Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Alternatives Analysis
Environmental Impact Statement & Project Development Phase

Transit-Oriented Development Portfolio
Somers, Wisconsin

Prepared for:
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

in association with:
HNTB
CAMBRIDGE
American Design
Bay Ridge Consulting
Connectics Transportation Group
Great Lakes Archeological Research Center
Heritage Research
Martinsek & Associates
Valerie Kretchmer Associates

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**Introduction**

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) is studying the potential to extend commuter rail service from Kenosha to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The proposed commuter station in the Town of Somers was initially proposed west of the Union Pacific Railroad, north of 12th Street. However, as part of the current alternatives analysis study, the Town of Somers sought to consider alternative sites due to potential conflicts with current and future development proposals, and potential emergency access delays caused by commuter trains. As a result, two additional sites in the vicinity of the Union Pacific Railroad have been considered at, 9th, and 7th Streets.

A general assessment of existing conditions and conceptual station area plans were developed for each alternative station location to assist the Town of Somers in choosing a preferred station location. While all stations along the corridor represent reasonable alternatives, as described in greater detail below, the Town of Somers has stated its preference to keep the Somers station at the 12th Street location. The following paragraphs discuss existing conditions influencing planning decisions for the preliminary Somers KRM commuter rail station.

**Community Issues and Opportunities**

Key stakeholders within the community were interviewed to obtain opinions on “issues” and “opportunities” within the station area. In addition, a public workshop was held on March 9, 2006 at the Somers Town Hall to solicit community input. The primary issues and opportunities identified in both the workshop and interviews are summarized below. The complete summaries of the interviews and public workshop are located within the Appendix.

**Key Issues:**

1. Accessibility of area from roadways
2. Develop area for pedestrian/bike safety
3. Land use conflicts in the station area
4. Presence and protection of natural resources
5. Commuter rail implementation and operating costs
6. Proximity of fire station to the proposed station location
7. Potential to push out farms and existing residents
8. “Not in my backyard” protesters
9. Existing land use plan does not allow for adequate densities
10. Interference with planned development

**Key Opportunities:**

1. Attractive natural resources
2. Potential for new development, tax base growth, and tourism
3. Relative “blank slate” for new development
4. Desirable location between Milwaukee and Chicago
5. Area colleges
6. North shore bike trail
7. Focal point for the community
8. Local quality of life
9. Alternative transportation and congestion mitigation
10. 12th Street and Sheridan Road are major arterials

**Existing Land Use, Circulation, and Urban Design Conditions**

The station study area is considered to be a ½ mile radius around the proposed station due to the fact that transit-oriented development (TOD) is typically focused within a ten minute walk or ¼ mile distance of a transit facility, with higher density uses concentrated within a five minute walk or ¼ mile area. The existing land use, circulation, and urban design patterns for the three alternative station sites—12th Street, 9th Street, and 7th Street—are briefly described below within a station area context to highlight the similarities and differences between the sites. Noteworthy to each station site is that the University of Wisconsin at Parkside is located between 12th and 7th Streets approximately two miles east of the Sheridan Road, and Carthage College is located on Sheridan Road approximately one mile south of 12th Street and two miles south of 7th Street.

**Existing Land Use**

Existing land use within each study area is characterized by single-family residential uses east of the Union Pacific Railroad, and agricultural uses, open space, and wetlands west of the Union Pacific Railroad. The majority of single-family residential uses are along Sheridan Road or its side streets. There are also a few multi-family residential uses along Sheridan Road, and scattered commercial uses north of the 12th Street intersection. The Pike River and associated wetlands are dominant features west of the railroad, and east of the railroad south of 12th Street. Lake Michigan is also a dominant natural feature east of Sheridan Road. The Town of Somers Fire Station is the only public institution in the corridor, which is located on 12th Street immediately east of the...
railroad. There are numerous vacant parcels in the station study area. Figure B1 illustrates the existing land uses within each alternative station area.

