

MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
AMENDED AGENDA

MARCH 12, 2024
2:00 P.M.

LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM
210 RIVER DR., WAUSAU, WI

Members: John Robinson – Chair, George Peterson – Vice Chair, Allan Opall, Betty Hoenisch, Steve Hagman, Katie Rosenberg, Tim Buttke, Matt Lee Baer, Milton Olson, Chris Voll, Mark Maloney, Brent Jacobson, Kregg Hoehn, Matt Bronson

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the telephone conference beginning **five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:**

PHONE NUMBER: 1-408-418-9388

ACCESS CODE: 146 513 0623

Please Note: If you are prompted to provide an “Attendee Identification Number” enter the # sign. No other number is required to participate in the telephone conference.

When you enter the telephone conference, PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC COMMENT
3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 9, 2024, COMMISSION MEETING

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

4. 2024-2027 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT
5. APPROVE THE NEW MPO PLANNING BOUNDARY MAP
6. **NEW 2025-2029 STP-URBAN FUNDING ALLOCATION AND PROJECT DISTRIBUTION AMOUNTS**
7. INTRODUCE NEW TRANSIT DIRECTOR AND TRANSIT PLANNING WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP AND CREATE MEETING SCHEDULE
8. MARATHON COUNTY ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS
9. SEARCH FOR NEW TRANSPORTATION PLANNER
10. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING DATE – APRIL 9, 2024
11. ADJOURNMENT

Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk’s Office at 715-261-1500 one business day before the meeting.

SIGNED _____
PRESIDING OFFICER OR DESIGNEE



EMAILED TO: Courthouse, Daily Herald, TPP Printing, City Pages
Midwest Radio Group, Marshfield News

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE:
By: _____

EMAILED BY: DM
DATE: 3/5/24
EMAIL TIME: 1:00 pm



MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes
January 9, 2024

Meeting Attendance: John Robinson – Chair, Dave Meurett (for Bronson), Darryl Landeau, Dave Mack, Lance Mueller, Michael Wodalski (for Maloney), Ryan Van De Walle, Katie Rosenberg, Brad Lenz, Jeff Gates, Jordan Kelbley, Gaylene Rhoden, Tim Buttke

1. Call to Order

In the presence of a quorum, with the agenda being properly signed and posted, the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robinson at 2:02 p.m. in the Large Conference Room, 210 River Drive, Wausau and virtually via WebEx.

2. Public Comment – No public comment was made.

Follow Through: None.

3. Approve Minutes November 14, 2023, Commission Meeting

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY / BUTTKE/ROSENBERG TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 14, 2023, MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

Follow Through: None.

4. 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment

Discussion: Mack discussed the 3 projects being added to the TIP. Robinson asked a question regarding the Center for Independent Living and how it differentiated from the County's 85.21 program. Mack asked Landeau to go over the differences.

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY / GATES/RHODEN TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #1-24 ADOPTING THE AMENDMENT TO THE 2024-2027 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE WAUSAU METROPOLITAN AREA. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

Follow Through: Staff will forward the amendment to WisDOT.

5. Transit Planning Work Group Charter

Discussion: Robinson gave an overview of the committee. Rosenberg commented that we should make sure the committee is not a duplicate of the TAC. Rhoden asked who should be represented from the communities (such as a board member). Mack mentioned the charter states the community can nominate whomever the community deems has the authority and knowledge to discuss the public transit system and related components within their community.

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY / ROSENBERG/BUTTKE TO ACCEPT THE CHARTER FOR THE WAUSAU METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT PLANNING WORK GROUP. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

Follow Through: Communities will need to designate their representative.

6. Agenda Items for the Next Meeting Date

Discussion: Robinson noted unless there was anything that needed action, the next meeting would take place in March.

MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Action: NONE.

Follow Through: None.

7. Adjournment

Action: There being no further business to come before the members, **MOTION / SECOND BY ROSENBERG /RHODEN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION AT 2:18PM. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.**

Follow Through: None.

Submitted by:

Dave Mack, MPO Director

Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning

DM: LM

**AMENDMENT
TO THE
2024-2027
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM (TIP)
FOR THE
MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING
COMMISSION/WAUSAU AREA METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)**

March 12, 2024

MARATHON COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING

COMMISSION RESOLUTION # 2-24

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE AMENDMENT TO THE 2024-2027 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE WAUSAU METROPOLITAN AREA

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission was designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Wausau Urbanized Area; and

WHEREAS, in compliance with Metropolitan Transportation Planning Regulations by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission has developed a four-year transportation improvement program (TIP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area; and

WHEREAS, the Transportation Improvement Program identifies transit, pedestrian/bicycle, and highway improvement projects and programs consistent with current transportation plans;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission endorses the *Long Range Transportation Plan for the Wausau Metropolitan Area* and the *Transit Development Program for the Wausau Area Transit System*, which will be continually updated and maintained as part of the urban transportation planning process;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission approves the *Garfield and Stewart Avenue Railroad Track Crossing Improvements in the City of Wausau* and attaches the *2024-2027 TIP Amendment Table 1 and 2 Spreadsheets* as part of this amendment to the 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program for the Wausau Metropolitan Area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with 23 CFR 450.336, the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Wausau, WI urbanized area hereby certifies that the metropolitan transportation planning process is addressing the major issues facing the metropolitan planning area and is being conducted in accordance with all applicable requirements of:

1. 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303, and this subpart;
2. Sections 174 and 176 (c) and (d) of the Clean Air Act as amended (42 U.S.C. 7504, 7506 (c) and (d)) and 40 CFR part 93;
3. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended (42 USC 2000d-1) and 49 CFR part 21;

4. 49 USC 5332, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or age in employment or business opportunity;
5. Section 1101(b) of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST Act) (Pub. L. 114-357) and 49 CFR Part 26 regarding the involvement of disadvantaged business enterprises in the US DOT funded projects;
6. 23 CFR part 230, regarding the implementation of an equal employment opportunity program on Federal and Federal-aid highway construction contracts;
7. The provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*) and 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38;
8. The Older Americans Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6101, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance;
9. Section 324 of title 23, U.S.C. regarding the prohibition of discrimination based on gender; and
10. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794) and 49 CFR 27 regarding discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission certifies that the Transportation Improvement Program contains only projects that are consistent with the transportation plan for the urban area and recommends that this document be submitted to the appropriate federal and state agencies for approval.

