

Updates to the Final Report of the City of Madison  
**LONG-RANGE METRO TRANSIT PLANNING Ad Hoc Committee**

Original Report - June 2008 – black text  
Updates from March 2010 – green text  
Most recent updates – August 2012 – red text

Short-Term (2008-2009)

**1. Provide A Positive Customer Experience.**

The golden rule of marketing is that it is more cost-effective to invest in the current customer base than to invest in finding new customers. Metro's number one priority is and should be to continually improve the customer experience to keep current customers and increase their usage. In order to see a significant rise in ridership, Metro should improve the customer experience to make riding the bus as safe, convenient and user-friendly as possible. Before Metro can successfully market its product, the system must be one that people want to participate in.

The first priority should be maintaining and improving personal safety on buses and at bus stops. In the final round of public comment, concerns about personal safety were among the top ten most frequent comments received. Several of the following recommendations include ways to improve safety, but the Committee feels that the issue merits specific and continued attention by Metro to address any unsafe situations and to overcome any public perception of Metro as unsafe.

The Committee also recommends the following customer service expansions and improvements:

Customer service training: Every Metro employee, but most especially drivers and customer service staff, should consider themselves ambassadors for the Metro system and should be unfailingly polite and helpful to the riding public. Metro should do everything it can to make this possible, including providing a safe and pleasant work environment and the appropriate training and career development opportunities. Drivers and Customer service representatives are on the front line in terms of encouraging people to use Metro service as well as providing solutions to those who call in with complaints. Professional customer service training is recommended to give these employees the tools needed to market Metro as well as to professionally manage customer concerns and complaints, so that customers will consider using the service again. Providing professional training may reduce employee turnover and frustration.

Greater emphasis on Metro's customer feedback: Metro should not only ask for feedback, but also should continue and expand efforts to gain feedback, reply to feedback, and use feedback to improve Metro's systems. (see also recommendation #17)

Improved telephone assistance: The Committee suggests Metro conduct an internal analysis of current and expected customer service staffing and communication needs and budget accordingly in 2010 (also mid-term)

Increase customer service phone staff: Due to increased ridership, phone calls and emails to the customer service center has greatly increased in recent years. Confirm that phone operators identify themselves. Metro should also consider how the adoption of a 311 system would impact its need for dedicated customer service staff. (also mid-term)

Expansion of customer service hours: Metro should expand customer assistance through later hours into the evening with the goal of providing assistance to match Metro's actual bus service time. Currently, Metro phone operators are only available to customers until 6:00 PM on weekdays, and 4:30 PM on weekends/holidays. Customers with fixed-route questions or paratransit travel concerns are left with little customer service support outside these times.

Metro's entire facility was updated with an Internet Protocol (IP) phone system in October of 2008. Capacity to receive calls has increased from only 5 people being able to be on hold to approximately 50. We no longer have complaints about a busy signal or not being able to get through to an operator. The system itself electronically processes calls faster allowing them to work through the system faster to the operator. During extremely busy times, there is an option to record a message that callers hear before speaking with an operator. For example on a snow day, simply saying "buses are operating today and running approximately 10 minutes behind schedule" helps serve customer needs without even speaking with an operator.

There was a staff upgrade in April 2009 by converting a vacant 50% marketing/50% customer service specialist position to a position dedicated 100% to oversight of the customer service center. A candidate with a heavy customer service/call center supervisory background along with a professional certification in customer service management was hired. With the new staff person on board, Metro's customer service standard operating procedure was updated. Customer service staff were retrained with heavy emphasis on improving the level of service to each individual customer.

Metro's new Quality Management phone software was also implemented around the same time. The new system records and logs every phone call made to the call center. This allows a supervisor to review calls and coach customer service reps in areas that could be improved as well as praise staff on a job well done. Standard operating procedure is now for this supervisory position to review 5 calls per customer service representative per day. Calls are reviewed with the customer service representative on an individual basis. Calls are scored on a pre-determined criteria/set of expectations as defined in the new customer service standard operator procedure.

Calls are scored on: a representative giving an initial greeting; personally identifying themselves; offering to provide assistance; actively listening to the call; and providing the caller with the information requested. If it is a paratransit call, the CSC representative is also scored on whether or not he/she has read the details of the ride back to the caller.

Additional technology to record screen shots of customer service workstations is being purchased in 2010. This new technology will help better train customer service staff as well as research difficulties or questions in paratransit ride booking.

Customer service hours have been expanded by 1 hour on Sundays and holidays to now being available 11:30 AM – 4:30 PM. On Saturdays, we have added additional staff to help during busy times.

However, we are now working current staff the maximum amount of hours available per their classification. Full timers are working their allotted 40 hours. PT staff work the allowable 30 hours per week. We would need to expand the budget and add positions to sustain an additional range of coverage past 6 PM.

Metro's phone recording system has recently been upgraded to an entirely new system that now makes it easier for customer service supervisors to locate/review phone calls. Phone recordings are used on a frequent routine basis throughout the day to verify paratransit ride bookings and to assure quality of fixed route information provided. Screen shot technology has also been added so that a supervisor can see what was on a rep's screen during a phone call. This helps troubleshoot ride bookings by verifying that customer service reps are using various programs correctly and keying in information, such as paratransit ride bookings, correctly.

Due to ADA requirements, customer service hours have been expanded on Sundays and holidays to 9 AM – 4:30 PM. The customer service center is now open during regular business hours seven days a week, including holidays.

The customer service center has had a great deal of staff turnover since the time of the original report. With this turnover has come a great improvement in absenteeism. In addition, because we have had some decrease in call volume due to electronic information available (i.e. Google Maps and Smart Phone apps), Metro's call center is now adequately staffed for current hours. A majority of calls ring straight through to an operator. Customers who do not pass immediately through experience an average hold time of less than 60 seconds before speaking with an operator.

Metro plans to implement an IVR System in the next 2-3 years, which will provide some automatic schedule information. It is our hope that Metro's call volume will decrease enough so that we can expand call center hours until 8 PM or 10 PM on weekdays using existing staff.

Staff now place an extremely heavy emphasis on tracking and research into customer feedback. An internal tracking system is in place to make sure all feedback is responded to in 10 working days. Cameras are now available on all Metro vehicles and all customer service rep phone calls are recorded. Video and sound recordings are used to research nearly every complaint made. Video and sound recordings are used to follow up appropriately with driver and/or call center staff.

Metro was recently recognized by the American Public Transportation Association as the best mid-sized transit system in North America. One of the judgment criteria for this award was customer service. In its application, Metro cited its efforts in providing trip planning information in Google Maps as well as working with third party smart phone app developers in providing bus tracking apps using Metro's existing GPS technology. Metro has also started dedicating a staff member to oversee Metro's outreach in social media outlets such as Twitter and YouTube as well as overseeing its email and text messaging service.

In 2011, all schedule material, including supplemental school service, became available in Google Maps. This feature improved the ease of trip planning, all while providing an environmentally-friendly option for customers.

Metro also formally encourages and recognizes an employee each year for outstanding customer service.

## **2. Ride Pass Programs**

Metro will benefit from increased promotion of unlimited ride pass agreements. By entering into an unlimited ride pass agreement, the customer pays per ride for a high volume of rides and distributes these rides through free passes for its constituents or employees. The customer receives a discount for volume purchasing.

Metro currently holds unlimited ride pass agreements with UW-Madison, City of Madison, St. Mary's Hospital, Edgewood College and MATC. Giving people the opportunity to ride for free can dramatically increase ridership.

The unlimited ride pass agreement structure lends itself to be a viable option to pool together small businesses in order for employees to receive the free ride pass that larger institutions such as UW-Madison and City of Madison employees currently receive. A small business unlimited ride pass pool could increase ridership for Metro while providing an attractive employee benefit and parking demand reduction for small businesses. In 2008, Metro should propose a plan for the 2009 budget to internally manage and deliver a new program to sell unlimited ride passes to small businesses.

Metro should also analyze the costs and benefits of offering a broader range of ride pass agreements. In some cases, offering a bulk rate on passes with a fixed number of rides could be an attractive option.

Considering the success of current unlimited ride pass contracts, Metro should more actively pursue businesses and organizations interested in entering into ride pass agreements. These agreements offer Metro guaranteed revenue and a new pool of riders who may not have otherwise considered commuting via bus.

Further opportunities for increasing ridership through additional ride pass agreements (unlimited or otherwise) could be explored in the following categories:

- State of Wisconsin and Dane County (for employees)
- Apartment Building Owners and Condo Associations
- Corporate Real Estate Proprietors
- Small Businesses
- Large Centers of Employment
- Hotels and other Hospitality Groups (Greater Madison Convention and Visitor's Bureau)
- School Communities, including students, employees, Parent/Teacher Coalitions and the like.

Metro should also explore ways to retain current riders who have unlimited ride passes once they leave the institution that gave them the pass. For example, Metro might offer graduating UW students or former St. Mary's employees an opportunity to purchase an unlimited ride pass at a similar discount for some limited amount of time, in effect "easing them in" to paying full fare. (also mid-term)

Metro recruited and hired a new position in marketing to oversee Metro's Commute Card Program, an unlimited ride pass program for small business. This staff person has been conducting active outreach to small businesses, non-profit groups, neighborhood associations, and smaller higher education and technical schools. More than 35 businesses were signed up in the first two months of the program.

Meriter joined in our unlimited ride pass program for larger organizations to provide service access for their employees. Other organizations that contract with Metro for this service for employees, volunteers and/or students include St. Mary's Hospital, the University of Wisconsin, Edgewood College and Madison College (MATC).

The Commute Card program continues to be successful. Through employer and community outreach, the Commute Card program has grown to over 90 businesses and accounted for more than 163,680 rides in 2011. Both large and small organizations have found the Commute Card to be an attractive benefit to offer their employees and yet another way to promote sustainability. Dane County has also signed up as an unlimited ride pass partner, similar to Meriter and St. Mary's Hospital.

Moving forward, marketing staff plans to work closely with the City of Madison's new Rideshare, etc. coordinator to better facilitate the cross-promotion of both programs. Involvement in alternative transportation lunch and learns, staff meetings and transportation fairs at local organizations continue to provide a successful way to spread

the word about the Commute Card program and the resources that are available at Metro Transit.

This Fall Metro is introducing a Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) school year pass for \$300. This pass is meant to help MMSD better facilitate their district funded pass programs and will save parents purchasing passes a trip to Metro to purchase a second semester pass.

Metro staff recently reached out to members of Sector 67, a non-profit collaborative space in Madison that is dedicated to creating the next generation of electronic technology. Staff discussed collaborating on specific projects such as how to electronically count passengers and consulting on research into smart card fare technology. Staff also discussed current Metro service and asked for input about how to better serve this important technological group.

### **3. Service Improvements**

Destinations, route maps and frequency of service are the most common topics that this Committee received feedback on. While we are reluctant to make recommendations about specific route numbers, stops, or even neighborhood service, we can and do recommend certain standards and guiding principles.

Core service: Although it is the natural inclination of any system to grow, it is important that any expansion of the Metro service area only be undertaken if it does not harm existing service. In other words, adding new destinations on the periphery of the Metro system should not be done at the expense of service on existing routes.

