UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Center for Economic Development

Public Transit and Access to Jobs in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area, 2001-2014

Prepared by:

Center for Economic Development

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

January 2015

For further information contact:

Joel Rast, Ph.D.

UWM Center for Economic Development

Telephone: 414-229-6155

E-Mail: jrast@uwm.edu

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

About this Report

During the past several years, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development (CED) has produced a number of studies focusing on transit service and access to jobs in the Milwaukee region. In 2008, the Center authored a study that examined the impact of transit service reductions from 2001 to 2007 on access to employment in the Milwaukee metro area. We followed that report with studies in 2010 and 2011 examining how proposed service reductions for the Milwaukee County Transit System would affect transit service to regional employers. This study examines the impact of transit service cuts and service expansions that have occurred between 2001 and 2014 on access to jobs in the Milwaukee Metro area.

This report was written by Joel Rast, associate professor of political science and urban studies and director of CED. Maps, tables, and GIS and data analysis were done by Catherine Madison. Additional data analysis was done by Lisa Heuler Williams. We are grateful for the assistance of the Milwaukee County and Waukesha Metro Transit Systems in the preparation of this study.

CED is a unit of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The College established CED in 1990 to provide university research and technical assistance to community organizations and units of government working to improve the Greater Milwaukee economy. The analysis and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of CED and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of UW -Milwaukee, or any of the organizations providing financial support to the Center.

CED strongly believes that informed public debate is vital to the development of good public policy. The Center publishes briefing papers, detailed analyses of economic trends and policies, and “technical assistance” reports on issues of applied economic development. In these ways, as well as in conferences and public lectures sponsored by the Center, we hope to contribute to public discussion on economic development policy in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Further information about the Center and its reports and activities is available at our web site: **www.ced.uwm.edu**

Introduction

Public transit in the Milwaukee metro area is undergoing changes. After a decade of painful service reductions and fare increases, resulting in a 22 percent decline in bus route miles by Milwaukee County Transit Service alone, the bleeding seems to have stopped—at least for now. Since 2011 service has for the most part stabilized, and during the past year several new bus routes have been added. In recent years the UWM Center for Economic Development has done several studies examining the impact of transit service reductions on access to jobs in the four-county Milwaukee metro area.[1] The recent increases in bus service make this an appropriate time to revisit this issue. In particular, to what extent have these service expansions begun to offset the reductions carried out during the past decade.

Our concern in this report is chiefly with how a compromised transit system affects the ability of transit-dependent populations to access job opportunities in the Milwaukee region. Many kinds of people use public transit, including those who have other mobility options. Indeed, a healthy transit system requires a diverse ridership base. However, we focus here on those whose mobility options are more limited because deficiencies with public transit for such individuals are not simply an inconvenience, but directly impact their ability to earn a livelihood. Transit-dependent populations are for the most part low- and moderate-income.

We begin with a long-term perspective, examining the net effect of the combination of service reductions and service expansions on access to jobs from 2001 to the present. Given the mix of reductions and expansions that have occurred during the past 13 years, how well are employers served by transit, compared with service in 2001. Next, we break this down by economic sector, looking in particular at four sectors in which low- and moderate-income populations are heavily represented: manufacturing,

[1] Center for Economic Development, *Out of Service: The Impact of Transit Cuts on Access to Jobs in Metropolitan Milwaukee* (2008); *An Analysis of the Impact of Proposed 2012 Milwaukee County Service Reductions on Access to Employment* (2011). For additional analysis of public transit and access to jobs see Public Policy Forum, *Getting to Work: Opportunities and Obstacles to Improving Transit Service to Suburban Milwaukee Job Hubs* (2013).

retail, health care, and accommodation and food service. Our purpose here is to determine whether some of these sectors have been impacted more heavily than others by the net loss of transit service. We conclude by examining the more recent period between 2011 and 2014 where bus service experienced a net increase, comparing access to jobs in 2011 to access in 2014 in order to isolate and quantify the impact of these service expansions.

Our key findings are as follows:

- 1,324 fewer employers are served by transit today than would be the case if the transit system of 2001 were currently in place. These establishments employ an estimated 30,923 workers.

