



MILWAUKEE COUNTY

2025-2027 State Biennial Budget Priorities

Office of Government Affairs

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley

Alec Knutson, Government Affairs Director

alec.knutson@milwaukeecountywi.gov

414-278-4191

county.milwaukee.gov

Table of Contents

MEDICAID FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMs (CSP).....	1
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS).....	3
YOUTH AIDS.....	5
BASIC COUNTY ALLOCATION (BCA) & CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ALLOCATION (CFA).....	7
BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM.....	8
FLEXIBLE RENTAL ASSISTANCE ALLOCATION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	11
DIRECT GAP FINANCING FUNDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS.....	14
INVESTING IN JUSTICE- COURTHOUSE COMPLEX	16
PATROL SERVICES- MILWAUKEE COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE (MCSO)	18
COURT SERVICES- MILWAUKEE COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE (MCSO).....	20
STATE COURT-APPOINTED DEFENSE ATTORNEYS.....	22
FUNDING FOR QUALIFIED STATE COURT-APPOINTED INTERPRETERS.....	23
DAILY REIMBURSEMENT RATE AND REIMBURSEMENT FLOOR FOR STATE INMATES IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY CORRECTIONAL SETTINGS	25
MILWAUKEE COUNTY ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEYS.....	27
MILWAUKEE COUNTY SPECIAL PROSECUTION CLERKS.....	29
MASS TRANSIT AIDS	31
GENERAL TRANSPORTATION AIDS	33
PARATRANSIT AIDS.....	35
LOCAL ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGAM – DISCRETIONARY SUPPLEMENTAL (LRIP-S).....	37



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

MEDICAID FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide \$14 million funding for the non-federal share of Community Support Program (CSP) costs and \$21 million for Crisis Intervention Services statewide.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Counties finance the cost of CSPs and crisis mental health services upfront and receive Medicaid reimbursement *for only the federal share for that service*.
- State funding has not kept pace over the years with increased county costs for services, resulting in counties bearing a disproportionate share of CSP and crisis service costs from county tax levy.
- Milwaukee County serves roughly one-third of all CSP enrollments in the state.
- CSPs are highly successful as the average daily census at the MCMHC went from about 900 in 1990 to less than 50 by 2020.
- Milwaukee County has been so successful that its psychiatric inpatient hospital was closed in 2022 after 142 years of operation.
- If DHS fully funded the non-federal share of CSP, Milwaukee County taxpayers would likely save \$5 million per year due to decreased hospitalizations and reduced medical and psychiatric costs.

BACKGROUND

County-operated Community Support Programs (CSP) programs typically serve significantly impaired individuals, many of whom enter the county mental health system as involuntary patients committed under Chapter 51 and who often represent the highest-cost patients for counties, as they frequently end up in state hospitals or jails when their needs are not adequately met in community-based settings. All counties are required to offer CSPs, which are not reimbursed sufficiently to operate adequately and require substantial county tax levy support to maintain. As a result, counties are experiencing an increasing tax levy burden to meet the required local match for the programs funded through the state Medicaid benefit.

As a result of a 1994 court settlement, Milwaukee County created a Community Support Program (CSP) system with multiple teams serving 500 individuals who had been primarily living in long-term care units at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex (MCMHC). A cohort of 50 individuals who were institutionalized for decades began receiving treatment from a team that operated as an “Intensive” CSP with services more closely aligned with the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model than typical Wisconsin CSP teams. Most participants served by the Intensive CSP, many of whom had lived in a hospital setting for most of their adult lives, never returned to the hospital. When they did require acute hospitalization, the stays were typically short.

In addition, counties are required to provide Crisis Intervention Services including an emergency mental health services program to serve persons in crisis situations, which, at a minimum, includes a 24-hour crisis telephone service and 24-hour in-person response on an on-call basis.

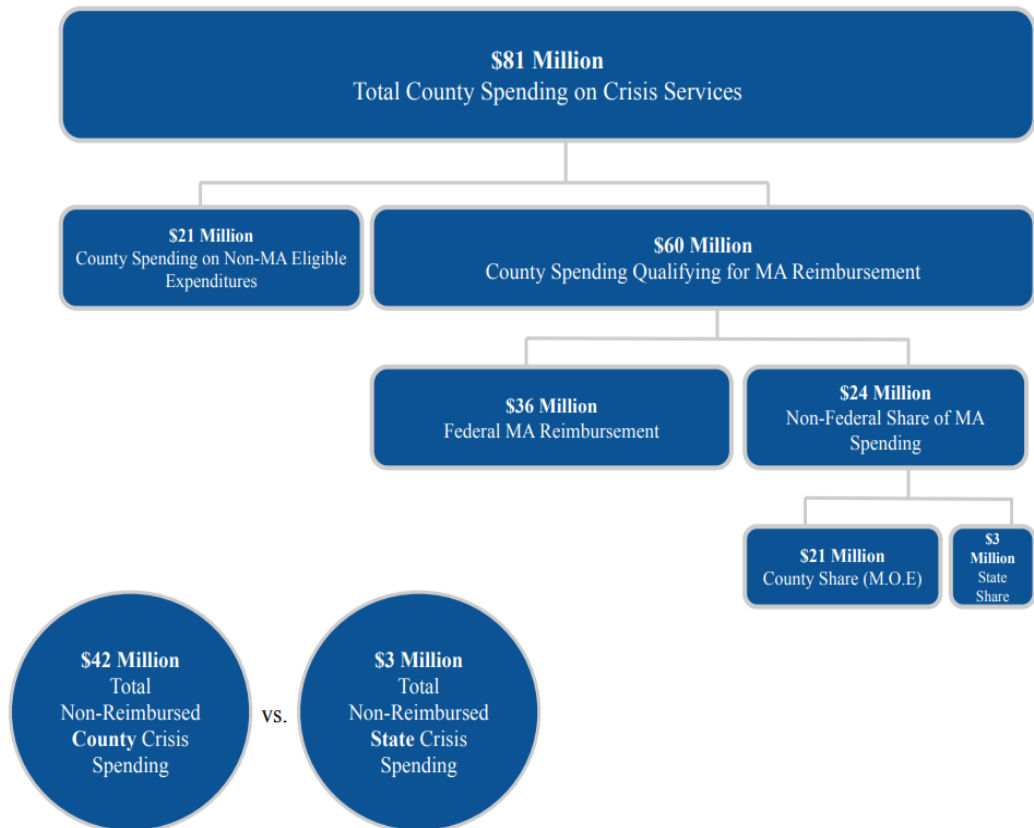


Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

CURRENT STATUS

While the state pays the full cost of most Medicaid services, when it comes to county based CSP and crisis mental health services, the county finances the cost of the services up front and receives Medicaid reimbursement for only the federal share for that service. State funding has not kept pace over the years with increased county costs for services, resulting in counties bearing a disproportionate share of CSP and crisis service costs from county tax levy. There are CSPs in 66 counties that enrolled 4,001 people in 2021. Milwaukee County serves roughly one-third of all CSP enrollments in the state with 17 contracted CSP teams and one county-operated high-fidelity ACT team.

The shift to community-based and recovery-oriented services that leverage public-private partnerships like CSPs has reduced hospitalizations so significantly that the last long-term care units were closed in 2015. The average daily census at the MCMHC went from about 900 in 1990 to less than 50 by 2020. CSPs have made such a remarkable impact that Milwaukee County closed its psychiatric inpatient hospital in 2022 after 142 years of operation and dramatically reduced the cost for services and improved patient outcomes. With fully funded CSPs, Wisconsin counties would be better positioned to achieve positive outcomes and avoid state hospital referrals and other costly placements.





ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide a statewide increase of \$5 million annually to counties for Adult Protective Services (APS).

SUMMARY POINTS

- During the pandemic, assessments to evaluate the adequacy of supervision and services being received for individuals with disabilities increased significantly in 2021 and 2022 and has remains elevated.
- With the population of individuals with disabilities and adult residents age 60+ projected to continue to increase significantly in the next decade, State GPR funding —which has remained flat since 2006 – will be critical to support our older adults and adults-at-risk.
- Milwaukee County is currently projecting a deficit of \$430,000 in APS services in 2024 or \$860,000 over the biennium.
- Historically, caseloads were capped at 20 per month, however, staff is currently averaging between 40-60 cases which has impacted staff retention.
- This critical service provides protection to our community's most vulnerable populations, such as individuals with disabilities and adult residents age 60+ from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.