Metro service goals and standards: The current standards are written from a “route” perspective (i.e. service frequencies by route, stop spacing by route, etc). We recommend that these be supplemented with a user or neighborhood perspective. Stop spacing, for example, should be determined both by what types of routes serve the stops and by the neighborhood in which they are located. Neighborhoods with higher densities of housing might require more frequent stops, for example. In addition, common destinations should continue to be a priority for stop placement. Similarly, riders are often concerned with the frequency at which any bus comes by a stop, not just the frequency of one route. From a user’s perspective it may be important to time routes to either provide more frequent service options from a stop, or to facilitate transfers.

Priority neighborhoods: Metro should make it a priority to provide a higher level of service to low income and transit dependent neighborhoods. Demographic data showing income and car ownership by neighborhood are readily available and can be used to prioritize the allocation of bus service. These neighborhoods should, ideally, be served more frequently, for more hours in the day and more days in the week.

Stop location and common destinations: There was a clear desire expressed by members of the public for buses to stop closer to major destinations such as shopping malls, grocery stores, etc. Metro should explore partnering with the management of these

businesses to establish bus stops in their parking lots, and the planning department should consider making bus access a condition of approval for future development. This concept might be expanded to other destinations (medical facilities, schools, employment centers, community centers, parks, etc.) as well.

Transit time: Unsurprisingly, transit time is of primary importance to Metro's ridership. This is dealt with under other recommendations (express service, bus rapid transit, etc), but we restate it here as an important criteria for planning and decision-making. One recurring complaint about the transfer point system is that it increased transit times significantly. In addition, as Madison has grown and added miles and miles of new streets, the area Metro needs to cover, and thus the time it takes to cover it, has grown as well. An ideal, if not always achievable, goal is to make it faster to ride the bus than to drive. A more realistic standard might be to make it no slower to take the bus. This is one of the key factors in deciding to ride the bus, and as such, should be an important factor in planning route placement and timing.

Service hours: Another critical aspect of Metro's service is the hours during which it is available. We recommend extending service on key routes later at night to serve:

- Theater-goers and others patronizing the arts, especially downtown
- Second and third shift workers, including employees in the food service sector
- Bar patrons, especially those who shouldn't be driving

Similarly, we recommend adjusting morning commute hours to serve early shift workers such as those in the construction trades. Finally, we recommend improving service on weekends such that at least the core routes run on the same schedule as during the week. Decreased service and different schedules on the weekend can discourage ridership.

Service to schools: Metro currently partners with the Madison Metropolitan School District to provide school specific service. In addition, a large number of K-12 students ride the Metro system. The Committee encourages Metro to continue this partnership and to look for ways to address concerns about safety, long transfer times and lack of service for after-school activities.

Creative approaches to route design: The Committee received many comments related to route design, with an emphasis on two things. The first was the desire to have routes that relate differently to the transfer points, either by going directly between them rather than via downtown (i.e. increasing service between the North and East transfer points) or by designing routes that overlap transfer points rather than beginning and ending at them (i.e. East High to Warner Park via the North Transfer Point). The second was the desire to have "simpler" routes that don't "wander through neighborhoods." This directly contradicts Metro's stated goal of placing bus stops within a certain distance of all residential areas. There may be a compromise consisting of some looped routes that attach to a backbone of more direct routes, possibly in combination with express routes or Bus Rapid Transit. The Committee did not discuss in detail this idea, but encourages Metro to consider how to creatively design routes to address these concerns.

In response to customer feedback and ongoing scheduling issues, a variety of route and schedule improvements and enhancements went into effect on August 23, 2009.

Highlights include:

- **The return of Route 10**, which provides more direct midday service between isthmus neighborhoods and the UW campus, as well as offering cross-isthmus routing between the Johnson Street, Gorham Street and Jenifer Street areas. In addition, the route is designed to alleviate overloads on Routes 2, 3, 4 and 9 during the middle of the day when commuter routes 28 and 38 are not running.
- **Start up of Route 59**, which adds service to Jamestown and Orchard Pointe areas in Fitchburg (including Super Target and Star Cinema) on weekends and holidays.
- **Expansion of the route 34 schedule** to provide fast, direct service between the East Transfer Point and MATC-Truax campus during a.m. and p.m. peaks (route formerly operated middays only). Travel times between east and south Madison neighborhoods and MATC are reduced by up to 30 minutes.
- **Integration of overload extra trips into the published schedule**, along with schedule adjustments for certain routes to better distribute passenger loads among buses in busy corridors. These schedule enhancements are tailored to the UW fall and spring semesters, and are targeted at corridors with high ridership and chronic overcrowding. This includes additional route 9 trips during a.m. and p.m. peaks to augment service on routes 2 and 28, which were experiencing overcrowding.
- **Earlier weekday trip on Route 20**: A 6:00 a.m. departure from the North Transfer Point was added to provide better access to morning flights at the Dane County Regional Airport, as well as connecting to the MATC campus and Route 6 service to East Towne Mall.
- **Route 7 schedule adjustments** to improve on time performance and connectivity at the East and West Transfer Points.
- **Bus added to the Route 18 rotation during the p.m. peak** to improve connectivity at the South and West Transfer Points and reduce customer wait times.

Metro staff constantly monitors loading conditions through both direct observation and notification via customer complaints. Additional buses are quickly placed into service on segments where overloads are occurring.

As part of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) update process Metro staff, in conjunction with staff from the MPO and surrounding communities, is identifying new services and improvements to the existing system that could be implemented as part of



the Regional Transit Authority. These new services and improvements fall into three basic categories:

### **1. Bus Service Improvements (Fixed Route and Demand-Response)**

Improvements and enhancements might include:

- Increased headways and service span on existing routes
- Extensions of fixed route service into new areas that are not currently served
- Addition of limited-stop, express bus service from the transfer points to and through the downtown/UW campus area
- Addition of limited-stop commuter bus service from outlying cities and villages (service would extend to or in many cases through the downtown/UW campus area)
- Addition of midday bus service from outlying cities and villages
- Demand responsive service (for instance, accessible shared-ride taxi service) to areas within the RTA boundary not served by fixed-route service

### **2. Bus Service Improvements Outlined in 1. Above PLUS Implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service in One or More Corridors.**

Potential corridors for BRT service include: E. Washington Avenue; Packers Avenue (STH 113); Mineral Point Road; Fish Hatchery Road/Park Street; South (UP) Rail Corridor; and Former Southwest Rail Corridor.

Route 75 began operating March 26, 2012. This route provides quick, limited stop service between Madison, Verona and Epic Systems. In addition to Epic employees, the new route is being used by commuters between Madison and Verona.

Metro continues to closely monitor overcrowding and schedule adherence issues so that “extras” can be targeted to correct them. Information is gathered through customer feedback, direct observation, and driver reports.

Metro has submitted its 2013 budget request which is now under review by the Mayor. Some service items looked at in the operating budget include service to the Owl Creek neighborhood, and improvements to address some routes with overcrowding or chronic scheduling issues. Examining transit service is a dynamic process, and Metro’s Service Development Committee meets every two weeks to discuss issues and potential solutions.

A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study for the Madison area is currently underway. Four basic alignments are being looked at—essentially north, south, east, and west. One of the expected outcomes of the study is a metric of travel time savings for passengers using the

service, and also potential travel time savings elsewhere in the system as a result of the BRT service.

Providing a safe and secure environment at the transfer points continues to be a high priority. The introduction of a uniformed police presence at the South Transfer Point three years ago brought about a dramatic decrease in the inappropriate conduct at that location. In 2012 an additional \$20,000 was added to the security budget, allowing Metro to quickly respond to disruptive and dangerous activity at the West Transfer Point by providing uniformed police presence at the transfer point and riding west side buses.

#### **4. Fare Card Options**

Limiting the barriers to purchasing fare cards and offering a broader selection of fare card options may assist in increasing ridership. A compilation of possible fare card enhancements derived from Committee work and public feedback is listed below. Metro and the Transit and Parking Commission should research these possibilities and implement solutions that increase the availability of a wide range of fare options and help overcome the “exact change” barrier.

- Consider ways to help riders obtain correct change for the fare if they do not have a fare card.
- Increased Number of Rides Per Ticket – A current limiting factor may be that few options exist between purchasing an unlimited 31-Day pass and the 10-Ride Ticket. Increased Fare Card options such as 25 or 50 ride tickets or an unlimited annual pass should be researched.
- Online Purchasing – Customers may not only purchase passes online, but may also have the option to print them at home.
- Reusable Cards – Once a fare card is exhausted, customers may have the option of adding rides to it and reusing the same ticket. Consider making these multi-use – could they also be used in the new parking meters? As a library card? As a debit card at local businesses? As an ID? (also mid-term)
- 24-hour fare card machines – These fully automated machines could accept credit cards or cash and may be located downtown on the Square, at the transfer points, on buses, and in other accessible areas to the riders and the public. (also long-term)

Although these are listed as short term, staff recommends these be considered mid-term or long-term, as the last 2 bullet points highlight.

Metro is in the process of ordering and installing new fareboxes in its entire fleet. New fareboxes have a vacant bay that smart card readers can be installed in at a later date. Staff estimate that Metro will start looking at installing smart card readers in the next 5 years. Once those have been installed, we can begin looking at offering other fare card options as recommended in this report.

## **5. Partnerships with Business**

Maximizing opportunities to partner with businesses should be an ongoing focus for Metro Transit. A strong relationship with Madison's business community can provide Metro with key contacts, new marketing opportunities, and an avenue for Metro to reach out to thousands of potential new riders.

By promoting and supporting Metro Transit, businesses may also benefit in a variety of ways such as saving money on parking by encouraging their employees to use transit, enhancing the company's employee benefits package, marketing themselves as a sustainable business, and publicizing their community leadership.

Metro Transit and local businesses may partner in a number of ways to reach mutually beneficial goals. Examples of increased partnership opportunities include:

- Provide an area for bus stops – Businesses may offer space in front of their store/office building for a Metro bus stop. These stops could include benches and/or shelters sponsored by the business.
- Sponsorship of benches and shelters - Nearby business and neighborhoods could sponsor existing facilities. The sponsoring organization could advertise on the shelter/bench that “This shelter/bench is provided by....”
- Increased sales outlets – Partner with high-traffic businesses who will sell passes to both employees and the public.
- Partner with realtors and apartment owners – Offer realtors and apartment owners an opportunity to buy bus passes at a discount to use as an incentive for buying/renting downtown homes. (also mid-term)
- Angel System – provide a “bus buddies” program, which connects experienced riders with novice riders at the same or a nearby employer. These “Angels” would help new riders plan their routes and navigate the system.
- Airport Service – Partner with the County, Airport, UW, Convention and Visitors Bureau and downtown hotels to not only create better bus service to the airport, but also provide Metro information to out-of-town visitors.
- Businesses near high volume stops - Consider bringing in vendors with newspapers, coffee, breakfast and lunch food, etc. where such vendors do not

already exist adjacent to the stop, shelter or transfer point. Heating and pay phones are other amenities that riders would welcome.