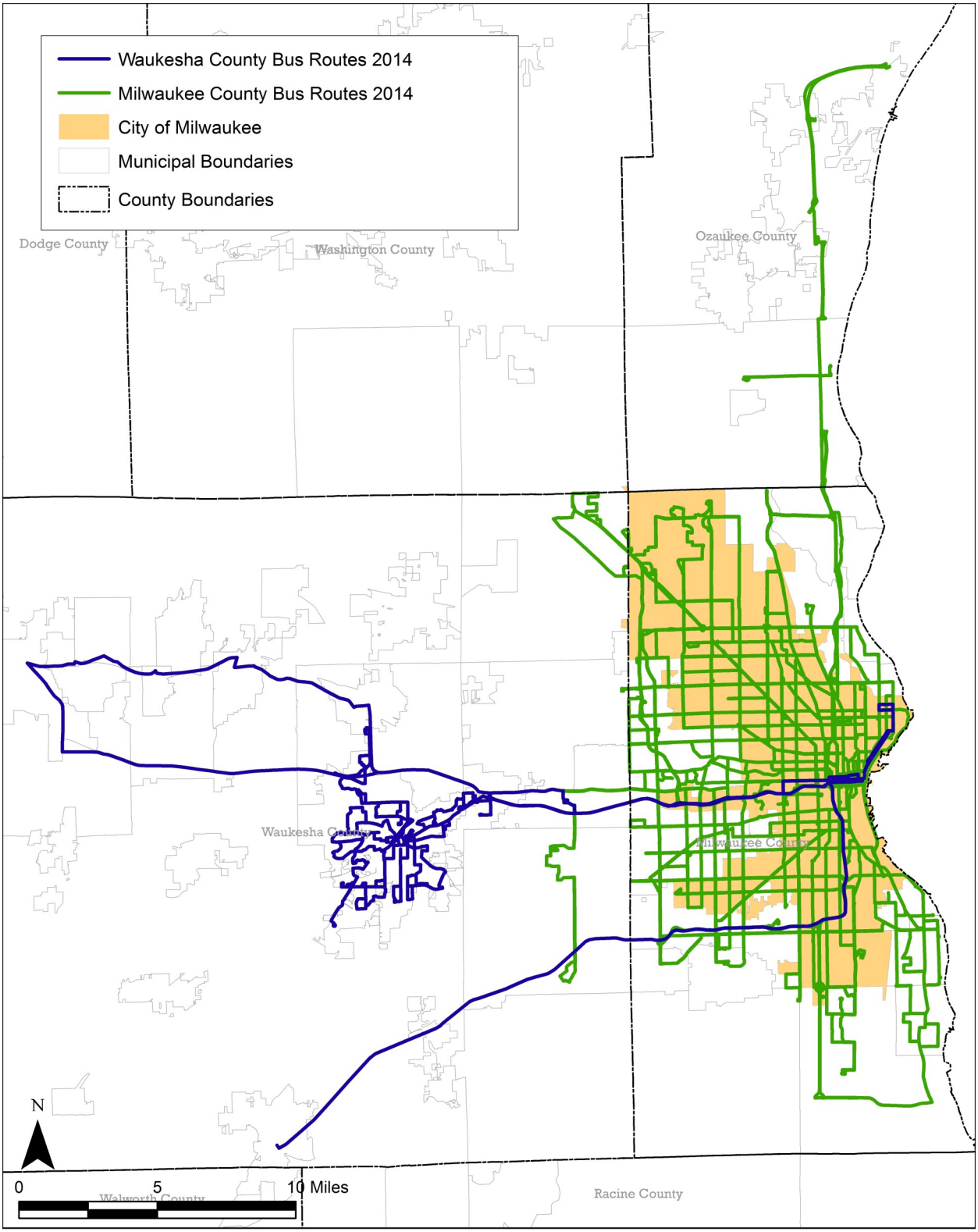
- Nearly one-fourth of the jobs that would be served by transit if the 2001 bus system were still in place today are in manufacturing. Employers in the retail, accommodation and food service, and health care and social assistance sectors—sectors which, along with manufacturing, are major employers of low- and moderate-income workers and job seekers—are underrepresented among employers affected by service reductions.

- The number of employers served by transit rose by 443 from 2011-2014. We estimate that these establishments employ a total of 15,839 workers.

The Mismatch Between Jobs and Transit-Dependent Workers

There are three principal public transit providers in the Milwaukee region: Milwaukee County Transit Service (MCTS), Waukesha Metro Transit, and Waukesha County Transit. Other regional transit providers such as the Washington County Commuter Express are not feasible options for central city residents seeking to reach suburban job destinations and are not considered in this analysis. MCTS operates bus service in Milwaukee County and provides limited service to Ozaukee and Waukesha Counties. Waukesha Metro Transit serves the city of Waukesha and administers service by Waukesha County Transit to other areas of central and western Waukesha County. Route

Map 1. Bus Routes, Milwaukee Metro Area



Source: Milwaukee County Transit System, Waukesha MetroTransit, US Bureau of the Census, and UWM Center for Economic Development

10 operated by MCTS provides a link between the MCTS and Waukesha transit systems at Brookfield Square, allowing MCTS passengers to reach destinations in Waukesha County, and vice-versa. Map 1 shows the configuration of current bus routes for the MCTS and Waukesha transit systems, combined.

As Map 1 shows, large portions of the four-county region have no transit service whatsoever, particularly Washington and Ozaukee Counties, where bus service is virtually non-existent. Even in Milwaukee County, where bus lines are most heavily concentrated, service to suburban communities such as Franklin and Oak Creek in the southern portion of the county is minimal in comparison to service within the city of Milwaukee proper. For persons dependent on transit to reach job destinations what this means is that their prospects for reaching a wide range of employment destinations located in the city of Milwaukee are far greater than those of accessing jobs in suburban areas.

