

4: Northeast Side Transit Opportunities

INTRODUCTION

MILWAUKEE CONNECTOR

THE COMET

KRM COMMUTER LINK

A NEW TRANSIT AUTHORITY

TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

RETAIL DISTRICTS

RECREATION / ENTERTAINMENT/ CULTURAL CENTERS

RESIDENTIAL TRANSIT NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

UWM AND MOBILITY

PROPOSED OR ENHANCED NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT ROUTES

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

NORTHEAST SIDE CORRIDORS

CATALYTIC PROJECT - NORTH AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Side has a mix of employment, housing, schools, health care, major institutions and retail all within walking distance of transit. In preparing for the future, the Northeast Side is an ideal location to increase the number of trips made by transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians. This would in turn decrease the single occupant auto trips and ultimately decrease traffic congestion, reduce air and noise pollution, and improve general mobility in the city.

Transit is a major political issue in Milwaukee that will directly affect the Northeast Side neighborhoods. In the current transit planning process the city and county have evaluated different approaches for using \$91.5 million in federal transit aid that has been set aside for Milwaukee and Southeast Wisconsin transit improvements since the early 1990's. Both the city and county are working through their competing objectives and jointly preparing a negotiated transit plan that will incorporate some of the recent planning efforts, including the Milwaukee Connector, the Comet, SMART and the Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee (KRM) Commuter Link.

MILWAUKEE CONNECTOR

The Milwaukee Connector project originated as a catalytic project and economic development strategy from the 2000 Downtown Plan, to connect neighborhoods to downtown and workers to jobs. Its other intended purpose is to be incorporated into the comprehensive Milwaukee transit proposal and "Locally Preferred Alternative" to provide efficient and modern mass transit. There is 91.5 million set aside from the Federal Transit Administration for Milwaukee transit.

The latest technologies under consideration are Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which is being considered for express routes. In addition the BRT could supplement a Downtown Circulator which is being considered as a streetcar or embedded rail system. The Circulator is being considered for a Downtown loop to start but could be expanded to cover a wider geographic area in the future. This rail-based system would link attractions like the convention center, Grand Avenue Mall, downtown hotels, Intermodal Am Trak Station, lakefront attractions like the Milwaukee Art Museum and Summerfest grounds, etc..

THE COMET

In 2007, Mayor Barrett introduced another initiative called the COMET, for County of Milwaukee Express Transit system. This plan would augment and upgrade Milwaukee County transit buses and offer "comfortable, competitive, high-quality rides" designed to deliver employees and students to their destinations.

The COMET's routes would include an east-west route connecting the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus, Columbia St. Mary's Hospital, the Milwaukee School of

