ON TRACK FOR THE FUTURE

MADISON PASSENGER RAIL STATION STUDY

November 2025

Final Draft

CITY OF MADISON

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1. INTRODUCTION

PASSENGER RAIL AND MADISON – A PRIMER

Today, Madison is among the larger metropolitan areas in the Midwest not served by passenger rail. Madison previously had passenger rail service provided by multiple railroads, including the Chicago and North Western Railway (Figure 1.1) and the Milwaukee Road (Figure 1.2), connecting to Chicago, Milwaukee, and the Twin Cities, as well as a branch of the Illinois Central. Passenger service ended in 1971 as a result of federal legislation that restructured passenger rail and established Amtrak. During this time, routes were streamlined and re-prioritized to focus on higher-demand corridors, leading to the discontinuation of service to many cities, including Madison. The four historic station buildings in Madison have been demolished or repurposed for other uses.

Figure 1.1: Chicago and North Western Railway Station, 1956
640 West Washington Avenue, Madison, Wis.
Wisconsin Historical Society

Figure 1.2: Milwaukee Road Depot, 1956
201 South Blair Street, Madison, Wis.
John E. Gruber / Center for Railroad Photography & Art

The routes Amtrak retained within Wisconsin are seeing strong ridership. The Hiawatha currently offers seven weekday round trips between Chicago and Milwaukee, making it Amtrak's sixth-busiest route and the top-performing service outside the East and West Coasts. From September 2023 to October 2024, it carried 665,000 riders—a 4.4 percent increase over the previous year. Meanwhile, the new Borealis service, with one daily round trip on the Chicago–St. Paul corridor, recorded an impressive 205,000 riders in its first full year of operation. Both the Hiawatha and the Borealis are Amtrak-operated and funded through a partnership with the Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota Departments of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration, under the "state-supported" service program. Wisconsin is also served by the Empire Builder, a long-distance train route operated by Amtrak that connects Chicago to the Pacific Northwest—a federally supported service. Both the Borealis and the Empire Builder serve a station approximately 30 miles northeast of Madison in Columbus, Wisconsin.

Recent federal and state plans, including Amtrak Connects US (2020), the Midwest Regional Rail Plan (2021) and the Wisconsin Rail Plan (2023), identify corridors for intercity passenger rail expansion in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest with Madison as a key market for future service. These plans coupled with more recent federal funding programs for passenger rail have laid the foundation for future intercity passenger rail to Madison.

Since the remaining station buildings in Madison have been repurposed and no boarding platforms remain, any new Amtrak service would require a new station. This study is intended to identify the best site for such a station if Amtrak were to return to Madison. It does not evaluate the feasibility of extending service to Madison, which would be a project of Amtrak and the state.

EXISTING RAIL CONNECTIONS

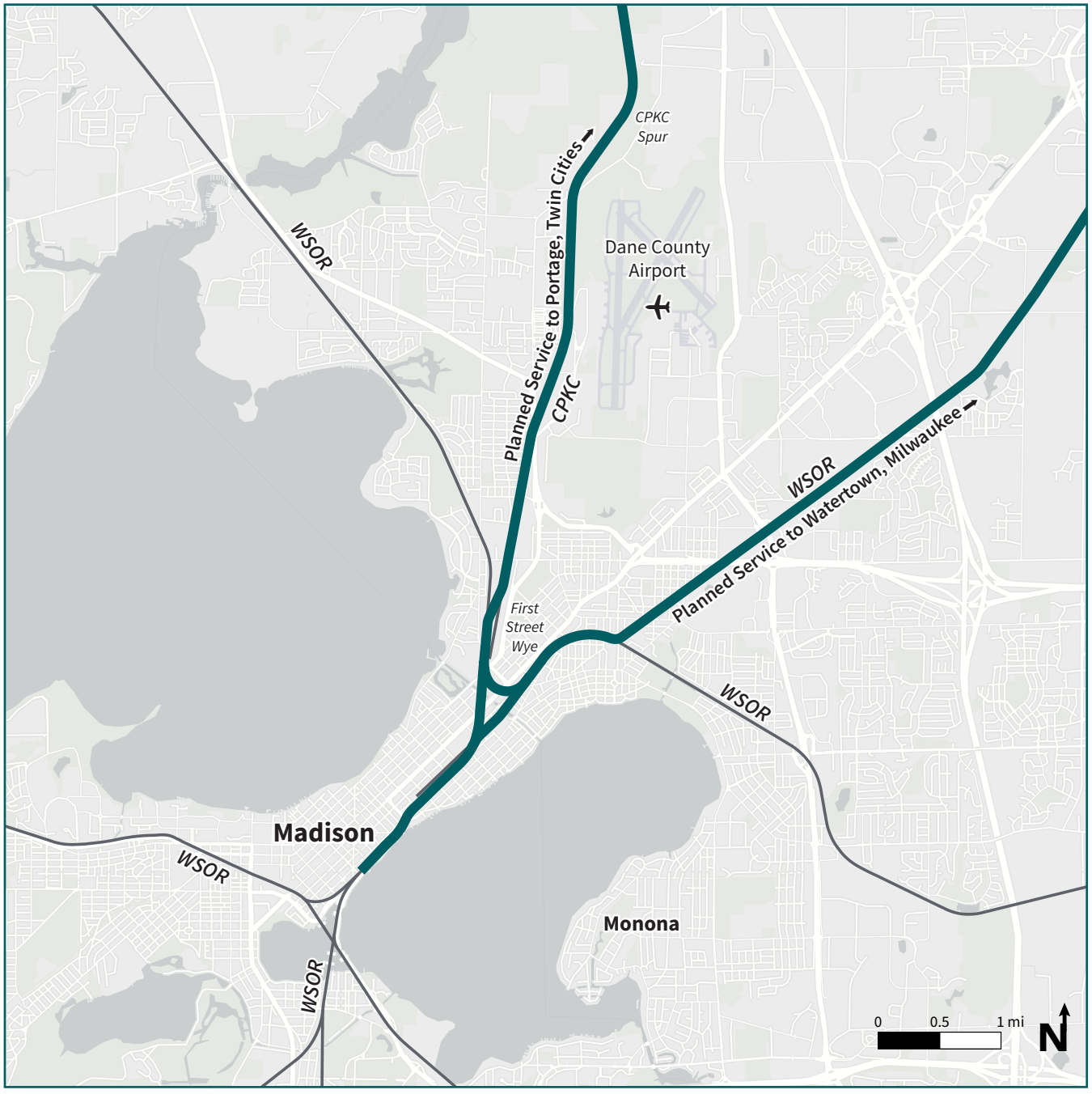


Figure 1.3: Rail Segments in Madison

Amtrak service to Madison would utilize existing rail lines.

