

**** All present are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the City's Core Values ****



OFFICIAL NOTICE AND AGENDA

of a meeting of a City Board, Commission, Department, Committee, Agency, Corporation, Quasi-Municipal Corporation or sub-unit thereof.

Meeting of the: **TRANSIT COMMISSION**
Date/Time: Thursday, November 19, 2015 @1:30 p.m.
Location: Metro Ride Offices, 420 Plumer Street, Wausau
Members: Sherri Abitz (C), Keene Winters, Robert Mielke, Keith Draheim, Txanj Hue Yang

AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION (All items listed may be acted upon)

1. Roll Call
2. Public Comment on Matters Appearing on the Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes – October 8, 2015
4. Financial Report/Budget
5. Transit Service Pilot Project and Grant Request
6. Transit Director's Report
 - Fleet Update
 - Staffing Update
 - Vehicle Lift Project Update
7. Next Meeting Date
8. Adjourn

THIS NOTICE FAXED TO THE WAUSAU DAILY HERALD AND CITY PAGES:

Date: 11/13/2015 TIME: 9:56 AM BY: Greg Seubert, Transit Director

Meeting facilities are accessible to the disabled. Please note that upon reasonable notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through appropriate aids and services. For information or to request this service, contact the City Clerk at 715-261-6620.

TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES

Date and Time: The Transit Commission met on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at 1:30 P.M. at Metro Ride Office, 420 Plumer St., Wausau, WI.

Members Present: Sherri Abitz, Robert Mielke, Keith Draheim and Txanj Hue Yang

Members Excused: Keene Winters

Also Present: Greg Seubert, Mary Foss

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Wausau Daily Herald in the proper manner. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Abitz after noting a quorum was present.

Public Comment on Matters Appearing on the Agenda

Kathy Zoern asked how many more Life report assessments by Marathon County do we need to get this figured out? She expressed concern about the uncertainty that may be caused by a one-year project and she expressed her preference for long-term solution. She asked what the next steps would be if the project is not funded.

Chris Weems stated that he used to rely on the route to Rothschild, Schofield and Weston and would like to see the route come back.

Nancy Stencil stated that she would like to see a route to Rib Mountain. She works at North Central Health Care and her clients would utilize the route.

Approval of Minutes

Mielke moved to approve the minutes of the July 30, 2015 meeting. Yang seconded. Motion carried.

Transit Service Pilot Project and Grant Request

Abitz stated that the Metro Ride funding request to Marathon County was turned down by their executive committee. They did approve \$10,000 for the development of a county-wide transit policy, but it will not be completed until 2016.

Abitz stated that the pilot project involves a grant request to the Wausau Community Foundation to help fund the extension of transit services in 2016 and the collection of data that could be provided to the County for their transit study.

Seubert explained that the funding request to Marathon County was for the expansion of transit services to Rothschild, Schofield and Rib Mountain on Monday through Saturday. The pilot project does not include service on Saturday, so the request to the Foundation is less than the request to the County. The amount requested of the Foundation would reduce by half the cost for Rothschild, Schofield and Rib Mountain. During the one-year term, data would be gathered in order to measure the success of the project. Alderman Winters plans to meet with the Foundation next week to present the proposal.

Seubert stated that the City of Wausau's contribution to the 2016 Metro Ride budget would be reduced if the pilot project moves forward. The City of Wausau would have to authorize any grant agreements in advance of the project. Seubert said that he did not know of any other funding options to facilitate an expansion of service in 2016 if the Foundation did not fund the project. Rothschild and Schofield have indicated their inability to fund transit service without assistance.

Abitz said that Rib Mountain will be sending out another survey to business and residents. She has heard concerns about traffic flow on Rib Mountain Drive. Some residents and businesses are afraid that congestion will worsen if buses are stopping on Rib Mountain Drive.

Draheim expressed concern about the lack of pedestrian infrastructure in Rib Mountain. Seubert said that route design will be determined largely by time and distance, but the lack of pedestrian infrastructure there will be taken into account. In order to accommodate passengers, bus stops may have to be placed near businesses and not on the street.

Mielke moved to authorize submission of the pilot project proposal and grant request to the Foundation. Draheim seconded. Motion carried.

The next meeting date was not determined. Seubert will poll members if he deems a special meeting is necessary. The next regular meeting date is November 19, 2015.

Mielke moved to adjourn the meeting. Yang seconded. Motion carried.

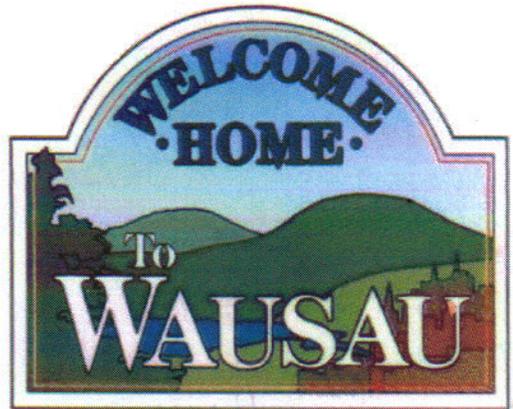
Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abitz, Chairperson

mf

Wausau Area Transit System
Revenue & Expense Summary
Year to Date
September 30, 2015