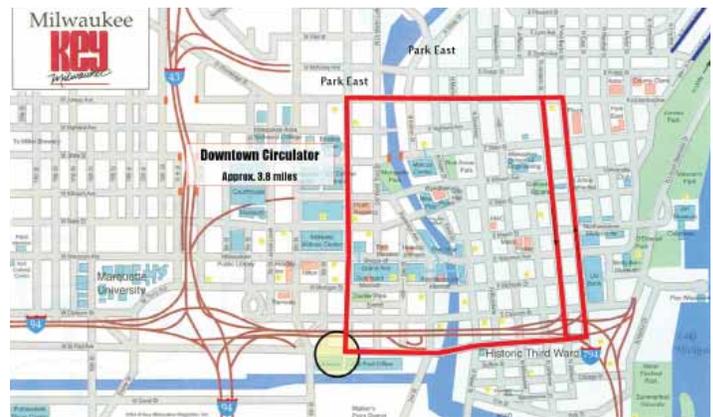


Figure 4.1: Downtown Circulator and Intermodal Station

*Image Source: DCD

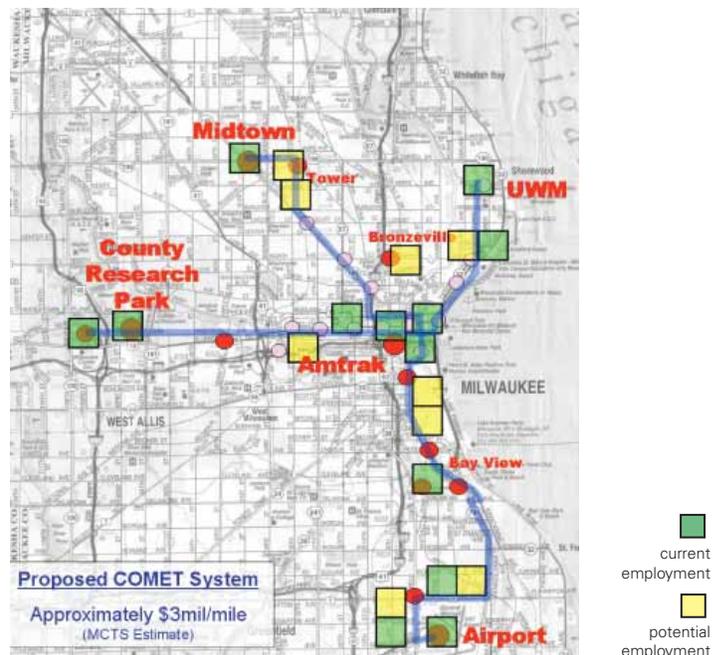


Figure 4.2: The COMET Proposed Corridors

*Image Source: DCD



Figure 4.3: The COMET Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

*Image Source: DCD

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

Engineering, downtown, Marquette University, the Milwaukee County Regional Medical Center and the Milwaukee County Research Park. A north-south route would link the Midtown shopping center, the Tower Automotive redevelopment area, the Fond du Lac Avenue-North Avenue corridor, the Bronzeville area, downtown, Bay View and General Mitchell International Airport. The COMET lines would also stop at the new Intermodal Station downtown.

KENOSHA, RACINE, MILWAUKEE COMMUTER LINK (KRM)

In the Milwaukee area, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority is planning the KRM Commuter Link, a \$200 million rail line that would connect downtown Milwaukee to the south side, the southern suburbs, Racine and Kenosha counties. It has been proposed that the trains would run 14 round trips daily and would link to Chicago's Metra trains. There is some political concern that the KRM line will overshadow the financial needs of the Milwaukee County Transit System, which has experienced frequent fare increases and route cutbacks. A portion of the funding for the proposed KRM transit commuter rail transit is anticipated to be paid by the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" program along with additional local, state and federal funding. (Note: KRM funding is separate from MCTS and 91.5 million set aside for local transit improvements).

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY RESPONSE

While Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker has consistently opposed any rail-based system in Milwaukee County, (and requested the federal money be used for express buses), the previous guided street tram developed as the preferred local alternative was rejected by Mayor Tom Barrett. The Milwaukee Transit Study Committee is trying to develop a locally preferred alternative by reviewing and melding the best aspects of various plans.

A NEW TRANSIT AUTHORITY

These transit efforts are proceeding at the same time community leaders are having long overdue discussions over the future of public transit funding in Southeast Wisconsin. The combination of new transit plans and the financial challenges of local transit agencies (in addition to those of MCTS) in funding ambitions and far reaching new transit plans for the existing Milwaukee County Transit System, have sponsored consideration of a new regional transit authority.

The new RTA would have the primary responsibility of recommending to the State legislature and Governor a permanent dedicated funding source for the local share of capital and operating costs of commuter rail and public transit.

Based on successful transit models currently in operation around the country, a dedicated funding source is a critical step and a key component to making transit viable as a

long term solution to the transportation needs of the metro region.

Currently the county and city are working together with suburban leaders, to study the feasibility of a four-county regional authority with a dedicated revenue source that could take over local bus systems and replace the current transit authorities. However those discussions have not yet produced agreements on managing, operating or funding a new regional transit authority. Despite all the political debates, a Milwaukee-area transit planning is moving forward to seek federal funding within the year.

