



# McHENRY COUNTY

TRANSIT PLAN UPDATE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

# McHenry County Transit Plan Update

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Public Engagement Report  
November 2018

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# McHENRY COUNTY

## TRANSIT PLAN UPDATE

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## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT

### 1. Introduction

Public and stakeholder outreach is an important component of the McHenry County Transit Plan Update. A project website <https://www.mchenrycountyil.gov/county-government/departments-j-z/transportation/transportation-plans-programs/2018-transit-plan> was developed early on in the study that included English and Spanish pages; links to the survey; a summary of past events and promotion of upcoming events, and draft reports when they became available.

Using a variety of communication tools, there has been extensive outreach to all areas of the County to determine what the mobility issues are and to identify how people desire to move around and through the County. These opinions have been gathered at community events, through focus groups and stakeholder interviews, by way of a project website and through a community survey. This report captures the input received to date with the purpose of informing the service recommendations. Public and stakeholder input will continue in order to prioritize service recommendations and produce the final Plan.

## 2. Survey

An online survey was created at the initiation of the study. The survey was available in both Spanish and English. There were two versions of the survey. The standard (or long) version was posted online via SurveyMonkey. This version of the survey had 44 questions and inquired in great detail on respondents' attitudes and opinions on each type of transit service (Metra, Pace fixed route, MCRide) operating in McHenry County. A short version that would fit on one double sided page was produced as a print survey. The short version did not break out respondents' attitudes by transit mode but did ask questions about whether the person used transit (or why they didn't use transit), what would make them use transit, and destinations where they would like to travel. Flyers advertising the online survey were available at all transit presentations done during the course of this study, posted at McHenry County Metra stations, in seat drops on Pace fixed route and MCRide buses operating in the County, posted on social media, and sent to stakeholders and organizations. Paper surveys were available at all outreach events and at select locations in the County (libraries in Algonquin, Crystal Lake, Woodstock, McHenry, Harvard, Johnsburg, Fox River Grove, and Richmond). The majority of surveys were filled out online. Out of 1,028 surveys completed, 19 were completed in Spanish<sup>1</sup>. The following sections summarize those survey results.

### A. Demographics<sup>2</sup>

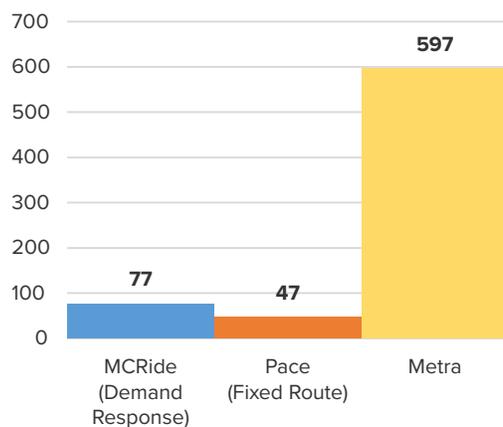
Almost two-thirds of respondents were female while a third were male (a two to one ratio). Respondents were most likely to be between the ages of 45 and 64 (nearly half of all respondents). The income level of respondents was more evenly distributed, with 28 percent of respondents making over \$105,000.

Overwhelmingly, respondents owned a personal vehicle (just 61 did not own a vehicle). Of those that did not own a car, the mostly likely reason was that a disability prevented vehicle operation.

### B. Transit Usage

Despite the fact that few were carless, almost half of those responding used public transit, indicating there are a high number of "choice" riders taking the survey. A breakdown of which transit modes respondents used is shown in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: Ridership by Mode**

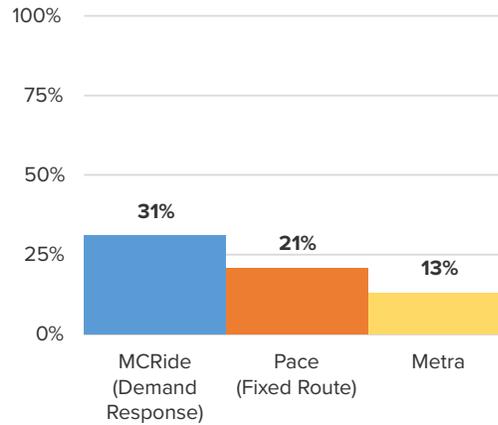


<sup>1</sup> As of July 3rd, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in following sections are drawn from the number that answered a particular question rather than the entire universe of respondents.

