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Milwaukee County
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Milwaukee County Receives Initial Federal Approval for Bus Rapid Transit

MILWAUKEE -- Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today announced that the County has received approval from the U.S. Department of Transportation to enter into the Project Development (PD) phase of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit Project, a critical next step in the process to modernize our transit system and drive economic activity in all corners of the County.

This key approval allows Milwaukee County and the Milwaukee County Transit System to begin environmental and engineering studies on the 9-mile BRT route. Further, by entering into the PD phase, any money spent on the studies can be applied as the local match of the project cost.

“This approval is more great news for Milwaukee County,” said County Executive Chris Abele. “When I announced that we would pursue this project we made it clear the goal was to create a fast, modern and affordable way to connect people to jobs, school and economic opportunities. As we move into this next phase we will continue to work with the community, riders and our partners on the Milwaukee County Board and Milwaukee and Wauwatosa Common Councils to make this plan a reality.”

The county executive’s upcoming budget, due October 1st, is expected to include funding to continue planning for the Bus Rapid Transit project as part of a broader commitment to ensuring a sustainable transit system for years to come. As the Public Policy Forum recently observed, Milwaukee County is at a fork in the road when it comes to transportation and infrastructure. In order to preserve the progress we’ve made and have the ability to make smart investments with an eye towards the future, like Bus Rapid Transit, we must take steps to ensure the overall sustainability of our transit system with dedicated funding, like the vehicle registration fee.

The 9-mile BRT route would provide an improved transit connection to major employment and activity centers through downtown Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, Milwaukee’s near west side, and Wauwatosa. With more frequent service and faster travel times, BRT will give riders more time to spend with their families, more time to study for a final exam, or simply more time to relax at home.

An analysis shows that in less than 20 years the BRT project will attract thousands of new riders every day and cut bus travel times on the route. The study team found the proposed BRT service would benefit drivers by taking more than 6,100 cars off the road and reduce the amount of miles people drive by up to 17 million miles a year. Fewer cars mean less congestion on local roads, and cleaner air for everyone.

In late August, Milwaukee County submitted an application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for grant funding for the BRT project. The FTA is expected to announce funding recipients in 2017.

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