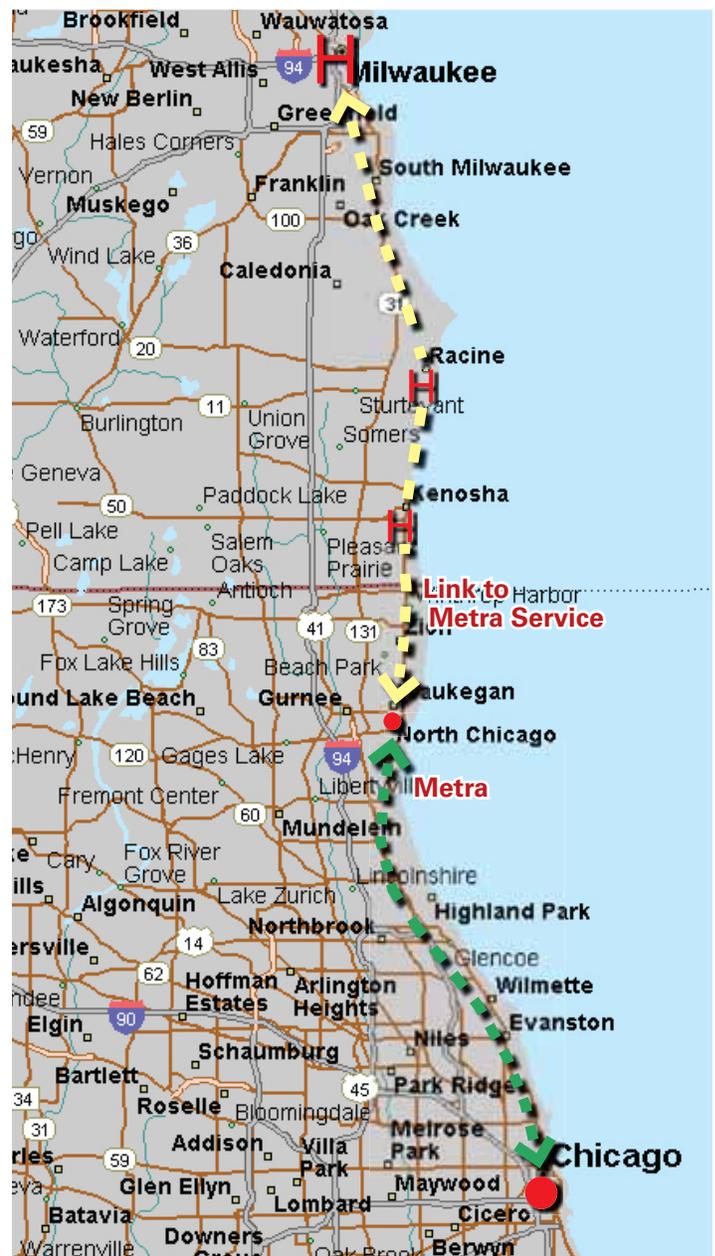


Figure 4.4: Proposed Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee Commuter Link (KRM)

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NORTHEAST SIDE

Despite the larger transit debate for the Milwaukee region, the Northeast Side has some key goals and recommendations for transit improvements to benefit both the Northeast Side and the city. The primary goal is to provide transit where ridership is strong. This has the greatest potential to benefit the community by connecting major employers, retail shopping districts, major institutions (e.g. UWM, Marquette, MATC, etc.) and residents. This is an essential issue for the transit-reliant residents of the Harambee and Riverwest neighborhoods and the denser neighborhoods of the east side. Also, transit service needs to be perceived as a safe, comfortable, efficient and reliable form of transportation to encourage optimal ridership. There are approximately 79,192 daily transit trips serving the Northeast Side with Route 30 (Sherman-Wisconsin) and Route 19 (MLK-S.13th) having the highest ridership numbers.