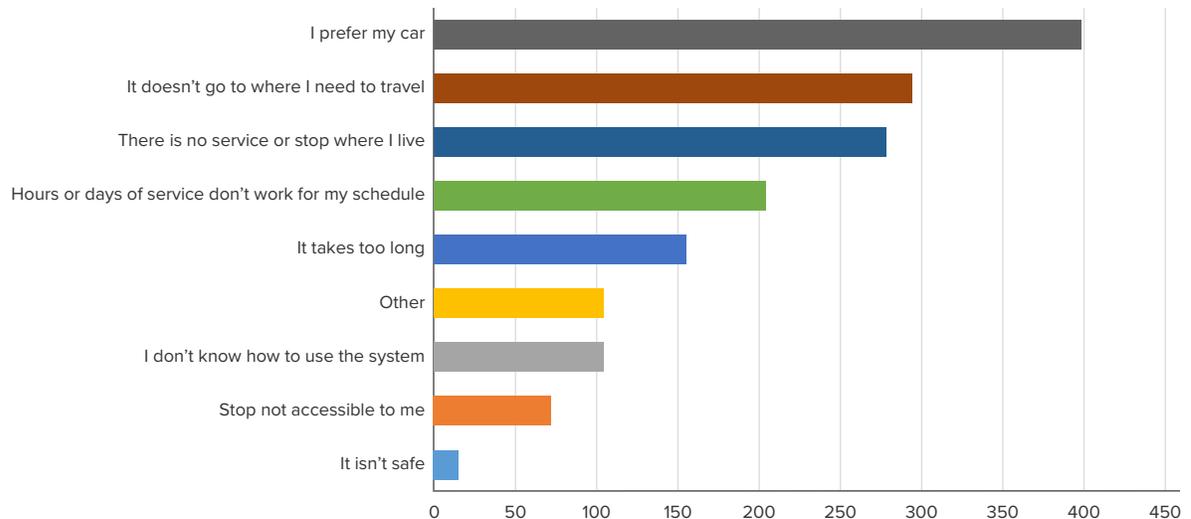
MCRide and Pace fixed route riders were more likely to rely on the service for their daily travel needs—most Metra riders (81 percent) rode one or less times per week (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2: Percentage Riding Transit Three or More Days a Week (by Mode)**



Since most respondents owned a car, for them transit was just used for the occasional trip rather than daily travel. In addition, as most respondents had a “choice” in their means of travel, it is not surprising the preference using their car was the most common reason for not using transit more often. Most of the other barriers revolved around transit access, rather than the quality of the ride. Not going to where they needed to travel (294 responses) and no service or stop near where the respondent lived (278 responses) were the next most common responses to this question (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3: Why Respondents Don't Ride Transit More Often**

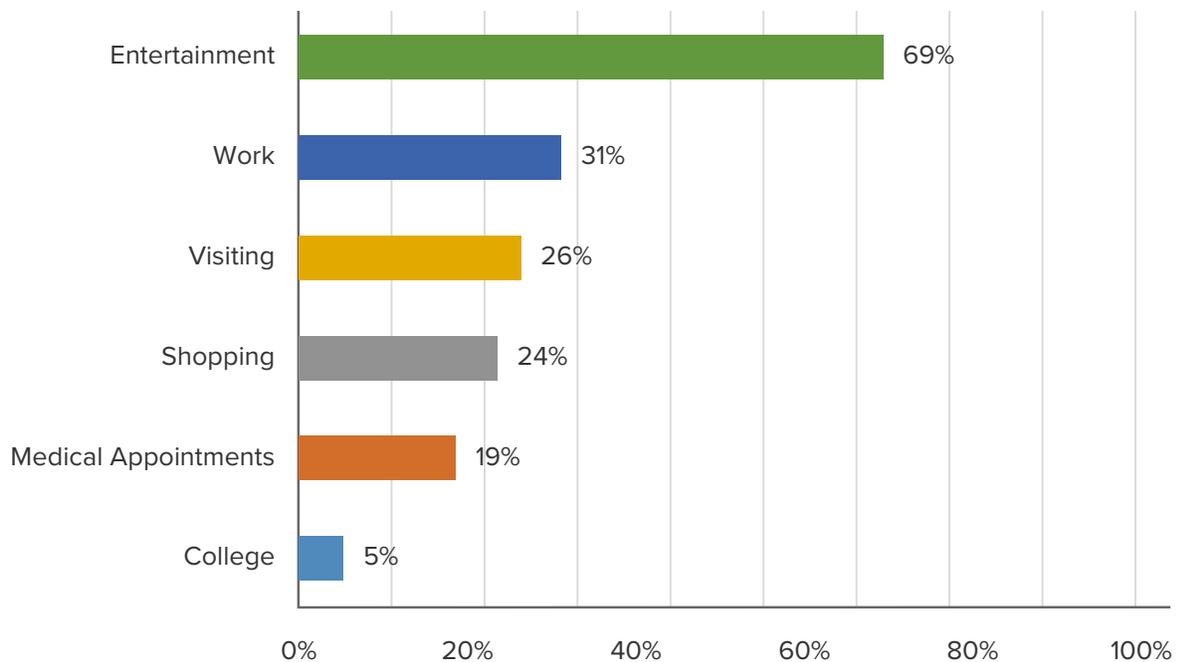


Metra riders were the most likely to say that the commuter rail agency was convenient and got them to where they wanted to go; a little more than three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Almost as many disagreed as agreed with that statement about Pace fixed route and MCRide. Only Metra riders expressed much of a concern with fares (24 percent said they were unreasonable), and Pace fixed route has the highest customer satisfaction of all the modes. Safety is not a large concern on any of the modes, although it is least concerning on Metra.

Concerns specific to MCRide revolve around scheduling rides (86 percent would like to schedule rides using an app, 82 percent would like to be able to pay with a fare card, and 37 percent find it difficult to schedule a ride).

