

According to transit officials, the real trend in America is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

With that in mind, we have a plan – SMART (Suburban and Milwaukee Advanced Rapid Transit) – that upgrades and improves our bus transit system in Milwaukee County through the use of BRT.

The objectives were simple: connect people who are dependent on the transit system to jobs and to job training centers; and make the system more attractive to current and future riders. The SMART plan meets both objectives.

SMART includes state-of-the-art hybrid buses, interactive stops and designated lanes. The SMART plan has lines that go from the northern to the southern and from the western to the eastern parts of the county – connecting transit dependent populations with jobs and with job training centers.

New technology and upgrades would reduce travel time by 25%. Other cities that added Bus Rapid Transit lines saw a 20% increase in riders.

In contrast, the City of Milwaukee plan would use \$52 million to construct a trolley car rail system that covers just a 3-mile radius in downtown Milwaukee. There are two major problems with the city plan:

- Essentially half of the funds would be spent on a system that does not serve transit dependent populations in the central and northwestern parts of the city where the greatest need for transit exist.
- A new system would compete with the existing bus system for state and federal aid. There is only a limited amount of transportation funds available and the bus system needs the help more than a new system.

The recent editorial calls for a modern urban transit system. We have to choose between creating a new system largely targeted to visitors and a small group of downtown employees or a system that meets the larger needs of people who depend on mass transit each and every day to get to work or school.

I say that we must take care of the people with the greatest needs first. The \$91.5 million should be used to improve and upgrade our bus system, not used to build a system to compete against it.

Scott Walker
Milwaukee County Executive