La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility

SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is required by Wisconsin Statute to conduct a management performance audit of all urban transit systems receiving state aid at least once every five years. This report summarizes the 2012 Management Performance Review (MPR) for the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU).

The MPR process consisted of three main activities: performance analysis, written questionnaire completion, and an on-site interview and facility review. The review team conducted a performance analysis in April 2012 to inform the areas of focus for the questionnaire and on-site interview. An electronic questionnaire form was sent to the MTU Transit Manager on May 1, 2012. The on-site interview and facility review was conducted on May 13-14, 2012.

This report documents the findings of process, and is organized in the following five sections:

- Part I presents an overview of the system.
- Part II quantitatively examines the system's performance compared to national and Wisconsin peer systems.
- Part III reviews the system's policy- and decision-making process.
- Part IV reviews ten functional areas with information gathered in the on-site review and interview.
- Part V summarizes conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

I. System Overview

The La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) serves the City of La Crosse, French Island, portions of Onalaska, and La Crescent, Minnesota, covering a service area of 36 square miles and serving a population of 78,000. MTU is owned and operated by the City of La Crosse.

Status of Prior Audit Recommendations

The last Management Performance Review of the MTU system, completed in 2007, made 17 specific recommendations for improvement within the system. Table i summarizes the current status of recommendations. Ten recommendations have been fully completed or are no longer applicable.

Table i: Summary of Recommendations from 2007 Audit

Functional Area	Recommendation	Status
Planning	Establish a regularly occurring service performance analysis process	**Completed**. The city has implemented a 20 percent fare recovery standard; MTU reports on this annually. WisDOT performance measures are tracked.
Planning	Ensure a service performance analysis is included in the current TDP effort	**Completed**. The TDP, completed in 2007, contained a quality-of-service performance assessment.
Planning	Begin construction of new downtown La Crosse transit center	**Completed**. The Grand River Station transit center opened in 2010.
Vehicle Maintenance	Reduce regular service revenue fleet to 17 vehicles through attrition if service levels are not planned to increase	**Not completed**. The manager stated that the age and mileage on the fleet makes this impossible to implement.
Vehicle Maintenance	Explore installing computer workstations in maintenance area to allow mechanics to directly enter data into the RTA system	**Completed**. Mechanics access and enter data directly.

Functional Area	Recommendation	Status
Vehicle Maintenance	Conduct an analysis of parts inventory to reduce amount of parts on hand	**Completed**. Inventory is conducted annually; no parts are kept on hand that cannot be obtained within a day or two.
Vehicle Maintenance	Establish an annual maintenance performance analysis process	**Not completed**. The manager stated that the performance of the maintenance function has been satisfactory since filling a mechanic position left empty for two years following an employee's retirement.
Operations	Review medical insurance costs for cause of discrepancy with peer systems	**Not completed**. The health insurance cost structure is passed down to MTU by the City of La Crosse and is beyond the system's control.
Operations	Provide Human Resources Department with work schedules of safety sensitive employees	**Completed**. HR has access to employee schedules for drug and alcohol testing.
Finance	The City Finance Department should include revenue raised through the U-Pass program in the system operating revenue figure reported to the National Transit Database	**Not completed**. WisDOT staff advised MTU to keep the U-Pass revenues out of the NTD revenue reporting. U-Pass revenues are used locally to calculate farebox recovery.
Marketing	Update website to include route numbers and route maps	**Completed**. The website includes easily navigable route maps; numbers are prominently displayed.
Marketing	Initiate program for alternative funding for promotion/marketing of downtown trolley	**No longer applicable**. The trolley service was discontinued in 2010 and the trolley vehicle was disposed.
Marketing	Initiate program of periodic rider opinion surveys	**Completed**. A thorough rider opinion survey is conducted by MPO staff as part of the TDP process.
Paratransit	Publish more information regarding the Mobility Plus program on the MTU website	**Partially completed**. Videos on how to ride the service have been posted to the website; however, general information (application, fares, policies) is not posted.
Information Technology	Pursue the implementation of APC technology	**Not completed**. The manager stated that current staffing levels will not allow for APC to be implemented and adequately maintained; this opinion is based on the system's past experiences with maintaining electronic fareboxes.
Information Technology	Ensure that the implementation of AVL technology is considered in the design of the transit center	**Completed**. The transit center includes dynamic signage with capability for real-time updates through AVL.
Information Technology	Pursue AVL technology for fleet	**Not completed**. The city is looking to replace the radio system in the near future and may explore a radio application of AVL technology.

II. Analysis of System Performance

This audit quantitatively evaluates MTU's performance through a peer group analysis in which the system is measured against a group of transit systems with similar service area characteristics. The peer analysis compares MTU to its peers using seven specific performance measures, evaluating performance in the most recent year for which data is available (2010). Consistent with the WisDOT approach to measuring performance, performance is considered "satisfactory" within one standard deviation of the peer average (arithmetic mean). The time trend analysis compares MTU's change over time from 2006 to 2010 to the peer average rate of change during that period.

Results of this peer and time-trend analysis are shown in Table ii.

Table ii: Peer Analysis Performance Summary

Performance Objective	Measure	National Peer Comparison (2010)	Wisconsin Peer Comparison (2010)	National Time Trend Comparison	Wisconsin Time Trend Comparison
Cost effectiveness	Operating expense per passenger	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Service efficiency	Operating expense per revenue hour	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Service effectiveness	Passengers per revenue hour	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Market penetration	Passengers per capita	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Market penetration	Revenue hours per capita	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Passenger revenue effectiveness	Passenger revenue per passenger	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory
Passenger revenue effectiveness	Passenger revenue per operating expense	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory

Key to Symbols

▲ *Better than peer average*

■ *Within satisfactory range (+/- 1 standard deviation of average)*

▼ *Outside satisfactory range*

III. Policy- and Decision-Making Process

Based on review of current structures and processes, the policy- and decision-making process is evaluated for effectiveness. Table iii summarizes the extent to which MTU satisfies the four effectiveness criteria used in this audit to assess the system's policy- and decision-making process.

Table iii: Assessment of Policy- and Decision-Making Process

Criterion	Rating
The manager has sufficient authority and control to manage in an efficient manner.	▲
The lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability are well defined and appropriate.	▲
The lines of communication provide for sufficient exchange of information to ensure decision makers are knowledgeable on issues.	▲
The current organizational structure is conducive to effective and efficient operation.	▲

Key to Symbols

▲ Structures and procedures are **conducive** to effective operations

■ Structures and procedures are **adequate** with room for improvement

▼ Structures and procedures are **insufficient**

IV. Functional Area Review

This review addressed ten functional areas of small urban transit systems. The review's assessment of each functional area is presented in Table iii. Assessment ratings are based on the degree to which the function's structures and procedures are conducive to continued effective operations.

Table iv: Summary Assessment of Functional Areas

Functional Area	Rating
Area 1: Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing	▲
Area 2: Personnel and Labor Relations	▲
Area 3: Transportation Operations	■
Area 4: ADA Paratransit Service	■
Area 5: Safety Management and Training	▲
Area 6: Long- and Short-Range Planning	▲
Area 7: Scheduling	▲
Area 8: Marketing	▲
Area 9: Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	▲
Area 10: Information Technology	▲

Key to Symbols	
▲	Structures and procedures are **conducive** to effective operations
■	Structures and procedures are **adequate** with room for improvement
▼	Structures and procedures are **insufficient**

V. Recommendations Summary

The recommendations presented in this review are summarized in Table v.

Table v: Summary of Recommendations

Functional Area	Recommendation
Area 1: Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing	No recommendations
Area 2: Personnel and Labor Relations	No recommendations
Area 3: Transportation Operations	• Ensure that all drivers who report for duty are checked in by a person who is trained in reasonable suspicion for drug and alcohol use, including Safe Ride runs.
Area 4: ADA Paratransit Service	• Explore feasibility of requiring contractor to use integrated dispatching software with AVL in next procurement. • When the County's mobility manager position is filled, work with the county to improve the travel training function to ensure that all passengers who can be using the fixed route service are trained and able to do so.
Area 5: Safety Management and Training	No recommendations
Area 6: Long- and Short-Range Planning	• Pursue bus stop improvement program from TDP to add bus stop pads and improve accessibility and safety at high-demand locations. Explore the possibility of obtaining FTA funds to pay for improvements.
Area 7: Scheduling	No recommendations

Functional Area	Recommendation
Area 8: Marketing	• Provide ADA application and general system information on website. • Revise customer contact process so that every complaint is formally logged, with follow up actions documented to show validity. • Continue working toward Google Transit functionality, particularly to provide information to university market.
Area 9: Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	No recommendations
Area 10: Information Technology	• Study feasibility of AVL implementation on fixed route vehicles to improve on-road supervision and provide real-time bus arrival capability at transit center.

LaCrosse MTU exemplifies many of the best practices of small transit systems in the United States. Service delivery is very good and the staff is motivated and performs their functions well. The system is reasonably capitalized, but does need replacement buses. It is a high performing system compared to other systems in Wisconsin.

It is slightly deficient in technology; but the strong performance in other areas will allow the system to embrace proven technological advances that are available in the marketplace. While it does serve the university communities with a U-Pass system and a strong Late Night service, it is not reaching full potential of the university travel market compared to other strong university communities in the Midwest.

PART I: SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) serves the City of La Crosse, French Island, portions of Onalaska, and La Crescent, Minnesota, covering a service area of 36 square miles and serving a population of 78,000. MTU is owned and operated by the City of La Crosse.

Fixed Route Service

MTU operates eight fixed routes and two flex routes throughout the area. Service operates at 30- or 60-minute frequencies with several routes operating seven days per week. Service is provided on weekdays beginning at 5:12 a.m., with the last trip on several routes ending at 10:40 p.m. Routes without evening service end between 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. MTU's peak requirement is 13 buses . A summary of route frequency is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Fixed/Flex Route Frequencies

Route	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
1 – South Ave	30 min (daytime) 60 min (evening)	60 min	60 min
2 – Green Bay	30 min (daytime) 60 min (evening)	60 min	60 min
4 – Losey Boulevard	30 min (daytime) 60 min (evening)	60 min	60 min
5 – Valley View Mall	30 min (daytime) 30 min (evening)	60 min (morning) 30 min (afternoon)	60 min (morning) 30 min (afternoon)
6 – Northside	30 min (daytime) 60 min (evening)	60 min	60 min
7 – French Island (flex)	60 min (no evening service)	--	--
8 – Crossing Meadows	60 min (no evening service)	--	--
9 – Onalaska	8 round trips (morning & afternoon only)	--	--
10 – La Crescent (flex)	12 round trips (morning & afternoon only)	--	--

MTU also operates Safe Ride, a late night service that provides high frequency (every 8 minutes) service between the college campuses and downtown on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights from September through May. Students pay for this additional service through the U-Pass agreement and their student fees. The fare structure for fixed and flex route service is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Fixed/Flex Route Fare Structure

	Cash	Tokens	Monthly Pass
Adult	$1.50	10 / $14.50	$35.00
Youth (4-17)	$1.25	10 / $12.00	$23.00 (For one month) $30.00 (For all June, July, August) $45.00 (For Semester)
Children (3 & under)	FREE	--	--
Senior (65 & over)/Disabled	$0.75	--	$25.00
UW-L, Western Tech, Viterbo Students	FREE (U-Pass)	--	--
Transfers	FREE	--	--

Monthly passes are available for purchase at a number of outlets throughout the service area, including the MTU office.

Paratransit

MTU's complementary paratransit service is provided for certified users with disabilities through an accessible curb-to-curb, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant van service, MTU Mobility Plus. The paratransit service area includes any area within 3/4 of mile from any regular bus route. The one-way customer fare for this service is $3.00, equal to twice the regular fixed route fare. As is required by ADA, the paratransit service operates during fixed route service hours.

Mobility Plus is operated by First Student, a private contractor. First Student and its predecessor company have operated paratransit service in La Crosse since 1988, except for a short period of time in 2004 when another contractor operated the service.

Fleet and Facilities

The on-site review conducted in May 2012 included a review of MTU's fleet and facilities.

Fleet

The MTU fixed route fleet consists of 21 heavy-duty buses (Table 3). All vehicles in the fixed route fleet are ADA-accessible, and equipped with either a lift or a fold-out ramp.

The average fleet age is 8.9 years. Three buses are older than 12 years which is the standard bus life used by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

MTU's peak requirement is 13 buses; 7 buses are kept as spares. The spare percentage (spare buses a percent of peak bus requirements) is 54. The FTA guideline for fleet spare ratio is 20 percent. However, this guideline is intended for systems operating with an active fleet of 50 or more revenue vehicles. This percentage is also based on vehicles operating within their useful lives—12 years for the MTU buses. When the three over-age buses are excluded from consideration, the spare percentage is 31 percent. While this appears high, it is important to recognize that MTU has an old fleet and four additional buses will reach their useful life in 2013. The MTU spare ratio does not raise any concerns.

Table 3: Fixed-Route Fleet

Vehicle Numbers	Quantity	Year	Make/Model	Length	Average Life Miles (2011)	Age (years)
1001-1003	3	1999	Gillig Low Floor	36'	432,220	13
1101-1104	4	2001	Gillig Low Floor	32'	424,154	11
1105-1111	7	2002	Gillig Low Floor	32'	415,012	10
1201-1205	5	2007	Gillig Low Floor	32'	212,450	5
102	1	2011	IC Hybrid	Cutaway	32,104	1
TOTAL	**20**				**349,636 (avg)**	**8.9 (avg)**

The paratransit fleet is owned entirely by First Student and has no federal or state interest attached to the vehicles. A fleet of 17 accessible vans and minibuses is used to provide the service. Vehicles are operated on the La Crosse Mobility Plus service, as well as other specialized service contracts held by First Student.

A sample of the revenue fleet is shown in Figure 1.

