



## Metro Transit System

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July 26, 2016

TO: City of Madison Plan Commission  
FROM: Chuck Kamp, Transit General Manager, Metro Transit  
SUBJECT: 114 Milky Way – Conditional Use – “Royal Capital Milky Way Property”

Metro Transit has reviewed the subject development and requests that the Plan Commission give consideration as to whether existing conditions should permit granting approval of a conditional use permit for this property, with 94 residential units, at this specific location and at this specific time.

The City of Madison does not currently fund Metro Transit for operation of daily, all-day transit service, east of the Interstate 90 Corridor (south of Interstate 94). Limited, peak-hour service on weekdays was first extended across the East Buckeye Road bridge going east of the Interstate to serve the then-established multi-family buildings in the Richmond Hill neighborhood in January of 2004. It was not until August of 2013 that a similar number of limited peak-hour bus trips on weekdays were routed across the Cottage Grove Road and Milwaukee Street bridges, to serve the established residential density in the Grandview Commons neighborhood to the south – and the emergent Grandview Commons North area, which includes the proposed development as the single multi-family apartment site in Veridian's neighborhood map.

While Metro Transit does operate 75 trips per week along Milwaukee Street, including service to bus stop locations at the Milky Way intersection east of the Interstate (15 trips each weekday, between 5:15am-8:45am and 3:45pm-6:45pm) – the daily, all-day bus service that operates middays, evenings and on weekends only serves bus stop locations west of these Interstate bridges in the adjacent South Thompson Drive corridor (at the Milwaukee Street, Cottage Grove Road and East Buckeye Road intersections). This service offers 81 additional trips each week, operating until roughly 10:30pm each night, and starting between 7:30am and 8:30am on weekends.

The extension of limited, peak hour bus service in January of 2004 – to serve the established multi-family dwellings in the Richmond Hill neighborhood north of East Buckeye Road – was prompted in part by public feedback received by the City of Madison and Metro Transit regarding the lack of pedestrian facilities on the East Buckeye Road bridge at that time, and the conditions encountered by residents needing to make the relatively short walk across this bridge to access the only available transit service that operated in the South Thompson Drive corridor, west of the Interstate (See Figure 1):

I would like to voice my strong support for the proposed extension to the Madison Metro bus service in the Richmond Hills area. I have a sister who prefers to ride the bus and lives in the Richmond Hills area. I am extremely concerned for her safety as she is forced daily to walk across the Buckeye bridge (over the Interstate) in order to reach the closest bus stop. It is an extremely hazardous situation for both pedestrians and drivers along the bridge, especially during inclement weather and darkness. In my opinion it is just a matter of time before someone gets hurt. Please be proactive and don't wait for a tragedy to happen before taking action and putting a bus [route] on the [east] side of the bridge. Thank you.

The roughly 1/4 mile walking distance along East Buckeye Road between the South Thompson Drive and Kings Mill Way intersections, including the approximately 300' long bridge deck itself, was reconstructed with pedestrian facilities in 2008 – giving residents of the Richmond Hill neighborhood dedicated walking (and bicycling) infrastructure to be able to access the daily, all-day transit service that exists on the west side of Interstate in the South Thompson Drive corridor. (See Figure 2)

Prior to this September 2003 public feedback received by the City of Madison and Metro Transit about the lack of pedestrian facilities on the East Buckeye Road bridge, the initial phases of multi-family development in the Grandview Commons neighborhood north of Cottage Grove Road and east of the Interstate came before the Plan Commission for review in May 2002. At that time, Metro Transit's staff report to the Plan Commission only made allusion to the similar lack of pedestrian facilities on that bridge, without raising specific concern to overall project approvals:

The proposed development plan submitted for parcels between 5802 and 6124 Cottage Grove Road do not have pedestrian access to transit service. The nearest transit stop is on South Thompson Drive south of Cottage Grove Road, a distance of [just over] 1/4 mile.

This bus stop serves both primary and commuter transit routes. [...]

Metro Transit has begun the process of mapping possible service expansions through the areas covered in recently adopted neighborhood development plans. The City has not identified the operating funds necessary for such expansions of the current transit network, nor does this neighborhood currently represent the highest ranking for transit service when compared with other portions of the City not currently served by mass transit. For these reasons, Metro Transit does not anticipate any short-term improvements to transit access [...] in this area.

