



Metro Transit System

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TO: City of Madison Plan Commission
FROM: Drew Beck, Transit Planning and Scheduling Manager, Metro Transit
SUBJECT: **8001 Raymond Road – Conditional Use – “Meriter Psychiatry Hospital Addition”**

Metro Transit has reviewed the subject development and requests that the Plan Commission give consideration to specific supplemental conditions in granting approval of a conditional use permit for this property, adding ten new inpatient beds, an intensive new outpatient program and other public events, at this specific location.

The City of Madison does not currently fund Metro Transit for operation of daily, all-day, transit service that reaches the McKee Road corridor. Limited, commuter route service on weekdays does exist between the Muir Field Road and Maple Grove Drive intersections. Regularly scheduled mid-day, evening and weekend route service otherwise terminates north of McKee Road, along Carnwood Drive between Muir Field Road and McKenna Boulevard. It is approximately one mile walking distance from the commuter bus stops on weekdays (corner of Muir Field and McKee), and almost one and one-half miles from the bus stop with regularly scheduled daily, all-day service (corner of Carnwood Drive and Muir Field Road).

Metro Transit’s service area is formally defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of regularly scheduled bus routes. This service area definition establishes the eligibility boundaries for the complementary paratransit service required under the Americans with Disabilities Act, that is available to passengers who are not able to use the fixed route transit bus routes or stop locations. The property addressed 8001 Raymond Road does not meet these regulatory guidelines, meaning passengers who are unable to ride fixed route transit vehicles and are certified as eligible for complementary paratransit rides would not be permitted to schedule trips to or from this property.

In May of 2007, the property owner of 8001 Raymond Road had sought City approval for construction of the now-adjacent medical clinic, that was eventually subdivided onto a new parcel addressed as 3201 Meriter Way.

In response to this application, Metro Transit identified the same transit service deficiencies as above, that persist to this day. Metro Transit, citing “the nature of primary care medical clinics generating a higher than average transit ridership demand, particularly from paratransit-eligible riders who in some cases do not have other transportation options” also stated our agency “can not express support for this proposed rezoning.”

The staff report from the City Planning unit echoed these concerns regarding the provision of municipal services (public transportation) to this site:

Another significant consideration in the approval of the requested OI rezoning and establishment of a medical clinic on the site is the relative isolation of the site from transportation facilities. It is a general planning recommendation that people-intensive uses such as medical clinics and schools, for example, should be readily accessible to a large cross-section of the population, including persons without access to private automobiles.

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The staff report also expressed concern “with what appears to be an incremental approach to the development of the 63-acre Meriter property represented first through the planning effort undertaken for the adolescent psychiatric hospital in 2003 and now with the proposed medical clinic and office building.” Looking forward, the City Planning unit identified a need for more information about “the ability to provide public services to any additional development, including multi-modal transportation.” As conclusion, the Planning Unit staff report summarized:

[...] staff remain concerned by Meriter’s incremental approach, and recommend that no additional development be considered on this property until there is a comprehensive plan indicating what types of uses may be proposed in both the near and longer-term. Staff strongly urges the Plan Commission and Common Council to encourage the property owner to pursue the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the property well in advance of submitting any proposals for the remaining developable area of the 63-acre site. The plan should address future land uses, transportation access and circulation to and within the site.

Then Vice-President of Meriter Health Services, Fred McGee, included the following sentence in the conclusion of their project letter of intent of May 7, 2007 – submitted as part of their application package, for City review and approval:

Meriter also commits to submitting a full master plan for City approval outlining the uses and timetable for development on the remainder of its property.

UnityPoint Health-Meriter has now submitted the present application, an expansion of their Adolescent Psychiatric hospital, for development on what is the remainder of this property at 8001 Raymond Road.

In 2009, Metro Transit received written feedback from a University of Wisconsin email address – an individual that identified as an intern working at Meriter Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, which at the time was limited to providing inpatient care for children and adolescents.

While working at Meriter, I have observed a barrier that prevents many families from fully engaging in the child’s treatment. This barrier is in access to transportation to the location of the hospital. There are several reasons a family may have limited transportation ability. First, the family may not be able to financially afford a vehicle or pay for the gas to drive to the hospital. A family may be unable to legally drive due to not having documentation as a legal resident or losing their driver’s license. The nearest bus stop at this time is 1.5 miles from the hospital, which limits the availability of this community service. Families are generally unable to walk from the bus stop as the distance, weather, physical requirement, and lack of sidewalks limit the availability of walking to the hospital.

Patients are admitted to the hospital and the average length of stay is between five to ten days. During this time, the children are separated from their families. The family has an integral role in the treatment for the child as they are invited to meetings with the treatment team, encouraged to have daily face-to-face contact with their child to monitor progress and provide updates to the treatment team. Available and affordable transportation is critical to ensuring ongoing family involvement.

I am writing to advocate for increased access through improved bus transit service to the area. I am writing on behalf of the clients with whom I work, as a bus stop near the location of the hospital would directly benefit the patients and families of our community.

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Specific to the approved medical clinic at this site, Metro Transit has received either phone or written feedback from an employee of the clinic, both a general patient and a paratransit-eligible patient - that had needed to coordinate private accessible transportation to reach an appointment, a local resident that identified the general lack of transit service in the area – specifically referencing the presence of the clinic in support of expanded service.

General to health care clinics, Metro Transit has received written feedback from a UnityPoint corporate email account that identified as a clinic manager – requesting extension of transit service to their facility.

With no master plan having been drafted or adopted for the 63-acre site, Metro Transit requests that the Plan Commission do adopt conditions of approval for the current development, that would begin to address some of the transportation components of the anticipated contents of a master plan cited in the 2007 project review for this parcel:

- The applicant shall draft and implement an accessible transportation plan that will be made available to employees, patients and visitors otherwise dependent upon City public transportation services (fixed route or paratransit). This transportation management plan will compensate for the inability of the City to currently provide sufficient transit service at this site, and shall remain in effect until such time that the City funds an expansion of the public transportation service area, that would encompass this property, for the entirety of each transit service day.

The intent of this condition would be to allow Metro Transit, City Alders and the Mayor to direct an appropriate response to future requests of City residents, identifying a need for public transportation service to this site. This response from the City would include reference to the applicant's adopted transportation plan, committing the applicant to have established and actively coordinate an accessible transportation alternative for their employees, patients and visitors, until such time that the City of Madison budget permitted expansion of the transit service area to reach the area of this proposed project.

- The applicant shall identify where accessible bus stop zones could be constructed along an existing – or planned – collected or high classification street, if the City were to fund a future extension of fixed route transit service towards the site.

The intent of this condition would be to have the adopted site plan – including any proposed relocation of the existing public street right-of-way easement, or establishment of additional access easements for public transit vehicles to operate on private property – designed to be able to accommodate future fixed route bus ingress and egress to an accessible bus stop (and potentially layover) location.

- The applicant shall provide an accessible pedestrian connection between their property's vehicular access to a collector or higher classification street and the nearest public building entrance to the hospital.

The intent of this condition would be to have the adopted site plan identify accessible public walkways between the public street network, existing bus stops, and the planned building entrances.

Sincerely,



Drew Beck, Transit Planning and Scheduling Manager

CC: Tom Lynch, Director, Department of Transportation
Natalie Erdman, Director, Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development
Heather Stouder, Director, Planning Division

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