- Transfer Points - Develop transfer points encouraging the location of services immediately adjacent – dry cleaner, childcare, market, etc. (also mid and long-term)
- Marketing - There are many opportunities for Metro to enter into partnerships and take advantage of co-marketing opportunities with those partners.
- Schedules - Partner with businesses to display schedule information and advertise which Metro routes are close to their business.

The new marketing staff person has been thoroughly exploring opportunities to partner with businesses through the new Commute Card program. We have been marketing the use of the card as a way to enhance employee morale, promote cleaner air practices, and address parking issues. The Commute Card is also used as a “foot in the door” tool for outreach to these businesses. If the program is not of use for a business, then offers are made to facilitate 31-day pass sales as well as set up trip planning visits by customer service staff.

The following businesses are partnering with Metro in promoting the Commute Card program to their business memberships:

- Office of Business Resources
- Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce
- Madison Environmental Group / EnAct
- Downtown Madison Inc, Madison's Central Business Improvement District,
- Greater Williamson Street Business Association
- Community Shares of Wisconsin
- Sustain Dane
- Dane Buy Local
- Dane County Clean Air Coalition
- Community Car
- Northside Business Association
- Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce

**Increased sales outlets** –Working with drivers and operations staff to identify locations that are convenient for Metro riders. Marketing staff follow up on new outlet suggestions.

**Angel System or Rider “Buddy” system** – This type of service is offered to all customers, but usually utilized by seniors and those with disabilities. For personalized ride training, customers should call 608-266-4466 for an appointment.

**Airport Service – Partner with the County, Airport, UW, Convention and Visitors Bureau and downtown hotels** - Metro information is provided at the airport. The

Commute Card staff person plans to work with the Greater Madison Convention & Visitor Bureau and area hotels to promote bulk purchases of convention passes to visiting groups.

**Marketing** – Metro worked with Henry Vilas Zoo and provided advertising in the Ride Guide and system map in exchange for Metro bus stop and service information on the zoo map.

**Schedules at various businesses** – We provide Ride Guides/maps on a regular basis to:

- MATC
- Edgewood
- Wisconsin English as a Second Language Institute
- Madison libraries
- Madison DOT
- Hilldale
- Fitchburg Town Hall
- UW Hospital
- various apartment complexes
- Stark Co. Realtors
- Youth Action Hudson Inc.
- Goodman Center
- Attic Correctional Services
- Project Pros
- South Madison Coalition of the Elderly
- Middleton Cross Plains Area School District
- Wisconsin Youth Company
- Wisconsin Management Company
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

Many businesses also focus on environmentally friendly business practices and encourage employees to utilize electronic or telephone information. Metro's web traffic and distribution of electronic information is at an all-time high. According to a story on Channel3000.com, Metro's route and schedules were the 6th most Googled information in Madison.

Metro staff works closely with Sustain Dane and the Mpower Champion Program. The Mpower Business ChaMpions is the first program in South-Central Wisconsin that systematically ensures businesses go green effectively and efficiently. Metro participates in various alternative transportation lunch and learns with the Mpower Champion businesses from year to year. This includes participating in group discussions as well as on-site visits to participating businesses.

Metro participates in co-marketing opportunities as they arise with other organizations that have a similar goal in reaching out to employer/businesses. (for example Rideshare, Bicycle Federation, Community Car, B-Cycle Sustain Dane, etc).

Metro staff does outreach to area Chambers and businesses organizations to spread the word about the Commute Card program and the benefits of implementing a Commuter Choice program within the workplace.

Metro staff participates in Lunch & Learns / Alternative Transportation fairs at local businesses and community events. Community involvement includes participating in the Isthmus Green Day event, the Fitchburg Green Day event, and Safety Saturday in conjunction with the City of Madison Fire Department and over 25 other local organizations.

Metro staff participates in additional business organizations in an effort to network and provide outreach to the community. This includes a membership with Downtown Madison Inc. and the Sustainable Business Network through Sustain Dane.

Metro is also partnering with the University of Wisconsin in promotion of the phone app Mobile UW. Ads are placed in the Ride Guide, Metro has supplied a bus for a TV commercial, and marketing efforts will continue to promote this important app that has direct cost savings effects including decreased call volume to customer service center and a reduction in printing costs.

Metro also recently filmed a video about accessible services and worked with Wisconsin Academy of Service Dogs to be part of the online information video.

Metro worked with officials from Epic Systems and the City of Verona to design and implement Route 75 (described above in point # 3). This enhances the partnership begun with these entities when route 55 began operating in 2005. Even with the addition of route 75, ridership on route 55 continues to grow as employments increases at Epic.

## **6. Regional Transit Authority (RTA)**

The Committee urges the State Legislature to grant local governments the authority to establish an RTA to help with the governance and funding of metropolitan transit systems. At the same time, existing funds that sustain Metro Transit must be protected so that they aren't reallocated to other transportation modes. We support enabling legislation that works for municipalities around the state, ensures accountability and provides adequate representation of all involved municipalities. The Committee supports Metro's involvement in a state study process if one develops. We also strongly support continued local discussions about what an RTA will look like in the Metro service area.

For the Metro service area, the long-term goal should be to have an expansion of services, a countywide RTA, and any RTA should only occur after a referendum on the RTA is held. In the shorter term, the municipalities that make up the Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (MPO) should convene to determine if there is MPO-wide support for an RTA. At a minimum, an RTA in the Madison area should have boundaries contiguous with the MPO boundaries. Those municipalities wanting to be part of the

RTA should convene to draft a resolution that addresses the a) governance structure, b) taxing structure, and c) by-laws of the RTA and seek approval from each local governing body, with the goal being to have a regional referendum with the same language for creating the RTA.

An RTA State Legislative Study Committee was formed in late 2008 to draft statewide RTA enabling legislation for the full Legislature to consider. The Metro Transit General Manager was a member of this committee. The draft allowed any multi-jurisdictional area in the state where local leaders were in agreement to form an RTA to do so, requiring agreement on governance structure, service area, taxing structure (up to a ½ state sales tax), and by-laws through identical resolutions approved by each participating local entity.

For political reasons, this bill was introduced after several related bills were discussed during the 2009-2011 State Budget process. The Legislative Council bill (Senate Bill 205) was taken up in a hearing of the Senate Transportation Committee in February 2010. In June 2009, however, the Governor signed RTA legislation in the budget bill for three areas of the state, including the Madison area. The bill specifies governance structure (nine member Board), service area (MPO urban planning boundary) maximum sales tax rate (1/2 cents), but he vetoed the requirement for a referendum that was contained in the Joint Finance Committee Budget Bill. However, local leaders have committed to a referendum before any taxes are authorized in the Madison area RTA.

In November 2009, the Dane County Board approved the formation of the RTA Board for the purposes of overseeing an RTA plan to take to the voters in a referendum, hopefully in 2010. By February 2010, all nine members of the Board had been appointed, and the first meeting is scheduled for March 2010.

Metro Transit has a Transit Development Plan being worked on now, and the focus of that has become to develop an RTA service and funding plan for the MPO Board and the RTA Board to consider. The City and County have been meeting to develop broad parameters to consider in the RTA plan.

In 2010 the Dane County RTA Board was nearing the finalization of an RTA service plan to consider putting before the voters in a referendum, including alternatives that would use only half of the fully authorized ½ cent sales tax. The service scenarios included regional express bus services, shared ride taxi services in smaller peripheral areas, improved core services, and investments in capital equipment to reduce diesel emissions and provide more technology related customer support services.

The political turmoil experienced in Wisconsin starting in late 2010 caused concern that RTAs may not retain their statutory authority. Indeed, in early 2011 the State Legislature rescinded the 2009 RTA Law, thereby terminating the authority of the Dane County RTA and its Board.

There continues, however, to be substantive discussions and deliberations at the state and regional level on RTAs. In January 2012 the Metro Transit General Manager testified

before the Wisconsin Transportation Policy and Finance Commission about the need to establish enabling legislation to form RTAs, and in the spring of 2012 a hearing was held to form an RTA in the Fox Cities that was co-sponsored with bipartisan support. The Metro GM testified in favor of this with the message that this was a regional transit ownership and governance model to consider in other areas of the state, such as Dane County.

## **7. Employee Cost Controls**

Metro makes up 16% of city employees and currently uses about 29% of city sick leave and absent without pay (AWOP) absences not related to Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or paid sick leave absences. Metro is strongly encouraged to continue working collaboratively with labor representatives to reduce absenteeism and control costs at Metro. Examples of strategies could include wellness programs (including exercise opportunities to counteract the effects of sitting all day), attendance policies, etc.

Metro might also consider an incentive program for safe and responsible drivers. For example, heavy acceleration and braking uses more fuel. If drivers can reduce their fuel use via their behavior, Metro could reward them with a portion of the cost savings. (also mid-term)

In the most recent Labor Agreement, the City was successful in negotiating disciplinary provisions for excessive absenteeism. The new provisions went into effect January 1, 2009.

The current Labor Agreement (effective 3/10/11) replaced “days off” suspensions as a disciplinary action with “working” suspensions. Through the first half of 2012 total absence without pay time has decreased 7.9% from the same period in 2011.

## **8. Bus Size and Type**

Metro should develop a scope of work for an outside group to review the pertinent issues related to determining whether smaller, larger, or a mix of buses should be used to serve the Metro area. Issues should include current and peak hour requirements, purchase costs, fuel and parts costs, life-cycle costing, fuel options (diesel, hybrid, etc.), ridership and fuel costs projections, school supplemental service needs for older buses, current garage limitations, interlining, and federal spare ration requirements. This study should be done by the MPO during the Transit Development Planning Process (TDP) starting in 2008. The TDP’s focus should be on peak ridership analysis, and if further study is required after the TDP, a consultant should be contracted to do a more detailed study.

This review should specifically include consideration of the use of different sized buses, both larger and smaller than the current equipment. Metro staff brought an articulated bus (55 or 60 feet long) to Madison for a day this past summer to review the possibility of future purchases of such buses for use on the UW campus routes where ridership averages 80 - 100 rides per bus per hour.



Metro should also continue its review of the pilot program with hybrid diesel/electric buses. (also mid-term)

With the establishment of Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in Dane County, the focus of the 2008 Transit Development Planning Process has been the development of a 'bus plan' for the RTA Board to consider when establishing its program of services for the referendum. The study of bus size and type has been delayed.

In 2011 WisDOT identified unused transit planning funds across the state and transit systems were able to compete to use them. Metro Transit successfully applied to do this study and is now working with staff from the Madison Area Transportation Board and the City of Madison to draft a scope of work and Request for Proposal to have an outside consultant perform key operational analysis. A resolution forming a regional steering committee has been approved by the TPC, and work is expected to be complete in 2013.

## **9. Bus Stop Signs**

City Traffic Engineering currently installs and maintains all bus stop signage along rights-of-way controlled by the City of Madison. Their policy has been that bus stop plaques are predominantly meant to address passenger vehicles and convey the associated parking restrictions in bus stops zones. This is the reason the sign plaques are installed at a 45-degree angle facing the street (as opposed to perpendicular to the street or even facing the sidewalk, where they could be more easily read by passengers and pedestrians). This makes it harder for Metro passengers to identify bus stops from the sidewalk, since bus stop signs are hard to distinguish from other street signs.