Where do transit-dependent populations live? People who rely on public transportation because the costs of purchasing and maintaining an automobile are prohibitively expensive or because they do not possess valid driver's licenses are far more likely to live in the city of Milwaukee and other portions of Milwaukee County than in the exurban Washington, Ozaukee, and Waukesha (WOW) counties.[2] The poverty rate for the city of Milwaukee in 2013 was 29 percent, compared with a rate of 6 percent for Washington County, 5 percent for Ozaukee County, and 5 percent for Waukesha County.[3] Not surprisingly, there is a strong racial dimension to this disparity in poverty rates, with the regional poverty rate for African Americans at 38 percent, and that for non-Hispanic whites at 7.6 percent.[4] Recent data show that 91 percent of the region's African-American population lives in the city of Milwaukee, while less than 3 percent of blacks live in the

[2] A 2005 study by the UW-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute found that only 47 percent of African-American adults and 43 percent of Hispanic adults in Milwaukee County had a valid driver's license. See John Pawasarat, *The Driver License Status of the Voting Age Population in Wisconsin* (Milwaukee: UWM Employment and Training Institute, 2005).

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2013, 5 year estimates.

[4] Ibid.

WOW counties combined.[5] What this means is that the typical transit-dependent job holder or job seeker is a low-income person of color, living in the city of Milwaukee.

Unfortunately for such individuals, regional job growth patterns in recent decades indicate that it is the suburbs, rather than the central city, where employment opportunities are likely to be the greatest. For decades, all the net job growth in the Milwaukee region has occurred in suburban areas, particularly those communities located outside Milwaukee County where transit service is least extensive. From 1994 to 2009 the city of Milwaukee lost 27,858 jobs, while employment in Washington, Ozaukee, and Waukesha Counties increased by 56,271.[6] In 1970, 56 percent of the region's workers were employed in the city of Milwaukee, while only 18 percent worked in the WOW counties. By 2011, Milwaukee and the WOW counties were even, with 34 percent of regional workers each.[7]

The pattern of transit cuts during the past decade has exacerbated this mismatch between the transit system and transit-dependent workers and job seekers. Map 2 shows the location of bus routes and route segments that have been eliminated since 2001. As Map 2 reveals, a substantial portion of those service cuts has reduced service in suburban locations. Why have service cuts disproportionately affected suburban areas? Simply put, because MCTS makes decisions about which bus routes to shorten or eliminate based primarily on ridership numbers. Suburban areas, often less densely populated and developed than central city locations, are where ridership numbers are likely to be the lowest. As a financially strapped transit provider, MCTS must pay careful attention to ridership in prioritizing bus routes, including decisions about which routes to keep or eliminate.[8] However, it is also true that MCTS's efforts to maximize efficiency in this way

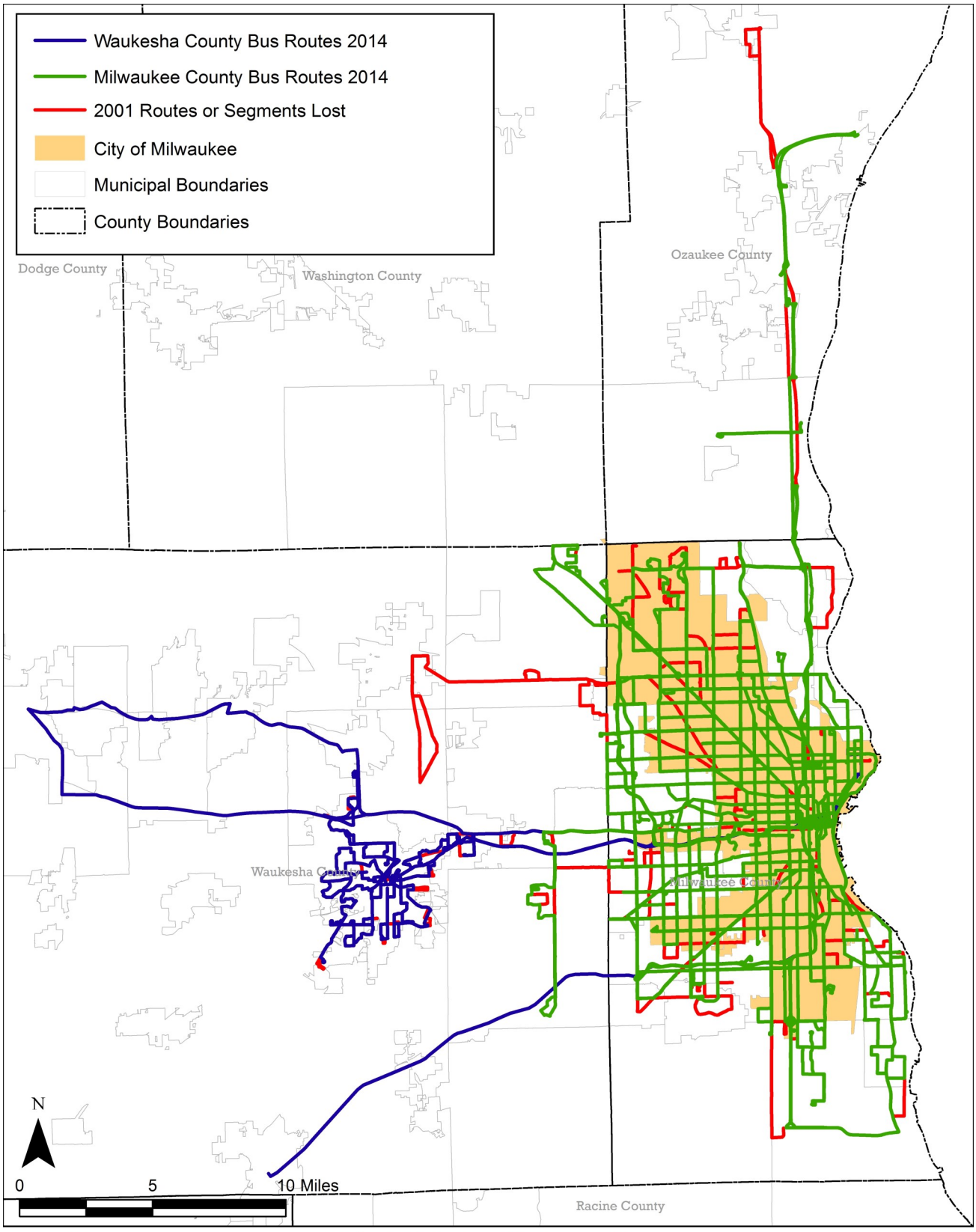
[5] Marc V. Levine, *Perspectives on the Current State of the Milwaukee Economy* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2013), 13.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid, 16.

