

# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

# 2020



## Impact of Covid-19

The pandemic has required Metro and the City of Madison to make hard decisions in 2020 that have impacted our service and the lives of our riders, employees and the community as a whole. Like many transit agencies across the country, Metro was faced with the very tough task of balancing the health of our employees while still providing critical service to the community.

Ultimately, we preserved transit service for essential workers, kept our workforce intact, and took necessary measures to keep employees and passengers healthy and safe.

On March 23, Metro reduced service and began operating Saturday schedules with some additional routes and frequencies during commuting hours. This resulted in operating about 65% of normal service levels and allowed us to redeploy staff to critical tasks in the maintenance facility to assist with daily deep cleanings.

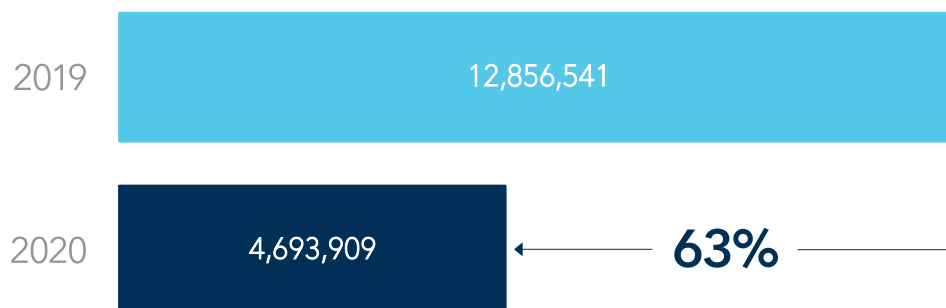
Metro worked closely with essential service organizations to make sure critical community needs were still being met despite the cut in service levels. For example, extra trips were added on routes serving hospitals to better coincide with employee shifts, and we transported people to and from emergency homeless shelters.

As the pandemic progressed, Metro followed FTA, CDC, State of Wisconsin and local public health guidelines closely and instituted several protective measures for the community, including:

- Reducing capacity on buses to 15
- Suspending fare collection and requiring rear door boarding for five months
- Requiring face masks from all employees and riders on buses, transfer points, and shelters.
- Daily deep cleanings of all vehicles

When college campuses began to open, Metro increased its service levels to approximately 85% of what was in place prior to the pandemic. Metro closed out the year with this same level of service, with plans to continue at this pace until a full review of our transit network is complete in 2022.

### Ridership Infographic



*Metro provided a total of 4,693,909 rides in 2020. This was an approximate 63% decrease compared to the previous year due to Covid-19.*

# Bus Rapid Transit

Despite the setbacks of the pandemic, the City of Madison continues to work towards the implementation of a bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

Staff are currently planning an initial corridor operating east to west through Madison's downtown and university campus areas with a 15-minute frequency. Additional BRT routes operating north and south in the through the city are also being developed. More than 80,000 residents and almost 120,000 jobs are within a 10-minute walk of planned rapid transit routes.