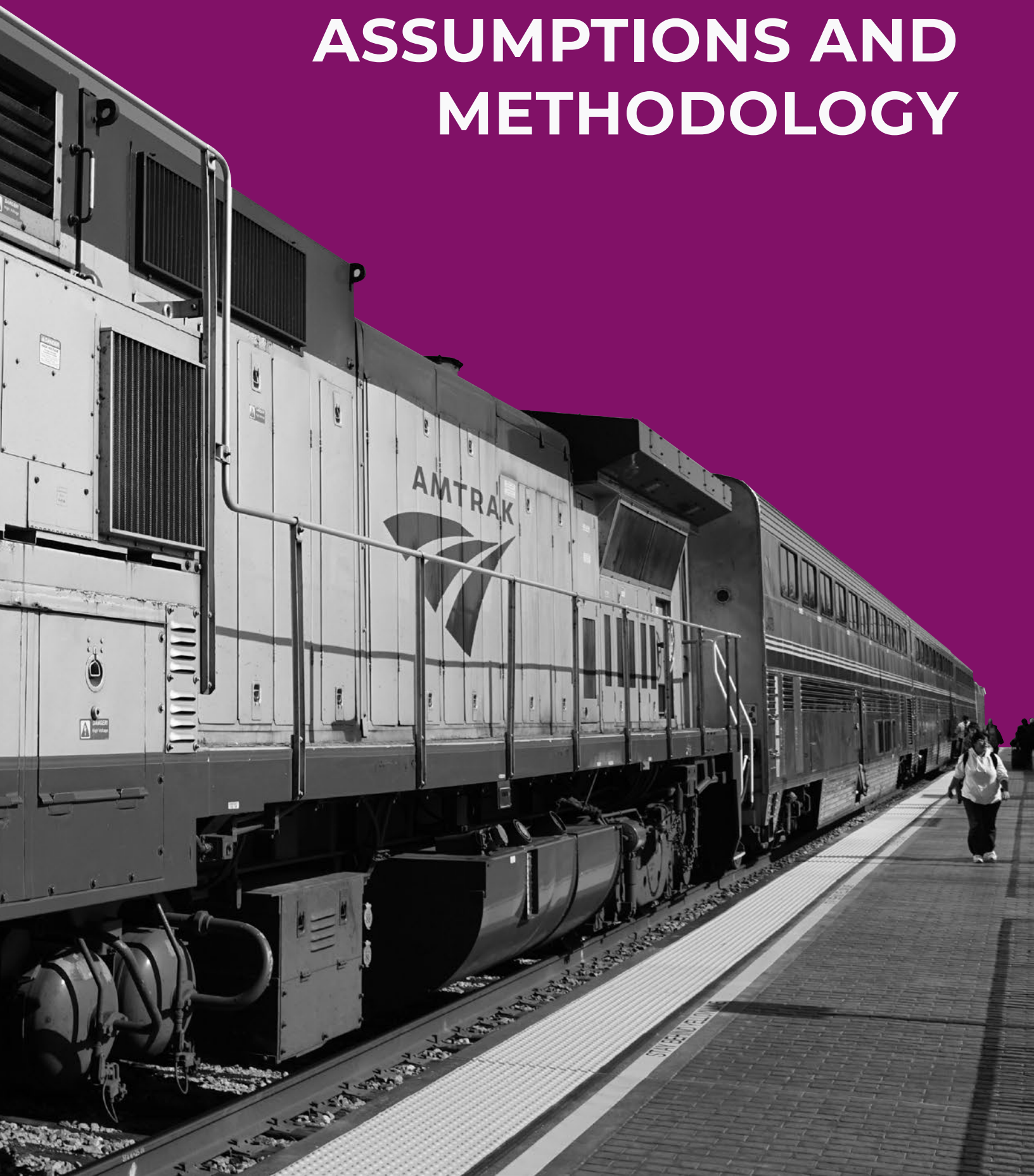
Trains to and from Milwaukee would use the Watertown Subdivision from Watertown to Madison on track that is owned by the State of Wisconsin and operated by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR). Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) data shows this line as having zero trains per day.

Trains continuing north to Minneapolis/St. Paul would use the line from the Johnson Street Yard to Portage that is owned and operated by Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC). FRA data shows this line as having three trains per day.

Both lines connect to the WSOR line that runs the length of Madison's isthmus. FRA data shows this line as having six trains per day. Tracks continue south to Janesville (and onto Chicago)—a potential option for future passenger rail connections to Madison.

There are two ways for passenger trains to pass through Madison. One option uses the First Street wye, which allows trains to continue through without reversing. However, this limits the station sites to those north or east of the Yahara River, placing the station at least 1.6 miles from Capitol Square and three miles from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The other option involves trains continuing onto the WSOR tracks across the isthmus, which connect to both the Watertown and CPKC lines. Trains traveling only between Madison and Chicago could terminate here while trains continuing from Milwaukee to the Twin Cities via Madison would need to reverse direction. While stations in this area add a small amount of travel time, they offer much closer access to major destinations—resulting in a faster overall trip for most riders traveling to or from Madison. This study anticipates service would begin with three to four round trips between Milwaukee and Madison, with a later phase connecting Madison to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Figure 1.3 shows a map of rail segments included in this study with ownership information.

2. GOALS, ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY



GOALS

Based on knowledge of best practices, data review, and public and stakeholder input, the study team developed the following goals for station location:

- Meet train access and operational needs
- Accommodate essential station elements
- Ensure feasibility of site ownership or control
- Minimize environmental impacts
- Maximize ridership potential
- Promote equitable access to the station
- Capitalize on economic development opportunities.
- Create or build upon an active, welcoming, and functional place

Balancing these goals requires trade-offs, but minimum requirements were established for train operations and station program feasibility.

ASSUMPTIONS: SERVICE AND STATION NEEDS

Assumptions about the service and station program elements guided the selection and evaluation of site options. These assumptions were based on potential service levels outlined in the Amtrak Connects US plan, the Amtrak Station Planning and Development Guidelines, input from Amtrak representatives and other key stakeholders. Service and station needs for the Madison station would evolve as the Service Development Plan and other aspects of the service and station needs are defined.

RAIL SERVICE

Initial phases expect 3–4 daily round trips between Milwaukee and Madison, with eventual service to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Early estimates for annual ridership generated from a new station in Madison are about 250,000, based on data from comparable cities.

TRAINS

Service would use the new Siemens Venture passenger cars pulled by Siemens Charger locomotives. Trains would be up to 700 feet long. The 48-inch floor height would enable potential high-level platforms for accessible boarding. Push/pull trains, with a locomotive on one end and a cab car on the other, allow for operators to reverse the direction of the train at a station during the passenger boarding and alighting process simply by walking to the other end of the train without any turning movements.

PLATFORMS

A 700-foot-long platform is desired, with straight, level designs to accommodate all train doors. High-level platforms would improve accessibility but would likely require a dedicated passenger track. A platform under 700 feet long would still be functional, but would limit which train cars passengers could board and alight at this station.

STATION FEATURES

For regional service, passengers generally arrive not long before departure time and carry their own luggage, so there is no need for elaborate station facilities.

- Enclosed building, or space within a larger building, with a waiting area, ticketing, and restrooms—sized between 3,000–5,000 square feet.
- Train servicing facilities for cleaning, storage, and crew accommodations (could be provided at an alternate location nearby if needed).
- Sustainable building practices, universal design principles, and potential integration with mixed-use development.

STATION CONNECTIONS

Passengers would arrive and depart from the station in many ways. With Madison's large student population, we can expect that a large portion would not drive but instead would use transit, walk, bike, or use ride-hailing apps or a cab.

- Long-term and short-term parking for 100–200 vehicles
- Pick-up / drop-off zones
- Convenient bus stops for transit connectivity to different parts of Madison.
- Ideally, options for intercity stops for seamless multimodal connections.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study used a layered evaluation process to identify the most promising potential station locations.

STEP 1 – CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION

Six station area corridors (Figure 2.1) were first identified along existing railroad tracks in Madison. Each corridor represented a general area where one or more station sites could be located.

