

Earth Tech, Inc.

Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Alternatives Analysis

Environmental Impact Statement &
Project Development Phase

Transit-Oriented Development Portfolios

in association with:

HNTB

CAMBRIDGE
SYSTEMS

and

American Design

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Appendices provided under separate cover



This introduction presents transit supportive development concepts and policies for the nine station sites included in the KRM Alternatives Analysis. A brief explanation of the role of the plans in the overall KRM study, an overview of the KRM Corridor, and a description of the planning process are provided below.

This work is being undertaken by the EarthTech consulting team on behalf of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). It is important to note that the work presented in this summary focuses on transit supportive land uses and economic effects.

The Role of Station Area Planning in the KRM Alternatives Analysis

The station area concepts comprise one aspect of the complete KRM Commuter Link Alternatives Analysis, which is being prepared in conformance with the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) "New Starts" project development and evaluation process. The overall study, which includes an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and a simultaneous Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), is intended to result in the identification of a Locally-Preferred Alternative (LPA) for enhanced public transportation between Kenosha and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The station area development concepts provide an in-depth look at transit supportive possibilities in the vicinity of each of the nine proposed station locations. Examining transit supportive plans and land-use policies is an important component of the New Starts process. Encouraging transit supportive land use and development around transit station locations can help develop long term ridership for the overall transit system. However, transit supportive development, commonly known as transit oriented development (TOD) has somewhat different physical characteristics than auto oriented environments which serves to create a land use interdependency with transit services.

Transit-oriented development capitalizes on the special development opportunities created by the presence of transit facilities and riders. Because transit service tends to reduce the demand for automobile trips and shorten work commute travel times, transit station areas often become a preferred living location. Transit oriented development also frequently serves as a retail or commercial service "intercept" opportunity – given the fact that people are already in the area for transit service. Within this type of mixed use area, a pedestrian orientation is created for ease of accessibility to all services and facilities. When acceptable lev-

els of enhanced development are added, residents within station areas become transit dependant which is beneficial both for the transit system ridership and area businesses. Typically transit oriented development is concentrated within one half mile or a ten minute walk of the station facility. Frequently, the most concentrated development occurs with a quarter mile, or a five minute walk.

It should be noted that the Alternatives Analysis is considering various potential transit modes choices, such as improved bus service, bus rapid transit or commuter rail. However, the work developed as part of this transit supportive land use analysis assumes commuter rail as the transit mode within the corridor. Finally, for purposes of the analysis, assumed commuter station locations remain subject to change at this stage of the program and through final engineering in the design process. It is expected that as work progresses, plans and policies will continue to be refined.

Federal Transit Administration "New Starts" Evaluation Process

The FTA applies its "New Starts" criteria and measures to evaluate candidate transit improvement projects seeking federal capital or operating funding assistance. Funding for New Starts programs is a nationally competitive process. The KRM Commuter Link project will be judged against other projects using the basic criteria outlined below. In short, the degree a project can demonstrate land use and development planning and policy commitment to transit, the greater the chances for funding support.

The measures by which transit supportive land use and future development patterns are evaluated include: existing land use patterns, plans and policies, and expected impacts. The transit supportive station area plans address and/or make recommendations with regard to the following factors, where applicable:

- Regional and community growth management, such as development concentrations and land conservation efforts;
- Transit supportive corridor policies, such as those which encourage higher density development patterns and enhance pedestrian access;
- Supportive zoning regulations near transit stations, such as increased density, appropriate building placement, and reduced off street parking requirements;
- Tools to implement land use policies, such as regulatory and financial incentives and outreach efforts;

- "Performance" of application of land use policies to comply with transit supportive land-use regulations, such as current development proposals within one-half (1/2) mile of the station site; and
- Potential impacts of a transit project on overall land use, such as the adaptability of station area land for development or redevelopment.

It is important to point out that not all of these tools need to be operating and in place at this time, but that commitments are made and progress is shown to the point in time transit service begins. However, any early initiatives that can be undertaken consistent with policies and plans could enhance the overall land use program ranking.

Overview of the KRM Corridor

The KRM Corridor extends from the City of Kenosha at the south, through the City of Racine, to the City of Milwaukee at the north. It is located along the Union Pacific Railroad Kenosha Subdivision, roughly parallel to State Trunk Highways 31 and 32, and extends for a distance of approximately 33 miles.

As noted above, while specific transit station locations may be subject to change as the study progresses, the station locations identified in the Existing Conditions maps represent the assumed station locations in this analysis. Proposed station areas along the corridor, from south to north, include: Kenosha, Somers, Racine, Caledonia, Oak Creek, South Milwaukee, Cudahy-St. Francis, Southside Milwaukee and Downtown Milwaukee. The Southside station area was not addressed in the "Wise Ride: Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Corridor Transit Study" (September 2001). The preliminary location for this station area was determined in working with City of Milwaukee officials.

Station areas vary greatly in the character and density of existing development. For example, the proposed station site in Downtown Milwaukee is very urban, with a predominance of office, retail and residential uses as well as several key mixed use and commercial redevelopment opportunities. At the other end of the spectrum, the proposed station location in the Town of Somers is a largely rural and currently undeveloped area that has significant potential for introducing completely new development patterns.

