

SERVICE & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan

DECEMBER 30, 2021 – FINAL



LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE



SRF CONSULTING GROUP, INC.

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LA CROSSE REGIONAL TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT PURPOSE

To develop a ten-year transit plan proposing transit improvements for La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR), and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) that meet the travel needs of residents and visitors in the region, with an emphasis on future needs and sustainable growth.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Community Surveys: 258 responses
- 5 Stakeholder Meetings: 28 attendees
- 2 Virtual Open Houses: 22 attendees
- Transit Center and Library Boards
- Wikimap: 38-point specific comments, 6 routes drawn
- Continued outreach and interviews

NEEDS

New/ Underserved Destinations	Policies	Markets	MTU	Onalaska – OSR	SMRT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing areas in Onalaska • Feasibility of northside circulator • Amtrak and Airport • Access to civic services and amenities • Corridor investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fare structure • Guaranteed ride home program • Marketing/building awareness of service • Roadway design and physical development • Environmental Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Transportation • Regional travel • First-last mile connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Focused • Transfers and Missed Connections • On-time Performance • Higher quality service product • Environmental and Equity goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in Onalaska and Holmen • Direct service to La Crosse • Rise in fares • Improve Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop at Grand River Station • Additional run on Green Line • Cashton • Saturday Service

GOALS

Determine methods to improve on-time performance and include improvement to on-time performance as part of the system design.

Distinguish between regional routes, neighborhood service and frequent corridors, and identify areas of route duplication.

Identify corridors for capital improvements and where those investments have the greatest potential.

Support car-light lifestyles through transit services that reduce costs for families as well as business, and benefits the environment.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reduce redundancy and overlap to improve on-time performance and add layover time
- Adjust low-performing route segments
- Attempt to reduce the number of turns buses make to improve directness and reliability
- Provide bi-directional service if possible and improve route legibility
- Operate routes on to main collectors and arterials, granted pedestrian infrastructure is present
- Reduce service through commercial parking lots
- Establish service and performance guidelines

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Financial Planning: Operations and Capital
- Fares: Fare capping, guaranteed ride home, pass programs
- Technology: Electric buses and charging, smart cards
- Marketing: Website, wayfinding, customer service and complaint processes
- Bus stop spacing and amenity/shelter guidelines
- Local Operating Agreements between communities (SMRT)
- Regional Mobility Management

Phase	Total Peak Vehicles	Annual Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	15	60,626	\$5,317,615 (Fixed Route at \$87/hr in 2019)
Phase I	15	60,626	\$5,698,844 (At \$94/hr)
Phase II-A	17	69,653	\$6,547,382
Phase II-B	21	86,126	\$8,095,844
Phase II-C	22	92,782	\$8,721,461

New funding through the federal Infrastructure Bill – **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)** will lead to additional operating and capital funds. Matching funds will need to be secured.

A La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) project.



Prepared by:



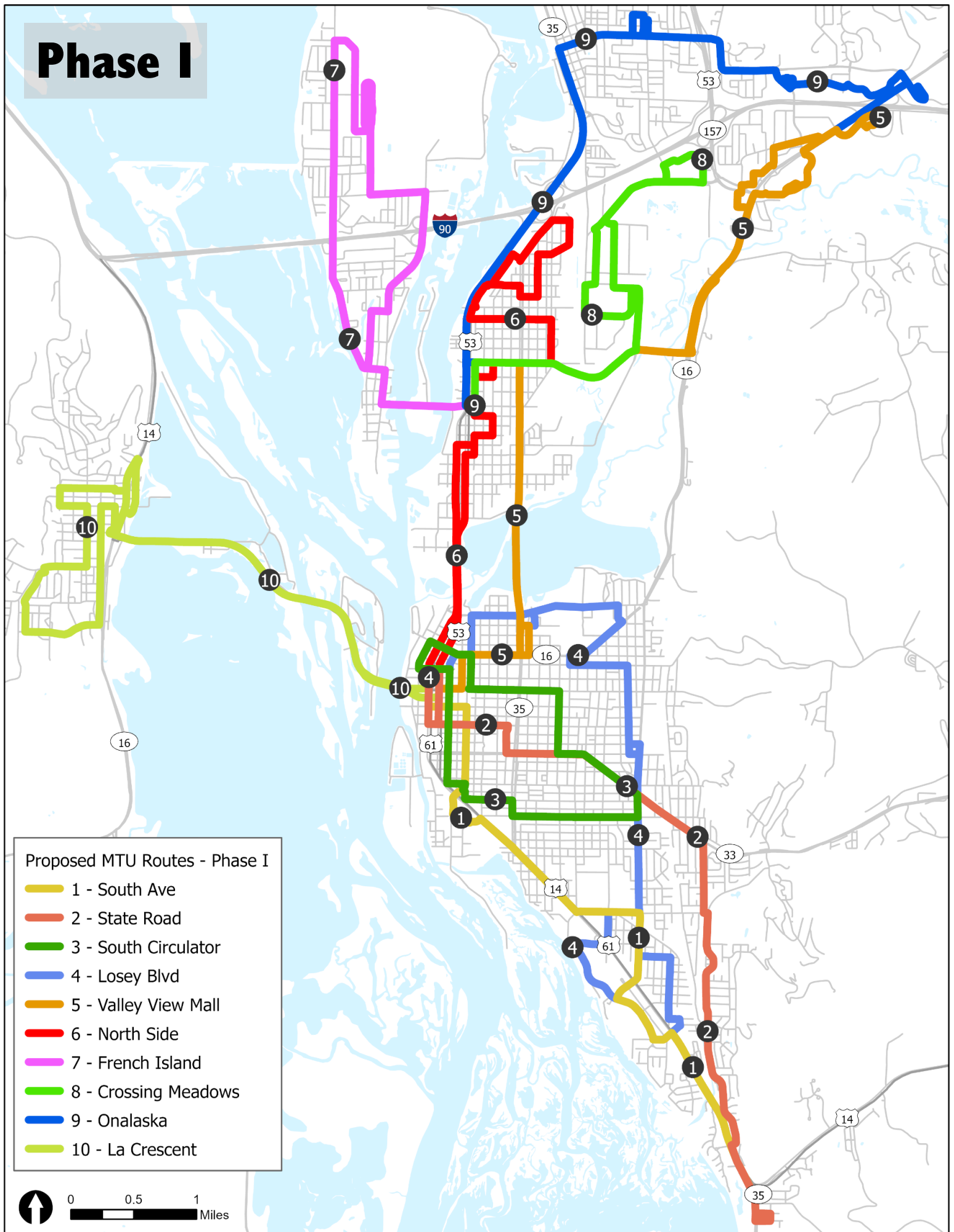
Phase I

Proposed MTU Routes - Phase I

- 1 - South Ave
- 2 - State Road
- 3 - South Circulator
- 4 - Losey Blvd
- 5 - Valley View Mall
- 6 - North Side
- 7 - French Island
- 8 - Crossing Meadows
- 9 - Onalaska
- 10 - La Crescent



0 0.5 1 Miles



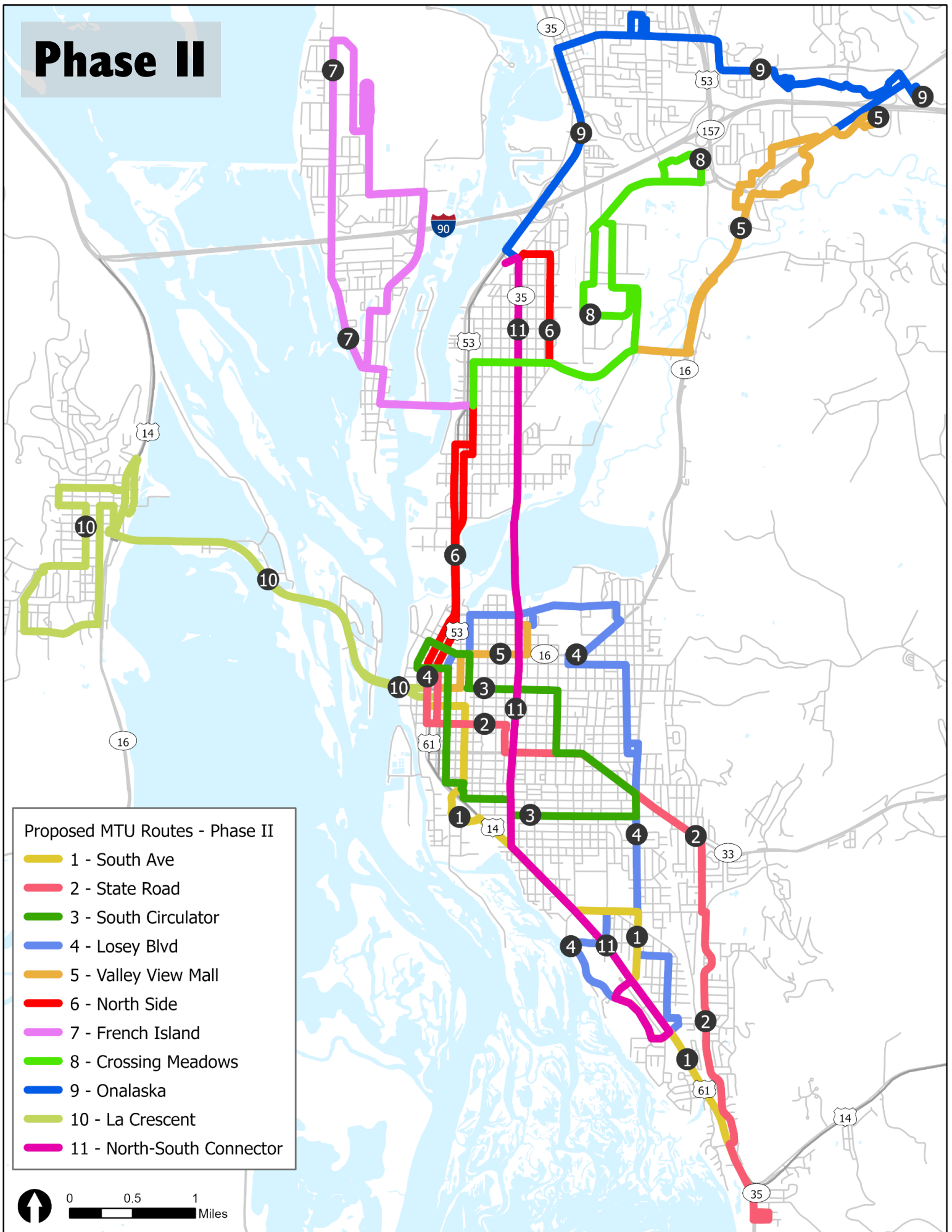
Phase II

Proposed MTU Routes - Phase II

- 1 - South Ave
- 2 - State Road
- 3 - South Circulator
- 4 - Losey Blvd
- 5 - Valley View Mall
- 6 - North Side
- 7 - French Island
- 8 - Crossing Meadows
- 9 - Onalaska
- 10 - La Crescent
- 11 - North-South Connector



0 0.5 1 Miles



INTRODUCTION

This Service and Policy Recommendations Report is the second report of the La Crosse 2022-2032 Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP). This report covers:

- Goals
- Service Development
- Policy and Strategic Recommendations
- Financial Planning
- Winter Public Engagement
- Implementation

This report follows the TDP Needs Assessment report of September 15, 2021.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the La Crosse 2022-2032 Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) is to propose transit improvements that meet the travel needs of residents and visitors in the region. The project scope includes the development of goals and objectives for City of La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR), and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT); an evaluation of existing conditions; authentic public engagement; and developing transit service recommendations that reflect community needs and can be feasibly implemented within the 10-year period.

In addition to addressing specific service needs within the transit systems, the TDP will identify opportunities to improve coordination between these three transit providers, human services agencies, and other transportation modes.

TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW

La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility

MTU operates complementary paratransit and seven fixed routes focused on the City of La Crosse: the downtown Circulator and routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. All routes, except for Route 8, operate from approximately 5:30 AM to 10:30 PM on weekdays, 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM on Saturdays, and 8:00 AM to 6:30 PM on Sundays. Route 8 is a weekday service focused on the industrial park in north La Crosse. It is interlined with Route 7, which is contracted by the Town of Campbell and operated by MTU for weekday service on French Island. There is also a fare-free, late-night, Safe Ride program Thursdays through Saturdays.

MTU also provides contracted service to other municipalities. Route 10 connects downtown La Crosse with the City of La Crescent, MN. It operates from approximately 5:30 AM to 7:00 PM on weekdays and 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM on Saturdays. Route 7 operates between 5:55 AM and 5:55 PM. It is interlined with Route 8, which operates between approximately 6:30 AM and 5:00 PM. Route 9 serves Onalaska and has morning service between 6:55 and 10:30 AM and afternoon service between approximately 1:30 PM and 6:30 PM.

Onalaska Shared Ride

The Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) provides shared-ride service for the City of Onalaska, Village of Holmen, and Village of West Salem. The service is known as “Onalaska/Holmen/West Salem Public Transit” in the community. The service is administered by the City of Onalaska and service is currently provided through contract by Running Inc. Rides are available seven days a week between 6:30 AM and 7:00 PM.

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) is a weekday-only commuter bus system in Crawford, Monroe, Vernon, and La Crosse Counties in Wisconsin. It is administered by La Crosse County and contracted out to Running Inc. Each route runs three or four round trips per day. The Blue and Yellow Routes serve the municipalities of Viroqua, Westby, Coon Valley, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 7:00 PM. The Red Route serves Prairie du Chien, Lynxville, Ferryville, Desoto, Genoa, Stoddard, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. The Green Route serves Tomah, Sparta, West Salem, Onalaska, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Transit service in the La Crosse area is informed by preceding policies and plans. Table 1 lists plans that are relevant to this TDP update. Other guiding decisions include the Complete Streets policies adopted by La Crosse County, as well as the cities of La Crosse, Onalaska, West Holmen, and Salem in 2011.

Table 1. Guiding Plans that Inform the Transit Development Plan

Policy Document	Description	Themes and Connection to Transit
Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan 2015-2025	This plan describes the MTU system, its history, and national trends affecting transit; analyzes the system’s performance and compares it to similar transit systems; addresses stakeholder input; and outlines recommendations to improve system performance within its budgetary and other constraints.	The previous TDP provides background for the current effort, including the recent history of MTU’s fare structure, revenue sources, and service changes. It demonstrates that the cost-effectiveness of service has been declining since 2008. Some concepts have been implemented (e.g., creation of the Circulator route) while others have not (e.g., creation of an express route). Some issues raised in public engagement were echoed by stakeholders in 2021, e.g., inconvenient service hours, inconvenient transfers, and competition with free parking.
City of La Crosse Transportation Demand Management Plan (2018)	This plan identifies regional and statewide trends that encourage a shift from single occupancy vehicle travel to other modes; describes completed and ongoing projects that support this shift; identifies related opportunities, challenges, and issues; and establishes specific future goals.	The plan recommends both transit improvements and transit-supportive development/programming. It recommends seeking bus rapid transit, transit-oriented development, and corridor pulse-node opportunities.

City of La Crosse Transportation Vision (2015)	Toole Design Group hosted a four-day charrette to develop a 100-year vision for transportation in La Crosse. It included small-group table exercises by about 115 members of the public, eight stakeholder interviews, open office hours, and a final vision statement and set of conceptual designs presented to the public.	The visioning process supported goals of safety, walkability, bike friendliness, access, slower driving speeds, few vehicle miles traveled, complete streets, and beauty. The final design concepts included a transit-oriented development approach along bus routes downtown and on South Avenue, with mixed uses, high density, and parking maximums. Other proposals would improve safe access to bus stops, such as a shared streetscape design on Pearl Street, separated bicycle lanes on La Crosse Street, and a series of roundabouts along South Avenue.
2021-2024 LAPC Transportation Improvement Program (October 2020)	The TIP lists all federally- and state-funded transportation projects programmed in the La Crosse and La Crescent metropolitan planning area through 2024. It also includes a financial plan with funding sources.	Transit projects in the 2021-2024 TIP include operations funding for MTU, OSR, La Crosse County Minibus, Vernon County Minibus, and SMRT; operations funding for a mobility management project and vehicle loan program; and capital funding for new vehicle purchases by MTU, City of Onalaska (OSR), City of La Crescent (Apple Express), and La Crosse County (SMRT). These projects are listed in detail on page 20 of the TIP.
Beyond Coulee Vision 2040: A performance-based approach to moving people and goods (2020)	This is the most recent update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee. It is a long-range, multimodal plan that integrates all jurisdictions in the planning area.	In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of area transit services, the plan sets out action strategies that include implementing improvements recommended in the last TDP, such as improved service to Amtrak and Onalaska; developing an integrated regional transit system; ingrain equity by prioritizing multimodal and transit projects; address climate change by transitioning to electric/alternative fuel vehicles.
City of La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2012)	This plan reviewed then-current conditions, established benchmarks for improvement, and made recommendations to encourage walking and biking for transportation and recreation.	The pedestrian components of the plan include adding sidewalks to streets; making more intersections ADA compliant; and switching signals to pretimed cycles that better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. These changes support access to transit stops, which were included as a factor in prioritizing improvements.
SMRT Marketing and Communications Strategic Plan (2021)	SMRT developed a marketing and communication strategy plan in 2021 in cooperation with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC).	<p>The plan outlines four goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate and nurture awareness for S.M.R.T. Bus • Increase ridership in outlying communities • Move funding of S.M.R.T. Bus to self-funded model rather than relying on grants • Foster relationships with major employers and businesses in key communities <p>The plan then outlines strategies for branding and awareness among four identified target audiences.</p>

GOALS

Following the spring public engagement and an analysis of operating data for the three transit agencies, the Needs Assessment established a list of key findings, needs, and opportunities for transit improvements in the La Crosse region. Based on these needs, the following goals were established in consultation with the transit agencies for the La Crosse 2022-2032 Regional TDP. Potential strategies, objections and applicable routes are listed below each goal.

LA CROSSE MUNICIPAL TRANSIT UTILITY

Goal 1: Determine methods to improve on-time performance and include improvement of on-time performance as part of the system design.

Incorporate additional layover time into the schedule

- Currently most routes have 0 to 2 minutes of layover time (except Route 10: La Crescent). The additional layover time will allow buses to catch up to the schedule if they fall behind.
- It will also allow customers more time at the transit centers to transfer from one route to the next, without the fear of missing their bus.

Remove redundancies and overlap

- Improve directness and straighten routes in the city core - remove turns and straighten routes in core areas of the city with a street grid.
- Applicable routes: South routes 1, 2, 4; North Route 6; focus on adjusting route segments with low ridership.
- Circulator route(s) can provide coverage in core neighborhood closer to downtown.
- To improve direct connections, there is a desire for a faster north-south spine service.

Refine current routes

- Route 2 and Circulator: service to Losey Festival Foods.
- Route 6: circuitous alignments on Liberty Street and north end.
- Multiple routes run on Gillette Street – overlap of service.

Simplify La Crescent in-town alignment with consideration for ADA

- Create a more legible path for the bus to follow, while continuing to allow for deviated fixed route service in the city.

Goal 2: Distinguish between regional routes, neighborhood service and frequent corridors, and identify areas of route duplication

Reduce or eliminate one-way segments

- Routes 2, 4, 6, and 8

Some routes operate significant portions on residential streets; consider moving service to main collectors and arterials, granted pedestrian infrastructure is present

- Routes 4 and 6, and routes approaching the Caledonia transfer point

Remove or reduce service from commercial parking lots

- Shelby Mall
- Route 6 at Bridgeview Plaza
- Route 9 at Center 90

Improve service on Route 9 – Onalaska

- Right sizing the fixed route, creating a useful service for multiple trip purposes, not just as commuter service
- Expand service levels to match La Crosse routes
- Serve retail and employment centers with Route 9, determine methods of extending service further north

Explore alternative transit service products

- On-demand services, vanpool, shuttle park-and-ride services
- Low performing route segment in the industrial park
- Southern Bluffs Elementary School

Goal 3: Identify corridors for service and capital improvements and where those investments have the greatest potential

Develop and prioritize service expansion scenarios

- Prioritize service improvements in frequency, span, weekend, and/or coverage if 20-40 percent more operating funds were available.
- Summer public engagement had no strong preference for frequency or coverage, or for front door access versus walking further to better service. Span of service is satisfactory, except for industrial park manufacturing businesses (shift start and end times).

Consider capital investments in bus signal priority and upgraded transit amenities, platforms, and stations

- Caledonia Street and Bridgeview Plaza transfer points, and the Valley View Mall Park and Ride

Develop financially sustainable service products

- Long-term sustainable funding must be available for operations and capital before service expansion is considered.
- The local match for capital and operational funds for new buses and service in partner cities will need to come from partner cities.
- Operational and capital plans flow from preferred service plan.

Goal 4: Support car-light lifestyles through convenient transit services that reduce costs for families as well as business, and benefits the environment

Create a pleasant customer experience

- Increase the number of bus shelters, improve amenities, replace aging shelters, and improve the pedestrian environment near bus stops.

Expand the zero-emissions fleet

- Increase the number of electric vehicles in the fleet and install charging infrastructure.

Develop convenient ticket payment programs

- Continue to improve marketing of pass programs and expand availability. Consider passes for large events.
- Explore the possibility of a low-income fare program or a fare capping program.

Work with community development partners

- Reduce or remove parking requirements in new developments and consider land use and site design for pedestrian friendly access from the bus stop to the front door of destinations.
- Improve regional transit travel times for common trip purposes.

ONALASKA SHARED RIDE

Goal: Right sizing service products for Onalaska community needs

- The community will need to evaluate the needs and purpose of transit in Onalaska, and whether the current shared ride taxi is the best tool to serve those needs. The community is experiencing population growth and has the residential and employment densities to support more fixed-route transit.
 - Consider a more extensive community and rider survey to find community needs.
 - City should set performance measures for transit based on the community needs.
 - Find the right balance between shared ride taxi service, shuttle services, and fixed route service.
- Review and improve the customer feedback and complaint process
 - Develop better customer feedback options before future fare increases
 - Evaluate the fare policy – the current fare of \$4.50 is cost prohibitive for daily roundtrip travel.
- The city should review regular reports on transit performance of the contractor to evaluate performance and meeting community needs.
- There is a strong desire by both La Crosse and Onalaska residents to make travel by bus between the communities more convenient.
 - The OSR should consider timed transfers with La Crosse MTU at the Caledonia St or Bridgeview Plaza transfer points during MTU pulse points.
 - Consider fixed-route or scheduled shuttle service to downtown La Crosse, either operated through OSR or MTU.
- The OSR program currently has no marketing budget or program, this should be developed, potentially in coordination with SMRT and the ADRC through a mobility manager.
 - Currently there are three websites with information on OSR; monitor consistency in information provided.
 - Monitor and promote agency and medical subscription trips.
- Explore technology improvements such as Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) for both dispatch and customer service.
- Consider electric vehicles for the next round of vehicle procurement.

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL TRANSIT

Goal: Right-size service and assess destinations

- Determine minimum service warrants for a community or destination and set priorities for service expansion.
 - Add a stop at La Crosse Grand River Station/King Street, preferably stopping during MTU pulse points.