In situations where a bus stop falls before, or nearside of an intersection, the sign plaque must be installed at the start of the parking zone restriction – approximately eighty feet from the corner – despite the fact that passengers actually board the bus at the intersection itself. In these situations, the City of Madison sign shop installs a supplementary plaque on the rear side of the bus stop sign, stating “Board Bus at Corner”.

Metro Transit currently serves just over 2,000 unique bus stop locations. About 1,000 of these signs are expected to lack any information on the rear side of the signage at present. The Committee proposes a pilot project to mark both sides of bus stop signs. The pilot project would consist of applying an adhesive sticker, produced by the City of Madison sign shop, to the rear sides of bus stop signs. Metro should pick a trial route to test, install these stickers and collect passenger feedback. If the presence of stickers makes it easier to identify stops and thus to ride the bus, they should be placed on all remaining signs.

Metro staff, in conjunction with Traffic Engineering, is in the planning phase of a pilot bus stop signage project, funded as an amendment to the 2010 City operating budget. This budgeted project would address the existing placement of nearside bus stop sign plaques a distance away from where passengers actually board the bus (at the corner). While the project was intended to help clarify the parking zone restrictions for such nearside bus stops, it will also benefit passengers by relocating the bus stop sign plaque to

the corner where boarding actually takes place. Another potential aspect of the project would be rotating the sign face to be perpendicular to the sidewalk (90 degree angle), enhancing visibility of the sign for pedestrians walking towards it. While the project would require removal of the "Board Bus at Corner" plaques currently on the rear side of these sign poles, the discussion among Metro staff was to incorporate the adhesive sticker proposal for implementation on the rear side of these newly installed nearside bus stop signs being placed at corners.

Over 100 nearside bus stops have been “double-signed” to reduce confusion for customers as to where buses actually stop, and to provide better demarcation of the no parking zone contained within the stop. The double signage consists of a bus stop sign (and a parking restriction) at both the beginning and the end of the bus stop zone. The stops chosen for the double-signage were identified as locations where chronic parking and customer confusion issues had been noted.

## **10. Bus Amenities and Bus Stop Amenities**

The experience of riding the bus is critical to retaining existing riders and recruiting new ones. Safety and comfort should be baseline expectations for all buses and stops. Driver attitude alone has an impact on the experience of a bus trip, enhancing or negating all other amenities in place.

The Committee recommends an overall emphasis on improving the passenger experience via simple amenities on the bus and at bus stops. These could include:

### **On the Bus:**

- Emphasize customer service in driver training, and create a work environment for drivers (including basic things like bathroom breaks) that fosters a good attitude.
- Metro must maintain its concern for rider and employee safety.
- A system for trash receptacles could be provided on buses to achieve and maintain a goal of cleanliness.
- Feedback tells us that bike racks on buses are often full. Metro should explore providing space for more bikes on popular routes.
- Many Metro users are commuters who may benefit from access to the Internet, especially during longer rides. Metro could explore providing access to Mad City Broadband. Consideration of providing wireless (WiFi) laptop access en route may be obviated by the growing use of GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications), which is a service subscribed to the individual as opposed to a service that Metro would provide. (mid and long term)
- Air temperature in the buses and a heating system from the floor has been brought up in public comments.

- It may help riders confirm that they've boarded the right bus if internal annunciators announce route number inside as the external ones do when a bus pulls up to a stop. This would be especially helpful when buses switch from one route to another.

**At Bus Stops:**

- All stops should be accessible by sidewalk and should have nearby crosswalks so riders can access them from both sides of the street. (also mid-term)
- Riders would benefit from benches and/or shelters at more stops. This could be done in partnership with nearby business and neighborhoods (see #5).
- Consider bringing in vendors with newspapers, coffee, breakfast and lunch food, etc. where such vendors do not already exist, especially at transfer points. Heating and pay phones are other amenities that riders would welcome (see #5).
- Metro can work with the City Streets Department about placement of new automated trash containers at bus stops that will be emptied by the Streets Department on their weekly cycle.
- Enforcement of the smoking ban in bus shelters.
- All bus stops should have schedule information available.
- Increased use of destination signs (indicating landmarks a bus goes to) is recommended.
- Consider making it more convenient for riders to mode shift from bus to bike or vice versa. This could include secure bike parking at transfer points and major stops, "bike center" facilities such as lockers. Anything done on this front should be in harmony with the Platinum Biking Committee Report.

Metro staff continues to encourage installation/replacement of both sidewalks and concrete passenger boarding pads whenever they are invited by public works agencies to comment on upcoming construction projects. Metro staff also coordinates with City of Madison public works staff to incorporate new concrete boarding pads with street and sidewalk maintenance projects. In addition, Metro staff makes recommendations to the Plan Commission and Common Council related to redevelopment projects adjacent to existing bus stop locations - to encourage boarding pads and, when applicable, benches or shelters as conditions of approval. Recent examples include portions of Watts Road, which gained both concrete boarding pads as well as an accessible curb ramp to assist passengers crossing the street at the bus stop.

All bus stops have schedule information available in electronic format at [mymetrobus.com](http://mymetrobus.com) (i.e. download and print or view using mobile device.) Staff is

working on the purchase of several 11 x 17 display cases to be mounted on poles at select bus stop locations (without shelters) along Route 2 on a pilot program basis.

A system for trash receptacles has been implemented. First as a pilot program on a handful of buses and now on all buses.

Metro has also experimented with bike racks that hold three bikes rather than two. Racks holding three bikes extended too far from the bus and dipped too far into the street causing damage to the racks. Since that time, we have moved back to the two slot bike racks.

### On the Bus

- The training program for new fixed route bus operators has been updated and revised. There is an extensive focus on customer service skills, including sections on The Importance of Good Service, Customer Expectations, Listen to Customer Concerns, Thank the Customer, Difficult Customers, and Dignity. In addition to the new driver training, refresher training is provided every summer for drivers. The focus of this training in recent years has been on security, to help drivers develop the skills to maintain a safe environment on the bus.
- Video surveillance has been installed on all buses. The cameras are used to document what transpires when events occur that threaten the safety of riders and/or employees. The visibility of the cameras, plus the signage alerting customers to their presence also serve as deterrents to disruptive behavior and provide a sense of security to riders.
- Trash receptacles have been implemented on all buses.
- Metro experimented with bike racks that hold three bikes rather than two. Racks holding three bikes extended too far from the bus and dipped too far into the street causing damage to the racks. Additionally, when stored in an upright position, the racks blocked the front headlights. We have moved back to the two slot bike racks, but continue to explore the options for a three-bike rack.
- UW-Madison has installed wi-fi on two buses, as a research and class project tool. The monthly charges for wi-fi service make it cost prohibitive to equip the fleet. Staff is monitoring developments in technology, and anticipate it becoming affordable to expand wi-fi capabilities to additional buses in upcoming years.
- Metro staff and UW are also exploring the idea of installing tablet devices on buses that could be used to access Metro's live stop information and trip planning products.

### At Bus Stops

- Real time bus arrival and location information is available on several third party computer and mobile apps. In addition, for customers who do not use smart phones, schedule information is displayed at approximately 100 bus stops, in addition to the 150+ bus shelters where schedule information is maintained. This fall another 100 display cases will be installed. Staff plans on rolling out a quick response (QR) code pilot program using some of these display cases. The QR code will link to live bus

arrival, static schedule information, and possibly detour information using a smart phone app.

- UW-Madison and Metro have partnered on a bus shelter expansion/replacement program on the campus. UW is purchasing and installing 60 shelters over an 8-year period. Upon installation, ownership of the shelter is transferred to the City of Madison.
- The City received a \$250,000 grant to upgrade the Metro bus shelters that date from the early 1980's. In addition to the seating, maps and schedules that are provided in existing shelters, possible additional amenities include lighting (solar or other), heating elements, real-time arrival signage, and surveillance cameras. The shelters will be branded as a Metro shelter.
- In response to customer input, a larger, "double shelter" was fashioned to be placed at the stop on westbound University Avenue, farside of University Bay Dr. This stop has seen a marked increase in customer activity over the years.
- Metro staff coordinates with City of Madison public works staff to incorporate new concrete boarding pads with street and sidewalk maintenance projects. In 2011, 57 new concrete boarding pads were installed. In 2012, we have a working list of 25 locations right now, and that may expand as the construction season progresses.
- Video surveillance technology has been a great tool in improving the passenger experience. Video is consulted on all negative customer feedback. Driver supervisors will use video during training sessions and individual employee follow up as a coaching tool on what went well in a situation and things might be better handled in the future. All safety concerns are also reviewed.
- Staff are working with the Streets Department to install trash containers at problematic bus stops.

## **11. Proactively Approach the Media**

Metro Transit has an excellent story to tell. Ridership is at a record-setting high, new hybrid bus technology supports the green trend, and Metro has one of the lowest per rider costs among peer groups. Unfortunately, it's the negative press that appears more often in the papers. Recently, Metro has begun to forge stronger relationships with local and statewide media. The Committee recommends that Metro continue to build relations with local media representatives and proactively pitch stories on a routine basis that are intriguing, current, and reflect the many positive aspects of Metro Transit. Metro should also explore partnering with radio and television stations that provide traffic reports to announce route changes, detours, delays, etc.

This has been a work in progress. We proactively pitch the "green" idea whenever possible. We have worked with Madison Gas & Electric to provide information on their "green" channel. In the past few years, media has been extremely responsive in helping announce route changes, detours, and delays.

Metro's response to the H1N1 virus was another good proactive news venture. Channel 3 worked with staff to get out Metro's proactive steps in combating the flu. We've been featuring that news story on our website under "flu efforts".

Media has also helped disseminate “back to school” information in the fall.

All media have been extremely helpful in advanced planning for inclement weather announcements.

Metro continues to work with media to get important messages out including two well attended press conferences in the past year. The first press conference announced Metro’s improved venture into trip planning technology using Google Maps as well as partnering with third party smart phone app developers to provide customers with live bus location information using GPS technology.

The second was a press conference event in August 2012 celebrating Metro’s APTA award for all of its improvements in the past three years and how these improvements have made it the best transit system of its size in North America.

## **12. Annual Marketing Research.**

Metro should implement three targeted market research surveys to identify key audiences, to gain a better perspective on public perception and customer satisfaction, and to provide a base for strategic marketing planning.

The surveys should target:

- Current customers through an onboard survey
- Core Madison service area (riders and non-riders)
- New areas for potential growth (riders and-non riders)

Using an integrated approach to surveying including telephone, email, and focus group surveys is encouraged. Previous marketing surveys completed in 2004 were conducted by a paid consultant. In the future, Metro may financially benefit by partnering with large research-orientated institutions such as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation or UW-Madison to assist in conducting and analyzing the research.

An onboard survey was conducted in 2008. Metro will budget for and plan to do a targeted market research survey in 2011. Staff is gathering information and working with other transit systems to see what they are doing.

Staff will get estimates for market research project in 2013.

Eight studies are underway involving transit service as the main topic or a partial focus of the study that could provide helpful data to Metro for this recommendation. Public input is being solicited as part of the analysis for many of the studies.