KRM: A PLAN FOR THE KENOSHA - RACINE - MILWAUKEE COMMUTER LINK

Process for Preparing Transit Oriented Development Portfolios

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the conditions impacting each potential station area, several venues for community input into the planning process were provided as further background research and on-site studies were undertaken by the team. The development of concept plans, policies and economic impact analysis followed. Key steps in the process are described below.

Inventory and Analysis

The inventory and analysis phase of the planning process consisted of three general tasks for each station area: a review of existing conditions and planning policies, completion of a market study, and a community workshop.

- **Physical Conditions and Current Plans** - Existing land uses and physical conditions were determined through general field inspection and mapped for each station area. Access and circulation features and urban design elements present within each area were also documented. Existing plans and policies from each community were also reviewed to determine their potential relevance to the TOD planning effort.
- **Real Estate Market Overview Analysis** - A real estate market study was undertaken for each station area to gain an understanding of local demand for various market rate land-uses as a baseline for near term TOD opportunities. The analysis looked at the 15 year development potential for residential retail, and office land uses.
- **Stakeholder Interviews** - Stakeholder interviews provided the consulting team the opportunity to meet informally with a variety of individuals within a community area to gain first hand impressions regarding development potentials near candidate commuter station areas. The interviews provided the opportunity to meet with policy makers, citizens, developers, service agencies, and other community interests to understand current community plans, proposed projects, and other ideas for transit supportive land use. The interviews provided the consulting team with valuable insight regarding existing conditions, needs and opportunities within and around prospective commuter station areas.

- **Station Area Workshops** - Workshops were facilitated at each proposed station location. The workshops allowed interested community members to voice their ideas and aspirations for the area, and build local community consensus and commitment to station area redevelopment.

A complete summary of interviews, workshops and market analysis can be found in the *Appendix*.

Station Area Plan Concepts

With the benefit of the work completed in early steps described above, station area planning concepts were then prepared to identify the location and extent of new development or redevelopment opportunities in the future, and associated station area improvements. The primary purpose of the plans are to illustrate TOD possibilities and seek community concurrence on local initiatives which begin to support transit oriented development and land-use policies. These plans were reviewed during a public workshop process. Citizen-generated ideas and reactions regarding how transit supportive improvements could occur at each potential station location were incorporated into the Portfolio.

The Station Area Plan Concepts are comprised of the following elements;

Existing Conditions

The station area plans provide an overview of existing conditions for each station area largely comprised of three annotated maps: land use, access and circulation and urban design. A summary of existing population and employment characteristics is also provided, along with a summary of market findings relevant to each station area. Community issues and opportunities resulting from interviews and workshops are also summarized.

Future Concept

Each transit supportive development concept describes primary influences and any key differences from existing community plans and policies. Development or redevelopment potential is illustrated and described for the near term and long term, with net acreage change for each land use identified. The data is also expressed in terms of the anticipated number of new dwellings or square footage of commercial and office development. In addition, the plan concepts include the following:

- **Future Land Use** - Planned future land using relative densities for each station area are identified. The plans illustrate potential transit supportive land use and development patterns, as well as key sites and properties which may be subject to change in the future. Concept plans build off of current land use patterns and current land use plans and policies for each community.
- **Future Access and Circulation Patterns** - Considering land use plan recommendations, and current community plans for street and other capital improvements, circulation and access recommendations were developed. These included preliminary station facilities design, multimodal access needs, bicycle and sidewalk improvements, parking, desirable grade separations, new street and circulation patterns, and related improvements. Ideas focus on enhancing access to commuter train stations and developing bicycle and pedestrian access within the greater station area.
- **Future Urban Design Framework** - Urban design plays an important role in successful transit oriented development. Creating walkable, pedestrian oriented environments with strong connections throughout the study area are important. Creating shopping environments where street level pedestrian access can be made as well as provision for amenities for both cyclists and pedestrians should be considered.
- **Economic Effects** - The future economic effects are based on key areas "subject to change" within the station area. Areas subject to change include key vacant sites, underutilized properties, and buildings and uses that are becoming obsolete, and thus have a high potential for reuse and redevelopment in the future. When the future land use recommendations for the station areas were applied to the area subject to change, an appropriate "order of magnitude" of potential station area development was identified. Assessed values of proposed developments were then calculated to determine the projected assessed value of subject to change parcels reported for each station location. In addition, increases in retail sales were also calculated based on net increases of commercial development square footages.

Implementation Strategies

Key policy recommendations are made for each station area. Given the fact that transit service in the corridor is several years away, adopted policies which will encourage implementation are important to provide future incremental direction to managing development and redevelopment which is conducive to transit when service begins.

Local Acceptance

The program has solicited the endorsement of all local governments hosting a transit station within their community. The KRM transit supportive land use program has successfully secured adoption of local resolutions supporting the program at every station within the corridor.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the KRM Steering Committee extends its appreciation to all participating communities for their support and involvement to date. Active participation and local support for ultimate program recommendations will be a key factor in the eventual success of transit supportive initiatives in the KRM Corridor.