The roughly 1/3 mile walking distance along Cottage Grove Road between the South Thompson Drive and North Star Drive intersections, including the approximately 250' long bridge deck itself, was reconstructed with pedestrian facilities in 2006 – giving residents of the Grandview Commons neighborhood dedicated walking (and bicycling) infrastructure to be able to access the daily, all-day transit service that exists on the west side of Interstate in the South Thompson Drive corridor. (See Figure 3)

Fourteen years later, Metro Transit continues to anticipate limited opportunities for the City of Madison to be able to identify the operating funds that would be necessary to extend daily, all-day transit service to these neighborhoods east of the Interstate. Metro Transit operates a reduced number of buses during off-peak and weekend periods, and these routes alignments are already extended as far as possible within these funding and corresponding schedule constraints. Establishing daily, all-day transit service to the neighborhoods east of the Interstate would broadly dictate an additional bus needing to operate for roughly ten hours each weekday and twenty-nine hours on weekends – for a total of 79 hours per week (4,108 hours annually). The marginal cost for the City of Madison to add new service hours is currently around \$60 per hour, meaning annual funding to Metro Transit would need to increase by about \$246,000 in order to upgrade these neighborhoods to daily, all-day transit service (from their existing limited, peak hour trips on weekdays only).

The conditional use permit application for the proposed 94 units of residential construction is located on a parcel that is between 1/3 and 1/2 of a mile east of the daily, all-day transit service that operates to the South Thompson Drive intersection with Milwaukee Street, which Google Maps identifies as an estimated nine minute walking distance from the project site on the west side of Milky Way at Milwaukee Street. (See Figure 4) There are two concurrent bridge decks in this length of Milwaukee Street, between South Thompson Drive and Milky Way, neither of which currently have pedestrian facilities. The western bridge spans approximately 200', and its thirty-foot surface width is only divided down the middle by the center lane line. (See Figure 5) The eastern deck extends closer to 250' in length, while only having a surface width of 26' – but once again only divided down the center for the opposing vehicle travel lanes. (See Figure 6)

Metro Transit has confirmed with Amy Coughlin at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation that she is managing a project, currently planned for construction in 2018, that would undertake marginal improvements to the existing bridge facilities. The scope of the reconstruction is intended to standardize the bridge deck surfaces at a width of 30', while introducing new lane markings that would establish two 10-foot vehicle travel lanes bordered by a 5-foot shoulder lane in each direction.

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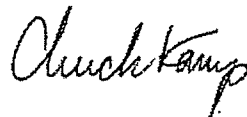
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Metro Transit staff reports to the Plan Commission generally endeavor to identify proposed rezoning or conditional use projects that, either due to specific affordability goals or broader density characteristics, fall outside of the City of Madison's existing transit service area – as both of these factors can correlate to a greater potential for (unmet) transit ridership demands by the future residents. The transit service area can, in one way, be described as the boundaries of operation for Metro Transit's door-to-door paratransit service – an alternative for riders should their abilities preclude them from being able to access the fixed route city buses and stop locations. These boundaries are legislated as to surround the regularly scheduled transit routes at a 3/4 mile buffer distance (i.e. excluding limited peak-hour or other trips) – in part to acknowledge that transit riders could reasonably travel up to that distance (perhaps a fifteen minute walk) in order to access available fixed route transit bus stops, especially during off-peak periods or weekends if their transportation alternatives were limited.

The conditional use application for 94 residential units on this parcel at 114 Milky Way nominally falls within the City of Madison's transit service area, being just under 1/2 mile from the daily, all-day transit service operated to South Thompson Drive and Milwaukee Street. There are countless examples around the periphery of the City where projects of similar density exist, at distances of up to 3/4 of a mile and more from where Metro Transit operates daily, all-day transit service. These developments, however, almost universally have some level of dedicated pedestrian facility – even if only an unimproved shoulder that has sufficient width such that a pedestrian can distance themselves from the adjacent vehicle travel lanes when walking.