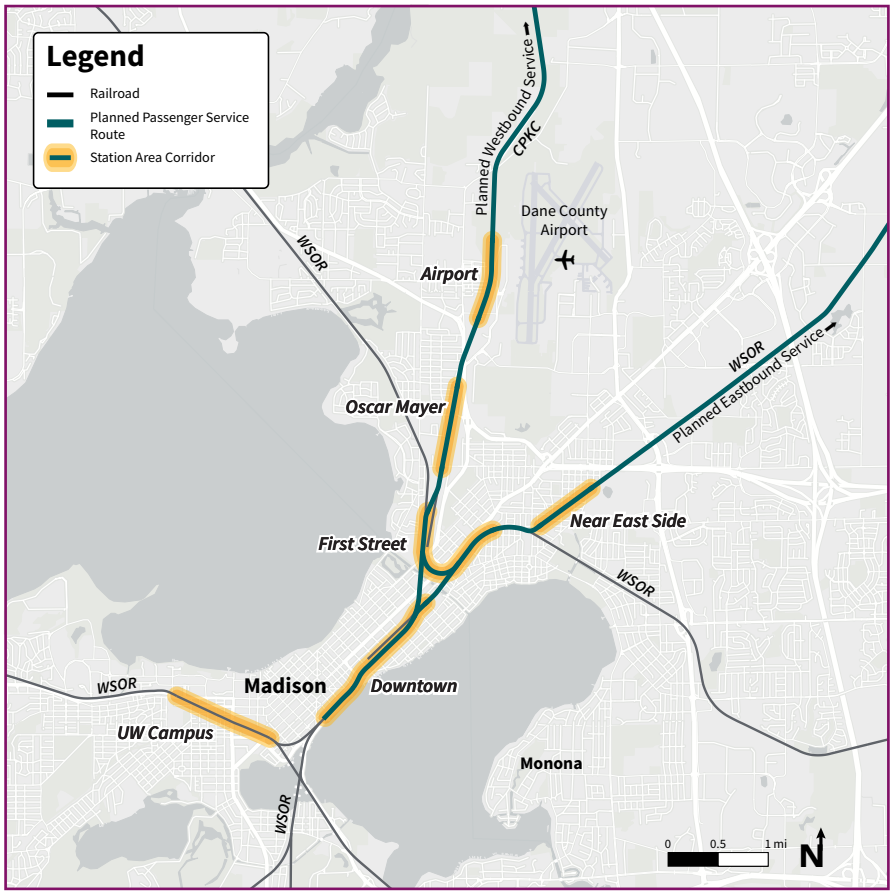


Figure 2.1: Station Area Corridors

Figure 2.2: Sites for Station Evaluation

STEP 2 – SITE EVALUATION

Within the identified corridors, eight potential station sites (Figure 2.2) were developed and evaluated against the study's criteria.

No sites at the University of Wisconsin–Madison were evaluated due to the space constraints in this area. However, future changes or redevelopment could create opportunities for a station, particularly a secondary stop with minimal facilities to support special event service.

Other corridors were not considered because of their distance from the major destinations in Madison. More details about site areas dismissed from consideration are included in Chapter 4.

STEP 3 – REFINEMENT AND OUTCOMES

Through the site evaluation process, the study team determined that selecting exact parcels or developing detailed site plans was unnecessary at this stage. Instead, based on a combination of the corridor and site-level evaluations, two general station areas emerged as the most feasible and best aligned with the study's goals. These areas can be advanced conceptually, with site-level details to be refined in later phases of the project.

The outcome of this final study step:

- Identified two top site areas to advance into the next project phase.
- Placed two additional areas in reserve for future consideration if conditions change.
- Dismissed five sites from further consideration to provide clarity and avoid leaving options unresolved.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Station corridors and sites were evaluated using the following criteria:

- **Train Access and Rail Operations:** Ability to support efficient rail service, including track alignment, freight/passenger conflicts, siding feasibility, and servicing.
- **Ridership Potential:** Ability to attract riders based on population, jobs, destinations, and likely travel demand.
- **Equitable Access:** How well the corridor serves under-served populations and supports non-auto travel options.
- **Access and Multimodal Connectivity:** Quality of connections to BRT, local bus routes, intercity bus, pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile networks.
- **Land Use and Development:** Compatibility with surrounding uses, redevelopment potential, economic development, and neighborhood fit.

DATA SOURCES

The evaluations used in this study were grounded in expert analysis, used existing data and stakeholder input, and incorporated a variety of quantitative measures such as:

- Distance and accessibility to BRT, Metro Transit routes, and multimodal facilities.
- Vehicle access considerations (e.g., parking availability, roadway congestion).
- Land use compatibility and redevelopment potential.
- Proximity to major economic, cultural, and visitor destinations.
- Equity considerations for low-income and car-free populations.

3. RECOMMENDED SITE AREAS

PLAN A: MONONA LAKEFRONT

The Monona Lakefront site (Figures 3.1, 3.2)—located along the existing rail corridor parallel to John Nolen Drive between Henry and Blair Streets—is Madison's top recommendation for a future passenger rail station. Its proximity to the Capitol Square, Monona Terrace, downtown hotels, and the city's most iconic lakefront setting ensures that riders truly feel they have arrived in Madison.

Figure 3.1: Monona Lakefront Site Overview

A station here provides unparalleled visibility and immediate access to many of the area's top visitor destinations. It offers synergy with the convention center, nearby cultural amenities, and downtown businesses, just steps from Capitol Square, this location strengthens Madison's identity as a welcoming and connected city for residents and visitors alike.

CONNECTIVITY

The station is also well-connected to get riders to their final destinations. Many downtown destinations are within walking distance. Metro Transit Routes C and 38 stop within a block of the station entrance, providing frequent 15-minute or better service to the UW campus as well as residential neighborhoods. Rapid Routes A and B BRT stations as well as Routes E, F, R, and 75 are only 2–4 blocks away. The Wilson Street bike lane directly in front of the station connects to the Capital City and Southwest paths and the Lake Loop. Parking is available at a city-owned garage a block away from the station and a city-owned surface lot.

STATION DESIGN

Despite some physical constraints—including the Monona Terrace parking garage, John Nolen Drive, and adjacent development—the site provides a variety of flexible design options. The station could be integrated into new infill or redevelopment, or even connected to existing buildings. Passenger drop-off, pick-up, and accessible parking can be accommodated nearby, with vertical connections and lighting improvements enhancing safety, visibility, and comfort.

RAIL OPERATIONS

A future station here would include a dedicated passenger track parallel to the platform which would allow WSOR freight trains to continue operating without disruption, while overnight train storage and servicing would occur off-site. These operational considerations are feasible within the existing rail corridor and are common among downtown passenger rail stations. Trains continuing to the Twin Cities would need to reverse direction at the station.

COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER EFFORTS

The Monona Lakefront site aligns with long-term city and regional planning goals:

- Madison LakeWay Master Plan – supporting a revitalized lakefront and positioning the station as a central connectivity hub.
- Potential Monona Terrace Expansion – offering opportunities to integrate a multimodal transportation hub into a future convention center addition.

SUMMARY

The Monona Lakefront site area offers unmatched connectivity, accessibility, and ridership potential, making it a strong candidate for a future passenger rail station.

While engineering and design complexities must be addressed—including the need for off-site train servicing—the site's strategic location, flexible development potential, and alignment with broader urban planning efforts make it an ideal opportunity to meet multiple goals for this part of the city, while also promising a successful extension of Amtrak to Madison.

This site would provide passengers with easy and direct access to downtown destinations. Residents from the west, south, east, and north sides of Madison would have equitable access to this centrally located station. Regional passengers from Madison's suburbs could reach the site conveniently using a direct route from the Beltline Highway via John Nolen Drive. The station would accommodate both the full Chicago–Twin Cities corridor and trains operating solely between Madison and Chicago.