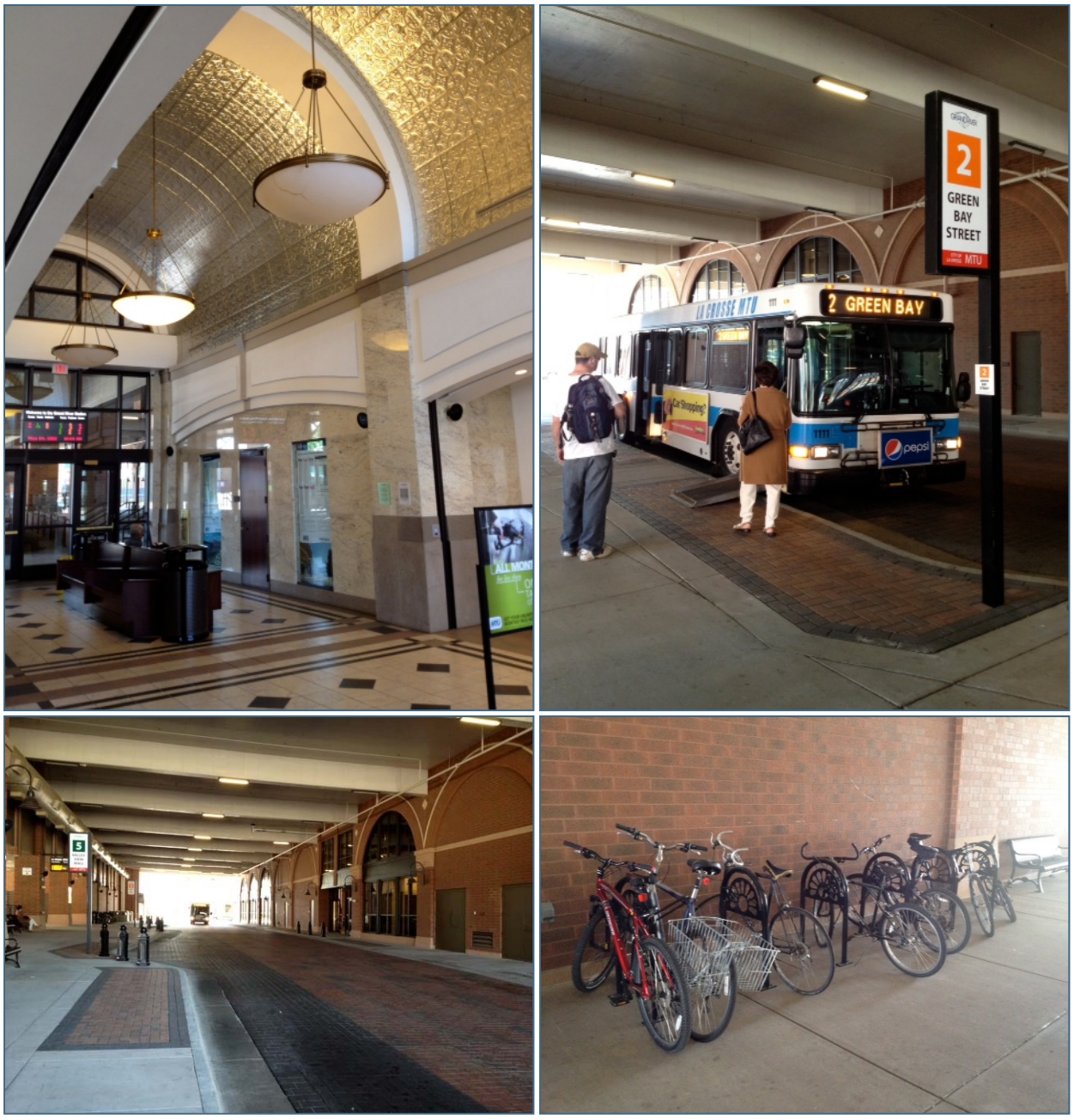
Figure 1: Revenue Vehicles

Facilities

Fixed route vehicle maintenance, vehicle storage, operations, and administrative activities occur at a combined maintenance and operations facility at 2000 Marco Drive, approximately 1.5 miles south of the downtown transit center. The facility has adequate space to support current MTU operations.

The downtown transfer center, Great River Station, is a new facility completed in 2010. The state-of-the-art transfer center includes a spacious interior waiting room, marked bus bays, real-time arrival signs, and schedule information. The facility has adequate space to support current MTU operations.

Figure 2: Downtown Transfer Center



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Planning	Establish a regularly occurring service performance analysis process	**Completed**. The city has implemented a 20 percent fare recovery standard; MTU reports on this annually. WisDOT performance measures are tracked.
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PART II: ANALYSIS OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Part II of this report examines system performance data. A quantitative assessment of MTU's performance was conducted as one of the initial tasks in this audit. Since there are no recognized industry standards for most measures of transit system performance, common practice is to compare the performance of a system to the average values of a peer group of systems.

Peer Groups

The selection of the peer group for MTU is based on a review of urbanized systems in the National Transit Database (NTD). The NTD was used because its data are readily available and consistently reported. Two peer groups were selected for comparison: a national peer group and a Wisconsin peer group. National peer systems were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Mode operated.** Systems that operated fixed route services were considered.
- **Population density.** Density is a gross measure of potential service effectiveness as measured by an indicator like passengers per revenue hour. The potential for group riding increases with population density.
- **Population served.** Population is a gross measure of market potential as measured by total population. Less emphasis was placed on this criterion because population density has a stronger impact on service effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Climate.** Only systems that experience cold weather and snowy winters were considered.

The national peer group includes systems in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Ohio, and Tennessee (Table 5).

Table 5: National Peer Systems

Peer System	Population	Land Area (sq mi)	Population density (persons/sq mi)
Battle Creek, MI	83,000	104	798
Bay City, MI	110,000	447	246
Billings, MT	100,000	34	2,941
Cedar Rapids, IA	97,716	22	4,442
Chattanooga, TN	155,554	289	538
Dubuque, IA	58,000	26	2,231
Decatur, IL	86,080	53	1,624
Peoria, IL	207,795	105	1,979
Muskegon, MI	170,200	527	323
Saginaw, MI	127,000	63	2,016
Sioux City, IA	102,798	51	2,016
Canton, OH	378,098	567	667
Topeka, KS	122,377	58	2,110
Frederick Co., MD	60,154	18	3,342
Youngstown, OH	288,870	433	667
Wichita, KS	386,046	149	2,591
National Peer Average	**158,356**	**184**	**1,783**
La Crosse	**78,000**	**36**	**2,167**
% of Average	**49%**	**20%**	**122%**

The Wisconsin peer systems are listed in Table 6. Since comparisons with Wisconsin systems have been done in prior audits, the Wisconsin peer comparison is included in this review.

However, the limitations of using other Wisconsin small urban systems for peer comparison are recognized in this review. The Wisconsin systems vary significantly in terms of population and land area served. These factors can significantly affect the performances of the transit systems.

Table 6: Wisconsin Peer Systems

System	Population	Land Area (sq mi)	Population density (persons/sq mi)
Appleton	187,683	117	1,604
Beloit	35,871	16	2,242
Eau Claire	69,300	28	2,475
Fond du Lac	48,250	19	2,539
Green Bay	174,760	90	1,942
Janesville	62,540	28	2,234
Kenosha	91,500	30	3,050
Oshkosh	65,810	25	2,632
Racine	112,100	27	4,152
Sheboygan	59,490	23	2,587
Waukesha	68,030	27	2,501
Wausau	45,513	27	1,686
Wisconsin Peer Average	**85,071**	**38**	**2,470**
La Crosse	**78,000**	**36**	**2,167**
% of Average	**92%**	**94%**	**88%**

Performance Measures

The peer analysis is this section compares MTU to its peers for six objectives using seven specific measures, as organized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Performance Objectives and Performance Measures

Cost effectiveness	•Operating expense per passenger (WisDOT core measure)
Service efficiency	•Operating expense per revenue hour (WisDOT core measure)
Service effectiveness	•Passengers per revenue hour (WisDOT core measure)
Market penetration	•Passengers per capita (WisDOT core measure)
Service availability	•Revenue hours per capita (WisDOT core measure)
Passenger revenue effectiveness	•Passenger revenue per passenger (Added measure) •Passenger revenue per operating expense (WisDOT core measure)

Each measure is used to assess MTU's performance in two ways:

- **Comparison to peer average for most current year.** Year 2010 NTD data is used. This is the most recent year for which NTD data is available. Consistent with the WisDOT approach to measuring performance, performance will be considered "satisfactory" within one standard deviation of the peer average[1] (arithmetic mean). The system's performance is considered "significantly worse than the average" if it falls more than one standard deviation outside the mean.
- **Comparison to peer average for annual rate of change.** The average annual rate of change from 2006 to 2010 is calculated as follows. NTD data from reporting years 2006 to 2010 is used.

$$Annual\ rate\ of\ change = (Value_{2010} / Value_{2006})^{¼} - 1$$

For the trend analysis, the system's annual rate of change is analyzed alongside the peer average rates of change for context.

[1] In order to be consistent with previous performance reviews, this analysis identified performance measures as "Better than Average" if a measure was better than the peer group average and "Satisfactory" if a measure was worse than average, but within one standard deviation. It is recommended that future performance reviews identify all measures within one standard deviation of the average as "Satisfactory", and measures better than average and beyond one standard deviation of the average as "Significantly Better".

2010 Operating Statistics Summary

Table 7 and Table 8 contain operating statistics for MTU and the selected peer systems for 2010. These operating statistics are the basis for the performance measures included in this analysis.

Table 7: 2010 Operating Statistics – National Peer Systems

Peer	Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips	Operating Expenses	Passenger Revenues
Battle Creek, MI	27,875	513,006	$2,617,845	$315,831
Bay City, MI	55,014	534,926	$4,944,656	$700,249
Billings, MT	38,637	630,068	$3,173,313	$322,726
Cedar Rapids, IA	68,123	1,071,568	$6,074,143	$682,339
Chattanooga, TN	163,451	2,631,013	$13,258,942	$1,738,173
Dubuque, IA	27,664	312,856	$1,515,738	$158,077
Decatur, IL	68,211	1,245,094	$4,539,137	$382,904
Peoria, IL	106,235	2,736,116	$17,919,805	$1,729,497
Muskegon, MI	35,510	629,925	$2,488,263	$482,185
Saginaw, MI	43,897	992,279	$5,203,110	$810,542
Sioux City, IA	47,876	1,202,255	$3,843,625	$789,190
Canton, OH	135,537	1,979,428	$9,217,034	$1,319,214
Topeka, KS	62,643	1,151,733	$4,971,996	$829,252
Frederick Co., MD	59,004	707,420	$3,950,852	$525,156
Youngstown, OH	78,376	1,135,456	$7,257,879	$658,718
Wichita, KS	108,916	2,210,177	$9,644,649	$1,453,918
National Peer Average	**70,436**	**1,230,208**	**$6,288,812**	**$806,123**
La Crosse	**55,657**	**1,230,030**	**$4,321,911**	**$791,676**
% of Average	**79%**	**100%**	**69%**	**98%**

Table 8: 2010 Operating Statistics – Wisconsin Peer Systems

Peer	Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips	Operating Expenses	Passenger Revenues
Appleton	58,598	956,086	4,713,837	775,081
Beloit	20,680	269,109	1,813,063	260,801
Eau Claire	46,033	918,671	3,475,620	723,574
Fond du Lac	12,665	138,731	1,043,666	106,542
Green Bay	72,563	1,370,835	6,044,732	1,016,801
Janesville	28,925	422,852	2,704,821	409,763
Kenosha	69,337	1,585,272	6,180,088	559,916
Oshkosh	35,872	855,667	2,816,193	560,336
Racine	86,177	1,415,706	6,885,919	1,007,898
Sheboygan	38,945	440,780	2,960,284	413,409
Waukesha	51,220	716,600	4,441,769	584,760
Wausau	37,771	774,081	3,109,134	410,779
Wisconsin Peer Average	**46,566**	**822,033**	**$3,849,094**	**$569,138**
La Crosse	**55,657**	**1,230,030**	**$4,321,911**	**$791,676**
% of Average	**120%**	**150%**	**112%**	**139%**

Five-Year Trend Summary

Table 9 and Table 10 show MTU's operating statistics and performance measures for fiscal years 2006 through 2010. The average annual rate of change for the five-year period is calculated for each statistic and measure and shown alongside the national and Wisconsin peer average rates of change.

Table 9: Operating Statistics – Five-Year Trend

Operating Statistic	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)		
						La Crosse MTU	National Peer Average	Wisconsin Peer Average
Revenue hours of service	54,833	53,982	54,950	54,962	55,657	0.4%	-0.1%	-0.7%
Revenue miles of service	743,782	737,412	750,397	774,080	774,167	1.0%	0.3%	-0.5%
Passenger trips	1,062,190	1,075,101	1,202,018	1,189,841	1,230,030	3.7%	0.7%	-2.7%
Operating expense	$3,806,191	$4,080,316	$4,299,741	$4,038,060	$4,321,911	3.2%	3.4%	2.2%
Passenger revenue[2]	$646,546	$665,269	$749,635	$776,938	$791,676	5.2%	5.3%	4.4%

Table 10: Performance Measures – Five-Year Trend

Performance Measure	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)		
						La Crosse MTU	National Peer Average	Wisconsin Peer Average
Operating expense per passenger	$3.58	$3.80	$3.58	$3.39	$3.51	-0.5%	3.0%	5.1%
Operating expense per revenue hour	$69.41	$75.59	$78.25	$73.47	$77.65	2.8%	3.5%	2.9%
Passengers per revenue hour	19.4	19.9	21.9	21.6	22.1	3.3%	0.9%	-2.0%
Passengers per capita	13.6	13.8	15.4	15.3	15.8	3.7%	0.7%	-2.7%
Revenue hours per capita	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.4%	-0.1%	-0.7%
Passenger revenue per passenger	$0.61	$0.62	$0.62	$0.65	$0.64	1.4%	4.8%	7.3%
Passenger revenue to operating cost	17.0%	16.3%	17.4%	19.2%	18.3%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%

[2] Modified from NTD to include U-Pass revenues.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness addresses transit use in relation to the level of resources expended. It is key measure that should be considered by decision makers and funding agencies. The primary measure for comparison under this area is **operating expense per passenger**.