Respondents are more likely to use Metra for entertainment or recreation than to go to work (77 versus 30 percent of trips); shopping and medical appointments were the most common reason for respondents to use MCRide or Pace fixed route. Work is not the majority of trips for any mode (despite making up the most transit trips nationally). This is likely due to the infrequent and limited service hours of transit in the County at present (see Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4: Reason for Taking a Transit Trip (All Modes)<sup>3</sup>**



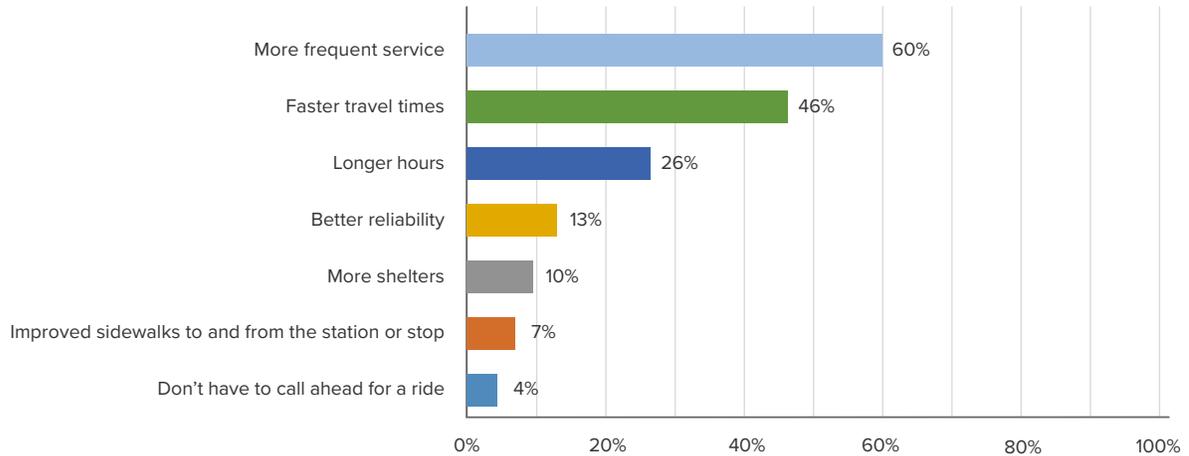
There is little transferring between modes in the County. At Metra stations, where it would be expected most mode-to-mode transfers would occur, only three out of 537 respondents used transit to get to a Metra station. Eighty-seven (87) percent drove in a car by themselves or got a ride from someone else. The most common way to get to a station other than driving is walking.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents could choose more than one answer, which means percentages will not add up to 100.

### C. Recommendations

More frequent service was either the top or second-most requested transit improvement for all three modes (70 percent for Pace fixed route, 60 percent for Metra, and 54 percent for MCRide). Faster travel times were only cited by close to 50 percent of the respondents for Metra as a desired transit improvement.

**FIGURE 5: Improvements to Service Desired (All Modes)<sup>4</sup>**



Two hundred and fifty-eight (258) respondents indicated a desire to travel somewhere via transit that they couldn't reach currently. There were 610 specific locations they wished to go to. The top five communities they wished to visit on transit were Woodstock (72), Crystal Lake (61), McHenry (43), Algonquin (37) and Chicago (35). Rockford (20) and Lake Geneva (17) were the most popular destinations outside of the RTA service area. The most popular specific locations that people wanted to go to include:

- The McHenry County Government Complex
- Woodfield Mall
- Algonquin Commons
- Shopping along Eastwood Drive (Woodstock)
- Shopping along Northwest Highway (Crystal Lake)
- Downtown Crystal Lake
- Centegra Hospital (mostly the ones in McHenry and Huntley)
- O'Hare Airport
- Woodstock Square

Most of these locations are already accessible by transit. However, in most cases, respondents' homes were not within walking distance of a fixed route bus route or Metra line going to these destinations, or it would take more than a two seat ride to get there.

<sup>4</sup> Respondents could choose more than one answer, which means percentages will not add up to 100.

## 3. Meeting with Transit Agencies

### A. Metra

A meeting was held with Metra staff on Thursday, May 10, 2018 to discuss the Transit Plan Update. A brief summary of the points made during the meeting are below.

- Metra's priority is state of good repair (SGR and the maintenance of existing services)
- New planned station and parking projects in McHenry County are as follows:
  - ▶ **Cary**—a new station and warming shelter on inbound platform; construction will start this summer
  - ▶ **Pingree Grove**—miscellaneous improvements will be made at the station house and surrounding landscape; the City of Crystal Lake will be taking over the maintenance of the station
  - ▶ **Woodstock**—Metra is looking at a station rehabilitation later this year
- Metra has recently completed a fare structure study recommending the consolidation of the outer fare zones (JKLM) in to a single J zone. This will benefit McHenry County riders as Harvard to Crystal Lake is currently five zones. With the proposed changes, the fare differential between the cities will be reduced to two zones, a significant decrease in the fare to travel between the cities. The three outermost stations, Woodstock, McHenry, and Harvard, would change to zone J with a cost reduction of \$2.50 one way for travel to Crystal Lake. This recommendation is due to the significant reduction in ridership between these cities from the last Metra fare increase. Metra's goal is to recapture these intermediate riders.
- There are a minimal number of reverse commuters into McHenry County; there is only one train that could serve reverse commuters looking to come into McHenry County in the AM peak.
- Transfers between Metra and Pace services are minimal in McHenry County
- Metra has an advertising arrangement with Uber but no partnership in terms of service. The latest mode of access information (Fall 2016) indicated that no one used a shared ride service to get to a Metra station in McHenry County.
- Metra has heard from riders that they want faster travel times to downtown; if the UP-NW Line improvement project was advanced (no plans at this time to advance it) it would allow for more express trains and more service to Woodstock.