1. The City’s Transportation Master Plan

2. Bus Size Study (MPO)
3. BRT Corridor Study (MPO)
4. UW Transit Evaluation Study (UW Transportation)
5. Transit Development Plan (MPO)
6. Long Range Facilities Plan (City – includes Metro facility)
7. Transit Oriented Development Study (CARPC)
8. Inter City Bus Terminal Study

### **13. Image**

Metro should always be working towards improving its brand and image. It's important to reinforce the positive experience of riding the bus and the sense of community experienced while sharing the ride. Metro's main message and image should be based upon results from market research and staff input. The message and image should be simple and be marketed through rider testimonials and pictures to capture and clarify a more personal connection with Metro.

Metro currently has a graphic artist/photographer on staff who can utilize archived pictures as well as new to produce promotional items such as posters, calendars, etc. to capture the image of Metro through riders and leaders in the community using Metro Transit.

Metro has created promotion calendars and utilized archived pictures more fully in all advertising efforts to portray a bright, clean, positive image of Metro. We will continue these efforts through the year.

We plan to work with Adams Outdoor Advertising and Madison Mallards to become part of game day promotions at Mallard games.

Metro will utilize our 2012 APTA Outstanding Achievement award to bolster image efforts throughout the coming year. We will also utilize the new sales associate and advertising program to identify other community opportunities to improve our image. Our new in-house advertising program will allow us to better control advertising content that might be harmful to Metro's image.

### **14. Within-City Advocacy**

The Committee recommends that Metro's General Manager be a strong advocate for the Metro system when dealing with other parts of the City of Madison – including other departments, committees, the Common Council and the Mayor. Metro relies on other City departments for services – snow removal, for example – and the General Manager should advocate strongly for Metro in those contexts.

With respect to snow in particular, the General Manager should urge the City to reevaluate the current snow clearance policy to give clearing bus stops higher priority.

In December 2008 and in December 2009, authorization was provided to spend extra dollars for contractors to expedite the snow removal at bus stops based on unusually large snow storms in those months. Metro's snow removal budget in 2010 was increased from \$39,000 in 2009 to \$50,000 to expedite the clearing of snow around bus stops, although a supplemental request by Metro was submitted to increase the dollar amount to \$100,000 for 2010, which did not get approved. Actual expenditures in 2008 and 2009 for snow removal at bus stops were \$190,000 and \$176,000 respectively!

There has been steady progress to improve the focus of snow removal at bus stops during winter months. Metro's snow removal costs increased from a budget of \$39,000 in 2009 to \$100,000 in 2012. For 2012, a new program was authorized in the City budget that involves identifying key stops in Metro's service area that will focus on quicker snow removal at those bus stops.

## **15. External Advocacy**

Metro needs strong advocates at the state and federal governmental levels. The Committee recommends that the Mayor's Office track and lobby for policy that will support Metro's goals and growth, especially increased funding.

Through the Mayor's office, efforts have been made to support an RTA bill during the 2009-11 State Biennial Budget process, including attendance at a Joint Finance Committee Meeting until 2:00 in the morning. The Mayor also appointed the General Manager to be on a Special Legislative Study Committee to draft Statewide RTA legislation, which is now SB 205, working its way through the Legislature. And finally, the Governor signed a bill on June 29, 2009 on the lawn of the Governor's Mansion with the Mayor present allowing the formation of RTA's in only 3 areas of the state, including the Madison area.

Also, the City's federal lobbyist has been used to help seek and receive federal earmarks through our Congressional delegation. This includes \$2,000,000 in discretionary bus funding that Madison received in 2008, \$150,000 in proposed FY 2010 funding that is pending approval, and an earmark request of \$2,000,000 for FY 2011, the two latter amounts to be used for the site analysis/preliminary engineering and design for the replacement/upgrade of Metro's current bus garage.

Despite a very challenging state budget process for 2011-13, working through the Mayor's office and the state transit association efforts were made to successfully avoid some of the most harmful proposals. Specifically, the state would have lost about \$46 million in federal funding had collective bargaining rights been eliminated for transit employees, and those rights were maintained when the final version of the state budget was amended by the legislature to recognize this. Also, despite an across the board cut of 10% for most local transportation programs, including transit, a separate appropriation for paratransit reduced Metro's cut to about 8%. Finally, despite the rescission of the state RTA bill, Metro staff continue to push for the adoption of a new enabling legislation that will allow the creation of RTA's, as described in more detail in #6 above.



As a result of working closely with the City's federal lobbyist, Metro has been successful in applying for a new federal grant called State of Good Repair. Metro was awarded approximately \$5 million in 2011 for new buses, fareboxes, and shelters. Metro again applied for this grant in 2012 and was recently awarded nearly \$3.8 million for the purchase of diesel buses. Metro also applied this year for several other new federal grant opportunities for a) Clean Fuels, and b) Livable Communities to upgrade diesel buses to hybrids and to expand the park and ride lot at the North Transfer Point.

## **16. Transportation Demand Management**

Metro should develop a demand response taxi zone in at least one periphery area of the Metro Transit service area to test whether such service is more cost effective than traditional bus service. Propose this service in 2009.

Funding for service changes in the 2009 budget in the amount of \$150,000 was approved in the fall of 2008, and Metro staff was directed to develop the specifics of the proposed changes to be implemented in the summer. Feedback was provided by the Madison Area Bus Advocates (MABA), and a public hearing was held in the spring of 2009, which did not include any proposed demand response taxi-zones due to a) a lack of feedback for such a concept from the public or MABA, and b) limited funding to work with given the needs for other transit improvements. The service improvements were implemented in August 2009, including a new Route 10 on the Isthmus, a new Route 59 in Fitchburg and Madison on weekends, and schedule improvements on over a dozen other existing routes.

The Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (MPO) is issuing an RFP for a consultant to conduct a transit vehicle size study. The study will analyze passenger activity, along with operational factors such as interlining and scheduling efficiencies, to develop recommendations to identify the most efficient mix of transit vehicles.

## **17. "Secret Rider" Program**

Metro should establish a system, similar to "secret shoppers", to solicit feedback from riders on their bus riding experience. Riders would fill out surveys, either Web or paper based (or both), covering the following:

- Demographic information
- Driver behavior
- Ride experience
- Safety
- Cleanliness
- Schedule and transfers

- Origination and destination points, timeliness, convenience of stops, etc.

To the extent possible, questions should be parallel to the Rider Survey questions, which cover many of these topics, so the data can be combined.

There are two possible methods of recruiting these “secret riders”:

- Short term or one time participants: Advertise the opportunity, make forms available, and reward complete forms with entrance in a drawing for a free 10-ride pass. This has the advantage of a wider potential pool of feedback, but the possible disadvantage of only catching the negative experiences.
- Long term participants: Offer a free 10ride pass or a discounted monthly pass in exchange for evaluating a minimum number of trips per week or month. This would be more likely to get feedback on positive or neutral ride experiences in addition to negative ones, but has the disadvantage of getting feedback from a smaller pool of people.

The Committee recommends that Metro pilot one or both of these methods for six months and evaluate the response rate. If successful in collecting feedback, the program should be made permanent.

The Transit General Manager has set up a program on an informal basis by employing the help of Transit and Parking Commission (TPC) members, bus advocates, downtown business leaders, , and representatives from other organizations. Individuals report in to the GM on the ride experience, driver behavior, safety, cleanliness, etc. They answer the basic question “How was your ride?”

We have received a great deal of constructive feedback focusing on both positives and areas in need of improvement or behavior not up to par. Metro’s feedback form is also featured on the front of Metro’s website and recorded into Metro’s feedback database for review by appropriate supervisory staff.

The Transit General Manager is continuing this informal program of obtaining feedback on the ride experience

## Mid-Term (2010-2012)

### **18. Schedule – Ease of Reading and Accessibility**

Accessing and understanding the system map and ride guide is a significant barrier for new and potential Metro riders. A new rider needs to know quickly and easily where, when and how to catch a bus – and shouldn’t have to puzzle her or his way through a two part multi-page system to figure it out. The Committee recommends the following steps to make Metro schedule information readily available and easily understandable:

- Try to make the Ride Guide more intuitively comprehensible and prominently display in the Ride Guide details of finding Metro scheduling information online, including information by bus stop ID number, not just route. Metro already has

that information on its Website, but it is a little known feature. Ride Guide route maps need to be upgraded to provide more visual context as well. The Committee recommends that rather than incrementally improving the Ride Guide, Metro staff consider if there are other print systems of conveying route and schedule information that are easier for a new user to navigate.

- Installation of “next bus” real time digital signs at all transfer points and at stops with higher numbers of boardings.
- Installation of current paper schedules at all stops (see #23).
- Partner with businesses to display schedule information and advertise which Metro routes are close to their business (see #5).
- Finish the implementation process with Google Transit by 2009. The Committee supports and encourages Metro’s efforts to work with Google to provide its online bus schedule via Google Transit, replacing the current trip planner. The Committee also encourages all outside City of Madison agencies involved with this process to support Metro in finalizing its relationship with Google so that this valuable service can be provided as soon as possible.
- Acquisition of enhanced customer notification technology including software that would improve upon Metro’s current Rider Alert e-mail alert system by expanding text and voice notices beyond the work and home computer to cell phones and PDA’s.
- When designing routes, remember that simpler is better. The current system of core, peak and off-peak service makes a lot of sense to Metro, but can be confusing for riders. Wherever possible, simplify the number of routes to reduce confusion.

The City Attorney’s office has worked diligently with Google to iron out remaining issues, and an agreement is expected soon. The “customer notification” recommendation has been partially implemented, with customized updates for the University of Wisconsin, Epic, MMSD, MATC, and the American Center for service update information tailored to the route(s) that serve these customers.

Metro is working on retooling copy in early pages of the Ride Guide. So far, a section has been added pointing people to online video demonstrations and instructions. We recently completed online videos demonstrating “How to Ride” and “How to Read Your System Map and Schedule”. Videos are available at [mymetrobus.com](http://mymetrobus.com) under “video library” as well as “how to ride”.

Metro’s Transit Tracker program is now available to all riders with internet-enabled phones. Typing [mymetrobus.com/mobile](http://mymetrobus.com/mobile) gives you access to text estimates of Transit Tracker as well as an abridged version of Metro’s official detour list.

Metro has worked with City IT to improve upon its Rider Alert email technology. Metro

Rider Alert emails are now available in specific groups including detours, winter weather, MATC, UW Campus, American Center, Epic Campus, and Supplemental School service. Specific text message alerts are also available to these targeted groups.

A website redesign is in progress. The goal of the redesign is to make our website more user friendly.

A new interactive voice response (IVR) system is scheduled to for implementation in 2010-2011. The goal of IVR is to allow customers to enter their bus stop ID, and departures from that stop will be read automatically. This service will be available 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

We also have been encouraging using the mobile version of the Transit Tracker, where riders can bookmark their favorite stops on their internet-enabled phones for real-time arrival estimates.

Metro schedule information is now available in Google Transit. Live arrival information is also available in Metro's Transit Tracker and third party smart phone applications. We have seen such a popular response that staff are focusing heavily on promoting the use of electronic schedule information with the hope in the long-term of moving away from printed material all together.

