

# Transit Connector



## **Goal**

*Develop a Downtown transit network to facilitate both internal circulation and connections to adjacent neighborhoods*

## **Objective**

- Locate transit stops within five-minute walk of Downtown activity generators.
- Design legible, memorable transit system.
- Connect activity generators throughout Downtown to one another.
- Enhance pedestrian realm.

## **Benefits**

- Increases pedestrian activity.
- Encourages commercial development adjacent to stops.
- Higher utilization of existing parking structures.

## **Responsible Parties**

This project is a two-phase project with different parties responsible for implementation in each phase. Phase one is the institution of a rubber-tire Downtown Trolley system. Milwaukee County, through the Milwaukee County Transit System, has programmed the two initial Trolley routes to begin in 2000.

The Downtown Plan is a long-range plan that anticipates further expansion and enhancements in the Transit Connector system as time passes and ridership increases on the Trolleys. The Plan endorses the decision of the Wisconsin Center District Board to examine the potential for a higher-capacity Transit Connector in the future. The Wisconsin Center study is expected to begin in late 1999

and will develop concepts for the second phase of this project.

## **Rationale**

For a wide variety of reasons, successful Downtowns are busy places where people want to be. Successful Downtowns also attract workers, visitors, tourists, customers, residents, and students at the institutions, streets, buildings and other meeting places where all of these people gather and interact.

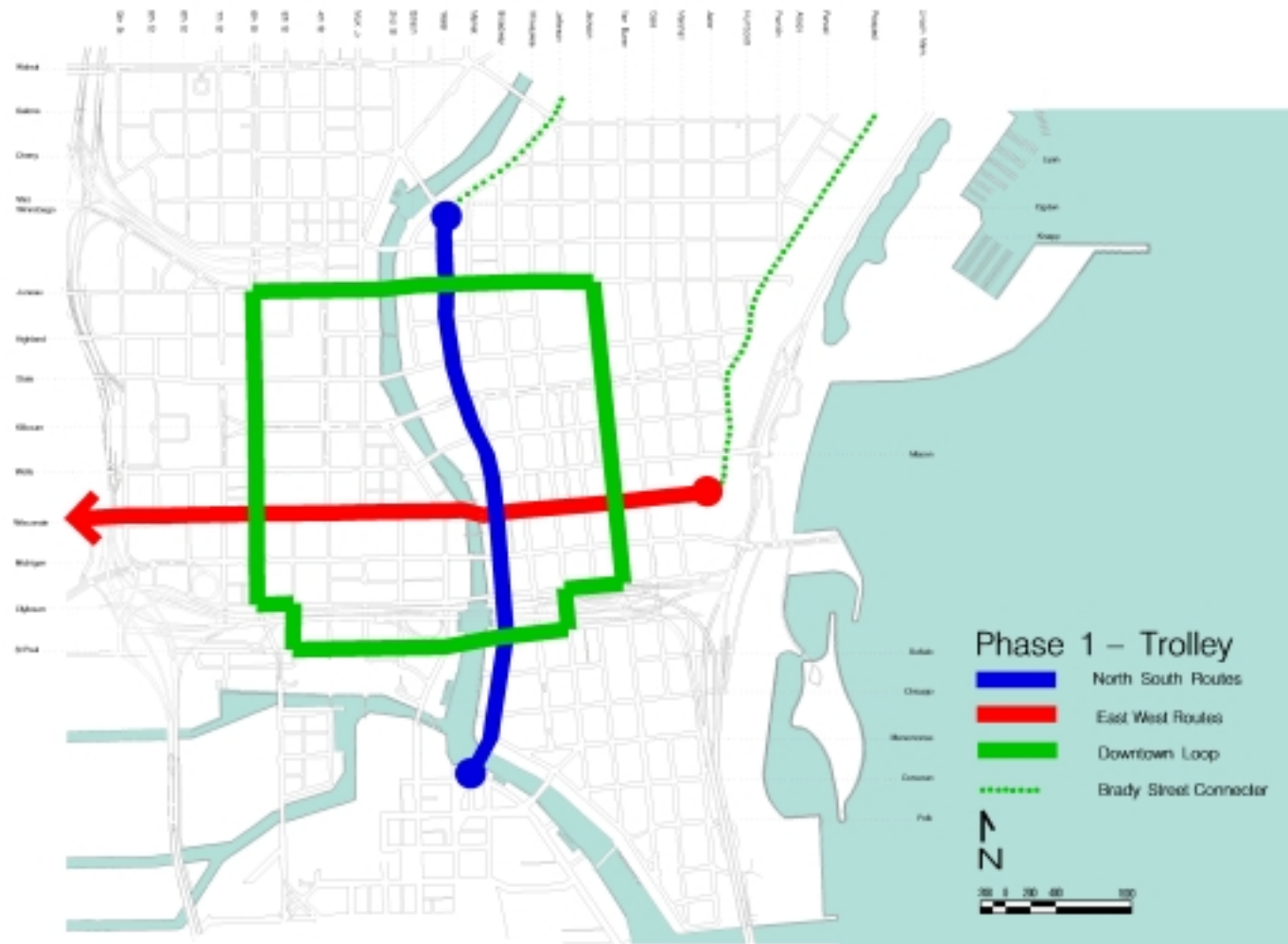
Many recent actions and projects are enhancing Downtown Milwaukee. One of the most pressing challenges facing Downtown is how to provide better connections between its many activity areas.