Figure 4: National Peers – Operating Expense per Passenger Trip

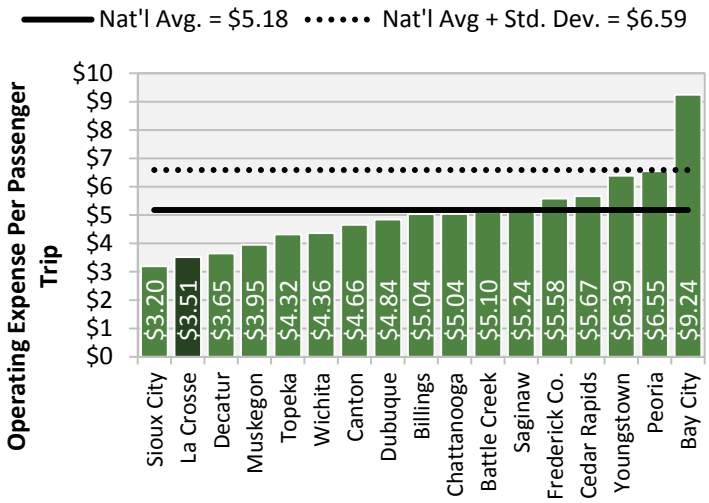
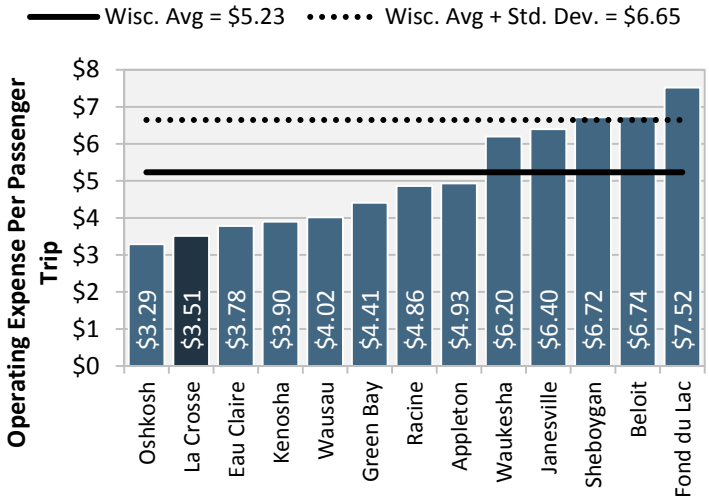


Figure 5: Wisconsin Peers – Operating Expense per Passenger Trip



The average operating expense of providing a single passenger trip on MTU fixed route service is $3.51.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's cost per passenger is much lower than the average of $5.18. MTU's **cost effectiveness is better than** the national peer average. This is due primarily to high service effectiveness as will be assessed in the next measure.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's cost per passenger is lower than the average of $5.23 (Figure 6). MTU's **cost effectiveness is better** than the Wisconsin peer average.

The trend analysis in Table 11 shows that over the five-year span, per-passenger expenses have decreased at an average annual rate of -0.5 percent**.** In contrast, the per-passenger expenses have increased at a rate of 3.0 percent for the national peers and 5.1 percent for the Wisconsin peers.

Service efficiency and service effectiveness affect cost effectiveness. These measures are assessed in the next sections.

Table 11: Trend Analysis – Operating Expense per Passenger Trip

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. + 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	$3.58	$3.80	$3.58	$3.39	$3.51	-0.5%	-
National Peer Average	$4.72	$4.80	$4.89	$4.78	$5.18	3.0%	9.3%
Wisconsin Peer Average	$4.35	$4.77	$4.74	$4.98	$5.23	5.1%	7.7%

Service Efficiency

Service efficiency examines the amount of service produced relative to resources expended. **Operating expense per revenue hour** is the measure used to assess how efficiently a system delivers service.

Figure 6: National Peers – Operating Expense per Revenue Hour

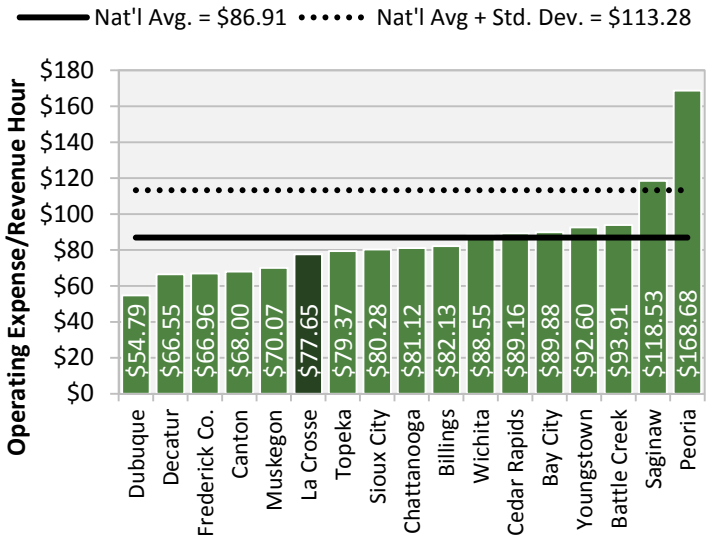
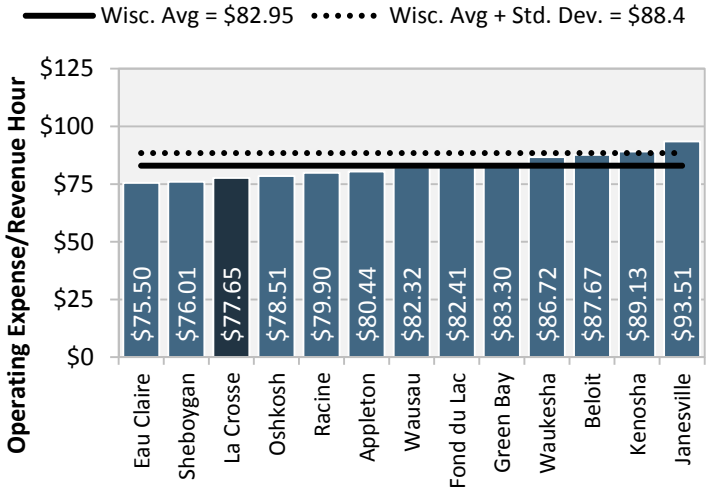


Figure 7: Wisconsin Peers – Operating Expense per Revenue Hour



The cost of providing one hour of revenue service on MTU's fixed routes is $77.65.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's cost per passenger is lower than the average of $86.91 (Figure 6). MTU's **service efficiency is better than** the national peer average.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's cost per passenger is lower than the average of $82.95 (Figure 7). MTU's **service efficiency is better** than the Wisconsin peer average.

The trend analysis in Table 12 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's operating cost per revenue hour has increased at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent. Relative to its peers, MTU's hourly operating expense per revenue hour has increased at a rate slightly lower than the national and Wisconsin peer averages of 3.5 and 2.9 percent, respectively.

Table 12: Trend Analysis – Operating Expense per Revenue Hour

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. + 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	$69.41	$75.59	$78.25	$73.47	$77.65	2.8%	-
National Peer Average	$74.34	$75.33	$85.19	$84.41	$86.91	3.5%	7.9%
Wisconsin Peer Average	$73.96	$78.72	$84.15	$81.53	$82.95	2.9%	4.1%

Service Effectiveness

Service effectiveness is a measure of the consumption of transit service in relation to the amount of service available. **Passengers per revenue hour** is the measure used to assess service effectiveness.

Figure 8: National Peers – Passengers per Revenue Hour

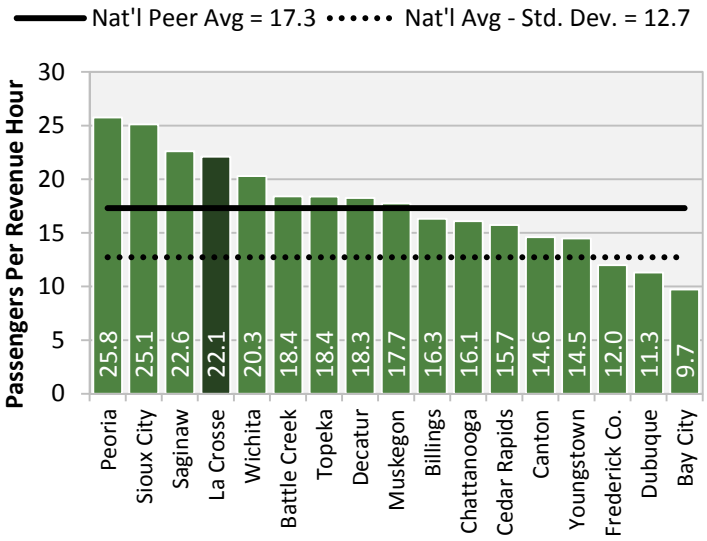
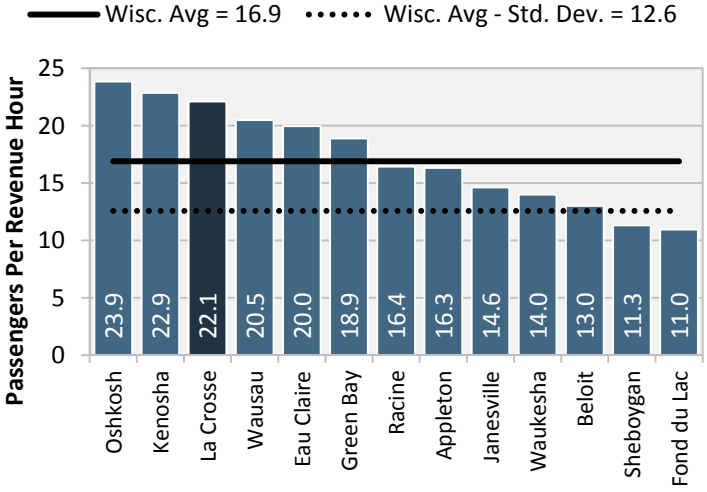


Figure 9: Wisconsin Peers – Passengers per Revenue Hour



MTU carries an average of 22.1 passengers per hour on its fixed route service.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's passengers per revenue hour is higher than the average of 17.3 (Figure 8). MTU's **service effectiveness is better** than the national peers.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's passengers per revenue hour is higher than the average of 16.9 (Figure 9). MTU's **service effectiveness is better** than the Wisconsin peers.

The trend analysis in Table 13 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's passengers per revenue hour has increased at an average annual rate of 3.3 percent. Service effectiveness is improving at a higher rate than the national peer average rate of 0.9 percent and the Wisconsin peer average which has been decreasing at a rate of -2.0 percent.

Service effectiveness is affected by measures related to market penetration and service availability which are assessed next.

Table 13: Trend Analysis – Passengers per Revenue Hour

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. - 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	19.4	19.9	21.9	21.6	22.1	3.3%	-
National Peer Average	17.0	16.8	18.6	18.4	17.3	0.9%	-6.1%
Wisconsin Peer Average	18.5	18.2	19.1	17.3	16.9	-2.0%	-4.5%

Market Penetration

Passengers per capita is a measure of market penetration of current services.

Figure 10: National Peers – Passengers per Capita

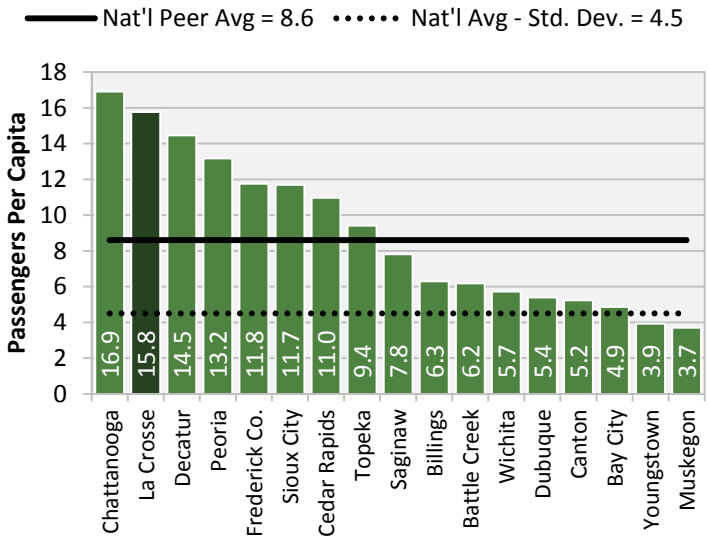
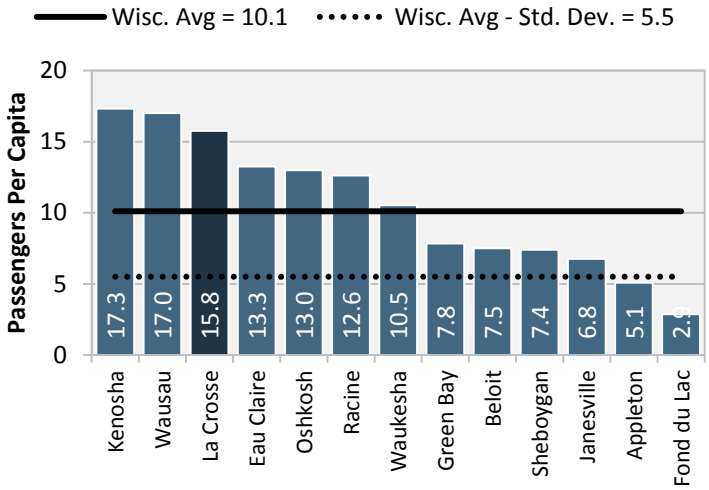


Figure 11: Wisconsin Peers – Passengers per Capita



In 2010, MTU carried 15.8 passengers per capita. In other words, the average resident of the MTU service area boarded the bus 15.8 times during 2010.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's passengers per capita is much higher than the average of 8.6 (Figure 10). MTU's **market penetration is better than** the national peer average.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's passengers per capita is higher than the average of 10.1 (Figure 11). MTU's **market penetration is better** than the Wisconsin peer average.

The trend analysis in Table 14 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's passengers per capita has increased at an average annual rate of 3.7 percent. Relative to its peers, MTU's passengers per capita has increased faster than the national peer average rate of 0.7 percent, and the Wisconsin peer average, which has been decreasing at a rate of -2.7 percent.