Revenue	Year to Date	City Budget	State Budget	% of Total (City Budget)
Adults	\$103,018.48	\$175,574.18	\$175,574.18	58.7%
Students	\$180,370.65	\$224,077.04	\$224,077.04	80.5%
Elderly & Disabled	\$6,121.50	\$55,518.20	\$55,518.20	11.0%
Trippers	\$23,127.51	\$30,959.10	\$30,959.10	74.7%
Paratransit	\$3,958.75	\$10,368.00	\$10,327.50	38.2%
Total Revenue	\$316,596.89	\$496,496.52	\$496,456.02	63.8%
Expense-Fixed Route Bus				
Wages - Drivers	\$546,721.48	\$768,580.07	\$768,580.07	71.1%
Wages - Repair & Garage	\$153,250.98	\$224,637.94	\$223,904.92	68.2%
Wages - Administrative	\$189,960.44	\$216,776.67	\$209,865.94	87.6%
Total Wages	\$889,932.90	\$1,209,994.68	\$1,202,350.93	73.5%
Employee Welfare	\$609,600.71	\$899,210.97	\$896,537.82	67.8%
Services	\$95,216.52	\$149,791.74	\$149,791.74	63.6%
Fuels & Lubes	\$152,090.15	\$350,311.07	\$349,338.07	43.4%
Tire Expense	\$10,948.39	\$21,843.14	\$21,843.14	50.1%
Parts, Supplies, Rep & Laundry	\$120,172.55	\$119,047.00	\$119,047.00	100.9%
Maint-Blds, Grds, Euqip	\$6,812.09	\$18,214.19	\$18,214.19	37.4%
Utilities	\$34,608.09	\$63,460.28	\$63,460.28	54.5%
Insurance	\$71,080.41	\$97,800.35	\$97,800.35	72.7%
Advertising	\$5,301.01	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	88.4%
Pstg/Dupl/Off Spls/Pub Not/Software	\$7,165.10	\$14,497.21	\$14,497.21	49.4%
Fees, Subscriptions & Dues	\$3,800.00	\$4,352.98	\$4,352.98	87.3%
Meetings	\$2,330.45	\$3,900.00	\$3,900.00	59.8%
Other Expenses	\$604.75	\$2,950.00	\$2,950.00	20.5%
Total Fixed Route Bus Service	\$2,009,663.13	\$2,961,373.61	\$2,950,083.71	67.9%
Expense-Paratransit				
Wages and Employee Welfare	\$99,216.86	\$244,334.94	\$242,057.57	40.6%
Contractual Sevices- Marathon Cty.	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Contractual Services	\$7,939.17	\$11,716.07	\$11,716.07	67.8%
Supplies and Expenses	\$3,291.15	\$13,917.04	\$13,869.57	23.6%
Fixed Charges	\$2,443.14	\$12,351.86	\$12,351.86	19.8%
Miscellaneous Expense	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Total Paratransit Services	\$112,890.32	\$282,319.91	\$279,995.07	40.0%
Total Metro Ride Expenses	\$2,122,553.44	\$3,243,693.52	\$3,230,078.78	65.4%
Wheels-to-Work Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$291,116.00	
Contract Expense (s.85.205)	-\$22,625.25	-\$30,000.00	-\$30,167.00	
Net Expenses	\$2,099,928.19	\$3,213,693.52	\$3,199,911.78	
Net Income (loss) from Operations	\$1,783,331.30	-\$2,717,197.00	-\$2,703,455.76	
Other Income				
Subsidy - State	\$600,014.76	\$771,286.43	\$800,019.68	77.8%
Subsidy - Federal (operating asst.)	\$744,018.31	\$1,004,279.21	\$992,024.41	74.1%
Subsidy - Federal (capital maint.)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.0%
Subsidy - Rothschild	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.0%
Subsidy - Schofield	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.0%
Subsidy - Weston	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.0%
Subsidy - Wausau	\$330,679.67	\$796,650.75	\$766,598.06	41.5%
Wheels-to-Work	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$129,314.00	#DIV/0!
Wausau School District	\$8,045.40	\$12,243.00	\$12,243.00	65.7%
Subsidy - Sec 85.21	\$63,808.16	\$85,077.55	\$85,077.55	75.0%
Recovery of Phys Damage Losses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
Advertising	\$36,765.00	\$47,660.00	\$47,660.00	77.1%
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
Insurance Premium Dividend	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Total Other Income	\$1,783,331.30	\$2,717,196.94	\$2,832,936.70	65.6%
Total Revenue & Other Income	\$2,099,928.19	\$3,213,693.46	\$3,329,392.72	65.3%



**METRO-RIDE TRANSIT COMMISSION
2016 GRANT PROPOSAL &
PROGRAM BUDGET**

Compiled by: Keene Winters
Alderman, Wausau District 6
September 29, 2015

METRO-RIDE TRANSIT COMMISSION 2016 PILOT PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR EXPANSION OF THE BUS SYSTEM

Background: On July 30, 2015, the METRO-Ride Transit Commission met to consider the re-establishment of multi-community service in response to requests from the public, the Village of Rothschild and the City of Schofield. The commission voted unanimously to forward a budget request to Marathon County for up to \$118,000 in 2016 to provide matching dollars for services in Rothschild, Schofield and Rib Mountain and funding for Saturday service.

On September 4, 2015, Marathon County's Executive Committee declined to consider the budget request for 2016 and instead earmarked \$10,000 for a study of the transit needs of Marathon County by the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS).

Grant Request: The METRO-Ride Transit Commission is now requesting \$89,923 in grant funds to provide dollar-for-dollar match to Rothschild, Schofield and Rib Mountain for a 2016 demonstration project to expand bus service to those communities. With service extended to these communities, METRO-Ride and WIPPS can gather data about the expansion of the system and incorporate in the study. A study with data collection could produce a policy paper on multi-community transit services that would potentially have both local and statewide importance.

Appendix C contains a sample list of questions that could be answer with data from the pilot project. The goal of the study should be to determine whether county funding for this program is worthwhile.