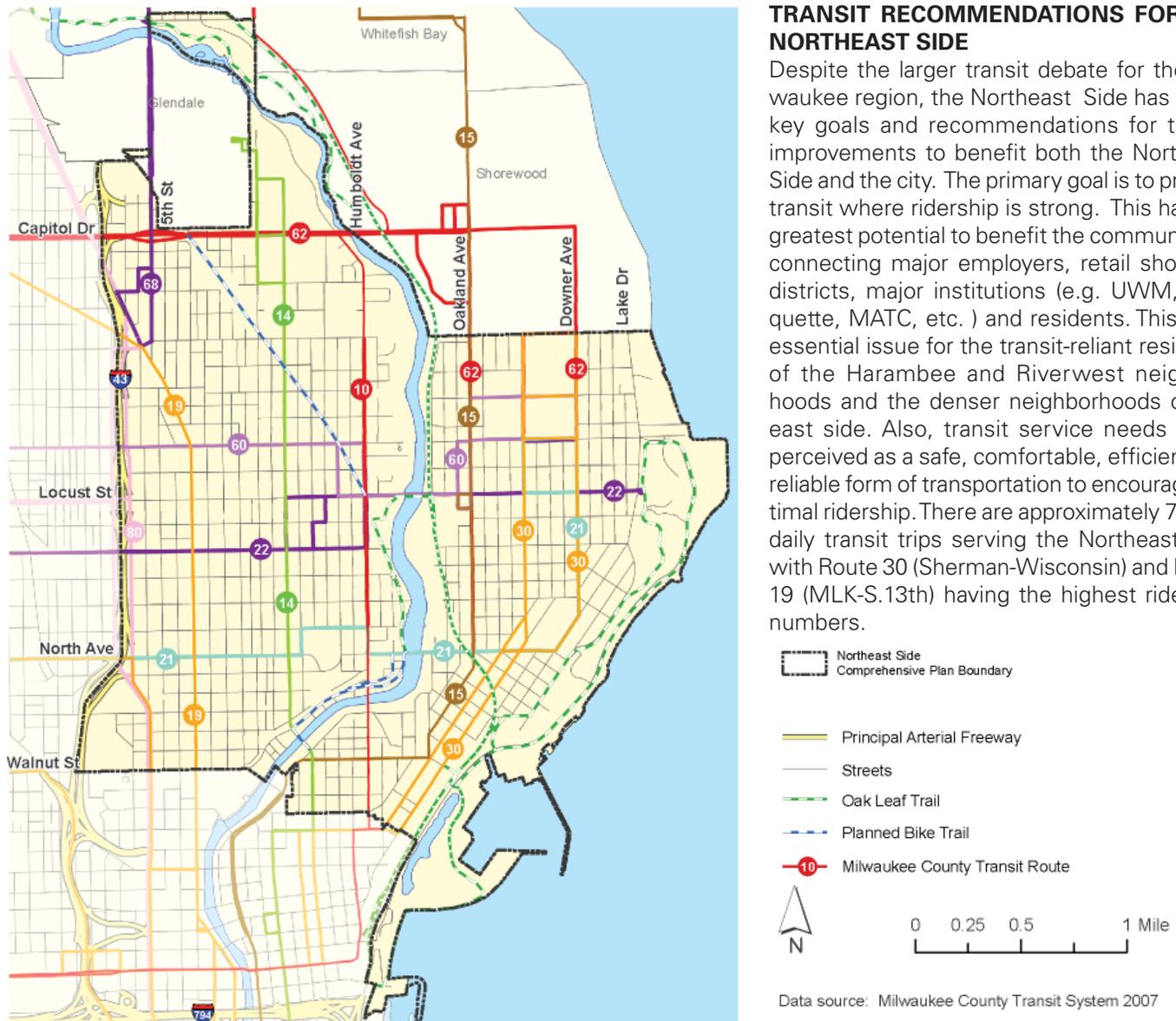


Figure 4.5: Existing Transit

EXISTING NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT ROUTES

The following transit routes are currently serving the Northeast Side. (Refer to existing transit map)