[8] Farebox revenue represents roughly one-third of MCTS operating revenue. See Public Policy Forum, *Milwaukee County's Transit Crisis: How Did We Get Here and What Do We Do Now?* (2008), 5.

Map 2. Bus Routes and Route Segments Eliminated Since 2001



Source: Milwaukee County Transit System, Waukesha Metro Transit, US Bureau of the Census, and UWM Center for Economic Development

have made a substantial number of suburban job locations inaccessible to transit-dependent workers and job seekers.

Job Locations Served by Transit, 2001 and 2014

In this section we examine how the net change in transit service (i.e., the combination of service reductions and expansions) from 2001 to the present has affected access to job locations in the four-county region. Our method relies principally on determining whether or not individual employers are located within walking distance of a bus stop, and it should be acknowledged that there are certain shortcomings to this approach. First, it does not capture scheduling changes such as reduced hours of service that may make employment at certain establishments impractical or impossible for transit -dependent workers. Second, it does not take into account the length of trips by transit users. Clearly, there is a limit to the amount of time an individual can be expected to spend commuting to work, making some destinations served by transit inaccessible because it would take too long to get there. Given these considerations, our measure of accessibility based simply on transit service to individual employers is a generous one.

To do our analysis, we first created GIS maps of all bus routes operated by the three main transit providers in the region—MCTS, Waukesha Metro Transit, and Waukesha County Transit—for the years 2001 and 2014. For MCTS, routes also include those introduced in January 2015. We then identified the locations of all employers in the region for both years, 2001 and 2014, using SNAP data from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The SNAP database contains the addresses of all Wisconsin employers covered under the state's unemployment insurance laws. This includes private business establishments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies.

Next, we determined which employers were located within walking distance of a bus stop in 2001, and which were within walking distance in 2014. The general guideline for transit planning is that most people will walk ¼ mile to get to a bus stop. While some

people are willing to walk further than this, transit use declines significantly as distances exceed ¼ mile. In this study, we follow standard industry practice and use ¼ mile as our measure of accessibility.[9] Using GIS analysis, we drew ¼ mile buffers (or circles) around each bus stop in the regional transit system. All job locations within the buffers were designated as accessible by transit, while those located outside of the buffers were designated as inaccessible.

Because some locations lost transit service while others gained service during this time period, determining the net change in service was not a simple matter of counting the employers located in areas that were served by transit in 2001 but no longer served in 2014. To calculate the net change in service we subtracted the number of employers which had gained service during this time from the number which had lost service. We found that 1,610 employers were located in areas served by transit in 2001 but no longer served in 2014. Another 286 employers were located in areas that did not have service in 2001 but were served in 2014. Consequently, 1,324 fewer employers are served by transit today than would be the case if the bus route structure of 2001 were still in place.

How many workers do these 1,324 establishments employ? Here again, due to the combination of service reductions and increases, this figure cannot be calculated simply by counting the number of employees for establishments located in areas formerly served by transit. To calculate the net change in jobs served by transit, the total number of jobs in areas that gained service from 2001 to the present must be subtracted from the number of jobs in areas that lost service during this time.

