

City of Madison

Department of



Transportation

North-South Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Public Participation Plan
Design & Environmental Review Phase

October 2023

Introduction

This public participation plan provides a roadmap for the project team to engage with the public and stakeholders throughout the design and environmental review phase of the North-South Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The project team intends this to be a collaborative, living document which outlines the goals of public involvement and the initial strategies that will be used during the project, while allowing other tools and strategies to be added as appropriate.

The project team will also develop a stakeholder list that will evolve throughout the project.

Project Overview

The City of Madison is building a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system as part of an effort to provide better access to jobs, reduce travel times and improve transit equity throughout the region.

Planning work for the BRT system began in 2012 where the east-west and north-south BRT lines were envisioned. More detailed planning work for the east-west line began in 2018, with design being completed in 2022, construction in 2023 and 2024, and a projected opening in late 2024. Public outreach for the east-west line consisted of several meetings and engagement activities throughout planning, design, and construction.

Planning for the north-south BRT line is beginning in fall 2023, and the project is expected to be complete by the end of 2027. Public outreach for the north-south line will be an integral part of planning and decision-making.

Project Limits

North-South BRT is a proposed 15-mile project in the City of Madison, of which 3.5 miles of guideway and stations is shared with East-West BRT (currently under construction) in the downtown Madison, University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) Campus and isthmus areas.

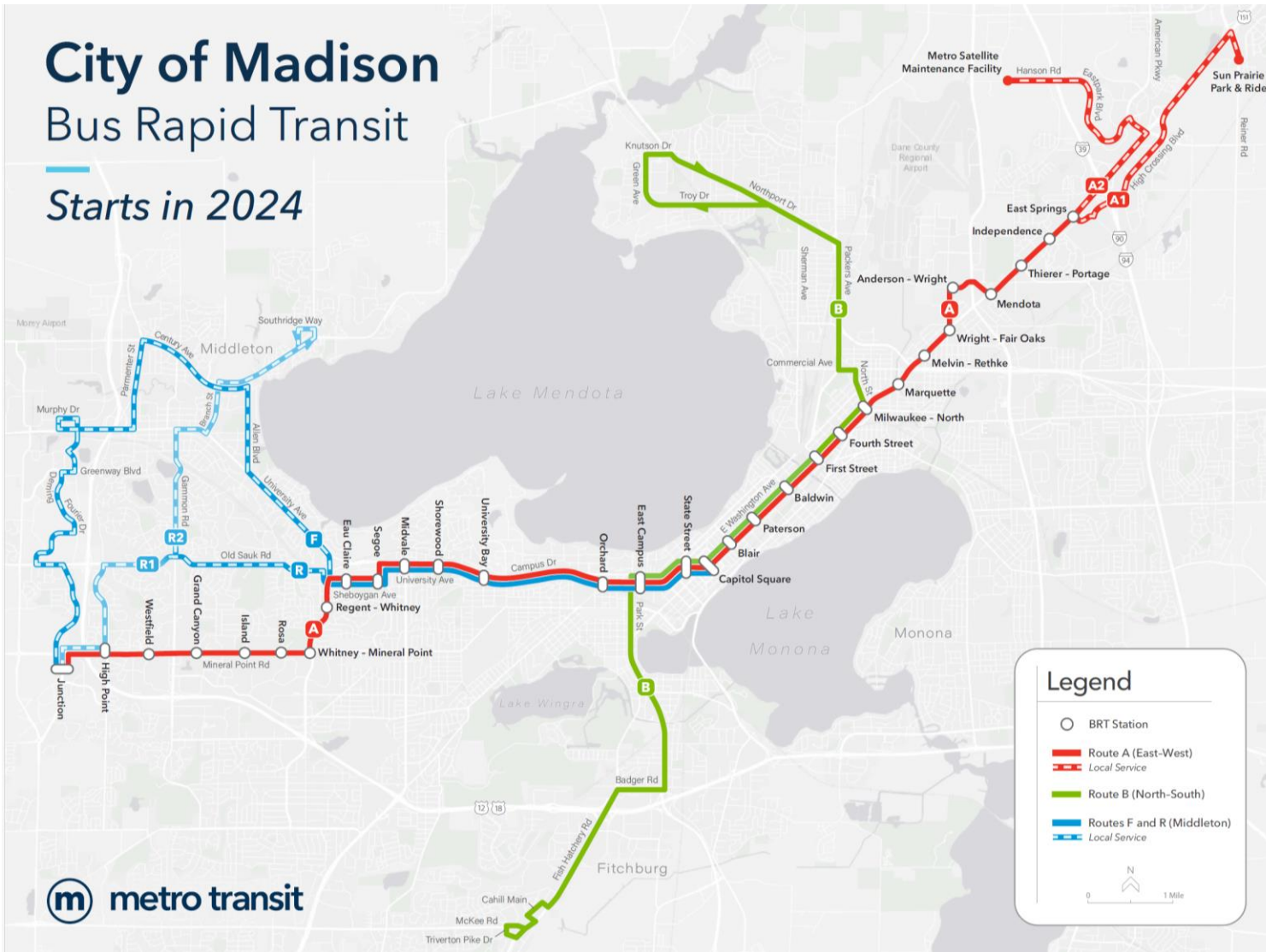
The line will run approximately from Northport Drive in North Madison, through the isthmus and downtown Madison, and through part of the UW Campus, then continue to South Madison and terminate in the City of Fitchburg.