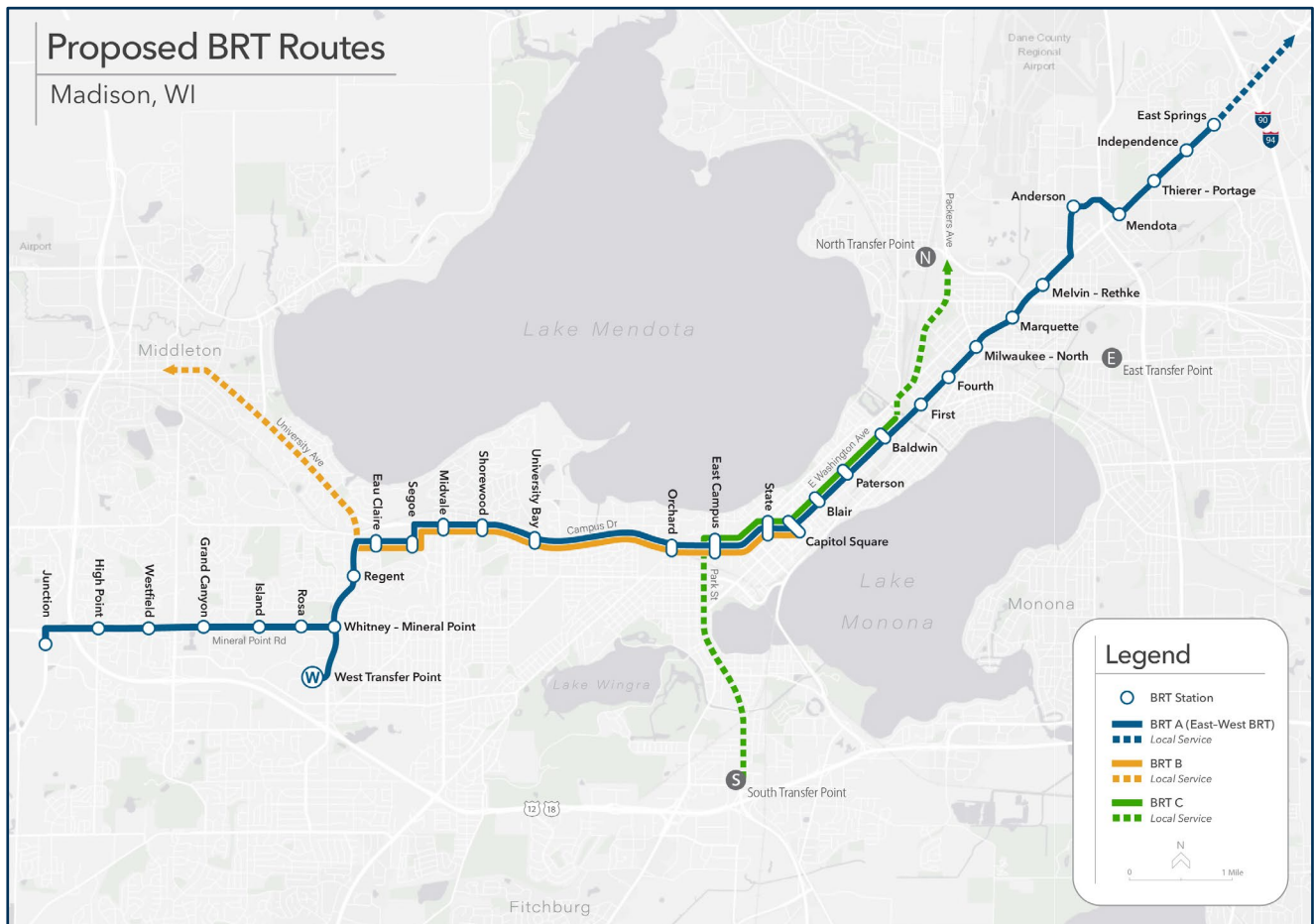
With its first BRT corridor expected to cost \$160 million, Madison is pursuing several funding sources for the project including local share, federal and state grants and internal funding sources. Staff are also working to make

the current local partnerships more resilient, however forming a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) remains a high priority.

In August 2020, the City of Madison's proposed East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System was accepted into the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts Program. Acceptance into the program authorized the City to proceed into project development, the more detailed planning process required for the implementation of the proposed BRT system.

Additionally, the City was awarded \$4.7 million in federal Bus and Bus Facilities grant funds to help jumpstart BRT planning. The funds will help reduce the amount of local share funding needed for the project.

Project construction is planned to begin in 2023 with service hoped to begin in Fall of 2024.



## **Network Redesign**

Metro has also started the process of a complete redesign of its system to better meet the regional needs of residents and businesses. Metro has not undertaken this type of system overhaul since converting to a transfer point system in 1998. The goal of the redesign is to make the system run more efficiently, reduce travel times, and incorporate service into Madison's future BRT system.

Planning and outreach will continue through 2021. A first wave of service changes are expected in August of 2022 with additional changes implemented prior to the roll out of BRT service in 2024.

## **VW Settlement Funds**

Metro Transit was selected as recipients in the second round of State of Wisconsin Transit Capital Assistance Grants made possible through the Volkswagen Mitigation Program. The \$7.5 million grant award was used to purchase 12 new buses, allowing Metro to retire aging diesel buses in our fleet. All of the new vehicles feature clean idle certified engines, which reduce carbon emissions during idling and wasted fuel consumption saving both money and the environment.

Metro expects to bring on the City's first three all-electric buses in 2021 with plans to make significant investments in all-electric buses as part of our future bus rapid transit system.

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## **Facilities Update**

### **Renovations Continue on Maintenance/ Bus Storage Facility**

Metro has completed the second phase of a \$44 million improvement project at its main maintenance and bus storage facility located on East Washington Ave. Inadequate space to store buses, coupled with the aging infrastructure and inadequate ventilation have led to unsafe working conditions and substandard, inefficient amenities that needed to be addressed.

The first and second phase of construction included building new service lanes, remodeling of the workshop and body shop, structural work, critical HVAC upgrades and widespread electrical upgrades to support the addition of electric buses.

Phase three will begin in the summer of 2021 and includes remodels to maintenance bays/lifts, new boilers and water heaters, remodels to administration and office areas, new driver locker rooms, restrooms, and standby room, and new HVAC and lighting.

### **New Satellite Facility on Madison's Far East Side**

To provide capacity to expand service and implement BRT, Metro has been looking for a satellite maintenance and bus storage facility for a number of years. Metro's current facility was designed to hold 160 buses, but currently houses 223.

The City of Madison has purchased two prior FedEx buildings located on the far-east side of the city near the UW Hospital American Center. One building is slated for a large bus storage area and bus wash, while the other will be more maintenance focused.

Staff expect to close on the property and start to immediately use the space in July 2021.