Dated this 12th day of March 2024

John Robinson, Commission Chairman

David Mack, MPO Director, Marathon County
Metro Planning Commission Secretary

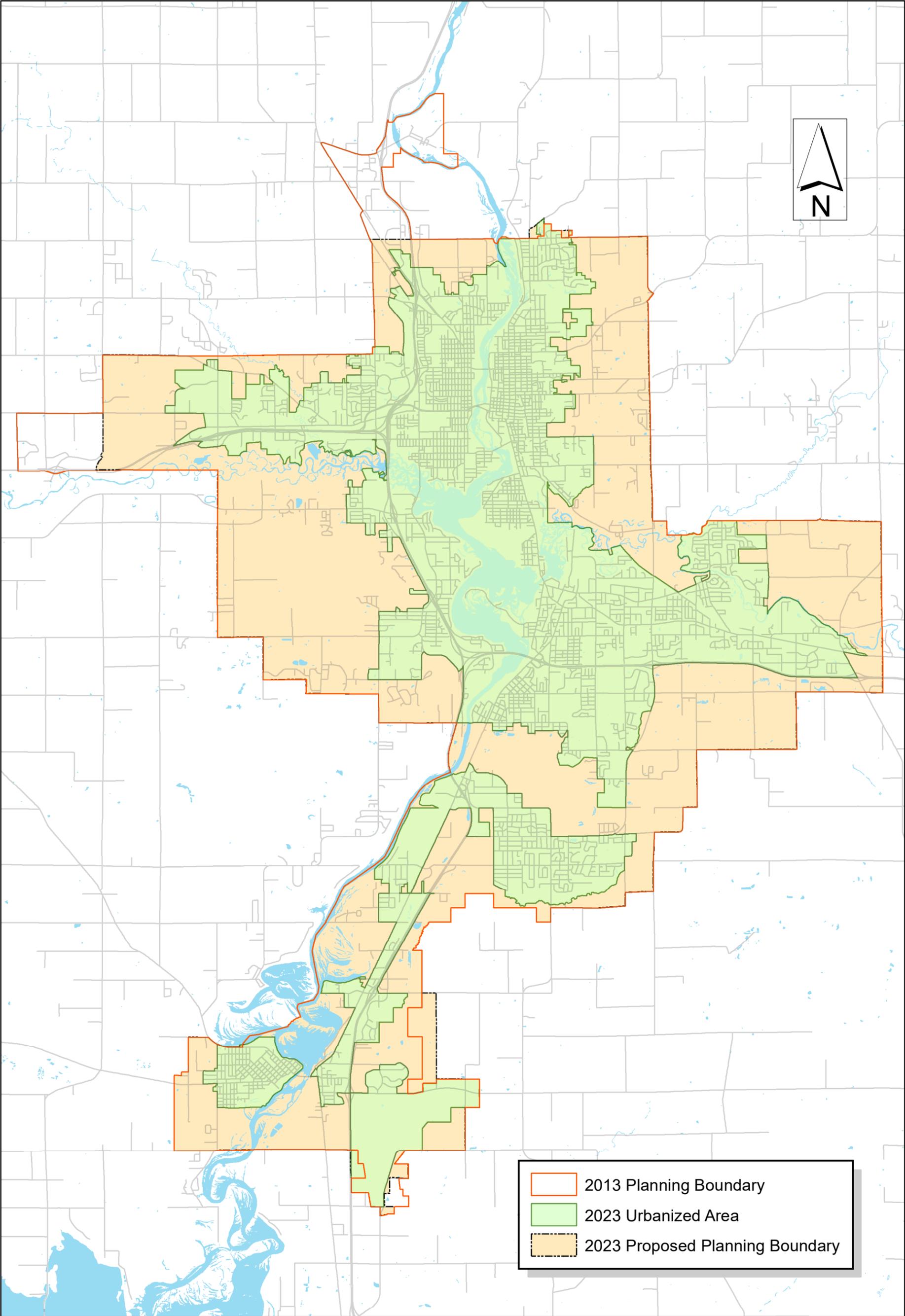
TABLE 2

Assessment of Available Funding for the 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program
Amendment March 12, 2024

Funding Source		Programmed Expenditures				Estimated Available Funding			
Agency	Program	2024	2025	2026	2027	2024	2025	2026	2027
Federal Highway	NHPP	\$7,283,235	\$24,657,229	\$9,062,109	\$9,062,109	\$7,283,235	\$24,657,229	\$9,062,109	\$9,062,109
Administration	STBG	\$3,583,463	\$0	\$1,212,247	\$2,634,977	\$3,583,463	\$0	\$1,212,247	\$2,634,977
	BR	\$3,830,266	\$0	\$2,025,208	\$0	\$3,830,266	\$0	\$2,025,208	\$0
	IM	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	TAP	\$583,257	\$0	\$2,033,457	\$0	\$583,257	\$0	\$2,033,457	\$0
	CRP	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	HSIP	\$3,760,459	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$3,760,459	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
	OCR	\$0	\$178,265	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$178,265	\$0	\$0
Totals		\$19,040,680	\$25,015,494	\$14,513,021	\$11,877,086	\$19,040,680	\$25,015,494	\$14,513,021	\$11,877,086
Totals	Inflated by 2.0% Annually	\$19,040,680	\$25,450,764	\$15,018,074	\$12,497,070	\$19,040,680	\$25,450,764	\$15,018,074	\$12,497,070