### B. Pace

A meeting was held with Pace on May 15, 2018 to discuss the Transit Plan Update. The following points were discussed about transit services in McHenry County:

- Fixed route ridership in McHenry County has been flat or declining since the last plan, but that is not exclusive, as Pace ridership has been down across the board.
- Pace has not expanded their Call and Ride program to McHenry County as there is not a strong fixed route network; the most successful call and rides connect to a fixed route. Connecting to Metra has not proven to work well.

- Pace is exploring using tablets for connecting rider requests with drivers
- Barrington Road inline station to open in June 2018; the local bus routes will connect at the park and ride on the north side of I-90; Route 550 will continue to be the McHenry County connection to the service.

## 4. Stakeholder Meetings

In order to reach more stakeholders, there were several outreach meetings held throughout the County. The focus of these meetings was to reach as many people as possible with diverse backgrounds and needs.

### A. Homeless and Low Income Persons

A meeting was held on Thursday, April 19, 2018 as part of the Continuum of Care to End Homelessness Board Meeting to obtain information on specific public transportation needs for those who are low income and/or homeless. The following points were made:

#### Issues

- There is a lack on connectivity of transportation services between townships
- Clients are resistant to using public transportation for a few reasons – some don't understand how it works, others have social anxiety
- It is hard to make multiple trips on public transportation (e.g. dropping child off at daycare before going to work)
- Many destinations are not served – medical appointments, stores for prescriptions, social service agencies, and shelters
- Development in McHenry County has not followed transportation routes
- There is not enough publicity about existing services; people don't know transit exists in the County
- There needs to be a better understanding by the drivers of the special needs of the riders

#### Recommendations

- Uber/Lyft could help fill in the gaps but they do not allow for Medicaid/Medicare reimbursable services
- Destinations mentioned that clients need to get to on public transportation:
  - ▶ Northwestern Hospital-Woodstock
  - ▶ Northwestern Hospital-Huntley (from Woodstock)
  - ▶ Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington
  - ▶ Walmart in Woodstock
- Need for later evening services and Sunday services on MCRide; also need a solution for overnight shift workers (11:00 PM to 7:00 AM shift)
- It would be good for MCRide to have an app to describe the service, schedules, etc.
- A system needs to be put into place to help subsidize rides for low income riders

## **B. Individuals with Disabilities**

A meeting was held on Tuesday, May 22, 2018 at the Center for Independent Living offices in McHenry. The focus was on public transportation for those who have disabilities. The following was discussed:

### Issues

- MCRide was the transit mode used most frequently by attendees and attendee's clients
- Challenges to using fixed routes include bus stops being too far away from homes/destinations; having to cross large roads (like Randall Road) to get to the route; missing sidewalks/crosswalks; route times are inconvenient; and fixed routes do not run on time
- Issues with MCRide have included not arriving on time and poorly scheduled trips causing very long trip times
- MCRide taxi service issues include unmarked vehicles, poor communication, and perception that rides could be unsafe due to driver behavior
- Most clients use transit to go to work or workshops

### Recommendations

- Better coverage
- Longer service span on weekdays
- Electronic fare payment
- Destinations that they would like to get to on transit include Lake County, Woodfield/Schaumburg and O'Hare Airport

## **C. Seniors**

The McHenry Township Senior Center was the location for a meeting on Wednesday, May 30, 2018. A presentation and an open group discussion took place, which were followed by one on one conversations. Seniors had questions about specific destination locations, discount passes, and how to use the system. The team displayed information on MCRide, Pace, maps and paper copies of the transit survey. The Center agreed to display a poster with information to take the survey electronically.

Seniors currently take MCRide or McHenry Township Express to:

- Doctor
- Shopping
- Senior center
- Hair cut
- Restaurants
- Assisted living facility
- Visit those in the hospital

### Issues

- MCRide service is unresponsive; for instance, you need to allow for a two hour lead time to go a few miles
- Sharing rides takes too long
- Needs to be Sunday hours for fixed route and MCRide
- McHenry Township bus needs Saturday service hours
- In general, there needs to be more buses and drivers

### Recommendations

- Bus service needs to travel beyond the County borders
- They would like to take transit to church or the Milwaukee airport

## **D. Planners Forum**

A discussion of the Transit Plan Update was held at the McHenry County Planners Forum on Thursday, May 31, 2018. The Planners Forum is a regularly held meeting with planning staff from McHenry County and local municipalities. The discussion centered on ongoing and future developments in the County as well as transit gaps and needs. They are as follows:

