

**Milwaukee East-West BRT
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2019)**

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 9.1 Miles, 19 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$54.79 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$40.93 Million (74.7%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2021):	\$6.07 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	10,200 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: Milwaukee County proposes to build a bus rapid transit (BRT) line linking downtown Milwaukee with Milwaukee’s west side and Wauwatosa, the neighboring city to the west. The project includes dedicated bus lanes along half of the alignment (4.6 miles), traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, and the purchase of 11 hybrid electric buses. Service is planned to operate between 4:30 a.m. and 1:30 a.m. on weekdays, between 5:00 a.m. and 1:30 a.m. on Saturdays, and between 6:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. on Sundays. Buses are planned to run every 10 minutes during weekday daytime hours and every 15 to 30 minutes at other times.

Project Purpose: The project, which would be the Milwaukee metropolitan area’s first BRT line, is expected to improve transit service in the region’s most traveled and congested corridor. Major trip generators along the route include downtown, Marquette University, and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center (MRMC). The corridor already has high transit ridership, with over 10,000 weekday trips on average. The project is anticipated to improve access to jobs, healthcare, education and other services for the 18 percent of households in the corridor that do not own automobiles. The project is also expected to support continued redevelopment in downtown Milwaukee, the continued expansion of the MRMC, and denser mixed-use redevelopment in other portions of the corridor.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: Milwaukee County selected the locally preferred alternative for the project and had it adopted into the region’s fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in July 2016. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2016 and completed the environmental review process with receipt of a Finding of No Significant Impact from FTA in November 2018. Milwaukee County anticipates receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in 2020, and the start of revenue service in September 2021.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2018): The total project cost changed from \$54.69 million to \$54.79 million due to design refinements, and the CIG request changed from \$38.65 million to \$40.93 million (increasing from 70.7 percent to 74.7 percent). The anticipated Small Starts Grant Agreement date changed from mid-2019 to 2020. The revenue service date changed from late 2020 to September 2021.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$40.93	74.7%
Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program	\$2.27	4.1%
Local:		
Milwaukee County Property Tax Bonds	\$8.34	15.3%
Milwaukee County Vehicle Registration Fee Revenues	\$1.97	3.6%
Milwaukee County Signal Prioritization Project	\$1.28	2.3%
Total:	\$54.79	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The existing station area population density is 5,700 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 119,000, corresponding to a Medium rating. Parking costs in the Milwaukee central business district (CBD) average \$13 daily, corresponding to a Medium-High rating. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 2.17, which corresponds to a Medium rating.
- The corridor is the most densely developed urban area in the state and includes two of the region's most important employment clusters, downtown Milwaukee and the Medical Center/Research Park District in Wauwatosa. The corridor includes commercial, institutional, and residential uses ranging from single-family houses in the western portion of the corridor to high rise office buildings near the eastern terminus.
- The corridor's street network is in a grid with sidewalks on both sides of the street.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Milwaukee's downtown plan envisions the area becoming a vibrant neighborhood through the redevelopment of underutilized land and surface parking lots into pedestrian-friendly uses. The city's Near West Side Area Plan seeks to restore the neighborhood's compact walkable development pattern. Further west, Wauwatosa's comprehensive plan generally recommends retaining existing development densities and character, but fostering higher-density infill development around the city's downtown. Plans encourage consideration of pedestrian and transit access to new development.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Milwaukee's zoning in the downtown area and near west side encourages pedestrian-friendly development characteristics, seeks to avoid an oversupply of parking, and allows Medium to High densities per FTA's benchmarks. Much of the western portion of the corridor is lower-density residential, while the western end is zoned for campus-like medical center and research park uses, as well as suburban-style commercial development.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Milwaukee uses tax-increment financing to help support major developments and business improvement districts to fund projects, such as streetscaping, that enhance the local business environment. No details of specific uses in the corridor were provided. Milwaukee conducted extensive public outreach as part of its comprehensive plan updates, but no land use-related outreach specific to the BRT corridor was noted.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Since 2005, investment in downtown Milwaukee redevelopment has totaled \$7.2 billion. These developments are generally dense, mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented. There are 20 projects proposed for corridor station areas, mostly in the downtown, but no details about building form were provided.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* A qualitative analysis by the project sponsor found strong potential for continued transit-supportive redevelopment in downtown Milwaukee, based on the strength of plans, amount of land available, and market demand. The remainder of the corridor appears less likely to be redeveloped in transit-supportive patterns.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-Low