The reason that Metro Transit has drafted this memo to the Plan Commission, requesting consideration as to whether the conditional use standards are met at this location and at this time, stems directly from the proposed density in the conditional use application (which can correlate to a greater potential for transit ridership) being within reasonable walking distance of the existing daily, all-day bus service – but impacted by the current lack of dedicated pedestrian facilities for most of that walking distance.

Metro Transit requests that the Plan Commission consider whether granting this conditional use permit might "be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare" – at least until such time that WisDOT has completed their planned bridge deck improvements and marking of the new five-foot shoulder lanes. The mode split for transit usage during the work commute in the City of Madison has approached a 10% mark in recent Census data. If viewed from the perspective that the existing property (and actual zoning) is not generating any transit ridership, action at this time (prior to construction of bridge improvement) by the City of Madison to approve the 94 units of multi-family housing on this property could be seen as leading directly to the creation of new pedestrian travel demand across these two bridges spanning the Interstate – even if just half of the current 10% transit mode split, roughly 5 units out of the 94, were to have occupants with transit travel needs outside the traditional weekday commute hours. Metro Transit further requests that the Plan Commission consider the granting of this conditional use permit against the City being "able to provide municipal services to the property where the conditional use is proposed, given due consideration of the cost of providing those services." Given the rough estimate of an annual cost approaching \$250,000 to extend daily, all-day transit service to this development – combined with limited commercial and employment transit ridership generators located in these neighborhoods east of the Interstate, that would support increased fare revenue for such service – creates a difficult consideration when the City must balance where to invest its limited budget resources, particularly in new transit service operations.



Sincerely,

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Chuck Kamp, Transit General Manager

CC: Paul Soglin, Mayor, City of Madison  
Natalie Erdman, Director, Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development  
Heather Stouder, Director, Planning Division

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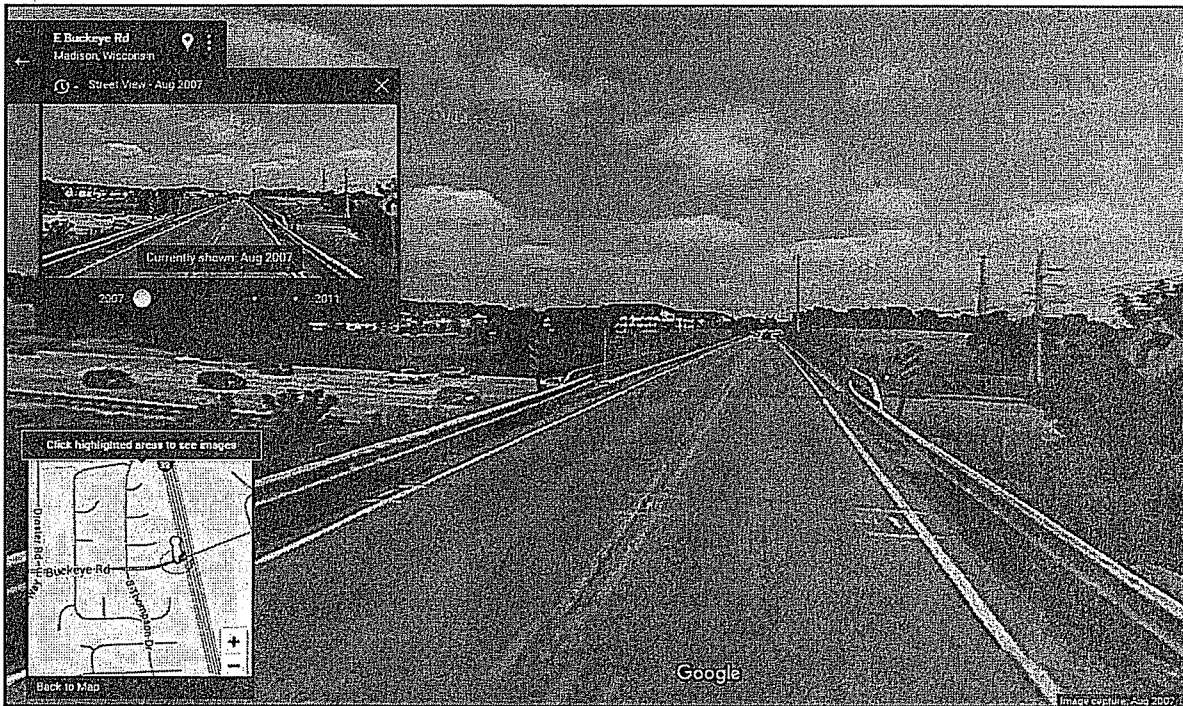