### Issues

- People don't know about the transit services
- Schedules aren't convenient
- Riders don't want to schedule service ahead of time
- More workers are on flexible schedules; don't work regular hours
- There are limited opportunities for workers to reverse commute into McHenry County on Metra because of the schedule

### Recommendations

- More flexible, shared-ride services may be more appropriate
- Employers are looking for more custom options to transport their workers

## **E. Government Officials**

A meeting was held with the Council of Governments on Wednesday, June 20, 2018. The following was discussed:

### Issues

- There are changing demographics and work habits in the County
- Students need transportation to McHenry Community College (MCC)

### Recommendations

- One size doesn't fit all; there should be a combination of dial-a-ride and fixed route
- Instead of spending money on buses, the County should buy accessible vans and give out to Uber drivers for use in the County
- Woodstock needs more Metra service so that it is more similar to the train schedule in Crystal Lake
- Marketing is important for the bus programs; use the villages' newsletters
- Consider Zipcar as an option
- Need infrastructure that enables people to get to bus stops; i.e. sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes
- Keep the current services running but also keep an eye out for future and emerging technologies/ services

### **F. College Age Students**

The college student focus group was held on Thursday, June 28, 2018 at the McHenry County Administration Building.

### Issues

- More than half of the attendees used transit in Chicago or at their universities, but most did not know there was general public transportation in McHenry County; misperception that the Pace bus is only for seniors and those with disabilities
- People don't want to call for a bus ahead of time
- Need better and more frequent access to Metra
- Bus stops are too far apart

### Recommendations

- Need more advertising about public transportation options in the County
- Would like to see hybrid buses
- Subsidize Uber trips
- Need to develop an app for live bus tracker and payment
- Have "surge" routes; routes that focus/go direct to schools or jobs- high demand areas
- Prefer circulating buses; shorter times between buses
- Improve bike infrastructure

## 5. Other Events/Open Houses

### A. First PTAC Meeting

On Wednesday, January 17, 2018 a presentation on the Transit Plan Update was made at the McHenry County Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) Meeting. The presentation included a discussion of the study objectives, review of the implementation of previous Transit Plan recommendations, the project schedule and public outreach. There was then an overall discussion and interactive exercise on issues and opportunities. The following comments were received:

#### Issues

- Lack of awareness of transit options in the County
- Lack of central location for data/info
- Problems with transit competing with Uber and Lyft
- Lack of service in rural areas
- Lack of continuous fixed route service
- Lack of service to:
  - ▶ Spring Hill Mall
  - ▶ Walmart on Illinois Route 31
  - ▶ US Route 14 in Crystal Lake
  - ▶ McHenry County hospitals
  - ▶ Lake in the Hills assisted living facilities
  - ▶ Medical buildings at Congress and Main (Crystal Lake)
- More frequent Sunday Metra service needed
- There may be an issue with the Route 550 bus reliability on Randall during construction

#### Recommendations

- Service from Boone County to Harvard Metra
- Service to Rockford for medical appointments (especially Swedish American Hospital)
- Service along Illinois Route 173
- Route from Downtown Woodstock to PADS center and the Old Firehouse Assistance Center
- Route along US Route 14 in Crystal Lake
- Route on Illinois Route 31 to Interstate 90
- Route from Cary to Illinois Route 31
- Route from Hebron to VA Clinic in McHenry

## **B. Second PTAC Meeting**

The second PTAC meeting was held October 24, 2018. The meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation describing the four draft concept alternatives for the Transit Plan Update. General Plan recommendations as well as details for each concept alternative were reviewed. Once the presentation was over, the attendees were asked to distribute themselves equally around five tables to participate in a workshop exercise to review each concept alternative. Information including the draft report showing proposed services, a map of each concept, costs and other information, discussion questions, and comment cards were distributed at each table. A note taker was assigned at each table.

The attendees were asked to first review Concept 1 at their individual tables and discuss the pros and cons for the concept. Pro comments and con comments were recorded and handed in at the end of a set time period. Attendees were then asked to get up and sit at a different table to discuss Concept 2 with another group of participants. The distribution of attendees at different tables allowed each member to hear unique opinions during each round of discussion. The same format was followed for each subsequent concept. At the conclusion of discussions, the pro and con comments submitted for each concept were grouped with similar comments and posted on the wall. Finally, a general discussion about the results from each concept was held. Attendees were asked to clarify their comments, if necessary.

The following is a brief synopsis of the pros and cons discussed for the four concepts. The number in the parentheses indicates the number of similar comment cards posted. The complete set of comments can be found in the [Transit Plan Addendum](#) to the meeting minutes.