The expansion of the transit system has been proposed for the following reasons:

To Meet County Social Services Needs

- To help meet the transportation needs of the disabled.
- To help meet the transportation needs of a growing elderly population.
- To expand para-transit services in the metro core and allow for more of North Central Health Care's transportation budget to be used in rural areas.

For additional information about county population needs see Appendix A, excerpts from the *2013-15 Local Indicators for Excellence in Marathon County*.

To Provide a Catalyst for Intergovernmental Cooperation and Additional Local Aids

- To provide an incentive for additional municipalities to join the City of Wausau in providing a more user-friendly, multi-community transit system.
- For every \$1.00 the county contributes, there will be \$1.00 in matching local funding and \$3.04 in federal and state aid. Grant monies will fund 19% of the \$471,437 project costs.

To Support Jobs & Economic Development

- To provide opportunities for adults who cannot or should not drive a vehicle to reach employers with job openings.
- To create a community that will be more attractive to young people.

For additional information on connecting job-seekers with employers see Appendix B, an article from the *City Pages*.

**WAUSAU METRO-RIDE TRANSIT COMMISSION
ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR SCENARIO 4**

TABLE I-A

Expanded Weekday Service – Dollars

	Municipal Funds	Grant Funds	Total Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds	Rider Fees	Total Aids & Fees	Total Cost
City of Schofield	\$23,648	\$23,648	\$47,296	\$31,346	\$40,489	\$4,848	\$76,683	\$123,979
Village of Rothschild	\$26,185	\$26,185	\$52,370	\$34,709	\$44,832	\$5,368	\$84,909	\$137,279
Rib Mountain Business District	<u>\$40,090</u>	<u>\$40,090</u>	<u>\$80,180</u>	<u>\$53,140</u>	<u>\$68,639</u>	<u>\$8,219</u>	<u>\$129,999</u>	<u>\$210,179</u>
Totals	\$89,923	\$89,923	\$179,846	\$119,195	\$153,960	\$18,436	\$291,591	\$471,437

Expanded Weekday Service – Percentages

	Municipal Funds	Grant Funds	Total Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds	Rider Fees	Total Aids & Fees	Total Cost
City of Schofield	5.02%	5.02%	10.03%	6.65%	8.59%	1.03%	16.27%	26.30%
Village of Rothschild	5.55%	5.55%	11.11%	7.36%	9.51%	1.14%	18.01%	29.12%
Rib Mountain Business District	<u>8.50%</u>	<u>8.50%</u>	<u>17.01%</u>	<u>11.27%</u>	<u>14.56%</u>	<u>1.74%</u>	<u>27.58%</u>	<u>44.58%</u>
Totals	19.07%	19.07%	38.15%	25.28%	32.66%	3.91%	61.85%	100.00%

TABLE I-B

Restoration of Saturday Service – Dollars

	Municipal Funds	County Funds	Total Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds	Rider Fees	Total Aids & Fees	Total Cost
Saturday Service*		\$28,077	\$28,077	\$18,608	\$24,036	\$2,878	\$45,522	\$73,599

Restoration of Saturday Service – Dollars

	Municipal Funds	County Funds	Total Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds	Rider Fees	Total Aids & Fees	Total Cost
Saturday Service*		38.15%	38.15%	25.28%	32.66%	3.91%	61.85%	100.00%

*Note: Saturday service provided for September through May. No Saturday service in the summer.

**METRO-RIDE TRANSIT COMMISSION
2016 BUDGET PROPOSALS**

TABLE II

	CURRENT WAUSAU- ONLY SYSTEM		PROPOSED MULTI- COMMUNITY SYSTEM		NEW FUNDING REQUIRED
	Dollars	Percentages	Dollars	Percentages	
Federal 5307 Funds	\$984,690	31.00%	\$1,138,651	31.00%	\$153,961
State 85.20 Funds	\$762,341	24.00%	\$881,536	24.00%	\$119,195
State 85.21 Funds	\$95,324	3.00%	\$95,328	2.60%	\$4
User Fees	\$499,451	15.72%	\$517,887	14.10%	\$18,436
Wausau School District	\$12,243	0.39%	\$12,243	0.33%	\$0
City of Wausau	\$822,372	25.89%	\$819,498	22.31%	-\$2,874
City of Schofield	\$0	0.00%	\$23,648	0.64%	\$23,648
Village of Rothschild	\$0	0.00%	\$26,185	0.71%	\$26,185
Rib Mountain Business District	\$0	0.00%	\$40,090	1.09%	\$40,090
Grant Funds	\$0	0.00%	\$89,923	2.45%	\$89,923
Marathon County	\$0	0.00%	<u>\$28,077</u>	<u>0.76%</u>	<u>\$28,077</u>
Totals	\$3,176,421	100.00%	\$3,673,066	100.00%	\$496,645

APPENDIX A

**EXCEPTS ON TRANSPORTATION FROM
FOCUS 2013-2015-LIFE IN MARATHON COUNTY
LOCAL INDICATORS FOR EXCELLENCE**

Basic Needs and Supports

Section Summary

Community Success and Progress:

- Marathon County has compassionate service providers with a willingness to collaborate and partner using a client-focused approach.
- Community initiatives such as the Marathon County Hunger Coalition and the Marathon County Housing and Homelessness Coalition bring together 50 organizations collaborating to serve the community.
- In 2013, the need for an additional resource to provide shelter from the cold weather led to the creation of the Warming Center operated by Catholic Charities.
- Marathon County Food Pantries provided needed food to over 8,000 people in 2012.