BACKGROUND

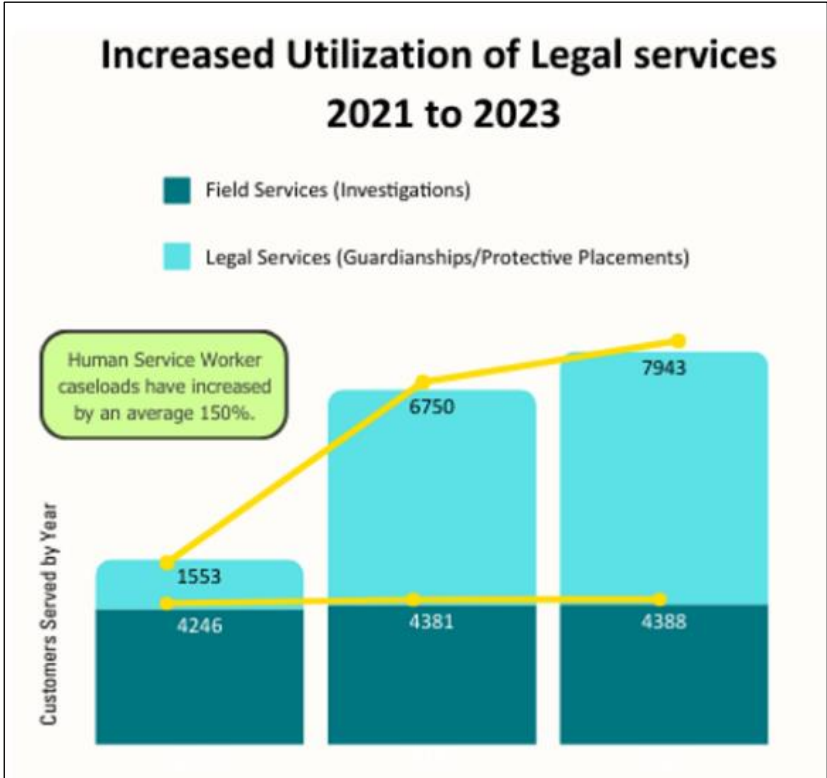
Formed in 2020, Milwaukee County Adult Protective Services (APS) serves individuals at risk ages 18 through end-of-life, helping older adults and adults at risk who have been abused, neglected, or financially exploited. APS is also responsible for guardianships and annual reviews for people in need of protective placement. Milwaukee County has designed its program to make services easier to access, connecting residents to resources more quickly and efficiently.

During the pandemic, assessments to evaluate the adequacy of supervision and services being received for individuals with disabilities increased significantly in 2021 and 2022. State funding for APS was significantly impacted as the state now requires counties to provide Maintenance of Effort for Long Term Care, funding which had previously been utilized in part to support APS. Each county's contribution is based on a percentage of the county's 2006 Basic County Allocation (BCA) under the Community Aids program. Family Care has increased from 35,058 enrolled in 2012 to 52,915 enrolled in 2022 (50.9 percent increase).¹ In August 2022, 5,862 Milwaukee County residents were enrolled in one of these publicly funded long-term care programs, which is 24 percent of all Wisconsin participants.

¹ Bureau, State of Wisconsin. [Informational Paper 51](#). Retrieved February 24, 2023.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities



Referrals for Adults/Elders at Risk to APS increased 84% in 2021, while the number of APS incidents for adults with disabilities rose 38%. Milwaukee County has experienced a 20% increase in calls regarding abuse and neglect in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities due to facility staffing shortages and closures. In 2020, APS added an online referral process which increased access to the APS program, but in turn reduced the amount of APS team members who are in the field responding to the referrals. APS experienced a 10% increase in referrals for customers that have long term care services in place.

The average caseload for APS team members has also increased significantly. Historically, caseloads were capped at 20 per month, however, staff is currently averaging between 40-60 cases which has impacted staff retention. With the

population of individuals with disabilities and adult residents age 60+ projected to continue to increase significantly in the next decade, state GPR funding —which has remained flat since 2006 – will be critical to support our older adults and adults-at-risk.

CURRENT STATUS

The State of Wisconsin 2023-25 Adopted Budget included additional statewide funding of \$1 million annually for APS. The requested action to provide a statewide increase of \$5 million annually to counties for Adult Protective Services in the 25-27 budget is necessary for counties to continue to meet the increased enrollment in Wisconsin’s Medicare Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) for long-term care.



Milwaukee County

2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

YOUTH AIDS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide a statewide increase of 2% in Youth Aids over the biennium, estimated at \$1 million to Milwaukee County. Additionally, provide \$4 million to Milwaukee County to support the operational costs of the new Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth (SRCCCY) and do not enact any increases to the daily rate for Type 1 facilities.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The number of youth placements to state corrections has declined dramatically over the last several years, but the increased daily rate has generated significant budgetary challenges for Milwaukee County, forcing deep cuts to community-based and preventative services for youth.
- Based on the current daily rate, it costs Milwaukee County nearly \$463,000 annually to place one youth at Lincoln Hills, which represents a 138% increase from 2020. The DOC's proposed 82% increase of the daily rate from \$1,268 to \$2,305 would increase anticipated costs by \$5.7 million per year.
- Milwaukee County will need to add 32 new positions to adequately staff the SRCCCY, which will cost almost \$2.5 million annually.
- While Milwaukee County is working toward its goal of zero placements, it is critical that the state-county partnership created through Act 185 is strengthened by building a sustainable funding structure to ensure Milwaukee County can provide service that reduce recidivism and save taxpayer money.

BACKGROUND

After the passage of 2017 Wisconsin Act 185, the state of youth justice in Wisconsin has been uncertain. While Act 185 was a significant and valuable first step, additional action is needed to adequately support transformational changes to Wisconsin's youth justice system.

Act 185 altered Wisconsin's youth justice model by moving away from an approach that utilized large youth prisons like Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, to a county-operated system that focuses on smaller, community-based settings that are closer to home and provide them critical access to their support networks. The Act aimed to ensure youth on a non-serious juvenile offender court order were provided treatment for underlying issues and necessary rehabilitation services to provide them with a sustainable path out of the justice system and reduce recidivism rates, in recognition that community-based support systems are more successful at reducing recidivism at a fraction of the cost of incarceration.² Based on the current daily rate, **it costs Milwaukee County nearly \$463,000 annually to place one youth at Lincoln Hills, which represents a 138% increase from 2020.** The number of youth placements to state corrections has declined dramatically over the last several years, but the increased daily rate has created significant budgetary challenges for Milwaukee County, forcing deep cuts to community-based and preventative services for youth. **The DOC's proposed 82% increase of the daily rate from \$1,268 to \$2,305 would increase anticipated costs by \$5.7 million per year.**

² Fazal, Shaena M. (2014). Safely Home. Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. [Home \(safelyhomecampaign.org\)](http://Home(safelyhomecampaign.org)) Retrieved February 24, 2023.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

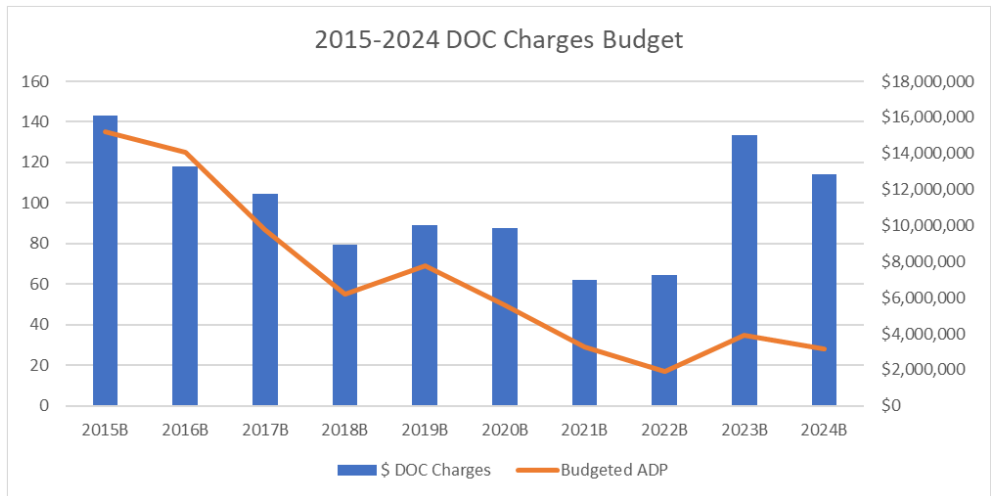
The state-county partnership in Wisconsin Act 185 provided \$40 million through state grants for bonding capacity to support counties’ construction of Secured Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCYs). The original amount provided to support the construction of these facilities did not meet the combined estimated costs identified by Brown, Dane, Milwaukee, and Racine Counties. The first phase of implementing Act 185’s county-state partnership required constructing facilities that provide the necessary local capacity to close Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and bring youth closer to home. The construction of Milwaukee County’s SRCCCY is on schedule to open in early 2026. Milwaukee County has made considerable progress toward the goal of having zero placements in state-operated youth justice facilities by investing in preventative services to youth at the front end of the system, but youth are still being served at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake.