ROUTE	NAME	RIDES PER DAY					TOTAL RIDE
		AM	MD	PM	EVE	LN	
10	Humboldt-Wisconsin	1,431	2,753	1,648	603	595	7,030
14	Holton-Forest Home	1,196	1,847	1,403	478	410	5,334
15	Oakland-Kinnickinnic	1,557	2,715	1,807	735	771	7,585
19	M.L. King-S. 13th	2,168	3,350	2,217	697	611	9,043
21	North Ave.	1,111	2,291	1,508	714	313	5,937
22	Center St.	1,253	1,565	1,289	513	219	4,839
23	Fond du Lac Ave.*	1,946	3,347	2,153	824	834	9,104
30	Sherman-Wisconsin	3,662	6,035	3,905	1,836	1,109	16,547
60	Burleigh St.	1,325	1,596	1,463	595	378	5,357
62	Capitol Dr.	1,866	3,057	2,272	809	412	8,416
Total		17,515	28,556	19,665	7,804	5,652	79,192

Figure 4.6: Existing Northeast Side Transit Routes Ridership Chart (Note: MCTS Rte. 11 has replaced Rte. 14)

* Data Source: MCTS *Included for comparison purposes, note in Northeast Side plan area

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 4.7: Existing Transit

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Many significant employment centers are located in the Northeast Side (refer to the proposed transit map for locations).

- A) Riverworks Industrial Center and (BID) and adjacent Glendale Industrial Center.
- B) UWM Main Campus
- C) Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Complex
- D) Wisconsin Paperboard
- E) Schlitz Park / Manpower
- F) Milwaukee Downtown, Central Business District

RETAIL DISTRICTS

There are numerous shopping districts of varying sizes and retail volumes throughout the Northeast Side.

Riverworks	Capitol Drive Shopping District
Upper East Side	North Avenue (East Side BID), Oakland Avenue Commercial Area (BID) and Downer Avenue (BID)
Lower East Side	North Avenue (East Side BID), Brady Street (BID); Farwell Street
Riverwest	Center, Locust and Holton Street; scattered neighborhood retail
Harambee	MLK Drive and North Avenue

RECREATION / ENTERTAINMENT / CULTURAL CENTERS

There is a wide range of recreation, entertainment and cultural amenities within the Northeast Side and additional transit would help offset parking demand, especially at peak periods.

Downtown	Discovery World, Milwaukee Art Museum including the Calatrava addition
Lakefront	Numerous summertime events, museums, recreational activities and programs
Upper East Side	UWM, Downer, Oakland and North Avenue dining / entertainment (East Side BID), Urban Ecology Center
Lower East Side	Brady Street, Water Street, Farwell Street Dining / Entertainment
Riverwest	Center Street, Churches and other Cultural Institutions
Harambee	King Drive, Bronzeville Entertainment District
Riverfront	Cluster of cultural and entertainment uses along river. Riverwalk, Urban Ecology Center

RESIDENTIAL TRANSIT NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

All the neighborhoods of the Northeast Side would benefit from enhanced transit. However, some lower income areas depend on transit for access to jobs, shopping, medical visits and other daily needs. Many residents of Harambee and students living in the Northeast Side do not own cars and rely exclusively on transit, walking and/or biking. Therefore it is critical that transit needs for these neighborhoods be addressed.

UWM AND MOBILITY

As the UWM population continues to grow and less land is available for parking; there is a greater reliance on transit for students, faculty and staff. UWM will be addressing these issues in detail during their campus master planning process. The University is considering additional campus locations and dedicated transit routes. See UWM Master Plan web site http://www4.uwm.edu/master_plan. The City of Milwaukee's Common Council has stated a preference that these locations be located in the City. See Appendix B for Common Council resolutions passed in 2008 and 2009.

PROPOSED OR ENHANCED NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT ROUTES

The following transit routes should be enhanced to meet future demand based on the location of employers, retail districts, entertainment / recreational areas and residents.