- Create a consistent loop for service within La Crosse for routes entering La Crosse from the south.
- Consider an additional run on the Green Route, or a later departure of the last run from La Crosse.
- Consider service to the Village of Cashton .
- Consider Saturday service.
- Develop a formal template for local operating agreements between communities and SMRT.
- Improve marketing of the service and coordination with other transit providers and human and social service providers.
 - Consider working with a mobility manager shared among regional transit providers, ADRCs, human and social service providers.
- Add shelters, wayfinding, and stop amenities to make the service more visible in the communities served.
- Consider a guaranteed ride home program.
- Monitor the performance of the new electric vehicles.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

This chapter of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) presents the proposed service plan for the three transit agencies. The service plan for La Crosse MTU is presented in two phases: Phase One and Phase Two. These phases and the overall system plan are described in this chapter of the TDP in greater detail. The service plans for OSR and SMRT include recommendations to better serve the customer needs and make the service more visible in their communities.

Service concepts were developed based on the goals established following the Needs Assessment. Drafts were vetted in conversations with staff at the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) and the transit agencies, and through the winter public engagement activities.

Additional transit funding through the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)** will lead to additional operating funds. This could result in added frequency, span, weekend service, service in partner cities, and/or new routes. The TDP planning team developed a list of priorities for service expansion once the additional operating and capital funds become available. To unlock these federal funds to their full potential, sufficient local or state matching funds need to be provided.

Finally, it should be noted that the guiding philosophy behind the service plans developed for this TDP is that the ridership losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 will eventually be regained and that system ridership will continue to grow along with the region's population.

LA CROSSE MUNICIPAL TRANSIT UTILITY

The Phase I service concepts include recommendations under a cost neutral scenario, while the Phase II concepts present an increase in the overall level of service provided throughout the region as well as new routes and direct connections throughout the metropolitan area. However, the service plan is grounded in existing key service connections and transit riding patterns that have developed over the past few years and allows for MTU to build off and strengthen these connections while still developing services that can serve new ridership markets.

Service planning started by developing differing "scenarios" that represented varying degrees of modifications to the existing MTU system. The draft scenarios ranged from minor tweaks to existing routes to a full reimagining of the MTU system. The planning team held conversations with LAPC and MTU staff to determine the level of comfort with changing existing routes, and to develop new route concepts that fill gaps in the current system and expand the geographic coverage. The draft service scenarios were developed based on the goals established following the needs assessment, using the following guidelines:

- Reduce redundancy and overlap to improve on-time performance and add layover time
- Adjust low-performing route segments
- Attempt to reduce the number of turns buses make to improve directness and reliability
- Provide bi-directional service if possible and improve route legibility
- Operate routes onto main collectors and arterials, granted pedestrian infrastructure is present
- Reduce service through commercial parking lots

Various elements from all potential scenarios were selected or rejected depending on a variety of factors, including the ability to implement each scenario, the ability to address concerns raised during the outreach process, the ability to serve certain key trip generators, and other similar elements. Cycle and layover times had to be considered in the new alignments as well as system impacts caused by changes to individual routes.

Next, the remaining concepts were further refined into a two-phase implementation plan. The modifications in Phase II are broken down further into three sub-phases and will be described subsequently. These can be implemented as funding becomes available. The operating cost per hour for MTU fixed-route service was \$87.71 in 2019. For future planning purposes, a cost of \$94.00 per hour was used.

For every route proposal described below, the service plan includes:

- A description of the Phase I and Phase II modifications
- A table of frequencies for daytime (5:00 AM – 6:00 PM) and evening (past 6:00 PM) service
- A table of proposed service statistics
- A map of the proposed alignment changes

The ultimate proposed MTU transit networks at the end of Phase I and Phase II are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. No changes are proposed to the weekend late-night Safe Ride Bus service.

Phase I – Cost Neutral

- Reduce travel time and improve on-time performance
- Incorporate 10 percent layover time for each route (6 minutes per hour)
- Service to Southern Bluffs Elementary School

Phase II – Service Expansion

- Improvements to span, frequency, and weekend service
- Potential new transfer center at Bridgeview Plaza
 - New North-South connection
- Partner city service enhancements
 - Onalaska, French Island/Campbell, La Crescent

The [Phasing Plan](#) section summarizes the proposed enhancements in each phase by route.

The [Impacts of New Services](#) section summarizes the vehicle needs, service hours, and operating budget impacts by phase.

Figure 1. Proposed MTU Fixed Route System Map – Phase I

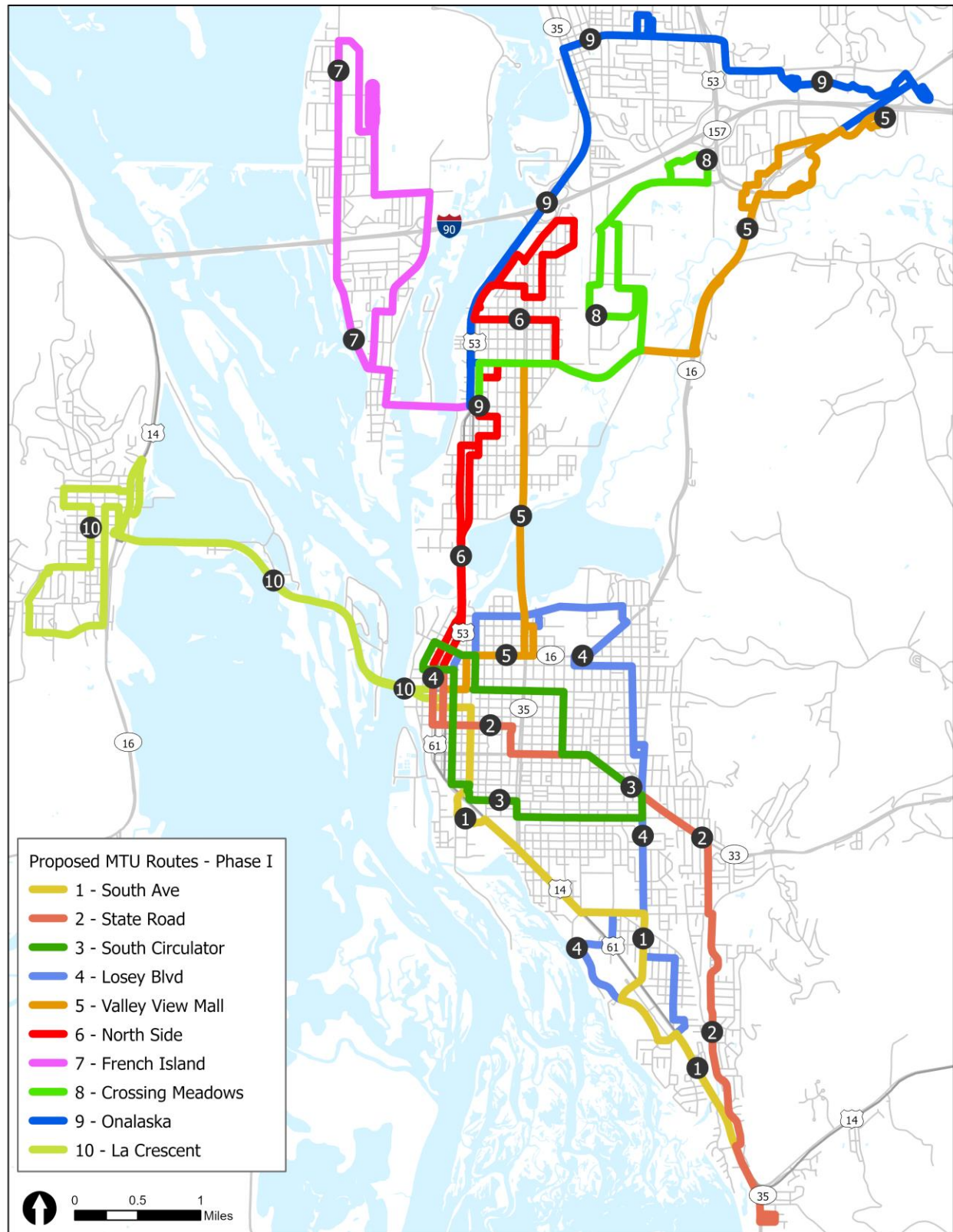
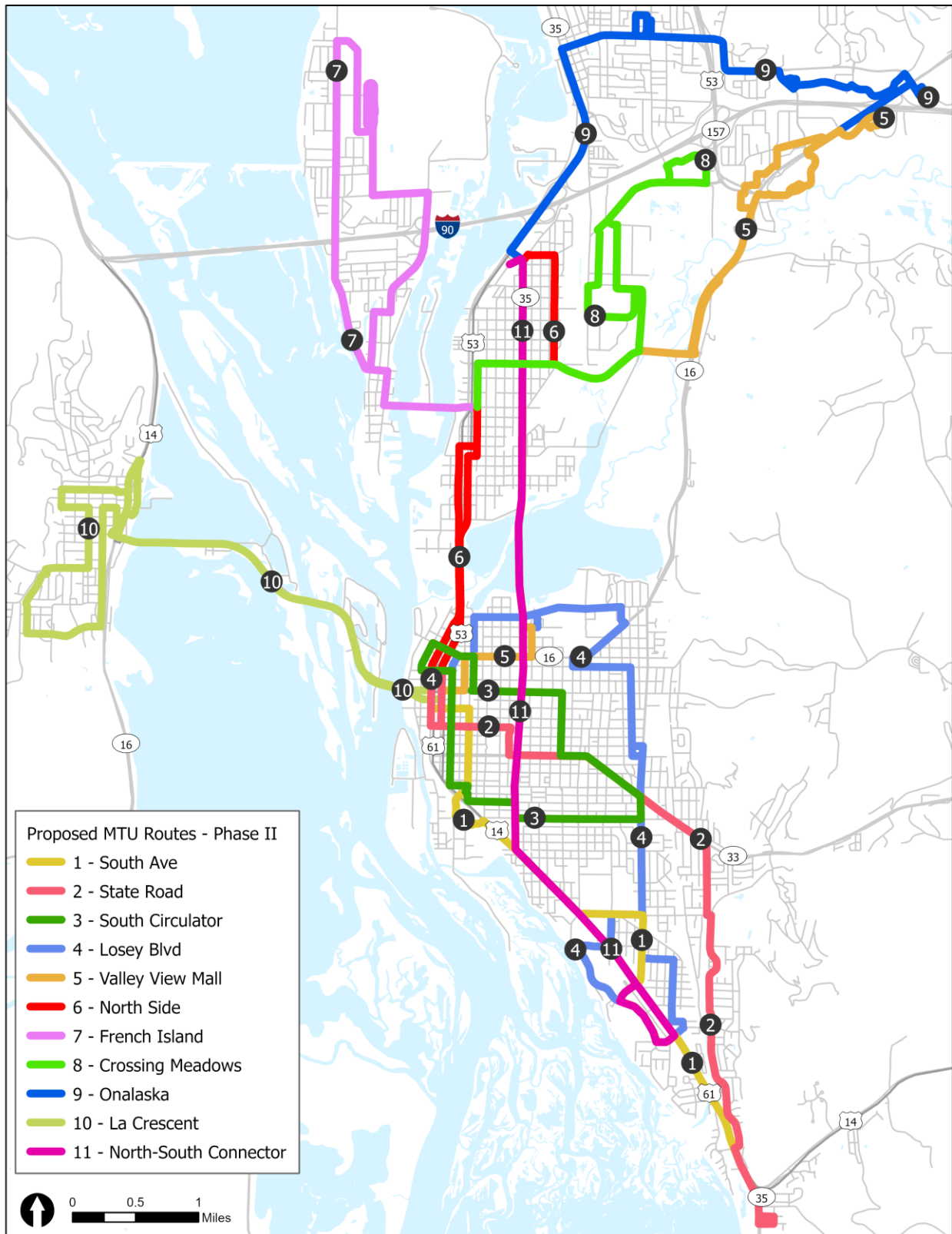


Figure 2. Proposed MTU Fixed Route System Map – Phase II



Proposed Route 1 – South Avenue

Route 1 will continue to connect southern La Crosse to Downtown along a western alignment on South Avenue. In Phase I, the main modification to the alignment includes straightening the route on the north end near Viterbo University to speed up service from South La Crosse to Downtown, extending the route to the Southern Bluffs area, and to improve on-time performance. It provides a more consistent, direct, and less confusing “one seat ride” between Southern Bluffs and Downtown La Crosse. The route will continue to be interlined with Route 2, with a new layover spot on Sunnyside Drive.

In Phase II, the frequency of Route 1 would increase from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes through most of the day on weekdays. This would require an additional bus shared with Route 2. In addition, both Saturday and Sunday service would be extended by two hours.

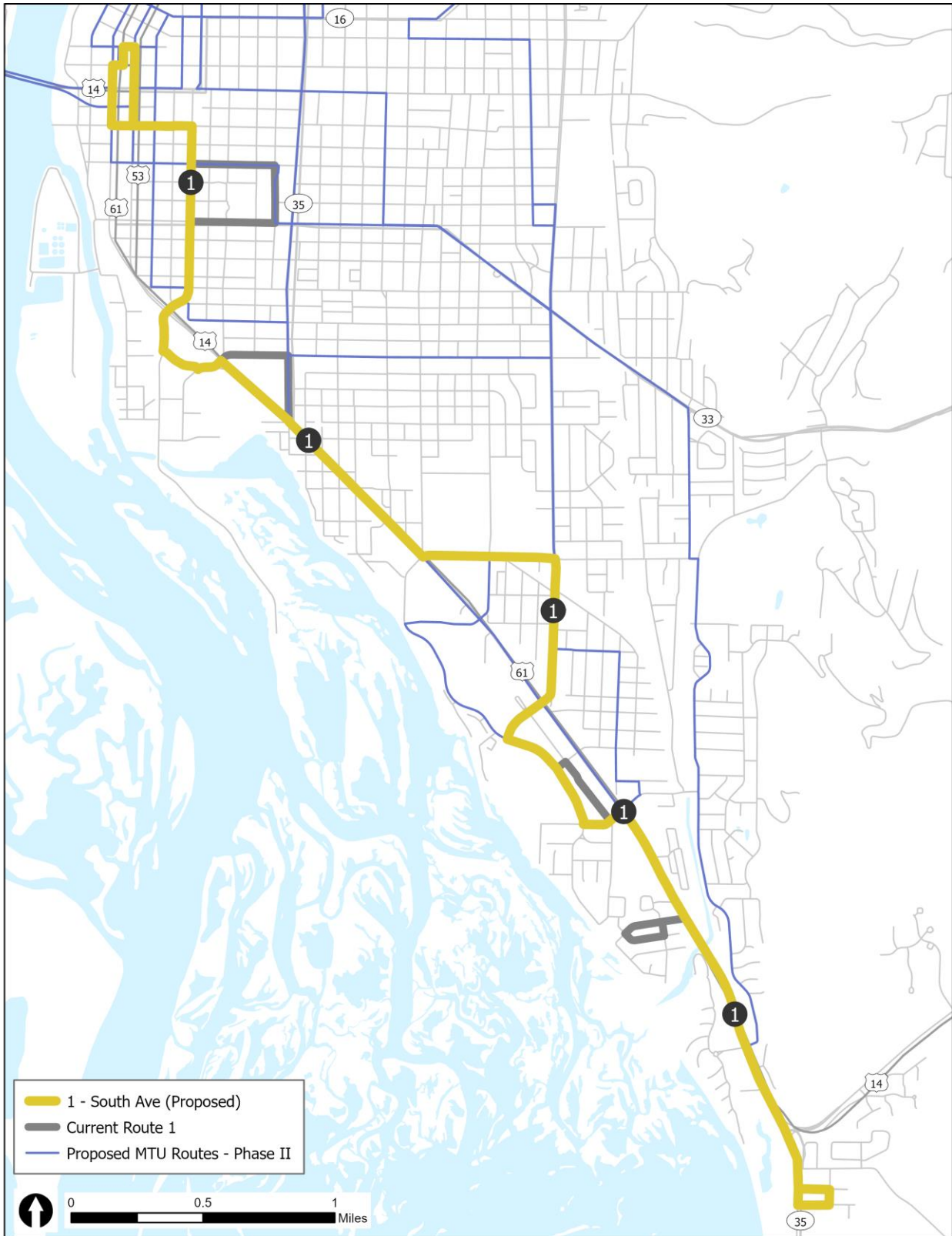
Table 2. Proposed Route 1 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	60	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	20	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	60	60

Table 3. Proposed Route 1 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	30	\$829,362
Phase I	2	30	\$829,362
Phase II	3	43	\$1,160,148

Figure 3. Proposed Route 1



Proposed Route 2 – State Road

Route 2 will continue to connect southern La Crosse to Downtown along an eastern alignment on State Road and 33rd Street South. In Phase I, the main modification to the alignment includes straightening out the route along State Road and serving the Mayo Clinic and Viterbo University. It also extends the route south to the Southern Bluffs area where it interlines with Route 1. This will speed up service from South La Crosse to Downtown and improve on-time performance. It provides a more consistent, direct, and less confusing “one seat ride” between Southern Bluffs, the Village Shopping Center on Losey Boulevard, and Downtown La Crosse. The route will continue to be interlined with Route 1, with a new layover spot on Sunnyside Drive.

Before this change were to be implemented, the one-way loop on 33rd Street may remain in the alignment to serve the Hillview Terrace Health Care Center (red dashed line on map). New development at the former Kmart site will also need to be considered.

In Phase II, the frequency of Route 2 would increase from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes throughout most of the day on weekdays. This would require an additional bus, shared with Route 1. In addition, both Saturday and Sunday service would be extended by two hours.

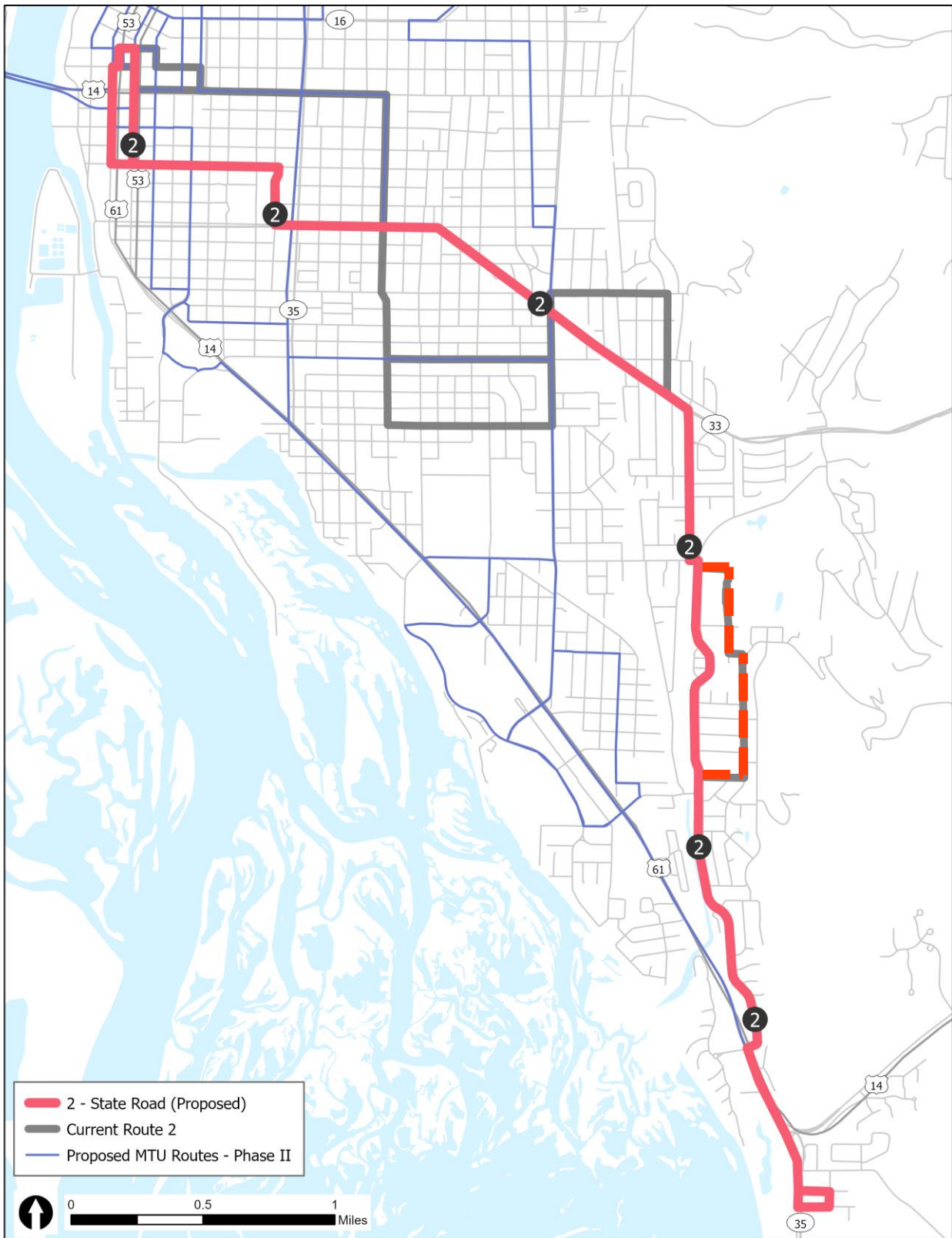
Table 4. Proposed Route 2 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	60	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	20	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	60	60

Table 5. Proposed Route 2 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	30	\$829,362
Phase I	2	30	\$829,362
Phase II	3	43	\$1,160,148

Figure 4. Proposed Route 2



Proposed Route 3 – Southside Circulator

The current MTU Go – Southside Circulator was implemented in 2017 and has been adjusted since the last TDP from serving as a campus circulator to the University of Wisconsin—La Crosse (UWL) to primarily serving as a neighborhood circulator. This proposal makes the southside circulator a permanent route on par with the other fixed routes in La Crosse as Route 3. It is recommended to be added to the system map for improved system legibility and marketing. The alignment changes in this proposal will cover some of the gaps created by the proposed alignment changes to Route 2 along 16th Street and Cass Street.

In Phase II, the circulator will also offer hourly service in one direction on Saturdays (12 hours) and Sundays (11 hours).

