

COPY

# SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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June 10, 2016

Mr. Chris Abele  
Milwaukee County Executive  
Milwaukee County Courthouse  
901 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 306  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Mr. Abele,

On behalf of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), I am writing to support the implementation of the East West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, connecting downtown Milwaukee, the near west side, and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center.

Providing rapid transit in Southeastern Wisconsin will be vital to the Region's ability to compete with other metropolitan areas in the Nation to attract the workforce required to grow the number of jobs in Milwaukee County and the Region in the future. As the baby boom generation is retiring from the labor force, the following generations are no larger than the baby boom generation, meaning that the Region will no longer be able to grow its labor force from within its existing population. The Milwaukee metropolitan area is one of only six in the nation (of the 39 metro areas with more than 1.5 million residents) that does not have some form of rapid transit service, and a number of the remaining five without rapid transit are working on developing rapid transit lines. Without this project, the Milwaukee area will fall further behind peer metro areas in the quality of transit service it provides, making it more difficult to attract the workers needed for the County's and Region's future.

In addition, the implementation of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit project is important for the following reasons:

- To reduce vehicle traffic volume, alleviate traffic congestion, and provide a reliable travel option unaffected by congestion in the Milwaukee area's most heavily travelled and congested travel corridor.
- To reduce transportation energy consumption and air pollutant emissions.
- To mitigate the extreme traffic congestion which may be expected for multiple years during the reconstruction of the East-West Freeway (IH 94) between S. 70<sup>th</sup> and S. 16<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- To provide those without an automobile real access to jobs, healthcare, education, and other elements of daily life.
- To provide a transit alternative that will be an attractive choice for those who own an automobile and currently choose to travel by automobile in the east-west corridor.

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- To efficiently serve the substantial travel demand of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, and to accommodate and encourage its planned aggressive growth.
- To efficiently serve the substantial travel demand of the Milwaukee central business district, and to accommodate and encourage its planned aggressive growth.
- To encourage new, denser, mixed-use development and redevelopment—which results in more efficient public infrastructure and services and lower energy use per household.
- To provide the transit element of the identified multi-modal improvements needed to address the existing and forecast long-range future travel demand in the east-west corridor as recommended in the current and previous regional transportation plans.

A project of this nature has long been included in SEWRPC's regional transportation plans, starting with the first regional transportation plan published in 1966, and would represent the first stage in implementing a larger rapid transit network planned to serve and connect many parts of the Milwaukee metropolitan area. Starting the development of this larger network by connecting the Region's two largest job centers and improving the spine of the Milwaukee County Transit System's existing bus network is a cost-effective and efficient proposal, providing significant benefits to existing bus riders and providing residents who currently drive in this corridor with an attractive alternative.

The Regional Planning Commission strongly supports this project, and hopes that its successful implementation will enable the development of a larger network within Milwaukee County and the Region.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Yunker, P.E.  
Executive Director

KRY/KJM/dd  
#232503

cc: Chair and Members of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
c/o Mr. Joseph J. Czarnecki, County Clerk  
Mayor Tom Barrett, City of Milwaukee  
Chair and Members of the City of Milwaukee Common Council  
c/o Mr. Jim Owczarski, City Clerk  
Mayor Kathy Ehley, City of Wauwatosa  
Chair and Members of the City of Wauwatosa Common Council  
c/o Ms. Carla A. Ledesma, CMC, City Clerk