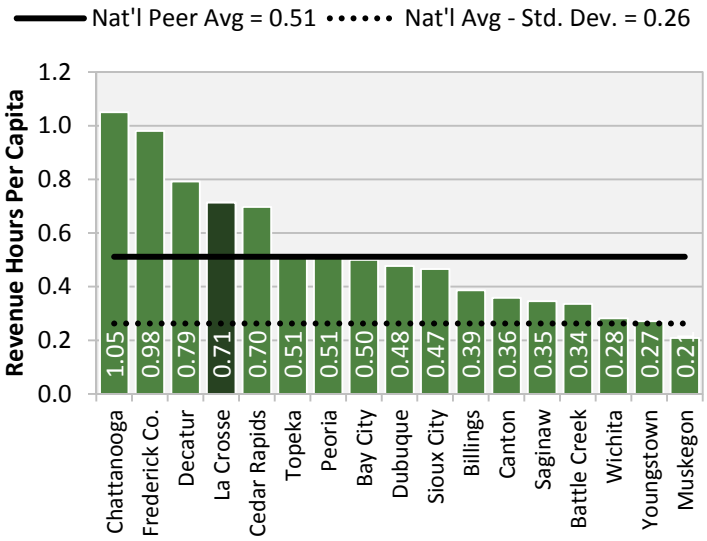
Table 14: Trend Analysis – Passengers per Capita

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. - 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	13.6	13.8	15.4	15.3	15.8	3.7%	-
National Peer Average	8.4	8.4	8.7	9.0	8.6	0.7%	-5.6%
Wisconsin Peer Average	11.4	11.2	11.8	10.6	10.1	-2.7%	-5.3%

Service Availability

Revenue hours per capita is the performance measure used to assess service availability.

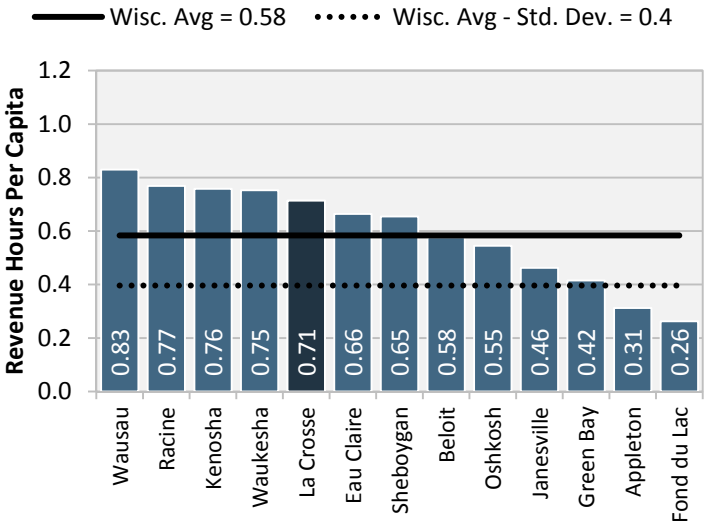
Figure 12: National Peers – Revenue Hours per Capita



In 2010, MTU provided 0.71 revenue hours annually for each person in its service area.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's revenue hours per capita is higher than the national peer average of 0.51 (Figure 12). MTU's **service availability is better than** the national peer average.

Figure 13: Wisconsin Peers – Revenue Hours per Capita



Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's revenue hours per capita is higher than the average of 0.58 (Figure 13). MTU's **service availability is better than** the Wisconsin peer average.

The trend analysis in Table 15 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's revenue hours per capita have increased at a rate of 0.4 percent. Relative to its peers, MTU's revenue hours per capita is increasing faster than the national and Wisconsin peer group averages, which have declined at a rate of -0.1 percent and -0.7 percent respectively.

Table 15: Trend Analysis – Revenue Hours per Capita

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. + 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	0.70	0.69	0.70	0.70	0.71	0.4%	-
National Peer Average	0.51	0.52	0.50	0.51	0.51	-0.1%	-3.8%
Wisconsin Peer Average	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.60	0.58	-0.7%	-2.7%

Passenger Revenue Effectiveness

Passenger revenue per passenger, or average fare, measures the amount each passenger is paying to use the service. It is one measure of passenger revenue effectiveness.

Figure 14: National Peers – Passenger Revenue per Passenger

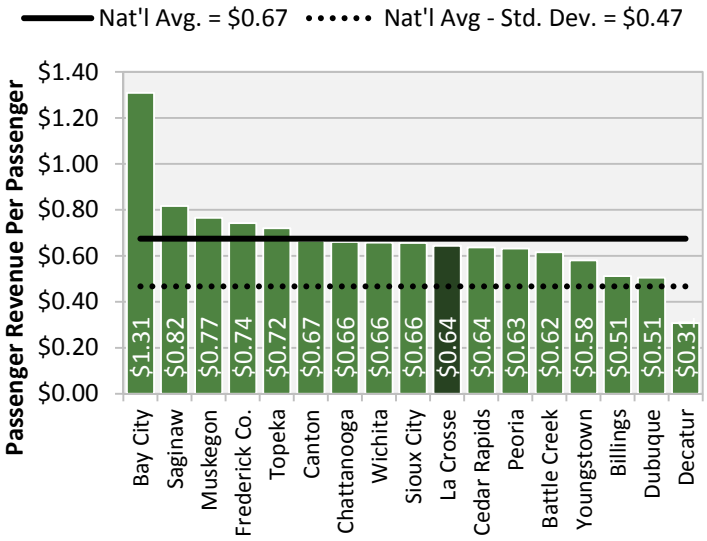
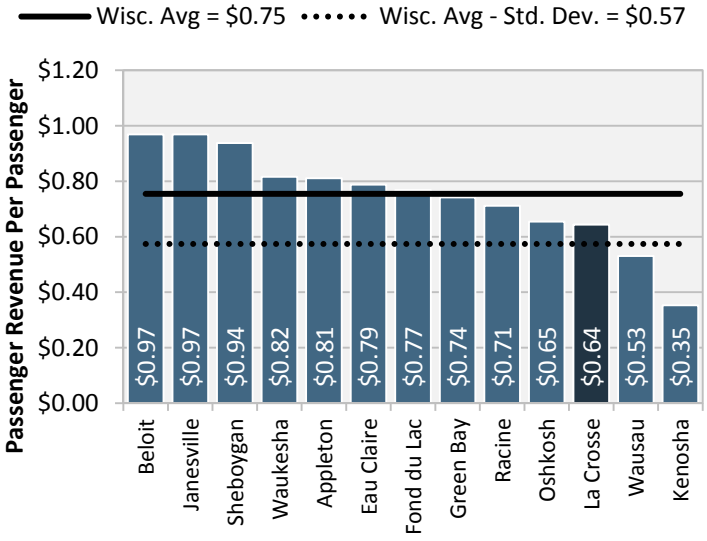


Figure 15: Wisconsin Peers – Passenger Revenue per Passenger



In 2010, the average MTU fixed route passenger paid $0.64 for a ride.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's passenger revenue per passenger is just lower than the average of $0.67, but well within the acceptable range (Figure 14). MTU's **passenger revenue effectiveness is satisfactory** relative to the national peer average.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's passenger revenue per passenger is lower than the average of $0.75, but well within the acceptable range (Figure 15). MTU's **passenger revenue effectiveness is satisfactory** relative to the Wisconsin peer average.

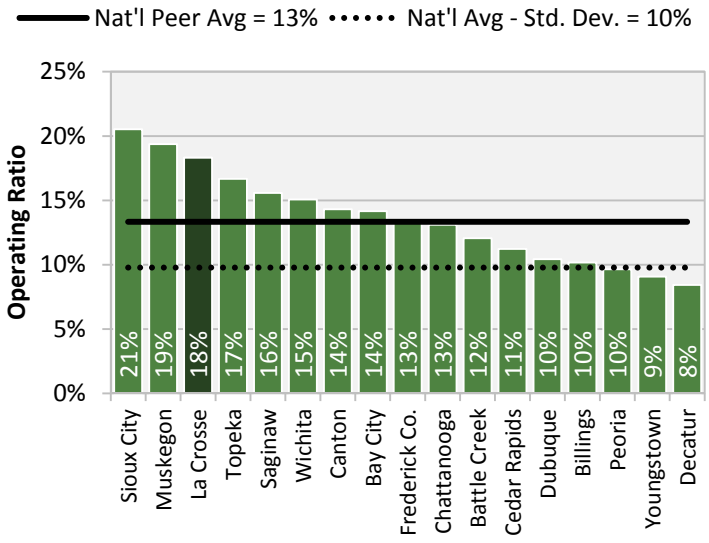
The trend analysis in Table 16 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's passenger revenue per passenger has increased at an average annual rate of 1.4 percent. Relative to its peers, MTU's passenger revenue per passenger has increased slower than the national average of 4.8 percent and the Wisconsin average of 7.3 percent. This is within the satisfactory range for the national peer group, but outside of the satisfactory range for the Wisconsin peer group.

Table 16: Trend Analysis – Passenger Revenue per Passenger

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. - 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	$0.61	$0.62	$0.62	$0.65	$0.64	1.4%	-
National Peer Average	$0.58	$0.62	$0.62	$0.63	$0.67	4.8%	-3.0%
Wisconsin Peer Average	$0.58	$0.63	$0.62	$0.72	$0.75	7.3%	1.7%

Another way to assess passenger revenue effectiveness is **passenger revenue to operating expense.** It measures the level of operating expenses that are recovered through passenger fare payment. This measure is also referred to as the **operating ratio**.

Figure 16: National Peers – Passenger Revenue/Operating Expense

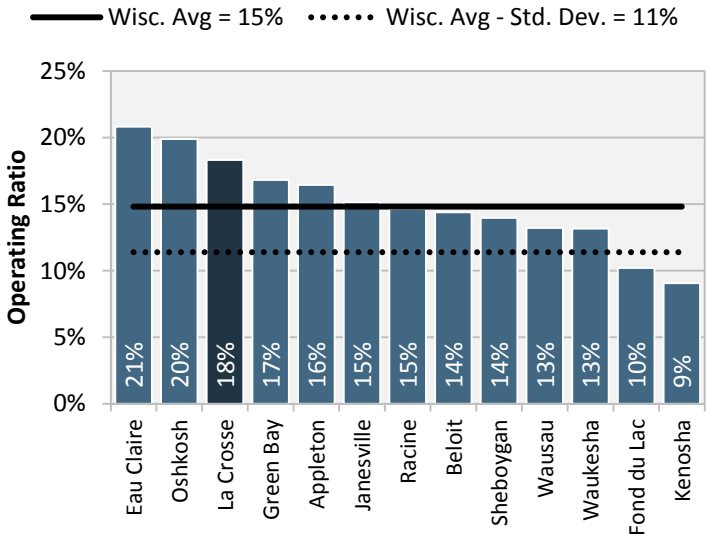


In 2010, MTU collected 18 cents in passenger revenue for every dollar of operating expense; in other words, the system recovered 18 percent of its operating expense through the farebox.

Compared to the national peers, MTU's operating ratio is higher than the average of 13 percent (Figure 16). MTU's **operating ratio is better than** the national peer average.

Compared to the Wisconsin peers, MTU's operating ratio is higher than the average of 15 percent (Figure 17). MTU's **operating ratio is better than** the Wisconsin peer average.

Figure 17: Wisconsin Peers – Passenger Revenue/Operating Expense



The trend analysis in Table 17 shows that over the five-year span, MTU's operating ratio has increased at an average annual rate of 1.9 percent. Relative to its peers, MTU's passenger revenue per passenger has increased slightly slower than the national peer average of 2.0 percent and the Wisconsin peer average of 2.1 percent, but is well within the satisfactory range for each.

Table 17: Trend Analysis – Passenger Revenue to Operating Expense

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average Annual Rate of Change (2006-2010)	Acceptable Range (Avg. - 1 St. Dev.)
La Crosse	17.0%	16.3%	17.4%	19.2%	18.3%	1.9%	-
National Peer Average	12.5%	13.1%	13.1%	13.6%	13.3%	2.0%	-5.6%
Wisconsin Peer Average	13.5%	13.6%	13.4%	14.9%	14.8%	2.1%	-1.6%

Conclusions

The symbols in Table 18 indicate the measures for which MTU's performance is better than average, satisfactory, or significantly worse than its national and Wisconsin peer systems, and whether performance has been improving, staying steady, or worsening over the past five years.

Table 18: Peer Analysis Performance Summary

Performance Objective	Measure	National Peer Comparison (2010)	Wisconsin Peer Comparison (2010)	National Time Trend Comparison	Wisconsin Time Trend Comparison
Cost effectiveness	Operating expense per passenger	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Service efficiency	Operating expense per revenue hour	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Service effectiveness	Passengers per revenue hour	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Market penetration	Passengers per capita	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Market penetration	Revenue hours per capita	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average	▲ Better than average
Passenger revenue effectiveness	Passenger revenue per passenger	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory
Passenger revenue effectiveness	Passenger revenue per operating expense	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory	■ Satisfactory

Key to Symbols

▲ *Better than peer average*

■ *Within satisfactory range (+/- 1 standard deviation of average)*

▼ *Outside satisfactory range*

MTU's performance can generally be summarized as very good relative to its state and national peer systems. The system provides an excellent level of service hours relative to its peers, and as a result, carries a high level of ridership. Cost effectiveness is good, due to high productivity and low hourly operating expenses. Fares are average, and the system's satisfactory and highly stable farebox return is largely a product of its U-Pass agreements with local universities.

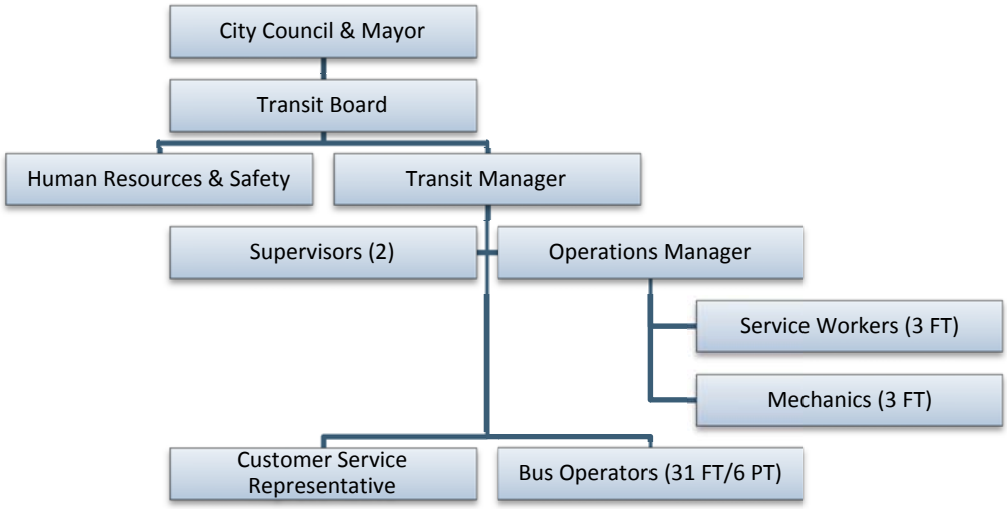
PART III: POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Part III of this report contains a review of MTU's policy- and decision-making process. Information for this portion of the review was gathered through interviews with staff during the on-site visit in May 2012 and responses to the questionnaire completed by the Transit Manager prior to the visit.