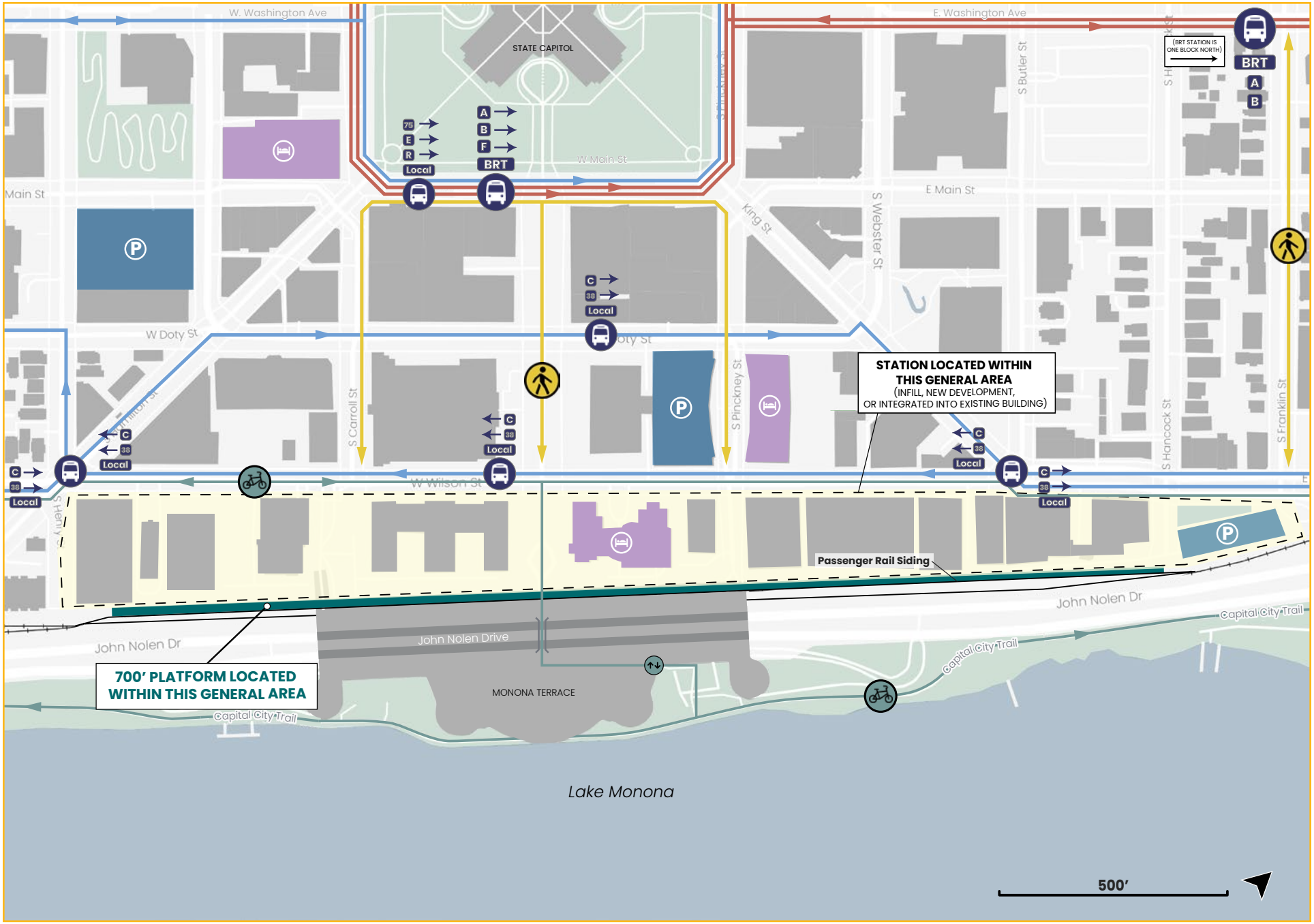


Figure 3.2: Monona Lakefront Detailed Overview

PLAN B: JOHNSON STREET YARD

The Johnson Street Yard site (Figures 3.3, 3.4)—located along the existing rail corridor near Johnson and First Streets, adjacent to the Madison Public Market—offers a large, flexible footprint that could serve as a practical alternative should a downtown station prove infeasible. This location provides ample space for passenger facilities, parking, and train servicing, while offering adequate multimodal connections and proximity to ongoing redevelopment efforts on the border of the Isthmus and Oscar Mayer areas.

Figure 3.3: Johnson Street Yard Site Overview

CONNECTIVITY

There are few destinations within walking distance of the Johnson Street Yard. Nearly all passengers would need to use bus, bike, ride-hailing, or cars to continue to their destinations.

The site is served by Metro Transit Routes D1, D2, and 28, as well as Metro Rapid Routes A and B. Directly in front of the site at Johnson and First, Route D1 provides 30-minute headways. About 800 feet southwest, Routes 28, D1, and D2 serve a southbound-only stop at Johnson and Fordem with 15-minute headways during peak times. Rapid Routes A and B operate along East Washington Avenue, roughly 1,000 feet east, providing all-day, high-frequency service.

A bike lane or bike path could be built to connect the site to an existing trail that links to the Yahara Trail and onward to the Capital City Trail. Parking could be provided as part of a new development.

STATION DESIGN

This site's size creates opportunities not available in more constrained downtown locations. A station here could be co-located with new mixed-use development, integrating housing, retail, or office space while supporting economic growth in line with city goals for the area. The large footprint also allows for efficient layouts, including dedicated passenger tracks, storage, and servicing facilities that streamline operations and provide room for future expansion.

Like the Monona Lakefront site area, several potential station configurations are possible, including integration with infill or future redevelopment projects. Parcels along the proposed platform area are currently privately owned and marketed for sale, presenting opportunities for public-private partnerships. Passenger pick-up, drop-off, and parking could be located within the site itself, minimizing impacts on surrounding streets.

RAIL OPERATIONS

With the current track configuration, passenger trains could access the Johnson Street station by crossing Johnson Street using the curved WSOR track, running through the WSOR yard, crossing Commercial Avenue, and then backing up into the CPKC stub track to serve the station. This operation is feasible but more cumbersome than just running directly into the station, and would also require a continuous through track in the yard.

The path into the Johnson Street station could be improved by connecting the curved WSOR track directly to the CPKC track. This connecting track appears feasible and would improve travel times while reducing conflicts with freight trains. However, it could have complications, including modifications to existing grade crossings and impacts to adjacent traffic signals. It would also increase the capital cost of the project.

Coordination with WSOR, CPKC, WisDOT, and Amtrak will be required to finalize operational details.

STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Because the site is privately owned, preserving it for rail would require early collaboration with developers and coordination with others, which hold utility easements on the property. The site benefits from its proximity to the adjacent WSOR rail yard, but would utilize track owned by CPKC, requiring coordination with both railroad companies. While these factors add complexity, they also open opportunities for partnerships that could advance both transportation and economic development objectives.

SUMMARY

The Johnson Street Yard site is not Madison's preferred station location, but it offers notable operational and development advantages that make it a strong Plan B. Its chief drawback is limited connectivity—because Madison's compact size allows for a highly accessible downtown station, anything less convenient risks losing competitiveness with automobile travel. At Johnson Street, more passengers would need to transfer to reach

their final destination, adding complexity that may outweigh the operational benefits. Still, the site's scale and flexibility—paired with proximity to the Public Market and the East Washington corridor—make it a viable alternative if a downtown option proves infeasible.

While a Johnson Street station would be convenient for east and north side residents, it would be much less convenient for students and people living downtown, and the site would be very inconvenient for anybody traveling to or from the south or west side of Madison. Regional passengers from Madison suburbs would not find the station convenient because there is no direct route to and from these communities. The Johnson Street station location would be a logical choice for the full route between Chicago, Madison, Eau Claire, and the Twin Cities, but trains ending in Madison would lose ridership and revenue compared to a downtown option.