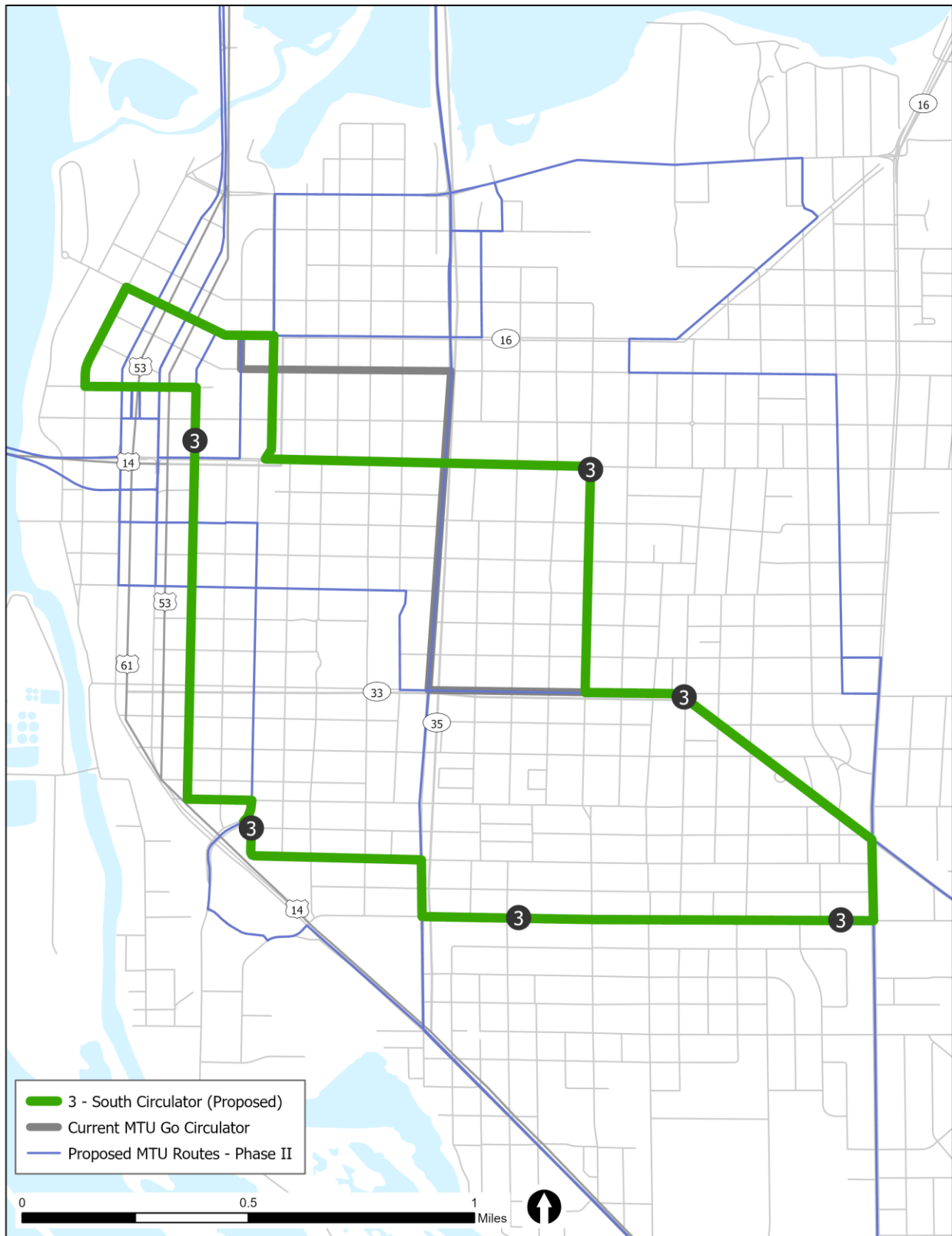
Table 6. Proposed Route 3 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	7:12 AM-10:10 PM	15	30
	Saturday	-	-	-
	Sunday	-	-	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:15 PM	15	30
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:15 PM	30	30
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:15 PM	30	-

Table 7. Proposed Route 3 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	25	\$599,250
Phase I	2	25	\$599,250
Phase II	2	25	\$709,512

Figure 5. Proposed Route 3



Proposed Route 4 – Losey Boulevard

Route 4 will continue to connect South La Crosse to UWL, Western Technical College (WTC), and downtown La Crosse along Losey Boulevard and La Crosse Street. In Phase I, the alignment is adjusted slightly to serve Myrick Park. The proposed route will no longer run through the UWL campus, nor through the parking lot in front of the Shelby Mall. This will speed up service and improve on-time performance.

In Phase II, the frequency of Route 4 would increase from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes throughout most of the day on weekdays. This would require an additional bus. In addition, both Saturday and Sunday service would be extended by two hours.

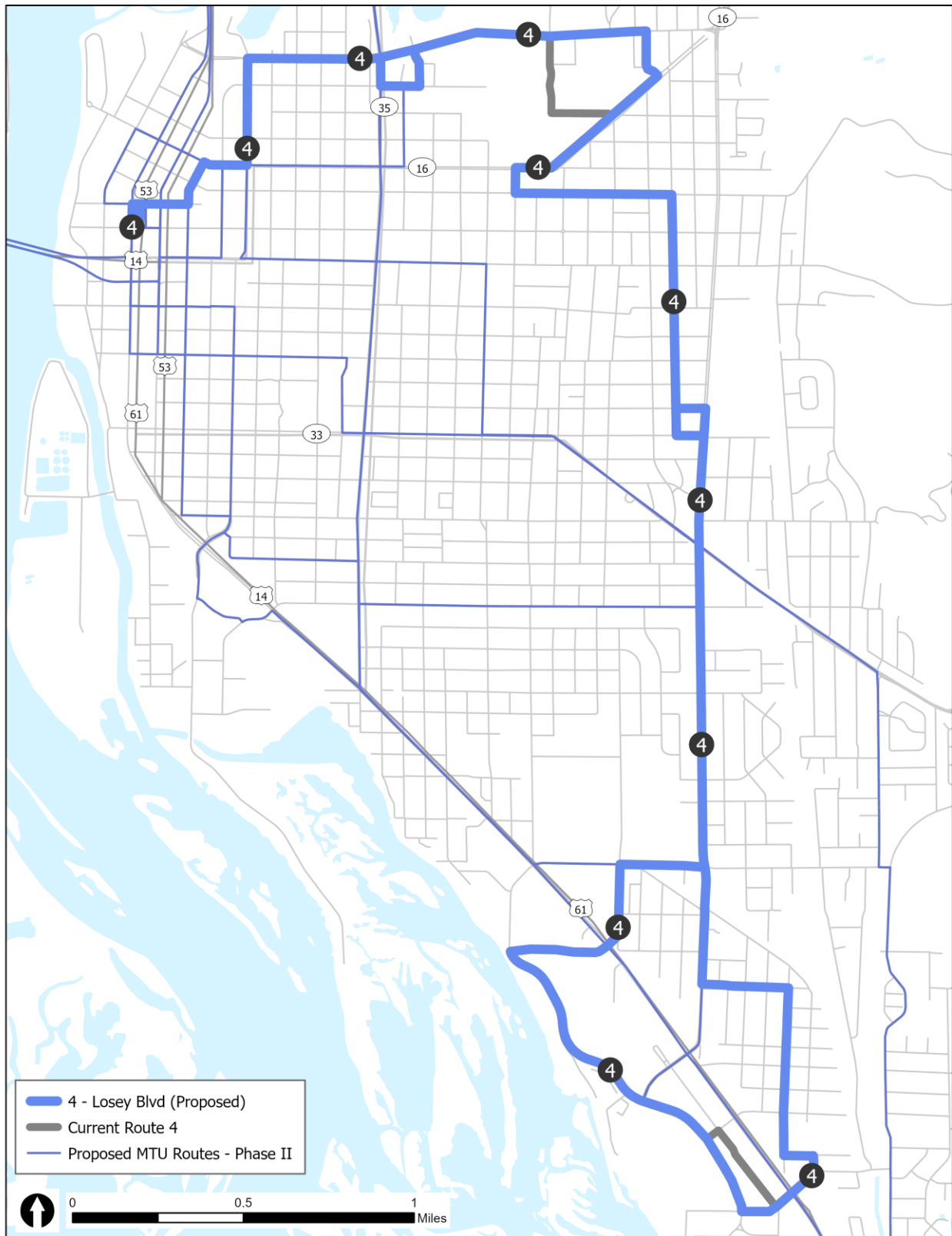
Table 8. Proposed Route 4 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	60	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	20	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	60	60

Table 9. Proposed Route 4 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	30	\$829,362
Phase I	2	30	\$829,362
Phase II	3	43	\$1,160,148

Figure 6. Proposed Route 4



Proposed Route 5 – Valley View Mall

Route 5 will see minor modifications to its alignment around the former Shopko on the northern end of the route in Phase I. The route connects Downtown, UWL, and the commercial areas near Valley View Mall. It will be important for MTU to monitor the changing business and retail environment on the northern end of the route, and if needed, adjust the route to serve active business establishments. Removing service from commercial parking lots will improve the on-time performance and reduce conflict points and the risk of crashes.

In Phase II, the frequency of Route 5 would increase from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes throughout most of the day on weekdays. This would require an additional bus. In addition, both Saturday and Sunday service would be extended by two hours.

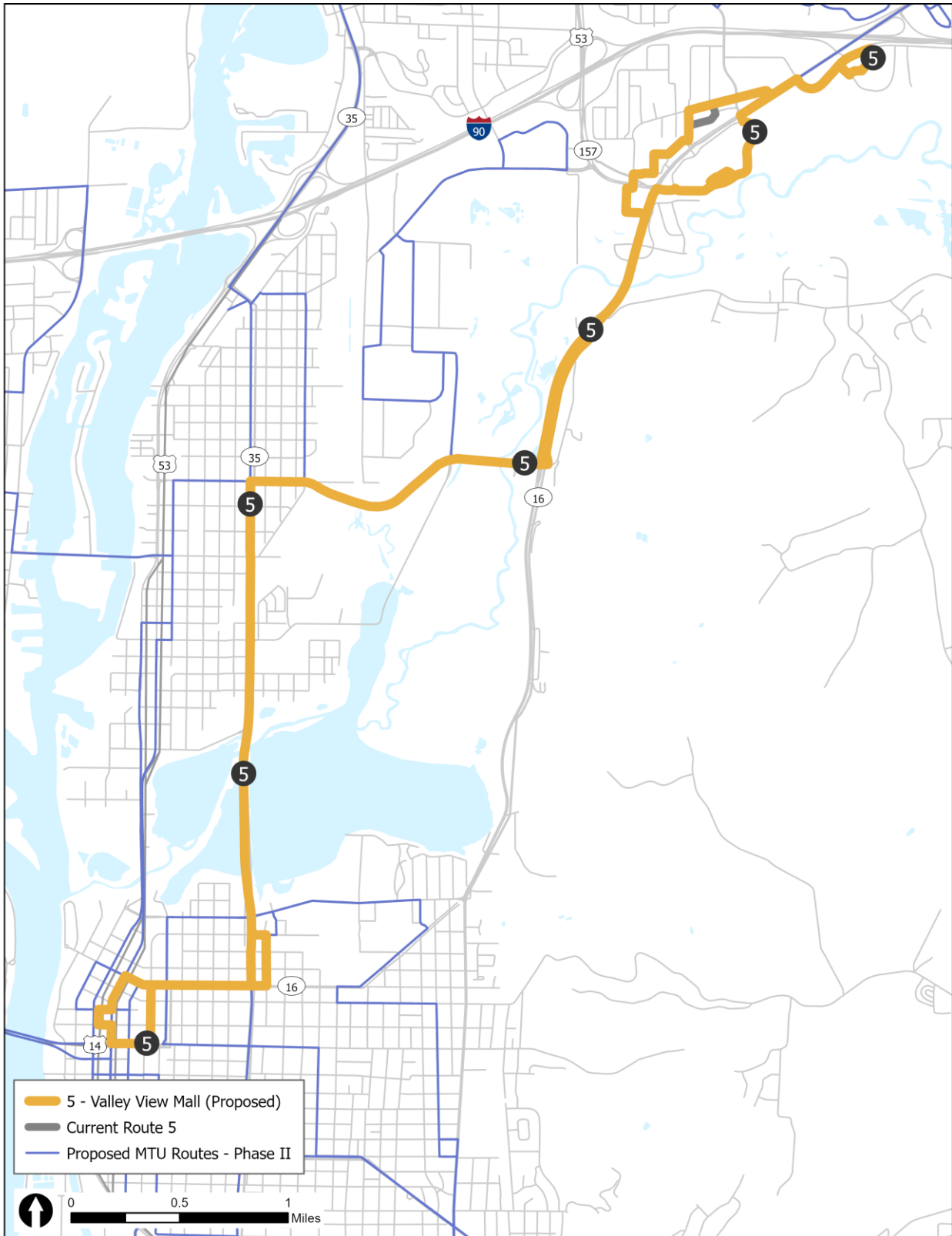
Table 10. Proposed Route 5 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	30	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	30	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	20	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	30	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	30	60

Table 11. Proposed Route 5 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	34	\$977,976
Phase I	2	34	\$977,976
Phase II	3	51	\$1,404,642

Figure 7. Proposed Route 5



Proposed Route 6 – Northside

Route 6 currently makes many turns and is the least direct route operated by MTU. Route 6 provides the main connection between North La Crosse and Downtown. However, because of its many turns, the trip is not time competitive with other modes of transportation.

In Phase I, the route alignment would remain unchanged, however, it could be adjusted to follow the Phase II-A recommendation that straightens out the route. This adjustment should follow George Street north of Gillette Street to Bridgeview Plaza (red dashed line on map), instead of Onalaska Avenue as proposed in Phase II-A.

The proposed alignment changes for Route 6 are applied in Phase II-A, as a new transfer center or transfer point at the Bridgeview Plaza shopping center would require some capital investment. In addition, in Phase II-A, a new Route 11 would serve George Street. The proposed alignment in Phase II-A, as well as Route 11, will speed up service from North La Crosse to Downtown and South La Crosse, and improve on-time performance.

In Phase II-A, 20-minute service can be achieved without additional funds because straightening the route shortens the route length and reduces travel times significantly. The proposed alignment in Phase II-A assumes a new transfer location will be constructed at the Bridgeview Plaza shopping center.

While the Phase II-A alignment would speed up service considerably, improve on-time performance, and increase map legibility, it would also increase the walking distance to the route for some in the neighborhood. The final alignment through the northside may need some adjustments to address accessibility concerns.

In Phase II-B, both Saturday and Sunday service would be extended by two hours.

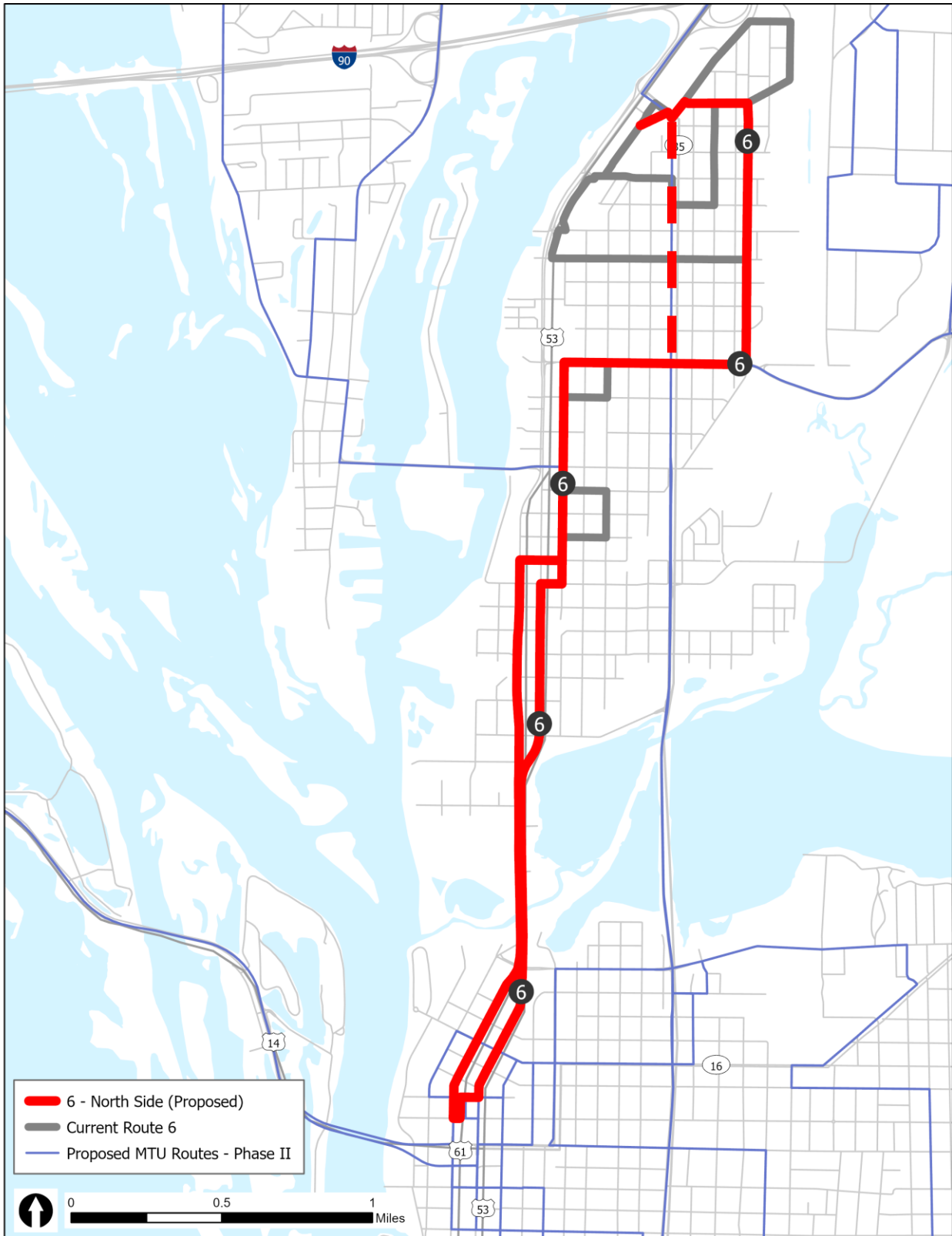
Table 12. Proposed Route 6 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	60	-
Phase II	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	20	60
	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	60	60

Table 13. Proposed Route 6 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	2	30	\$829,362
Phase I	2	30	\$829,362
Phase II	2	30	\$848,538

Figure 8. Proposed Route 6 (Phase II-A)



Proposed Route 7 – French Island

Route 7 serves French Island in the Town of Campbell, which provides the local funding match for the service. As such, expansion of the service would require additional local matching funds from the Town or the State of Wisconsin. Route 7 is interlined with Route 8 Crossing Meadows, connecting at the Caledonia Street transfer point.

To improve on-time performance and to add layover time into the schedule for the operators to recover from delays, Phase I proposes some minor modifications to the alignment. In addition, the new alignment should be operated in a counterclockwise direction. The route will continue to offer deviated service upon request, including streets removed in this alignment proposal along Sky Harbour Drive and Hinkley Road.

If additional local funds are found, service should be extended in the evening on weekdays and service should be introduced on Saturdays and Sundays.

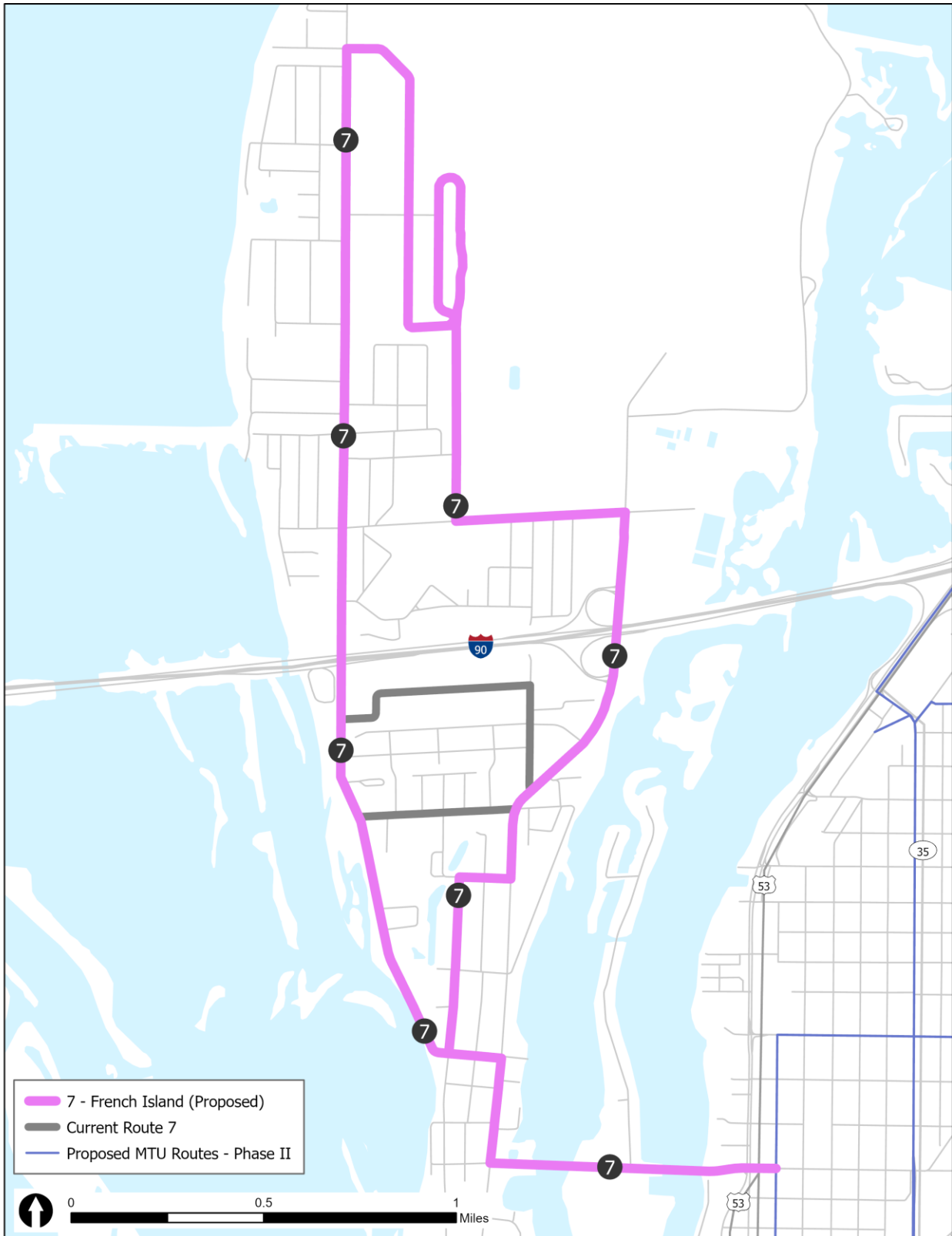
Table 14. Proposed Route 7 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:55 AM-5:55 PM	60	-
	Saturday	-	-	-
	Sunday	-	-	-

Table 15. Proposed Route 7 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	0.5	6.5	\$155,805
Phase I	0.5	6.5	\$155,805

Figure 9. Proposed Route 7



Proposed Route 8 – Crossing Meadows

Route 8 serves the north side of La Crosse, a large industrial area, and the commercial Crossing Meadows area. The route is interlined with Route 7, connecting at the Caledonia transfer point. Because of this interline, service expansion is dependent on additional local match funding from the Town of Campbell. Route 8 could also be operated independently by MTU, allowing for expanded service, but this would require additional local, state, or federal funding.

The route proposal in Phase I modifies the alignment in the industrial park by moving southbound service from Hemstock Street to Larson Street. It also modifies the alignment by staying on Caledonia Street to connect to Gillette Street, eliminating two turns. This will improve legibility and on-time performance.