Challenges and Opportunities to Improve:

Challenges

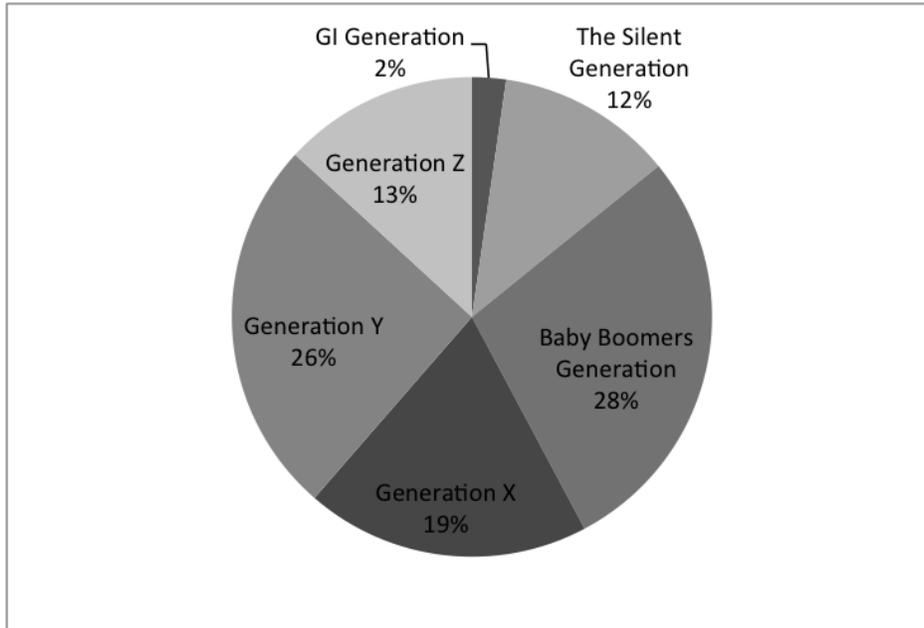
- Requests for basic needs assistance continue to rise as community resources diminish, challenging the county's ability to serve all persons in need.
- The amount and duration of homelessness and housing assistance has strained the limited resources of affordable housing, emergency shelters, and voucher programs.
- Public transportation services including paratransit are limited, and rural transportation services are non-existent.

Opportunities to Improve

- Awareness programs about basic needs concerns can emphasize the importance of working together for solutions.
- Coordinating services in innovative ways can open up creative solutions.
- Research could identify root causes to basic needs challenges such as housing, homelessness, and hunger.



Key Measure: Marathon County Population by Generation, 2010



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

For the first time since the advent of the automobile, travel is on the decline. Thought to be a function of the declining economy, people are making fewer discretionary trips and living closer to service centers. However, vehicle travel is declining more than any other means and is expected to continue declining after the economy recovers.

Compared with recent generations, Generation Y is more likely to choose not to drive, wanting alternative transportation options instead as part of their choice to re-urbanize. This generation prefers bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit. Generation Z is waiting even longer than previous generations to drive. Concurrently, more members of the G.I. and Silent Generations are “aging in place.” These generations face limited access to transportation for medical, nutritional, shopping, and social needs. As life expectancy is increasing, the years of transportation dependency are increasing as well. For aging Baby Boomers, who currently travel more than any other generation, this poses additional challenges. 83% live outside of the urban centers where public transportation is usually more accessible.

A transportation system includes the infrastructure, the vehicles, the technologies, the transported people and goods, the environment that affects and is affected by transportation, and the policies that govern transportation. Past transportation policies were established to build infrastructure to facilitate the fast transport of people and goods over long distances. However, the existing transportation system and policies no longer meet our needs and wants. To meet the needs of these changing generations, policy will need to shift from infrastructure construction and repair to planning for multiple transportation modes, transportation-related technology, increased demand for public transit, and changing land-use patterns.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Generation Birth Years	
GI Generation	1912 - 1926
The Silent Generation	1927 - 1945
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964
Generation X	1965 - 1983
Generation Y	1984 - 2002
Generation Z	2003 - Present

- State budget cuts have reduced funding of public transit by 10%.
- About 80% of seniors live in areas that are car-dependent.
- As life expectancy increases, the difference between life expectancy and driving expectancy increases. Seniors are estimated to be dependent on others or public transit for transportation for a period of 7 to 10 years.
- In Wisconsin metropolitan areas, 50% to 90% of seniors have poor access to transportation.
- In a 2013 study by New Urban Land Institute, 52% of Baby Boomers, half of Generation Y, and 45% of Generation X respondents indicated that they place a high priority on public transportation options.
- Over 25% of Generation Y does not have a driver's license.

SOURCES

- **American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)**
Public Policy Institute
www.aarp.org/research/ppi/
- **Urban Land Institute**
www.ulii.org/
- **Wisconsin Department of Health Services**
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/
- **Wisconsin Department of Transportation**
www.dot.state.wi.us

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Personal Vehicle

- The average household has 2.4 vehicles.
- 4.5 % of households have no vehicles.
- There are 3,365 miles of roads in the county
 - * 274 miles of state highway
 - * 614 miles of county roadway
 - * 2,477 miles of local streets

Bike & Pedestrian

- 100 miles of newly signed bike routes are in the Wausau metro area.
- The Cities of Wausau, Schofield, and Mosinee and the Villages of Rothschild and Weston have ordinances regarding sidewalks.
- All federal and state funded road projects must have bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