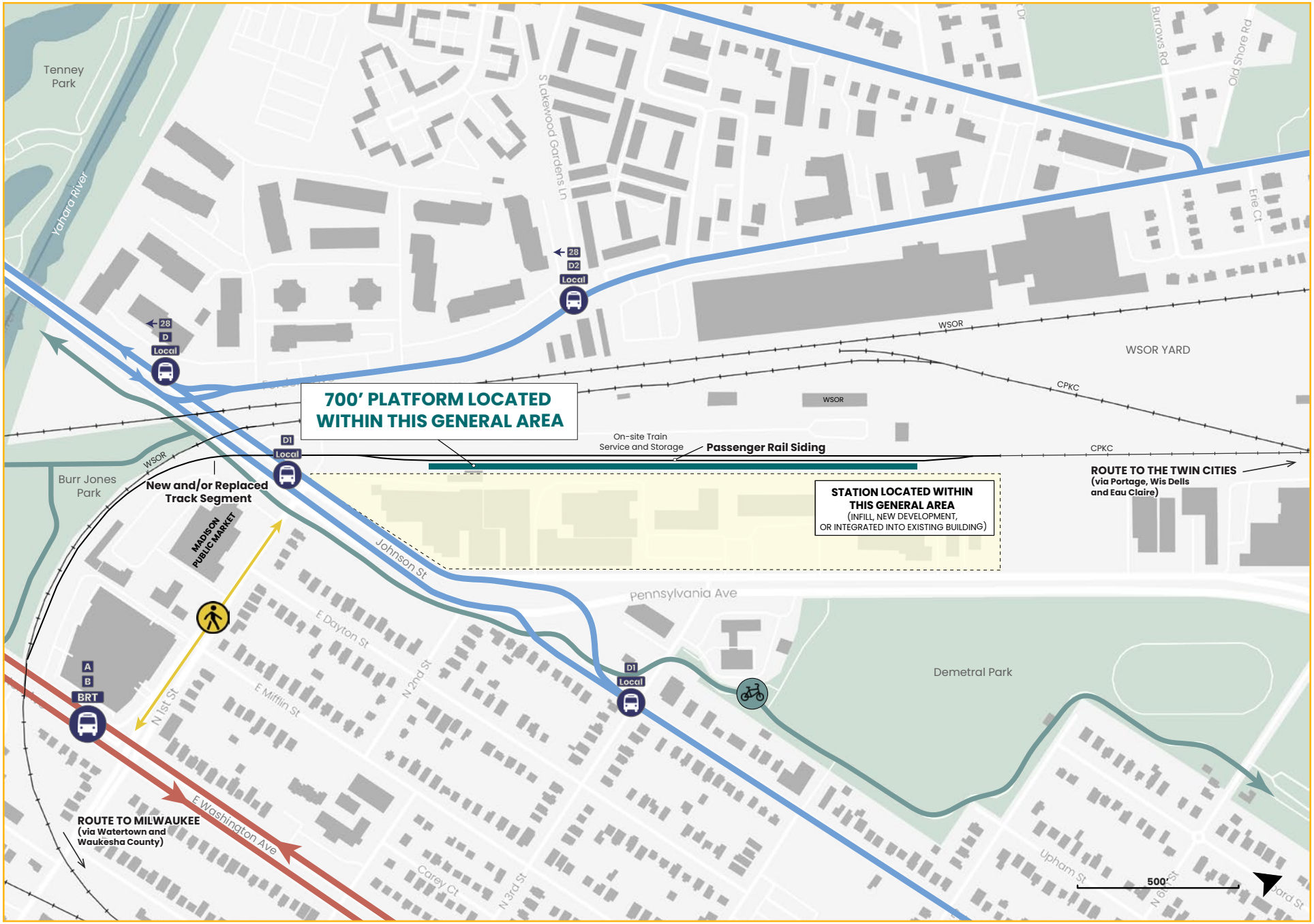


Figure 3.4: Johnson Street Yard Site Detailed Overview

RESERVE SITES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

CAPITOL EAST RAIL CORRIDOR

A site along the rail corridor between Blair and Paterson Streets was evaluated for its strong transit connectivity and proximity to both downtown Madison and the growing Cap East district. The main draws of this area would be that the train would not have to cross the congested Blair and Wilson Street intersection, and construction could be more straightforward compared to a site west of Blair Street. However, development here would require trade-offs, including impacts to street and multimodal connections and access for utility operations. These challenges do not align well with the City of Madison's goals for this study or the transportation system more broadly. As a result, the study team recommends placing this site in reserve for future consideration, should other top-recommended locations prove infeasible or solutions to these challenges emerge. This site is not as convenient to downtown destinations as the Monona Lakefront, although it may provide more space to accommodate service expansion in the future.

Figure 3.5: Capitol East Rail Corridor Overview

CAMPUS CORRIDOR

The rail corridor through the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus area has high ridership potential, but faces major constraints. Limited land availability, parking and access challenges, out-of-direction train travel, and closely spaced at-grade crossings make this area difficult for a primary station location. However, the corridor could be considered in the future if land becomes available or if the university identifies a way to accommodate a station within their campus.

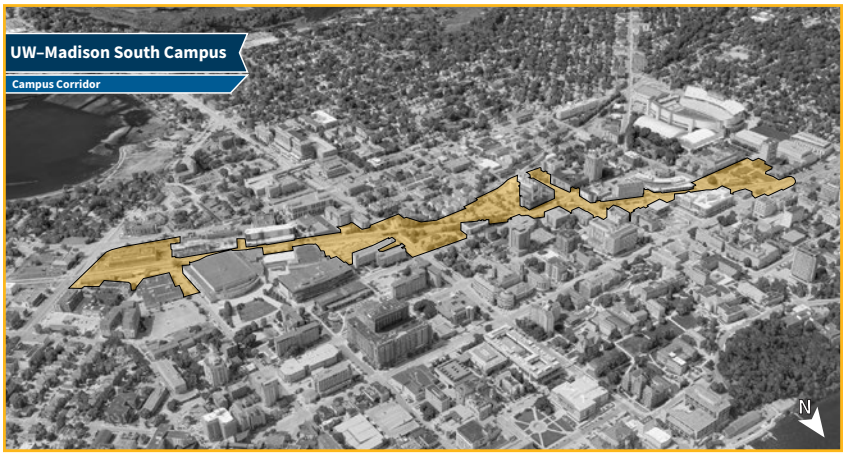


Figure 3.6: UW Campus Corridor Overview

This area would also be well suited for more limited service, for special events—for example, football Saturdays—where limited parking and access needs would be less of a concern. A secondary station (built in addition to the main Madison station) with minimal facilities could be used for such service.

4. SITE AREAS DISMISSED FROM CONSIDERATION

DISMISSED AREAS

Through multiple rounds of analysis, this study dismissed several sites from consideration.