The second phase of implementation of the SRCCCY requires dedicated resources to support the critical rehabilitation services and treatment to address underlying issues. Shifting resources to focus on treatment services within a community-based setting is effective and supported by leading national experts on youth incarceration as it improves outcomes, reduces recidivism, and saves taxpayer dollars.³

CURRENT STATUS

A 2% increase in Youth Aids revenue to counties will support community-based programs for youth who are involved in the justice system, which will improve short and long-term outcomes and reduce recidivism and costs to taxpayers.

Additional state funds of \$4 million are needed during the 2025-27 biennium as Milwaukee County transitions youth from corrections to its SRCCCY, to support the costs related to the daily rate and operational costs needed to provide intensive programming including job training and rehabilitative treatment. These services increase the chances for youth to live a fulfilling life outside of the justice system, contribute to their communities, and reduce the compounding economic and social costs of youth incarceration.



³ A 2020 report by the W. Hayward Burns Institute made this a high priority recommendation: “despite the cost-effectiveness of community-based alternatives, many counties across the nation working to reduce out-of-home placements are still challenged by a lack of appropriate resources. To... sustain community-based alternatives, states should incentivize counties to invest in these alternatives. States that realign funding to counties to support the care and supervision of youth no longer eligible for incarceration in state facilities should require that a substantial portion of the funding be allocated to community-based alternatives to out-of-home placement.”



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

BASIC COUNTY ALLOCATION & CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ALLOCATION

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide 2% increase each year of 2025-2027 biennium to the Basic County Allocation (BCA) and Children and Families Allocation (CFA).

SUMMARY POINTS

- A 2% increase to BCA and CFA will save Milwaukee County taxpayers approximately \$900,000 each year to keep pace with inflation.
- A more sustainable health services funding allocation to counties will save the State of Wisconsin money on higher levels of care that are more expensive, including crisis and emergency services, hospital stays, and other acute health care services.

BACKGROUND

The BCA is a type of federal block grant provided to counties that is not earmarked to serve a specific target population. Counties can determine how much funding to provide to each of the populations eligible to be served with these funds: persons with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health issues, and older adults.

This allocation is funded with 81% general purpose revenue (GPR), 12% Federal Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), and 7% Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) funds. The preliminary BCA award level is based on the estimated Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) SSBG award level; the actual award level depends on action by Congress for the FFY budget.

The Children and Families Allocation (CFA) is the primary state funding source for child welfare services. CFA funds may be used for services related to child abuse and neglect, community-based youth delinquency, and other children and families target populations. CFA funds cannot be used for youth corrections placements.

CURRENT STATUS

A 2% increase to the BCA is estimated to increase to revenue for important health and human services in Milwaukee County by about \$700,000 annually, and a 2% increase to the CFA is estimated to provide roughly \$200,000.

The funding will help pay for programs and services within every area of human services, including mental health services, aging and disability services, and youth services - both community-based services and the detention center, and children's services including Birth to 3 programming. Milwaukee County currently spends about \$407 million each year on programs that the BCA supports. The state's current BCA allocation funds roughly 7% of these essential services.



Milwaukee County

2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide an increase to counties of \$5 million in SFY 2026 and \$10 million in SFY 2027 to administer the Birth to 3 Program, for a total of \$15 million over the biennium and create statutory language to require future funding allocations to reflect actual programmatic costs.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Birth to 3 program is a federally mandated program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which mandates that all eligible children with developmental delays or disabilities be provided with critical services to support their early development.
- The funding model is heavily reliant on county contributions in levy and Basic County Aids (BCA), which together cover 47% of the total budget.
- Wisconsin is one of three states to rely upon localities as the primary funding source for Early Intervention Services.
- In 2010, Wisconsin required providers to shift to an evidenced-based model, which significantly improved outcomes and services but funding was not provided to meet the costs of the new model.
- Compounding the financial impact, private insurance carriers are increasingly denying coverage for Birth to 3 services, requiring counties to subsidize costs with more local funding.
- The need for these services continues to grow – since 2020, Milwaukee County has seen a 13% increase of children served while funding remained flat. To prevent a reduction of services or providers for this critical service, Milwaukee County subsidizes it annually by \$1.5 million in tax levy annually.
- Milwaukee County has lost nearly two-thirds of its local providers since 2018. While only three community-based providers remain in Milwaukee, Milwaukee County is in jeopardy of losing all providers for this mandated service.

BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Early Intervention System is part of a federal entitlement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C. This act mandates that all eligible children with developmental delays or disabilities be provided with critical services to support their early development.

Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and operated at the county level, Birth to 3 serves over 13,000 children annually across Wisconsin. Services provided include special education, physical, occupational, and speech therapies, along with service coordination.

Birth to 3 is often the first program to which children with disabilities and their new parents are connected for early intervention services. In 2023, Milwaukee County's Birth to 3 Program served about 2,600 infants and toddlers in 2023, and the need for these services continues to grow –the number of children served has increased by 13% since 2020.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

In 2010, Wisconsin required providers to shift to an evidenced-based model of practice that helps families better meet the needs of their child. This significantly improved service and outcomes, but it also dramatically increased program costs. The program did not receive a corresponding increase in resources to support this new model.

Despite the program’s importance, the funding model is heavily reliant on county contributions in levy and Basic County Aids (BCA), which together cover 47% of the total budget. The total state allocation (GPR + federal IDEA Part C) to counties has remained relatively flat for several years, despite increasing numbers of children served. Compounding the financial impact, Medicaid and private insurance reimbursements have declined over the last several years. This leaves local counties with an unsustainable financial burden and contributes to service delivery challenges, particularly in underserved areas.

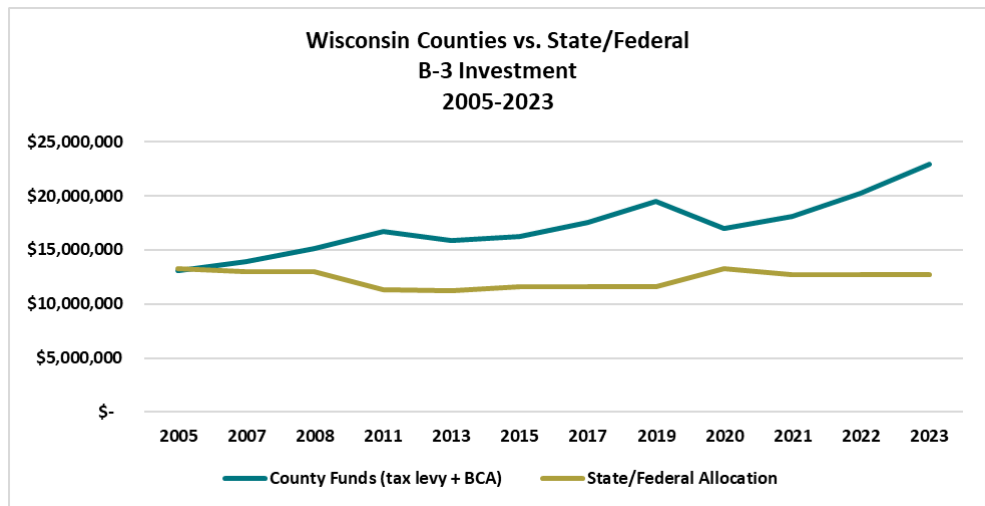
Due to insufficient reimbursement levels, local providers are leaving the network, shrinking the network of providers to a concerning level. Milwaukee County has lost nearly two-thirds of its local providers since 2018. There are now just three community-based providers remaining in Milwaukee. As a smaller pool of agencies continue to operate at a loss, due to insufficient funding for increased costs and enrollment, Milwaukee County is in jeopardy of losing all providers for this mandated service.

This situation is not unique to Milwaukee County. Across the state, provider rate increases are needed to attract and retain a quality workforce and stabilize the network for these services. Additionally, providers of specialized services like vision and hearing must manage individual contracts with counties that often lack the funds to compensate them, creating obstacles for children in accessing these services promptly.