Figure 1: Google Streetview image looking east towards Richmond Hill neighborhood, across the East Buckeye Road bridge in August of 2007 – prior to its reconstruction with pedestrian or bike facilities.

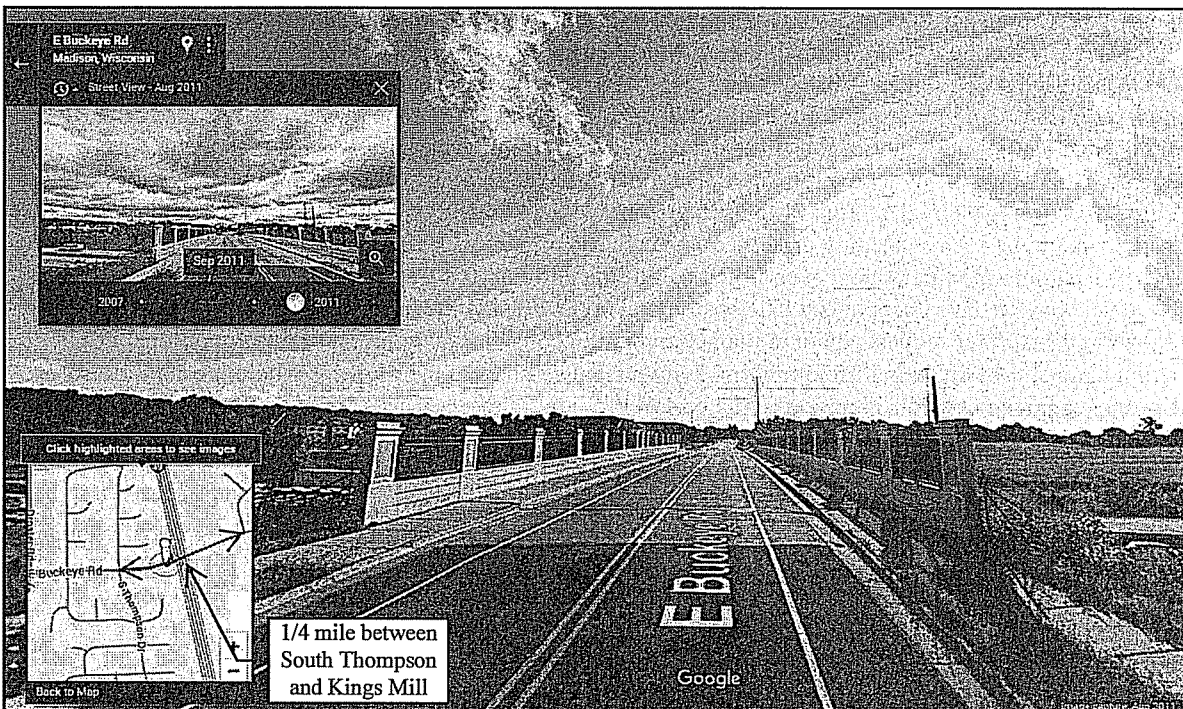


Figure 2: Google Streetview image looking east towards Richmond Hill neighborhood, across the East Buckeye Road bridge in August of 2011 – after its reconstruction with pedestrian and bike facilities.