Organization and Staffing

The organizational structure of MTU is shown in Figure 18. La Crosse MTU is a utility within the City of La Crosse. The Transit Board serves as the policy making body for the system. The Transit Manager functions as the day-to-day administrator of the system.

Figure 18: Organization Structure



Management

Major management responsibilities include preparing budgets, developing specifications and leading procurements, participating in the hiring process and labor negotiations, and short-range service planning. The Transit Manager is supported in his management role by the Operations Manager (who has responsibility for both operations and maintenance) and two supervisors. The remaining administrative tasks are completed by the customer service representative.

With a total staff of 45 full-time equivalents, management makes up 8.9 percent of the total transit workforce. This represents an average ratio relative to peer Wisconsin transit systems, as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Management to Total Workforce Peer Comparison

System	Management FTE	Total FTE	Management Percent of Total
Oshkosh	4	29	13.8%
Janesville	3	29.5	10.2%
Appleton	5	54	9.3%
La Crosse	4	45	8.9%
Kenosha	4.5	59	7.6%
Green Bay	3	56	5.4%

Transit Board

MTU is governed by a 15-member Transit Board, which acts a liaison between the transit system and the Mayor and City Council. It also provides a public forum for input into the transit system. The board meets as needed; in 2011, there were seven Board meetings, and in 2010, the board met eight times. Meetings are publicized via the city's website and are open to the public. Transit staff regularly attends meetings to report on items and observe proceedings.

The Transit Board composition is described on the City's website:

> *The Municipal Transit Utility Board is comprised of the Board of Public Works; two unpaid citizen residents of the City, preferably persons who regularly utilize or ride the Municipal Transit Utility buses, who serve two-year terms; one La Crosse County Board Supervisor, who serves a term of two years or until the end of his/her elected term on the County Board, whichever is earlier; and an unpaid student representative from each of the City's institutions of higher education for a one-year term. The Board also includes the Mayors of the cities and towns with fixed-route bus services.*

Board agendas and minutes are also available online, along with the municipal code[3] that defines the board's function and responsibilities. This transparency is a good practice for a transit governance board. Staff prepares an executive summary-style annual report for the Board and public review, in addition to reports presented at meetings.

Support Functions

MTU receives support from the City of La Crosse in several areas. The expenses for these City services are allocated to MTU and other City departments based on the number of FTEs. The following support functions are provided:

- Human resources/legal. The City's human resources department assists in labor negotiations, hiring and dismissals, benefits, payroll, and other legal issues.
- Finance. The finance department provides regular reports on the system's financial health and status relative to budgeted levels, and maintains the general ledger, payables and receivables.
- Information technology (IT). The City's IT department is responsible for all IT functions at MTU, including networking, hardware, and software.

[3] http://www.cityoflacrosse.org/index.aspx?NID=2279

Conclusions

In general, the policy- and decision-making process in place at MTU appears to be satisfactory. Table 20 contains the review team's assessment of MTU's performance on the four criteria used to measure the effectiveness of the system's policy- and decision-making process.

Table 20: Assessment of Policy- and Decision-Making Process

Criterion	Rating
The manager has sufficient authority and control to manage in an efficient manner.	▲
The lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability are well defined and appropriate.	▲
The lines of communication provide for sufficient exchange of information to ensure decision makers are knowledgeable on issues.	▲
The current organizational structure is conducive to effective and efficient operation.	▲

Key to Symbols	
▲	Structures and procedures are **conducive** to effective operations
■	Structures and procedures are **adequate** with room for improvement
▼	Structures and procedures are **insufficient**

Overall, the structures and processes in place at MTU and the City of La Crosse support the effective provision of transit services. There are good communication structures in place between the system, the City, and the Transit Board.

PART IV: FUNCTIONAL AREA REVIEW

Part IV of this report contains a review of the following functional areas:

1. Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing
2. Personnel and Labor Relations
3. Transportation Operations
4. ADA Paratransit Service
5. Safety Management and Training
6. Planning
7. Scheduling
8. Marketing
9. Vehicle and Facility Maintenance
10. Information Technology

A detailed audit questionnaire was completed by MTU Transit Manager prior to the review team's on-site interview in May 2012. The following sections summarize the observations and key findings from the questionnaire and on-site interview.

1. Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing

As a unit of the City of La Crosse, La Crosse MTU uses the city's systems for the majority of its financial functions, including payroll, purchasing, payables, and receivables. These financial services are provided to the transit system with an allocated fee, as noted in the previous section. The City also provides an extra layer of financial oversight through an external auditor, who examines the transit system's grants and contracts on an occasional basis. The transit system has access to a regular year-to-date budget report, which is sufficient for the Transit Manager to follow how the system is tracking relative to the budget.

UW-La Crosse, Viterbo University, and Western Technical College each participate in a U-Pass program, which allows students of the three institutions to ride the bus for free in exchange for a fixed fee paid by the university. MTU bills the three U-Pass participants a fixed fee each year, based on the number of service days per semester and each university's share of service. This amount is renegotiated every year.

In the last audit, it was recommended that the revenue raised through the U-Pass program in the system operating revenue figure be reported to the National Transit Database. According to MTU management, WisDOT staff advised MTU to keep the U-Pass revenues out of the NTD revenue reporting.

The National Transit Database reporting manual is very clear that the U-Pass revenues should be reported as fares. The 2011 NTD Reporting Manual covers this issue on page 94 as follows:

> *Passenger fares are the revenues earned from carrying passengers. They are usually the amounts paid by the rider to use transit services but may also include special transit fares. Special transit fares are fares from contracts to your transit agency in which an agency or organization pays a set amount in return for unlimited transit service for the persons covered by the contract.*

Purchasing is either conducted through the city systems or through an RFP/RFB process. Routine maintenance is quoted out, and the fleet is insured through TMI. The system maintains no petty cash;

instead, MTU maintains accounts with local vendors that provide goods. The Transit Manager is responsible for checking purchases each month and signing off on invoices.

Budgeting

Annual operating budgets are developed on a calendar year basis consistent with the WisDOT funding calendar. The local share is estimated based on projected state and federal contribution.

Because transit is not set up as an enterprise fund, if the state and federal contributions come in above projected levels and an unspent excess remains at the end of the year, the local share is turned back to the City. Likewise, if the state and federal portions come in below estimates or expenses exceed budgeted amounts, the City pays the balance. In each of the last three years, more than two thirds of the City's local share has been turned back to the City at the end of the fiscal year as unspent excess (Table 20).

Table 21: Budget, Actual, and Returned Local Contribution

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Budgeted	$542,291	$515,177	$542,509	$571,814	$576,005	$577,427
Actual	$427,954	$533,608	$357,848	$178,431	$160,611	$165,400
Returned	$114,337	-$18,431	$184,661	$393,383	$415,394	$412,027
Percent of Budgeted Returned	21%	-4%	34%	69%	72%	71%

Capital budgeting is conducted through the CIP process, along with budgeting for other city capital equipment. There is no annual set-aside amount for transit capital purchases included in the City's local share contribution for operating. A capital program with an annual set-aside amount would ensure long-term stability for capital purchases and position the system well to respond immediately to new federal funding opportunities, such as the recent State of Good Repair and American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) grant programs.

MUT has a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goal for goods and services of 0.29 percent, but has not met that goal in each of the past five years. WisDOT and FTA are available for technical assistance with meeting DBE goals.

Revenue Handling

The current fare collection and revenue handling process is documented in a written policy. Fares are collected on board buses using non-registering fareboxes. Exact fare is required; this policy change was enacted when the downtown transfer center opened, providing change machines for passenger use. Drivers record passenger counts by fare type on a daily trip sheet.

Each night, a service worker pulls the full vaults from buses. Vaults are stored in a locked room until the next morning, when they are emptied and counted by a two-person team consisting of the extra board "show-up" person and the AM supervisor. These two people bag the money and bring it to City Hall, where the City Treasurer is responsible for preparing the money for bank deposit.

Cash receipts are reconciled with passenger counts by the Service Representative. The system maintains a sophisticated *Daily Revenue and Ridership Report*, which compares expected revenue totals based on passenger counts to the actual cash received from each vault and is linked to monthly and annual reporting spreadsheets. This spreadsheet provides an excellent tool for monitoring fare revenue and flagging any unusual activity that may indicate theft, and is a best practice for small transit systems.

Approximately $700 in cash is collected each day and deposits are made daily. Due to the low volume of cash collected daily, the system may wish to consider decreasing the frequency of bank deposits to every other day or twice a week.

Summary

Overall, the finance function at MTU is efficient and conducive to an effective operation. One recommendation is made for this area, which is a carryover from the previous system review:

- Change the NTD reporting approach so that U-Pass revenues are reported as fare revenue.

2. Personnel and Labor Relations

Bus operators, service workers, and mechanics are represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 519. The term of the current ATU labor agreement is March 11, 2011 through December 31, 2013. The Customer Service Representative is represented by SEIU Local 180.

The Transit Manager and Operations Manager are responsible for conducting labor negotiations on behalf of the system. The Transit Manager stated that current relations between labor and management are good. The current labor agreement includes procedures for employees to file grievances against management. Grievances are heard by the Transit Manager and a human resources representative from the City. No grievances were logged in 2011; this substantiates the manager's claim of good relations.

As a city department, transit operates under general city policies and procedures regarding personnel. In addition, MTU maintains a comprehensive *Employee Manual*, which functions as a complementary volume to the labor agreement and outlines policy and procedure for transit employees. All employees are issued a copy of the manual.

The labor agreement limits the number of part-time operators to 12 percent of the number of regular full-time operators. A separate provision in the labor agreement allows for the use of "special" part-time employees in addition to the regular part-timers for work that cannot be filled by full-time employees. All use of part-time operators may not exceed 3,400 hours per calendar year.

Salary and Benefits

As of January 1, 2012, La Crosse MTU bus operators begin at an hourly wage of $16.91, and are eligible for a maximum hourly wage of $21.88, reached after a period of six years. Incremental additional longevity pay is also available for full-time employees who have worked at the MTU for more than eight years, with additional hourly increments awarded at 12, 16, 20, and 24 years of service. Currently, 20 of the 35 eligible drivers, mechanics, and service workers receive some level of longevity pay. Longevity pay is a common municipal practice, but typically applies to all employees including management. The system may wish to continue to monitor its wages, particularly as related to longevity pay, to watch for compression between management and labor wage rates.

Benefits are described and communicated to represented employees through the labor agreement. Full-time employees are eligible for vacation and holiday pay; health, dental, long- and short-term disability, and life insurance; and pension benefits. Dependents are eligible for health benefits as well. MTU pays 90 percent of the premium costs for employee health coverage. In 2010, MTU's fringe benefits were equal to 60 percent of wages and salaries compared to a national peer average of 58 percent and a Wisconsin peer average of 68 percent.

Employees are granted vacation time commensurate with years of service, up to six weeks off after 29 years of service. All vacation time must be taken during the year after the year in which it was earned;

vacation time is not allowed to accrue except for in cases where scheduling does not allow an employee to use his/her vacation. Vacation balances are paid out upon leaving employment, or paid into an employee's retirement account upon retirement. Employees receive paid holidays on nine scheduled days, as well as two floating holidays.

All full-time employees are covered by the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS). As of January 1, 2012, employees are required to pay 50 percent of the total WRS contribution rate, with the City paying the remainder.

Driver Recruitment

The annual driver turnover rate is low to moderate; the Transit Manager was unaware of the exact statistic, but estimated that one driver has turned over each year for the past five years. Recruitment to fill open positions is conducted using the website, advertisements, and employee referrals.

The system has had a hard time recruiting part time drivers, citing the difficult demands of being an on-call employee on the extra board. Few recruits come to MTU from other transportation providers, already in possession of a CDL; generally, MTU will help interested and qualified candidate obtain the CDL. A driver's license and background check is performed on new recruits upon hiring, and employment is contingent on the outcome of these checks as well as a DOT physical and passing the FTA pre-employment drug test. Driver's license checks are conducted annually for drivers each year.

Part-time employees can move into open full-time positions through an interview process that is open to outsiders and competitive.

Summary

Overall, the personnel function at MTU is efficient and conducive to an effective operation. No recommendations are made in this area.