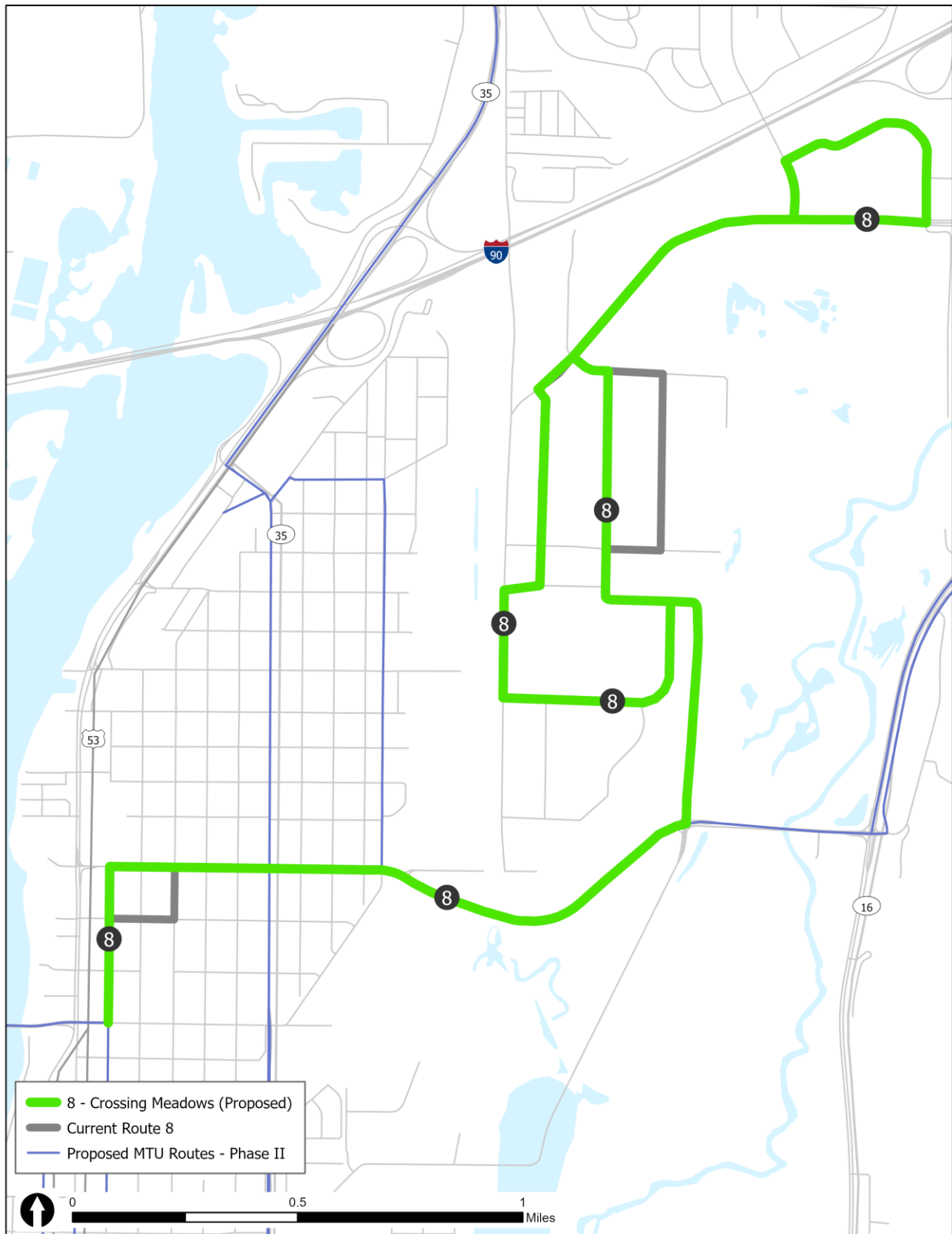
Table 16. Proposed Route 8 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	6:25 AM-4:55 PM	60	-
	Saturday	-	-	-
	Sunday	-	-	-

Table 17. Proposed Route 8 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	0.5	6.5	\$131,835
Phase I	0.5	6.5	\$131,835

Figure 10. Proposed Route 8



Proposed Route 9 – Onalaska

There are no proposed changes to the alignment of the current Route 9 in Phase I. In Phase II-A, the route would connect with other MTU routes at Bridgeview Plaza instead of at the Caledonia Street transfer point. This would shorten the route slightly to improve on-time performance and add layover time into the schedule. Removing service from the Center 90 parking lot could also be considered to speed up service, improve on-time performance, and reduce conflict points. There are no proposed changes in Phase II-B.

The route currently does not reach its full ridership potential due to the limited level of service offered. In Phase II-C, a significant increase in service is proposed to eventually match the service levels currently offered on the routes operating completely within the City of La Crosse, creating a more reliable service. Closing the midday gap would also eliminate a split shift for operators. In order, the Phase II-C expansions include:

- Span of service improvements: closing the midday gap
- Span of service improvements: match La Crosse weekday hours of service
- Frequency improvements: 30-minute service during the day. This would require one additional bus.
- Saturday service expansion: offer hourly Saturday service (12 hours)
- Sunday service expansion: offer hourly Sunday service (11 hours)

Note that the increased cost of providing ADA complementary paratransit during the expanded service span is not included in the operating cost increase. This would be an item for negotiation and opportunity for coordination with OSR. Once Route 9 operates at a service level appropriate for the densities and destinations it serves, new route options expanding fixed route service further north into Onalaska or Holmen could be considered.

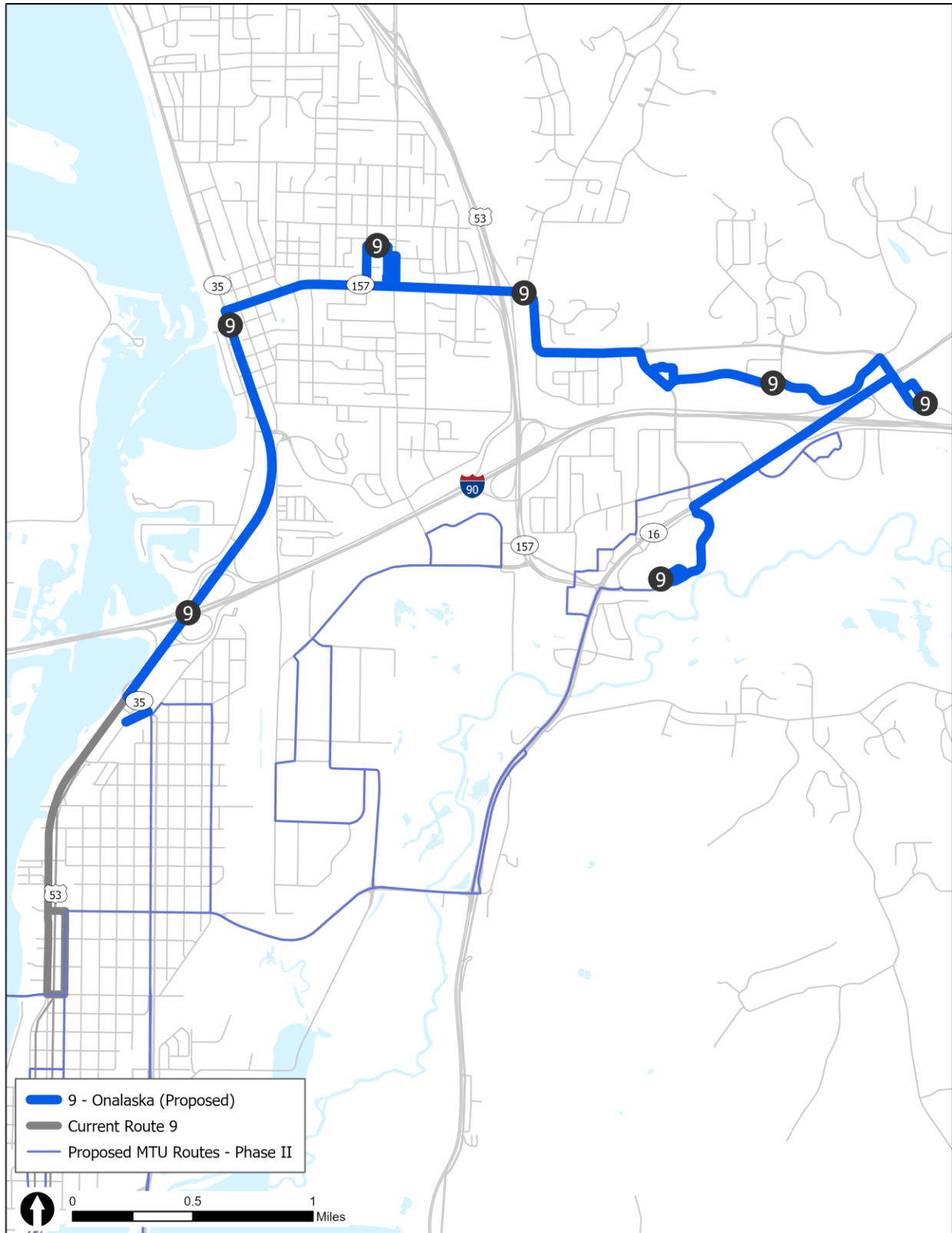
Table 18. Proposed Route 9 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Current	Weekday – Current	6:55 AM-10:23 AM, 1:25 PM-6:23 PM	60	-
	1. Weekday – Close Midday Gap	6:55 AM-6:23 PM	60	-
	2. Weekday – Match La Crosse Span	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	60	60
Phase II-C	3. Weekday – Match La Crosse Frequency	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
	4. Saturday – Hourly Service	7:42 AM-7:40 PM	60	60
	5. Sunday – Hourly Service	7:42 AM-6:40 PM	60	-

Table 19. Proposed Route 9 Service Statistics

		Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Incremental Operating Cost Increase	Annual Operating Cost (Total)
Current	Weekday – Current	1	8.5		\$203,745
	1. Weekday – Close Midday Gap	1	11.5	+\$71,910	\$275,655
	2. Weekday – Match La Crosse Span	1	17	+\$131,835	\$407,490
Phase II-C	3. Weekday – Match La Crosse Frequency	2	30	+\$311,610	\$719,100
	4. Saturday – Hourly Service	1 (Saturdays)	12 (Saturdays)	+\$57,528	\$776,628
	5. Sunday – Hourly Service	1 (Sundays)	11 (Sundays)	+\$52,734	\$829,362

Figure 11. Proposed Route 9 (Phase II-A)



Proposed Route 10 – La Crescent “Apple Express”

Route 10 is the only route currently operating with sufficient layover time for the operator to recover lost time and ensure on-time performance. However, the alignment within the City of La Crescent is quite circuitous. The Phase I proposed alignment creates a more legible path for the bus to follow, while continuing to allow for deviated fixed-route service in the city.

Furthermore, the plan recommends expanding the deviated service to serve Pettibone Park along U.S. Highway 14. The City of La Crosse would need to provide a small contribution to support the local match of the route. Expanding service hours in La Crescent would require additional local matching funds from the City or the State of Minnesota.

If additional local funds are found, service should be extended in the evening on weekdays and Saturdays, and service should be introduced on Sundays.

Table 20. Proposed Route 10 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I	Weekday	5:42 AM-7:00 PM	60	-
	Saturday	7:42 AM-3:30 PM	60	-
	Sunday	-	-	-

Table 21. Proposed Route 10 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	1	13	\$349,962
Phase I	1	13	\$349,962

Figure 12. Route 10 – Apple Express



Figure 13. Proposed Route 10



Proposed Route 11 – North-South Connector

In Phase II, the new Route 11 North-South Connector is proposed along the State Highway 35 corridor from the new Bridgeview Plaza transfer point to the Shelby Mall area. This route would not go into Downtown La Crosse, thus creating a quick one-seat ride between north and south La Crosse. It would connect with routes 6 and 9 at the north terminus, while connecting with routes 1 and 4 at Shelby Mall. As the route intersects with all other routes except routes 7 and 10, it would serve as a new spine of the transit system and on-street transfers should be encouraged.

The route is proposed to operate at similar service levels as the other core routes that serve La Crosse, operating 17 hours per weekday and offering Saturday and Sunday service.

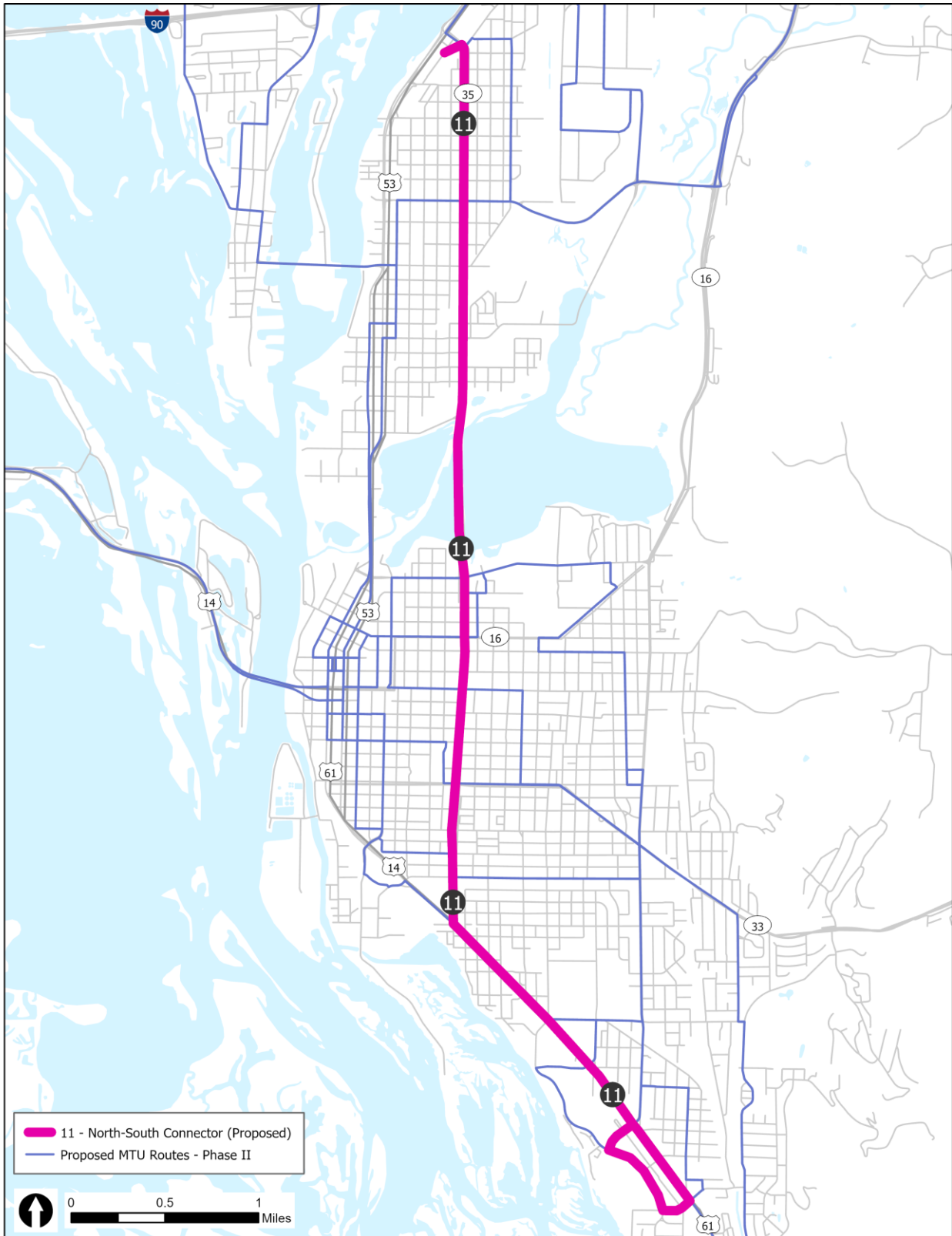
Table 22. Proposed Route 11 Service Parameters

Phase	Day	Span of Service	Daytime Headway	Evening Headway (past 6:00 PM)
Phase I		-	-	-
	Weekday	5:12 AM-10:40 PM	30	60
Phase II	Saturday	7:42 AM-9:40 PM	60	60
	Sunday	7:42 AM-8:40 PM	60	-

Table 23. Proposed Route 11 Service Statistics

	Buses Required (Peak)	Weekday Revenue Hours	Annual Operating Cost
Current	-	-	-
Phase I	-	-	-
Phase II	2	30	\$848,538

Figure 14. Proposed Route 11



Phasing Plan

As previously discussed, the implementation plan for the TDP consists of two main phases, with the latter phase being subdivided into three sub-phases. Because of this, it is possible (depending on funding) that the implementation timeframe will exceed the ten-year planning horizon of the TDP.

Phases II-A through C can be implemented independently from each other but are listed in order of priority based on the engagement and data analysis for this project.

Phase I

Phase I is a “cost neutral” phase and consists of the following elements:

- “Cost neutral” alignment modifications on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and the Southside Circulator (Route 3).

Phase II-A: Bridgeview Plaza

Phase II-A consists of the following elements:

- Operational “cost neutral” alignment modifications on routes 6 and 9 to serve a new Bridgeview Plaza transfer location.
 - Includes cost neutral 20-minute service on Route 6.
 - Would be dependent on capital investment in a transfer point or center at Bridgeview Plaza.
- A new North-South connector route (Route 11) operating as a regular La Crosse Route. This would require two additional buses.

Phase II-B: La Crosse Service Enhancements

Phase II-B consists of the following elements:

- Adding Saturday and Sunday service to the Southside Circulator (Route 3).
- Weekday frequency improvements to 20-minute service on routes 1, 2, 4 and 5. This would require four additional buses, one for each route.
- Saturday and Sunday service span extension by two hours on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 11.

Phase II-C: Onalaska Service Enhancements

Phase II-C consists of the following elements for Route 9 – Onalaska:

- Span of service improvements on Route 9 – Onalaska: closing the midday gap.
- Span of service improvements on Route 9 – Onalaska: match weekday La Crosse hours of service.
- Frequency improvements on Route 9 – Onalaska: 30-minute service during the day. This would require one additional bus.
- Saturday service expansion on Route 9 – Onalaska: offer hourly Saturday service (12 hours).
- Sunday service expansion on Route 9 – Onalaska: offer hourly Sunday service (11 hours).

Note that the increased cost of providing ADA complementary paratransit in Onalaska during the expanded service span is not included in the operating cost increase. This would be an item for negotiation and opportunity for coordination with OSR.

Impacts of New Services

The estimated service impacts of the proposed phasing plan are presented in this section of the TDP, as follows:

Peak Vehicles Required

The number of peak vehicles required by phase is presented below.

Table 24. Peak Vehicles by Phase

Phase	Total Peak Vehicles	Increase by Phase
Current	15	
Phase I	15	+0
Phase II-A	17	+2
Phase II-B	21	+4
Phase II-C	22	+1

Annual Revenue Hours of Service

The estimated annual revenue hours of service by phase is presented below.

Table 25. Annual Revenue Hours by Phase

Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Increase by Phase
Current	60,626	
Phase I	60,626	+0
Phase II-A	69,653	+9,027
Phase II-B	86,126	+16,473
Phase II-C	92,782	+6,656

Annual Operating Cost

The estimated annual operating cost by phase is presented below. The operating cost per hour was \$87.71 in 2019. For future planning purposes, a cost of \$94.00 per hour was used.

Table 26. Estimated Annual Operating Cost

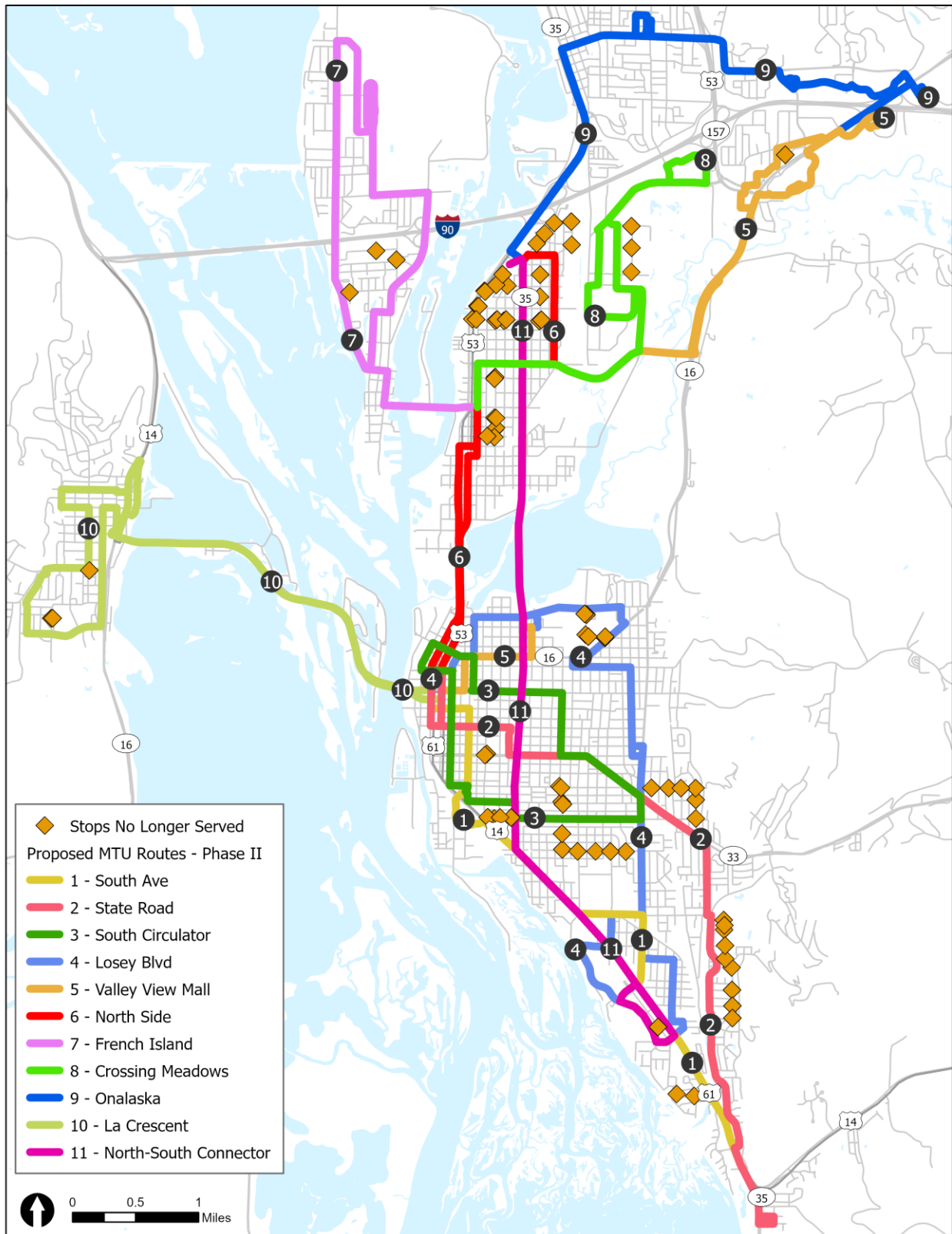
Phase	Annual Operating Cost	Incremental Increase by Phase
Current	\$5,317,615 (Fixed Route at \$87/hr in 2019)	
Phase I	\$5,698,844 (At \$94/hr)	
Phase II-A	\$6,547,382	+\$848,538
Phase II-B	\$8,095,844	+\$1,548,462
Phase II-C	\$8,721,461	+\$625,617

Facilities Impacts

Bus stop locations no longer served by current routes with new alignments will need to be removed, while new bus stop locations will need to be added along streets with new realigned service and new routes. The 80 of 507 total stops no longer served at the end of Phase II are shown in Figure 15.