Federal Transit Administration	Section 5307 -- Wausau Urbanized Area	\$1,753,678	\$1,448,551	\$1,461,107	\$1,490,329	\$1,753,678	\$1,448,551	\$1,461,107	\$1,490,329
	Section 5304	\$24,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$24,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Section 5310	\$1,060,494	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,060,494	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Section 5339	\$0	\$3,570,424	\$2,834,955	\$0	\$0	\$3,570,424	\$2,834,955	\$0
	Section 5307 - Other	\$107,530	\$109,681	\$111,875	\$114,112	\$107,530	\$109,681	\$111,875	\$114,112
Totals		\$2,945,702	\$5,128,656	\$4,407,937	\$1,604,441	\$2,945,702	\$5,128,656	\$4,407,937	\$1,604,441
Totals	Inflated by 2.0% Annually	\$2,945,702	\$5,217,895	\$4,561,333	\$1,688,193	\$2,945,702	\$5,217,895	\$4,561,333	\$1,688,193

Wausau Proposed Planning Boundary - 2023



- 2013 Planning Boundary
- 2023 Urbanized Area
- 2023 Proposed Planning Boundary

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles



November 17, 2023

Jordan Kelbley
Planning Supervisor
WisDOT NC Region
1681 Second Ave. South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-4768

WAUSAU MPO ALLOCATION OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT (STP-URBAN) FUNDS FOR 2025-2029

At their November 14, 2023 meeting, the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission (Wausau MPO) reviewed its priority rankings of the projects submitted for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds assigned to the Wausau Group. The Commission allocated funds based on preliminary estimates of the available funds presented by WisDOT. This amount was projected to be approximately \$4,217,564 for years 2025-2029. The Commission understands the final allocation amount may change based on state budget and changes to funding levels.

The Planning Commission identified and prioritized its top projects by utilizing the participating roadway costs, state review costs and the construction engineering costs of the project applications within the MPO area. The number one ranked project was awarded funds based on a 70% Federal share and a 30% local share, with the second ranked project receiving the remaining Federal funds. The projects are ranked as:

#1 – Ross Avenue from River Bend Road to Paul’s Avenue in the Village of Weston and Town of Weston. This project was identified to receive \$2,073,382 of the allocation.

#2 – Camp Phillips Road (County Road X) and Ross Avenue intersection. This project was identified to receive \$2,144,182 of the allocation.

The communities understand that the STBG funds available for this period will be capped at the amounts set and will be defined and identified in the project agreement with the WisDOT.

If you need any additional information or have comments, please let me know.

David Mack
Wausau MPO Director

Cc Dave Meurett - WisDOT
Rich Handrick - WisDOT
James Griesbach – Marathon County
Michael Wodalski – Village of Weston
Milt Olson – Town of Weston

Wausau MPO STP-Urban 2024-2029
Funding Recommendations

Alternative Scoring

Muni	Project	Rank	Project Cost*	80%	70%	60%	55%	50%
V. and T. of Weston	Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls	1	\$ 2,961,974	\$ 2,369,579	\$ 2,073,382	\$ 1,777,184	\$ 1,629,086	\$ 1,480,987
Marathon County	Camp Phillips and Ross	2	\$ 3,360,000	\$ 2,688,000	\$ 2,352,000	\$ 2,016,000	\$ 1,848,000	\$ 1,680,000
City of Wausau	17th Ave.	3	\$ 4,864,810	\$ 3,891,848	\$ 3,405,367	\$ 2,918,886	\$ 2,675,646	\$ 2,432,405
C. Schofield	Ross Ave. Schofield - Pine	4	\$ 1,732,126	\$ 1,385,701	\$ 1,212,488	\$ 1,039,276	\$ 952,669	\$ 866,063
Available	\$ 4,217,564		\$ 12,918,910	\$ 10,335,128	\$ 9,043,237	\$ 7,751,346	\$ 7,105,401	\$ 6,459,455

Scenario 1 (70%)		Funding Level	Amount Remaining
Total Funding available	\$ 4,217,564		
Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls (1)	\$ 2,073,382	70%	\$ 2,144,182
Camp Phillips and Ross (2)	\$ 2,144,182	64%	\$ 0

Scenario 2 (60%)		Funding Level	Amount Remaining
Total Funding available	\$ 4,217,564		
Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls (1)	\$ 1,777,184	60%	\$ 2,440,380
Camp Phillips and Ross (2)	\$ 2,016,000	60%	\$ 424,380
Ross Ave. Schofield - Pine (4)	\$ 424,380	25%	\$ -

Scenario 3 (55%)		Funding Level	Amount Remaining
Total Funding available	\$ 4,217,564		
Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls (1)	\$ 1,629,086	55%	\$ 2,588,478
Camp Phillips and Ross (2)	\$ 1,848,000	55%	\$ 740,478
Ross Ave. Schofield - Pine (4)	\$ 740,478	43%	\$ 0