A transportation system that provides quick and easy movement in and around Downtown will increase the comfort of tourists and convention visitors. They will patronize a larger range of venues. A transit system that moves tourists and visitors between the various new entertainment and retail attractions and workers and residents moving between new housing and new jobs will help Milwaukee become more competitive and desirable as a place to live work and recreate. Easy movement and connections will contribute to a more positive Downtown experience.

## **Recommendations**

The first task of the Vision Translation Workshop asked participants to identify activity generators and positive pedestrian links. Downtown is replete with activity generators. On a seasonal, weekly and daily basis people are drawn primarily to the core of downtown, between I-794 and Juneau Avenue from the lake to 9th Street, as well as the Third Ward and the SummerFest grounds. While the physical proximity of some of the attractions in the





core permits an easy walk, the workshop participants believed that the existing pedestrian links need improvement. They indicated that the quality, appearance and character of the pedestrian realm did not promote walking. Whether these perceptions are fully accurate matters less than the fact that these perceptions exist, and bad perceptions lead to less pedestrian activity.

In the absence of safe, convenient and pleasant transportation alternatives, most people choose to drive to and between these attractions. Other sections of the Downtown Plan provide guidance for reconstituting the urban fabric of Downtown. While this will facilitate walking between many of these attractions and daily uses, only a few will choose to walk to all of them, simply because of the size of Downtown makes the full extent unwalkable. (It is approximately a 30 minute walk from the Hillside-Haymarket neighborhood to the Third Ward). Consequently, this plan proposes that the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) provide and enhance public transportation within the Downtown.

The MCTS has traditionally provided a public transportation connection between Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. These buses are heavily used. However, the MCTS system does not provide attractive service between Downtown activities. If Milwaukee is to fulfill its potential as an important urban center, internal transportation connections must be strengthened. Convention attendees do not want to rent a car, and should not be required to hire taxis, simply to go to a concert at SummerFest or dinner in the Third Ward.

The Downtown Plan document presents a multi-modal phased transportation system that connects such locations. The proposed transportation plan strives to make Downtown more vibrant and livable. The plan recommends:

- small vehicles for circulation within Downtown;
- a different transit system to connect



Downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods;

- a linear Downtown transit system to facilitate quick understanding of the system;
- color coordinated vehicles and stops to facilitate route comprehension.

To make the system immediately comprehensible, the Plan recommends a system of rubber tire trolleys that operate on linear routes. Trolleys emulate older streetcars in form and character. They combine historic charm with modern functionality. Trolleys travel at speeds that are compatible with pedestrians; therefore, they enhance the pedestrian realm.

The trolley stops/kiosks should be integrated with intersection improvements, which include pedestrian crosswalks, signing and other street furniture amenities. The service area from each stop has been diagrammed with an optimum three-minute walk. The three-minute walk (650 feet) gives excellent access within a short walk for everyone. Shorter walking distances and frequent service create incentives to use the system especially in inclement weather.

Stops/kiosks should help identify the lines they serve and enhance the "Park Once" concept.