North / South Transit Corridors

MCTS 19/68	MLK to Port Washington: from Downtown Milwaukee to the Bay Shore Town Center; Connecting Downtown to Grand Avenue Mall, Schlitz / Manpower, Bronzeville (North and MLK transit node), MLK Shopping district, Capitol Drive shopping district and Riverworks / Glendale Industrial Center and Bayshore Town Center.
MCTS 11	Holton Street to Capitol Drive from Downtown Milwaukee Connecting Downtown to Brady Street, Holton Street, Capitol Drive, Riverworks Industrial Center.
MCTS 10	Humboldt Boulevard to Capitol Drive to Estabrook Parkway from Downtown Milwaukee to the Bay Shore Town Center; Connecting Downtown to Brady Street, Humboldt Avenue, Capitol Drive, Riverworks / Glendale Industrial Center and Bay Shore Town Center.
MCTS 15	Water Street, to Brady Street to Oakland Avenue, to Silver Spring Avenue from

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown Milwaukee to the Bay Shore Town Center; Connecting Downtown to Brady Street, East Side BID, Oakland Avenue BID, UWM and Bay Shore Town Center.

MCTS 30 Prospect Avenue to Maryland Avenue or Downer Avenue to UWM to Capitol Drive to the Bay Shore Town Center; Connecting Downtown to Brady Street, East Side BID, Maryland Avenue, UWM and Bay Shore Town Center. Note that this route is being considered for BRT status due to heavy ridership and because of its downtown to UWM connection.

East / West Transit Corridors

MCTS 62 University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee through Capitol Drive to Midtown Center and the Brookfield Market Place.

MCTS 21 Wauwatosa Mayfair Mall and Civic Complex through North Avenue to the Columbia St. Mary's Hospital and the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.

MCTS 22 University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Locust to Center Street, with stops at Humboldt Boulevard, Holton Street and Martin Luther King Drive to areas west of the Northeast Side.

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

Allowing higher density development around transit stops can lower the household transportation costs, and therefore increase the supply of affordable housing. Also, the location of housing near transit can decrease the need for the second or third household vehicle. The creation of design guidelines focusing development around transit stops can promote higher density mixed use development that allows transit riders to combine shopping for basic needs (groceries, pharmacy/convenience, daily purchases like coffee, etc.) with the journey to work. Transit Oriented Development should adhere to neighborhood scale, character and context particularly in historic districts. (See Figures 4.8 & 4.9 Downers Grove and Bartlett Illinois.)

Properly designed communities can also help citizens to not only be safer due to slower traffic speeds, but to feel safer because streets are more inviting for pedestrians. Softly lighted rather than over lighted sidewalks along streets designed for slower speeds tend to encourage walking, transit and bicycle trips and attract daytime and evening neighborhood activity.

As the federal government evaluates the appropriation of transit funds, being a "Livable Community" is increasingly an important factor. The characteristics of a livable community include neighborhoods where housing, schools, and parks are within easy walking distance of user-friendly transit opportunities that effectively connect residents with local social and economic services and jobs; and the transit service reflects the diverse needs of the community. Any Transit Oriented Development (TOD) should address the following livable community planning criteria.

Transit, Pedestrian and Bicycle Access: Land use planning, zoning and urban design encourages alternatives to automobile use through walking, transit, and bike riding. Specific measures are taken to encourage bicycle use, e.g. bicycle parking facilities with showers and lockers, bike carriers on buses, expansion of bike lanes, etc.

Mixed Use Neighborhoods: Residential areas that are within walking distance of office and commercial areas, recreation areas, and areas devoted to health, educational and social services.

Economic Development: Transit improvements, such as an embedded rail streetcar line, can be a very important eco-



Figure 4.8: Downers Grove, IL - Example TOD and livable community with a community shopping district and civic plaza.



Figure 4.9: Bartlett Town Center - Bartlett, IL - Example TOD and livable community with a community shopping district and civic plaza.

NORTHEAST SIDE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

conomic development tool because this infrastructure is a permanent framework for investment and assurance that this particular route will be there in the future. It is an added value to both existing and new development, with the economic benefits of having transit riders in close proximity to businesses along the route. Ultimately transit riders are good retail customers. Transit-oriented development connects people to jobs in an efficient way, and tailors land use to transit routes, creating environmentally sound and sustainable development.

Land Use Amenities: Transit stops and facilities that are designed to be safe and comfortable to encourage rider-ship. Areas around transit stops can offer neighborhood services including day care centers, groceries, dry cleaners, and other enterprises that are useful to transit passengers.