**Existing Circulation and Urban Design**
Circulation and urban design features are very similar in all three station areas. Sheridan Road is a four-lane north-south arterial area. The minor street system intersecting Sheridan Road in the study area is cul-de-sac in design and terminates at the railroad or Lake Michigan coastline. 12th Street, or County Highway E, is a two-lane east-west arterial that connects Interstate 94 (I-94) with Sheridan Road. 9th Street is a local residential street with a cul-de-sac design, located west of Sheridan Road. 7th Street, or County Highway A, is a two-lane east-west arterial with no direct interchange with I-94. None of the streets within the alternative station areas contain sidewalks, curbs, or urban design amenities. However, 12th Street does have wide shoulders that may be used for bicyclists.
Introduction
The purpose of the conceptual station area plans is to highlight the potential to create a transit supportive land use environment surrounding a station area. The following summaries describe the key elements of each conceptual station area plan from a land use, circulation, and urban design perspective. More importantly, the advantages and disadvantages within each alternative station location—12th Street, 9th Street, and 7th Street—are highlighted, which assisted the Town in selecting a preferred station location.

Conceptual Future Land Use
Each station area would include a commuter rail station and parking. The station could be located on either side of the railroad, but should be at least 200 feet from a cross-street intersection to avoid having railroad crossing gates blocking the intersection while the train is at the station. A small mixed-use area with retail, offices, and multi-family residential is proposed adjacent to the station. Townhome or duplex residential uses are proposed adjacent to this mixed-use area. It is important to concentrate higher-density residential uses near the proposed station to generate commuter ridership, provide services for commuters and residents, and create a vibrant station area as a welcoming gateway to the community.

Beyond the mixed-use area adjacent to the station, the land uses primarily include single-family residential uses and open space. The Pike River and related wetlands and floodplain areas are proposed for preservation in order to serve as open space, recreation, and stormwater management. It is important to protect these sensitive environmental resources, and to provide connections between these resources and other station area amenities, such as parks and bike trails.

Advantages and Disadvantages:
1. A significant advantage for the 12th Street station area is the potential for neighborhood commercial uses at two major arterials—County Highway E and Sheridan Road. There are numerous, aging commercial uses near 12th Street and Sheridan Road, which could be redeveloped to provide neighborhood retail and commercial services.
2. A significant advantage for the 12th Street station area is the fire station located on the north side of 12th Street, immediately east of the railroad. This municipal property could be utilized for the proposed train station and commuter parking in the future. The Town has determined the need to relocate the fire station in order to provide better service to all areas within the community.
3. A potential disadvantage for the 7th Street station area is the environmentally sensitive land south of 12th Street, which would prevent more intensive development.
4. A potential advantage for the 7th Street station area is the existing multi-family residential use located on the south side of 7th Street, immediately east of the railroad.
5. A significant advantage of the 7th Street location is developer interest to construct a commuter station, commuter parking, and neighborhood commercial uses west of the railroad and south of 7th Street.
6. A potential disadvantage for the 12th Street station area is the environmentally sensitive land south of 12th Street, which would prevent more intensive development.

Conceptual Future Circulation and Access Patterns
North and south roadway access to all station locations is similar to the extent that all three station locations rely on Sheridan Road as the primary access route. Sheridan Road is a major north-south arterial with two travel lanes in each direction, and provides local access between Racine and Kenosha. Capacity improvements would be needed on Sheridan Road to facilitate access to and from the proposed station location and new land uses.

Advantages and Disadvantages:
1. An advantage for the 12th Street station location is direct east-west access to I-94. Similar to 12th Street, capacity improvements would be needed on 7th Street to facilitate access to and from the proposed station.
2. A significant advantage for the 9th Street location is a limited railroad crossing.
3. An advantage for the 9th Street location is the existing multi-family residential use located on the north side of 12th Street, immediately east of the railroad.
4. A potential disadvantage for the 12th Street station area is the potential for neighborhood commercial uses at two major arterials—County Highway E and Sheridan Road. There are numerous, aging commercial uses near 12th Street and Sheridan Road, which could be redeveloped to provide neighborhood retail and commercial services.
5. A significant advantage for the 12th Street station area is the fire station located on the north side of 12th Street, immediately east of the railroad. This municipal property could be utilized for the proposed train station and commuter parking in the future. The Town has determined the need to relocate the fire station in order to provide better service to all areas within the community.
6. A potential disadvantage for the 12th Street station area is the environmentally sensitive land south of 12th Street, which would prevent more intensive development.
7. A potential advantage for the 7th Street location is the existing multi-family residential use located on the south side of 7th Street, immediately east of the railroad.
8. A significant advantage of the 7th Street location is developer interest to construct a commuter station, commuter parking, and neighborhood commercial uses west of the railroad and south of 7th Street.