Metro's ridership increased 1.3 million rides last year. Despite that 9% increase, we actually ordered 5,000 fewer Ride Guide for the year. In 2010, 68 rides were recorded for every Ride Guide printed. In 2011 (with increased ridership), 76 rides were recorded for every Ride Guide printed.

Metro's website also experienced an increase of nearly a million visits last year compared to the year prior.

Metro will continue to review Ride Guides and system maps to make them as clear and easy to understand as possible. However, allowing passengers easy access to electronic information on tablets and smart phones on the bus is a more major focus.

Metro's website has been completely redesigned by City IT staff.

IT/marketing staff are discussing phasing out Metro's current trip planner in favor of providing only Google Transit online trip planning information.

Special quick response (QR) bar codes have been added to all shelters on the UW campus as well as the Capitol Square and State St. By pointing smart phones at these codes, customers can get live arrival estimates for those individual stops via links to the smart phone app Mobile UW.

## **19. Increase the Marketing Budget**

Metro's annual marketing budget of \$163,000 is small and comprises only 0.4% of Metro's overall budget. When compared to Metro peer systems, its marketing budget ranked last. Metro peer system budgets averaged \$492,600 and 1.5% of overall budget. (Metro Transit peer survey, March 2007.) A strong marketing budget is essential to continue increasing ridership.

Metro should increase its marketing budget to \$500,000. By increasing the marketing budget, Metro will have the financial means to carry out important new marketing activities. While the Committee feels strongly that the marketing budget needs to grow, it does not recommend that such growth come at the expense of a decrease in service.

No update in 2010.

Metro's marketing budget continues to decrease. However, Ride Guides and System Maps are no longer considered marketing budget items, which allows more funding towards advertising promotions. Bus flyers are printed much less frequently due to customers utilizing electronic information.

Staff hope to increase the marketing budget through revenues generated by new in-house advertising program that will begin in 2013.

## **20. State Funding**

The State should be a stable funding partner by covering 42% of transit operating costs, consistent with the strong state role in Wisconsin in previous years. If RTA enabling legislation is approved, then the goal would be for the base state transit operating assistance to be at the current percentage level (35%) and move toward the historic level of 42%.

The State should also start to play a role in helping with important transit investments, by contributing capital funding to local transit systems. This could be achieved by providing half of the non-federal share of capital assets, so that the federal-state-local mix would be 80-10-10. Investments in technology, cleaner burning transit vehicles, and other innovative capital projects should be targeted for state funding at a minimum. State government should also enact a commuter choice income tax benefit plan based on the federal model to reward bus riders.

The Committee urges all Metro financial partners to write to area state legislators to support this goal. The outreach staff being recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee should consider adding this effort to their list of tasks and should help communicate to local businesses and other stakeholders the importance of stable state funding for public transportation in Wisconsin. City and Metro leadership should also meet with the editorial boards of the local newspapers on this important effort. Finally, Metro should work with local transit advocacy groups and encourage the formation of statewide transit

advocacy to support higher levels of state funding for public transportation to achieve goals related to increasing economic development (transit returns \$3.61 for every dollar of investment), improving access for older adults and people with disabilities, and reducing carbon emissions to improve the environment. (Wisconsin Department of Transportation – *The Socio-Economic Benefits of Transit in Wisconsin, Phase II: Benefit Cost Analysis, Final Report No. 0092-05-14, May 2006.*)

No update in 2010.

As state funding has been cut, Metro has worked with the Mayor's office and the state transit association to communicate with and influence state legislators and others to counter those trends. When the Governor formed the Wisconsin Transportation and Finance Policy Commission during the 2011-13 budget, Metro was asked to speak regarding Transit Funding. The three points highlighted in the General Manager's testimony to the Commission was a) returning to the higher level of state funding (42% vs. 32% today), b) allowing the formation of RTAs, and c) establishing a state transit capital contribution as other states have done. The Commission is still holding hearings across the state and has heard these messages from other transit systems and community leaders as well. The work of the commission is to focus on state transportation funding for the next 10 years, and their final report is due in March 2013.

## **21. Federal Funding**

Federal funding needs to be increased to provide a minimum of 20% of operating costs, and sufficient capital funding for keeping pace with necessary bus and other basic replacements, technology funding, and new starts for bus rapid transit (BRT), commuter rail, and other possible investment scenarios being considered. Federal studies on infrastructure for transit, roads and bridges consistently show that basic investment and replacement needs are not being met. Higher fuel economy standards are causing a reduction in fuel consumption, which is a good thing. But the lack of a stable federal funding source for transit needs is the downside of this trend. A recent federal study (*Transportation for Tomorrow: Report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission*) called for a significant increase in investment in our surface transportation system and a comprehensive overhaul of the current federal funding system, including expanded federal revenue sources. We believe that something on this scale is needed and would benefit Metro. Metro, its partners and the City are encouraged to make clear to the federal government the importance of a streamlined funding system that increase the amount of support coming to local transit systems.

Through the Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association, an effort to support a national campaign to restore transit operating assistance is underway. This is designed to include a provision in a federal jobs bill to put transit operating assistance back into the budget in order to create jobs and help people get to and from jobs. The national group is called "The Alliance for Transit Operating Assistance."

Through the Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association and the Mayor's office, there have been efforts over the past two years to focus on a six year federal

reauthorization bill for highways and transit, but the well-publicized contentious nature of the U.S. Congress has caused multiple delays in achieving this goal. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), which authorizes highways and transit funding for two years, was signed into law on July 6, 2012 and will go into effect on October 1 2012. The most significant impact on Metro Transit is that virtually all grant funding will now be strictly determined by formula and all discretionary funding programs are eliminated. Metro will receive \$458,000 more formula funding in 2014 than in 2013 and then an additional \$119,000 in 2014. However, Metro received \$3,786,500 in discretionary funds (from the State of Good Repair Grant) in 2012 (\$5,160,800 in 2011) which will be unavailable in 2013 and 2014 due to the elimination of those discretionary grants. This will make it difficult for Metro to maintain its normal bus replacement schedule in those years unless some alternate funding source is obtained.

## **22. Express Bus Service**

Public comment centered on several key issues following the release of the Interim Report. One of these was the need for express bus service covering:

- Large employers or employment centers
- Park and ride lots
- The Capitol Square
- University of Wisconsin
- Airport
- Connections between transfer points

The challenges to providing each type of service relate to schedule, equipment and funding. As such, they are mid and long-term objectives. However, at least one of the express bus concepts has been adopted and shows potential for application in other parts of Metro's service area. As discussed in the building public / private partnerships section of this report, the commuter service and financial model, which was successfully applied to The American Center (a large employer and employment center), has the potential to be used as a solution to meet other express bus service needs.

Rush hour commuter service, for example, could be provided from park and ride lots to the square. If this service is combined with the recommendation elsewhere in this report to adopt a policy for locating new park and ride lots at transfer points rather than on the perimeter of the urban area, commuters could park their automobiles or transfer to local or express service to the square. Depending on density and time of day, this concept could also be applied to the University of Wisconsin as a destination.

Express service to and from the airport is more problematic as the volume of flights is not concentrated by time of day similar to starting and quitting times at employment centers. Airport express service, however, does have a good potential for financing if the scheduling issues can be worked out. The Committee recommends working with Dane

County, the UW and local hotels to implement express service to the Airport from the Downtown/Campus area.

Deadheading empty buses back to the garage could provide express service options if origins and destinations of potential passengers can be identified and routes to the garage could be designed to meet passenger needs. This effort would also address a perception issue that empty buses are wasteful, not environmentally sensitive and fiscally un-sound. Whether this is actually the case is not the issue. The issue is a marketing perception problem, which an express bus option has the potential to address.

Metro should also consider establishing signal priority for express routes. This could be implemented as soon as practical, or as part of the transition from an express route system to a Bus Rapid Transit system (see #34).

As part of the RTA effort (see #6), Metro has developed a preliminary list of express bus services in the core and periphery areas. This list is being considered by the MPO's Transit Development Plan Steering Committee at the present time, as part of the RTA plan to be put before voters in an upcoming referendum.

WisDOT will be expanding the park & ride lot near the Verona Rd/Hwy PB intersection in 2013. The lot will be upgraded to include pedestrian facilities and bus stops. Upon completion, routes 55 & 75 will begin serving the lot to provide commute opportunities from the region southwest of Madison. Both of these routes are limited stop and function as express-like service between Verona and Madison.

### **23. Schedules At More Bus Stops**

One significant barrier to ridership is not knowing when the bus comes to a stop near you. Metro currently posts stop level departure data at the four off-street Transfer Point facilities (Kiosk posters) and approximately 150 bus shelters maintained by Metro (Shelter posters – including the Middleton Transfer Point). Metro also provides laminated shelter posters for some additional bus shelters owned and/or maintained by other entities (i.e East Towne Mall, locations on the UW campus). A printable PDF file of stop level departure data for every bus stop location is also available on Metro's website, so that riders may produce their own copies of this information for any stop they need.

In most instances, the present data format of the printable PDF file would fit within the dimensions of an information display unit identified by staff. The exception may be at certain high-density stops with multiple routes, where a second display unit may be needed in order to fit all the stop level departure data.

The Committee recommends a pilot program that would install display units with schedule information at "inbound" bus stops along the Route 2 corridor (operating between the West and North Transfer Points, via University Avenue and Johnson/Gorham Streets). Inbound bus stops are those locations where the predominant



passenger activity would be boarding for travel towards the downtown or UW campus area. Fifteen bus stop locations are identified for this pilot, on the basis of their proximity to major intersections and generally how they fill in gaps between bus stops with information currently posted (i.e. bus stops with shelters). Metro should install schedules at these stops and solicit rider feedback to evaluate the success of the pilot. If successful, this pilot should be expanded to as many bus stops as possible, starting with heavily used inbound routes and expanding from there.

Metro is working to post more schedules at non-shelter stops along Route 2 in the fall of 2010.

Paper schedules have been installed at all Metro shelters and 100 bus stops. An additional 100 stops will be added this year.

Staff will also experiment with adding QR bar code information with links to live arrival estimates via Mobile UW at various bus stops throughout the city. A first phase goal is to add codes to all bus shelters, and bus stops with schedule displays. The second phase would be to affix QR code stickers to all stops throughout the Metro system.

## 24. Target Specific Audiences

Metro Transit is available to most Madisonians, however, there are certain populations who are more likely to become riders. Metro should increase efforts to hit these target audiences and strategically prioritize them according to market research results.

Potential target audiences may include:

- Environmental organization staff and members
- Other civic organizations including health, education, social, etc.
- Residents and businesses in heavily-traveled bus corridors
- Residents and businesses in densely populated, mixed use neighborhoods with lower parking per capita
- Residents and businesses in neighborhoods with lower than average per capita car ownership
- Downtown businesses
- Large employment centers
- Senior citizens
- Working families
- University faculty, staff, and students
- People who participate in other forms of non-single occupancy auto transportation – ride sharers, car sharers, bikers, walkers, etc.

No update in 2010.