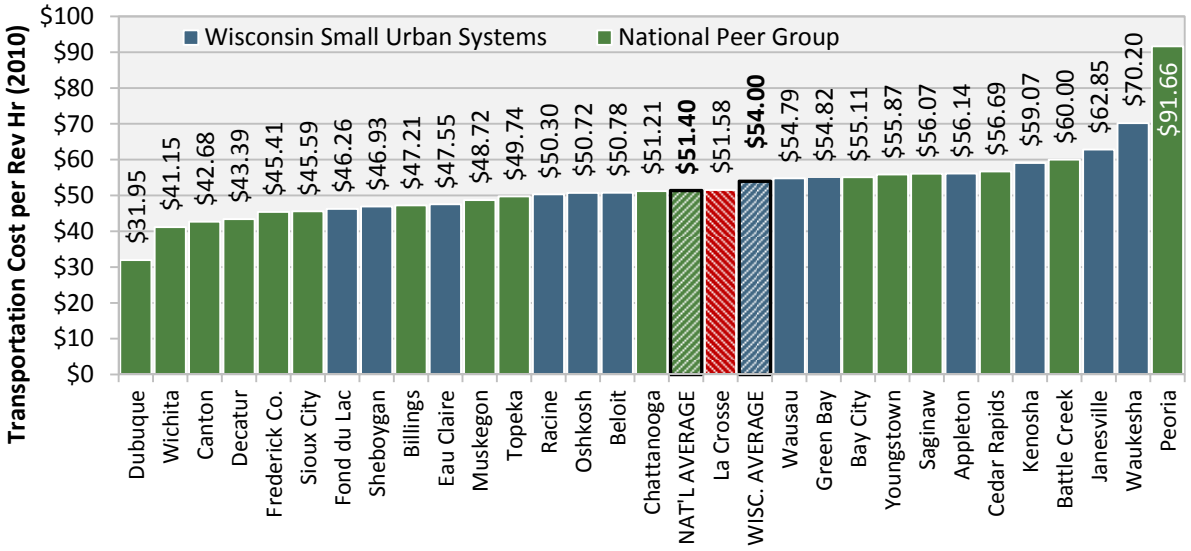
3. Transportation Operations

Operating statistics were examined prior to the on-site visit to highlight any obvious deficiencies or irregularities in performance. In 2010, MTU's operations statistics were as follows:

- Transportation operating expense per revenue hour: **$51.58**
- Revenue hours per 100 transportation employee work hours: **91.8**

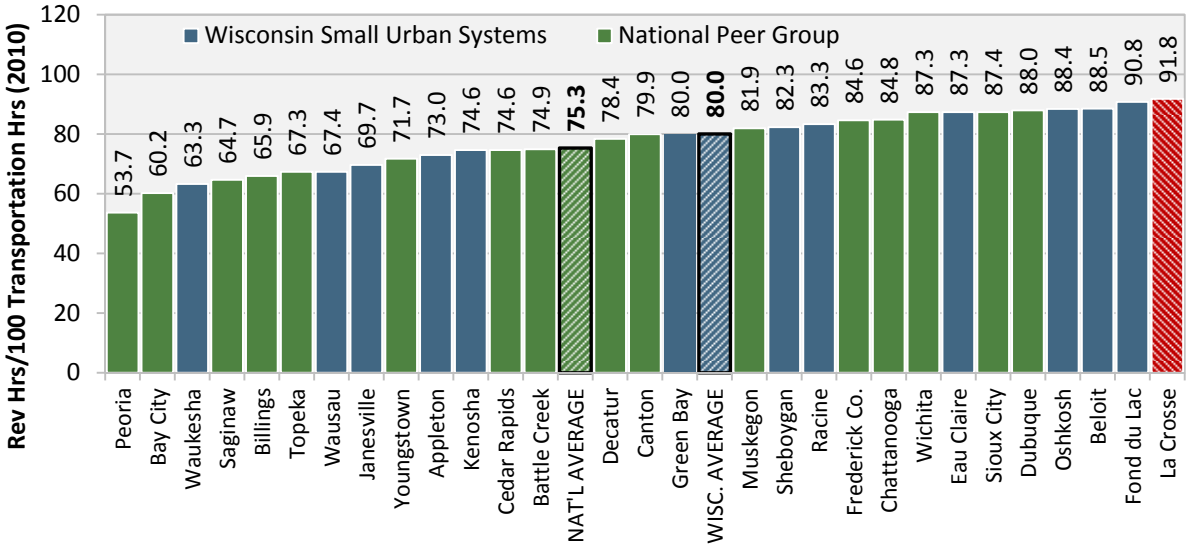
In 2010, La Crosse MTU incurred $51.58 in transportation operating expenses for each revenue hour of service provided. This is between the averages of the national and Wisconsin peer systems (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Transportation Expense per Revenue Hour (2010)



In 2010, MTU provided 91.8 revenue hours of service for each 100 hours worked by transportation employees. This is the highest level of transportation employee productivity among the national and Wisconsin peers (Figure 20) and represents a very high level of utilization of the transportation employees at MTU. These results, coupled with the moderate transportation unit revenue hour costs, suggest that MTU employees are receiving reasonable, but not excessive wages and benefits.

Figure 20: Revenue Hours per 100 Transportation Employee Work Hours



These operations performance measures do not indicate any special areas of concern at MTU.

Operations are supervised by the Operations Manager, who splits his time between operations and maintenance; This is a good and cost-effective model for a small system that allows for good communication between the various functions of the transit utility (discussed further in section 9).

Two supervisors are primarily responsible for monitoring service and performing street supervision activities. Between these two supervisors, the Operations Manager, and the Transit Manager, at least one supervisor is on duty at all points during the service day. Management staff rotates Saturday coverage, and late night/weekend coverage is provided by a service person.

The A.M. Supervisor is the first person to report to work on weekdays, arriving at 4:00 a.m. The drivers are required to report to the supervisor 15 minutes in advance of pullout. The first weekday pullout is scheduled for 5:00 a.m. to arrive at the downtown transit center at 5:12 a.m. Supervisors check drivers for fitness for duty and have been trained in FTA standards for reasonable suspicion for drug and alcohol.

Supervisors are present for all shifts except for the Safe Ride service. Safe Ride drivers are checked in by a service worker who has not been trained in reasonable suspicion for drug and alcohol. This creates risk for the system. MTU should train this service worker in reasonable suspicion to check drivers in for duty.

Drivers begin their shifts by completing a pre-trip inspection. After completing their runs, drivers complete a post-trip inspection that determines if repairs are needed. Post-trip inspections are turned into the Operations Manager, who then forwards needed repairs to maintenance. This practice ensures that all mechanical problems get reported and receive repair attention.

Buses are considered on-time if they are between zero minutes early and five minutes late. MTU does not have a formal procedure in place for monitoring for on-time performance. The operations supervisors do ride checks with every driver at least once a year, to check on time and other performance. If management suspects a driver is running early, they will perform ad-hoc on-time checks.

Drivers report fewer problems with on time performance since the recent revision to schedules to serve the new transit center. When this was done, all but one railroad crossings were eliminated.

Summary

Overall, the operations function at MTU is strong and contributes to the effective provision of transit service. The function is well integrated with finance and maintenance, and issues are communicated in a timely manner between the functions. One recommendation is made in this area:

- Ensure that all drivers who report for duty are checked in by a person who is trained in reasonable suspicion for drug and alcohol use, including Safe Ride runs.

4. ADA Paratransit Service

According to 2010 NTD reports, MTU's contracted paratransit service carried 82,044 passengers on 40,830 revenue hours at a total cost of $1,167,561. These reported levels of service result in the following service statistics:

- Passengers per revenue hour: **2.0**
- Operating expense per revenue hour: **$28.60**
- Operating expense per passenger: **$14.23**

The performance measures are shown in relation to the national and Wisconsin Peer groups in Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23. MTU paratransit has performed slightly under the national and Wisconsin Peer average in terms of passengers per revenue hours, but has performed better than both peer groups in terms of operating expenses per revenue hour and per passenger.

Figure 21: ADA Passengers per Revenue Hour Peer Comparison (2010)

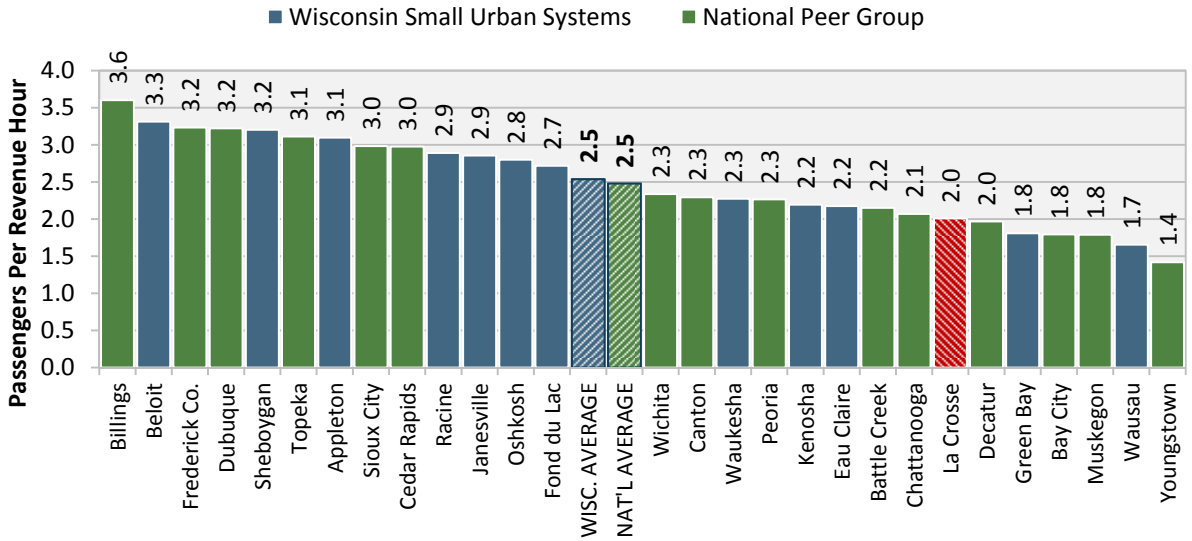


Figure 22: ADA Operating Expense per Revenue Hour (2010)

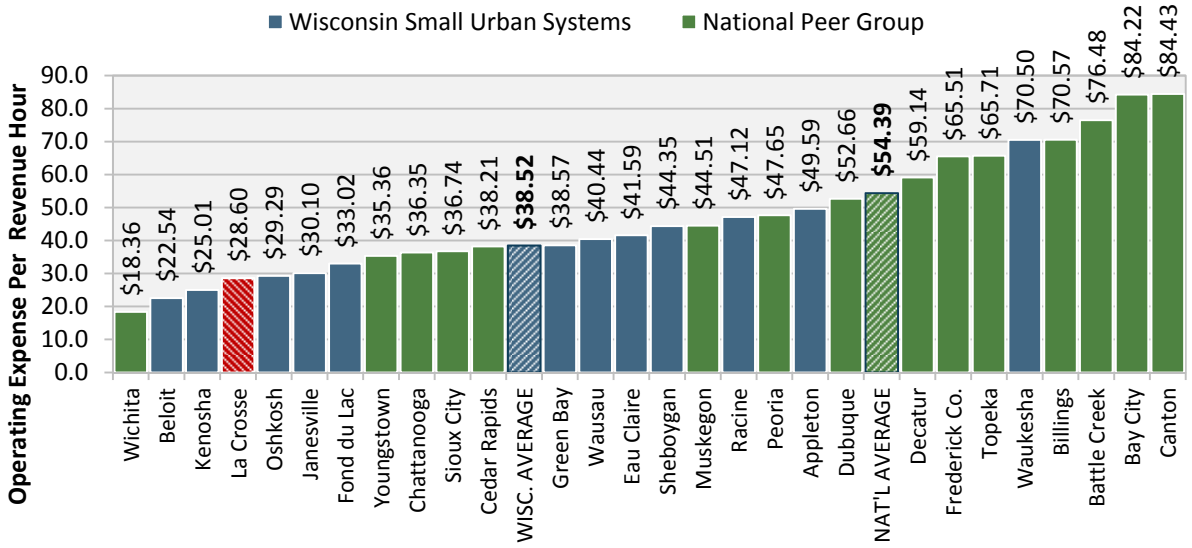
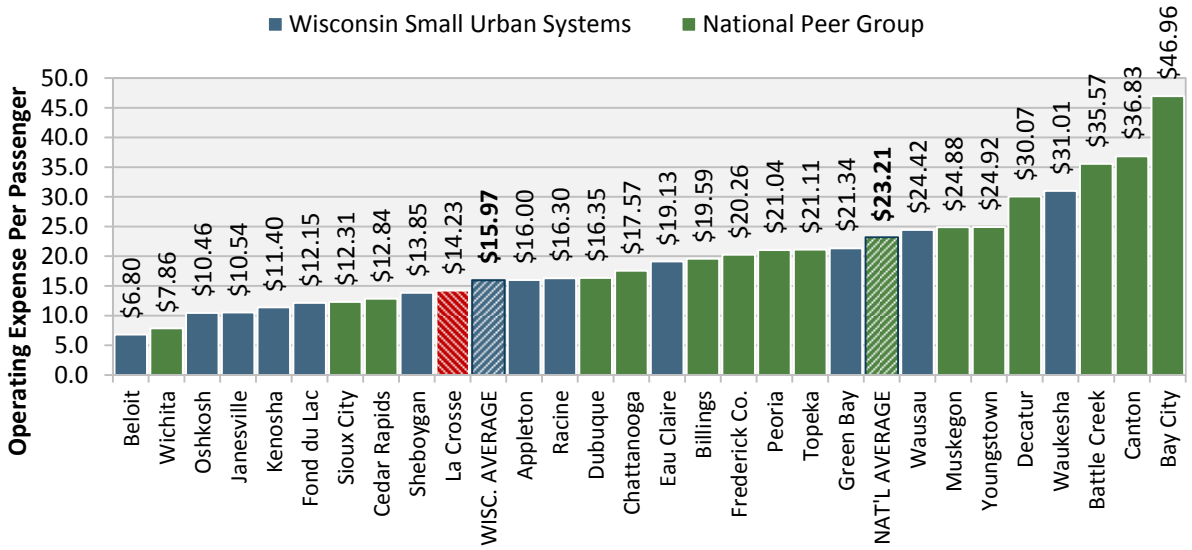


Figure 23: ADA Operating Expense per Passenger Trip (2010)



Paratransit service in La Crosse is a contracted service provided by First Student from a facility at 2321 Commerce Street in La Crosse. First Student, or its predecessor company, has operated paratransit service in La Crosse since 1988, except for a short period of time in 2004 when another contractor operated the service.

Service is provided using 17 vehicles; 44 drivers; and three dispatchers. The system is an integrated system with ADA service, elderly transportation, and county-wide transit service. The La Crosse MTU pays the contractor a per-trip charge of $11.07.

ADA complementary service complies with the FTA ADA requirements. Some passengers use the service as ADA customers and also as Western Wisconsin Cares customers for trips that fall outside of the

geographic boundaries of ADA service. When making a trip outside the ADA defined area/time, the passengers are charged a different rate.

The MTU also provides financial support for trips made outside the ADA defined area/time by ADA-eligible riders; MTU pays 30 percent of the cost and Western Wisconsin Cares pays 70 percent. This provides a high level of mobility to ADA-eligible customers.

The contractor provides all equipment, facilities, technology, drivers, supervision, and maintenance. A formalized training program provided by First Student is included for all drivers. The program is based on school bus training and has been modified for paratransit service.

The MTU evening supervisor is responsible for reviewing system performance. He spends approximately one hour per week at the facility and 10 hours per month reviewing documentation provided by First Student regarding billing.

Paratransit eligibility is determined by the MTU Supervisor/ADA Coordinator. Usually, a medical provider provides information that is adequate for certification. The form signed by the medical provider was examined and was found adequate to determine disability qualification.