The North-South BRT is expected to serve 33 stations, of which 24 are expected to be constructed through the North-South BRT project. The North-South BRT line shares 9 BRT stations with the East-West BRT.

PROPOSED NORTH-SOUTH BRT LINE (EXISTING ROUTE B)

City of Madison Bus Rapid Transit

Starts in 2024



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Project Partners

- City of Fitchburg
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
- Greater Madison MPO
- Dane County
- Other City of Madison Departments –Department of Civil Rights, Planning, Traffic Engineering, etc.

Goals of Stakeholder and Public Participation


Public participation is a crucial to the success of this project. The project team aims to implement a public involvement strategy that is comprehensive, inclusive, and engaging. The goals of public and stakeholder involvement for this study are to:

- Provide clear and transparent information regarding the study and the decision making process
- Follow the Five R's of Meaningful Public Participation:
 - Be Respectful – value input from all participants, be open to new ideas, be authentic
 - Be Relational – be open, be kind, be inviting, build relationship capital, get to know people
 - Be Receptive – be genuinely open and ready to listen, incorporate ideas, be willing to adapt
 - Be Responsive – use feedback and communicate how it was considered and incorporated, answer all questions in a timely manner
 - Be Real – set realistic expectations and communicate those clearly to community members, help them understand the process and how decisions will be made
 - Be Relevant – Engage with people about things they are actually interested in
- Ensure outreach to underserved populations is comprehensive and ensure explicit consideration of comments made by those from underrepresented communities who will be most impacted by changes proposed
- Ensure that public engagement efforts and materials are inclusive—allowing full participation by any member of the public regardless of income, race/ethnicity, level of education, spoken language, disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation
- Engage a broad group of stakeholders including neighborhood organizations, community groups, non-profits, businesses, and more
- Meet all necessary Federal requirements under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Small Starts grant program

Levels of Public Participation and Strategies

As it relates to the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation,¹ the public participation process for this effort will focus primarily on informing, consulting, and involving the public and stakeholders.

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) via the City of Madison’s Public Participation Resource Guide (developed by the Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative)

¹ International Association for Public Participation, <https://www.iap2.org/>.

STRATEGIES

Examples of public participation strategies under the “inform”, “consult”, and “involve” levels of public participation that will be used throughout the project are listed below. Additional strategies and tools will be added as appropriate as the project progresses:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE
Fact sheets	Public comment forms and surveys	One-on-one stakeholder meetings
Information on website and social media	Group stakeholder meetings and presentations with discussion	Community mapping – pedestrian improvements
Tables/booths at community gatherings	Focus groups (in coordination with Regional Planning Commission)	Iterative discussions with members of the public and stakeholders (i.e., making changes based on feedback and following up with those changes, etc.)
Press releases	Interactive open house	
Alder communications / blogs	Responding to public comment and asking follow-up questions	
E-blasts		
Postcards		
Signs and handouts on buses		
Targeted communication to stakeholders via email		

MAKE IT EASY, INCLUSIVE, AND ACCESSIBLE

The project team will approach all of its public and stakeholder participation activities through a lens of convenience, inclusivity, and accessibility. The following strategies will be used and more may be added as needed throughout the project:

- Offer meeting options in-person and virtually
- Be accommodating with meeting times and locations
- Hold in-person meetings at transit-accessible locations
- Follow the language access plan described in the following section of this plan
- Include alternative text on website images and either descriptive audio and/or closed captioning on videos
- Upload all presentations, handouts, etc. on project website
- Create handouts with QR codes
- Avoid jargon and technical terms
- Partner with community organizations or the City’s Dept. of Civil Rights’ Community Navigators to spread awareness, which may include compensating organizations or individuals to assist with outreach activities or provide feedback in certain settings
- Develop a working document to track stakeholder engagement and add to it throughout the project

PUBLIC INPUT FOCUS AREAS

Feedback about any part of the project will be welcomed and considered; however, the project team is focused on seeking public input on the following aspects of the project:

- Station locations
- Routing on the north and south ends of the route (route termini)
- The locations of bus-only lanes
- Related roadway, walking, and biking improvements to ensure safe and convenient access to stations

Language Access Plan

The City of Madison has a Language Access Program which provides access to City services for people whose primary language is not English. This project is committed to ensuring that requests for accommodations, translation, and interpretation services are met in a timely and complete manner in order to allow all interested individuals to meaningfully participate in public involvement activities for this effort.