Regarding railroad crossing gate delays, the 12th Street and the 7th Street station locations would both cause an additional access delay over the 9th Street location. When a train travels within the 1500-foot approach to an intersection, the railroad crossing gates would come down and block the road for approximately 25-35 seconds. If a train station is located within the 1500-foot approach area, the crossing gates would open while the train is stopped at the station. Once the train leaves the station, the crossing gates would close again and cause another access delay. The 12th and 7th Street station locations would cause slightly longer delays because they would be located within the 1500-foot approach, while the 9th Street location is outside of the 1500-foot approach. However, greater access delays will be caused by coal freight trains using the Union Pacific Railroad after the completion of the planned expansion of the Oak Creek Power Station.

Advantages and Disadvantages:
1. An advantage for the 12th Street station location is direct east-west access to I-94.
2. A disadvantage for the 9th Street station location is limited east-west access since there are no at-grade railroad crossings.
3. An advantage for the 9th Street station location is a limited railroad crossing...
4. A disadvantage for the 12th Street and the 7th Street station locations is an additional railroad crossing delay, compared to the 9th Street station. However, projected coal train traffic will cause much greater crossing delays.
5. An advantage for all station locations is the potential to create multi-use bicycle trails along the Pike Creek and to the station.

Conceptual Future Urban Design Framework
The overall character of each of the station areas is rural, with farmland and natural resources west of the railroad and a residential uses fronting Sheridan Road. The urban design framework would include:
- Creation of pedestrian-friendly street and sidewalk network within the station area
- Installation of pedestrian streetscape amenities, such as street lighting and street trees
- Creation of a linear greenway along Lake Michigan through easements and/or purchase

Based on these preliminary recommendations, the overall character of each station area would change from a rural setting to a more suburban setting that includes a new commuter station, new residential development, and pedestrian and bicycle amenities.

Preferred Station Location
Based on a review of the advantages and disadvantages of each conceptual plan, the Town of Somers has chosen 12th Street as the preferred commuter station location. Primary considerations in their decision included the potential to relocate the 12th Street fire station in the future and to utilize municipal property for the proposed train station and commuter parking. A 12th Street station would offer potential to accommodate neighborhood commercial uses. Further it was concluded that 12th Street maximizes access to the regional arterial street system to serve development patterns. Given the Town’s preferences, a parcel-level existing conditions assessment was performed to determine opportunities for future land use, circulation, and urban design improvements within the 12th Street area. The following pages contain this assessment for 12th Street.
1. Agriculture west of the railroad alignment is planned for future residential uses.
2. The Town of Somers fire station is adjacent to the proposed transit station location.
3. The Pike River watershed and floodplain is an environmental asset within the station area, but a constraint to more intense development.
4. Aging, underutilized and vacant commercial uses along Sheridan Road provide potential for redevelopment.
5. The Sheridan Road corridor contains established residential neighborhoods.
1. County Highway E is the primary east-west arterial from I-94 to Sheridan Road.
2. Sheridan Road is a four-lane north-south arterial that is planned for roadway improvements.
3. Lake Michigan is an obvious natural amenity, but is not publicly accessible from Sheridan Road.
4. Agriculture and vacant land represents an opportunity to create a pedestrian oriented framework to support transit.
1. The proposed station location is currently planned as a park and ride facility.
2. County Highway E is a rural, two-lane arterial with paved shoulders.
3. Existing residential neighborhoods east of railroad along Sheridan Road are completely auto-dependent.
4. Sheridan Road is a four-lane arterial without pedestrian or bicycle access improvements.
Introduction