A new transfer point or transfer center at Bridgeview Plaza would need to accommodate at least three buses for the three routes that would serve this pulse point transfer location. A restroom facility and customer amenities would also be desired at the layover point.

Figure 15. Stops No Longer Served in Phase II



Individual Service Improvement Costs

If the phasing plan is not feasible, or if community needs and priorities change, the table below shows the cost of improving individual service elements through smaller incremental service expansions. The percent increase from base refers to the percentage increase in hours compared to the current 212.5 hours of service provided on weekdays by MTU on its fixed-route system. Weekend service improvement hours are converted to weekday hourly equivalents, such that a 10 hour increase on Saturdays equals a 2-hour weekday increase.

Table 27. Individual Service Improvement Costs

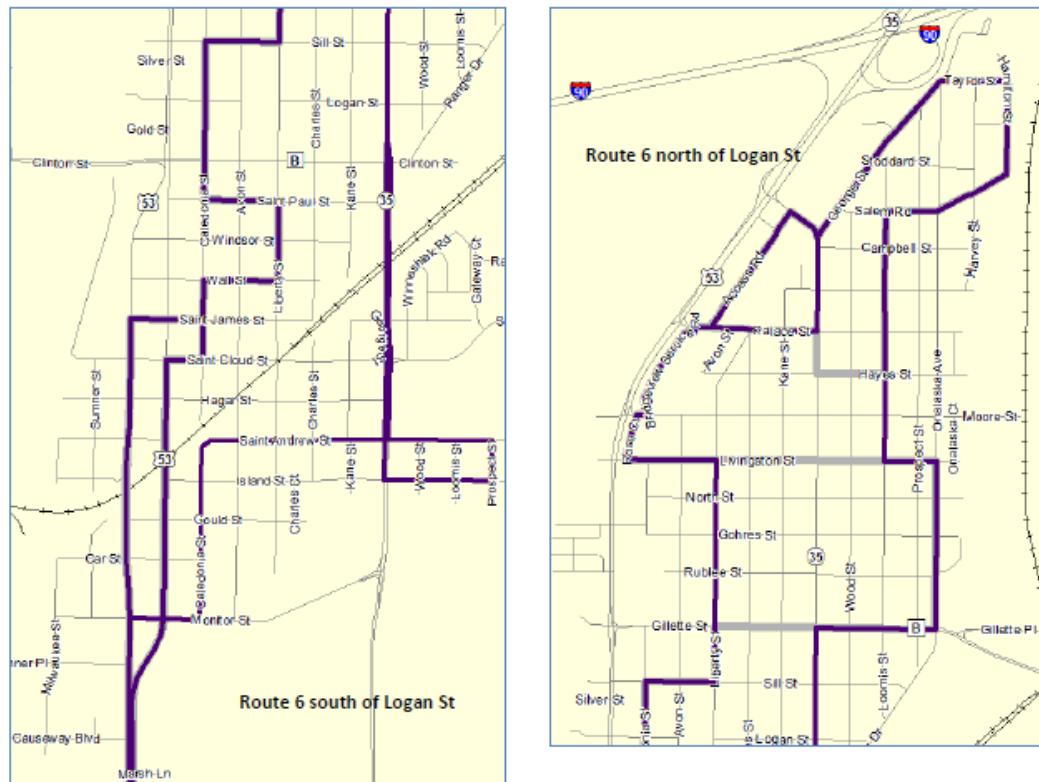
La Crosse Route Service Enhancements	Increase in Daily Hours	Percent increase from Base (212.5)	Annual Cost	Additional Buses
La Crosse Routes (1, 2, 4, 5, 6) - 20 Minute Frequency (Weekday)	69	32%	\$2,972,280	5
• Routes 1-2 - 20-Minute Frequency	26	12%	\$719,100	2
• Route 4 - 20-Minute Frequency	13	6%	\$719,100	1
• Route 5 - 20-Minute Frequency	17	8%	\$814,980	1
• Route 6 - 20-Minute Frequency (current alignment)	13	6%	\$719,100	1
La Crosse Routes (1, 2, 4, 5, 6) - 2 Hours Additional Service Span (Weekday)	16	8%	\$383,520	0
• Extends 30-minute service by 2 hours, and adds 2 hours to the overall span				
La Crosse Routes (1, 2, 4, 5, 6) - 2 Hours Additional Service Span (Weekends)	4	2%	\$97,760	0
• 2 Hours on Saturday	2	1%	\$48,880	0
• 2 Hours on Sunday	2	1%	\$48,880	0
La Crosse Route 3 - Circulator Weekend Service, one-way	4.6	2%	\$110,262	0
• Saturday (12 hours)	2.4	1%	\$57,528	0
• Sunday (11 hours)	2.2	1%	\$52,734	0
New Routes				
North-South La Crosse Connector (South Shelby Mall – Bridgeview Plaza)	30	14%	\$719,100	2
• Match Current La Crosse Route 1-6 Weekday Service Levels				
Northside Circulator	15	7%	\$359,550	1
• Match one-way Southside Circulator Hours				
Southern Bluff Elementary School				
• Extend routes 1 and 2 south by making routes more efficient heading towards DT	0	0%	\$0	0
• New far-southside circulator	12	6%	\$287,640	1
• On-demand flex zone service	12	6%	\$287,640	1
Industrial Park Flex Zone	17	8%	\$407,490	1
Vanpool – Regional Employer or WisDOT Sponsored Program				
Onalaska - Holmen Route	30	14%	\$719,100	2
• Would require local match funds from communities				

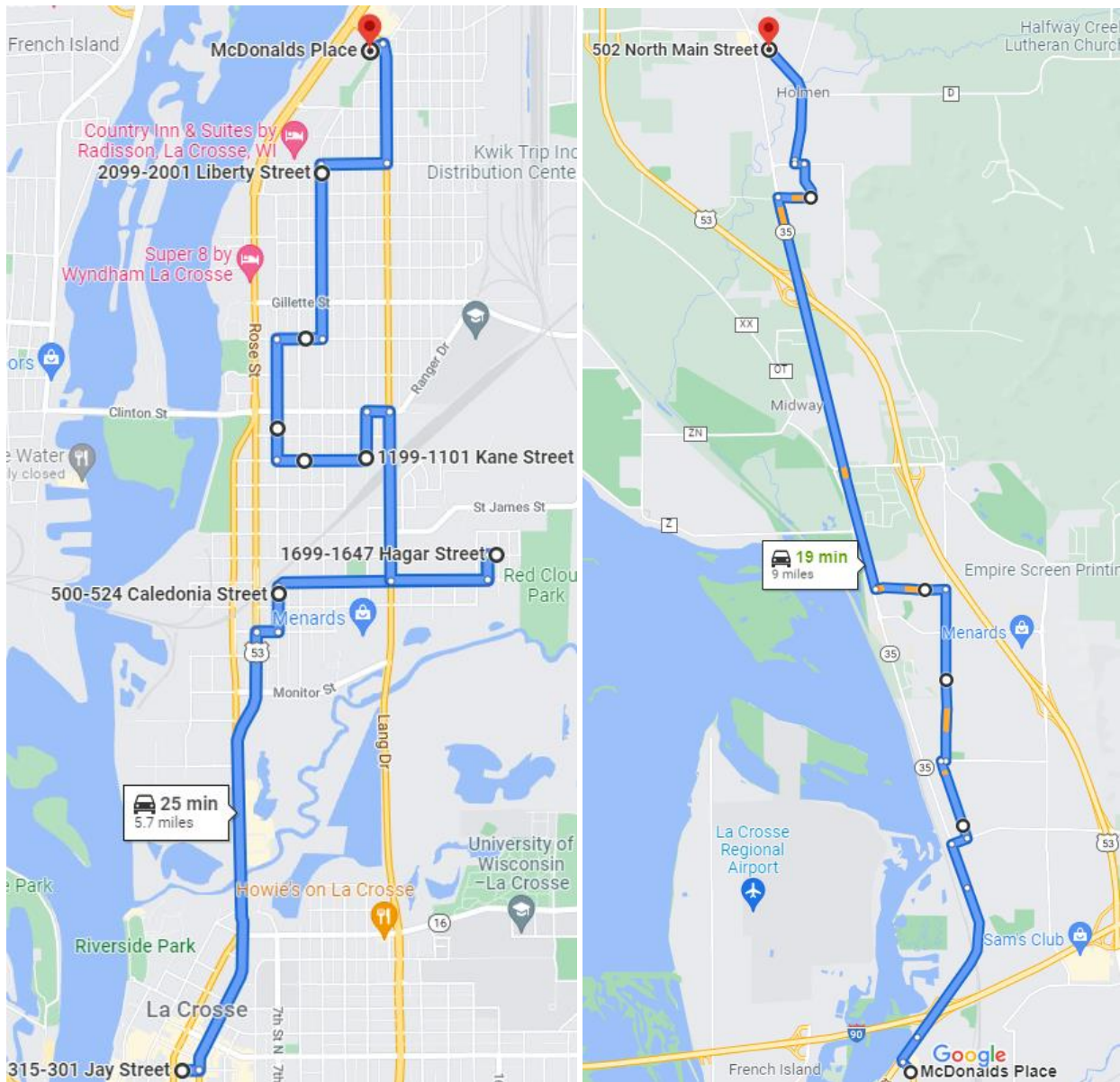
Partner City Routes	Increase in Daily Hours	Percent increase from Base (182.5)	Annual Cost	Additional Buses
Partner Cities Routes (7, 8, 10) - Expand Service Span to Match La Crosse	8	4%	\$191,760	0
• <i>Routes 7-8 - Service Until 10:00 PM</i>	4	2%	\$95,880	0
• <i>Route 10 - Service Until 10:00 PM</i>	4	2%	\$95,880	0
Partner Cities Routes (7, 8, 10) - 30 Minute Frequencies	25	12%	\$599,250	2
• <i>Routes 7-8 - 30-Minute Frequency</i>	12	6%	\$287,640	1
• <i>Route 10 - 30-Minute Frequency</i>	13	6%	\$311,610	1
Partner Cities Routes (7, 8, 10) - Expand Saturday Service	11	5%	\$263,670	0
• <i>Routes 7-8 - Nine hours of service</i>	9	4%	\$215,730	0
• <i>Route 10 - Two additional hours of service</i>	2	1%	\$47,940	0

Alternative Service Products and Concepts

During the planning process, two additional fixed-route concepts were discussed but ultimately not recommended at this time. These include a northside circulator that could directly serve the Rubbermill area and the Amtrak station, and a direct fixed route or shuttle between the Village of Holmen, City of Onalaska, and Bridgeview Plaza in La Crosse. A northside circulator would follow a circuitous route, while a new fixed route to northern areas of Onalaska and Holmen should be considered after expanding the current fixed-route service on Route 9 in Onalaska. Concepts from the previous 2015 TDP and this planning process are shown below.

Figure 16. Additional Route Concept Sketches





La Crosse MTU may also decide to offer service products beyond its current fixed-route and paratransit offerings. Microtransit and vanpool programs are used by transit agencies nationwide to offer services in areas that are difficult to service with traditional fixed-route transit or for destinations that have distinct peak travel demands in areas or timeslots outside the service area or hours of fixed-route service.

Microtransit

Agencies nationwide are piloting new “microtransit” services for areas not suitable for transitional fixed-route service, often to expand the service area coverage. These microtransit services are similar to demand-response systems operated by transit agencies for decades, either through their paratransit operations or as general public dial-a-ride services that rely on advance bookings and predetermined daily manifests.

However, the new generation of demand-response microtransit service is distinctly different from dial-a-ride. In order to create efficient routings for their drivers, dispatchers in traditional dial-a-ride systems need bookings at least a day in advance. This places limitations on customer flexibility and makes dial-a-ride service an option of last resort.

Inspired by transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, transit agencies are now finding that software advances make it possible to give drivers real-time routing updates. When services are designed with this in mind, customers can use demand response with the same, or even more, spontaneity that they board fixed-route buses.

Microtransit describes demand-response services that use modern technology, including cell phone apps, to offer trips within an hour after booking. Implementation of microtransit in the La Crosse area could be considered for industrial zones, areas beyond a half-mile of fixed-route service, or as an alternative for late night or overnight service.

Implementation of microtransit would require further study. The system would need to consider goals for a new service, service design, labor and contracting, fares, data and technology ownership and operation, operational and capital cost, and ridership outcomes.

Vanpool

In locations where service has been requested by one or two large employers, a vanpool program may be a more effective way to support commutes, rather than adding new transit service. Like private carpools, it is fundamentally a volunteer effort organized by coworkers on a basis of mutual trust; however, public agencies can use their resources to encourage vanpool formation. It may also require additional coordination among area employers to align work-shift start and end times.

Vanpool programs tend to operate separately from public transit. In many locations they are sponsored by a regional or state government rather than the local transit agency. Agencies that do have their own programs manage them separately from other services.

For example, the program operated by DART in Des Moines, Iowa is entirely self-funding, using member fees to maintain a fleet of vans available to groups of five to 12 commuters. Vanpool members pay a refundable deposit plus monthly fare based on the size of their group and the mileage driven. The driver is a member of the group who receives personal use of the van in exchange for maintaining it and keeping the vanpool running smoothly. Vanpool is intended to serve trips outside DART's service area.

ONALASKA SHARED RIDE

The Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) Taxi, which also serves Holmen and West Salem, provides curb-to-curb service. As such, there are no route alignment recommendations for the current service product or recommended changes to the service area. However, below are two concepts for OSR to explore in the coming years to better connect to MTU service and the region, as there is a strong desire by both La Crosse and Onalaska residents to make travel by transit between the communities more convenient.

Serve MTU Pulse Points

Instead of requiring an advance reservation, an OSR taxi could serve one of the MTU transfer points at Bridgeview Plaza, Caledonia Street, or Valley View Mall during pulses in the MTU schedule. This would allow for customers to make timed transfers more seamlessly without a reservation for trips to Onalaska, Holmen, and West Salem. It could also result in higher ridership per hour, as multiple people may make the connection at once.

Onalaska – La Crosse Shuttle

If the proposed improvements to MTU Route 9 – Onalaska are considered to be cost prohibitive, OSR should explore the possibility of operating its own fixed-route shuttle services. The OSR operating cost per revenue hour is just under \$28 per hour (2019) due to a different labor and operating structure. OSR can offer a shuttle service between Onalaska and Bridgeview Plaza with smaller vans and at a lower cost than MTU service. The service could also be expanded to the north to Holmen, to the east to West Salem, and to the south to Downtown La Crosse.

The shuttle service could operate from a few dedicated stops in Holmen, West Salem, and Onalaska to La Crosse at scheduled timeslots, potentially providing a park-and-ride type service. The new service would require additional advertising and bus stop signs. Scheduled rides should attract more riders per hour, but a more price competitive fare than the current \$4.50 should be established to make daily roundtrips an appealing option.

For future planning purposes, a cost of \$31.00 per hour was used. The table below shows the cost of providing 12 daily roundtrips from Holmen and West Salem to Downtown La Crosse.

Table 28. Proposed OSR Shuttle Statistics

	Buses Required	Weekday Revenue Hours	Weekday Revenue Miles	Annual Operating Cost
Holmen – Onalaska – Downtown La Crosse	1	12	600	\$94,860
West Salem – Onalaska – Downtown La Crosse	1	12	600	\$94,860

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL TRANSIT

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit offers weekday-only commuter bus service in Crawford, Monroe, Vernon, and La Crosse Counties in Wisconsin. Below are four concepts for service changes and enhancements to the SMRT service, listed in order of increased expansion cost.

Service in La Crosse

It is recommended that all three routes entering La Crosse from the south make the same consistent loop through La Crosse. This loop should include a stop on King Street across from the Grand River Station. Preferably, the schedules of the loops would align with stops on King Street at MTU pulse point for the fixed-route service at :12 and :42 past the hour. SMRT should coordinate with the City of La Crosse to establish a loading zone on-street parking designation to secure space for the buses to drop off and pick up passengers. Currently, the City of La Crosse charges a fee for transit operators to serve the transit center, which covers insurance for the facility. In addition, all transit bays are currently at capacity,

It is also recommended that the Blue and Yellow routes combine under one color and operate the same loop through La Crosse for consistent marketing and legibility for new customers.

Green Route

The Green Route between Tomah and La Crosse should have a later departure for its last run leaving La Crosse or add a fourth roundtrip to better accommodate students at WTC and UWL with classes ending late in the afternoon. Currently, the last departure from La Crosse is at 4:53 PM from Valley View Mall, but at 4:20 PM from UWL. It is recommended to push back the last departure from UWL to 5:20 PM.

Alternatively, a fourth round-trip run on the Green Route could be added to serve this late afternoon/early evening customer base. This would require \$35,738 in additional funding for operating expenses. The third run of the Green Route would need to operate earlier for the bus to make a fourth run in the evening.

Saturday Service

Public engagement indicated that people use the SMRT bus for more than just commuting to their place of employment. There is a desire for weekend service for shopping, social, and recreational trip purposes. To serve this need, each of the current four routes could offer two daily roundtrips on Saturdays. This would require \$58,304 annually in operating expenses, but no additional buses. Additional drivers may be necessary to operate the eight additional runs.

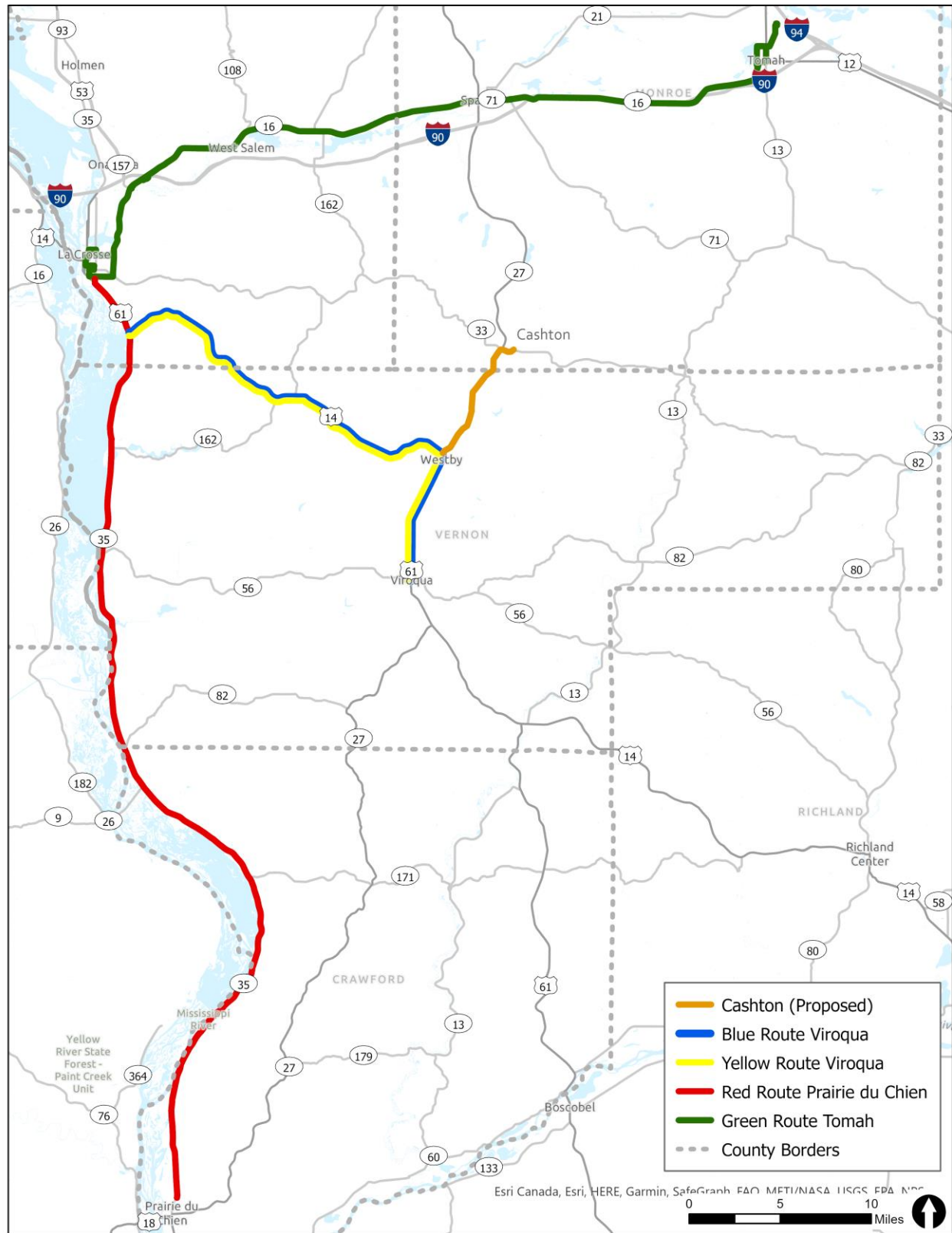
Cashton Service

Stakeholder engagement indicated the desire to add round-trip service to the Village of Cashton and some of the food processing industries located in that community. This could be accomplished through two methods:

- Diverting two daily round trips from the Blue/Yellow route from Viroqua to Cashton
- Adding a new Orange Route to serve Cashton with two daily roundtrips from La Crosse (Figure 17)

Adding a new route with two daily roundtrips from La Crosse to Cashton would require an additional bus, operator, and \$71,476 annually in operating expenses.

Figure 17. SMRT Service Expansion Proposal



POLICY AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter covers internal agency policy changes as well as requests to other government entities for issues outside of the transit agencies' control. The TDP can be a tool for policy makers to understand the benefits of transit and for advocates to promote transit with data. The communities surrounding La Crosse are growing fast, developing new regional destinations without adequate transit service. Improved coordination among the transit agencies, as well as pursuing mobility management strategies, will be key to address the regional transit needs and help promote the services available.

LA CROSSE MUNICIPAL TRANSIT UTILITY

Fares

Passenger fares are a significant portion of any transit agency's operating budget, including MTU's. Fare policy, fare levels, and fare collection technology are important to consider when determining a strategic direction for a transit agency. Major changes to these elements often require significant investments and engagement processes.

Two fare policies MTU should explore in the next five years are fare capping and converting the current tickets to two-hour passes.

Currently, customers who purchase monthly passes benefit from having unlimited rides on MTU, while riders who pay for individual rides make a personal cost-benefit decision for every trip. Thus, monthly pass holders benefit from discounted rides if they use MTU more than what the cost of a monthly pass would have purchased in individual fares. Fare capping would extend that benefit for frequent MTU users who currently pay per ride. This would remove the cost barrier of paying upfront for a monthly pass. It would also reward customers who might not know in advance how many trips they will be taking that month. Fare capping does require mobile ticketing or smartcard payment systems to keep track of a customer's transit usage during a month. The new MTU GenFare system should have this capability.

Another option to explore with paper tickets, mobile tickets, or smartcards is extending the validity of the ticket to a two-hour pass. MTU already removed the "transfer penalty" by providing free transfers. Converting tickets into a two-hour pass would allow customers to take the bus for quick errands across town for an affordable price. Transfers should be honored at any MTU bus stop.