Our task here is further complicated by the fact that SNAP employer data does not provide precise information on the number of employees at individual workplaces. Rather, it provides a range (1-4 workers, 5-9 workers, etc.) for each establishment. Table 1

[9] See Sean O'Sullivan and John Morrall, "Walking Distances to and from Light-Rail Transit Stations." Transportation Research Record 1538. Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC (1995): 19-26; and Fang Zhao, Lee-Fang Chow, Min-Tang Li, Albert Gan, and Ike Ubaka, "Forecasting Transit Walk Accessibility: A Regression Model Alternative to the Buffer Method." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC (2003).

provides employment numbers for all establishments located in areas that lost service from 2001 to 2014 *less* the number of employers which gained service during this time. For example, there are 530 employers with between 1-4 workers located in areas that lost service from 2001 to 2014, and another 92 employers of this size that gained service. The net change represents a loss of service to 438 firms of this size, shown in column 2 of Table 1. Moving over to columns 3 and 4, we see that these firms employ a minimum of 438 workers and a maximum of 1,752 workers. By repeating this exercise for each size category of employer, we find that the net change in transit service to employers has resulted in the loss of service to a minimum of 20,018 jobs, and a maximum of 41,828 jobs.

Table 1. Net Reduction in Transit Service to Employers, 2001-2014

Employees	Number of Employers	Minimum Total Workers	Maximum Total Workers	Average Total Workers
1-4	438	438	1,752	1,095
5-9	282	1,410	2,538	1,974
10-19	272	2,720	5,168	3,944
20-49	220	4,400	10,780	7,590
50-99	67	3,350	6,633	4,992
100-249	32	3,200	7,968	5,584
250-499	12	3,000	5,988	4,494
500-999	+1	+500	+999	+750
1,000+	2	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total	**1,324**	**20,018**	**41,828**	**30,923**

This range is of course too wide to be a useful measure of access to jobs. We could simply use the minimum total workers affected, a measure we have used in previous studies of job access. However, this figure, while highly reliable, no doubt vastly understates the net reduction in access to jobs. For this number to be valid, every

establishment in each employment size category would have to employ the minimum number of workers in that category. For example, of the 272 establishments employing between 10 and 19 workers, all 272 would be presumed to employ exactly 10 workers. This is an unrealistic assumption.

We believe a more accurate estimate of the impact on access to employment can be derived by averaging the minimum and maximum number of workers for each category, shown in column 5 of Table 1. Using this method, we find that approximately 30,923 fewer jobs are served by transit today than would be the case if the transit system of 2001 were still in place. While this number is less reliable than the minimum total workers affected, we believe it is far closer to the correct number and thus more appropriate as an estimated figure of the number of jobs that would be accessible by transit if the 2001 system of bus lines were currently in place.

Sector-Specific Analysis

In addition to examining the net change in transit service to employers from 2001 to the present, we wanted to look at specific economic sectors to see how transit service to establishments within these sectors has been affected during this period. We examine four sectors: manufacturing, retail, health care, and accommodation and food service. These sectors were chosen because they are major employers of low- and moderate-income workers and job seekers. For each of these sectors we repeat the exercise in the previous section. That is, we quantify the net loss in transit service to employers and provide estimates for the total number of jobs affected.

Table 2 summarizes results for manufacturing (NAICS code 31-33). As column 2 shows, the net change in service to manufacturing establishments is a loss of service to 199 establishments, which we estimate employ a total of 7,667 workers. Comparing these results with those for all employers provided in Table 1, we find that the loss of transit service to manufacturing establishments accounts for 15 percent of the loss of service to all employers. However, because these businesses employ on average more workers than other sectors, the number of jobs affected accounts for nearly 25 percent of the total. Put

Table 2. Net Reduction in Transit Service to Employers, Manufacturing

Employees	Number of	Minimum Total	Maximum Total	Average Total
1-4	30	30	120	75
5-9	38	190	342	266
10-19	49	490	931	711
20-49	53	1,060	2,597	1,829
50-99	15	750	1,485	1,118
100-249	6	600	1,494	1,047
250-499	9	2,250	4,491	3,371
500-999	+1	+500	+999	+750
1,000+	0	0	0	0
Total	**199**	**4,870**	**10,461**	**7,667**

another way, almost one-fourth of the jobs that would be served by transit if the 2001 transit system were still in place today are in manufacturing.

This figure is not particularly surprising, given the decentralization of manufacturing that has been occurring in the Milwaukee region. From 1997 to 2009, the percentage of regional manufacturing jobs located in the city of Milwaukee fell from 28 percent to 19 percent. In 1997, 46,467 workers in the city of Milwaukee were employed in manufacturing; by 2009, the number had fallen to 27,253.[10] The steady increase in the proportion of regional manufacturing jobs located in the suburbs, where transit service is generally less extensive than in the city of Milwaukee, explains why manufacturing jobs are so well represented among jobs no longer accessible by transit. For transit-dependent populations, this trend is a significant concern since manufacturing is still one of the main sectors offering opportunities for workers with limited formal education to earn a living wage. Efforts to reduce poverty and joblessness in Milwaukee will be negatively impacted

[10] Levine, *Perspectives on the Current State of the Milwaukee Economy*, 8.

to the extent that the proportion of the region's manufacturing jobs accessible by transit continues to shrink.