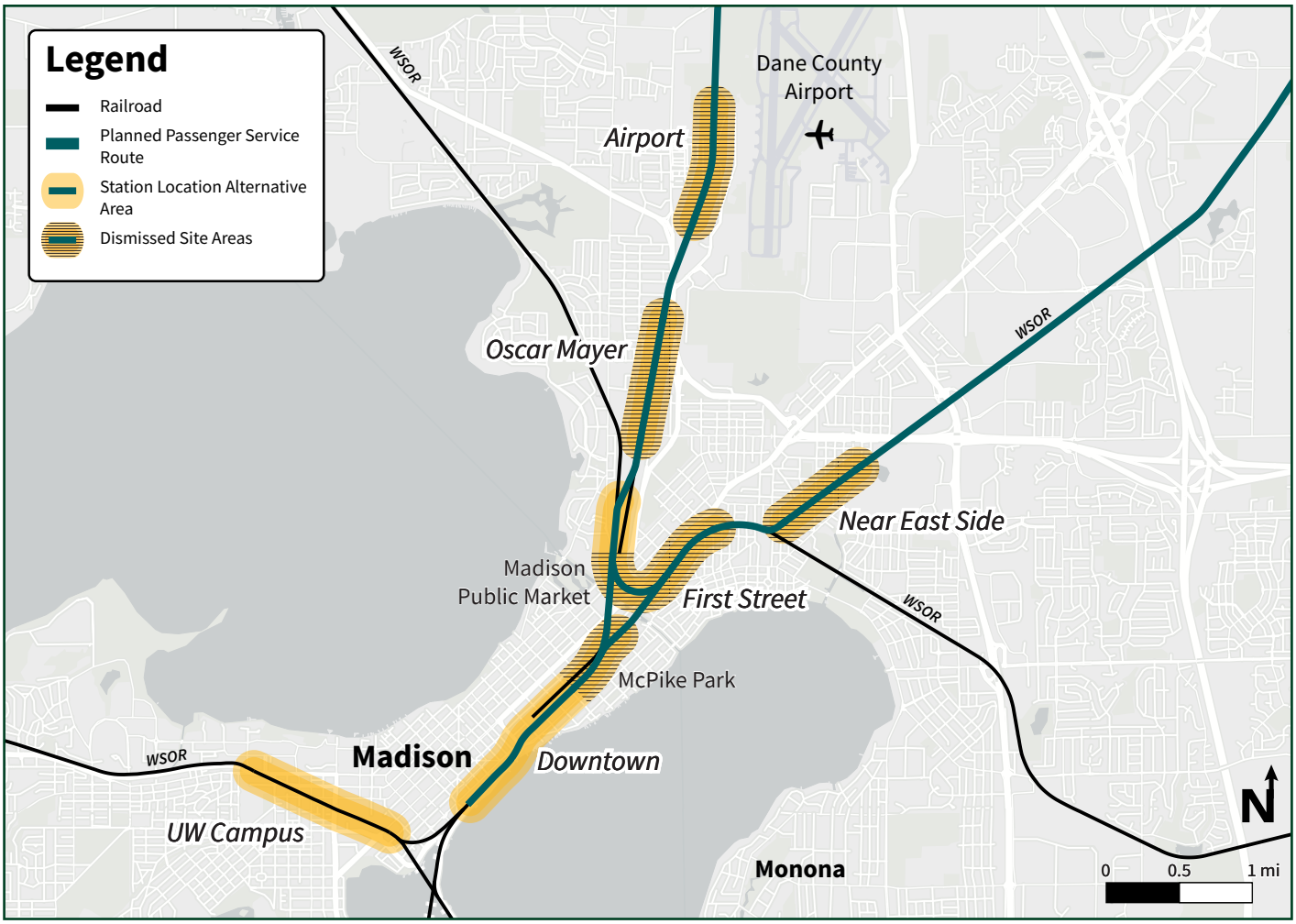


Figure 4.1: Dismissed Site Areas

DANE COUNTY AIRPORT CORRIDOR

The Airport Corridor is being dismissed because, while it offers straight track and available parking, it lacks the accessibility, connectivity, and ridership potential needed for a successful passenger rail station. The site is far from downtown and major destinations, only served by one 30-minute bus route, and difficult to access by walking or biking. Its proximity to Dane County Regional Airport (MSN) does not add significant value, as most intercity travelers use larger airports in Milwaukee and Chicago along the existing Hiawatha route. With limited land use opportunities and primarily car-based access, the corridor does not align with Madison's goals for a centrally connected, equitable, and multimodal station location.

EAST SIDE CORRIDOR

The East Side corridor, surrounding WSOR Watertown line between Milwaukee Street and Fair Oaks Avenue, was evaluated due to its straight track and potential for lower capital costs. This area is dismissed for future consideration because it fails to meet Madison's broader goals for station access and ridership. The location is poorly connected to transit, far from downtown jobs and destinations, and surrounded by low-density residential land uses with limited redevelopment potential. Without strong multimodal connections or proximity to cultural and economic assets, the corridor would generate low ridership and primarily serve car-based trips—making it an ill-suited choice for Madison's passenger rail future.

OSCAR MAYER CORRIDOR

The Oscar Mayer Corridor is being dismissed because, despite its available space, favorable rail operations, and long-term redevelopment potential, it lacks the connectivity and convenience needed to serve as Madison's primary passenger rail station. The site is less accessible to downtown, the Capitol Square, and the UW campus—key destinations for riders—and would require transfers to BRT or other modes, limiting ridership potential. While the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan envisions future mixed-use redevelopment, timelines remain uncertain, and the area's current industrial character, weak pedestrian and bike environment, and reliance on car access make it less competitive than more central, multimodal options.

MCPIKE PARK AREA (BALDWIN STREET)

The McPike Park site near Baldwin Street is being dismissed because, while it offers strong multimodal connections and straightforward City ownership, its operational and physical constraints outweigh its advantages. Train service here would require backing up, adding time and complexity to operations while also blocking a pedestrian crossing at Few Street. The site can only accommodate a 450-foot platform—shorter than the desired 700 feet. With limited space for parking, moderate access to under-served communities, and mixed land use compatibility, the site does not provide the convenience or operational efficiency needed for Madison's primary passenger rail station.

MADISON PUBLIC MARKET SITE (FIRST STREET)

The Madison Public Market site at First Street was considered in this study because its public ownership, central location, and potential to connect with the market offered an appealing opportunity to integrate a passenger rail station with a public market. However, the site is being dismissed because its physical and operational limitations make it infeasible as a primary station location. It can only accommodate a 400-foot platform—the smallest of all options—with a curved alignment that is suboptimal for train operations. Because of the platform's location on the First Street wye, it would not have the ability to serve trains from the south, if the route to Chicago through Janesville were ever pursued in the future. Expansion is not possible, and the site's configuration could interfere with parking and access for Public Market visitors. While it benefits from strong transit connections and nearby redevelopment, its distance from downtown, limited ridership potential, and compatibility issues with surrounding land uses prevent it from meeting the goals of a successful passenger rail station.

5. NEXT STEPS AND FUNDING

NEXT STEPS

The City of Madison has undertaken this study to identify station locations for possible future Amtrak service, currently entering the planning phase of the Corridor ID program.

The Corridor ID (CID) program is intended to guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country to create a pipeline of projects ready for implementation. It requires sponsors to successfully complete all three steps of the program: Step 1 – Scoping & Program Initiation, Step 2 – Service Development Planning, and Step 3 – Project Development as shown in Figure 5.1. Each step requires a separate grant agreement with FRA and local match funds are required for Steps 2 and 3 at 10% and 20%, respectively. Projects that complete Step 3 in the CID program are eligible for priority funding under FRA's Federal-State Partnership (FSP) Grant Program. This program provides funding for final design, construction, and implementation activities.

Figure 5.1: FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program Steps

At the time of this report, WisDOT was finalizing Step 1 of the CID program for this corridor. Step 1 is a project initiation step that includes developing a scope, schedule, and budget for preparing, completing, or documenting its service development plan. If the corridor is advanced to Step 2 – Service Development Plan (SDP), key aspects of the passenger rail service would be determined including the route, estimated ridership, operating characteristics and infrastructure needs. During this Step, the station program needs for Madison should be updated and the station site(s) that advance for environmental review would be identified.

During Step 3, project development, preliminary design would be advanced, and the environmental review process would be completed. The completion of the environmental phase would include the selection of a preferred alternative and pave the way for corridor implementation. The City of Madison will continue to work with WisDOT and other stakeholders such as Amtrak and WSOR through the CID program steps to advance the station planning process. Through this process, many final decisions will be determined, including the station site in Madison, if not already.

IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

The implementation steps for a passenger rail station in Madison assumes station planning, design and implementation would be integrated with the project development activities for the Milwaukee-Madison-Eau Claire-Twin Cities corridor. This integration allows the station to access federal funding that is available for passenger rail development. The implementation milestones assume the corridor would continue to advance under the CID program with WisDOT as the lead state sponsor and City of Madison as a key stakeholder and partner for implementation.

The CID process will ultimately determine the process for corridor and station development as well as key governance and funding decisions. The CID process will also determine the process and funding sources for implementation and construction. At the time of this report, Step 1 of the CID program is the only step funded and in progress. Advancement of the subsequent steps are dependent on many variables and not guaranteed.

In some cases, a temporary platform is used to initiate a service extension prior to the full completion of a permanent station site. If a temporary station is developed, that site would be located within one of the recommended site areas.

