County officially received approval from the FTA to enter into the Project Development phase, meaning engineering, design and environmental study work could begin and costs associated with this work can now be applied to a future construction grant, that would include the purchase of vehicles, as part of the local match. Soon thereafter, the Department of Transportation transitioned the responsibility for continued development of the BRT project over to the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS). In turn, MCTS identified a Project Manager and Deputy Project Manager, and selected two consulting firms to assist in the Project Development phase:

- AECOM/HNTB (Engineering and Design of stations, shelters, right-of-way, etc.), and
- SRF (Environmental Assessment).

As a condition of seeking FTA project approval, the local unit of government needs to demonstrate a local funding commitment to the project. Last year, the County Board approved capital project WT083 in the 2017 budget for continued work on the East-West Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. The total estimated project amount is \$43,725,000 with an anticipated 80% share of federal funds totaling \$36,000,000 and a 20% local share of \$7,725,000. The 2017 budget approved roughly half of the project cost local cost of \$3,225,000 for 2017. The remaining \$4,500,000 of local share will need to be formally approved in a future budget.

At the present time, it is difficult to predict what other sources of funding may be available for the BRT project. Both State and Federal budgets remain uncertain. The State DOT was examining the possibility of supporting the BRT project as a mitigation effort of the I-94 East/West construction project, however that project was not approved in the Governor's budget. The federal budget is still in process, however, the President's budget includes funding as a continuation of existing projects that have already been approved. The Department of Transportation and MCTS are closely monitoring both budgets as it relates to the BRT project.

2017 Timeline

In 1st Quarter 2017, consultants focused on data collection and traffic analysis to begin to determine how BRT will fit into existing and future traffic along the route. The environmental review process also began. In addition, MCTS staff and consultants hosted a visit by the FTA to review the alignment. Furthermore, meetings with various stakeholders, elected officials and neighborhood groups have been held to update them on the timeline for engineering, design and environmental work, as well as to gather input, flag any concerns, and build support for the project.

In 2nd Quarter 2017, two public meetings and smaller BRT station workshops will be held to get input on the design and location of BRT stations. County Board Supervisors will be invited to participate in the public meetings, which are scheduled for June 7, 2017 at Marquette University High School and June 8, 2017 at the Zoofari Conference Center.

In 3rd Quarter 2017, environmental analysis will continue and the consultants will begin the process of revising the design as necessary in response to feedback obtained at public meetings and with various stakeholders. A Small Starts application update is due to the FTA in September 2017.

In 4th Quarter 2017, the environmental assessment findings will be shared publicly and with stakeholders. It is also expected that a refined design will be made available to the public at this time too.

2018 – In early 2018, the environmental assessment process will be completed and we will seek a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which will position us to finish the design to a 90% stage. Municipal approvals for the project will be sought from the City of Wauwatosa, and the City of Milwaukee to construct the project in each municipal right-of-way. After an FTA capital investment grant is awarded, the vehicle procurement process will begin and construction contracts can be let.

2019 -- Begin the construction and build-out phases.

2020 to 2021 – Perform startup/testing and begin operations.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed. A fact sheet has been attached with related information about the BRT project.

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Approved by:



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East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is Milwaukee County's planned 9-mile, **regional, modern** transit service connecting major **employment, education and recreation** destinations through downtown Milwaukee, Milwaukee's Near West Side, Marquette University, Wauwatosa and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center. BRT would provide improved access to the region's most **vital, most traveled** and most congested corridor.



Preferred route and station locations for the East-West BRT designated based on technical analysis and public/stakeholder input during the 2016 feasibility study



Wells Street/Wisconsin Avenue downtown alignment and station locations if conditions arise in which the preferred route is found not to be feasible



REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

BRT is a key part of the regional transportation plan, building on existing MCTS routes and providing opportunities to spur the development of and connection to additional rapid transit corridors in the region.

WHY BRT?

- BRT plays a vital role in a **healthy, multimodal** transportation system that connects people to **jobs**, and businesses to their **customers**.
- BRT is **cost-effective, efficient** and has been proven to increase transit use with **improved service** frequencies, travel time and reliability.
- BRT supports and sparks millions of dollars in **economic development**.
- BRT meets a critical need to **mitigate traffic congestion** during the multi-year reconstruction of I-94.

WHO WILL USE BRT?

The East-West BRT will attract between 7,250 and 9,250 new average daily transit riders – a 40 percent increase over existing transit ridership in the corridor. Within the half-mile station area around the preferred route are ...



9

colleges and universities

120K JOBS

100+ BUSINESSES with 250 or more EMPLOYEES

47,000



RESIDENTS

7 MEDICAL FACILITIES

25 HOTELS

COUNTLESS ATTRACTIONS including the county zoo, Miller Park, Bucks' arena, art museum and Summerfest

PROJECT PHASES



KEY 2017 PROJECT DECISIONS

In 2016, Milwaukee County completed a Feasibility Study and identified a preferred BRT route for the corridor. In 2017, the county will advance the project through the engineering and development phase and make three key decisions with public and local community input:

- **Lane configuration:** Where dedicated lanes will be located and whether they run along the center lane, along the median, the outside lane or curbside.
- **Station locations:** Final locations of stations along the route, including placement in the median or road side.
- **Station design:** The appropriate size and design of each station for its neighborhood – from urban stations to smaller neighborhood stops.



HOW IS BRT FUNDED?

The BRT capital cost is estimated at \$42 million to \$48 million. The financial plan for the project anticipates the capital cost will be funded up to 80 percent through the federal Small Starts program, which requires a minimum local match of 20 percent.

The day-to-day cost of operating and maintaining BRT is estimated at \$3.7 million annually. Operations will be funded as part of the existing Milwaukee County Transit System, which is resourced through fares, state and federal funding.

EAST-WEST BRT PROJECT FEATURES



Up to 19 stations connect regional network of major employment centers, education facilities and recreational destinations



Modern, fuel-efficient comfortable, vehicles with features for easy boarding and interior bike storage



Shorter travel times because of dedicated lanes, fewer stops, traffic signal priority and pre-board ticketing



Reduces traffic congestion by removing an estimated 6,700 cars per day from the corridor



More frequent daily service with buses every 10 minutes during peak hours and midday, and every 20-30 minutes in early morning, evening and late-night hours

UPCOMING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



- Neighborhood and stakeholder outreach
- Public workshops
- Public open house
- Email communications

Please visit www.eastwestbrt.com to submit comments or questions, and sign up to receive public meeting notices.



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