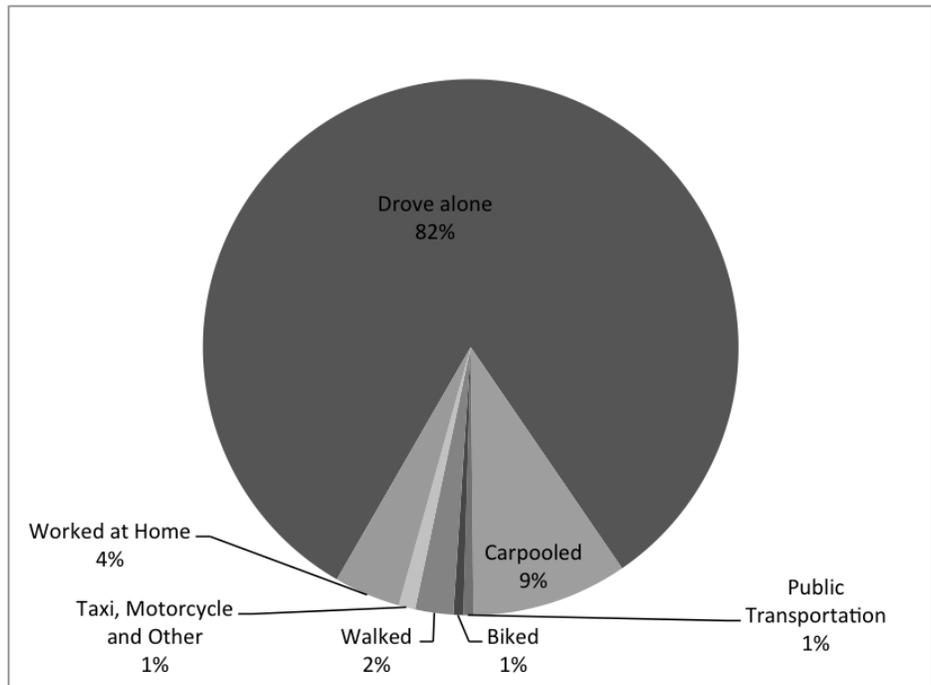
Public Transit

- Marathon County has 8 fixed routes and 10 school (express) routes.
- Metro Ride has 630,000 annual riders and 12,025 annual paratransit and human-services riders.

Air

- CWA has 10 flights per day with 20-25,000 passengers per month.

Key Measure: Choice of Transportation to Work in Marathon County, 2006—2010



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

An adequate variety of transportation choices is key to the functioning of a desirable community. As demographic and environmental factors challenge traditional transportation norms, residents are increasingly expecting their communities to provide transportation alternatives to the roadways that carry personal vehicles. An attractive community considers public transportation routes as well as foot- and bike-traffic paths and lanes in hopes of providing its residents options that fit their needs and lifestyle choices. For those who can't or choose not to drive, a variety of transportation choices is essential to their daily functioning.

Even for drivers, these increased options provide benefits. Everyone is a pedestrian at some time during the day, as people walk to and from other modes of transportation to their final destinations. Sidewalks and bike paths provide added safety for pedestrians and cyclists as well as recreational opportunities that improve public health and increase economic value.

A well-maintained, established roadway infrastructure is still the backbone to all transportation in Marathon County, providing not only for personal and

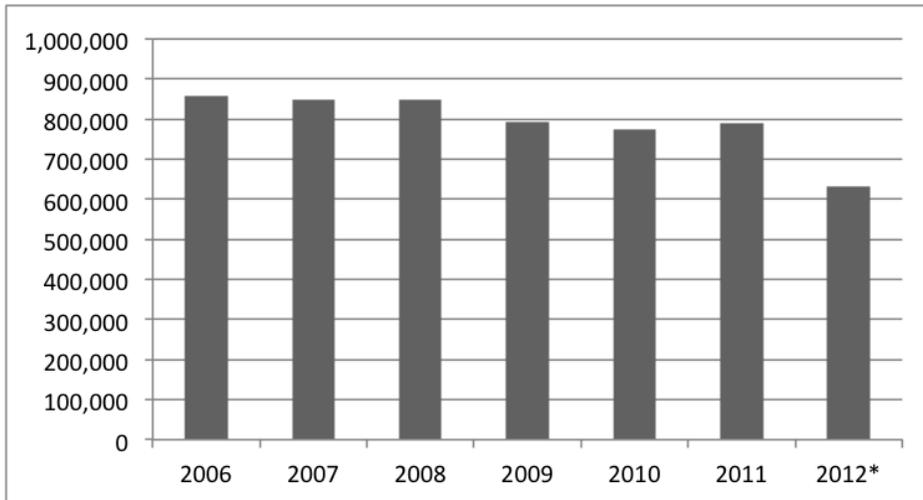
commercial vehicle traffic, but giving access as well to bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit routes. However, the state of Wisconsin is now encouraging more comprehensive road planning that considers multiple uses and factors sidewalks and bike lanes in the design.

The City of Wausau recently added 100 miles of newly signed bikes routes across the metro area. Still, a vast majority (82%) of Marathon County residents choose to drive alone when making their daily commute to and from work. As awareness of and access to transportation options increases, residents will likely take advantage of the economic, health, and environmental benefits of these alternatives.