The Town of Somers is positioned for significant residential growth. Wastewater treatment service extensions will open almost 3,500 acres west of Route 31. As evidenced by pending development proposals, developer interest in the station study area and the Town overall is high. Although current market interest lies in the west side of the Town near I-94, the proposed station area will receive a substantial amount of development in the future. As discussed in the previous sections, three alternative station locations along the Union Pacific railroad alignment—12th Street, 9th Street, and 7th Street—were identified for conceptual station area planning. Conceptual station area plans were drafted for each to assist the Town in arriving at a preferred station location. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of each location, 12th Street was chosen as the preferred station location for more detailed station area planning. However, it is important to point out that even with this action, the Town remains open to the possibility of the station moving to another location in the future. While it is the intent of the Town to preserve 12th Street for a station, the high growth and development dynamics in the area require the Town to maintain a level of flexibility for the future.

Market Potential

As part of the station area planning process, a detailed market assessment was conducted to estimate the Town of Somers’ future market demand and development potential between the years 2005 and 2020 for the ½-mile station area. Based on current development trends and long-term population and employment projections, Somers’ station area market demand has been determined for residential, retail, and office uses (see Table 1). The full market assessment report is located in the Appendix.

Table 1: Somers Station Area Development Demand, 2005-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential units</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail (square feet)</td>
<td>0 10,000-15,000</td>
<td>7,500-10,000</td>
<td>17,500-25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office (square feet)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000-7,500</td>
<td>5,000-7,500</td>
<td>15,000-20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Somers may consider the potential for the 7th Street station location based on future development proposals and commuter rail planning. A comparison of existing and future land uses within the ½ mile station area is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Existing and Future Land Uses, 2005-2035

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Existing Land Use (Acres)</th>
<th>Future Land Use (Acres)</th>
<th>Net Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family/ Low Density Residential</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>1513%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Family Residential</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>283%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Woodland</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HNTB Corporation (November 2006)

Future Access and Circulation Patterns

Access & Circulation is illustrated in Figure B.V on page B12.

It is anticipated the Somer’s station may need to accommodate a commuter parking lot 100-150 parking spaces in size. Shuttle bus parking and access will be important in facility design to accommodate student buses from both Parkside and Carthage Colleges. Signalized traffic control is proposed for 12th Street and Sheridan Road to provide safe access to and from the station.

A multi-use path is recommended on at least one side of Sheridan Road and 12th Street to access the station. The multi-use path could potentially be extended to Parkside College and Petrifying Springs Park, one mile to the west, and to Carthage College and the City of Kenosha’s lakeshore bike path, two miles to the south. Future residential developments should provide new pedestrian and bicycle amenities to facilitate access to the station, particularly along the Pike Creek west of the railroad.
Future Urban Design Framework

Urban Design Framework is illustrated in Figure B.VI on page B13.

The station area’s rural character would likely change to a suburban character as development proposals for the area are realized. The proposed residential project along the west side of the railroad will create a new suburban neighborhood with sidewalks and/or bicycle paths. Enhanced pedestrian amenities, such as pedestrian street lights and trees, are proposed along Sheridan Road and 12th Street within a multi-use path setting. Any future commercial uses near the station should provide pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks, seating areas, and landscaping. Future parking lots should be constructed within rear or side yard settings and landscaped and/or screened from the adjacent street.

Economic Effects

The future economic effects are based on the key areas “subject to change.” A map inset in Figure B.IV identifies areas “subject to change” within the station study area. Areas subject to change include key vacant sites and underutilized properties, as well as buildings and uses that are becoming obsolete and thus have high potential for reuse and redevelopment in the future. When land use recommendations for the station area are applied to these locations, a general “order of magnitude” of station area development potential can be identified. Using this methodology, Somers’ station area could accommodate approximately 311 units (see table 3). The future station area development computes to a total projected 2035 population in the half mile area of 1751, an increase of 850 from the 2005 population estimate of 901 persons. This future development would reflect an increase in assessed value (in 2006 dollars) amounting to $105 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020*</th>
<th>2035</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Residential (units)</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail (square feet)</td>
<td>17,500-25,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Office (square feet)</td>
<td>15,000-20,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Industrial (square feet)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 12th Street station area will experience redevelopment pressure beyond the areas “subject to change,” because of the projected 2020 market demand for residential and commercial uses.
1. The station amenities - shelter, platform, and parking - could be developed within a mixed-use setting east of the railroad.
2. New multi-family housing, single-family housing, and open space along the Pike River is proposed west of the railroad.
3. New commercial uses could be developed on underutilized commercial sites at Sheridan Road and 12th Street.
4. Long-term residential demand could be accommodated in multi-family housing near the station.
5. Long-term residential demand could be met through redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties on Sheridan Road.