### **Concept 1**

#### Pros:

- Fare savings
- Cost effectiveness
- Increased service/expansion of service to all (5)
- Connections to outer zones
- Door to door service, similar to Uber (3)

#### Cons:

- Service seems convenient but execution is problematic
- Need to transfer to another vehicle sometimes
- Confusing
- Possible increase in fares if traveling to different zones (2)
- Need a Ventra card or app to pay fares
- Length of trips could be long

## Concept 2

### Pros:

- Serves largest population centers (3)
- Not as limited as other concepts
- Less expensive compared to other concepts (2)

### Cons:

- Route 570 extension could be problematic for current riders; already a long route in Lake County
- Less efficient service
- Does not expand MCRide (2)
- Pace doesn't typically go across county borders unless it is an express route
- Eliminates fixed routes to smaller communities (2)

## Concept 3

### Pros:

- Efficient service/increase frequency (4)
- Increase in destinations service
- No need to schedule each trip

### Cons:

- Bad connectivity to other communities/not access for all (4)
- Doesn't increase MCRide service area
- Length of circulators is a concern; riders would need to get on at one point and ride quite a distance in some cases
- Redundant service to MCRide; MCRide serves shorter, local trips which is what the circulators are intended to do
- Increased cost (2)

## Concept 4

### Pros:

- Extends service area/better access to transit (4)
- More convenient
- More visibility for transit (i.e. see buses on the streets)
- Greater potential for increased riders
- No need to schedule a trip (2)

### Cons:

- Connectivity is an issue
- Only seniors/disabled can use MCRide (2)
- No service proposed on weekends
- Problem is getting to bus stops due to lack of infrastructure (i.e. no sidewalks in some areas)
- Expensive concept (4)

### Overall Discussion

- Circulator in Cary-Fox River Grove a good idea; that area of the County only has Metra service, no MCRide service
- Ideal would be to have circulators in select areas and expand the MCRide service area
- Get buy-in from larger employers to have services to them
- Feel that the circulators should connect with each other
- Keep the potential for Metra expansion in mind when deciding on a preferred option- i.e. what will the future look like if Metra yard is relocated to Woodstock
- If you expand MCRide service to the entire County with the same budget, there will be longer trips and slower service
- Need to have a “little of both”- i.e. some fixed route in urban areas and more MCRide services for rural areas
- Concept 1 really serves the type of County that we have right now
- If we do circulators, need to make sure we are not taking away service from people who need it (i.e. MCRide) and put in service that doesn’t make sense or won’t be used
- Should have less long-distance intercommunity bus routes

After discussion, it was stated that it makes sense to identify a preferred alternative as some type of combination of Concepts 1-4.

### **C. People in Need Forum**

In order to kick off the Transit Plan Update, McHenry County staff had a booth at the People in Need Forum on Saturday, January 27, 2018 at McHenry County College. Staff were on hand to discuss the Transit Plan Update and gather contact information from those interested in providing input into the Plan. The forum hosted over 85 exhibitors and approximately 700 people were in attendance. Numerous people approached the booth, were given information on MCRide, Pace and Metra services, and had questions answered by staff. Many signed up on the email list to receive future email blasts about the study.

### **D. District 15 Community Resource Fair**

The Community Resource Fair event was at Duker Elementary School on Friday, May 18, 2018 in the evening. It was an outreach event to mainly Spanish-speaking families Information on transit services was handed out, as well as paper surveys. iPads were also available to take the survey electronically (both the electronic and paper surveys were available in Spanish). An interpreter was on hand for those limited English speakers. The following comments were received:

Issues:

- People don't use transit because they don't know how
- People have a car and like their privacy
- Would like to teach older kids how to use transit to get to activities
- Appreciate that some documents are translated in Spanish to get the Spanish speaking population engaged; there is a desire to have all materials available in Spanish
- Most participants were unfamiliar with or confused by MCRide and Pace and thought the service was only for disabled

Recommendations:

- Need general public service in Lakemoor, Hebron and Spring Grove
- Include other types of payment, cash only is inconvenient
- Monthly, prepaid option would be helpful
- Promote public transportation in high schools, educate the students on availability and how to use

**E. McHenry Taste of Summer**

The Taste of Summer event took place on Saturday, June 2, 2018 in the afternoon in downtown McHenry. A booth was set up and information on the Transit Plan Update was discussed. The following comments were made:

Issues:

- Reasons noted for not taking transit included:
  - ▶ Doesn't go where they work
  - ▶ Like to drive
  - ▶ Need car for work appointments
  - ▶ There is no bus or train to get to Rolling Meadows
  - ▶ Dial-a-Ride drivers and call center staff are rude and don't care about the riders

Recommendations:

- Metra should provide weekend service to McHenry
- Need more flexible service
- Need improved service for those with disabilities
- Desire to take their bike on the bus
- The 806 should run on weekends and travel through the McHenry industrial park south of Bull Valley Road
- Bus routes should run past 5:00 PM for work

## ***F. Marengo Farmers Market***

Plan outreach took place at the Marengo Farmers Market on Saturday, June 9, 2018. The event took place throughout downtown Marengo with a table set up in Calvin Spencer Park. The team displayed information on MCRide, Pace, County maps, paper copies of the transit survey and flyers with the web and survey address. iPads were also available to take the survey electronically.

Most comments were focused on MCRide, because that is the only transit available in the Marengo-Union area. There were a few comments on other modes and many people said they do not use transit or didn't have comments.