Metro's Ridership Improvement Specialist has been doing research and targeting efforts at

- Environmental organization staff and members
- Other civic organizations including health, education, social, etc.
- Residents and businesses in heavily-traveled bus corridors
- Residents and businesses in densely populated, mixed use neighborhoods with lower parking per capita
- Residents and businesses in neighborhoods with lower than average per capita car ownership
- Downtown businesses
- Large employment centers

Staff have made appearances at senior centers and Madison Citichannels Senior Beat to market to senior citizens. Staff is also actively promoting Mobile UW to publicize ease of riding bus to UW and other campus staff and students.

## **25. Increase Co-marketing and Partnership Opportunities**

There are many opportunities for Metro to enter into partnerships and take advantage of co-marketing opportunities with those partners. Some ideas include:

### Public Sector

- Preferred entry at city, county and UW events for those who arrive by transit
- List Metro information (Web links, general information, which bus to take) on Overture and other city/county websites
- Promote Metro services at city/county-sponsored events (County Fair, Halloween Festival, Dane Dances, etc.)
- Co-market Metro with Monona Terrace "green building" certification
- Increase collaboration work with RideShare, etc. and UW Transportation.

### Private Sector

- Expand unlimited ride pass contracts (see #2)
- Expand Commuter Choice Program
- Purchase passes for employees
- Coordinate brown bag lunches to educate employees on how to use Metro
- Increase business sales outlets
- Make schedules and Metro information available at the workplace

- Sponsor customer amenities such as benches and shelters (see #5)

### Non-profit Sector

Employees and members of environmental and other non-profit organizations should be Metro “ambassadors” by communicating Metro’s good work to the public and leading by example. Metro should be active and well-connected in Madison’s strong environmental community.

No update in 2010.

Metro has added Dane County to our list of unlimited ride pass partners. Our Ridership Improvement Specialist provides business outreach to employers and human resource representatives throughout the Metro service area to provide employees a menu of options including:

- Commute Card program start up
- Commuter choice pre-tax information
- Straight purchase of Metro fare items
- Metro resource flyers for employees, Ride Guides, and maps at workplace

The Ridership Improvement Specialist also works closely with environmental groups, employee green teams, non-profit organizations, and neighborhood associations. One neighborhood association, Sustainable Atwood, has been a key member in actively promoting the Commute Card program. A key environmental group has been Sustain Dane and their Mpower Champion Business program. It has allowed Metro to get in front of a large number of businesses and promote our programs in general. They continue to be a big supporter of Metro and include our information to their members as often as possible when appropriate.

Our marketing unit also participates at City sponsored events like Safety Saturday and Big Rig Gig.

### **26. Advertising**

The Committee supports the use of advertising to fill some of the funding gap that Metro is currently experiencing. It also supports gaining a broader perspective of advertising on buses, including:

- Doing cost analyses on revenue potential for various advertising modes
- Conducting interviews with rider and general citizen focus groups regarding Metro’s use of advertising and the bus wrap advertising program
- Conducting formal or informal surveys of riders and Madison citizens to get a flavor of how Metro’s advertising endeavors are being perceived

The Committee also encourages Metro to conduct a cost/benefits analysis of full bus wraps compared to partially wrapped buses.

In addition to further research into public perception, the Committee supports exploring additional advertising opportunities such as advertising in shelters, on benches and at stops. Another way to reach the advertising goal is by selling naming rights for existing shelters and transfer points. Businesses could also play a role in improving the customer experience by sponsoring new benches and shelters in exchange for advertising or naming rights.

At least one percent of Metro's revenues (approximately \$500,000) should be derived from advertising (see #19).

We have been exploring the potential of various revenue generating advertising modes to present to the TPC.

Adams Outdoor Advertising has been selling advertising in the Ride Guide, on the System Map, and on our transfer stock. We sold a one-year deal to Covance. This deal was recently renewed for another year.

Metro has not conducted a cost/benefits analysis of full wrap vs. partial wraps due to this falling under the business operations of Adams Outdoor Advertising, who currently is under contract to sell bus advertising.

Anecdotally, they have stated the partial wraps seem to be a more attractive option to their clients due to 1) the high cost of production for a full wrap and 2) unfavorable media attention at beginning of program. Most popular ad products are partial wraps and king sized direct application ads.

Staff researched expanding advertising into different venues including shelters, using onboard annunciators for audio advertising, and website ads. Upon review, none of these venues were viable options and would not generate sufficient revenue to meet the 1% goal outlined in the initial ad hoc report. Staff then looked closely at the existing advertising program on the exterior of buses.

It was determined that by no longer using a third party vendor to sell advertising and then bringing the program in house, enough additional revenue would be generated that Metro could meet that 1 percent goal.

Recruitment efforts to hire a Metro Transit sales associate are underway, and Metro's marketing unit will officially take over this large ad program starting January 1, 2013.

## **27. Outreach Staff Person**

Currently, the Marketing Department consists of 4 full-time staff people. This is not enough staff to carry out the marketing needs for a \$55 million organization. A full-time

outreach staff person would concentrate on activities that promote Metro within the residential and business communities. Potential activities could include management of an unlimited ride pass program for small businesses, outreach with neighborhood groups, coordination with civic groups, and attendance at local networking events.

Metro has hired a full-time outreach person who is overseeing the “commute card” program. She is focusing on small businesses, outreach to neighborhood groups, and attending local networking events. She is also working with Visitor’s Bureau to promote Metro’s Convention Pass to visiting organizations.

Metro’s Ridership Improvement Specialist is overseeing the Commute Card Program. She is focusing on small businesses, outreach to neighborhood groups, and attending local networking events.

Some of the outreach efforts include:

- Prospect new businesses to join the Commute Card Program (via networking groups, cold calling, business mailings to HR Managers, Owners and Payroll/Benefit Specialists, connections with Green Teams within businesses, etc).
- Work one-on-one with employers/employees promoting alternative commuting choices. Further existing relationships with employers and property managers with the goal of increasing their participation level.
- Work with employers to develop programs that facilitate commuter use of alternative transportation (includes providing marketing materials that contain a list of Metro and/or community resources, route and schedule information specific to the business, employee instruction sheets on the Commute Card program, etc).
- Give presentations to employees/commuters and provide hands-on assistance to commuters at outreach events such as transportation fairs, Green Day events, etc.
- Attend employee lunch & learns to present information on the Commute Card program and other Metro fare options, attend staff meetings to instruct employees on the use of their Commute Card, attend business meetings to talk about the Metro Transit resources available to the community.

## **28. Paratransit Service**

Metro should develop a plan with Dane County to anticipate the changes that will be implemented related to the new State of Wisconsin Family Care model. It is estimated that when the Family Care model is implemented in Dane County in 2011, Dane County will reduce most or all of the \$2 million in Medical Assistance funding that is currently passed through to Metro paratransit services. The plan should include strategies that address identifying both new local funding sources from Dane County and methods to reduce barriers that will encourage some consumers to migrate from paratransit service to fixed route service.

In January 2010, the Transit and Parking Commission formally added a new element of the paratransit fare tariff that would allow Metro to charge human service agencies a

higher fare if Medical Assistance funding is dropped for covering the costs of trips taken by clients of those agencies.

Also, part of the RTA effort (see #6), the Family Care issue has been raised. Draft financial tables are being produced with different 30-year scenarios include funding replacement for anticipated losses in Medical Assistance funding.

In September of 2011, the Transit and Parking commission passed a resolution allowing Metro to enter into agreements for social service agencies to purchase Paratransit fare media at higher fares. As of June 2012, five social service agencies have signed such agreements with Metro.

### **29. Direct Mail/New Customer Promotion Pilot Program**

In the past, Metro has not used direct mail in large volume, primarily due to limited resources. The Committee recommends the creation of a postcard direct-mail pilot program, which targets neighborhoods of under-utilized bus routes to promote awareness of the routes and gain new riders to increase the efficiency of these under-utilized assets. Other mailers may include a citywide audience near Earth Day, or a mailing to businesses for a small business bus pass. Further use of direct mail could include targeting new riders by conducting special promotions, such as offering 10-Ride cards, as incentives to try service for free. The pilot should include a method of evaluation (such as promotion codes) and be assessed for its impact on ridership.

Metro is using new planning maps showing heavy and light boarding areas throughout the city. We will research the zip codes of these areas to possibly focus a direct mail project as our budget allows.

The planning unit has cautioned us that due to overcrowding and capacity issues in several areas of the city and on several routes, we should be careful which neighborhood we identify on which to focus this project.

Metro's Ridership Improvement Specialist did a direct mailing to human resource representatives in the fourth quarter of 2011. The mailing was targeted to offer the Commute Card program option to employers as they were making benefit decisions for the following year.

Due to Metro's limited advertising budget, and current (good issue) of overcrowding on buses, other direct mail projects are not being considered at this time. Such projects might be utilized again in the future, such as another Commute Card mailing at the end of the year.

### **30. Intelligent Transit Systems**

Metro should explore expanding intelligent transit technologies to the point where Metro is viewed as a first-class, modern technology based public transit system with real-time

information, scheduling capacities, and other information on the Internet. In order to implement several of these recommendations and continue to upgrade the information technology Metro currently uses, Metro may need more information technology (IT) capacity. Metro should conduct a review of staff IT needs to provide a serious investigation of a first class automatic vehicle location (AVL) system implementation. (also long-term)

A related recommendation was included in the Management Performance Audit presented to the Transit and Parking Commission in 2009, which called for a full assessment of Metro's management information uses, needs, required documentation, and related support functions, calling for a study of this for the purposes of determining whether resources are sufficient to do this. Supplemental funding for studying this was requested in the 2010 budget, but was not approved.

As documented elsewhere in this report, Metro continues to find creative ways to use technology to improve customer service to Metro passengers. The agreement with Google Transit to improve on-line scheduling of trips and the collaboration with students from UW and with the UW IT Dept. have resulted in dramatically easier access to understanding how to get around on Metro and where buses are in real-time. These improvements are huge and are being widely embraced by our customers, so much so that paper schedules continue to be relied on less and less, and printing costs are dropping.

### **31. Free Fare Promotions**

During the past two summers, Metro has partnered with the City of Madison to give free rides on Clean Air Action days. The days are determined by the Department of Natural Resources and there is usually less than 24-hour notice. While any decrease in emissions on days with poor air quality is welcome, it is unclear if ridership actually increases on these days. Metro should evaluate the impact of these days on both ridership and revenue.

In addition, Metro may see more positive results if special promotion days/events could be set months ahead of so as to give plenty of opportunity to market the event and urge new riders to try Metro. These special events could include print and media promotion ahead of time encouraging people to try the bus on a certain promotion day. On this particular day, ambassadors at transfer points and the Capitol Square could greet riders and give assistance and guidance to anyone trying Metro that day for the first time. Special drawings, giveaways, and refreshments could be provided to encourage and welcome new riders while also acknowledging all the current riders using Metro on a continuous basis.

Metro should work with its ride pass partners to come up with a funding system for this idea that benefits Metro, its partners, and potential new riders.

No update in 2010.

Because more than three quarters of Metro's rides are via unlimited ride pass programs, passenger revenue is a significant portion of our operating budget, and due to the fact buses are already extremely full, free fare days have not been considered a good option to promote service to new riders. Metro staff have been focusing efforts to attract new riders by promoting the Commute Card program and attending various community events.