Scenario 4 (50%)		Funding Level	Amount Remaining
Total Funding available	\$ 4,217,564		
Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls (1)	\$ 1,480,987	50%	\$ 2,736,577
Camp Phillips and Ross (2)	\$ 1,680,000	50%	\$ 1,056,577
Ross Ave. Schofield - Pine (4)	\$ 866,063	50%	\$ 190,514
17th Ave. (3)	\$ 190,514	4%	\$ -

Scenario 5 (80%)		Funding Level	Amount Remaining
Total Funding available	\$ 4,217,564		
Ross Ave. River Bend - Pauls (1)	\$ 2,369,579	80%	\$ 1,847,985
Camp Phillips and Ross (2)	\$ 1,847,985	55%	\$ -

* Participating Roadway Cost, State Review Cost, and Construction Engineering Costs

2024-2029 Program Cycle

MPO/TMA Funding Allocations									
200+K	Population	Percentage	Allotment	Cycle Budget	Current Projects	Allocation			
Appleton, WI	230,967	10.38%	\$5,292,655	\$26,463,275	\$13,793,376	\$12,669,899			
Green Bay, WI	224,156	10.07%	\$5,136,580	\$25,682,898	\$12,125,703	\$13,557,195			
Madison, WI	450,305	20.23%	\$10,318,829	\$51,594,145	\$17,914,939	\$33,679,206			
Milwaukee, WI	1,306,795	58.72%	\$29,945,469	\$149,727,343	\$73,542,407	\$76,184,936			
Round Lake Beach--McHenry--Grayslake, IL--WI	13,374	0.60%	\$306,468	\$1,532,339	\$2,963,012	-\$1,430,673			
	2,225,597	1	\$51,000,000	\$255,000,000	\$120,339,437	\$134,660,563			
50K-200K	Population	Percentage	Allotment	Cycle Budget	Current Projects	Allocation			
Beloit, WI--IL	44,092	4.98%	\$952,954	\$4,764,772	\$1,110,400	\$3,654,372			
Eau Claire, WI	105,475	11.91%	\$2,279,617	\$11,398,084	\$6,527,368	\$4,870,716			
Fond du Lac, WI	54,731	6.18%	\$1,182,894	\$5,914,468	\$4,130,315	\$1,784,153			
Janesville, WI	72,285	8.16%	\$1,562,286	\$7,811,429	\$4,342,707	\$3,468,722			
Kenosha, WI	125,865	14.21%	\$2,720,303	\$13,601,516	\$9,831,334	\$3,770,182			
La Crosse, WI--MN	93,411	10.54%	\$2,018,879	\$10,094,396	\$7,537,796	\$2,556,600			
Oshkosh, WI	76,190	8.60%	\$1,646,684	\$8,233,421	\$6,035,836	\$2,197,585			
Racine, WI	134,877	15.22%	\$2,915,078	\$14,575,391	\$12,083,653	\$2,491,738			
Sheboygan, WI	74,369	8.39%	\$1,607,327	\$8,036,635	\$3,610,997	\$4,425,638			
Superior (Duluth, MN)	27,191	3.07%	\$587,675	\$2,938,377	\$2,383,754	\$554,623			
Wausau, WI	77,429	8.74%	\$1,673,462	\$8,367,312	\$3,803,714	\$4,563,598			
	885,915	1	\$19,147,160	\$95,735,802	\$61,397,874	\$34,337,928			
Program	Population	Percentage	Allotment	Cycle Budget	Current Projects	Allocation	West Bend \$	Inflation for CM	Final Allocation
STP-Urban (50-200K pop.)	885,915	24.15%	\$19,147,160	\$95,735,802					
STP-Urban (20K-50K pop.)	304,918	8.31%	\$5,601,629	\$28,008,143	\$12,879,184	\$15,128,959	\$3,976,808	\$1,115,215	\$10,036,936
STP Local (20K-50K pop.)			\$988,523	\$4,942,613	\$2,054,120	\$2,888,493			
STP-Urban (5K-20K pop.)	505,537	13.78%	\$9,287,187	\$46,435,935	\$29,765,316	\$16,670,619	\$1,177,836	\$1,549,278	\$13,943,505
STP Local (5K-20K pop.)			\$1,638,915	\$8,194,577	\$1,660,320	\$6,534,257			
STP-Rural	1,971,751	53.75%	\$36,222,908	\$181,114,541	\$105,504,080	\$75,610,461	\$2,285,066	\$7,332,539	\$65,992,855
STP Local Rural			\$6,392,278	\$31,961,390	\$21,162,426	\$10,798,964			
	3,668,121	1	\$79,278,600	\$396,393,000			\$7,439,710	\$9,997,033	\$89,973,296
STP-Urban/STP-Rural Calculations									
Total 206 funding				\$130,578,600					
Minus tribal set-aside				\$300,000					
Urban/Rural funding				\$130,278,600					
Minus funding for TMAs (over 200k population)				\$51,000,000					
Urban/Rural funding remaining				\$79,278,600					

Local Bridge Program	Allotment	Cycle Budget	Current Projects	Allocation	Inflation for CM	Final Allocation
	\$88,114,400	\$440,572,000	\$336,453,500	\$104,118,500	\$10,411,850	\$93,706,650

Email to Dave Meurett, WisDOT from Dave Mack, Wausau MPO
2/7/2024

Dave,

With the new allocations submitted to us today, I've had a chance to look at them vs. what we did last fall with the numbers.

In Sept. 2023 we had \$4,217,564 assigned to us. We allocated \$2,073,382 or 70% of the project costs to the #1 project - Weston for the Ross Ave. River Bend- Paul's Rd.

The 2nd project was Weston's Camp Phillips and Ross Ave Roundabout. That was \$2,144,182 or 64% of their project cost.