CURRENT STATUS

Wisconsin is one of only three states to rely upon localities as the primary funding source for Early Intervention Services. Additionally, private insurance carriers are increasingly denying coverage for Birth to 3 services, requiring counties to subsidize service costs with even more of their local funding. BCA and levy support from counties for Birth to 3 has increased by nearly \$10 million since 2005.

A statewide annual increase of \$10 million and the establishment of statutory language requiring that Birth to 3 costs be re-evaluated with inflation adjustments included in annual budgets would help stabilize the provider network. As a state mandated service, the Birth to 3 program requires significant partnership with the state to ensure the availability of programming to eligible Wisconsin residents.





Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

Investing in early childhood development, particularly through programs like Birth to 3, offers proven benefits to children, families, and society at large. Research demonstrates that early intervention programs can yield nearly a 10% return on investment through improved school and career outcomes, and reduced costs in education, healthcare, and criminal justice. With this increase, the state/federal allocation would account for 39% of overall funding, rather than 26%, making it even with the percentage contributed by counties. An increase of this size would have an enormous impact on boosting provider rates and retaining quality providers while easing the burden on local governments.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

FLEXIBLE RENTAL ASSISTANCE ALLOCATION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide Flexible Rental Assistance funding to local governments, estimated at \$5.5 million to Milwaukee County over the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Flexible or emergency rental assistance sharply reduces homelessness, provides financial stability, ensures continued participation in the economy, and substantially improves adults' health and children's chances for long-term success.
- Milwaukee County led the nation in our effectiveness to get rental relief out quickly to residents by partnering with non-profit and private sector partners.
- Through federal pandemic funding, Milwaukee County issued over 26,000 payments to keep nearly 14,000 families in their homes, totaling roughly \$75 million.
- Milwaukee County continues to lead the nation with one of the lowest unsheltered homeless populations in the entire country and leads the state as the only local government utilizing local levy funding for housing unsheltered individuals.
- The expiration of federal housing funds will negatively impact the county's ability to keep families in their homes, which negatively impacts our region's economy.
- This funding would provide funds to ensure rent assistance is available to all unsheltered individuals within Milwaukee County.

BACKGROUND

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition⁴, across Wisconsin, there is a shortage of affordable rental homes available to extremely low-income households whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income. Many of these households spend more than half of their income on housing, making them more likely than higher-income renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay rent and experience unstable housing situations like evictions.

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) programs were created at the federal and state levels to respond to the loss of income of many rental households during the COVID-19 pandemic. These critical funds allowed local governments to keep pace with the demand for flexible rental assistance to help its most vulnerable residents and families avoid eviction as the U.S. experienced epidemic levels of housing instability.

The impact of federal rental assistance is indisputable; it sharply reduces homelessness and other hardships, lifts people out of poverty, and substantially improves adults' health and children's chances for long-term success, especially when families are able to move to safer, higher-income neighborhoods with better schools.⁵

⁴ [Wisconsin | National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) Retrieved November 13, 2024.

⁵ [Research Shows Rental Assistance Reduces Hardship and Provides Platform to Expand Opportunity for Low-Income Families | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) Retrieved November 13, 2024.



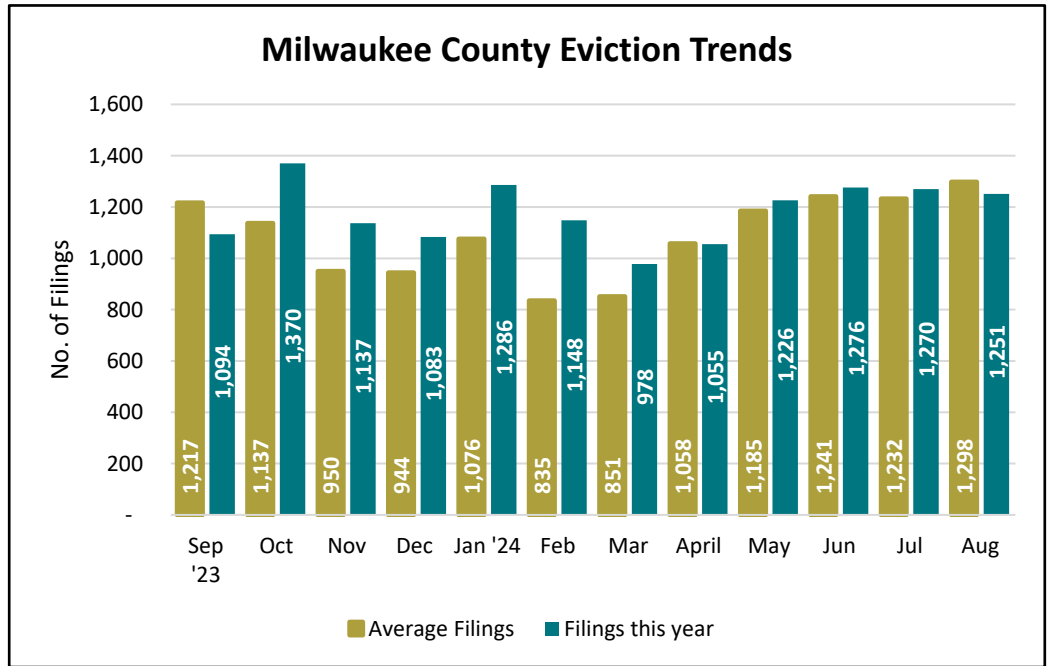
Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

Since the beginning of 2023, Milwaukee County has provided \$485,316 in flexible rent assistance funds to 395 households to obtain housing and assist with move-in costs (e.g. application fees, security deposits, etc.) at an average cost per household of \$1,228 through federal and state American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. A total of \$74,173,808.51 in ERA was provided/paid by Milwaukee County through 26,511 payments. There were 13,566 unique households served, with an average payment of \$2,793.64 and an average assistance amount per household of \$5,467.63.

CURRENT STATUS

There are 193,302 renter households in Milwaukee County (Milwaukee), paying a typical rent of \$954 per month. Flexible rental assistance is an opportunity to provide upstream services and proactive to keep people in their homes before they lost them⁶. If a landlord chooses to file an eviction, they need to provide their tenants with at least five days’ notice (in some cases more) and pay a \$98 filing fee to the courts.⁷ In Milwaukee’s ERA program, 87.74% of recipients identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. Additionally, 79.26% were at or below the federal poverty line or 30% of the area median income. The rate of evictions decreased by 12% in Milwaukee County during part of the pandemic due to a combination of ERA resources, the federal eviction moratorium, and the Right to Counsel program that was also put in place with Milwaukee County’s State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) allotment through ARPA.

Although it is challenging to directly link causation to outcomes, eviction filings would have been significantly higher without the ERA, Right to Counsel, and eviction moratoriums. The pandemic began on March 13, 2020, and by July 2023, new ERA applications were no longer being accepted anywhere in Milwaukee County due to a lack of funding. Overall, filings increased 9% this year compared to an average year before the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸

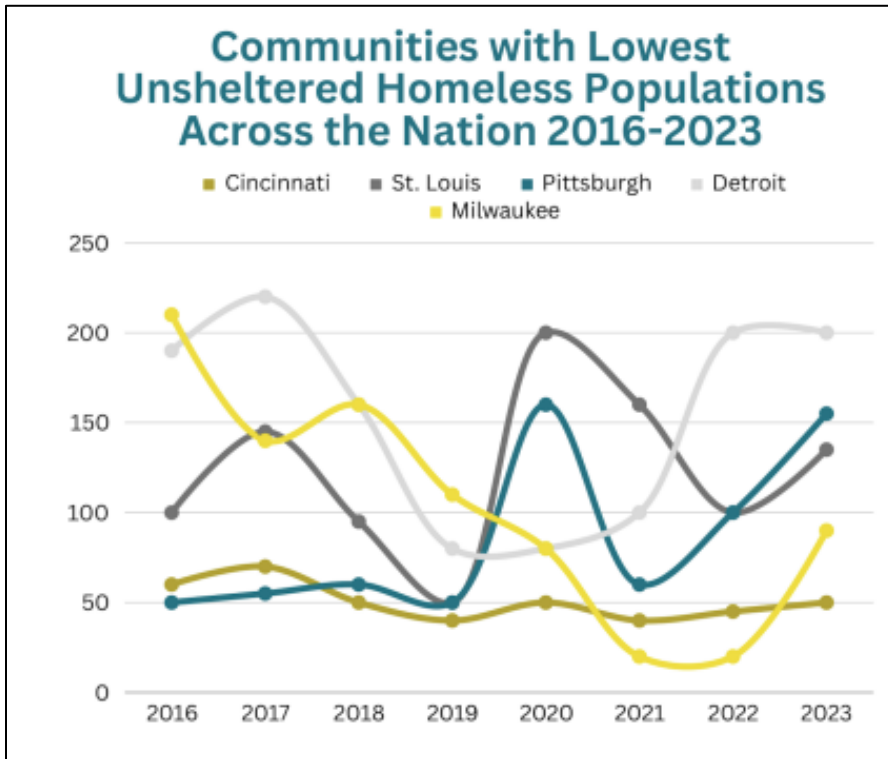


⁶ [County Dispersed \\$80 Million in Emergency Rent Assistance to over 22,600 Unique Households](#) Retrieved November 13, 2024.
^{7,8} <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/milwaukee-wi/> Retrieved November 12, 2024.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