Results for the other sectors we examine are not as striking. Table 3 summarizes the results for the retail sector (NAICS 44-45). There are 96 fewer retail establishments served by transit than would be the case if the transit system from 2001 were still in place today. We estimate these 96 establishments employ a total of approximately 1,787 workers, which represents 6 percent of the overall net loss of jobs accessible by transit since 2001. Given that roughly 14 percent of the region's workforce is employed in the retail sector, this means that retail jobs are underrepresented among jobs that have lost transit service since 2001.[11] This may be because many retail jobs are located in the city of Milwaukee, where transit service is still generally good, and because even with the service cuts of the past decade, service to suburban shopping malls and other retail concentrations where ridership numbers are relatively solid has not been eliminated.

Table 3. Net Reduction in Transit Service to Employers, Retail Sector

Employees	Number of Employers	Minimum Total Workers	Maximum Total Workers	Average Total Workers
1-4	35	35	140	87.5
5-9	22	110	198	154
10-19	18	180	342	261
20-49	12	240	588	414
50-99	7	350	693	521.5
100-249	2	200	498	349
250-499	0	0	0	0
500-999	0	0	0	0
1,000+	0	0	0	0
Total	**96**	**1,115**	**2,459**	**1,787**

[11] U.S. Economic Census, 2007.

Table 4 provides results for the accommodation and food service sector (NAICS 72). The results here are similar to what we found for the retail sector, with disproportionately few employers and jobs affected. There are 86 fewer employers in the accommodation and food service sector with transit service today than would be the case if the transit system of 2001 were currently in place. These 86 establishments employ an estimated total of 1,190 workers which represents just under 4 percent of the overall net loss of jobs served by transit. Since regional employment in accommodation and food service is around 10 percent of total employment, this sector is, like retail, underrepresented in the total number of jobs affected.[12] Here again, this could be because many jobs in this sector are located in retail corridors and locations like the downtown areas of Milwaukee and Waukesha where ridership numbers are sufficiently strong to make service cuts an unattractive option for transit service providers.

Table 4. Net Reduction in Transit Service to Employers, Accommodation and Food Service Sector

Employees	Number of Employers	Minimum Total Workers	Maximum Total Workers	Average Total Workers
1-4	20	20	80	50
5-9	13	65	117	91
10-19	26	260	494	377
20-49	26	520	1,274	897
50-99	2	100	198	149
100-249	0	0	0	0
250-499	+1	+250	+499	+374.5
500-999	0	0	0	0
1,000+	0	0	0	0
Total	**86**	**715**	**1,664**	**1,190**

[12] Ibid.

Finally, Table 5 summarizes results for the health care and social assistance sector (NAICS 62). Transit service reductions from 2001 to the present have resulted in a loss of service to 131 establishments, which we estimate employ a total of 3,517 workers. This represents roughly 10 percent of the net reduction in both jobs and employers served by transit. Like the retail and accommodation and food service sectors, health care jobs—which account for roughly 20 percent of regional employment—are underrepresented in the total number of jobs affected by service cuts. This is partly explained by the high percentage of health care jobs located in the city of Milwaukee, where transit service to employers continues to be relatively good and where fewer route reductions and eliminations have been made. Forty-two percent of regional health care jobs are located in the city of Milwaukee. By comparison, only 19 percent of regional manufacturing jobs are located in the city of Milwaukee.[13]

Table 5. Net Reduction in Transit Service to Employers, Health Care and Social Assistance Sector

Employees	Number of Employers	Minimum Total Workers	Maximum Total Workers	Average Total Workers
1-4	44	44	176	110
5-9	34	170	306	238
10-19	22	220	418	319
20-49	14	280	686	483
50-99	8	400	792	596
100-249	8	800	1,992	1,396
250-499	1	250	499	374.5
500-999	0	0	0	0
1,000+	0	0	0	0
Total	**131**	**2,164**	**4,869**	**3,517**

[13] Levine, *Perspectives on the Current State of the Milwaukee Economy*, 8; U.S. Economic Census, 2007.

To summarize, a total of 512 fewer employers in these four sectors combined are served by transit today than would be the case if the transit system of 2001 were still in place. Firms in these sectors employ an estimated 14,161 workers, of which more than half work in the manufacturing sector. To the extent that manufacturing employment continues to decentralize, access to manufacturing jobs will in all likelihood continue to represent one of the key challenges in connecting transit-dependent workers and job seekers to regional employment opportunities. While employers in the retail, accommodation and food service, and health care and social assistance sectors are underrepresented among employers experiencing loss of service, the impact on these sectors is significant as well. For transit-dependent populations, jobs in several hundred establishments in these sectors that would have bus service today if the 2001 transit system were still in place are instead out of reach.

