



On-Demand Transportation Service Connects Milwaukee Workers with Jobs in Menomonee Falls, Butler Riders, Employers Can Apply Now for FlexRide Milwaukee

Funded by \$1M National Science Foundation Grant, FlexRide Being Delivered by UW-Milwaukee, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Service Provider Via

MILWAUKEE – City of Milwaukee residents have a new way to get to jobs in the northwest suburbs – and employers have a new way to attract and retain workers.

[FlexRide Milwaukee](#) launches in early February, with riders picked up from one of five stops served by the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) in and around Milwaukee’s north and northwest sides and dropped off at any employer within the Menomonee Falls and Butler service areas. Riders – who must be at least 18 years old, City of Milwaukee residents, and working or willing to work within the service areas – can request pickups using a smartphone app or by phone.

Riders must register to use the service. To do so, they can fill out [this form](#) to determine eligibility and share basic information with the FlexRide team.

While registration is not required for employers, businesses and organizations with more than 10 employees in Menomonee Falls and Butler that employ or intend to employ City of Milwaukee residents are also encouraged to sign up for FlexRide. Those interested in participating in the pilot should contact Eric Lynde at elynde@sewrpc.org.

FlexRide’s goal is to use technology to close Milwaukee’s first- and last-mile transit gaps (the distance between an existing bus stop and one’s ultimate destination). Closing transit gaps can expand access to transportation for local workers, ultimately fostering opportunities for economic mobility.

The service is a pilot funded by a \$1 million grant from the National Science Foundation to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, received in the fall of 2021. Via, the global leader in TransitTech and a provider of on-demand mobility solutions, will power the service using its highly efficient technology platform. Via’s intelligent algorithms create quick and efficient shared trips that provide more flexibility for riders than traditional transport options, which have fixed routes and schedules.

For now, the service will operate through the fall of 2022. The project team aims to leverage the pilot to identify funding to continue the service beyond this time.



“We are excited to be collaborating with our partners on a technology-driven solution to a longstanding problem for our region – access to jobs,” Kevin Muhs, executive director of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, said. “Lack of transportation is too often a barrier for workers wanting to get to jobs and employers wanting to attract new employees, made worse during the pandemic. This is one step toward closing that gap and making us stronger as a region.”

Employ Milwaukee is leading efforts to sign up riders.

“We encourage anyone who currently works in one of the service areas – or is hoping to – to consider signing up for FlexRide,” said Chytania Brown, president and CEO of Employ Milwaukee. “As Milwaukee County’s workforce development board, we work every day to develop workforce solutions that promote regional economic growth and employment opportunity for all job seekers. FlexRide Milwaukee does just that.”

The Waukesha County Business Alliance is partnering with the Waukesha County Center for Growth and Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board, MobilISE and the FlexRide team to recruit employers.

“We are inviting all eligible employers to take part in this service,” said Amanda Payne, senior vice president of public policy for the Alliance. “We regularly hear from our members about the challenges they are facing in attracting and retaining workers – and the barrier a lack of transportation can be. FlexRide Milwaukee will help solve that problem.”

Employee and employer participants will be asked to take part in surveys throughout the pilot to evaluate the program and to help shape potential long-term transportation investments.

Leading the UWM research team are Lingqian (Ivy) Hu and Robert Schneider, urban planning faculty members at the [School of Architecture and Urban Planning](#), and Yaidi Cancel Martinez, associate scientist at the [Center for Economic Development](#).

“We want to thank all partners on this project, who have been doing solid foundational work in our region for years,” Hu said. “The NSF award recognizes the potential impact that our teamwork can have in connecting research with real-world solutions. Successful implementation of the pilot will address transit and other obstacles that deter marginalized population groups from accessing jobs in the Milwaukee region.”

MobilISE Executive Director Dave Steele said FlexRide is a welcome addition to a suite of services planned to address concerns with worker mobility and shortages. They include



Milwaukee County's East-West Bus Rapid Transit between downtown Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center coming in late 2022 and "last-mile" service being studied for Oak Creek/Franklin and Brookfield/New Berlin. Milwaukee County and SEWRPC are also studying a North-South BRT route along 27th Street. These transit initiatives are well-aligned with Milwaukee County and MCTS goals to advance racial equity.

"There is historic energy behind multimodal transit in Southeastern Wisconsin, and we are proud to be a part of it," Steele said. "MobiSE is the region's voice and platform for projects like this – connecting workers with jobs and companies with employees through stronger transportation options. All of these initiatives go right to our mission of building a stronger Southeastern Wisconsin through better connectivity."

About FlexRide Milwaukee

The FlexRide Milwaukee pilot is funded by one of 17 [Civic Innovation Challenge](#) grants sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Departments of Energy and Homeland Security. Six of the grants were awarded to projects that sought to deliver community-based solutions to close gaps in transportation equity.

UWM and SEWRPC also received a \$50,000 Stage 1 grant in 2021 to design the pilot with communities and potential users of the pilot service. The Stage 2 grant is meant to fund implementation of this pilot (i.e., FlexRide Milwaukee).