Milwaukee County is taking the lead in the state prioritizing the use of local levy funding for housing unsheltered individuals in Milwaukee County, this funding would provide funds to ensure rent assistance is available to all unsheltered individuals within Milwaukee County. It would enable Milwaukee County to continue being one of the most successful communities in the entire nation relative to housing unsheltered individuals.



Milwaukee County continues to be one of the best-performing communities nationwide with the lowest unsheltered homeless population. It ranked second with 96 unsheltered individuals in 2023, a 53.6% reduction from 2016 (207 unsheltered individuals).

State funding is necessary to ensure that rent assistance is available to all unsheltered individuals within Milwaukee County, which will positively impact the economy of both the region and state.



DIRECT GAP FINANCING FUNDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide Direct Gap Financing Funds for Affordable Housing Projects to local governments, estimated at \$1 million during the biennium, and increase the level of local control by local governments for use of these funds.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Safe, affordable housing has significant positive impacts on a range of outcomes for individuals and households, including economic mobility, health, education, and a sense of community.
- There is a statewide affordable housing crisis in Wisconsin, with a need for 46,000 affordable housing units in Milwaukee County alone, according to WHEDA.
- Milwaukee County has invested \$44,300,030 in one-time federal funding for affordable housing since 2021, which directly supported 1,006 housing units, 759 (76%) of which are affordable housing units.
- With the sunset of ARPA funds in 2026, Milwaukee County will have to provide gap financing for affordable housing projects through local tax revenue, which is extremely limited and must disproportionately fund mandated services.

BACKGROUND

Housing is a social determinant of health, as safe, stable housing is closely correlated to physical and mental health outcomes, including chronic conditions and life expectancy⁹. Affordable housing is a term used to describe housing units that are affordable for low- and moderate-income households. While access to safe, affordable housing has significant positive impacts on a range of outcomes for individuals and households, including economic mobility, health, education, and a sense of community and belonging, there are historic barriers to accessing affordable housing and homeownership that contribute to continued racial disparities in housing-related outcomes¹⁰.

There is an affordable housing crisis in Wisconsin according to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development (WHEDA). Statewide, there is a need for 150,000 affordable housing units; in Milwaukee County alone, the need is more than 46,000¹¹.

To address this crisis, Milwaukee County has invested \$44,300,030 in one-time federal funding for affordable housing since 2021, which directly supported 1,006 housing units, 759 (76%) of which are affordable housing units. A significant portion of this investment came from Milwaukee County's State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) allotment through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), through which over \$30 million was invested into housing related projects ranging from homeless prevention, affordable multi-family housing developments, and homeownership programs. Milwaukee County has also utilized funds granted through the State of Wisconsin's competitive ARPA opportunities to complete innovative affordable housing projects that have a targeted impact. As a result, Milwaukee County's average gap-financing award since 2021 is

⁹ [How can housing influence health?](#) Retrieved November 11, 2024.

¹⁰ [FHEO Table Talks Learning Brief: Advancing Racial Equity and Fair Housing](#). Retrieved November 12, 2024.

¹¹ [Affordable housing shortage reaches 'crisis level,' WHEDA claims](#) Retrieved November 13, 2024.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

\$2,407,695¹², which is significantly larger compared to the financing awards prior to 2021 (\$700,000).

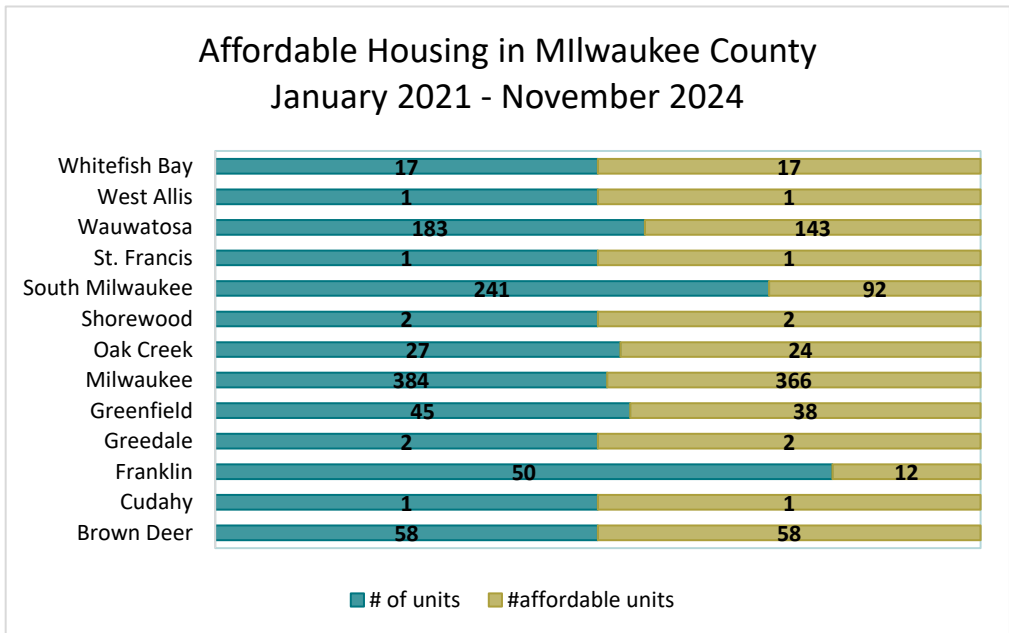
Milwaukee County has a long history of partnering with other local governments, developers, and community-based partners to ensure that affordable housing projects are planned and implemented to maximize cost efficiency and increase racial equity in affordable housing. In 2021, Milwaukee County pursued a strategy to improve the housing stock and homeownership rates around King Park to completely transform the neighborhood, which has been in decline for over a generation. Milwaukee County received a \$7.5 million ARPA grant from the State of Wisconsin’s Neighborhood Investment Fund to build 100 homes in the King Park neighborhood and worked with Community Development Alliance (CDA) to administer a competitive process through which it selected Habitat for Humanity and the Emem Group to construct the homes. Partners worked with the City of Milwaukee to acquire all the vacant lots prior to construction.

These affordable housing development projects are mostly in high opportunity areas, some of which are in suburban communities that had never received funds for affordable housing projects from Milwaukee County. These projects include Whitefish Bay Apartments, Layton Reserve, Woodale Crossing, Bucyrus Campus Redevelopment, Canal Transit Housing, and Walnut Glen, among others. One project provided \$3 million to rehabilitate tax foreclosures in suburban communities to then be sold to first time homebuyers. The rehabilitation of these homes includes a job training program component with residents of the Community Reintegration Center (formerly the House of Correction).

CURRENT STATUS

With the sunset of ARPA funds in 2026, Milwaukee County will have to provide gap financing for affordable housing projects through local tax revenue, which is extremely limited and must disproportionately fund mandated services. The requested \$1 million in gap financing for affordable housing development projects in Milwaukee County will improve economic mobility, health, and education outcomes.

Conversely, if affordable housing development projects are not able to continue at the pace needed, the result will be more costly—increases in evictions, homelessness, housing insecurity, lower attendance in school for children, and, more than likely, an increase in crime.