With the funding amounts announced today, we are going to recommend to the MPO Commission that we increase the #1 project to \$2,211,598 or 75% of their total project cost.

The 2nd project will be at 70% or \$2,352,000 from the new total allocation of \$4,563,598.

I've attached the recommended scoring and funding scenarios that the MPO Commission used at their November 2023 meeting to evaluate their options.

Hope the math works. Let me know if you have questions.

Dave

**WAUSAU METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT PLANNING WORK GROUP
TO
CREATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXPANDING TRANSIT SERVICE IN THE METRO AREA**

Reporting Relationships: Reports to the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the participating Communities also the Wausau Transit Commission.

Mission/Purpose: The Transit Planning Work Group (TPWG) are representatives of the communities in the Wausau Metropolitan Area that have the authority and knowledge to discuss the Public Transit System and related components in their community. Through discussion, common issues and concerns will be evaluated and recommendations for goals, objectives, and guidelines for each community will be developed for providing Public Transit in their community and the metro area.

Membership: The TPWG will nominate a chairperson for the group. Membership will include representatives identified by the community from the following:

1. Marathon County
2. City of Wausau
3. City of Schofield
4. Village of Weston
5. Village of Rothschild
6. Village of Rib Mountain
7. Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce
8. Wausau Area Transit System, aka, Metro Ride

Member Terms: TPWG will be sunset on March 31, 2025.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Facilitate and manage communications with municipalities, public and private transit providers, and the business community.
2. Serve as a liaison with their respective community leadership.
3. Develop recommendations that provides specific:
 - Community goals and objectives for obtaining and providing public transit for the area including:
 - Addressing current constraints to service expansion
 - Transit Development Plans
 - Short and long-term system upgrades
 - Potential areas for collaboration
 - Workforce development
 - Policy guidelines
 - Administrative guidelines
 - Public engagement strategies for each community and the Metro area as a whole.
4. Determine consistency of policy recommendations with existing communities strategic and comprehensive plans.
5. Evaluate the fiscal impacts of proposed policy recommendations.

Description of timeline:

1. Begin meeting by April 2024.
2. Review existing issues regarding each community's public transit service. (April 2024)
3. Create community goals and objectives (July 2024)
4. Formulate recommendations relating to policy and administrative guidelines (Sept 2024)
5. Present goal, objectives, and guidelines to represented communities (Jan 2025)
6. Close-out report to Metropolitan Planning Commission and Communities (Mar 2025)

MPO's Transit Work Group
Membership by Community

Marathon County – John Robinson, Supervisor and MPO Chairman

C. Schofield - Joan Joss, City Council
Mark Thuot, Public Works Director

V. Rib Mountain - Gaylene Rhoden, Administrator

V. Rothschild - George Peterson, President

C. Wausau - Becky McElhaney, Council President & Transit Commission Chair
Aaron Hursey, Metro Ride Director
Megan Newman, Metro Ride Operations Manager
Katie Rosenberg, Mayor

Wausau Chamber - Dave Eckman, Director

V. Weston - Jami Gebert, Administrator
Michael Wodalski, Public Works Director

MARATHON COUNTY ELDERLY & DISABLED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Marathon County Transportation Program

DECEMBER 2023

PREPARED BY: NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS NEEDS

With the reality of limited resources, it is not possible to meet all needs all of the time, a number of strategies were identified to restore and bolster the capacity of the MCTP to maintain a reliable, affordable transportation option for essential trips by elderly and disabled residents with limited transportation resources while attempting to fill in some of the gaps in the system where unmet needs remain.

Through the input and discussions brought together for this study, the following recommendations were identified to help address the elderly and disabled transportation needs in Marathon County:

- Maintain Existing MCTP Transportation System and Restore Service Capacity:
 - Engage in and Sustain More Active Recruitment of Volunteer Drivers and Address Volunteer Issues
 - Focus on Communications and Messaging
- Utilize the CILWW New Freedom Regional Volunteer Driver Program
- Increase Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advocacy at All Levels: Local, State and Federal
- Encourage Wausau Urban Area Communities to Support Transit Services
- Encourage Statewide Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Legislation
- Explore Creating County Level Mobility Manager Position
- Consider Study for Reestablishing County Route Service

The remainder of this section discusses each of the identified recommendations.

1. Maintain Existing MCTP Transportation System and Restore Service Capacity

It is a general finding of this study that the current model of service for the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP) through North Central Health Care (NCHC) and Metro Ride Paratransit is generally well received by those who use it. The biggest area of concern is the recent reduction in service through NCHC due primarily to a severe lack of availability of volunteer drivers.

Another issue identified, that may be undermining the program, is lack of awareness and program confusion due to the current complexity of the elderly and disabled transportation delivery system statewide as a whole.

As a result of these findings, this recommendation has two components:

- Active recruitment of volunteer drivers.
- Focus on Communications.

A. Engage in and Sustain More Active Recruitment of Volunteer Drivers and Address Volunteer Issues

Most counties are struggling with maintaining volunteer drivers post Covid. The MCTP had 35 active volunteer drivers pre-covid, but currently they are down to just 5. To handle this situation, trip workload has been shifted to paid drivers and service reductions have been implemented. These reductions include trip purpose for rides limited to medical, 3-day notice (up from 2) and no same day.

This has worked in the short term. MCTP rides dropped significantly in 2020 and 2020 due to Covid but recovered well in 2022. This situation is not cost efficient or sustainable. To return to 2019 trip levels, the goal is to restore MCTP service standards of providing for medical, nutrition and employment trip purposes, 2-day notice and providing same day rides when able.