### **32. Expand Sponsorship Participation**

To increase its visibility as a supportive community organization, Metro should play a more significant role in sponsoring events that are health-oriented, environmental, cultural, and business-related. Strategically sponsoring events will offer Metro publicity opportunities and a chance to connect with the community.

No update in 2010.

Metro actively participates in and/or sponsors community events like the Green Day Conference, National Car Free Day, Safety Saturday event, The Big Rig Gig, Urban League of Madison Resource Fair, and the Madison Community Baby Shower. Metro staff attends meetings and are guest speakers at functions such as the Madison Low Vision Support Group, Assisted Living/Retirement Home transportation events and college and technical school transportation fairs. Metro collaborates with the Madison School District and Madison Arts Commission on the Bus Lines Poetry Contest for area high school students. Staff also serve as a resource for the Mayor's neighborhood budget meetings.

### Long-Term (2013 and beyond)

### **33. Parking Policy**

There is a direct connection between the presence of a robust transit system and the need for parking at key destinations. Metro and the Parking Utility should quantify the impact of Metro service on the need for parking, especially in downtown Madison.

The Committee recommends that the City reevaluate several aspects of its parking policy. First, the City should find a way to set aside enforcement or other non-bond funds (e.g. parking revenues) to be used for transit. Second, the Parking Utility should consider innovative parking policies that would let the market set the price of parking while ensuring that customers have complete and easy access to downtown businesses. The City should consult with the UW to see if we can learn from their extensive transportation demand management policies.

No update in 2010.

No update in 2012.

### **34. Bus Rapid Transit**



The Committee talked several times about the concept of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and heard multiple visions of a possible BRT system, including concepts from the Madison Area Bus Advocates, Metro staff, and Transport 2020. BRT has potential for the Madison area, but a full BRT system carries a relatively high infrastructure cost because of the need for dedicated lanes. It is possible to implement elements of BRT without a high infrastructure cost.

Metro should explore the feasibility of a bus rapid transit system for the Madison area, with the goals of improving the frequency of service and reducing transit times. Any BRT system should build on and be informed by existing express routes (see #22).

A BRT system would have to be phased in over time, but Metro and the Transit and Parking Commission should begin planning for one soon so as to take advantage of any opportunities to reserve right-of-way for a BRT system or to incorporate future BRT into developments currently being planned. Future transportation and land use planning should consider setting aside dedicated lanes for bus access, express buses and/or a BRT system. Similarly, any future land use planning should fully incorporate transit.

A BRT seminar was hosted by the City of Madison/Metro on October 1, 2009 at the Warner Park Community Center, with transit staff from Eugene, OR and Kansas City, MO, as well as staff from the National BRT Institute and the Federal Transit Administration. Metro Staff plans to include a conceptual overview of the BRT as part of the proposed service expansion elements considered by the RTA Board in 2010.

There is increasing public interest in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as evidenced by an August 25, 2012 front page story about BRT in the Wisconsin State Journal. A consultant has been selected and work has begun on a Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Study for the Madison area. Funding for the study is being provided through the Sustainable Communities grant project led by the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC). A policy and technical workshop is being sponsored on September 11, 2012. A public information session is scheduled for September 10, 2012 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Madison Senior Center.

### **35. Service to Employment Centers via Partnerships**

The American Center Case Study provides an excellent example of how to leverage private funds to establish and expand public transportation at employment centers. The case study illustrates techniques of public / private participation which could have applicability for extending Metro service to new employment centers in the Madison region.

The American Center is located on the far northeast side of Madison and employs 6,100 people. Service began in 2002 following employer surveys and employee preferences determined through surveys and focus groups. The program included commuter only service (AM and PM) with a guaranteed ride home. Newsletters and flyers were

produced to announce service to all park businesses. Free rides for four-months of introductory service were financed by The American Center Owners' Association through an annual assessment on members.

Four businesses were identified as Founding Members. They contributed 50% of the financing and marketed the concept to the remaining businesses. The average cost to each remaining business was approximately \$300 per year, which was fully supported by businesses as reasonable to start Metro service. The cost to the Association and to founding members was reasonable.

Information booths and personalized posters were set up at key businesses to promote the service. Although the program started with one run in the morning and the afternoon, one additional morning and afternoon run was added in 2005 and service improvements have been proposed for the fall of 2008.

Route 25 ridership trend line shows positive results from the total effort.

The Committee recommends exploring similar partnerships:

- To create or expand service to employment centers, particularly those not serviced by regular routes or at times when shifts start/end
- For limited-stop shuttles to/from hotels to Amtrak/airport/bus depot
- To link shared-ride taxi service and Metro, similar to the East Towne Mall and Sun Prairie service

No update in 2010.

In another successful partnership, Metro created Route 55 to serve Epic Systems in Verona. Epic is the fastest growing employment center in our service area. As the need for service increased Epic, Metro and the City of Verona worked together to implement Route 75. There are on-going discussions to continue to improve our service to this area.

### **36. Public/Private Partnerships**

Metro should set an initial goal of 1% of revenues to come from public/private partnerships in the mid-term and reevaluate for a possible higher rate in the long-term. Examples of public/private partnership strategies include:

- Development fees - Agreements to have new development include transit fees (such as the Eau Claire model where a new Transitional Living Service facility that was developed contributed to the payment of paratransit service costs)
- Pilot projects - For example, The American Center contributing to Route 25 services initially (see #35)
- Participation in ride pass programs (see #2)

No update in 2010.

Since late 2011 Metro staff has worked with Epic Systems, the City of Verona, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and others to consider service expansion to Epic. In March of 2012, new semi-express service, Route 75, from the Capitol Square to Epic began with two trips during the a.m. peak and two during the p.m. The cooperation on this project extended to others, for example, the City of Fitchburg was able to make the case for a stop in Fitchburg on the way to Epic, which was included. Epic is picking up the local funding requirement for the entire route, and is looking at an approximately two year trial time to assess the success of the new service.

### **37. Park and Ride Lots**

Metro should consider the need for additional park and ride lots in the area. No research on this topic is available at the state and national level for transit systems Metro's size, but for larger areas like Washington DC and Seattle park and ride lots are viewed as integral parts of increasing ridership. Metro is exploring the possibility of expansion of the North Transfer park and ride lot, is negotiating a lease with Swiss Colony to use the lot near the East Transfer Point, and is beginning to plan for lots at the West and South Transfer Points. In general, the policy for the location of future lots should be near transfer points, or at locations of high ridership potential rather than the current policy of locating lots at the edges of the urbanized area. Wherever possible, Metro should lease space in existing underutilized lots. Consideration should also be given to formalizing "informal" park and ride areas, where Metro riders park in neighborhoods with unrestricted parking and catch a bus to their final destination.

After a two year effort to secure an agreement with Swiss Colony to lease part of the lot at the East Transfer Point, the effort was dropped due to their lack of interest, and the funding was requested to be transferred to pursue a project to expand the existing park and ride lot at the North Transfer Point. Funding was approved for this in the 2010 budget, and discussions have started with Kraft/Oscar Mayer for that purpose.

Because recent federal funding for all Metro capital projects has been scarce, Metro's focus has been to use limited capital funding for replacement buses. However, a new federal grant opportunity called "Livable Communities" contains criteria that the expansion of the North Transfer Point Park and Ride Lot appears to satisfy. A grant request was submitted in March and the awards are expected to be announced this summer.

### **38. External Fundraising**

Metro should investigate the potential for a 501(c)3 Friends of Metro Transit Group, similar to the "Friends" groups that work on behalf of our libraries and parks. The purpose of this group would be to promote Metro in the community and fundraise.

Potential activities of the Friends of Metro group may include:

Fundraising support – The Friends group may solicit donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations to support Metro’s mission. Possible activities may include membership drives, an annual dinner to thank supporters, and corporate giving.

Business Advisory Group – This group may also act as a liaison with the business community by recruiting key business leaders to communicate Metro’s message to the business community.

Metro has contacted peer groups to learn about their foundation programs. The Committee recommends that Metro continue their investigation into the feasibility and potential benefits of forming a non-profit foundation.

No update in 2010.

No update in 2012.

### **39. Facilities**

Metro should examine whether or not there would be cost savings by having Metro's operating facility moved to another location, or whether two smaller operating facilities would be more cost effective than one. A preliminary analysis shows that if each bus runs an additional 10 minutes of dead-head time every service day for a year, there is a cumulative effect of \$570,000 in annual costs for Metro. The existing operations facility at 1101 E. Washington Avenue is centrally located, but consequently dead-head times from the edges of the service area can be long. An alternative or complementary solution to this issue is to “express” buses instead of dead-heading them (see #22)

The short term fix to ease space concerns by leasing space at 1245 E. Washington Avenue for all finance, marketing, planning, IT, and administrative staff was accomplished in October 2008, thereby allowing more room for operations and maintenance staff at 1101 E. Washington.

The 2010 budget also includes an approval to perform a site analysis of the existing vs. alternative sites for one or two smaller facilities. Scopes of work for similar work at other transit systems are being collected to help prepare an RFP to accomplish this analysis.

Short Term Needs - The current garage, for safety and other practical purposes, cannot hold any additional buses. The demand for service expansion is growing. Ridership over the past 15 years has grown 44% and Metro has incrementally increased the number of buses from 170 to 209. There are also requests for expanded service within the city and from neighboring municipalities and academic institutions. Therefore, Metro is looking for a facility to lease that could hold 10-30 buses over the next several years to allow for service expansion while a new facility or satellite facility is designed and built.

Long Range Needs – Locate and build a new satellite facility for 100-150 buses and the bus maintenance department at a relatively central location (to minimize deadhead and driver relief times). The 1101 E. Washington facility would continue to operate 100-150

buses. The office area would be expanded to accommodate the administrative functions that are currently housed in leased space at 1245 E. Washington Avenue.

#### **40. Re-brand Metro**

There are a variety of avenues Metro can take regarding a re-branding process that range in price. One proposed solution is for Metro to hire a marketing firm to guide Metro through a re-branding process, including a new logo. However, in addition to the cost of the marketing firm, costs of re-branding Metro signs and equipment with a new look are a significant budget consideration. In addition, it would not be wise to re-brand Metro until after a decision is made on an RTA, since if an RTA is established, Metro may become part of a bigger branding effort.

Members agree that efforts to portray the positive experience of riding the bus and the sense of community experienced while sharing the ride should be important elements of Metro's marketing future.

We are awaiting a decision on the RTA. If Metro becomes part of an RTA, we will budget for and utilize a marketing firm to rebrand Metro.

Staff are still hopeful that an RTA might be possible in the future and are reluctant to conduct a rebranding effort in the short term for this reason. If Metro becomes part of an RTA, we will budget for and utilize a marketing firm to rebrand Metro.

A branding effort will be made as part of a 75 shelter retrofit being implemented this coming year. New shelter equipment will have a distinct Metro look.

Branding is part of the conceptual considerations under the current BRT Corridor Study. Many communities have used BRT to establish a different brand for this service based on the vehicle types, stations (vs. shelters) and other distinguishing features.