Bus Stops, Shelters, and Amenities

Access to bus stops and the bus stop waiting environment are an important element for transit riders. Without a safe and accessible path to a bus stop, existing and potential riders will not be able to access MTU fixed route services. Bus stops should be easily accessible on foot and with mobility devices, such as walkers and wheelchairs. It is critical bus routes and bus stops serve places with well-established sidewalk networks that connect to passengers' trip origins and destinations. Pedestrian safety elements for traffic engineers to consider include bumpouts, bus islands, and crosswalks.

Highly used stops should have extra amenities, such as shelters, benches, maps, and schedules. With the integration of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), electronic displays should be installed with real time information at the most used stops in the system. For routes with high ridership, smartcard fare readers should be placed at both doors of the bus to allow for all-door boarding, speeding up the boarding process. Bus pullouts should be discouraged, as they make it difficult to merge back into traffic. Bus stop locations should be placed on the far side of intersections, minimizing delays for operations from traffic signals.

Current stops have a phone number and QR code. As of December 2021, the QR codes did not link to the transit website or schedule information. Flag stops are currently allowed on Routes 7 and 10, but this practice should be discontinued to favor picking up passengers at dedicated stops with safer pedestrian environments. MTU should consider an “Adopt-a-Stop” program to ensure the cleanliness of the bus stops and access in snowy winter months.

Figure 18. Current MTU Bus Stop



Spacing

Local bus stop spacing guidelines recommend two to four blocks between stops. These guidelines are general, and the local context, such as the walkability of an area, must be taken into consideration, especially near major destinations. Bus stop spacing can be greater in walkable areas but must provide convenient access to major destinations.

Shelters

It is recommended that MTU identify ten stops per year for improvements, focusing on ADA accessibility improvements and installation of shelters. Besides providing access to bus stops, the waiting environment at the bus stop is also important. These include the need for bus stops to have signage that conveys information regarding the bus system such as phone numbers and web addresses. Lighting at the most used stops will enhance the perception of safety for passengers as they wait for the bus in the evening. It also allows bus drivers to see waiting customers at night. Based on the customer service amenity standards listed in the [Fixed-Route Service Development Guidelines](#) section, stops with ridership of over 20 daily customers should be prioritized for shelters and lighting. Priority bus stop enhancements should be based on ridership and equity considerations. Bike racks should also be installed at stops with shelters.

Marketing and Technology

Marketing activities should be focused on growing ridership by catering and understanding the existing customer base while, in parallel, capturing emerging transit markets. Many routes offer limited scopes of service and attract transit-reliant riders who have no other transportation choices. Investment in downtown La Crosse and population growth along transit corridors offer opportunities to capture new riders.

Once the circulator route goes through a final alignment modification, it should be incorporated into the overall system map and rebranded as Route 3. Route-specific schedules and maps should be available on the buses and high ridership stops.

The MTU website is currently integrated into the city of La Crosse website as a webpage for a city department. This constrains MTU's information to the city website's layout and tab structure. It is recommended MTU establish its own website with a more customer focused layout, showing a trip planner, bus tracker, maps, schedule, and fare payment information prominently on the homepage. There can still be a link from the city website to the transit website.

Some comments during public engagement indicated issues with bus bike racks often being full. MTU should keep track of the number of passengers mounting a bike on the bus. Once the farebox data shows that the current two-bike capacity is reached often, MTU should install bike racks that can carry three bikes on their buses. Additionally, highly used stops and stops with shelters should have bike racks or bike lockers.

MTU should seek to partner with large events in La Crosse to offer free event transit passes to relieve congestion and promote transit use. Rider alerts should be issued for detours, stop closures, or changes in service.

The La Crosse community has robust goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. MTU can promote the use of transit and its new electric vehicle fleet to address this community goal. Transit helps reduce the percentage of trips taken by single occupancy vehicles and reduces the overall vehicle miles traveled in the La Crosse region.

MTU is proactive in uploading its bus stops and schedules in a General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS), which can be used by third party applications to show transit availability. However, it would be beneficial for customers to name the bus stop locations by the street corner of the intersections, or directions from a landmark, so customers know on which corner to stand and wait for the bus.

Transit Signal Priority

Transit signal priority (TSP) deployment provides transit advantages by modifying traffic signal timing or phasing to minimize the time buses spend stopped at red lights. A relatively unobtrusive tool, TSP can improve service reliability and reduce travel time, making transit more attractive. TSP enhancements allow communication between the transit vehicle and modern traffic signals, resulting in less time waiting and more time moving. This is often done using on-board AVL or GPS communicating with wayside signal hardware. TSP is used in communities throughout the United States and around the world on mixed traffic streets and in dedicated guideways. TSP can be applied throughout a transit corridor, or at specific areas where signal delay and/or congestion is greatest.

Figure 19. Real Time Information at Grand River Station



Figure 20. Bike Lockers at Grand River Station



Moreover, there are many different TSP configurations and signal treatments that can be deployed depending on the situation and context. Common TSP treatments include extending a traffic signal green light phase or truncating a red light phase as the transit vehicle approaches, among several others. TSP should be deployed at intersections with a far-side bus stop or no stop.

City and County Coordination

While MTU can adjust its services, it operates in a built environment controlled by local, state, and private entities. Additionally, it depends on partner cities to provide the local match financial support for service to Onalaska, Campbell, and La Crescent.

The streets and bus stops where MTU operates should be safe for pedestrians to cross and access. MTU should meet regularly with public works staff to address intersections with safety concerns. Cities have found cost-effective ways to implement bus stop improvements by combining construction with pedestrian, bike, and roadway capital projects. MTU should work with the city to install additional shelters and bike racks at highly used bus stops and encourage sidewalks to be in a safe condition. Bumpouts and median islands should be considered on streets with high traffic volumes.

Development Guidelines

The fixed-route service development guidelines should be shared with city officials and property developers to create an understanding of the minimum characteristics necessary for transit to successfully serve new developments. Area developers, and those who rent, lease, or buy commercial property may assume transit services are available without confirming route alignments and frequency. A proactive preventative measure is to incorporate confirmation of a developer's understanding of transit into the project review process.

Adding transit service confirmation to the development review process would be beneficial at several levels because each step may involve different applicants who may have different needs and expectations. For example, the applicant for a zoning and subdivision application may be a different entity than the applicant for a building permit. A transit question should be added to applications for zoning map amendments, subdivision applications, and building permits.

New developments should be encouraged to place the front door near the intersection of a major street, close to the bus stop. Many strip mall customers today must cross expansive parking lots with hostile, long walking distances. Effective transit can get customers to businesses and organizations, but the customers need to be able to access to the front door through a pleasant pedestrian experience.

Fixed-Route Service Development Guidelines

Performance measures can be used to monitor existing service and evaluate the success of new service. Beyond the systemwide performance, these can aid in decision making and service development changes. As MTU pursues the service development plan outlined in this document, there are certain milestones that must be reached to ensure a project is ready for development. These standards and guidelines can be used to evaluate new service projects and determine whether it is viable. LAPC staff can provide MTU with technical and planning assistance when evaluating service changes.

Table 29. Service Development Considerations

Capital Facility Coordination	Prior to making service changes or expansion, MTU will make sure all capital facilities are funded, acquired, and/or constructed in coordination with the service change.
Benefits to People with Disabilities	New transit service should have a benefit to people with disabilities. This should be verified by reviewing demographics and conducting outreach to regional human service agencies.
Benefits to Minority and Low-Income Populations	Service modifications should benefit minority and low-income communities. Service changes will be compliant with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
Local Funding Support	MTU should seek out sponsorship of service from local government, businesses, non-profit agencies, etc. Projects that provide “overmatch” will be prioritized.
Sidewalk Score	This measure is calculated by determining the ratio of sidewalk length to street centerline length for each block group. A higher ratio means the block group has a better sidewalk network.
Transit-Supportive Land Use	This measure is calculated by determining the percent of block group acreage of land use codes that include medium to high density residential, commercial, and institutional. These land use types have a higher propensity to use transit.
Intersection Density	This measure can be calculated using GIS and Census data to determine the ratio of roadway intersections per block group and dividing it by the total block group acreage. A higher density implies greater transportation connectivity and the opportunity for better walkability.

Service guidelines are divided into four categories: route design, service level, service performance, and customer service. Route design guidelines describe strategies to make bus routes as effective as possible. These include attributes such as coverage, stop spacing, sidewalk and bus connectivity, and roadway and corridor characteristics. Route design guidelines can also be shared with city partners and developers to inform them about MTU considerations for service warrants.

Service level guidelines include frequency, span of service, and recovery goals. These attributes affect the success of transit performance along corridors the route serves and establish thresholds necessary to consider transit expansion beyond the current service area.

To assess the performance and adequacy of the public transportation system and guide the formulation of route improvement proposals, it is necessary to establish a set of transit service performance criteria. Performance guidelines evaluate fixed-route service productivity based on passengers per revenue hour, maximum loading capacity, on-time performance, and dependability.

Customer service guidelines improve the customer experience and satisfaction by outlining amenities at bus stops, providing rider alerts, setting marketing targets, providing travel training, and expanding pass programs with major employers and institutions.

Table 30. Fixed-Route Design and Performance Guidelines

Theme	Factor	Target
Route Design	Serve Areas with Appropriate Density	Employment – 5 employees per acre (for census block) Residential – 4 households per acre (for census block)
		Unique employers of 400 in single location
		Following uses (require pre-location coordination): <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hospitals (regional)Shopping centers (>100,000 square feet)Social service and government centersColleges & high schools
	Straightforward & Direct	Direct paths between generators (minimize deviation) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deviation from direct path < ¼ of route length
		Symmetrical routes (same path in both directions) – exception for one-way pair streets
	Maximize Ridership Potential of Corridor	Only one route in any corridor <ul style="list-style-type: none">If multiple routes, schedule to avoid bunching
	Transit Route Roadway Characteristics	Sidewalk connectivity between bus stops and adjacent uses
Surface type – prefer concrete or asphalt overlay on concrete		
Stop Spacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local: 2 to 4 blocks	
Service Level	Span of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Core: 4:15 AM – 11:00 PM weekday, 6:00 AM – 10:00 PM Saturday, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM SundayRegular: 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM weekday, 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM Saturday, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM Sunday
	Service Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Core: 15-minute peak/30-minute off-peak – 15-minute all day preferredRegular: 30 minutes
	Provide Adequate Run Time	Recovery goal of 10 percent on route
Service Performance	Productivity	Passengers per revenue hour: 15 Route below 50 percent of system average productivity, consider adjustments to improve or document critical need that supports the service OR consider deploying different mode of transportation. Conduct targeted outreach to understand any decline in ridership or productivity. Route above 150% of system average: consider adding more frequency.
	Maximum Loading	Percent of seating capacity: 125% for 2+ miles
	On-Time Performance	Over 85% within 1 minute early to 5 minutes late
	Scheduled Service Executed	99.5% of scheduled service executed (199 of 200 trips be executed)
Customer Service	Amenities	By daily stop level activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Real time information – 30+ passenger boardingsShelter and lighting, maps – 20+ passenger boardingsWayfinding, informative signage -- All
	Rider Alerts	Phone, app, website, detour maps
	Marketing	1% of operating budget Target outreach for underperforming routes
	Travel Training	Provide travel training at social service agencies and schools
	Expand Pass Programs	Contact large employers within service area

ONALASKA SHARED RIDE

Planning and Fares

The City of Onalaska should evaluate the needs and purpose of transit in Onalaska, and whether the current shared ride taxi is the best tool to serve those needs. The community has the residential and employment densities to support more fixed route transit with higher ridership potential. The current fare of \$4.50 is cost prohibitive for daily round-trip travel and limits the use of the service to customers with infrequent trips.

The city should consider a more extensive community and rider survey to find the community transportation needs and develop goals.

If higher ridership is desired, a fixed route service is more appropriate, but if the community prefers curb-to-curb coverage service, the current shared ride taxi model should be continued. Longer distance regional connections would also require a more scheduled service approach, either through fixed route or a park-and-ride shuttle service. The city will need to find the right balance between the service products and evaluate whether they meet local and regional transportation needs and goals.

Once the desired service products are selected, the city will need to set performance measures by service product. Then the city should regularly review reports on transit performance by the contractor(s).

The fare policy should be adjusted after analysis of transit performance in relationship to the community transportation needs and goals, and a customer feedback and complaint process should be established. Pass usage versus cash fares may indicate whether the service is used primarily by subscription medical riders, or by daily customers with different trip purposes.

Marketing and Technology

The OSR service currently has no marketing budget or program. This should be developed, potentially in coordination with SMRT and the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) through a mobility manager (discussed in Agency Coordination). Marketing should extend beyond the perception that the service is only available for seniors or people experiencing disabilities.

OSR trip information is currently listed on three separate websites, resulting in a lack of clarity. Multiple websites are leading to different topics and locations. Information should be consolidated to a single website with information on OSR service, while the city, MPO, La Crosse MTU or the mobility manager website should just refer to the OSR website. The OSR service website should include a map, hours of service, and list the reservation methods. The current contractor website has an online reservation system but not an online payment system.

A technology improvement to explore includes automatic vehicle location (AVL) for customers to track their ride and for dispatch to more accurately schedule trips. This would also allow the city to collect origin-destination data to analyze trip patterns in the community. If certain trips patterns emerge, a scheduled shuttle or fixed route service could be a more effective service product.

To meet the community's sustainability goals, electric vehicles should be considered for the next round of vehicle procurement.

OSR should seek to partner with large events in the three cities it serves to offer free event transit passes to relieve congestion and promote transit use.

Performance Measures

To monitor transit operations and contractor performance, OSR should keep track of the following core performance metrics by month.

Table 31. OSR Performance Metrics

Ridership	Total ridership
Ridership per Revenue Hour	Ridership per revenue hour reflects the productivity (effectiveness) per hour of purchased service. If ridership per revenue hour exceeds 6 passengers, an additional vehicle should be added or fixed route service should be considered.
Operating Expense per Revenue Hour	This measure evaluates the cost efficiency of the service
Subsidy per Passenger Trip	This will help track the efficiency of the service by comparing fare revenue, operating expenses, and ridership.
Average Wait Time per Passenger	A measure of customer satisfaction, this measure evaluates the wait time for on-demand rides. If the wait time exceeds 15 minutes, an additional vehicle should be added or fixed route service should be considered.
Average On-Vehicle Time per Passenger	A measure of customer satisfaction, this measure tracks the average on-vehicle time from pick-up to drop-off. This should not exceed 30 minutes for OSR.

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL TRANSIT

Local Operating Agreement

A template for a local operating agreement between SMRT and the communities it serves is provided in the appendix. The operating agreement covers the local match funding, service levels, and placement of transit amenities.

Marketing and Technology

Currently, each round trip of the four routes is labeled as a "route" on the schedule. These round trips should be renamed to "runs" to eliminate misinterpretation over the actual route alignment. A map with the SMRT routes and schedules should be posted at major stops and destinations in the communities SMRT serves, as well as at Grand River Station in Downtown La Crosse. SMRT buses currently have bike racks and should use this feature to promote multimodal trips. The SMRT website should be updated regularly, and service changes should be posted well in advance. To assist with the marketing effort, SMRT should coordinate with the other transit agencies in the region to hire a regional mobility manager, discussed in the next section.

SMRT should upload its bus stops and schedules in a General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) format, which can be used by third party mobile and web applications to show transit availability. This will allow customers

with trip planning in Google Maps, for example. Additional technology investments should be considered in Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) for bus tracking applications, and Automatic Passenger Counters (APC).

Figure 21. Schedule Information at Grand River Station



Bus Stop Amenities

SMRT should add bus stop signs in each of the communities it serves with route schedules and maps. In some of the larger communities, shelters could be added. These transit amenities show a commitment and investment in the community and makes SMRT more visible in the communities it serves.

Guaranteed Ride Home Program

Guaranteed ride home programs help commuters who may not always have a consistent work schedule or may have occasional unplanned overtime or family emergency. To prevent the risk of being “stuck at work,” it provides commuters a sense of comfort with a guaranteed ride home later in the evening. Programs usually establish eligible trip purposes such as personal illness or emergency medical issues, sick child or dependent family emergencies, and unplanned overtime. Transit agencies either provide alternative transportation options themselves or will reimburse regular commuters for a one-time taxi ride.

Performance Measures

To monitor transit operations and contractor performance, SMRT should keep track of the following core performance metrics by month.

Table 32. SMRT Performance Metrics

Ridership (Systemwide and by Route)	Total ridership by route
Ridership per Revenue Hour (Systemwide and by Route)	Ridership per revenue hour reflects the productivity (effectiveness) per hour of purchased service.
Operating Expense per Revenue Hour	This measure evaluated the cost efficiency of the service

AGENCY COORDINATION – MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

Mobility management practices can help the three agencies to coordinate services, improve marketing, and provide travel training. Mobility management designs transportation around the customer by providing clear information, transit coordination, travel training, and identifying service gaps. Mobility managers operate in both urban and rural areas, often housed at community action agencies or regional government or planning agencies. In some areas, mobility manager tasks may be part-time duties of a human service provider.

Official position descriptions for mobility managers often include travel training; connecting riders to providers; connecting transit, human services, and businesses; and developing One-Call/One-Click reservation systems. Other duties include promoting transit services, identifying service gaps, planning operations, and advocating for transit. Mobility managers are also tasked with organizing regional transit coordination meetings. Mobility managers free up time and resources for transit and human service providers to focus on day-to-day transit service.

Mobility management is an eligible expense under Section 5307, 5310 and 5311 programs, covered 80 percent by federal dollars and a 20 percent local match as a capital expense. The local match can be provided by state funding sources specifically for transportation or human services, such as disability services or veteran services, or by local funding.

A mobility manager for the La Crosse region could be hosted at any of the three transit agencies, the LAPC, La Crosse County, or at one of the ADRCs. The mobility manager can be a half-time or full-time position that assists the agencies with travel training, marketing, and coordination through organizing quarterly meetings among transit providers and human and social service providers in the region. The mobility manager can meet on a regular basis with businesses, senior centers, adult day care services, and other interested organizations in the region to connect them to transportation resources and travel training. This position could also assist with developing a regional trip planning and promoting the MTU and SMRT employer pass programs.

Finally, the mobility manager can help the region with addressing the needs and implementing the strategies of the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plans. For more information, the FTA provides a Mobility Management Brochure on its website:

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ccam/resources/mobility-management-brochure>

TITLE VI

The FTA requires all funding recipients and subrecipients to comply with U.S. Department of Transportation Title VI regulations, established by the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and expounded upon in FTA Circular 4702.1(b). Title VI requirements for transit services are generally related to supplying language access to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).¹ The state departments of transportation are the primary recipient of these identified FTA funds; thus, all the Section 5311 transit service providers are subrecipients. The state departments of transportation have the primary responsibility for Title VI compliance. Recipients of 5307 funding must have their own Title VI program.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is designed to prohibit discrimination based on disability. In terms of FTA and the provision of transit service, the ADA is structured to ensure equal opportunity and access for persons with disabilities.² ADA requirements apply to facilities, vehicles, equipment, bus stops, level of service, fares, and provision of service.

All public transit vehicles are required to be ADA compliant. Any new facilities or bus stops must be constructed to be ADA compliant. All transit service providers must complete required ADA training.

Service provision-related equivalencies include the following for demand response service:

- The response time, fares, geographic area of service, hours and days of service, trip purpose restrictions, and availability of information and reservation capabilities must be the same for all riders, including those with disabilities
- Regarding capacity denials (denials within the existing service parameters in the above bullet); denials are allowed for demand response service, if the frequency of denials is the same as the frequency for riders without disabilities
- Any priority given to persons with disabilities or higher levels of service is a local decision
- Requirements for demand response service are different than those required for ADA complementary paratransit associated with fixed route service

¹ https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Title_VI_FINAL.pdf

² https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf

FINANCIAL PLANNING

This chapter covers funding programs for financing both existing service and the potential service expansion concepts outlined in the service development chapter. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307, 5310, and 5311 provide formula-based grants to support capital, planning, and operating assistance. This section includes a description of these transit funding programs. As the La Crosse metropolitan area is below 200,000 in population as of the 2020 Census, FTA funds are distributed through the state departments of transportation to transit providers as sub recipients.

The recently passed federal infrastructure bill, the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)**, will lead to additional transit operating and capital funds. These funds will be allocated both through boosting the existing formula grant programs, as well as expanding competitive grant funding programs. To unlock these federal funds to their full potential, enough local or state matching funds need to be provided. This chapter also offers some options to raise additional local funds to fully leverage federal transit dollars in the region. Further guidance on funding and programmatic changes through the IIJA is expected from FTA and WisDOT in 2022.

While operational and capital plans flow from the preferred service plan, long term sustainable funding must be available for operations and capital before service expansion is considered. For the partner cities that contract with MTU, the local match for capital and operational funds for new buses and service in partner cities will need to come from the partner cities.

FUNDING PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Urban Transit Funds

MTU fixed-route service is funded through various sources, including assistance programs from FTA and the State of Wisconsin through WisDOT, local support from the City of La Crosse and service agreements with their partners (i.e., City of Onalaska), and the sale of transit passenger fares and revenue through fare agreements with partners (i.e., UWL).

In Wisconsin, bus systems in communities with populations that are greater than 50,000 and have operating budgets less than that of Madison and Milwaukee fall under the funding category of Tier B. The State of Wisconsin sets an equalized percent share of state and federal funds that consists of WisDOT 85.20 State Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance ("WisDOT 85.20") and the La Crosse urbanized area's allocation of funds from FTA Section 5307 Federal Formula Grant Program for Urbanized Areas ("FTA Section 5307").

Fare revenue accounted for approximately 14.9 percent of MTU revenues in 2019. This value estimates the amount of cash collected from passengers when boarding vehicles and the sale of fare media to passengers (e.g., monthly passes) and partners like UWL, who purchase special passes to ride fare-free.

MTU receives additional operating support from partner cities it contracts with for fixed-route service. MTU also receives revenues from advertising, concessions, and other non-transportation sources. Collectively, these revenues are often referred to as "other directly generated revenues."

The City of La Crosse is responsible for compiling the remainder of revenues once state and federal grants, passenger revenues, and other directly generated revenues are accounted for. This remainder is referred to as “local share,” which may consist of one or many sources. The local share serves as required match to FTA Section 5307 and WisDOT 85.20 funding

Opportunities for Additional Federal and State Funding

Federal Transit Administration Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program

This program is the primary program for federal transit capital assistance available to MTU and OSR. The Bus and Bus Facilities Program is a federally funded capital grant program contained within the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) authorization bill that provides capital funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities.

MTU receives FTA Section 5339 funding via two channels. FTA apportions formula funds to the La Crosse Urbanized Area on an annual basis. Additionally, discretionary Section 5339 funding is distributed via competitive solicitation overseen by WisDOT. MTU and OSR should continue to explore the use of Section 5339 funds for capital improvements such as fare collection systems, bus stop improvements and passenger amenities, and modern communications and information systems benefitting riders.