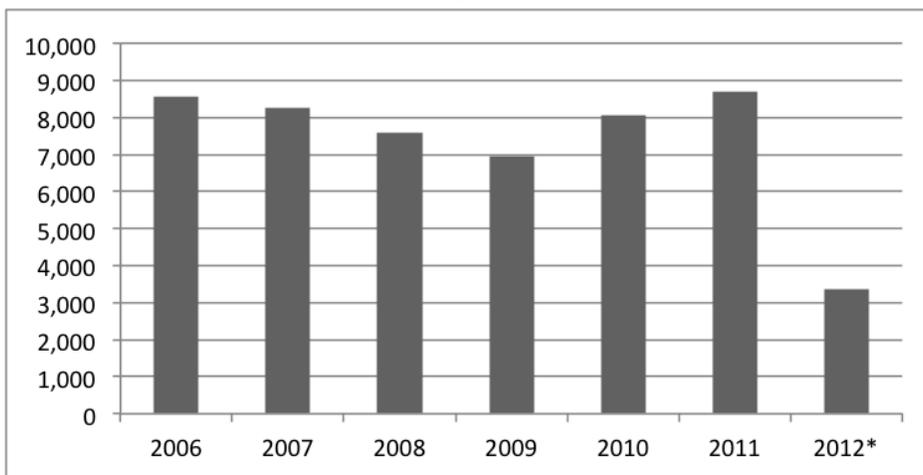
SOURCES

- **American Public Transit Association**
www.apta.com/Pages/default.aspx
- **Central Wisconsin Airport**
www.fly-cwa.org/
- **City of Wausau**
MetroRide Transit System
www.ci.wausau.wi.us/Departments/MetroRide.aspx
- **U.S. Census Bureau**
www.census.gov/

Key Measure: Total Rides Taken on Metro Ride Buses, 2006—2012



Key Measure: Total Rides Taken Using Metro Ride Paratransit, 2006—2012



* 2012 drops in totals are the result of decreases in funding.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

When people don't drive or are dependent on others for transportation, the potential exists to become immobile, homebound, and socially isolated. Public transportation, therefore, is an essential service for a healthy community. Adequate public transit has many benefits including the promotion of social interaction, improved access to healthcare, encouragement of active lifestyles, reductions in air and noise pollution, and decreases in infrastructure development and maintenance costs.

While travel in Marathon County is conducted primarily by either personal or commercial vehicle, there are limited alternatives; however, transit services

have been significantly diminished and are unlikely to expand, given the current budget environment, without an alternative source of local funds. Such cuts are evident in the significant decreases in services provided in 2012 and in the growing 2-1-1 needs requests related to transportation.

Public transit is poorly positioned to meet the increasing transportation demands predicted by demographic trends. Moreover, beyond the Wausau metro area, living independently in one's home may lead to isolation particularly for individuals in rural areas who plan to age in their homes unless transit services are expanded.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- The Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program serves persons over 60 and disabled persons without income thresholds. Riders must be traveling for medical, employment, or nutritional reasons. The program served 6,800 riders in 2012.
- The Metro Ride is an ADA compliant public transportation system with 8 fixed routes, covering an area that encompasses the homes of 38% of Marathon County's residents. This program had 631,360 fixed route riders and 3,370 Paratransit riders in 2012.
- Significant decreases in funds led to a 20% decrease in Metro Bus riders and a 61% decrease in Paratransit riders from 2011 to 2012.
- For Marathon County residents, transportation was the fastest growing category of need with 17% of 2-1-1 calls. High gas prices, bus fares, and taxi fares were common causes, and there were not enough social programs to meet the needs.

SOURCES

- **City of Wausau**
Metro Ride Transit System
www.ci.wausau.wi.us/Departments/MetroRide.aspx
- **United Way of Marathon County**
United Way's 2-1-1
www.unitedwaymc.org/211.htm
- **North Central Healthcare**
www.norcen.org/

APPENDIX B

CITY PAGES COVER STORY
ON
JOB SEEKERS AND TRANSIT SERVICES

CiTY pages

FOREVER FREE

February 12-19, 2015

Saturn in the morning

4

Mayor calls alderman a bully, all hell breaks loose

5

Walker wants anything extra for more tax relief

6

Feel the seasons at the Center for the Visual Arts

12

911 Facebook emergency

22

Riverflow Yoga will have new home

23

Before you judge my sorry state
Heed this tale of ironic fate

I'm not a mooch, I'm not a jerk
Just a poor sap out of work

Many jobs past city bus limits
A walk to work, hours not minutes

Finding employ with a commute so far
Nigh impossible without a car

But if no cash, no wheels for you
A vicious cycle, catch-twenty two

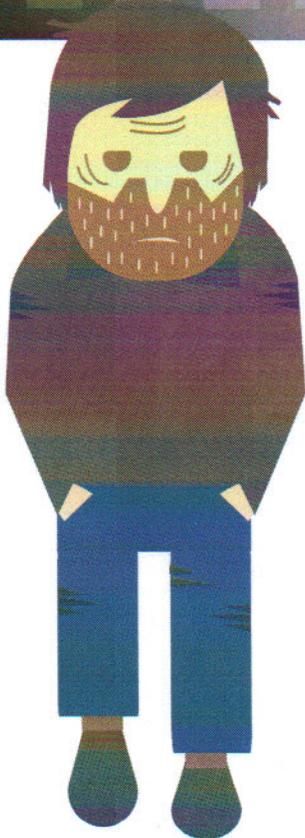
So woe are we who have no ride
Is there an answer? Find out inside

unreachable JOBS

CLASSIFIEDS



UNREACHABLE JOBS



A Job Center analysis found that more than half of all local job openings are unavailable to anyone without a car

Deacon Bryan Hilts thought it was odd when one of the people staying at Catholic Charities' Second Avenue warming shelter this winter asked to be awakened at 4:15 am. The shelter, which houses people who would otherwise be homeless, typically wakes clients at 6 am and requires them to be dressed, fed and out the door by 8.

It struck the Deacon as unusual that someone wanted to wake up so much earlier than was required.

Turns out this man needed the extra time to walk to work every day. His job was about 6 miles from the shelter, in the industrial park on Wausau's far west side, and walking was his only transportation. The man had to wake up early, Hilts found out, for the hour-plus commute by foot, in sub-zero weather.