¹² Does not include self-developed units, tax foreclosure rehabs, or the Hillview development.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

INVESTING IN JUSTICE: COURTHOUSE COMPLEX

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide 50% of the necessary investment for the design and construction of the new public safety building in the courthouse complex through General Purpose Revenue (GPR) and the state's bonding authority.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Milwaukee County is the largest circuit court in the State with 47 branches and 22 court commissioners: its total incoming cases in 2022 was 107,305. Almost 15% of all cases in Wisconsin are facilitated in this building-- more than Dane, Waukesha, and Brown combined.
- The Public Safety Building in the courthouse complex is severely outdated, functionally obsolete, has significant constitutional, public safety, and security issues. This funding request is the result of a unique, once-in-a-century need to replace and update critical structures where state-mandated services are provided.
- The Milwaukee County courthouse complex is the nexus of Milwaukee's public safety continuum and significantly impacts the region's public safety outcomes.
- State assistance with capital funding for a county asset that executes state mandated public safety services is similar to the state-county partnership under WI Act 185. In addition, the state has also partnered with the county to build unique public safety assets that have a regional impact, such as the Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine.

BACKGROUND

As an administrative arm of the state, Wisconsin statutes require Milwaukee County to perform many functions for the state. The state of Wisconsin sets specific standards that counties must abide by including providing space for various courts and programs. Within the Courthouse Complex, the Public Safety Building is the facility where Milwaukee County delivers many of these mandated services, such as criminal courts, the District Attorney office, public defenders, pre-trial services, and more.

The existing Milwaukee County Public Safety Building was built in 1929 by and for the city and county. Milwaukee County fully took over the building in 1971. The 322,000 square foot building is home to the Milwaukee County criminal courts, County Sheriff and District Attorney's offices, and other related uses.

Milwaukee County is the largest circuit court in the State with 47 branches and 22 court commissioners: its total incoming cases in 2022 was 107,305. Almost 15% (14.7) of all incoming cases in Wisconsin are facilitated in this building-- more than Dane, Waukesha, and Brown combined). Milwaukee County plays a critical role in the public safety continuum by coordinating and delivering various services that ensure the safety and well-being of its residents. These services are often facilitated in county facilities, such as the Public Safety Building, as well as within the community.

After nearly a decade of assessing a multitude of facility and operational challenges, Milwaukee County has



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

identified a critical need to re-envision and invest in the Courthouse Complex facilities. The current Public Safety Building is crumbling, inefficient, and poses risks to community safety and justice¹³. Therefore, it requires removal and replacement with a new building that will house criminal courts and other services. Due to the integrated nature of the Courthouse Complex facilities, a new building necessitates renovations in the Historic Courthouse and Criminal Justice Facility as well.

The building is severely outdated, functionally obsolete, has significant public safety and security issues, and does not reflect the quality of service for which the County is responsible. There is over \$75M in deferred system replacements, not including code and safety issues. Upgrading the building to current code would cost an estimated \$150M, which still would not address inefficient and unsafe layout of the facility. With inflationary factors considered, deferred maintenance and code compliance upgrades would cost an estimated \$334M without resolving unusable, obsolete building space issues. The 2016 Milwaukee County Courthouse Advisory Group recommended replacing the Public Safety Building with a new building that will house criminal court services. Due to the integrated nature of the Courthouse Complex facilities, this necessitates renovations within the Historic Courthouse and the Criminal Justice Facility to maximize efficiency and resources. These recommendations were later confirmed in a 2019 follow-up study.

Removing the Public Safety Building and making necessary renovations throughout the Courthouse Complex is not a matter of if, but when.

CURRENT STATUS

A welcoming and adaptable Courthouse Complex that embodies justice, equity, safety, and community well-being and addresses the holistic needs of the public, systems-involved individuals, and staff now and in the future. Milwaukee County's goal is to create welcoming Courthouse Complex facilities that prioritize equity and the needs of the Milwaukee community by fostering safety, accessibility, efficiency, and restorative practices through an adaptable design that is informed by stakeholder engagement and accommodates state-mandated services and comprehensive resources that uphold justice and fairness for everyone.

The request to provide 50% of the necessary investment for the design and construction of the new public safety building in the courthouse complex through General Purpose Revenue (GPR) and the state's bonding authority is necessary for the State of Wisconsin to fulfill its partnership to deliver state court services in the Milwaukee County Circuit Court and would **benefit all services throughout the public safety continuum.**



¹³ Hammel, Green and Abrahamson Architects, Justice Planning Associates, and IBC Engineering. (2016, February 8). Milwaukee County Courthouse Project Final Report.



PATROL SERVICES- MILWAUKEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (MCSO)

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide \$15,375,809 in SFY 2026 and \$17,172,710 in SFY 2027 to Milwaukee County for patrol services on our federal and state highways, for a total of \$32,548,519 over the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- ***Milwaukee County is the only county required to serve as the primary law and traffic enforcement agency on the freeway system*** – all other counties rely upon Wisconsin State Patrol.
- Cost increases continue to exceed funding received from the state for Expressway Patrol Services, which is not sustainable and negatively impacts services across the public safety continuum, including diverting resources from other state mandated public safety services.
- The state provides Milwaukee County \$1 million for Expressway Policing Aids while the service costs \$15 million, requiring Milwaukee County to subsidize the remainder with local levy and other funds.
- In 2023, MCSO responded to over 34,000 calls for service on the freeway in Milwaukee County and issued 25,276 citations.
- Adding to the cost, MCSO conducts criminal investigations for incidents that occur on or adjacent to the expressway, which requires a significant amount of personnel time. In other counties, state patrol utilizes municipal law enforcement for those costly criminal investigations.

BACKGROUND

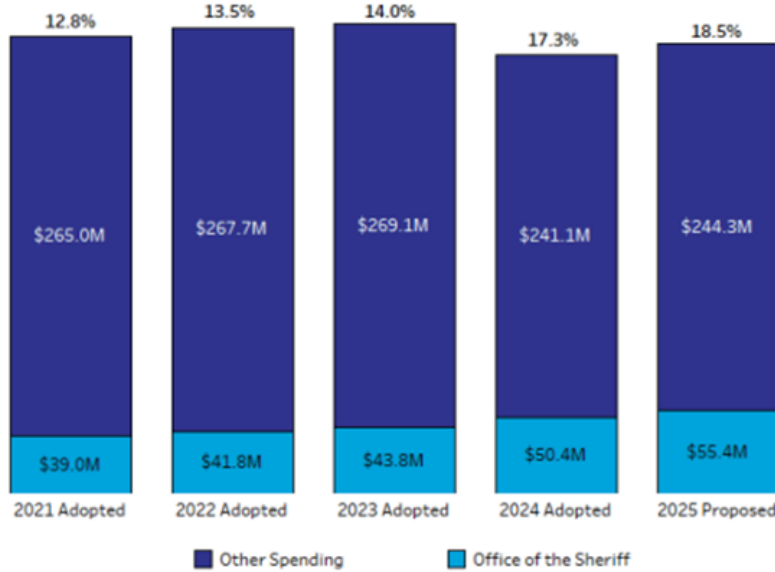
The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Expressway Patrol Division provides law enforcement services for the 158 miles of federal and state expressways located in Milwaukee County, county parks and parkways, and the Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport. Milwaukee County had over seven billion vehicle miles traveled in 2023 representing over 10% of the statewide total which was 30% more than any other county in the state.

MCSO's patrol of the expressway is a service mandated by the state. Milwaukee County is the only county required to serve as the primary law and traffic enforcement agency on the freeway system— all other counties rely upon Wisconsin State Patrol. The State of Wisconsin provides \$1 million in Expressway Police Aids, while the service costs at least \$15 million, requiring Milwaukee County to subsidize the remainder with local levy and other funds.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

Figure 5: Property tax levy, sheriff versus other county functions



Source: Milwaukee County budget documents

The Wisconsin Policy Forum highlighted the steady increase of local property tax levy required to support the mandated services in the Office of the Sheriff. The Wisconsin Policy Forum warned that “unless new strategies are developed to control annual cost increases in the public safety function, the future impact of Act 12 in helping to resolve the county’s structural deficit may be eclipsed”. The projected cost increases within the Office of the Sheriff alone will consume an additional \$21 million in local property tax support by 2027.

CURRENT STATUS

The cost of maintaining a highly trained expressway patrol force and necessary equipment continues to rise. Competitive pay is necessary to attract and retain qualified law enforcement officers. Technologies to communicate, investigate, compile data, analyze data, and store data continue to increase. One example includes body worn cameras, which were implemented at MCSO in 2020 and expanded in 2022 resulting in over \$800,000 of additional costs. Providing this service also requires local funding for squad car repairs and gasoline which have averaged \$1.25m/year over the past five years. Purchasing squad cars incur an average cost of \$1m/year for the past ten years to local taxpayers.