FHWA/FTA Flex Funds

There are several federal funding sources that are flexible for use between highway and transit capital projects. Many Federal-aid Highway programs have specific eligible transit activities identified in legislation. In addition, funds from other programs that do not have specific transit eligibility may be transferred by states – under the uniform transferability provisions of 23 USC §126 – to other Federal-aid Highway programs that do have such eligibility. In particular, Surface Transportation Program – Urban funds can be used for transit capital investments including vehicles, equipment, and facilities. Several Wisconsin regions (Madison, Appleton, Milwaukee, and Green Bay) have tapped into this as a regular source of program funding.

Opportunities for Additional Local Funding

This section lists potential enhanced and alternative funding sources for transit in La Crosse. All local match (non-federal) funds for sections 5307, 5310 and 5311 programs must be provided from sources other than those provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation. MTU can use additional local funds to expand service and unlock additional federal operational and capital funds. Almost all the funding opportunities listed would require either local or state approval, and in some cases, state enabling legislation.

Fares

Raising fares could increase fare revenue but may also cause some riders to forgo using transit altogether. Implementing fare increases is within the control of MTU and thus the simplest implementation of all revenue enhancement option. However, the additional revenue would be minimal, and it will not improve ridership. It is also far from a sufficient source to raise the operational revenue necessary to implement any of the Phase II service expansion concepts.

Transit Assessment District

Establishing a special transit assessment district along a street with high frequency transit could generate additional operating revenue for the system as a whole. This would be an option for an enhanced high frequency transit service product along a corridor. Additional enhancements to bus stops and traffic signal priority could be considered in such a district as well.

Special assessments are generally used to fund capital projects. Special assessment benefit districts are established during the project planning phase and final project costs are allocated to property parcels after the projects are completed based upon the benefits they receive. A benefit of such a mechanism is the creating a nexus between land use, development, and better transit service.

For example, the Kansas City Streetcar uses a transit assessment district stretching one-half mile in either direction from its route, charging additional property and sales taxes. There is also a \$100 annual fee per surface parking spot in the district, which encourages the land along the streetcar line to be developed to a more productive use. This will then generate more property taxes for both the transit assessment district and the city. This transit assessment district collects enough revenue to fund operations and provide free fares for the streetcar. A separate surface parking spot fee could also be considered.

TNC Fee

A few large metro areas in the nation started adding taxes or fees on trips taken by Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber, Lyft, and VIA. Chicago implemented a 67-cent fee per rideshare trip, with 52 cents being allocated to the city's general fund and 15 cents to transit. TNCs charge based on distance and demand.

Utility Fee

Some cities raise operational funding through charging a fee on utility bills. Corvallis, Oregon is a college town with a \$2.75/month fee on utility bills, which allows the city to offer free public transit. Springfield, Missouri is another example of a city with a transit system as a utility. For MTU to pursue this funding stream, it would need to collaborate with the City of La Crosse and create a clear connection between utilities and the need for transit. If transit were to become a utility in La Crosse, the fee would need to replace the current MTU allocation from the city's general fund and generate additional revenue to fund the Phase II expansion concepts.

Wheel Tax

The wheel tax has been discussed as a possibility for generating additional funding for transit in other communities in Wisconsin. Wisconsin law allows a town, village, city, or county to collect an annual municipal or county vehicle registration fee (wheel tax) besides the regular annual registration fee paid for a vehicle. State law does not specify the amount of the wheel tax. However, the municipality or county must use all revenue from the wheel tax for transportation-related purposes. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) collects wheel taxes for the municipality or county, keeps an administrative fee of 10 cents per vehicle application and sends the rest to the municipality or county.

WisDOT currently collects a wheel tax for the City of Beloit (\$10); City of Janesville (\$10); City of Milwaukee (\$20); St. Croix County (\$10). The City of Appleton also recently authorized a wheel tax of \$20 per year. None of these wheel taxes are specifically dedicated to transit but are used for transportation purposes of which transit is one.

It is possible for an individual community to implement a wheel tax to support transit, either for service expansion in their community or to reduce the property tax burden. Depending on the extent of the implementation and the level of tax, this could generate significant additional funds.

Regional Transit Authority

A new La Crosse Regional Transit Authority (RTA) would require much effort from the municipalities involved and concerted public engagement and support. The primary benefit of setting up a new authority in the La Crosse region lies in the potential for new funding. The authority would also provide independence, transparency, and unity in decision-making.

State enabling legislation will need to address the governance structure and the (taxation) powers of the transit authority through the following items:

- Option to start with one political subdivision and have new members join over time
- Ability to collect taxes to provide a reliable and independent funding source
- Ability to create an authority Board of Directors for representation of multiple communities
- Ability to construct, operate, and maintain transit and transit assets
- Ability to acquire or condemn property independently
- Ability to accept gifts, grants, loans, or other property
- Ability to provide service outside of transit area by contractual agreement
- Authority to issue negotiable revenue bonds independently
- Ability to independently borrow money

La Crosse should continue conversations with its partner cities on the development of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) once state enabling legislation is enacted. General experience is that this requires an individual champion of the legislation who enjoys enough public trust or influence to facilitate the momentum necessary. Often, citizen committees or exploratory committees are formed to build acceptance. Once finalized, discussions of contract service provision or board representation would then follow. Some considerations before starting the transit authority process include:

- **Board Representation and Decision Equity:** Ultimately, board representation would be determined by the state legislature albeit with input from the general-purpose government units. Also, because board representation could be a point of conflict or disagreement among stakeholders, experience cautions against pre-mature discussions that could hinder the progress of passing state legislation. Ideally, the composition of the board should be held off until enough support is garnered for the effort. The final transit board should be formed to provide equity by reflecting the sources of local funding. Consider a seat for La Crescent on the board.
- **Transfer of Assets and Facility Ownership:** The City of La Crosse could transfer the assets to the new authority. This includes vehicles, equipment, and the facility. Details of the transfer would be agreed upon by the respective city councils of participating municipalities in the RTA and stated in the intergovernmental agreement. The new authority could also purchase partner cities' share of

asset ownership and charge back the capital cost as an element of the service contract charges or continue an undivided joint ownership arrangement. Federal interests can be transferred to another or new grantee.

- **Funding:** With its own taxation powers, the authority would be provided with an opportunity to secure stable source of long-term funding. A levy could be placed on either property or sales tax, or a utility fee. The authority may also be formed without authorizing a millage at the outset but will require start-up funding which may be contributed by the parties involved.

Other Fees and Taxes

Additional fees and revenues to consider for increasing the local funds for MTU operations: including parking fees, community/business partnerships, development impact fees, advertising, and additional funds from the partner cities.

Rural Transit Funds

The FTA Section 5311 program authorizes capital, administrative, operating assistance, and training grants to state agencies, local governments, Native American tribes, and nonprofit organizations providing rural public transportation services. All projects must benefit residents in non-urbanized areas (under 50,000 in population). Section 5311 provides up to 80 percent federal share of the costs for administrative expenses, up to 80 percent for capital costs and up to 50 percent of the net operating cost for rural transit operations.

The state departments of transportation have oversight authority on this funding program and manage the solicitation process for Section 5311 recipients. The Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) is a subset of Section 5311 funding providing grants for training and technical assistance at 100 percent federal share. Additionally, 15 percent of Section 5311 funding, allocated as Section 5311(f), must be set aside to support intercity bus service unless a state can certify that all intercity bus needs are met.

Additional Federal Programs

Some additional federal transportation programs are described below. Other federal programs with transportation benefits are listed in the appendix.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

The FTA Section 5310 program is intended to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities. It does so by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. Eligible recipients of this funding are nonprofit agencies serving older individuals and persons with disabilities, public entities approved by WisDOT to coordinate transportation services for older individuals and persons with disabilities, and public entities providing public and specialized transit services.

At least 55 percent of program allocations must be used on public transportation capital projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. The remaining 45 percent of the program allocations may be used for:

- Public transportation projects exceeding the requirements of ADA .

- Public transit projects improving access to fixed-route services and decreasing the demand of individuals with disabilities for complementary paratransit.
- Assisting alternatives to public transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is a passenger transportation benefit of the Medicaid program. States are required in their Title XIX state plans to ensure necessary transportation of Medicaid beneficiaries to and from health care providers. Expenditures for transportation may be claimed as administrative costs of the state plan. Alternatively, the state may elect to include transportation as medical assistance under its state Medicaid plan, but use a direct vendor payment system consistent with applicable regulations. There are various ways in which a state can construct the network by which these rides are provided to the users. Statewide, regional, or local provider networks are typical.

Older Americans Act

Various programs through the Older Americans Act support transportation for seniors. Grants can be made to social service agencies and transit providers to ensure older adults can reach necessary services such as nutrition, adult day services, and civil services such as government benefits, legal aid, and regular tasks that require presence at public agencies. Older Americans Act funding covers fare subsidy on behalf of the passenger if program funds are used to provide a transportation benefit.

Veteran Transportation Programs

The Veterans Affairs (VA) contracts with medical and paratransit providers to provide transportation services for veterans who need access to health care. Social workers assist clients to refer them to public transit providers or more specialized transport.

Head Start

The Head Start program supports early childhood education for low-income families. Head Start programs are not required to provide transportation services. However, when they do provide those services, there are key regulations in Transportation, 45 CFR § 1303.70 (2016) with which grantee and delegate agencies are required to comply.³

CAPITAL PLANNING

The potential service expansion concepts outlined in the service development chapter list the number of additional buses needed by phase, while the policy and strategic recommendations include an expansion of the number of shelters and enhanced transit amenities. Service expansion would require additional buses beyond the replacement schedule outlined in the Transit Asset Management Plan (TAMP). Additional service and buses would also require additional storage space in the transit garage facilities, as well as washing bays, fueling stations, maintenance bays, and additional administrative personnel and administrative space.

³ <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/transportation/article/requirements-program-transportation-services>

La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility

The MTU revenue fleet consists of 23 buses used for fixed-route service. Of those, up to 16 are used in maximum service, leaving a spare ratio of 30.4 percent. The average age of the fleet is 11.4 years. The fleet operates out of a garage and maintenance facility at 2000 Marco Drive, La Crosse, WI.

As of 2018, 55 percent of MTU's fleet was at or beyond its useful life. MTU has prioritized cleaner diesel and hybrid buses in its replacement orders and plans to convert its fleet gradually to all-electric, beginning with the delivery of two 35-foot buses by Proterra in autumn of 2021. Two electric charging stations are under construction at the garage facility.

New buses are a continuous capital need to replace existing buses that have reached the end of their useful life, as well as expansion buses to support new services. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires transit vehicles to meet minimum service-life standards before vehicles are eligible for replacement without penalty. FTA uses a 13-year or 500,000-mile schedule for bus replacement, and a seven-year schedule for paratransit vans. For financial planning purposes, the procurement cost for a new 35-ft bus should be assumed at \$650,000.

Confirmed MTU projects with funding secured:

- Hoist – two in-ground and one mobile (March 2022)
- Two Electric Buses, two Charging Stations, one infrastructure upgrades (Fall 2021)
- Two Hybrid Buses (July 2021)
- One Apple Express Bus for La Crescent (Fall 2021)

Planned projects:

- Ten (10) new buses with five in 2023 and five in 2024
- Bus Shelter re-vamp in 2023 (estimated 50 shelters)

MTU proposed a new bus barn storage and maintenance facility to the City in December of 2021. The new facility would be adjacent to the current garage on Marco Drive and include administrative offices.

A new transfer point or transfer center at Bridgeview Plaza would need to accommodate at least three buses for the three routes that would serve this pulse point transfer location. The table below includes some design elements for a future transfer point.

Table 33. Transit Center Design Checklist

Bus Bays for Peak Service	Shelters / Covered Waiting Area	Driver Restroom Facilities	Real Time Arrivals
Information Kiosks with Maps & Schedules	Audible Schedule Announcements	Ticket Machines	ADA Accessible
Benches/Seating	Sidewalk Connectivity	Trash Receptacles	Lighting and Safety Features

High ridership stops and the transfer points should also be considered for heated shelters, boarding platforms, and displays with real-time travel information. The cost for additional shelters and stop amenities are listed below.

Table 34. Stop Amenity Costs

Cost Per Element/Amenity	Item Cost (2021)	Basic Stop (Pad and Sign)	Enhanced Stop (Basic Plus Shelter)
Concrete Pad (5 feet by 8 feet)	\$2000	\$2,200	\$11,700 – No Bench \$12,450 - Bench
Sign	\$200		
Bench	\$750		
Shelter (Larger Pad)	\$11,500		

Onalaska Shared Ride

There are six vehicles in use for weekday OSR operations. The 2020-2023 Transportation improvement Program (TIP) includes funding for six new vans. Shared ride minivans should be assumed to have a useful life of three years and 120,000 miles. For financial planning purposes, the procurement cost for a new van should be assumed at \$50,000.

If OSR decides to pursue new shuttle services, additional vans or cutaway minibuses will need to be acquired and some capital funding will need to be reserved for the placement of bus stop signs and shelters.

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit

Two battery electric buses will be added to the SMRT fleet in 2022, initially for deployment on the shorter Blue Route. SMRT intends to order two additional diesel buses in 2022, which are included in the budget. In the years ahead, SMRT hopes to expand its electric vehicle program if the performance of the first two vehicles and charging stations proves successful. For financial planning purposes, the procurement cost for a new medium bus (26 foot) should be assumed at \$110,000. However, the new electric buses cost approximately \$280,000 each.

SMRT should install signage with a map and schedule at least at one bus stop location in every community it serves. A shelter could be added in larger communities with higher ridership, enhancing the visibility of service.

WINTER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engagement efforts conducted in November and December of 2021 provided input on service alignment ideas and service expansion scenarios from current riders and community members through a virtual open house, presentations, discussions with stakeholder groups, and through pop-up events at active destinations in the city, like the Grand River Station and the La Crosse Public Library.

LAPC POLICY BOARD – NOVEMBER 2021

The project team presented to the LAPC Policy Board on November 17. The presentation covered the needs assessment findings, goal development, service development and alternatives, policy and strategic recommendations, financial planning, and an update on public engagement.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS – DECEMBER 2021

The same 34 transportation-needs stakeholders invited to the first round of public engagement were invited to a second round of stakeholder meetings in December. Two stakeholder meetings were scheduled in an “office hour” setting, one virtual through a Zoom videoconferencing call from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM on Tuesday, December 14, and one in-person at the La Crosse County Administrative Center from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM on Wednesday, December 15. Invitees could attend either of the two meetings, which covered the same presentation.

Stakeholders of the following groups and industries were invited:

- Higher Education Students, Faculty, and Staff
- K-12 Administrators
- Workforce & Economic Development, and Business Community
- Community and Advocacy Groups
- Newly Arrived Immigrant Communities and LEP Populations
- Groups and Advocates Representing People with Disabilities and Older Adults
- Social Service Providers
- Health and Human Service Providers and Resources
- Housing Organizations

There were five attendants on Tuesday and six attendants on Wednesday. Attendance records are in the appendix.

The presentation covered the needs assessment findings, goal development, service development and alternatives, policy and strategic recommendations, financial planning, and an update on public engagement. Below is an overview of the discussion and questions that were brought up during the meetings.

Virtual Meeting

During the virtual meeting, the following items were mentioned for future transit improvements:

- A desire to provide service to the apartments south of Gundersen.
- Participants are okay with making changes to routes to speed them up but would like a new route to offer front door service in areas where service was redirected.
- One participant liked the predictability and legibility of the straightened Route 1 concept, helping riders understand destinations. It makes the route less complicated to understand.
- In a poll to indicate preference for changes to Route 1, two participants picked option #2, one picked option #3, and one picked option #4. (See Figure 23 for the graphic)
- Participants acknowledged that a change to one route affects the system as a whole.
- In a poll for service expansion, participants all picked a different option for their priority regarding service span, frequency, new routes, or improved service to Onalaska.
- A clarification about the boards and in-person engagement at the library and transit center.

In-Person Meeting

During the meeting at the La Crosse County Administrative Center, the following items were mentioned:

- There might be a single La Crosse High School in the future, which would require a 37-acre site to accommodate the school, parking, and athletic facilities. The superintendent regularly communicates with MTU to address student transportation issues and explore the potential for transit passes for students and parents.
- WTC students use the SMRT bus to get to La Crosse.
- There was a request to consider bikeshare stations at major bus stops.

In the service planning conversation, the following items were discussed:

- Walking distance: preferably not too far from homes and medical facilities to the bus stop, but it would be okay to walk farther to businesses. Consider the type of destinations that would require front door access.
- If extending routes later at night, consider the routes that serve primarily college students. Participants didn't expect much demand for service in quiet residential neighborhoods and didn't see the need to expand hours on all routes.
- There is a Thursday downtown shopping night event series coming up this spring for college students at UWL, Viterbo, and WTC from 3:00 PM to 9:00 PM. It would be nice to have direct service on those evenings from the colleges to downtown.
- Expand service to populations that would use transit and key destinations.
- For Onalaska-Holmen: consider a park and ride at Bridgeview Plaza with quick service to Downtown La Crosse and UWL.
- Have routes serve the schools; offer and promote student and parent bus passes.
- Hourly service is not useful, 15-minute service would be great.
 - Timing in winter at 30-minute frequencies is tough.
- Route 7: the airport has flights early in the morning and late in the evening. Not much during the day. Consider changes to the schedule to accommodate travelers.
 - That would also complement the student population on French Island.
- Make changes to the schedule to have the buses run by the schools at the end of the school day.

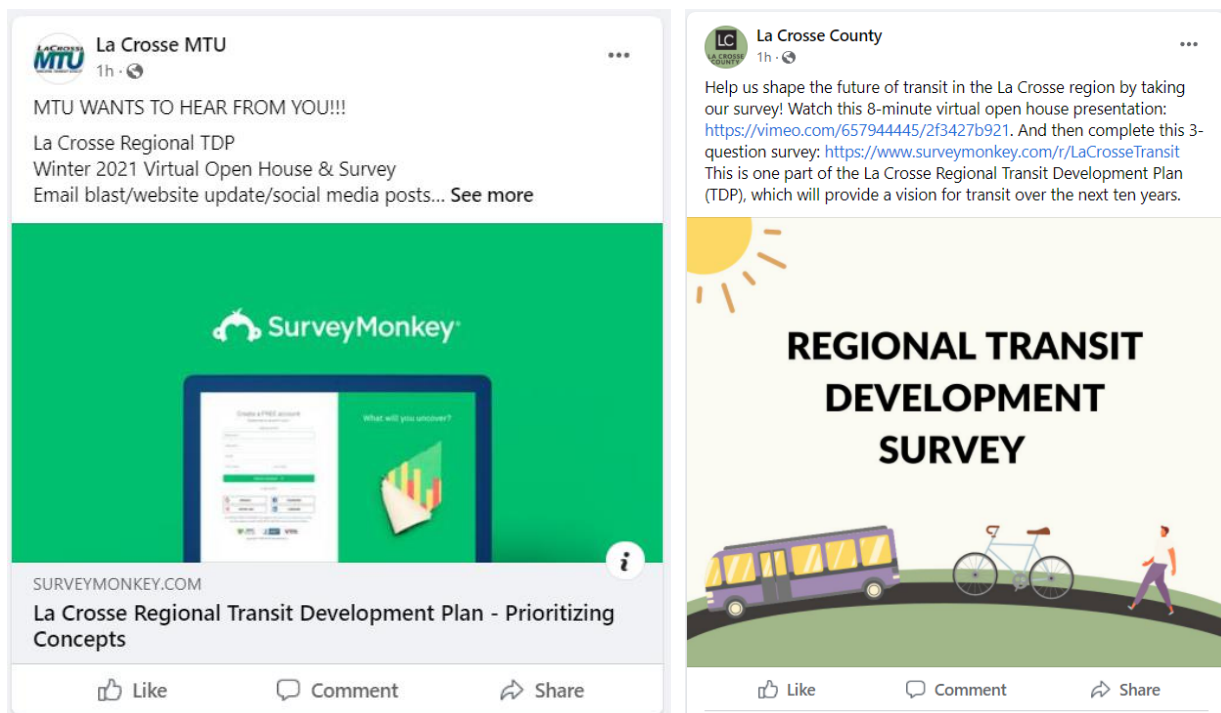
VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE & SURVEY – DECEMBER 2021

The project team developed an 8-minute video that covered most of the topics of the stakeholder meetings. The pre-recorded video was accompanied by a 3-question survey that included questions on route alignment tradeoffs, priorities for service expansion, and a general comment box for people to share any other thoughts on improving transit in the La Crosse Region.

Advertising

Advertising for the open house included social media and email blasts on listservs. On social media, the event was shared on the Facebook pages of La Crosse MTU and La Crosse County. Emails distributed the virtual open house and the survey to the LAPC listserv and the La Crosse Regional TDP stakeholder list, with the ask to share it among their clients, customers, colleagues, and friends.

Figure 22. Virtual Open House Promotions



Presentation

The 8-minute video was posted on Vimeo on December 17 and distributed through a link. The presentation covered the needs assessment findings, goal development, service development and alternatives, policy and strategic recommendations, financial planning, and an update on public engagement.

Survey

At the end of the video, there was a link to a 3-question survey. This survey was also distributed through the promotional materials, and a link and QR code on the display boards at the library and transit center. The

survey was available from December 15 through December 30, 2021, through an online instrument. The survey collected 10 valid responses.

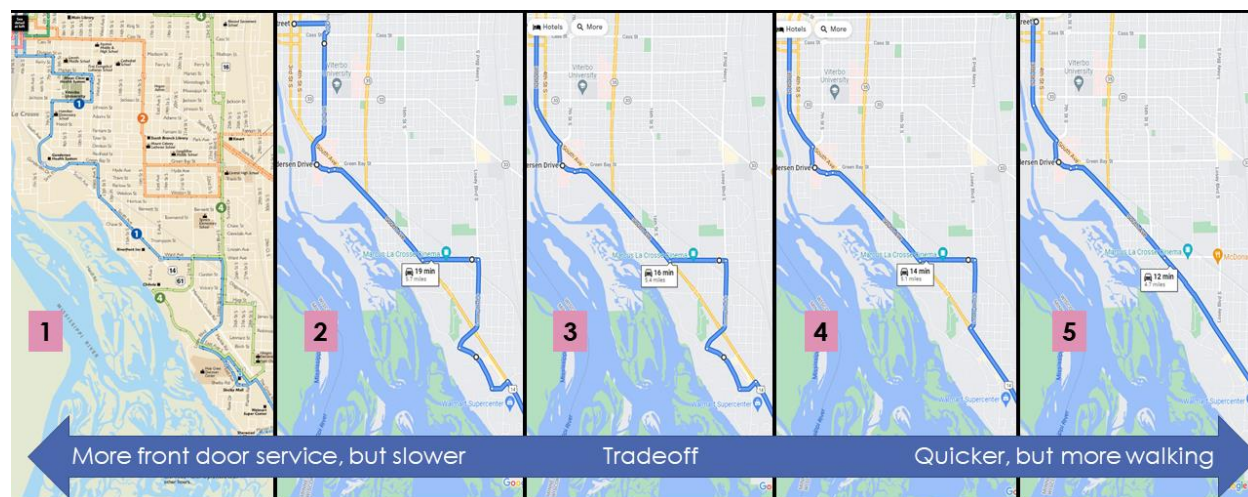
Before the questions, participants were expected to read the display boards or watch the 8-minute open house video. It then included the following prompt:

"Help us shape the future of the La Crosse regional public transit services! The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is developing a plan to guide the region's three public transit systems – La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR), and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) – over the next ten years. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared or used for any other purposes. Thank you!"