As a former Wausau cop, Hilts was familiar with this man's situation because he saw it all the time while on the police force. Most people are homeless because they don't have a job. But getting a job is tough without a car, and paying for a car is nearly impossible without a job.

It's an old problem, but now it's a problem with some real numbers attached to it. Last year, employees with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development at the Job Center in Wausau decided to look at job openings in relation to public transportation.

Their finding: Yes, there are many available jobs in the Wausau area, but you can forget about more than half of them if you don't have a vehicle.

It's a cycle that Hilts and Catholic Charities are hoping to break.

Numbers spell out the problem

At various meetings throughout the city, Kristine Porter and her staff at the Marathon County Jobs Center continue to hear the same questions. Are there a lot of job openings in Wausau? Is there a workforce ready to fill those jobs?

Jim Warsaw, at a county meeting last month, said Wausau needs a stronger workforce to fill employers' needs. As economic development director of McDevco, the public-private business advocacy group, it's one of the bigger complaints he's heard from employers in the region.

But a quick walk through the Job Center provides a pretty good picture of the many people looking for work. It's a busy place, filled with people searching for various types of jobs.

So if there are employers looking for employees and job seekers looking for employment, why aren't more of them connecting?

Porter decided to test a theory.

Last November, Job Center employee Audrey Kostroski took a look at all of the openings for a one-week period in the Wausau area and pinned them on a map. She then took everything she knew about those jobs—what time the person would start and end the day, where the company is located, whether weekends were required—then compared them to Wausau Area Transit Systems bus routes.

The findings were not good for those without a vehicle.

In that week, 423 jobs were posted. Of those, 248 would have been simply unavailable to anyone who relies on the bus for transportation. In the Wausau alone, there were 331 jobs open, 188 of them unfeasible for anyone without their own transportation.

The reasons are more varied than just "the bus doesn't go there." In some cases it's a matter of schedule. Any job that requires even occasional weekends is out of reach. If a person could get to a second-shift job via bus, but then couldn't get home, that job is out of reach. Any job that requires someone to be on call pretty much excludes a bus user.

That doesn't mean that someone without their own transportation should give up on a promising job, Porter says. Job Center staff encourage people to apply and will work with the employer to find a solution. Sometimes a company has regular carpools that a person could join or might offer some flexibility for someone without a vehicle. Getting to work might require multiple bus transfers and a longer commute time. Those are factors a potential employee needs to know.

"We want people to find the right next job," Porter says. "We think about the barriers and how to work around them and make the best of the opportunity."

Porter recalls one woman who not only took the bus to work, but first had to take her kids to day care. The process added several hours to her workday. Porter has many similar stories that run counter to the notion that people don't want to work—these real stories show the lengths people will go to to hold down a job. "The neat part is that we have people doing things like this. They really wanted the job."

Hilts observed the same thing. A man who didn't have a home of his own, who woke up hours before most to walk the 6 or so miles one way to Wausau's industrial park to get to work. An industrial park that isn't served by the bus system.

A wheel solution

There are people in the Wausau area ready to help those willing to put in a little time to solve their job versus car problem. Kent Olson of Olson Tire & Auto started Wheels to Work in 2011 to connect people in need with a reliable vehicle.

The program works like this: If a person needs a car or needs repairs on their car that they can't afford, they can apply to Wheels to Work. For repairs on a car, the participant must understand they won't be getting their car repaired by 5 pm that day. Instead, the car is turned over to young mechanics—primarily recent graduates of automotive repair programs who need experience before getting full-time jobs as mechanics.

Participants must have an income level at 200% or less of the poverty line, have a valid driver's license and insurance, and be working or looking for work.

Then, whether it's for a new car or a repair, the person goes through a program that includes classes on personal finance and vehicle maintenance.

Once the person has graduated, they'll get their car back, with the necessary repairs at a fraction of the normal cost. Or the participant can buy a car at a fraction of typical cost.

"This is not a quick fix," Olson says. "It's a process. It's a matter of whether you give a person a fish or you teach them how to fish."

patients, but it wasn't easy. First she had to rely on people to drive her to job interviews, then to get her to work every day—or pay \$15 cab fare each way. It was nerve wracking, because if they let her down and she arrived late, she looked bad to her employer.

Meanwhile, Coleman was working her way through the Wheels to Work program, and in December she graduated and was awarded with a car. She also picked up some good tips on car repair and budgeting, she says.

"I've been here eight months, and within six months I had an apartment, a job and a car," Coleman says, adding that it's a relief to be more self-sufficient.

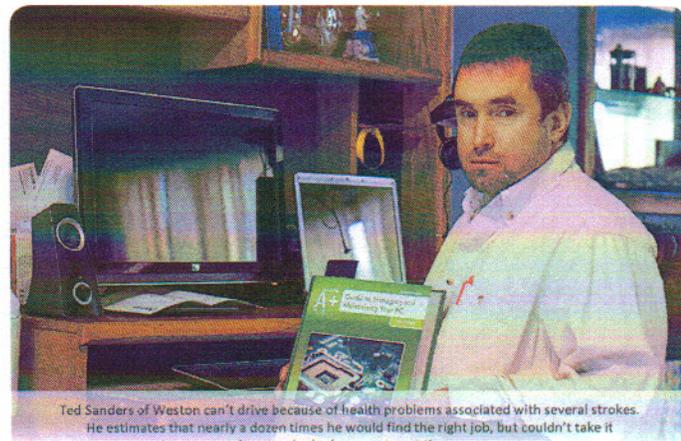
Wheels to Work relies on vehicle donations. These vehicles often need costly repairs. Parts stores offer supplies at cost, and Wheels to Work couples that with 50¢ on the dollar labor from new auto mechanics to keep costs low. A number of area dealerships, repair shops and part stores participate.