Transit Shelters: Improvements to transit shelters should address safety, comfort and information for riders. On major routes, shelters can be designed to address weather protection and provide informational technology signage that indicates the arrival of the next bus.

Safety: Transit stops and streets should be well lit. These areas need to be safe for pedestrians and all transit riders, including persons with disabilities. Traffic calming techniques should be used to provide safety to pedestrians and lower traffic speeds.

Sustainable Environments: Good transit design improves overall air quality. Parking is designed and located to save space and to ensure that buildings are accessible to pedestrians and transit, and not isolated by large parking lots. Livable communities also contain sufficient parks and green space to ensure a high quality of life for the residents.

Community Participation: Livable communities encourage participation by residents, retailers, neighborhood organizations, small and minority businesses, individuals and institutions in the planning process for their communities.

NORTHEAST SIDE CORRIDORS

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Key transportation corridors throughout the Northeast Side provide vital access to the region while connecting major resources such as commercial areas, central employment locations and natural recreation areas. These transportation corridors have a major impact on the image and economy of the Northeast Side, increasing the need for improvement strategies to be carefully planned and coordinated.

North / South Transportation Corridors

Lake Drive and Lincoln Memorial Drive

These two connecting drives provide access to destinations along the lakefront and provide extensive access to area north and south of the Northeast Side. On the north, Lake Drive provides access to the Villages of Shorewood and Whitefish Bay and on the south Lincoln Memorial Drive provides access to Downtown Milwaukee and I-794. These linkages make the drives a prominent route for the Northeast Side, making outside resources available to residents and providing easy access for visitors into the area.

Historic King Drive Transit and Commercial Corridor

This corridor connects Downtown Milwaukee to the Bayshore Town Center in Glendale. It serves as an important connection to major destination points. The corridor should be improved to attract businesses in order to generate additional economic activity. Improvement of individual properties through renovation and reuse of available commercial space, facade improvements and long term redevelopment strategies can lead to increased commercial activity in the area. Streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements can help foster a better corridor image.

Oakland Avenue Transit and Commercial Corridor

This corridor connects the Upper and the Lower East Sides to commercial areas of Capitol Drive and the Village of Shorewood to the north. Commercial nodes along Oakland Avenue at Locust Street, North Avenue and Edgewood Avenue could be strengthened through transit oriented development strategies. The corridor goes through the University Square BID and provides a link to other BIDs of the Northeast Side. Streetscape design on Oakland Avenue should be coordinated with the Village of Shorewood to establish a cohesive linkage.

Farwell Avenue

This commercial and residential corridor connects the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee and the Upper and the Lower East Side with Downtown. It also links two strong commercial nodes at North Avenue and Brady Street. Traffic improvements including the potential for two way traffic

NORTHEAST SIDE CORRIDORS

circulation can help enhance commercial activity in the corridor. Design standards for streetscape improvements that address pedestrian safety as well as design standards for future development could help strengthen the retail environment.

Prospect Avenue

This predominantly multifamily residential corridor also links the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, the Upper and Lower East Side neighborhoods and Downtown. However, it also provides a visual connection to the lakefront. For this reason, highrise development has dominated the land to the east of the corridor. Traffic problems have risen along Prospect Avenue greatly due to vehicular conflicts caused by the lack of loading areas. In addition, high speeds have reduced pedestrian comfort along the corridor. Development design standards can foster a more pedestrian friendly environment that encourages on street commercial activity. Two way traffic circulation has the potential to also help address traffic issues and will be further studied for this area.

Holton Street

This corridor bisects the Northeast Side from north to south establishing the boundary between the Harambee and Riverwest neighborhoods. Current streetscape improvements efforts are making this corridor more pedestrian friendly. Sidewalk widths and opportunities for street tree planting need to be further evaluated. There is potential for the development of commercial / mixed used nodes at Burleigh Street, Locust Street, Center Street, Brown Street, Keefe Avenue and North Avenue which would provide a more active commercial corridor. Facade and lot improvement programs would also help create a cohesive image for the area.