Impact of Service Changes, 2011-2014

The year 2010 marked something of a turning point for public transit in the Milwaukee region. Following a decade of steady bus route eliminations and route reductions, both MCTS and Waukesha Metro and County Transit found ways to curtail further loss of service. Hours and frequency of service continued to experience reductions, but the elimination of entire routes and route segments was for the most part avoided. Beginning in 2012, MCTS sought to improve service with the introduction of the GreenLine, RedLine, and BlueLine express buses, funded through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program. Additional express buses funded by the same program began operation in January 2015. These routes are chiefly intended to introduce limited stop express service along heavily used existing bus corridors rather than expand service to new locations. However, their implementation suggests a new commitment on the part of county officials to avoid major service cuts and take small steps toward undoing some of the damage that was done during the previous decade.

More recently, MCTS has added several bus routes and route segments in areas

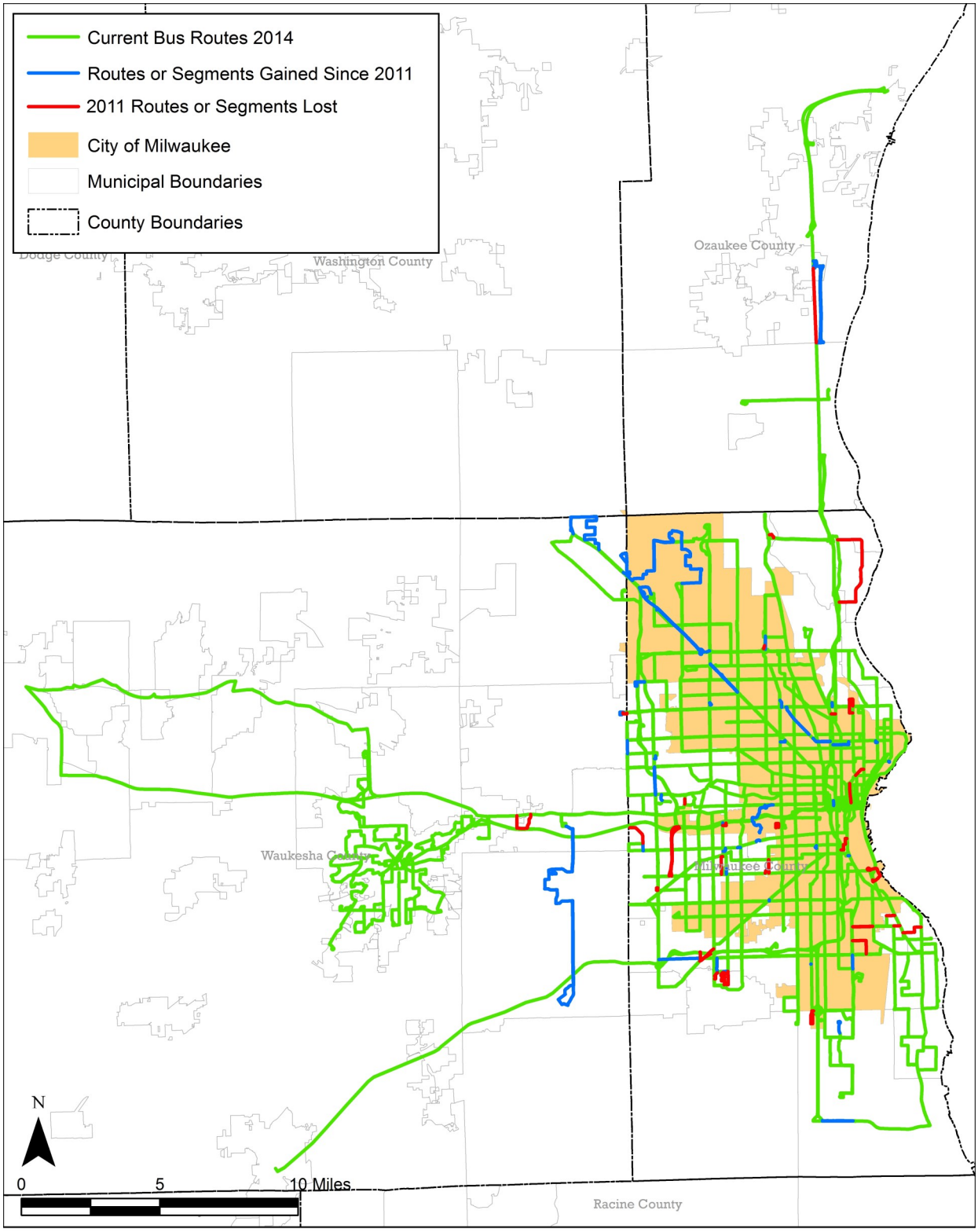
where service did not previously exist. In June 2014, Route 55 was extended from Southridge Shopping Center to 108th and Layton. Also in 2014, MCTS began operating Route 6 (New Berlin Industrial Express) and Route 279 (Menomonee Falls Industrial Express), both of which provide connections between central Milwaukee and suburban manufacturing areas. Route 6 provides service during shift changes at FedEx in the New Berlin industrial park and BuySeasons in the Westridge industrial park. It also serves Brookfield Square and Mayfair Mall. Route 279 travels mainly along Fond du Lac Avenue and provides service during shift changes at the Park Place and Menomonee Falls business parks. In addition, Route 61 (Appleton-Keefe), introduced in January 2015, provides regular fixed route service along Keefe and Appleton Avenues northwest into Menomonee Falls and Germantown, also connecting central city residents to suburban job locations.