Entry-level technicians perform the work, which gives them valuable work experience. Building up new employees to join the work force is an important aspect of the program, Olson says.

The program has had a number of success stories, including a young woman who went on to get her masters degree, Olson says.



Kristian Coleman found a good job, but it wasn't easy. She relied on rides from others first to the interviews, then to work every day. Eventually she earned a low-cost, reliable car through the Wheels to Work program, which in its four years has awarded or fixed more than 300 vehicles for participants



Ted Sanders of Weston can't drive because of health problems associated with several strokes. He estimates that nearly a dozen times he would find the right job, but couldn't take it because he had no way to get there.

Wheels to Work has awarded 111 cars to clients since its inception in 2011, repaired 212, and seen 354 total people completing the vehicle maintenance and personal finance classes.

One of them is Kristian Coleman, who, with her 11-month-old son, moved to the Wausau area eight months ago from Tennessee, without a car or job. Coleman was determined to find work. From her apartment in Schofield, she would walk the 4 miles to the Job Center on Grand Avenue.

The 23-year-old found work at a care center helping dementia and Alzheimer's

Some just don't drive

A car solution won't help everyone. For some people, the act of driving is out of reach.

When Ted Sanders turned 35, he suffered the first of several strokes which left him unable to drive. He suffered his last stroke in 2010, in front of his daughter and mother-in-law. "I shouldn't be talking to you right now," Sanders says. "I almost bit the bullet."

Still, Sanders was determined to find work. Newly armed with a degree from Northcentral Technical College in computer hardware repair, Sanders has been searching for a job for more than a year,

so far, with no luck.

The problem: Because he isn't able to drive, getting to and from a job is tricky. It's doubly tricky because he lives in Weston. To even take the bus, Sanders first would have to find a way to the Wausau city limits. The bus system no longer serves Weston.

"The search, for lack of a better word, has been disheartening," Sanders says.

Finding a job on or relatively near a bus line is hard enough. The other option for him is to rely on friends and family, but they all have jobs themselves. For him to share a ride, his and his family member's schedule need to line up, both in terms of geography and time.

The 46-year-old Weston man estimates that nearly a dozen times he would find the right job, but couldn't take it because he had no way to get there.

"It's extremely difficult and frustrating," Sanders says. "There are people who are in way worse shape than me. I can't imagine what they're going through."

A low-tech Uber

For Hilts, the Job Center's study really hit home. Those who are homeless and carless have much fewer job options and thus less opportunity to address why they're homeless in the first place.

Catholic Charities twice a year organizes a count of Wausau's homeless population. Those counts typically reveal more than 100 people in the Wausau area. That number is low, Hilts says, because it doesn't count people staying on friends' couches or with relatives.

Hilts says that the No. 1 reason people give them about why they're homeless is lack of transportation or a job. It's something he saw during his time as a Wausau police officer and continues to see through his work with the Catholic Charities warming shelter.

What's needed, Hilts realized, is a way to connect people who need rides with people who can offer them.

The catch is that any solution needs to be fairly low tech. Volunteers with the time to offer rides are often elderly and not tech-savvy in social media, mobile devices and the like. Those who need the ride can't afford those things.

The man walking to the industrial park is both an example and an exception to the rule, Hilts says.

"It's a unique situation that he was able to land that job," Hilts says. "So often, many of our guests can't even get to an interview, or if they do, and they're asked if they have reliable transportation, they have to say 'no.'"

Possible solutions include an on-demand public ride service, like one used in Rusk County. Started three years ago, it works through a computer system to map out routes based on input from bus customers.

People call to give their intended destination and time to a dispatcher. That information is fed into a program that uses all the rides and times to calculate a route for the drivers to follow.

The system uses cars, mini buses and one full-sized bus to get riders to their destinations. Many of the 200 riders per day use the on-demand system to get to work, says Rusk County Mobility Manager Sheryl Kising, including a dedicated route to that county's industrial park.

Things seem to have turned out OK for the man in the warming shelter who walked every day to the industrial park. Catholic Charities was able to arrange a taxi service to help out until he made other arrangements. The man stopped using the warming shelter when he found a temporary place to live, so Hilts and City Pages were unable to track him down for a follow up. That's probably good news.

But Hilts also knows there are many, many more people unable to find work because they just can't get there. **CTP**

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLES OF DATA THAT COULD BE COLLECTED BY THE METRO-RIDE COMMISSION IN A PILOT YEAR

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY A BUS SYSTEM PILOT PROJECT

- 1. Did the expanded, multi-jurisdictional coverage increase ridership? If so, by how much?**
- 2. Did the expanded, multi-jurisdictional bus system bring more federal and state aid dollars into the community? If so, how much?**
- 3. How many new para-transit clients does the expanded system attract?**
- 4. How many para-transit rides were taken off the Marathon County's para-transit service (provided through North Central Health Care Center)? What were the cost of those rides?**
- 5. Did the number of adult or choice riders on the system increase as a result of the expansion?**
- 6. Did the average cost per ride increase or decrease during the expansion? If so, by how much?**
- 7. Did ridership increase on routes that existed prior to the expansion?**
- 8. Can we get a snapshot of current rider satisfaction levels before the end of November?**
- 9. Did rider satisfaction increase after 10 months of the expanded system?**
- 10. Given the increased dollars spent—an estimated 15.6% more—were commensurate or greater benefits achieved?**