To accomplish this, efforts to recruit and retain volunteer drivers must be ramped-up and sustained. This should be a significant effort beyond the capacity of one or two staff people with other responsibilities. It is proposed that the County and TCC endorse a team effort involving personnel from the MCTP, County Planning, Wausau MPO, and ADRC-CW. The team should also include NCHC, United Way of Marathon County, GWAAR and CIL New Freedom. CIL has had some recent success in recruiting new volunteer drivers. Recognizing the importance of volunteers to aging and disability programs and the difficulties faced with attracting new volunteers, Wisconsin DHS has created a volunteer program coordinator to provide resources and assistance:



Samantha Margelofsky
Volunteer Program Coordinator
Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Samantha.margelofsky@dhs.wisconsin.gov
608-267-3228

The United Way has several programs and staff dedicated to volunteering efforts, including the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Marathon County.

This includes a searchable posting board for community volunteer opportunities. This is good, however, one finds the NCHC call for drivers buried on page 17 of 27. The competition for volunteers is significant. Looking at just calls for drivers, in addition to NCHC/MCTP, there are a minimum of 8 other organizations seeking volunteer drivers for various purposes, including:

- Faith in Action
- Habitat for Humanity
- Wausau Area Mobile Meals
- ADRC Meals on Wheels
- The Neighbors Place
- The Salvation Army
- Marathon County Hunger Coalition
- The Open Door of Marathon County

In addition to participating in other volunteering events, such as the United Way's recently reinstated annual Volunteer Fest, the team should work to develop special efforts dedicated to volunteer driving. These efforts should include coordinating with the other entities seeking drivers (noted above) on ways to work together to maximize the available volunteer driver pool.

A ramped-up recognition program and incentives package should be designed and implemented. Some ideas for this identified during this study include:

- Recognition Luncheon(s)
- Provide Meals
- Arrange Discounts (One idea was work with area vendors to assemble a special volunteer drivers discount card. Could feature gas and auto service discounts among others.)
- Think outside the box

Beyond Covid, there are a number of factors affecting volunteer driver participation. The team should work to identify and address these barriers. Discussions for this study have identified the following issues: mileage reimbursement rates, gas prices and insurance issues. Gas prices have stabilized and decreased somewhat, and the federal mileage reimbursement rate is expected to increase next year. These factors could be highlighted in recruitment efforts. The insurance issue is a larger concern.

Personal auto insurance companies are causing volunteer driver programs to lose volunteers due to non-renewal of coverage or increasing premiums on auto

policies for volunteer drivers. Some insurance agencies classify commercial activity as receiving any compensation, even mileage reimbursement and are non-renewing coverage or increasing rates as a result. Basically, volunteer driving is being lumped into livery services (for-hire vehicles that are used by businesses to generate revenue by transporting people) and transportation network companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft because they are getting “compensated” for their services.

GWAAR has been working with a coalition to advance legislation to protect volunteer drivers from insurance companies classifying volunteer driving as a commercial activity. The team should contact GWAAR and encourage them to press this effort and find out how Marathon County can support what they are doing. Outreach to stakeholders should explain the issue, the effort to change the law, and how they can talk to legislators about the importance of this problem and the need to pass this legislation.

The team must also broaden the promotion and advertising for the volunteer driver positions. Getting the word out to a wider range of agencies and stakeholders will increase awareness of the problem and help circulate the message on the need for volunteer drivers. Outreach should include area churches and other community service organizations. Some agencies contacted during this study expressed interest and willingness to help. The need for volunteer drivers should also be posted on the Volunteer Opportunities page of the County website.

B. Focus on Communications and Messaging

While many are aware of the MCTP, the many programs and providers can cause confusion among potential users. Going to the Internet to find out more about MCTP and transportation provided by the County, illustrates this problem. Looking on the County’s webpage doesn’t reveal it despite having a transportation section on its Services page, and a sampling of various key word searches in Google for the program yield NCHC’s website (norcen.org), the ADRC and various private services. While NCHC’s page is useful, someone looking for the Marathon County public transportation program might easily dismiss it as a private company program and not what they are looking for. The ADRC page of related and unrelated “transportation” services across multiple counties that need to be sorted through. Then, the limited info on the “Marathon County Transportation Program” again appears to attribute it to NCHC.

The County should work to clarify the identity and ownership of the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP) on the Internet and in other future resource publications, like those of the ADRC and others. The webpage should be hosted on the County website and redesigned to represent the MCTP as a County / public service and clarify NCHC's role as a contracted provider.

Similarly, the NCHC's program brochure is a quality piece, but it should also be redesigned to clarify program identity and roles.

It is apparent that the Marathon County Transportation Program needs an education component to help potential users understand their options. One of the primary reasons that a need for a ride goes unsatisfied is not that service is unavailable, but that the individual in need of the ride is either unaware of the services that are available or is misinformed about the availability of service or program requirements.

Most county transportation programs have detailed websites, service guides and brochures. The County should consider the development and maintenance of a website, Facebook page, guide and brochure for the transportation program. Although there will be individuals within the elderly and disabled communities that do not use the internet for various reasons, many are tech savvy. In addition, these tools would be useful to families and caregivers that are supporting someone who is elderly or disabled as well as professionals such as case managers and social workers assisting these persons. An annual mailing about program availability, costs, etc to keep entities informed about MCTP is another option. An email blast format was suggested.

The County should work as a conduit for improving communication between all providers and agencies & interest groups including advocates, social workers, case managers, other health care workers, residential administrators, etc. Sharing of information about each other's operations and programming and how they affect one another can improve awareness and service delivery. At the Stakeholder Group Meeting the concept of a "Transit Summit" was suggested.