This was followed by the Route 1 Example: From Tweaks to Redesign, shown in Figure 23, and the following prompt:

"In transit planning, routes can be aligned to offer front door service, but have longer travel times, or routes can be aligned more direct, but require a longer walking distance to a stop. The Route 1 example above is similar to the approach the planning team takes to other routes in the system, acknowledging that it is a transit system; changes to one route will affect others."

Figure 23. Route 1 Example: From Tweaks to Redesign



Then three questions followed:

- Question 1: Looking at the attached picture and the description of the route alignment options, would you prefer.
- Question 2: If La Crosse MTU received additional transit funding, it could expand service. Which of the following expansion concepts would you prefer MTU invests in: (Please rank)?
- Question 3: What other changes to La Crosse MTU service would you like to see, if any? Please provide any additional comments here, including those specific to a certain bus route, area in the community, or policy

Figure 24. Route 1 Example: Alignment Preference

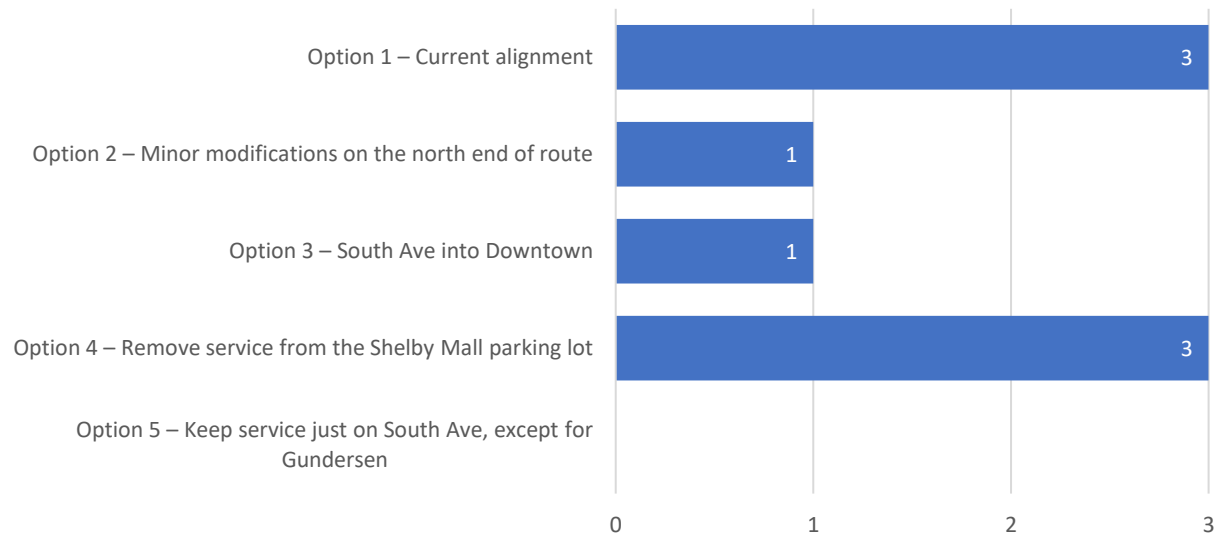


Figure 25. Service Expansion Preferences

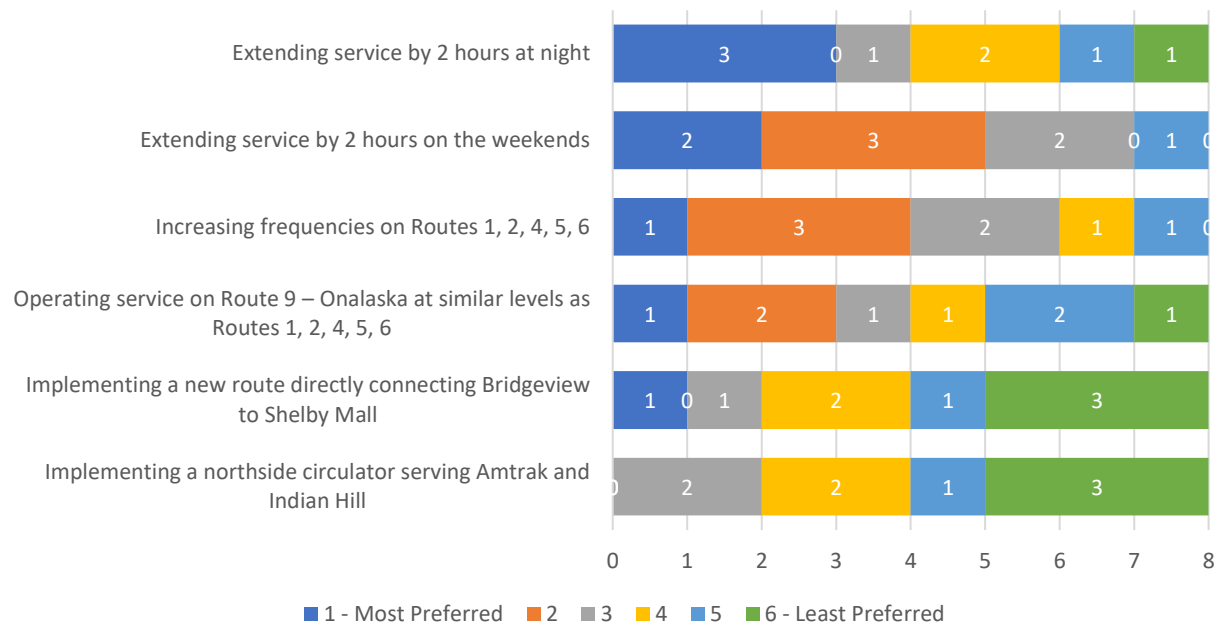


Table 35. December Survey: Open-Ended Responses

#	Comment
1	Have SMRT stop at Transit Center.
2	More routes to/from La Crescent to places in la crosse
3	Extending service towards Holmen and West Salem.
4	Service to La Crescent, or better route from the Apple Bus. It makes many trips, usually with the bus empty.
5	remove Onalaska non paratransit times slots 10:23am-1:25pm
6	A load matching of routes and service, some buses have no one riding them, other are busy reduce service where it is not used. We need general strategies to increase ridership, advertising and promotional events. A program that cleans the buses frequently they are currently very dirty and the cloth upholstery is stained and disgusting. How can we expect people to ride a bus that is obviously, visually dirty, this is a simple and inexpensive fix.

DISPLAY BOARDS – DECEMBER 2021

Four interactive boards were placed at the Grand River Station in La Crosse and at the La Crosse Main Public Library. The library boards were available from Wednesday, December 15 through Friday, December 17. The boards at the transit center were available on the afternoon of December 15, along with a SRF staff member. The boards provided information on the TDP planning process and asked visitors to place stickers on the boards in response to various questions and tradeoffs proposed.

Responses

Participants provided the following preferences and comments at the Grand River Station:

- The intersection of Losey Boulevard and State Road, near the JavaVino and Festival Foods is dangerous to cross. A transit rider appreciates having the circulator to cross the intersection.
- Participants preferred additional service on the weekends and frequency improvements over other service expansion concepts.

Participants provided the following preferences and comments at the La Crosse Public Library:

- For the route alignment tradeoff, there was one dot for keeping the current route (#1), two for making changes to the north end of the route (#2), and one dot for keeping the route on South Avenue (#3). (See Figure 23 for the graphic).
- For the transit expansion, preferences showed:
 - Five dots in favor of frequency improvements
 - Three dots on expanded evening service and a new northside circulator, and two dots for more service on the weekend.
- Two library patrons completed the online survey.

Full results of the December TDP boards are shown in the appendix.

IMPLEMENTATION

This plan was submitted to the LAPC on December 30, 2021. The LAPC will provide the plan to MTU, the City of Onalaska, and SMRT for their consideration and future implementation.

APPENDIX

SMRT OPERATING AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

[Year] Agreement Between La Crosse County
And the [County/City/Village of] Pertaining to Public Transportation

THIS AGREEMENT is made between the La Crosse County acting through the Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit, hereinafter referred to as “SMRT” and the [County/City/Village of]

WITNESSETH

WHEREAS La Crosse County currently operates the SMRT transit system

WHEREAS the purpose of this agreement is to set forth the terms and conditions under which transit service is provided by La Crosse County, through SMRT, to the [County/City/Village of]

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. SMRT shall provide fixed route bus service in conformance with this agreement to the [County/City/Village of]. Routes, schedules, fare structure, and other policy issues will be as determined by La Crosse County and SMRT with input from the [County/City/Village of].
2. Approved bus stop signage shall be located at each bus stop. The [County/City/Village of] will provide the signs and be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the signage. [County/City/Village of] will also be responsible for the purchase and maintenance of any bus stop shelters, benches, or phone station equipment that is purchased.
3. SMRT shall operate [Route Name] in the [County/City/Village of] on a mutually agreed upon schedule shown on Exhibit “A” which is incorporated herein by reference.
4. SMRT shall be responsible to complete, with the advice and assistance of the [County/City/Village of] any forms for federal assistance, assistance from the State of Wisconsin, reports required by federal or state agencies, and all grant applications related to furnishing of bus service to the [County/City/Village of]. La Crosse County and [County/City/Village of] agree that each participating community will pay its portion of the local share of the operating costs of providing bus service. The number of hours of service and the local share cost is as provided on attached Exhibit “B” which is incorporated herein by reference. The hours per community shall be calculated on an annual basis.
5. Any cash contribution received by MTU from [County/City/Village of] businesses for these services will be disclosed to the [County/City/Village of] and deducted from the local share cost for these services.
6. Any dollar amount over or under budget shall be distributed annually to each respective municipality based upon the cost per hour formula at the time the year end audit has been completed. If additional capital funding is made available after the budget has been approved and cost allocation has been determined, the funding must be approved by the SMRT. The funding

must then be approved by the governing bodies of La Crosse County and [County/City/Village of], respectively, before the capital grant application may proceed.

7. The services to be rendered hereunder shall commence on January 1, [Year] and terminate December 31, [Year], unless the parties hereto agree on or before October 1, [Year] to provide service beyond such date. Payment of local share shall be made by [County/City/Village of] to SMRT on a quarterly basis. Such quarterly payments will be made on the 31st day of March, the 30th day of June, the 30th day of September, and the 31st day of December.
8. Except for approved eligible administrative and personnel costs, no member, officer, or employee of the County, or their designees, or agents, no consultant, no member of the governing bodies of said County, City and SMRT, and no other public official of said governing bodies, who exercise or who has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to the project during his/her tenure, or who is in the position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to the project, shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in any contract or subcontract, or the proceeds thereof, who are to perform in connection with this agreement or in any activity or benefit therefrom, which is part of this agreement at any time during such person's tenure or for one year thereafter.
9. Equal Employment Opportunity: In connection with the execution of this contract, SMRT shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, religion, color, sex, or nation of origin. SMRT shall take affirmative action to insure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during their employment, without regard to their race, color, sex, or nation of origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer, recruitment or advertising; layoff, or termination; rates of pay, or other forms of compensation; and the selection for training.
10. Audit and Inspection of Records: SMRT and [County/City/Village of] shall permit the authorized representatives of La Crosse County, the U.S. Department of Transportation; and the Comptroller General of the United States to inspect and audit all data and records of SMRT relating to this contract until the expiration of three (3) years after the final payment under this contract.
11. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise In connection with the performance of this contract, the [County/City/Village of] will cooperate with the La Crosse County in meeting its commitments and goals with regard to maximum utilization of disadvantaged business enterprises and will use its best efforts to insure that disadvantaged business enterprises shall have maximum practicable opportunity to compete for sub-contract work under the contract.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this agreement has been duly executed this [Day] day of [Year].

WITNESS

[County/City/Village of] BY:

[Name, Mayor]

[Name, County/City/Village Clerk]

WITNESS

LA CROSSE COUNTY

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL TRANSIT

[Name, County Board President]

[Name, County Clerk]

Attachments

(1) Exhibit A – Schedule and Map

(2) Exhibit B – Budget Estimate

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS – DECEMBER 2021 ATTENDANCE RECORD

Attendees of the stakeholder meetings in December 2021 are shown below.

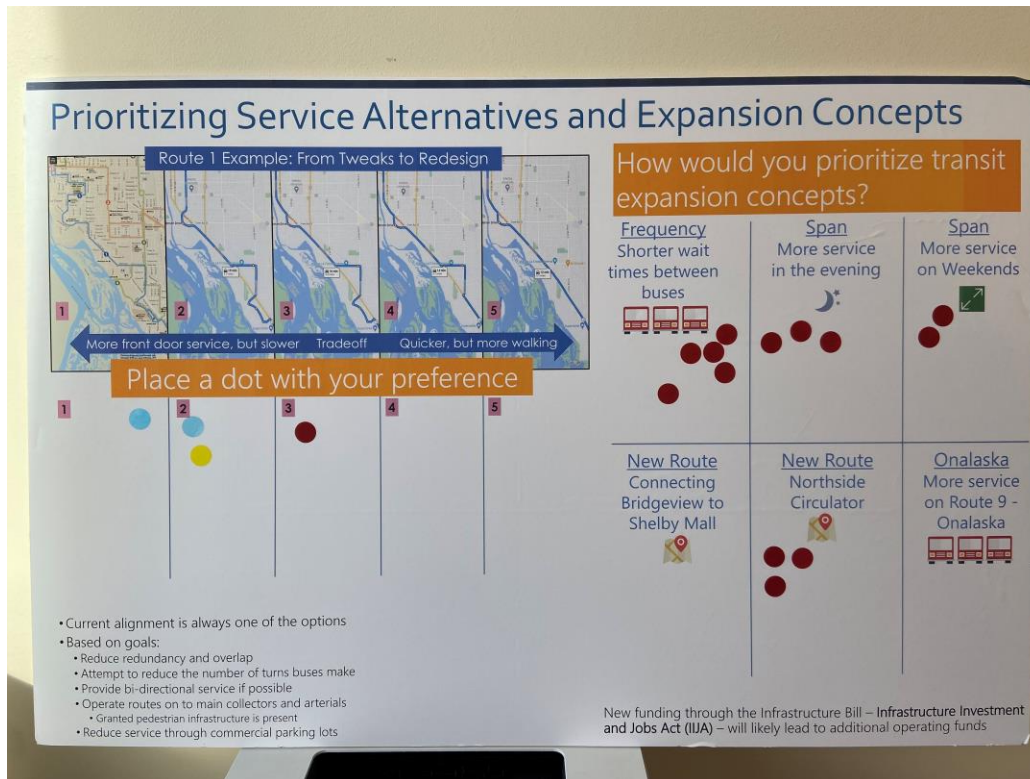
Virtual Meeting, December 14	In-Person Meeting, December 15
Alysa Remsburg, UWL Professor	Aaron Engel, Superintendent La Crosse School District
Cathy Van Maren, La Crosse Area Transit Advocates	Patrick Wilson, Coulee Region Sierra Club
Todd Antony, Superintendent Onalaska School District	Casey Meehan, Western Technical College
Shelley McNeely, Western Technical College	Brook Duncan, La Crosse County ADRC
Shoua Thao, HMOOB Cultural and Community Agency	Pamela Weber, Monroe County ADRC
Peter Fletcher, LAPC	Terry Bauer, La Crosse Downtown Mainstreet
Jackie Eastwood, LAPC	Peter Fletcher, LAPC
Menno Schukking, SRF	Menno Schukking, SRF
	Joe Kapper, SRF (on Zoom)

DISPLAY BOARDS – DECEMBER 2021

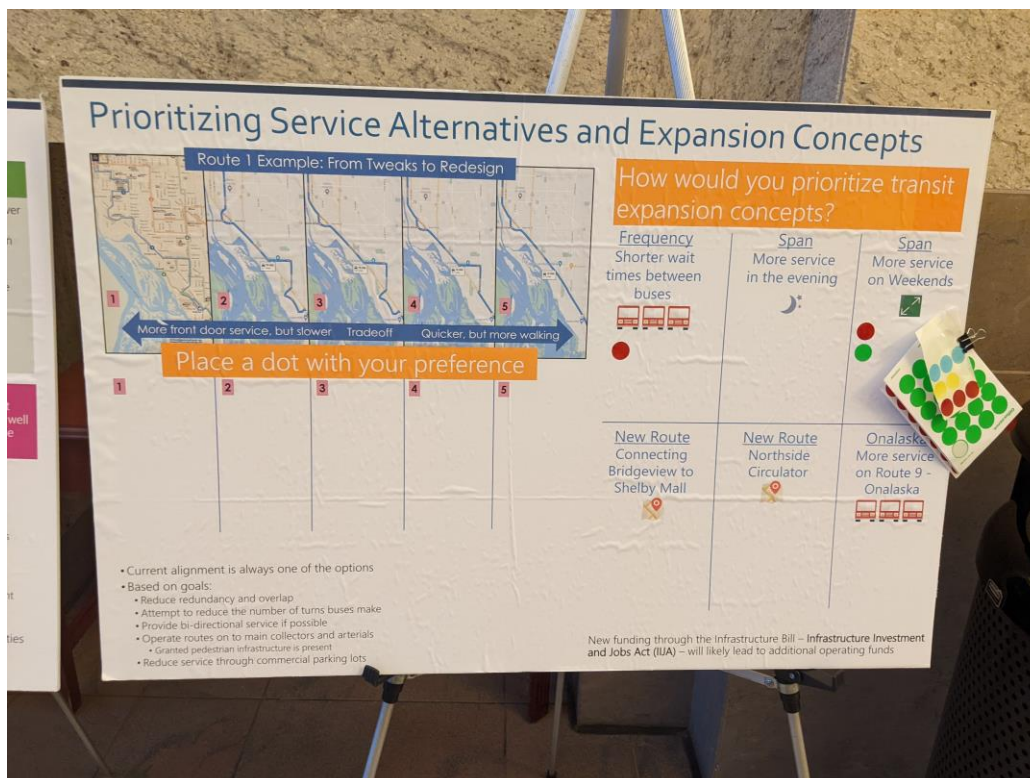
Boards stationed at the La Crosse Public Library and at Grand River Station, pictures show the board set-up and the response at the end of the comment period.



Board feedback at the library:



Board feedback at the Grand River Station transit center:



ADDITIONAL FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Program Title	Program Benefit	Program Purpose	Eligibility
United States Department of Agriculture			
SNAP Employment and Training Program	Advanced payment for fuel/bus fare	Access to education, training, employment services and employment	Low-income (ages 16 to 59)
Department of Education			
21st Century Community Learning Centers	Contract for student transportation service	Access to educational services and programs	Students from low-income families
Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities	Purchase and operate vehicles, Contract for service	Access to educational services and programs	Children with disabilities
Centers for Independent Living	Referral, assistance and training in use of public transportation	Access to program services for general trips	Persons with significant disabilities
Independent Living services for Older Individuals who are blind	Referral, assistance and training in use of public transportation	Access to program services for general trips	Person 55 years or older with significant visual impairment
Supported Employment Services for Individuals with Severe Disabilities	Bus tokens	Access to employment, employment services, and vocational rehab services	Persons with significant disability
Vocational Rehabilitation Grants	Bus tokens	Access to employment, employment services, and vocational rehab services	Persons with physical and mental impairments
Department of Health and Human Services			
Community Services Block Grant Programs	Taxi vouchers and bus tokens	General trips	Low-income persons
Developmental Disabilities Projects for National significance	Transportation information	General trips	Persons with developmental disabilities
Department of Health and Human Services			
Head Start	Purchase and operate vehicles, contract with providers, coordinate with local education agencies	Access to educational services	Children from low-income families
Refugee and Entrant Assistance Discretionary Grants	Bus passes	Access to educational and employment services	Refugees
Refugee and Entrant Targeted Assistance	Bus passes	Access to educational and employment services	Refugees
Refugee and Entrant Assistance Voluntary Programs	Bus passes	Access to educational and employment services	Refugees

Program Title	Program Benefit	Program Purpose	Eligibility
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	Any transportation related use, matching portion of JARC grants	General trips	Families with minor children
Grants for Supportive Services and Senior Centers	Contract for services	Senior program service access, medical and general trips	Person 60 years and older
Program for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian Elders	Purchase and operate vehicles	Medical and general trips	American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian elders
Medicaid	Bus tokens and brokerage services	Access to health care	Low-income persons (generally, but state defines)
State Children's Health Insurance Program	Any transportation related use	Access to health care	Children from low-income families (state determines eligibility)
Community Health Centers	Bus tokens/passes, transportation coordinators, and drivers	Access to health care	Medically underserved population
Healthy Communities Access Program	Improve coordination of transportation	Access to health care	Uninsured/underinsured populations
Healthy Start Initiative	Bus tokens, taxi vouchers	Access to health care	Persons with significant perinatal health disparities
Maternal and Child Services Grants	Any transportation related use	Access to health care	Mothers, infants, and children from low-income families

Department of Health and Human Services

Rural Health Care, Rural Health Network and Small Care Provider Program	Purchase vehicles and bus passes	Access to health care	Medically underserved populations
Community Mental Health Services Block Grants	Purchase vehicles and bus passes	Access to health care	Medically underserved populations
Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant	Any transportation related use	Access to health care	Persons with substance related disorder and/or recovering substance related disorder

United States Department of Labor

Job Corps	Bus tickets	Access to Job Corps sites and employment services	Low-income youth
Native American Employment and Training	Bus tokens, transit passes	Access to employment	Unemployed American Indians and other persons of Native American decent
Senior Community Service Employment Program	Mileage reimbursement, reimbursement for travel costs, and payment for costs of transportation	Access employment	Low-income persons 55 years and older
Trade Adjustment Assistance – Workers	Transit fare	Access to training	Persons found to be impacted by foreign trade, increase imports, or shift in production

Program Title	Program Benefit	Program Purpose	Eligibility
Welfare to Work Grants to Federally Recognized Tribes	Any transportation related use (no vehicle purchase)	Access to employment and employment services	American Indians and other persons of Native American decent who are long-term welfare recipients or are low- income
Welfare to Work Grants to States and Localities	Any transportation related use (no vehicle purchase)	Access to employment and employment services	Long-term welfare recipients or are low-income
Work Incentive Grants	Encourage collaboration with transportation providers	Access one-stop services	Persons with disabilities who are eligible for employment and training services under WIA
Workforce Investment Act Adult Program	Bus tokens/vouchers	Access to training	People on public assistance and low-income individuals
Workforce Investment Act Youth Activities	Public transportation	Access to training and other support services	Youth with low individual or family incomes
United States Department of Labor			
Youth Opportunity Grants	Bus tokens	Access program services	Youth from high poverty areas, empowerment zones or enterprise communities
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project	Bus tokens	Access to employment	Homeless veterans
Veterans' Employment Program	Bus tokens	Access to employment	Veterans
Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration			
Veterans Medical Care Benefits	Contract for services	Access to health care	Veterans with disabilities or low incomes