West Baltimore Station Rendering
Credit: Amtrak Media

Milestone	Agency Coordination	Key Actions
Station Feasibility Study (Complete)	City of Madison	• Evaluated potential station sites and identified those with the highest likelihood of success. • Began discussions with WisDOT, Amtrak, railroads, and property owners.
Scoping (In Progress)	WisDOT (Lead)	• Complete Step 1 of CID process • Develop scope, schedule, and budget for CID Step 2 (Service Development Plan). • Secure 10% local match. • Process grant agreement with FRA for CID Step 2.
	City of Madison	• Coordinate with WisDOT on Step 1, including station planning steps for inclusion in the Statement of Work.
Service Development Plan (SDP)	WisDOT (Lead)	• Completes CID Step 2: Evaluates route, ridership, station sites, operations, infrastructure needs, governance structure, funding plan and corridor implementation schedule and phasing. • Secure 20% local match for CID Step 3.
	City of Madison	• In coordination with WisDOT and Amtrak, updates station plans based on SDP findings and identifies station site alternative(s) for environmental review under CID Step 3.
Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review	WisDOT (Lead)	• Conducts preliminary engineering and environmental review as part of CID Step 3. • Prepares federal grant applications for construction funding.
	City of Madison	• In coordination with WisDOT and Amtrak, prepares preliminary station plans, supports environmental review of station site alternative(s) and selects station site for implementation. • Initiates process for public private partnership for station implementation and any required local development agreements. • Develops plans for station area planning, zoning and supportive infrastructure.
Final Design	WisDOT (Lead)	• Advances final design for corridor infrastructure and prepares construction plans.
	City of Madison/Private Development Partner	• In coordination with WisDOT and Amtrak, prepares final station plans and if required secures land for station facilities. • Public private partnership and development agreements are finalized for station design, construction and operations. • Implements station area plans and supportive infrastructure plans (e.g., bike/pedestrian facilities and transit connectivity).
Construction	WisDOT (Lead)	• Constructs corridor infrastructure.
	City of Madison/Private Development Partner	• Oversees construction of station building and local transportation access

Figure 5.2: Implementation Milestones and Action Steps

Figure 5.3 shows a conceptual schedule based on the major milestones required for passenger rail corridor planning, design and construction. City of Madison station implementation actions as outlined in Figure 5.2 will generally follow this schedule. This schedule is just an approximation of the length of time each major milestone may take to implement a station along with the passenger rail corridor. The schedule is subject to change and is dependent on approvals by multiple entities and agencies and funding availability.

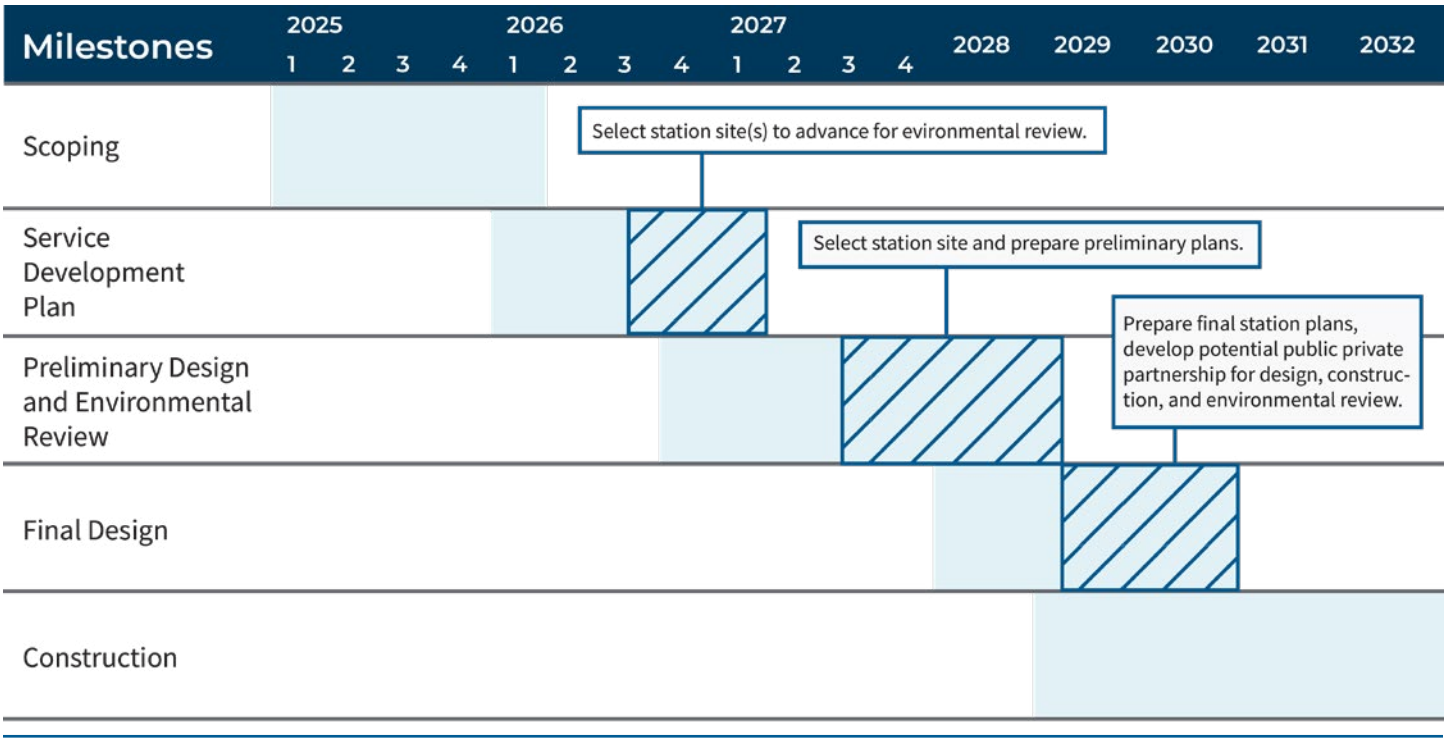


Figure 5.3: Conceptual Milestone Schedule
Note: Schedule is subject to change.

STATION FUNDING OPTIONS

The CID process for the corridor will determine funding and governance plans for the passenger rail service. Station planning and design are eligible costs within the CID program. Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Madison continue to partner with WisDOT, the CID lead sponsor for the passenger rail corridor, to integrate future planning, design, and environmental review of the station into the CID process and steps. This would allow station activities to leverage federal funds and obtain environmental clearance which is required to advance implementation of not only the corridor infrastructure but also the station facilities.

Likewise, inclusion of the Madison station into subsequent requests for federal funding for corridor construction and implementation in partnership with the corridor's sponsoring agency may be advantageous as this may open more funding options for the station.

Station design and construction are eligible costs under the Federal-State Partnership Grant Program and the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, which are the most likely sources of

future corridor implementation funding. Federal funding sources such as BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) could be a viable option if Madison seeks its own implementation funding separate from the corridor. Additional supplemental funding could come from FTA's transit funds if the station is developed with Metro Transit services or other state and local sources. Each funding source is unique and has its own requirements that must be met, and most federal sources require local match funds.

While these programs would cover a percentage of the planning, design and construction costs, local match funds would be required for all subsequent phases of the corridor. As a result, local match funds for the station may be required—which may come from public or private funds.

The following page provides a list that identifies a variety of funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels that could be used to implement a passenger rail station in Madison including a public-private partnership that could be used for station implementation:

FEDERAL FUNDING

Corridor Identification & Development (CID) Program

- Administrator: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Partnership with WisDOT as the lead sponsor provides federal funds for corridor planning and design, including station facilities. Local match funds are required for non-competitive grant obligations for Steps 2 and 3.

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program

- Administrator: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Funds station facilities. Local match required for competitive grant obligations.

Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) / National Partnership Program

- Administrator: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Supports capital projects to reduce backlog, improve performance, or expand passenger rail service, including station facilities. Local match required for competitive grant obligations.