East / West Transportation Corridors

There are very few through streets that provide direct access to the Northeast Side from I-43. The following are the major east / west corridors and access gateways into the Northeast Side.

Capitol Drive Commercial and Mixed Use Gateway Corridor

Capitol Drive is a major connection from I-43 providing access to commercial uses along Capitol Drive and the Riverworks Industrial Center. These are major destinations within the Northeast Side providing opportunities for future economic development for the city. Capitol Drive also provides a link to commercial areas within the Village of Shorewood and access to Lake Drive along the Lake Michigan waterfront.

Locust Street Gateway Corridor

This corridor is a less populated east-west connection and considered a secondary route. It traverses the Northeast Side linking various residential neighborhoods from I-43, over the Milwaukee River to the lakefront. It also connects major employment cluster along the Riverwest neighborhood and at Oakland Avenue. Locust Street has the potential to become a strong central commercial corridor in the Northeast Side through property and streetscape improvements, business attraction incentives and mixed use development.

North Avenue Gateway Corridor

North Avenue is a major east-west corridor that stretches from the Water Tower on Milwaukee's lakefront through central city neighborhoods to the suburbs and exurbs. It is a major historically significant east-west thoroughfare, and continues to be a strong central corridor and gateway to the east side. North Avenue does have "weak links" and deteriorated sections, but has potential to become a stronger corridor through reinvestment and strategic neighborhood improvements.

CATALYTIC PROJECT - NORTH AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

North Avenue is the primary access route for the Northeast Side from I-43 and bisects major commercial areas including the Historic King Drive and the East Side BIDs. It also traverses the Bronzeville Cultural and Entertainment District, serving as a key gateway location. North Avenue is a gateway to many neighborhoods including Riverwest, the Upper East and Lower East Sides.

However, the current building and streetscape conditions do not provide a positive image of North Avenue. Redevelopment opportunities along this corridor would have a major impact and help generate the momentum and economic base needed to promote additional development.

VISION

Link neighborhoods within the Northeast Side through an improved North Avenue that provides a compelling entrance to the area.

AREA BOUNDARIES

North Avenue from I-43 to the lakefront.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The portion of North Avenue between Martin Luther King Drive to Reservoir Park connects the Harambee and Riverwest neighborhoods and offers many redevelopment opportunities, including vacant and underutilized properties. North Avenue from the Milwaukee River to Oakland Avenue has the greatest amount of opportunity sites for redevelopment. This area has the greatest potential to change and provide a catalyst for new development along the entire corridor. The eastern portions of North Avenue (from Oakland Avenue to Lake Drive) provide a model for new development along the corridor where new construction has been carefully planned to fit the neighborhood context.

There is an opportunity for unification of the North Avenue corridor through streetscape improvements that foster pedestrian safety and a cohesive image. Design guidelines for new construction that include mixed use development would help create a more vibrant commercial corridor.



Figure 4.11: Possible North Avenue and 6th Street Culture Center



Figure 4.12: Gateway at North Avenue and Humboldt Boulevard



Figure 4.13: North Avenue Corridor

CATALYTIC PROJECT - NORTH AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

North Avenue is one of the few streets that connect neighborhoods on the east and west side of the Milwaukee River. Linkages to the Milwaukee River must enhance the pedestrian experience and help link neighborhoods on both sides of the river. A pedestrian friendly environment is paramount to the development of the area.

Figure 4.13 provides the location of potential development concepts for North Avenue shown on Figures 4.14 through 4.18. These include a potential cultural center on 6th Street in Bronzeville, a gateway at North Avenue and Humboldt Boulevard, treatment of the Milwaukee River's edge, and redevelopment opportunities in the East Side BID described in further detail under that area's chapter. These illustrate ideas about streetscape, wayfinding and landscape improvements; preservation of natural areas; as well as gathering places and pedestrian safety improvements.



Figure 4.16: North Avenue Streetscape Alternative



Figure 4.14: North Avenue and river's edge



Figure 4.17: North Avenue Library Site



Figure 4.15: North Avenue and river's edge East



Figure 4.18: Gathering Place at North Avenue and Ivanhoe Place