### Issues:

- MCRide is unreliable and doesn't go where they need to go
- Some residents do not consider MCRide as a viable option to get to Woodstock or Crystal Lake because it is deemed unreliable.
- Transit is not used because services were not relevant or useful
- Uber is too expensive to use from Marengo; there needs to be another option for spontaneous trip, like subsidizing the Uber or taxi trips.
- Residents have no public transportation that takes them west towards Rockford. Some residents need to get to Rockford for shopping and medical appointments.
- Transit is not used often because most Marengo residents have a long commute, making the services not relevant/useful.

### Recommendations:

- A fixed route that runs between Marengo and Woodstock a few times a day or a couple of times per week.
- MCRide should include service to the southeast and west of Marengo
- MCRide needs to offer services on Sundays and holidays, have more midday availability, and until 9:00 PM
- Randall Road needs better bus stops

## ***G. County Board Public Open House***

A public open house was held prior to and after the McHenry County Board, Committee of the Whole Meeting, on Thursday, June 14, 2018 from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM at the McHenry County Administration Building in Woodstock, IL. The meeting was conducted in an open house format. Exhibit boards that provided information regarding current transit service and demographic information were on display. A survey station and comment station were located for attendees to provide input. An interactive exercise allowed attendees to rank different transit service improvements. Attendees were also asked to place dots on a County map to show locations they would like to see served by public transportation.

The results of the interactive exercise had 31 percent of participants conclude that subsidizing rideshares like Uber and Lyft would be the best solution. The second and third most popular options were increased local fixed route circulator services and increased MCRide/demand response services for the general public with a 23 percent popular vote in each category.

New service recommendations and comments were as follows:

- Light rail should be considered
- There should be local fixed route circulators
- New bus routes are recommended as follows:
  - ▶ Between Marengo and Crystal Lake with a potential extension to Belvidere
  - ▶ Between Algonquin and Woodstock
  - ▶ Between Pingree Road Metra Station and Dundee

#### ***H. Woodstock Farmers Market***

Outreach took place at the Woodstock Farmers Market on Saturday, July 7, 2018 in the morning. A table was set up in the Town Square. Materials on public transportation services were handed out. The following issues and recommendations were received:

##### Issues:

- Question about whether the taxi drivers working under MCRide are trained; have had issues with the drivers
- MCRide service has been late
- Metra fares are too high
- In general, service seems to have decreased
- Does not understand why you cannot just hop on the bus to take a ride (e.g., if you see the bus out where you are, but it is dial-a-ride not fixed route, you cannot get on if you don't have a reservation)

##### Recommendations:

- Interested in direct service to O'Hare Airport (3 comments)
- Need more Metra frequency in Woodstock so that service is more similar to Crystal Lake
- Need more McHenry trains; one user currently rides Metra every day for work from McHenry to Chicago. Rider cannot accept any overtime because of lack of evening trains. Too expensive to take the train to Crystal Lake and then have to get a cab up to McHenry (existing 806 bus schedule doesn't help this).
- Need to increase the fixed bus routes
- Need an app for more spontaneous trips
- Would pay extra for rides that did not need to be reserved a day in advance
- Consider having a call-and-ride-like service to Walmart

## ***I. Main Beach Summer Concert***

McHenry County staff attended the Main Beach Summer Concert in Crystal Lake on Tuesday, July 10, 2018. The following comments were made:

### Issues:

- It does not seem like the existing bus/transit system is efficient or the best option for McHenry County, with its semi-rural nature; buses/transit is only applicable closer to the city
- Some people have to go to dialysis by 5:30 AM and they are reliant on Senior Care Volunteer Network because MCRide isn't operating

### Recommendations:

- Need more trips with earlier times

## ***J. Woodstock Public Library***

On Wednesday, July 11, 2018, McHenry County staff made a presentation at the Woodstock public library about the public transportation services available in the County. The following comments were received:

### Issues:

- No good way to get to the grocery stores in Woodstock – difficult to walk if you have a child in tow, carrying groceries, and have to cross Illinois Route 47
- Bus system is confusing and do not understand the difference between MCRide and fixed route; especially since the same buses are used and they are both referred to by the public as “Pace.”

### Recommendations:

- Need a universal fare payment system (instead of some transit modes accepting one payment method and others accepting something different). MCRide needs to be able to accept Ventra or electronic payment and not just cash
- Would like some more spontaneity in the trips. Don't always want to call ahead for around-town/local trips, as is required for MCRide. Would consider using a circulator type bus in Woodstock if it existed

## ***K. St. Joseph Church Fundraiser***

The St. Joseph Annual Fundraising Picnic outreach event was held Harvard Moose Lodge Family Center, on Sunday, July 22, 2018. The outreach went well with a large crowd of people willing to discuss and talk about their transit needs and experiences.

The event ran from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM. The team set up a booth and displayed information on MCRide, Pace and paper copies of the transit survey in Spanish and English. Two iPads were available with the electronic survey. Most people preferred to speak to the team in Spanish, and were more receptive if the survey was filled out for them by the project team. In addition to the booth, the team took a more proactive approach by also walking around the event and asking a variety of people to participate in the survey.

Comments received in conversation included:

Issues:

- They don't use transit because they prefer to drive their own car (this was the most common comment)
- They don't know where the stops are, and hours transit operates aren't flexible enough.
- Lack of awareness that demand response service still existed in Harvard (after the changeover from municipal dial-a-ride to MCRide).
- It is scary driving during winter, especially for older people, and taking the bus to work would be preferable if service was available.

