



Milwaukee County MOVE Roundtable Closeout Report Executive Summary

Context: Major changes, including possible bus rapid transit, are coming to the 27th street corridor, which runs from the North Side through downtown and into the South Suburbs. This is a very diverse stretch of neighborhoods. MobilISE is interested in finding ways to engage stakeholders to ensure that transit changes and accompanying corridor development meets community needs, enhances the overall sense of place, and creates greater access and improved quality of life. This means being mindful of the diversity of interests and identities along the corridor, and ensuring that the voices and lived experience of those who identify as Black, Latinx, older adults, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ are honored, safe, and improved by this work.

Focus: The Milwaukee County MOVE Roundtable will focus on developing shared talking points about the 27th Street BRT Corridor. These talking points will reflect both practical and aspirational goals for the corridor and open up a sense of possibility about what other improvements could be incorporated as part of the overall project. MOVE Roundtable participants will develop these talking points by melding real-world experiences shared by experts in the field with local priorities and sense of place. We'll begin by building a shared foundation of BRT – what it feels and looks like, then dream big-yet-practical to derive a collective interpretation that is Milwaukee-specific and effectively tells the story of how the 27th Street Corridor can become a true reflection of and in service to its communities.

Purpose/format

The Milwaukee Roundtable convened a group of representatives from different communities along the 27th Street Corridor, representing a broad swath of interests, geographies, and identities. Participants brought significant expertise about their own communities, but were largely unfamiliar with transit and corridor planning. Many reported being transit-dependent during significant phases of their lives. With the first BRT line in Milwaukee under construction, mobilISE WI recognized a window of opportunity to convene a group of stakeholders along the corridor to start seeing big – to envision a corridor transformed not only by better transit service, but by a new level of investment in service to the people and places along the route.

Over the course of the 6 sessions, the Roundtable went on a crash course to learn about 27th Street Corridor transit plans to date, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Transit Oriented Development (TOD), transit equity, and how to use initial BRT success to drive support for a BRT network. Participants were especially keen to dig into transit decision-making and funding, anti-displacement and affordable housing, and returning the street to be a point of pride.

Initial Outcomes

At the conclusion of the Roundtable, participants walked away with:

- A shared understanding of the transit planning trajectory and the 27th Street project status, including the 5-7 year anticipated timeline before BRT service will be implemented along the existing Purple Line route
- A consensus that the future 27th Street corridor should not only provide access for residents to opportunities and amenities outside their neighborhoods, but also bring people to their neighborhoods to experience the unique flavors, history, and cultures that are already locally recognized and celebrated.

- The Roundtable participants liked the idea of pursuing support for storytelling – developing a collection of stories from along the corridor that can be used to show the value of what is already there and make the case for them as a destination. These areas are in neighborhoods that historically have been off the radar for people who do not live there. The stories can be used to highlight neighborhood assets at future stations, garner additional support for beyond-transit investments, and build awareness about the communities currently in place.
- A recognition that while Milwaukee County transit is responsible for transit improvements, any accompanying development opportunities will be market-driven unless the Roundtable and others take action to set different expectations and/or develop a broader vision for the corridor as a sum of its parts.
- A shared sense that transit investments can prompt transformative change, and that there is a chance to reimagine the streetscape for how it could be used differently now and into the future. Possibilities include dedicated bus lanes, bike lanes, sidewalk cafes, plazas, pedestrian-friendly walking areas, green space and street trees, signage, WiFi hot spots, connections to trails/parks/historic sites, and more.
 - mobilISE WI and members of this group would like to work towards applying for an FTA TOD corridor planning grant that would support a robust effort to sync transit and land use investments in a meaningful and community-focused manner.
- A belief that there is “room for all,” that the diversity along the corridor should be celebrated and leveraged as an asset for both the corridor and the city at large.
- An interest in helping Milwaukee decision-makers and influencers see the promise of the corridor and get to know the people and the places that comprise it.
 - mobilISE WI and AARP would like to host a bus tour for city leaders in Fall 2022 to help them learn more about the corridor and to use their influence to leverage the transit investment towards a true re-imagining of the corridor and its potential.

Suggested next steps:

Based on the Roundtable and our experience in the transit/land use/community development space, Rail~volution would like to suggest the following:

- Proceed with planning the Fall corridor bus tour for decision-makers
- Look into the FTA TOD corridor planning grant: what type of entity is eligible to apply, when is the application/funding cycle, how does corridor planning timeline align with transit planning activities and Milwaukee County project management.
- Maintain an open line of communication with/across Roundtable members to allow ongoing ease of coordination as needed
- Be on the lookout for others along the corridor who may be strong additions to this group with their unique perspective, connections and ideas
- Be on the lookout for decision-makers and influencers within the City/County; build relationships with them so they develop an informed understanding of the corridor and its potential
- Explore potential support (perhaps through [Greater Milwaukee Foundation?](#)) for developing community stories
 - mobilISE WI expressed interest in pursuing this with support from Roundtable members.
- Stay abreast of anti-displacement work at the local level and proactively build partnerships, programs, and policies to support the current 27th Street communities as these transit and development changes occur in the years to come.