The Supervisor/ADA Coordinator does not perform functional assessments. Functional assessments are conducted by the supervisor as needed. The Supervisor/ ADA Coordinator also maintains a database of over 300 clients. He periodically sends out mailings to the clients and deletes clients whose mailings are returned as undeliverable.

Travel training to encourage able customer to use the fixed route buses is not offered routinely by MTU. Currently, the mobility manager position at La Crosse County is vacant. When the County's mobility manager position is filled, MTU should work with the county to improve the travel training function to ensure that all able passengers are trained in using the fixed route service.

Several buses were visually inspected. All vehicles are minibuses and no minivans are used for the service. Significant corrosion was noted on some buses. Interior appearance was average. To ensure quality of service, MTU may wish to include minimum vehicle cleanliness and condition standards, as well as timely vehicle replacement guidelines, in the next RFP.

No contractor buses are used to provide paratransit service in Minnesota. Service in Minnesota is provided by the flex Route #10 which complies with ADA requirements. A passenger making a bi-state trip must transfer at the Grand River Transit Center between the Wisconsin contractor vehicle and the Route #10 vehicle.

Dispatching is computer-assisted for record-keeping purposes, but no AVL technology is used. Dispatchers usually allow 45 minutes for a driver to make a tour from the far south portion of the city to the northern end of the service area near I-90. While this is a safe and traditional schedule algorithm for manual systems, it may not be the most efficient use of resources. Computer designed dispatching with AVL could reduce the number of vehicles required to provide service or could provide improved same day service. There are a variety of software/AVL programs available. Care should be used in purchasing software that is effective and compatible with the service provided and the contractor.

There are several purchase options. Software could be provided by MTU and leased to the contractor. Alternatively, the purchase decision could be made directly by the contractor and software would be owned and maintained by the contractor. If the contractor purchases the software, it may be

appropriate to examine the cost structure of the contract to determine which fixed and variable costs would be affected by the software. The fixed cost of the software would increase, but the variable cost of driver/vehicle/maintenance may decrease with improved scheduling. Typically, a combination of scheduling software and AVL can reduce operating costs approximately 8-10 percent compared to computer-assisted programs similar to approach currently used.

Summary

Overall, the paratransit function at La Crosse MTU is sufficient. The service is provided at a reasonable cost by the contractor, and the county-city joint contract is an excellent model for coordinated service delivery. Two recommendations are made in this area:

- Explore feasibility of requiring contractor to use integrated dispatching software with AVL in next procurement.
- When the County's mobility manager position is filled, work with the county to improve the travel training function to ensure that all passengers who can be using the fixed route service are trained and able to do so.

5. Safety Management and Training

La Crosse MTU has a training process in place that results in a well-trained staff. For new recruits, MTU uses a curriculum developed by the National Transit Institute. The three-week training program includes an extensive 40-hour classroom session, followed by approximately 80 hours of on-the-road training. On-the-road training consists of approximately 30 hours of one-on-one time with a supervisor, plus about 35-45 hours of driving with an experienced driver. Trainers give the supervisors feedback on trainee's performance, and gauge readiness for solo driving. Retraining is conducted on an ad-hoc basis for drivers who need skills updating. Drivers are offered incentives and recognition for safe driving records through the Transit Mutual Insurance (TMI) safety program.

A safety plan is in place at MTU. There are appropriate policies in place to set rules for cell phone use while driving, radio use, lift operation, and all other actions related to safe operation of the bus. These are outlined in the *Employee* Manual.

The La Crosse MTU Board adopted the system's *Security and Emergency Response Plan* in May 2012. The goals of the plan are to create a culture that supports safety during normal and emergency operations, and ensure that security and emergency preparedness are addressed during all aspects of system operations. This plan outlines the chain of command to be followed during an emergency situation and details procedures for emergency response.

A drug and alcohol policy is in place that provides for random and reasonable suspicion testing. Good random drug and alcohol testing procedures are in place and described in the *La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy*. Employees who test positive for drugs or alcohol are subject to the discipline policy. Drug and alcohol screens are also performed at pre-employment, post-accident, return-to-duty, and under reasonable suspicion as needed.

MTU maintains an accident log in accordance with Transit Mutual Insurance (TMI) regulations and grades accidents according to their preventability using National Safety Council standards. In 2010, the system logged 770,000 revenue miles and 12 preventable accidents. This results in 87,867 miles between preventable accidents.

The system maintains files of workers' compensation claims. Since 2007, no more than six claims have been filed in a calendar year. On the whole, claims have been minor.

Summary

The safety culture at MTU is strong and the training program in place is geared toward a safe and well-trained workforce. No recommendations are made in this area.

6. Planning

The Transit Manager and the MPO Director are responsible for the planning function at MTU. The MTU is actively involved with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (the Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO), which has completed the last several transit development plans (TDPs) for the system. The TDP is the main mechanism for short-range service and capital planning at MTU.

The last TDP was completed in 2007, with participation from the county, human service agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, and the transit system. MTU sat on the advisory committee for the TDP. The TDP update included a detailed set of performance measures. The stated purpose of the document was to make transit more accessible, identify unmet needs, and improve operational efficiencies. Approximately 50 percent of the recommendations from the 2007 plan have been implemented.

The TDP included an implementation plan for upgrading bus stop accessibility through a capital program. This program has not been implemented. It is recommended by this review that the transit system prioritize this program to improve transit access, safety, and passenger amenities.

MTU has a good program for regular data monitoring in place. Ridership by route is tracked on a daily, monthly, and annual basis using the revenue and ridership tracking database described in section 1. The system does not employ minimum service standards by route to trigger route changes or eliminations. The rationale is that the lowest performing routes are currently at the minimum frequencies that can be offered to meet basic mobility needs (level of service "E" as identified in the TDP) and would not likely be further reduced.

The system has structures in place for public input on service changes and planning decisions. Transit Board meetings and public hearings are used to solicit public input. When a 25-percent or greater service change, fare change, or a new route is initiated, a public hearing is required. The system's last public hearing was in November 2011 to address a fare change.

The system coordinates with the City of La Crosse regarding development decisions. Through the Technical Advisory Committee and Transit Coordinating Committee, MTU has a seat at the table regarding decisions on development. The city's Planning Director sits on the Transit Board. The relationship between transit and planning in La Crosse is adequate for solid coordination and decision making.

Summary

Overall, the planning structures in place are effective for continued growth and improvement of the transit system. The MPO does an excellent job leading preparation of the TDP, resulting in a high-quality document that has served the system well. The processes and structures in place allow for regular communication between the transit system and the relevant planning bodies.

One recommendation is made in this area:

- Pursue bus stop improvement program from TDP to add bus stop pads and improve accessibility and safety at high-demand locations. Explore the possibility of obtaining FTA funds to pay for improvements.

7. Scheduling

As a small system, MTU's fixed route scheduling function is fairly straightforward. The a.m. Supervisor is responsible for developing the weekly operator schedule, and basic run cutting activities. All scheduling is done by hand; no software is used. Drivers pick runs three times per year based on seniority, with changes generally driven by shifts in UW-L schedules. An extraboard is staffed by five full-time drivers to cover employee absences. Management reports that there is not an absentee problem at MTU.

The use of driver overtime is a good indicator of the efficiency of the scheduling function. The driver overtime percentage was just 1.2 percent in 2010; this is a positive result that represents a highly efficient use of staff time. Overtime rate less than five percent are generally considered acceptable.

The low amount of overtime is due in part to a unique provision in the union contract that allows MTU to employ "equalizer days" at the end of the week. Once extra board drivers are scheduled up to 40 hours, MTU is not required to schedule them for additional hours. Because overtime is paid after 40 hours, this provision has allowed MTU to keep overtime in check. The full-time operators on the extra board get pick of overtime hours first if available; hours are then offered to regular full-timers based on seniority. Overtime is tracked and compared to expectations regularly.

One measure for efficiency of operator scheduling is the payroll to platform ratio. In 2010, MTU's projected platform hours (as noted in its 2010 application to WisDOT) were 60,165. Payroll hours were 60,965. The difference between these values represents the amount of operator time used for non-driving tasks, such as pre- and post-trip inspections, report completion, and guaranteed time. At MTU, this ratio was 1.01 in 2010. This is a favorable result that means part- and full-time operator hours are scheduled efficiently to minimize non-driving time; ratios less than 1.15 are considered acceptable.

Summary

In general, the scheduling function in place at MTU is sufficient. Processes for scheduling are standard and well-run, and the overtime and payroll-to-platform ratios indicate that the scheduling process is working efficiently. No recommendations are made in this area.

8. Marketing

The marketing function is primarily the responsibility of the Transit Manager, with assistance from the Customer Service Representative. MTU's marketing budget for 2012 is $20,000, which includes changes to the rider's guide, radio ads, and pass program advertisements. Marketing activities account for only 0.3 percent of the total budget. This is a very low level of marketing budget, which reflects the constrained budget with which the system is functioning. A marketing budget of 2-3 percent of total budget is generally considered appropriate for a small urban system.

MTU's *Transit System Map and Rider's Guide* is its primary printed information piece. The guide contains all of the relevant information about using the bus system, including:

- System map with insets for the transit center and transfer point
- Description of on-demand service in French Island and La Crescent
- Fares, pass outlet, and U-Pass information
- Phone number and website

- How-to-ride guide and dos/don'ts
- Route timetables
- Other transit service provider contact information and descriptions

The guide is clear and easy to read, and is an excellent and comprehensive information piece for system customers. In 2008, La Crosse MTU received first place honors in the APTA AdWheel Awards for this guide. MTU also produces additional information guides about its Safe Ride program, Bikes on MTU, and MTU Works!, the system's employer pass program.

MTU also maintains a website as part of the City of La Crosse's website. The website is well organized, and contains clear and comprehensive information about its services. Information about routes is provided in one place, along with service hours and areas served. Schedules are provided in PDF form of the documents available on paper. The website also contains information about free ride days, night stops, bike-on-bus, and videos showing how to use the service. The website uses Google Translate to provide multilingual system information.

The website contains a general description of the ADA paratransit service, but does not state the fare, hours of service, or general policies. The application for ADA certification is not available online. Making more information available online would benefit customers and their caregivers. The system should post more ADA information on the system website, including the paratransit application, fares, policies for riding, and other information about registering as a certified user.

The system has been working toward implementation of Google Transit for trip planning. This should be pursued and prioritized because it is a relatively low-effort, low-cost undertaking that can greatly improve the reach of schedule information, particularly for La Crosse's large university population.

MTU has a system brand that is repeated throughout its marketing materials, on its fleet, and on the website, as shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24: MTU Brand Elements

Customer Contacts

Most customer contacts occur over the phone. Customer assistance is offered by phone, Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The telephone assistance provides trip planning services , fare information, and eligibility information. It also receives passenger complaints and commendations. The MTU website also includes a feedback form that customers can use to provide comments on the system.

MTU does not process or document all complaints. Recurrent complainers or invalid complaints are not logged. As a possible result, only 12 valid complaints were recorded last year. This informal practice of dismissing comments without retaining records presents a risk for the system. Should a complainant

allege that his/her comment was dismissed unfairly based on considerations such as race, gender, or disability status, MTU needs documentation regarding why each complaint was dismissed. Good transit requires that every complaint be formally logged, with follow up actions documented to show validity. Discipline-related complaints can be kept in the confidential personnel file, with the record showing referral of the result to the personnel file.

Summary

In general, the marketing function at MTU is sufficient. A few small improvements could help the system better serve its customer base. Three recommendations are made in this area:

- Provide ADA application and general system information on website.
- Revise customer contact process so that every complaint is formally logged, with follow up actions documented to show validity.
- Continue working toward Google Transit functionality, particularly to provide information to university market.

9. Vehicle and Facility Maintenance

Maintenance Management Performance Measures

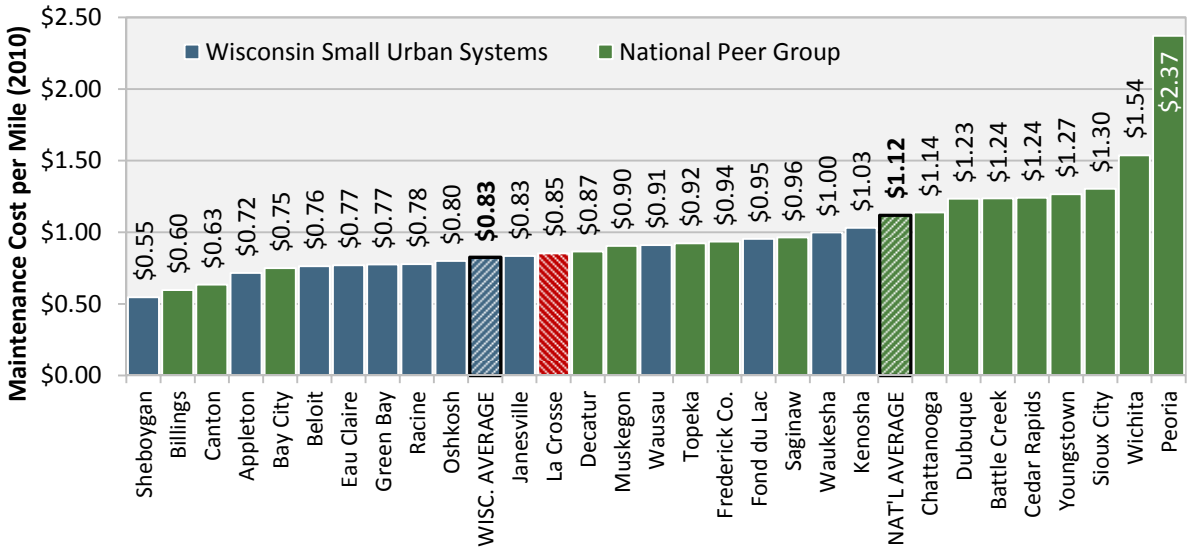
The following maintenance statistics were calculated prior to the on-site review to highlight irregularities in maintenance performance:

- Maintenance expense per vehicle mile: **$0.85**
- Vehicle miles per maintenance employee work hour: **73.0**
- Vehicle miles between major service interruptions: **21,347**
- Vehicle miles per gallon of fuel: **5.0**

Maintenance Efficiency

MTU's maintenance costs in 2010 were $680,279; the system operated 797,214 vehicle miles, for a cost per mile of $0.85 (Figure 25). This very close to the Wisconsin peer average ($0.83) and 26 percent lower than the national average.