Key Areas Subject to Change

Future Land Use
- Parks/Recreation
- Open Space (Primary Environmental Corridor)
- Medium-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Railroad Right of Way

Proposed Densities
- 2.3 - 6.9 dus/acre
- >7 dus/acre

FAR: 0.3

Preliminary Future Land Use

Figure No. B.IV

Preliminary Future Land Use

Racine Station Area

Clockwise from right:
- Neighborhoods with single-family
- Conserve environmental areas
- Multi-family housing

KRM: A PLAN FOR
THE KENOSHA - RACINE - MILWAUKEE COMMUTER LINK

B11
1. Station and commuter parking is proposed on municipal property east of the railroad at 12th Street.
2. Capacity improvements and multi-use path are recommended along Sheridan Road and 12th Street.
3. Traffic signal and crosswalk improvements are recommended for the Sheridan Road and 12th Street intersection.
1. Pedestrian amenities - such as benches, lighting, and sidewalks - are proposed within the station site.
2. Pedestrian streetscape enhancements - such as a multi-use path, lighting, and landscaping - are recommended for Sheridan Road and 12th Street.
3. The preservation and integration of natural resources as public open space amenities is recommended.
Introduction

Based on the station area plans, the Town of Somers should consider several recommendations to help facilitate the implementation of transit-supportive land use and development. It is fully recognized that physical land use, transportation, and design plans will evolve over time, especially as the engineering for KRM commuter service is refined. As a result, securing basic acceptance and support of land use and development policies for the station area is perhaps as important, if not more important, than the physical aspects of the transit-supportive land use program at this time. Therefore, Somers’ current development policies have been assessed in order to determine the appropriate policy recommendations to create a transit-supportive environment in the future.

Current Transit Supportive Policies

Transportation Infrastructure
- The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has long-range plans to reconstruct Sheridan Road. The Town of Somers supports the construction of pedestrian and/or bicycle amenities along Sheridan Road.
- The Town supports the use of shuttle buses provided by Parkside and Carthage Colleges as an alternative transportation mode for students.
- The Kenosha County Bike Trail exists within a former railroad alignment immediately west of the ½ mile station area.

Planning Initiatives
- The Town is just initiating a new neighborhood plan for the Sheridan Road corridor. Primary goals for the plan include a transit-supportive framework, neighborhood retail near the proposed station, and pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

Zoning
- Kenosha County’s zoning regulations apply within the Town of Somers. Zoning districts essentially follow the land use plan. The majority of existing residential uses are classified as medium density residential, which allows for 2.3 to 6.9 dwelling units per net acre. There are some multi-family uses in the station area, which are classified as high density residential (at least 7 dwelling unit per net acre).

Development Review Process
- The Town of Somers has a 60-90 day review and comment period for all completed site plan submissions.

Financing Tools
- The Town of Somers currently does not provide any financial incentives to induce new development, and believes the private market should support any proposed developments.

Transit Supportive Policy Recommendations

Transportation Infrastructure
- The Town should work with Kenosha County and WisDOT to implement multi-modal connections to the Somers station. As part of its long-range improvement plan, WisDOT could potentially reconstruct Sheridan Road to include a pedestrian and bicycle path and amenities. The public right-of-way for Sheridan Road is 100 feet, which could accommodate capacity improvements and new pedestrian/bike paths. In addition, new pedestrian and bicycle paths could be constructed on 12th Street, or County Highway E.
- The Town should negotiate with developers to provide pedestrian and bicycle paths within new residential developments, so that appropriate connections are made to the nearest arterial roadway leading to the station.

Zoning
- The Town should consider a minimum of 12 dwelling units per acre in the designated high density residential areas near the proposed station location.
- The Town should consider multi-family residential and commercial developments near the station based on future market demand.