Figure 3: Google Streetview image looking east towards Grandview Commons neighborhood, across the Cottage Grove Road bridge in August of 2011 – after its reconstruction with pedestrian and bike facilities

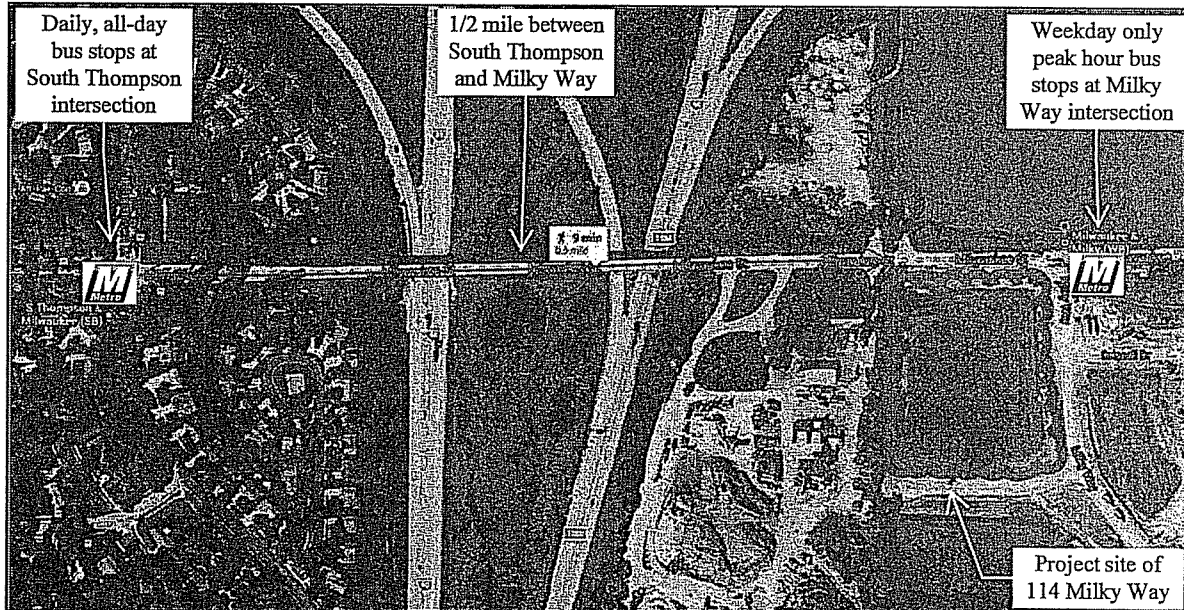


Figure 4: Google walking directions showing the estimated nine minute time to go the roughly 1/2 mile between the existing weekday peak hour bus stop location on Milwaukee Street at Milky Way (northeast of project site) and the daily, all-day bus stop location on South Thompson Drive at Milwaukee Street.

