



TESTIMONY DELIVERED TO MILWAUKEE COMMON COUNCIL, PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
July 13, 2016

By Kerry Thomas, Executive Director, MetroGO!

On behalf of MetroGO!, I'd like to express our strong support for the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service because of its significant positive impact on economic development, job access and growth, and regional competitiveness.

MetroGO!'s mission is to advance a regional transit network that fuels the economy and workforce growth, and builds vibrant connected communities. BRT is a cost-effective investment that uses existing roads to expand mobility and spur economic development in the region's top job and economic hubs: Milwaukee and Wauwatosa.

High quality BRT is a proven development catalyst that has assisted many other cities in attracting investment, creating jobs, and deepening economic resilience. Investments of over \$500 million have been experienced on BRT routes, strengthening business districts and neighborhoods, and supporting constrained municipal budgets.

Because of its dedicated lanes, signal preference and service plan, BRT would provide fast, frequent, reliable connections to over 120,000 jobs in the station areas, a corridor where 23% of residents do not have a car.

Reducing transit trip times, and increasing frequency and reliability have been identified by the Public Policy Forum as a essential strategies to expand crucial job access and improve employment sustainability—for drivers and the growing number of non-drivers alike.

Robust projected growth in this corridor will create additional travel demand and support strong BRT ridership, strengthening the transit system to ensure sustainable access to employment. Close linkages with the Streetcar will expand regional connections, including the Intermodal Station, and will enhance ridership and system sustainability for both.

Timing is important. In 2019, WisDOT will begin reconstructing I-94 in the East/West corridor. BRT is an rare opportunity to keep employees and commerce moving by providing a quick, safe, reliable mobility option that is unaffected by local traffic.

BRT would boost our economic competitiveness. It is well documented that younger generations are seeking urban lifestyles that include mobility options and vibrant neighborhoods that offer a multitude of amenities within a short walk or transit ride. Business and job growth depend on this current and future workforce. We have fallen behind.

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While peer regions have increased their transit service by 8.7%, although stabilizing recently, metro Milwaukee transit service has declined over 20% between 2001 and 2013.

The East-West BRT is a fiscally responsible investment that is critical to meeting shifting employment, economic development, and competitiveness trends.

High quality, fast, frequent East-West BRT would provide efficient, attractive mobility at a pivotal time — an asset that would enhance the vitality, economy, and quality of life in all of the communities along this economic corridor—and the region.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this economic and workforce issue.