Recommendations:

- Metra should be extended to Rockford.
- There should be more bus service to Richmond
- Recommend sharing information about transit to college and high school students because some people stopped going to college, specifically to McHenry County College, because they didn't have transportation.

### **L. Harvard Food Pantry**

Staff visited the Harvard Food Pantry on Tuesday, June 5, 2018 to speak with clients and staff. Few of the food pantry clients had much to say. Some because they did not use transit (they had personal vehicles) and others who understandably seemed reluctant to talk. The ones that did want to speak said the following:

Issues:

- Need information on how to use transit. (MCRide brochures were provided)
- Wait time for MCRide is too long
- MCRide and fixed route drivers can't help/answer questions because they don't speak Spanish

Recommendations:

- Would like more frequent fixed route service
- More frequent Metra stops, especially on weekends (Sundays)

The volunteers and coordinators at the food pantry felt that there seemed to be a lack of knowledge on the different services available (fixed route versus MCRide). Many did not know that the municipal dial-a-ride service had been replaced by MCRide. The conversion to MCRide came with its own pros and cons. They also stated that a lot of their clients come from the Northfield Court Apartments. The staff and volunteers offered up these further comments:

### Issues:

- Neither bus program (fixed route or dial-a-ride) works particularly well for the clients
- MCRide is not spontaneous and they have a hard time predicting when they will be finished (in order to schedule return trips)
- Clients do not like that they cannot just call for a ride home when they are finished. Someone commented that when Harvard had their own municipal dial-a-ride, the service was better and the bus would just be back at a certain time.
- There is not good access to the food pantry/senior center or Walmart. No sidewalks on US 14, IL 173 or Harvard Hills; clients have to either cut through the park or walk along a busy road to the senior center.
- Riders have a lack of patience when using dial-a-ride.

### Recommendations:

- A circulator specific to Harvard might fit their clients' needs.

## 6. Focus Groups

In order to receive input on the proposed service concepts, three focus groups were held in the County. The focus groups were composed of members of the public who had expressed interest in being more involved in Plan recommendations. The meeting times and locations were as follows:

- Tuesday, August 7, 2018, 6:00-7:30 PM, Harvard Public Library, Harvard, IL
- Thursday, August 9, 2018, 1:30-3:00 PM, RedTail Golf Club, Lakewood, IL
- Thursday, August 9, 2018, 6:00-7:30 PM, McHenry Public Library, McHenry, IL

Thirteen (13) people attended the meetings. A general discussion was held on the existing fixed route and MCRide services. Attendees were asked if they took transit or understood how transit operated in the County. Then, three draft service alternatives were shown to the attendees to elicit comments.

Most of the attendees were not transit riders. Several felt that transit services should be targeted to more dependent populations such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those with low income. Others felt that services needed to be more convenient, with service hours expanded, and services closer to their home or work locations. Another overarching theme at the focus groups was the need for technology (non-cash fare payment option, GPS bus tracking, an application to summon a MCRide vehicle) to encourage transit ridership. Still others felt that many would ride transit if the services were advertised and if people were educated on how to take transit. The concept they favored was the fixed route expansion concept (although not necessarily with all of the fixed routes included), although they also suggested that a new concept that focused on circulators should be explored.

## 7. Key Takeaways

The following themes were repeated by various stakeholders, in the survey results, and in the focus groups:

### *Key Destinations People Want to Travel to on Transit*

- O'Hare Airport
- Woodfield/Schaumburg
- Walmart in Woodstock
- Centegra Hospital-Woodstock
- Hebron

### *Service Recommendations*

- People are unaware of services, think the services are only for seniors or those with disabilities, or don't know how to use transit; more advertisement and education is needed
- Longer service span needed during weekdays
- Better or more service on weekends
- Better coverage is needed
- Fixed route service hours often don't allow people who work shifts other than first shift, to get to work
- Transit service needs to make people feel safe and secure
- One size doesn't fit all; there should be a combination of dial-a-ride and fixed route
- More flexible, shared-ride services may be more appropriate
- MCRide service needs to be available for more spontaneous trips; 24 hour advance call-in is too difficult - a hybrid of a MCRide/Uber type service would be welcome
- Need to improve on on-time performance for the dial-a-ride services
- It would be good to shorten trip times on MCRide to attract more riders
- Circulator systems within the towns would be welcome; they would allow people to make multiple trips around town, without needing multiple reservations on MCRide.
- More Metra service is needed from the outlying stations; weekend Metra service is needed in McHenry
- Using the trip planner on the Pace website only shows the fixed route services and not the MCRide service

- It would be good if employers supported transportation to and from places of employment
- Sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure is important in order to reach bus stops safely; difficult to ride fixed routes without sidewalks in place
- Vehicles used for fixed routes need to be easily distinguished from vehicles being used for MCRide; vehicles need to be branded differently
- Technology
  - ▶ Technology applications should allow for electronic fare payment and apps to schedule MCRide trips
  - ▶ It would be good to have an app similar to an Uber/Lyft app that allows you to see where the vehicle is