A county-wide transit summit provides an opportunity for transportation providers, benefit providers (MCOs, etc.), advocates, agencies and care providers for the elderly and disabled, as well as, local officials and other interested parties and stakeholders to come together to enhance program awareness, share system/program information, promote advocacy, address common issues and develop cooperative solutions. State (DOT, DHS, etc) officials and staff and elected representatives should be invited to attend/participate – possibly acting as presenters where appropriate. The transit summit could be annual or

periodic, as needed. Transit summit planning and implementation may be eligible for 5304 program funding with match being potentially “in-kind”.

There is also a need to get awareness out in the rural areas of the county of the programs that are available and how they work. One suggestion was to get more educational resources out where the elderly and disabled frequent like churches and community/senior centers.

Other options for information and education include: present at senior group meetings; get families information on the programs, possibly through the ADRC as part of a packet of things they need to know; develop a newsletter to be sent periodically to residents of the county to explain the services that are available; and putting program information in the Senior Review, area newspapers and town newsletters.

United Way 211 was identified as a source of information. The United Way holds quarterly interagency meetings which may be a good opportunity to provide a session with information on what's available. The County should work with both the United Way and the ADRC to improve resource material and messaging not only about the MCTP (including Metro Ride Paratransit component) but how the overall transportation system works in relation to all the various programs and providers.

2. Utilize the CILWW New Freedom Regional Volunteer Driver Program

The MCTP should work with the CIL New Freedom to explore options to integrate the two programs. This would involve coordinating with Midstate Independent Living Consultants (MILC) which has a Memorandum of Agreement with CIL for providing service in Marathon County. The CIL program can reinforce MCTP service and fill in gaps in service need.

The primary function of the CIL New Freedom program is to provide gap service to supplement other existing programs. To fulfil that mission, CIL New Freedom operates 7 days a week, 24 hours a day including evenings, weekends and holidays. Advance notice is preferred, but they work to accommodate need at any time subject to driver availability. This includes hospital discharge, another significant area of unmet transportation need. Trip purpose is unrestricted, so the CIL service can be used not only for medical, nutritional, and employment related needs, but also educational, volunteering-related, recreational, social and other needs. The program also provides rides that cross community

boundaries that other programs cannot. All of this is in order to try and address rider unmet needs when other programs are unavailable.

All of these operation parameters address the major on-going unmet needs in Marathon County that the MCTP does not have the resources to provide. Working with the CIL program provides the County with a mechanism to fill in those gaps in service to meet more of the community's transportation needs. CIL could also be utilized as a back-up option to help fulfill rides the MCTP can't due to scheduling conflicts or driver availability. By working together, this would assist CIL in meeting its service obligations under its agreement with MILC.0

The CIL New Freedom program would have to be incorporated with the communications and messaging recommendations noted above along with the other components of the system (NCHC and Metro Ride) so that potential county program users become more aware of this option to promote awareness and build ridership.

If successful, the County should consider integrating CIL New Freedom as a third leg of the Marathon County Transportation Program together with MCTP-NCHC and Metro Ride Paratransit.

3. Increase Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advocacy at All Levels: Local, State and Federal

Marathon County / MCTP should work to coordinate advocacy outreach to local, state and federal officials and elected representatives to address concerns and issues facing elderly and disabled transportation. Government entities must be mindful of lobbying restrictions associated with program grant funding and other regulations. However, information and education efforts can be made to increase awareness of concerns and issues, and other stakeholders can be encouraged to boost outreach. This includes families and caregivers that are supporting someone who is elderly or disabled as well as professionals: advocates, social workers, case managers, other health care workers, residential administrators, etc. that are assisting these individuals and families. Other related professional associations and support organizations, such as the Wisconsin Public Transit Association and GWAAR, are also a valuable resources in these efforts.

Local elected leaders need to be made aware of the importance of elderly and disabled transportation, informed about the issues facing the transportation

system, and encouraged to support and adequate budget for elderly and disabled transportation.

Some of the concerns and issues that need to be addressed through advocacy efforts include:

- Working to address transportation concerns specific to MA eligibility, adequate funding reimbursement, 5310 requirements and streamlining eligibility requirements.
- Eliminating barriers to intercounty cooperation.
- Enhancing coordination with disabled population, low income, elderly, Family Care and all other programs that provide for transportation services.
- Reducing or eliminating other federal/state program restrictions and regulatory barriers: encourage DOT to change problematic administrative code.
- Encouraging Wausau Urban Area communities to support/provide public transit.
- Promoting enabling legislation for Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) in Wisconsin.
- Addressing levy limits that result in cuts in funding / reductions in service levels for critical public services like elderly and disabled transportation.
- Addressing volunteer driver issues, including but not limited to the insurance classification problem – GWAAR legislative effort (see Recommendation 1A).

There is some overlap between this recommendation and the “Communications” recommendations in this Section. For example, the transportation summit concept (see Recommendation 1B) could be leveraged to assist with the advocacy efforts and goals. Expansion of the summit to a regional (multi-county) or statewide scope can amplify the outreach to DOT and other local, state and federal entities.

4. Encourage Wausau Urban Area Communities to Support Transit Services

Despite the range of public benefits provided by transit services, the City of Wausau is the only community out of the 7 total cities and villages in the urban area to support a public system. Cities as small as Mauston at 4,000 population recognize the importance of public transportation by supporting a shared-ride taxi service. At various points, transit was extended from Wausau to some of

the surrounding communities, but support within those communities could not be sustained and service was discontinued.