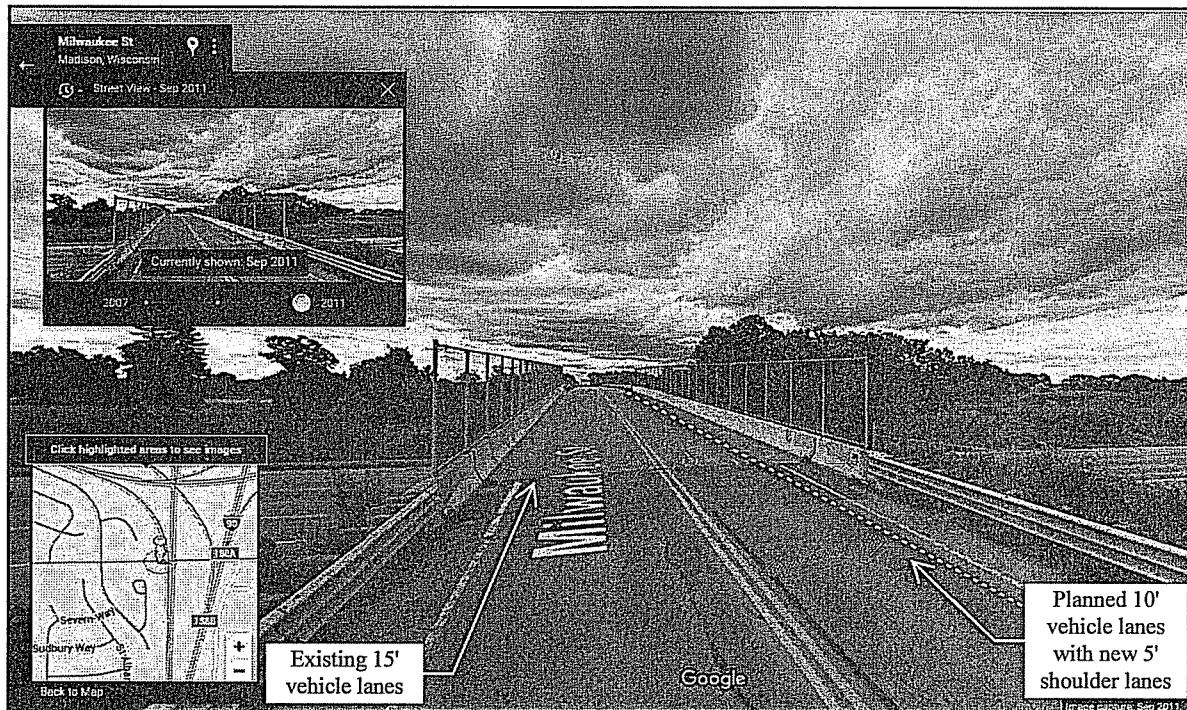


Figure 5: Google Streetview image looking east from South Thompson Drive approach, across the western Milwaukee Street bridge in September of 2011 – no pedestrian or bike facilities present.

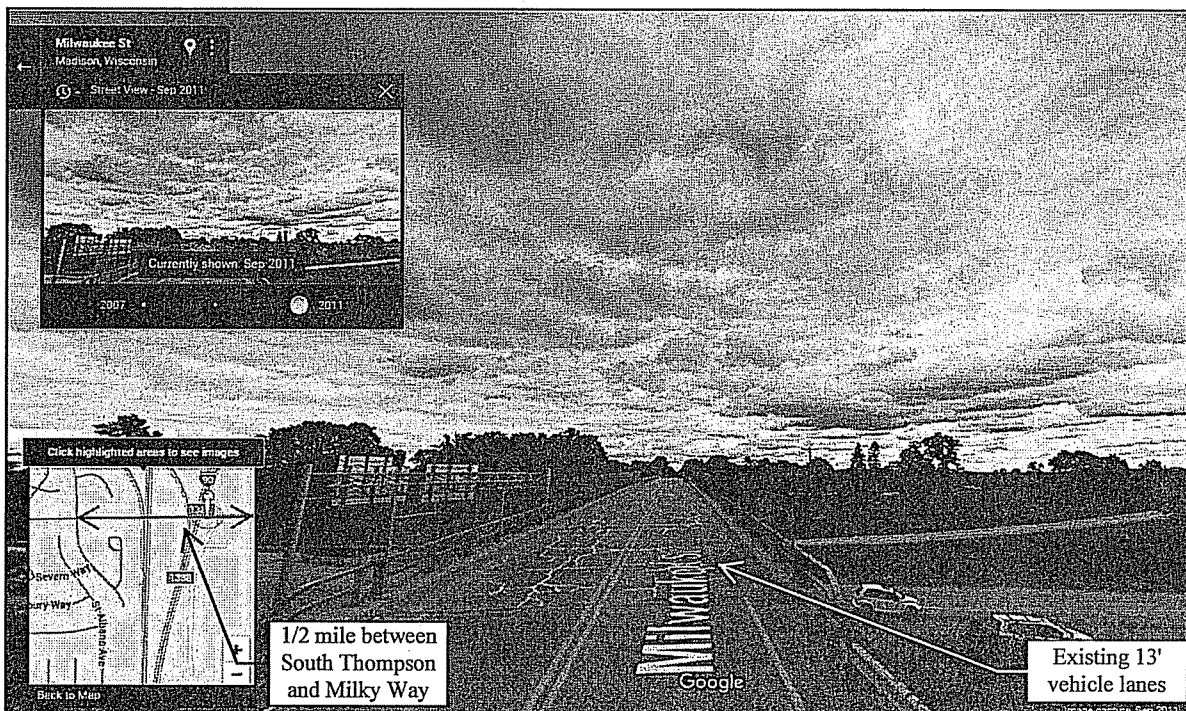


Figure 6: Google Streetview image looking west from Milky Way approach, across the eastern Milwaukee Street bridge in September of 2011 – no pedestrian or bike facilities present.