Staff managing the public involvement effort for this project will work closely with the City's Department of Civil rights to ensure the following:

- Language interpreters providing services in Hmong, Spanish, and Mandarin are available at all in-person and by request at virtual public meetings (due to the intensity of consecutive interpretation);
- Meeting notices and vital materials are translated into Hmong, Spanish, and Chinese;
- Complete a plain language review of vital materials, including any display or presentation materials, to ensure readability for a broad audience and to increase the quality of the translation services;
- The following text, translated into primary languages, is included at the top of all public meeting notices: "If you need an interpreter, translator, materials in alternate formats or other accommodations to access this service, activity, or program, please call the phone number or send a message to the email address below immediately. Language assistance will be provided at no cost."

Key Facts about the Project (Talking Points)

WHAT IS BRT?

A Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT, system is a **high-quality** bus-based transit system that delivers **fast, comfortable, and cost effective service** on a **high-use bus route**.

BRT includes:

- Direct routes and fewer stops
- Frequent, all-day service
- Bus-only lanes
- Branded stations and buses
- Transit signal priority
- Articulated electric buses
- Faster fare payment

WHY EXPAND THE BRT SYSTEM TO THE NORTH-SOUTH LINE?

Convenience

North-South BRT will run throughout the day with service every 15 minutes from 6 am until 8 pm. Convenient features like all-door boarding, fewer delays, and real-time bus arrival information at stations.

Reliability

Dedicated bus lanes and transit signal priority will make the service more reliable.

Comfort

The following features will improve comfort for all users:

1. Enhanced stations with shelter, lighting, heat, and seating;
2. Near-level boarding platforms (doors on both sides of bus); and
3. Modern, electric, 60-foot buses (starting in 2024)

Expanding Access

North-South BRT will provide high quality transit to the diverse people and places that make up Madison's Northside and Southside neighborhoods, and the Fish Hatchery Road corridor in Fitchburg, including:

- 97,000 people
- 78,000 jobs
- Healthcare, education, grocery stores, entertainment, and more
- 19,000 car-free households
- 6,800 people with disabilities
- 33,000 people of color
- 14,000 lower income households
- 6,800 seniors
- 10,700 youth under the age of 18

Environment

North-South BRT will use battery electric buses and the improvements are expected to increase ridership, reducing the region's reliance on fossil fuels.

Economy

This project would direct local and federal investment in Madison’s north and south sides—catalyzing economic development to help make the community vision for these neighborhoods a reality, while also reducing transportation costs for families.

Safety

Project includes Park Street reconstruction with dedicated bus lane and shared-use path. Dedicated bus lanes in other segments will help calm traffic; improvements to walking and biking connections are also expected.

FUNDING SOURCES

Funding sources for the project are expected to include approximately 80 percent Federal dollars and 20 percent local match. Cost estimates will be developed as the project progresses.

Project Timeline

PROJECT TIMELINE WITH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MILESTONES

2023-2025: Design and Environmental Review

Public involvement for the Design and Environmental Review phase of the project will tentatively include two rounds of in-person and virtual public involvement, in addition to meeting with alders, key stakeholders, and providing opportunity for the public to provide feedback throughout the process. A plan for the two rounds of public involvement meetings is described below:

Round 1 – Fall 2023 (prior to 10% Design)

- Public Meetings
 - In-person (open-house style) meetings (one each on the north side, south side, and in Fitchburg) and at least one virtual meeting
 - *Staff will provide access to printed meeting materials at libraries and Metro Offices in addition to making them available online*
- Stakeholder meetings
- Meetings with elected officials and relevant City of Madison Boards, Committees, and Commissions
- Goals of public involvement:
 - Share information about the project and gather feedback about station locations, routing, location of bus only lanes, and related roadway, biking and walking improvements.

Round 2 – Winter 2024 (prior to adopting Locally Preferred Alternative / 30% Design):

- Public Meetings
 - In-person (open-house style) and virtual meetings schedule (one each on the north side, south side, and in Fitchburg) and at least one virtual meeting
 - *Staff will provide access to printed meeting materials at libraries and Metro Offices in addition to making them available online*
- Stakeholder meetings
- Meetings with elected officials and relevant City of Madison Boards, Committees, and Commissions
- Goals of public involvement:
 - Summarize feedback received during round 1 and describe how feedback was incorporated, provide any updates on the project timeline, collect any final comments before the locally preferred alternative is adopted.

Note: Additional rounds of public involvement may be added as needed and would be expected to follow a similar format as those described above.

The timeline will be adjusted and/or additional public meetings will be added as needed.

2026 - 2027: Construction

Public involvement throughout with dates and details determined at a later time

2027: North-South BRT Open to Service