The density of elderly and disabled in Marathon County is highest in Wausau and the surrounding urban area. In addition, medical, residential and other services utilized by the elderly and disabled are scattered throughout the urban area. Historically, Metro Ride serves a significant number of elderly and disabled with its regular bus routes in addition to the paratransit service for those unable to ride a bus. When you consider that the local government share of Metro Ride cost is only about 25% with around 60% coming from state and federal sources, it is probably the most locally cost-efficient way to provide these services. It represents a missed opportunity to support the elderly and disabled residents in these communities.

The cities and villages of the Wausau Urban Area should be encouraged to implement expansion of Metro Ride transit service into their communities. The recent Metro Ride TDP (refer to Section 3 of this study) lays several scenarios with budget projections for extending transit service into the adjacent communities. This recommendation overlaps with the “Communications” and “Advocacy” recommendations in this Section.

5. Encourage Statewide Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Legislation

Transit systems across Wisconsin have explored the creation of Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) as an alternative organizational structure. An RTA would have an independent governing commission and could serve an entire region. The RTA structure would relieve the local municipalities from responsibility to provide the necessary local match to fund transit. However, RTA legislation has been stalled in the Wisconsin Legislature. An RTA remains an option if State legislative support shifts or new legislation supports such an initiative.

State elected officials should be encouraged to pass RTA enabling legislation. Again, lobbying restrictions limit direct action, but MCTP can work in conjunction with Metro Ride to disseminate information and education on this issue to elected leaders and the public. In addition, MCTP should support and coordinate with efforts of entities such as the Wisconsin Public Transit Association to promote RTA and explore ways organizations such as GWAAR might be able to help. This recommendation overlaps with the “Communications” and “Advocacy” recommendations in this Section.

6. Explore Creating County Level Mobility Manager Position

Mobility management is an approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to the elderly and disabled. Mobility management focuses on meeting individual rider needs through a wide range of transportation options and service providers. It also focuses on coordinating in-house services, in this case MCTP and Metro Ride Paratransit, with outside service providers and support programs in an effort to achieve a more efficient transportation service delivery system.

Mobility management involves these key steps:

- Developing an inventory of available services
- Identifying customer needs
- Developing strategies to meet customer needs
- Coordinating financial and other resources
- Improving coordination between in-house/public services and programs – public, private and non-profit
- Training staff and volunteers
- Promoting the use of innovative technologies, services, and other methods to improve customer service and coordination
- Developing customer information and trip planning systems

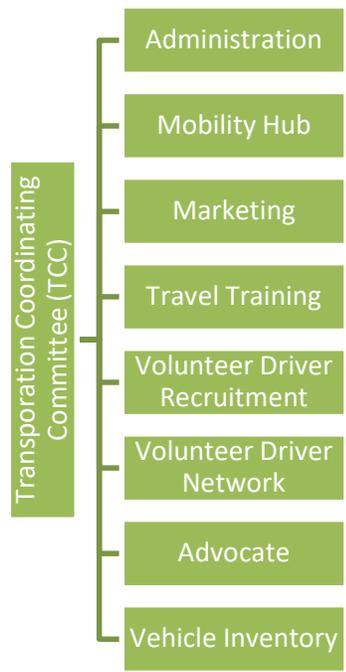
Mobility managers serve as service coordinators, operations managers, and customer travel navigators. They help communities develop transportation coordination plans, programs, and policies, and build local partnerships. Mobility managers may also work to promote policies that favor public transportation. They coordinate transportation services among all customer groups, service providers, and funding agencies and work with human service agencies and workforce centers that coordinate the travel and trip planning needs of individuals who receive human service program assistance.

Two programs administered by WisDOT 5310 and WETAP have awarded projects that include mobility managers throughout the state. The direction that mobility management takes is a local decision and is not limited or mandated by WisDOT other than to ensure project eligibility according to the applicable funding source.

Marathon County, through its TCC and MCTP, should implement a Mobility Manager in cooperation with Metro Ride. In addition to basic mobility management functions, this position could be tasked with shepherding

implementation of the recommendations of this study and providing oversight of the County’s elderly and disabled transportation services provided through MCTP and Metro Ride Paratransit. See **Figure 9** for a conceptual framework for a proposed MCTP mobility management system.

Figure 9: Proposed MCTP Mobility Management Framework



7. Consider Study for Reestablishing County Route Service

It was brought up during this study that it may be helpful for the elderly and disabled across the county to have regular transit routes between Wausau and the smaller outlying communities. However, the MCTP has run out-county routes in the past. These have all been discontinued due to low ridership. In addition there are the obvious budgetary and staffing issues.

While this same situation is found in a number of adjacent counties, there are several examples of counties successfully running county-wide transportation routes around the state. Marathon County may want to take a fresh look at the potential for re-establishing county-wide route(s) by developing a feasibility study on the creation of new county-wide route(s). A feasibility study could

evaluate options for organizing and operating routes, including routing, frequencies, fare structures, reservation and scheduling details, etc. This type of feasibility study would be eligible for 5304 program funding.

Looking at county route structures leads to consideration of alternative service models. There are a range of service models used by counties across the state. Many of those that provide county-wide routes have formed full single or multi-county transit systems. This transit system approach opens up additional funding opportunities. The 5304 program could also be used to more generally look at alternative service models for Marathon County. This approach provides an opportunity to prepare in advance for possible service delivery changes in the future while determining if a more detail route feasibility study is warranted.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

While all of the recommendations presented here represent important steps toward maintaining and expanding the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP), the pressing need is to address the volunteer driver problem. Therefore, the recommended top priority of this study is to focus on Recommendation 1.A. The CIL New Freedom program represents a ready-made solution to many of the elements of unmet transportation need within the County, and should, therefore, be the secondary priority for implementation moving forward.