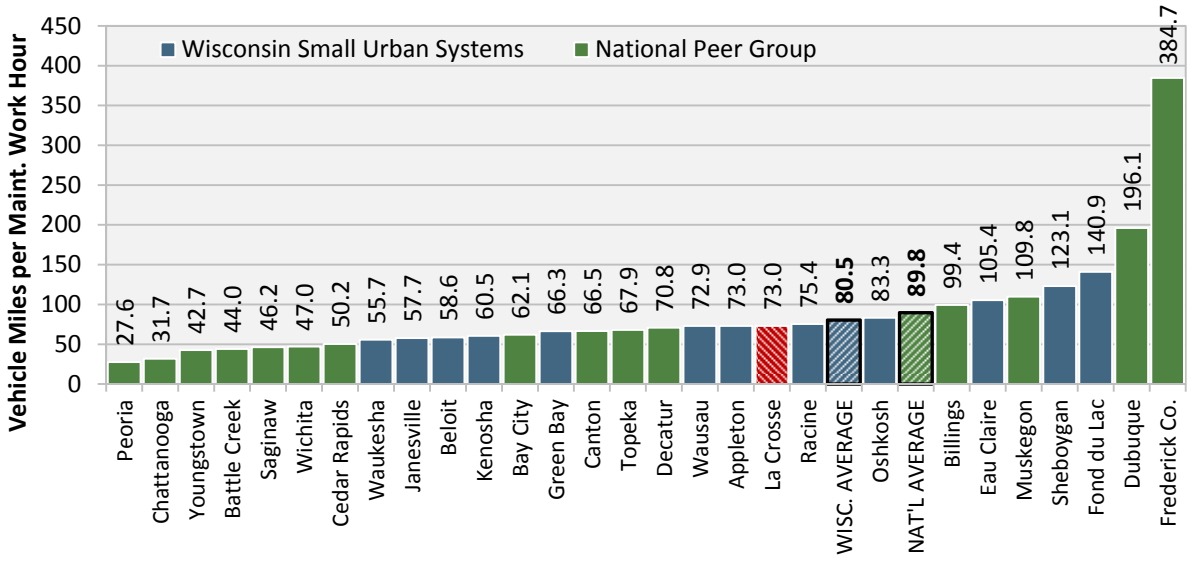
Figure 25: Maintenance Cost per Vehicle Mile (2010)



Miles per Maintenance Work Hour

MTU's maintenance employees worked 10,917 hours in 2010 to deliver 797,214 vehicle miles. Maintenance productivity was 73 miles per maintenance work hour (Figure 26). This was 9.4 percent lower than the Wisconsin peer average (81 miles) and 19.7 percent lower than the national peer average.

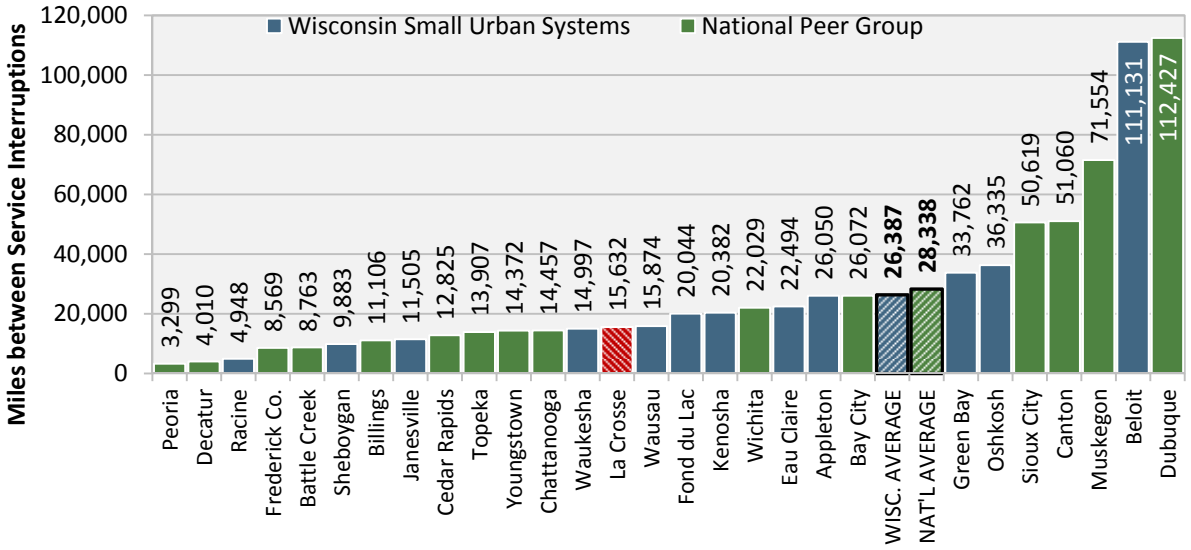
Figure 26: Vehicle Miles per Maintenance Employee Work Hour (2010)



Miles between Service Interruptions

In 2010, La Crosse MTU operated 797,214 vehicle miles and recorded 51 major service interruptions on its fixed routes. This resulted in 15,632 miles between interruptions (Figure 27). This is lower than the national and Wisconsin averages, suggesting some potential for improvement.

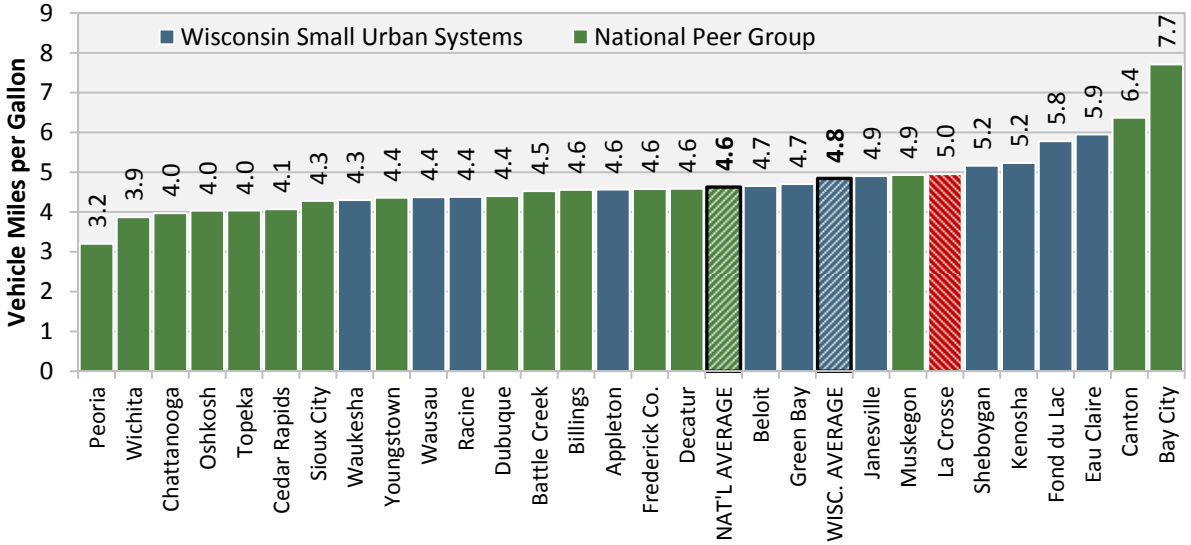
Figure 27: Miles between Major Service Interruptions (2010)



Miles per Gallon

In 2010, La Crosse MTU vehicles consumed 161,000 gallons of fuel and recorded 797,214 vehicle miles, resulting in an average fuel economy of 5.0 miles per gallon (Figure 28). This is above the national and Wisconsin averages.

Figure 28: Vehicle Miles per Gallon (2010)



The maintenance performance measures show a mixed performance for La Crosse MTU's maintenance function. While unit costs and fuel economy are favorable, revenue service interruptions are lower than the national and Wisconsin peer average However, no specific performance issues are called out for further review.

General Functions

Maintenance activities at MTU are managed by the Operations Manager, who reports directly to the Transit Manager. **For a small system like MTU where two dedicated management staff may not be justifiable, the shared operations-maintenance management model is a best practice.** This shared system is good for communicating needs from drivers to mechanics and from operations to policy.

Maintenance is completed by a dedicated transit maintenance staff of three mechanics and three service workers at the Municipal Service Center facility on Marco Drive. The maintenance function is guided by the *La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility Maintenance Plan*, dated May 2011. This comprehensive document clearly outlines policy and procedure for the following:

- Preventive maintenance
- General repairs
- Warranty recovery
- Vehicle servicing
- Facilities maintenance
- Purchasing

The PM program (summarized in Table 22) is based on manufacturer's specifications, modified to fit the specific needs and experiences of MTU.

Table 22: Scheduled Activities by PM

Inspection	Interval	Activities
A	6,000 miles	Complete inspection checklist for interior, exterior, engine compartment, and undercarriage Clean heater, AC filters, radiators and AC condensers Review bus history and defect reports for special attention areas Perform road test inspection
B	12,000 miles	Complete all "A" activities Change oil and oil filters
C	25,000 miles	Complete all "A" activities Change transmission fluid and filters
D	50,000 miles	Change differential fluid Change hydraulic system fluid and filters

PMs are tracked using the RTA software. A random inspection of maintenance records revealed that PMs are being completed on time, along with oil changes and fluid checks. Fluids and consumable consumption is checked regularly for changes or inconsistency that may indicate a problem. Oil analysis is also completed.

The maintenance facility (Figure 29) is in generally good condition. The repair shop consists of four service bays with one SEFAC lift and three fixed hoists. A service lane with a bus washer and fueling station is located adjacent to the repair shop, along with an enclosed storage area for buses and non-revenue vehicles, and a parts room.

The complex was constructed in 1975-1976. ARRA money was recently used to make upgrades to the bus wash, heat, water, lighting system, and make structural repairs to the bus storage building.

Figure 29: Vehicle Maintenance Area

Parts inventory is maintained along with all maintenance records on RTA fleet management software. The Operations Manager is responsible for setting levels for parts reorder and supervising parts withdrawals. Adequate inventory has not been an issue at MTU. A parts inventory is conducted on an annual basis; The 2011 inventory showed approximately $96,000 worth of parts on hand. Mechanics provide their own tools and are given a $475 tool allowance each year.

Summary

Overall, the maintenance function at MTU is sufficient. Policies, procedures, and staffing in place ensure that vehicle maintenance is conducted in a timely, efficient manner. The shared operations-maintenance management structure is cost-effective approach for small transit systems such as MTU. No recommendations are made in this area.

10. Information Technology

There are very limited IT applications in place at MTU. The system does not use electronic fareboxes. The system currently has no GPS capabilities on its fleet.

The City regularly backs up transit's system to a server located downtown. A fiber optic network connects the transit facility and downtown transit center to City Hall.

The downtown transit center is equipped with a dynamic sign at each bus bay to display arrivals. These signs were purchased with capability to handle future real-time information, but are currently just displaying scheduled arrivals.

MTU does not currently have an AVL system installed on its fixed-route vehicles. The implementation of an AVL system would allow for more detailed and widespread checks of on-time performance and would also enable the monitoring of stop-level passenger boarding information. An AVL system would also provide the groundwork for estimated arrival time and transit tracking applications for customer use.

Summary

Overall, the IT function is sufficient for its limited application at MTU. No problems were observed. One recommendation is made in this area:

- Study feasibility of AVL implementation on fixed route vehicles to improve on-road supervision and provide real-time bus arrival capability at transit center.

Conclusions

This review's assessment of each functional area is presented in Table 23. Ratings are based on the degree to which the function's structures and procedures are conducive to continued effective operations of the system. Specific recommendations for each of the functional areas are contained in the following section.

Table 23: Summary Assessment of Functional Areas

Functional Area	Rating
Area 1: Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing	▲
Area 2: Personnel and Labor Relations	▲
Area 3: Transportation Operations	■
Area 4: ADA Paratransit Service	■
Area 5: Safety Management and Training	▲
Area 6: Long- and Short-Range Planning	▲
Area 7: Scheduling	▲
Area 8: Marketing	▲
Area 9: Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	▲
Area 10: Information Technology	▲
Key to Symbols ▲	Structures and procedures are **conducive** to effective operations
■	Structures and procedures are **adequate** with room for improvement
▼	Structures and procedures are **insufficient**

LaCrosse MTU exemplifies many of the best practices of small transit systems in the United States. Service delivery is very good and the staff is motivated and performs their functions well. The system is reasonably capitalized, but does need replacement buses. It is a high performing system compared to other systems in Wisconsin.

It is slightly deficient in technology; but the strong performance in other areas will allow the system to embrace proven technological advances that are available in the marketplace. While it does serve the university communities with a U-Pass system and a strong Late Night service, it is not reaching full potential of the university travel market compared to other strong university communities in the Midwest.

PART V: RECOMMENDATIONS

This review's recommendations are summarized in Table 24.

Table 24: Summary of Recommendations

Functional Area	Recommendation
Area 1: Accounting, Finance, and Purchasing	No recommendations
Area 2: Personnel and Labor Relations	No recommendations
Area 3: Transportation Operations	• Ensure that all drivers who report for duty are checked in by a person who is trained in reasonable suspicion for drug and alcohol use, including Safe Ride runs.
Area 4: ADA Paratransit Service	• Explore feasibility of requiring contractor to use integrated dispatching software with AVL in next procurement. • When the County's mobility manager position is filled, work with the county to improve the travel training function to ensure that all passengers who can be using the fixed route service are trained and able to do so.
Area 5: Safety Management and Training	No recommendations
Area 6: Long- and Short-Range Planning	• Pursue bus stop improvement program from TDP to add bus stop pads and improve accessibility and safety at high-demand locations. Explore the possibility of obtaining FTA funds to pay for improvements.
Area 7: Scheduling	No recommendations
Area 8: Marketing	• Provide ADA application and general system information on website. • Revise customer contact process so that every complaint is formally logged, with follow up actions documented to show validity. • Continue working toward Google Transit functionality, particularly to provide information to university market.
Area 9: Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	No recommendations
Area 10: Information Technology	• Study feasibility of AVL implementation on fixed route vehicles to improve on-road supervision and provide real-time bus arrival capability at transit center.