Routes 6, 279, and 61 are being funded through a $13.5 million legal settlement between the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and two organizations representing inner-city residents of Milwaukee, the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH). In 2012, the two organizations filed a lawsuit against WisDOT seeking to block reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange. The plaintiffs argued that the $1.7 billion freeway project discriminated against low-income and minority populations by failing to include a public transit component. Under the settlement, reached in May 2014, the State of Wisconsin agreed to spend $11.5 million over a four-year period to fund new bus lines connecting inner-city residents with suburban job opportunities. An additional $2 million was committed for public outreach, engagement, and marketing.[14]

Given these changes to the regional public transit system during the past several years, we wanted to determine the extent to which access to jobs by transit-dependent populations has increased. Map 3 shows changes to the configuration of bus lines in the transit system from 2011 to the present. The blue lines represent areas with new bus

[14] See *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, "State to Spend $13.5 Million on Transit to Settle Zoo Interchange Suit," May 19, 2014; and *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, "New Bus Route Will Take City Residents to Suburban Job Sites," May 20, 2014.

Map 3. Changes to Bus Routes, 2011-2014



Source: Milwaukee County Transit System, Waukesha MetroTransit, US Bureau of the Census, and UWM Center for Economic Development

service, while the red lines represent areas that lost service during this time. The only major areas to lose service were the North Shore communities of Bayside and Fox Point, where the elimination of Route 68 cut off service to residential areas along Lake Drive and Brown Deer Road. On balance, service to employers expanded during this time. Table 6 shows the net increase in transit service to employers from 2011-2014.

Table 6. Net Increase in Transit Service to Employers, 2011-2014

Employees	Number of Employers	Minimum Total Workers	Maximum Total Workers	Average Total Workers
1-4	88	88	352	220
5-9	86	430	774	602
10-19	76	760	1,444	1,102
20-49	101	2,020	4,949	3,484.5
50-99	60	3,000	5,940	4,470
100-249	27	2,700	6,723	4,711.5
250-499	4	1,000	1,996	1,498
500-999	1	500	999	749.5
1,000+	-1	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
Total	**443**	**9,499**	**22,178**	**15,839**

As Table 6 indicates, even after taking into account the loss of service caused by the elimination of Route 68 and the reconfiguration of several other bus lines, the number of employers served by transit rose by 443 during this period. We estimate that these establishments employ a total of approximately 15,839 workers. This is a significant increase, suggesting that new bus lines have been configured in ways to maximize their access to suburban employment centers. The problem, of course, is that support for most of these routes comes from a legal settlement that provides funding for a limited time only. Should these bus routes prove effective in connecting transit-dependent populations

with job opportunities, new funding sources will need to be tapped in order to sustain them beyond the four-year period for which funding is currently in place.

Conclusion

One might be tempted to conclude from this analysis that following years of devastating cuts to public transit in the Milwaukee region, a new period of rebuilding has begun. Certainly, the improved job access resulting from the addition of bus lines by MCTS during the past year is both significant and welcome. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that these service expansions came for the most part not through creative efforts by public officials to secure additional resources for transit, but through legal action against the state Department of Transportation. Absent this legal challenge by public transit stakeholders, access to jobs in the Milwaukee metro area today would be largely unchanged from where it stood four years ago.

For the past several years, county officials have worked hard to maintain existing levels of transit service and avoid further reductions, and for this they should be commended. At the same time, a new complacency about public transit seems to be replacing the previous slash and burn mentality among decision makers. Drastic service cuts are avoided, but meaningful steps to begin to restore service to levels of the late 1990s have not been taken. Seemingly forgotten is the fact that the transit system of today is a shell of its former self, and that jobs continue to decentralize at a rapid pace. It is not enough to simply hold the line on service cuts. Serious rebuilding efforts supported by secure and long-term sources of funding will need to be undertaken to avoid further isolating transit-dependent job holders and job seekers from the region's job growth centers.

The problem will not be solved as long as the local share of transit funding relies, as it does in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties, on a property tax levy. This unusual and ineffective funding mechanism has been identified for years as a key obstacle to the provision of adequate public transit in the Milwaukee region, yet state and local

politicians have been unable to reach a consensus around an alternative set of arrangements. Until this happens, county officials are unlikely to have the resources to do anything more than maintain the status quo with public transit, and even that may become impossible without a property tax increase. Proposals for a Regional Transit Authority and a dedicated sales tax for transit have been unsuccessful in the past. Both, however, have merit, and deserve careful consideration going forward. Meaningful civic discussions about the institutional arrangements and funding mechanisms through which transit is governed and supported are needed if the recent expansion of service is to represent more than a fleeting interlude in a longer-term pattern of decline.