The service will operate weekdays from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., with highly flexible scheduling based on demand. Fixed stops will be at the following locations (also see map below), from which riders can connect directly to jobs or job interviews in Menomonee Falls and Butler:

- Sherman Phoenix, 3536 W. Fond du Lac Avenue
- Midtown Center, 5700 W. Capitol Drive
- Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, 5460 N. 64th Street
- Silver Spring Drive/Lovers Lane
- Woodman's/Sam's Club, Highway 145 in Menomonee Falls

Rides from and to the Woodman's/Sam's Club and Silver Spring/Lovers Lane stops will be free. Riders from and to the other stops pay \$1.50 for a one-way ride, increasing to \$3 later in the pilot.

After applying for the service, eligible riders will be able to download the FlexRide Milwaukee app and create an account. To book a ride, the rider will simply enter the pickup and dropoff locations and then check the app to find out where to meet the vehicle and when it will arrive.



The service will be accessible to all riders – including residents with disabilities, those without a smartphone, and those without a credit or debit card.

For more information about FlexRide, visit <https://www.flexridemke.com>.

Contact

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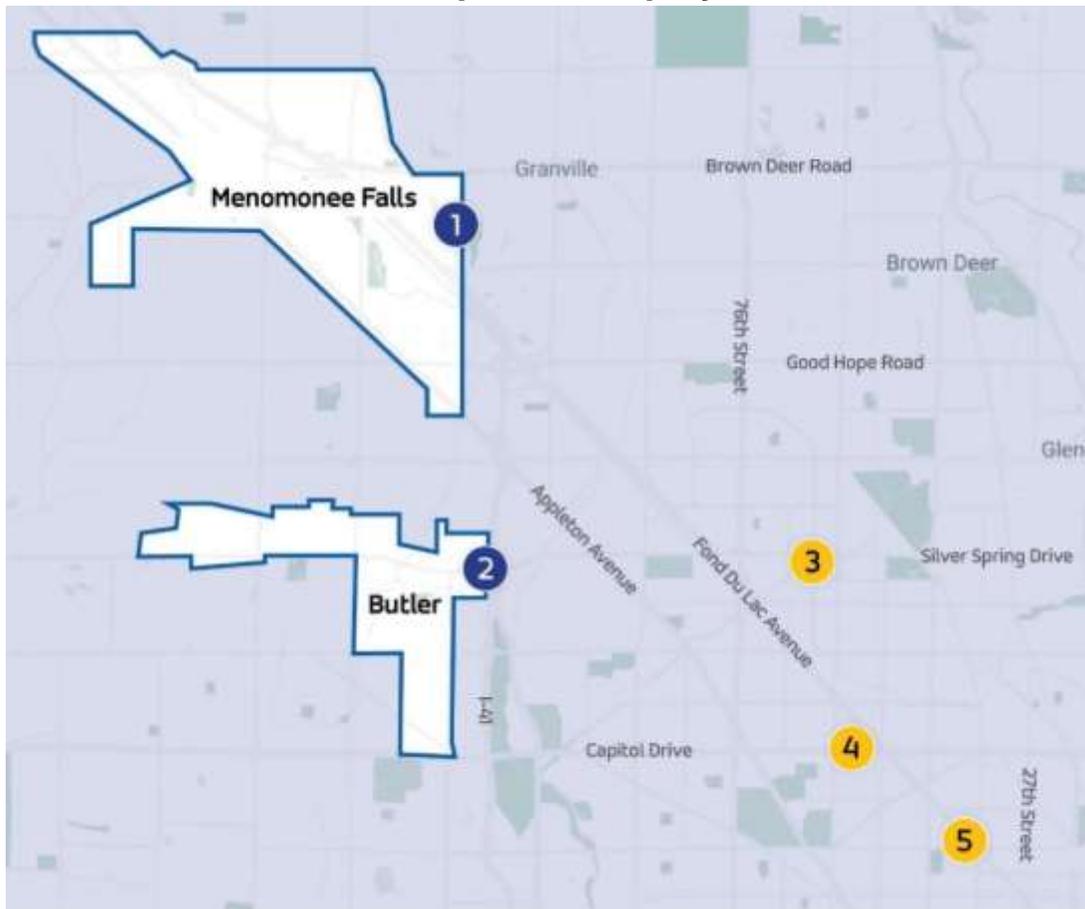
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FlexRide Milwaukee Stops and Employment Service Areas



Shuttle stops:

Rides from these stops are free:

- 1** Woodman's/Sam's Club
Served by MCTS BlueLine & Route 88
- 2** Lovers Lane/Silver Spring
Served by MCTS Routes 28, 57, & 63

Rides from these stops are just
 \$1.50 (for a limited time):

- 3** Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Served by MCTS BlueLine & Routes 58, 60, & 63
- 4** Midtown Center
Served by MCTS BlueLine, RedLine, & Route 60
- 5** Sherman Phoenix
Served by MCTS BlueLine & Routes 35 & 66



Additional Project Partners