Cost increases continue to exceed funding received from the state for Expressway Patrol Services, which is not sustainable and negatively impacts public safety as it diverts resources from other public safety mandates and services across the public safety continuum. Providing \$32,548,519 to Milwaukee County for patrol will ensure that MCSO can continue providing adequate law enforcement. It will also provide a safer community through more efficient, responsive, and accountable law enforcement services.



COURT SERVICES- MILWAUKEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (MCSO)

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide \$7,200,000 in SFY 2026 and \$7,500,000 in SFY 2027 to Milwaukee County for facilities security, courtroom bailiffs, and detainee/defendant transport/escort services in the Milwaukee County Circuit Court System, for a total of \$14,700,00 over the biennium, which represents 50% of all bailiff costs in Milwaukee County.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Due to Wisconsin Supreme Court standards (SCR Chapter 68.07(1)(2)), Milwaukee County is required to utilize 114 bailiffs to staff court operations, which is larger than roughly 90% of counties' entire sworn force.
- A 2006 National Center for State Courts (NCSC) audit determined that the Milwaukee County Circuit Court System's bailiff staffing level is "inadequate" and "an immediate increase in bailiff staffing is therefore an absolute necessity."
- This need is even more dire today – the number of felony cases has increased by over 45% since 2019 (pre-pandemic), while the number of deputies assigned to court services has remained flat since 2006.
- At the same time, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office receives no state revenue for court services, and without additional funds, the County budget crisis will result in inadequate security of courtrooms and other court facilities.
- Milwaukee County faces significant staffing challenges as it attempts to fulfill competing state mandates that require a significant amount of public safety resources.

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Circuit Court system consists of 47 circuit court judges and 22 court commissioners, who process more than 150,000 case files per year. There are five divisions and two administrative sections: Children's Division, Civil Division, Criminal Division, Jury Management, Probate, Administrative Services, and the Office of the Chief Judge.

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office is responsible for the physical security of this system, including facilities and external perimeters of the (main) Milwaukee County Courthouse, downtown Public Safety Building, and the separately located Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Center (Children's Court), courtroom security, and detainee/defendant management.

CURRENT STATUS

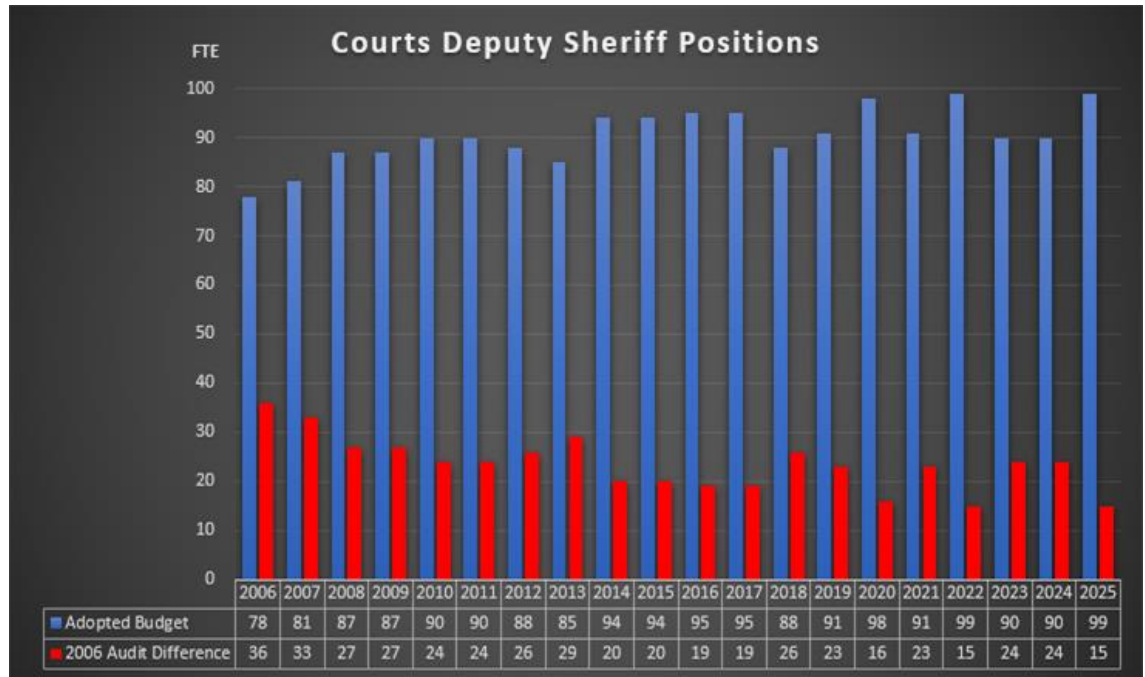
SCR Chapter 68.07(1)(2), which defines Wisconsin Supreme Court standards related to court operations, recommends, regarding court security, facilities and staffing, indicates the following:



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

- (1) *COURTROOM.* There should be no fewer than two sworn officers in each courtroom and each court commissioner hearing room when court is in session. The judicial officer may expressly direct otherwise.
- (2) *PUBLIC ENTRANCE STAFFING.* The public entrance should be staffed by at least one armed, sworn officer with access to law enforcement communications by radio, and other qualified court security officers as necessary. At least one sworn officer should be available to patrol the public areas and assist with public entrance staffing as needed.

Further, the NCSC audit report recommended a net increase of 36 bailiff positions assigned to Milwaukee County courts, from 78 to 114. While bailiff positions have increased, MCSO is still budgeted for just 90 bailiff positions and remains short by 24 positions of the NCSC’s recommendation.



While the NCSC audit was conducted 18 years ago, it is more urgent today than it was then because the First Judicial District has grown since then and today has over 5,100 active felony cases, and a 1,600 felony case backlog.

Based on the anticipated cost of deputy sheriff positions calculated for the 2025 budget, a net increase of 24 bailiff positions and the ongoing security of the Milwaukee County Courthouse, related facilities and their perimeters, as well as appropriately staffed courtrooms, would require \$29,295,257 (\$14,487,871 in SFY 2026 and \$14,807,386 in SFY 2027) in funding for the Court Services Division. The outcome of this additional funding will be improved community safety by helping ensure the efficient movement of court cases. This proposed funding includes \$1,378,480, 50% of MCSO’s contract with Allied Universal, the private security contractor responsible for mobile transports of detainees.



STATE COURT-APPOINTED DEFENSE ATTORNEYS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide \$2.5 million each year to Milwaukee County to fund state court-appointed defense attorneys when there is no attorney from the Office of the State Public Defender (SPD) available to produce taxpayer savings of \$5 million over the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- There has been a dramatic increase in the need for private bar attorneys to take appointments in criminal cases in recent years.
- Milwaukee County will pay over \$2.1 million for private attorneys who were appointed by state court judges in criminal defense cases in 2024 alone.
- The cost for private attorneys appointed by state court judges in criminal defense cases has nearly doubled between 2022 and 2023 and is expected to increase to \$2.5 million in 2025.
- State funding would enable Milwaukee to utilize local levy on other important public safety services.

BACKGROUND

Circuit court judges can appoint private attorneys to criminal defense cases when there is not an assistant state public defender available to ensure that all criminal defendants are represented. SPD is notified when there is an attorney appointed by the court. Private attorneys must be eligible to accept criminal appointments under the state's SPD rules and must be approved by SPD before the case reaches resolution. In recent years, there has been an agreement that private attorneys make the same hourly rate and covered expenses whether they are appointed by SPD or Milwaukee County. While there is an incentive for attorneys to take appointments through the SPD to access additional resources such as investigators, social workers, and paralegals, some attorneys still only take appointments when the judge makes the request at county expense.

There are financial and human costs to this problem. If there are not enough attorneys available to take criminal defense appointments, defendants may remain in custody longer and victims must wait longer for a resolution, slowing down the entire criminal justice process. Milwaukee County is not alone in experiencing this problem—counties around the state, particularly rural counties, as well as other jurisdictions nationwide, are working to address public defender attorney shortages. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin is convening a work group to develop solutions.

CURRENT STATUS

A shortage of SPD attorneys coupled with an increase in cases involving serious crimes has dramatically increased the need for private attorneys to take appointments in criminal cases. Milwaukee County will pay over \$2.1 million for private attorneys who were appointed by state court judges in criminal defense cases in 2024 alone. This cost nearly doubled between 2022 and 2023 and is expected to increase to \$2.5 million in 2025. The increasing cost that Milwaukee County must pay for defense attorney appointments is unsustainable.