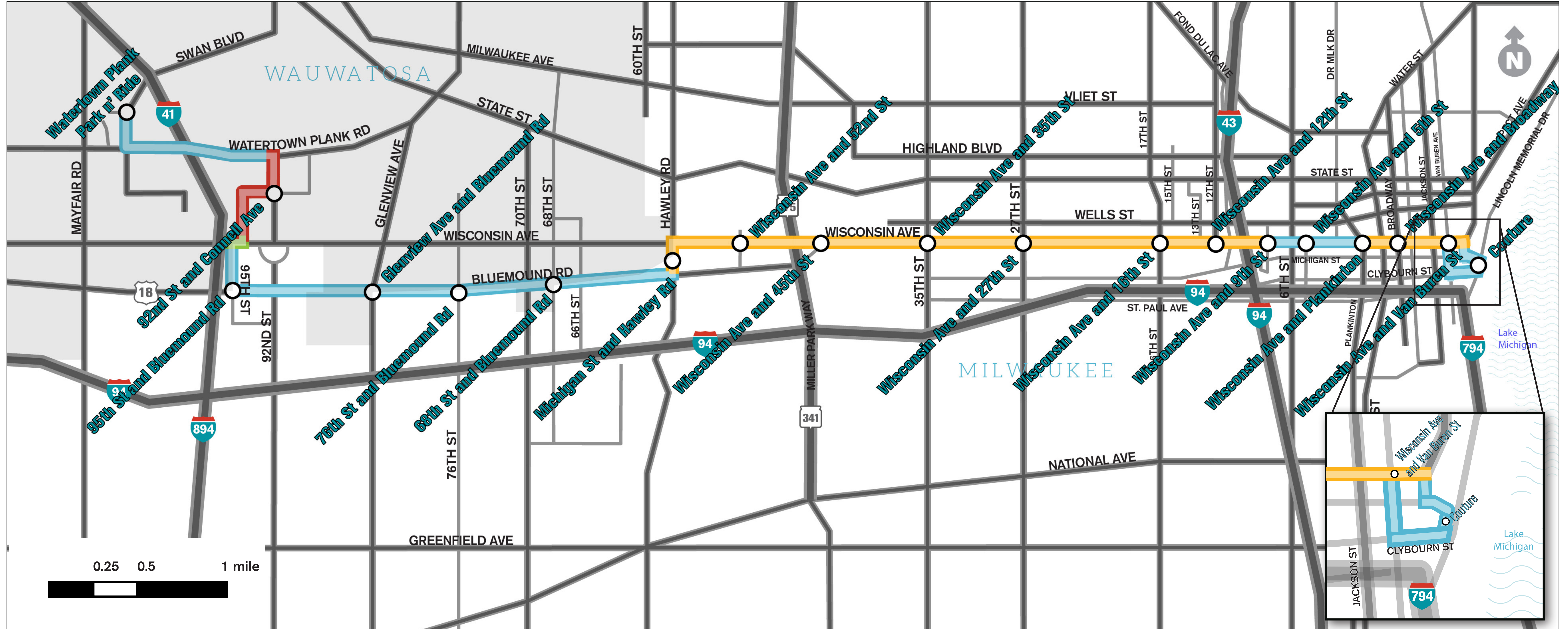
- Milwaukee has several funding tools to assist with affordable housing preservation, primarily loan programs for home and rental property improvements. Wauwatosa uses a provision in Wisconsin law that permits localities to use surplus tax increment financing revenues for affordable housing. Two recent affordable housing developments in the corridor were noted, along with multiple existing applications of Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

EAST-WEST BRT ALIGNMENT MAP

MILWAUKEE & WAUWATOSA, WI

EAST WEST **BRT**

MILWAUKEE, WI



LEGEND ○ Stations

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| ALIGNMENT TYPES |  | Curb running
Dedicated transit lane in parking lane next to curb |  | Right travel lane
Dedicated transit lane in right lane next to parking lane |  | Center running
Dedicated transit lane in left-most lane next to median or centerline |  | Mixed traffic
Transit vehicle shares lane with other vehicles |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|