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program

- Administrator: U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Funds station facilities. Local match required for competitive grant obligations. Suitable for Madison-led station implementation after CID program completion.

Bus and Bus Facilities Grants (Section 5339(a))

- Administrator: Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Applicable only if the station includes an integrated bus component in partnership with Metro Transit. Local match required.

Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307)

- Administrator: Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Applicable only if the station includes an integrated bus component in partnership with Metro Transit. Local match required.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

- Administrator: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: City of Madison receives funds directly. Eligible for construction of public facilities and improvements benefiting low- and moderate-income residents. No local match required.

Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Credit Assistance and Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF)

- Administrator: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Eligible Costs: Capital Financing
- Considerations: Programs provide low-interest financing options to support projects related to transit and passenger rail development.

STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING

State Legislative Appropriation

- Administrator: WisDOT or City of Madison with legislative partners
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Requires approval through the Wisconsin State Legislature's biennial budget process.

City of Madison Capital and Operating Budget

- Administrator: City of Madison
- Eligible Costs: Capital and Operations
- Considerations: Requires approval by the Madison Common Council through the annual budget process.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

- Administrator: City of Madison
- Eligible Costs: Capital
- Considerations: Allows funding for infrastructure and improvements using property tax revenue generated by new developments.

Station Parking Fees

- Administrator: City of Madison
- Eligible Costs: Operations
- Considerations: Revenue from station patrons using city-owned garages and lots could support station maintenance. May require new operating agreements.

Public-Private Partnerships (P3)

- Administrator: City of Madison
- Eligible Costs: Capital and Operations
- Considerations: Partnership with private developers for land near the station can generate revenue to support rail improvements and encourage transit-oriented development. Typically applicable to privately owned station sites.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND RAIL STATION DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships with the private sector could be used for passenger rail station implementation in Madison to lower the cost of infrastructure and reduce the construction costs and life-cycle costs.

A public-private partnership, or P3, can be structured in many ways and involves a long-term contractual agreement where a public agency and private entity collaborate to deliver an infrastructure project for mutual benefit. P3s leverage the resources of the private sector to finance, design, construct and maintain a transportation facility. P3 arrangements transfer some level of risk to the private sector with the expectation of a return on investment.

Public-private partnerships can leverage the value created in real estate from high-quality passenger rail and transit systems. Under a Joint Development agreement, the public agency responsible for station implementation can capitalize on this increased value by partnering to develop the station site in conjunction with complementary commercial and residential development. In doing so, the public agency would create revenue streams to support transit and rail improvements and ongoing station operations and maintenance costs.

Joint Developments can take many different forms and are set up for the public sector to share in cash flows in proportion to their share of equity contribution. Under a long-term lease agreement, a public entity may own the land and lease it to the developer for an extended period of time. This would create a revenue stream for the public entity to support the development and ongoing operations of the station. Joint Development could also include the sale of development rights for upfront capital investment from a private entity. In this case, a developer would purchase and develop the land and incorporate the station facilities into a transit-oriented development. The public entity could use the proceeds to enter into a long-term lease agreement with the developer for the station specific facilities.

CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS

Capital and operating costs for the Madison station would be determined during a subsequent project phase.

Capital costs for stations typically include station platform, station building, parking facilities, transportation access and other site development elements required for a station as well as real estate acquisition, if required. Capital costs are likely to range depending on the selected station site, the station size and programming needs and station site constraints and complexities.

The station would have annual operating and maintenance costs that could be the responsibility of a local entity depending on the corridor governance plan. These costs include janitorial/cleaning services, landscaping/grounds maintenance, and utilities. Life-cycle costs should also be considered. The annual operating and maintenance costs would likely vary by station and depend on the agreements with property owners and potential public-private partnerships.

STATION OWNERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

A major milestone in the planning process is determining station ownership and governance. This process is usually initiated during the Service Development Plan efforts. Stations for state-sponsored passenger rail service are owned and operated by a variety of entities, including local government entities, non-profit organizations, or LLCs. Some stations are also owned by railroad authorities, state departments of transportation and less commonly by freight railroads. Although Amtrak owns some stations around the country, they typically do not take on ownership of new rail stations especially for state-sponsored corridors. Station governance and ownership will require ongoing conversations and agreement among all parties involved.

Figure 5.4 shows examples of station ownership in Wisconsin, the Midwest, and other areas of the U.S. where Amtrak operates passenger rail services. This table is intended to demonstrate the varied ownership structures that exist for passenger rail stations. Each station is unique, and the City of Madison would need to develop its own governance and ownership structure in coordination with the corridor sponsor.

Location	Facility Owner	Platform Owner	Track Owner	Route Served (Amtrak)	Ridership (FY2023)
Milwaukee, WI (Milwaukee Intermodal Station)	WisDOT	WisDOT	CPKC	Borealis Empire Builder Hiawatha	509,107
Sturtevant, WI	Village of Sturtevant	Village of Sturtevant	CPKC	Borealis Hiawatha	47,266
La Crosse, WI	La Crosse Depot, LLC	CPKC	CPKC	Borealis Empire Builder	21,259
St Paul, MN (Union Depot)	Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority	Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority	Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority	Borealis Empire Builder	77,597
Champaign-Urbana, IL	Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District	Canadian National (CN)	CN	City of New Orleans Illini Saluki	217,042
Bloomington–Normal, IL	Town of Normal	Union Pacific	Union Pacific	Lincoln Service Texas Eagle	203,842
Ann Arbor, MI	Amtrak	Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)	MDOT	Wolverine Service	136,431
Durham, NC	West Village Durham II, LLC	North Carolina Department of Transportation	North Carolina Railroad	Carolinian Piedmont	112,383
Greensboro, NC	City of Greensboro	North Carolina Railroad	Norfolk Southern Railway/North Carolina RR	Carolinian Piedmont Crescent	157,429
Raleigh, NC (Union Station)	City of Raleigh	City of Raleigh	City of Raleigh	Carolinian Floridian Piedmont	219,538
Norfolk, VA	City of Norfolk	Norfolk Southern Railway	Norfolk Southern Railway	Northeast Regional	230,114
Fort Worth, TX	Fort Worth Transportation Authority	Fort Worth Transportation Authority	Fort Worth Transportation Authority, BNSF	Heartland Flyer Texas Eagle	107,566
Denver, CO	Regional Transportation District	Regional Transportation District	Regional Transportation District	California Zephyr Amtrak Winter Park Express	114,543
Portland, ME	Langdon Street Real Estate, Inc.	Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority	CSX Transportation	Downeaster	180,288

Figure 5.4: Station Facility Ownership Examples
Source: Amtrak, Great American Stations

NEXT STEPS: STATION SITES AND CORRIDOR COORDINATION

This study recommends the City of Madison focus on pursuing its top station site area—the Monona Lakefront Site area, while keeping the Johnson Street Yard site area as flexible as possible for further site development. As WisDOT leads the service development planning and environmental review processes, staff should take the following actions for each site and the overall Corridor Identification and Development (CID) process, in close coordination with city leadership and project partners:

MONONA LAKEFRONT SITE AREA

Engage with Madison LakeWay planning efforts, future Monona Terrace Convention Center expansion discussions, and Wisconsin Department of Administration facilities planning to track any changes that could affect the station's feasibility or design.

JOHNSON STREET YARD AREA

Monitor any development proposals on the site and assess whether agreements with the developer are needed to preserve the station's future potential. If deemed necessary, negotiate and monitor such agreements.

GENERAL ACTIONS

Stay engaged with stakeholders along the corridor, including WisDOT, Amtrak, and other project partners, to ensure the City of Madison's priorities are represented throughout the CID process. Keep local partners, including residents, businesses, property owners, and community groups apprised of information about the project as it moves forward—including opportunities to engage.