FUNDING FOR QUALIFIED STATE COURT-APPOINTED INTERPRETERS

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide \$1.5 million each year to Milwaukee County to fund required interpreters in state court proceedings, for a total of \$3 million over the biennium, and amend Wisconsin Statute 885.38(8)(A)(1) to say: “The county in which the circuit court is located **shall pay no more than 30% of the expenses in all proceedings** before a circuit court and when the clerk of circuit court uses a qualified interpreter under sub. (3) (d).”

Further amend Wisconsin Statute 885.38(2) to say “The supreme court shall establish the procedures and policies for the recruitment, training, and certification of persons to act as qualified interpreters in a court proceeding **with the State of Wisconsin to reimburse counties at a rate of 50%** for the fees imposed for the training and certification, and for the coordination, discipline, retention, and training of those interpreters.”

SUMMARY POINTS

- Costs for contracted court interpreters continue to increase, in addition to the overall need, while the pool of qualified interpreters decreases.
- The fees to certify interpreters can be cost-prohibitive, contributing to a mismatch between demand and the number of qualified interpreters.
- Milwaukee County is projecting that it will pay nearly \$1 million in 2024 for qualified interpreters in circuit court proceedings. This cost more than doubled between 2021 and 2022 and has increased every year since.
- Counties are forced to compete with one another for this limited pool of resources, which is challenging for Milwaukee County as the county is one of the lowest paying districts with the highest volume. In addition, due to budgetary pressures, although Milwaukee County recently increased rates to maintain services, the county does not reimburse for mileage similar to other counties.
- When the current rules and formula was established, counties paid for approximately 30% of interpreter costs; today counties pay approximately 70% of these costs.

BACKGROUND

Per Wisconsin Statute 885.38, “the county in which the circuit court is located **shall pay the expenses in all proceedings before a circuit court and when the clerk of circuit court uses a qualified interpreter.**”

Court interpreters must complete a difficult and costly three-part training through the National Center for State Courts to become certified. Interpreters must pay up to \$600 in fees¹⁴, which can be cost-prohibitive for many potential court interpreters. In addition, the pass rate for certification is low and most interpreters need multiple attempts. Counties must maintain a percentage of certified interpreters to meet Supreme Court of Wisconsin requirements. The state uses an outdated formula based on the volume of cases statewide to determine how much each county will be reimbursed each year for qualified court interpreters.

¹⁴ [Wisconsin Court System - Electronic payment of court fees](#) Retrieved November 11, 2024.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

This problem has been building in recent years: post-pandemic, the need for court interpreters has increased while the pool of qualified interpreters has not proportionately increased. Most qualified interpreters who independently contract with the Milwaukee County Circuit Court live outside of Milwaukee County and their fees have continued to increase, but the amount of money to distribute to the counties hasn't changed to keep up with the rising costs of interpreters. Milwaukee County (District 1) is one of the lowest-paying districts but has the highest volume. Despite a recent increase to maintain services, Milwaukee does not reimburse for mileage as other counties. This confluence of factors has led to Milwaukee County having to compete with other counties for the limited pool of certified interpreters.

CURRENT STATUS

Milwaukee County is projecting that it will pay nearly \$1 million in 2024 for qualified interpreters in circuit court proceedings. *This cost more than doubled between 2021 and 2022 and has increased every year since.* When the current rules and formula were established, counties paid for approximately 30% of interpreter costs; today counties pay approximately 70% of these costs. Fulfilling this request on the 25-27 budget will restore the State of Wisconsin's responsibility to provide qualified interpreters for state court proceedings, which has increased significantly in recent years and is unsustainable as there is a significant shortage of qualified interpreters.



DAILY REIMBURSEMENT RATE AND REIMBURSEMENT FLOOR FOR STATE INMATES IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY CORRECTIONAL SETTINGS

REQUESTED ACTION

Revise Wisconsin Statute § 302.27(1) to increase the contract rate to fully cover costs by changing the language from: "The rate under any such contract may not exceed \$60 per person per day." to " The rate under any such contract shall cover actual costs plus a 15% indirect cost rate to be increased based on bi-annual re-estimates of actual costs provided to the State DOC by local units of government."

SUMMARY POINTS

- The contract rate of \$60 per person per day has not increased since it was put in place almost 34 years ago in 1991.¹⁵
- Milwaukee County is subsidizing the state by \$50 per inmate per day to house DOC inmates at the CRC, which will total almost \$1 million in both 2024 and 2025.
- If the daily rate is not increased based on actual costs with a 15% indirect cost rate effective in 2025, the CRC will most likely not be able to continue to house state DOC inmates.

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Community Reintegration Center (CRC), formerly the House of Correction, has historically contracted with the State of Wisconsin to house Department of Corrections (DOC) inmates. This contractual relationship with local units of government has been essential to the state during periods of time when there were not enough correctional beds for the number of inmates that were sentenced. The contract rate of \$60 per person per day has not increased since it was put in place almost 34 years ago in 1991 Wisconsin Act 39 while costs have increased. Conversely, DOC utilizes a contract rate that charges counties for a rate that is at cost for county youth placements.

CURRENT STATUS

There are three primary drivers of the increase in costs to house residents at the CRC, including DOC inmates: health care, correctional officer wages, and food.

Incarcerated individuals often present a higher burden of illness compared to the general population, including mental health conditions, substance abuse disorders, chronic diseases, and infectious diseases¹⁶. Correctional-based health care costs are increasing around the country partly because of improved understanding about the correlation between health and behavior, including the risk for violence. In Milwaukee County, the contract with its correctional health care provider is over \$24 million/year and typically increases 3% (\$300,000-\$400,000) every year; however, in 2024, there was a request and demonstrated need for an additional \$1 million increase to cover costs to continue.

¹⁵ [91Act039.pdf](#) Retrieved November 12, 2024.

¹⁶ [Prison Health: A Deep Dive into the Healthcare of the US Jail System](#) Retrieved November 12, 2024.



Milwaukee County

2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

Correctional officer wages for CRC staff were increased by 10.5% effective Jan 7, 2024, as Milwaukee County was consistently losing correctional officers to other counties because of higher wages. Also in 2024, the cost of food more than doubled from \$2.7 million in 2023 to \$6.4 million in 2024 due to a combination of inflation and new standards around food service for more nutritious and higher caloric meals.

Most of the DOC inmates who reside in the CRC will return to live in Milwaukee County. Because the CRC has a significant capacity to house DOC inmates, the loss it experiences on the current daily rate ceiling of \$60 is more impactful than for smaller local units of government that do not house nearly as many DOC inmates in correctional settings.

The CRC is projected to lose almost \$1 million to house DOC inmates in 2025. Milwaukee County cannot sustain this annual loss: if the daily rate is not increased based on actual costs effective in 2025, the CRC will most likely not be able to continue to house state DOC inmates.

Year	DOC Transfer Days Served	Current Rate	Break Even Rate	+/-	Current Revenue	Break Even Revenue	Gap +/-
2022	7,683	\$ 51.46	79.85	\$ 28.39	\$ 395,367.18	613,487.55	\$ 218,120.37
2023	14,385	\$ 51.46	81.48	\$ 30.02	\$ 740,252.10	1,172,089.80	\$ 431,837.70
2024	19,661	\$ 51.46	98.32	\$ 46.86	\$ 1,011,755.06	1,933,069.52	\$ 921,314.46
2025	19,661	\$ 60.00	106.54	\$ 46.54	\$ 1,179,660.00	2,094,682.94	\$ 915,022.94
						Total	\$ 2,486,295.47

Source: Milwaukee County Budget Office



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

MILWAUKEE COUNTY ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

REQUESTED ACTION

Convert 12.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) ARPA positions to General Purpose Revenue (GPR); convert 1.0 FTE grant-funded position to GPR; and add 3.0 FTE GPR positions. This is an approximate personnel cost of \$3,350,000 per year.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Wisconsin is facing a crisis in our criminal justice system due in part to a lack of prosecutors.
- In 2022 and 2023 combined, 37 Milwaukee ADAs resigned from Milwaukee County – over 25% of its legal staff. Half of current ADAs have less than five years of legal experience.
- Recent workload analysis illustrates the necessity to convert the 12.5 positions funded through ARPA and add four ADA positions to execute the office’s basic functions, address the criminal court backlog, and respond to current conditions related to domestic violence and gun violence.
- The Milwaukee County’s District Attorney’s Office is projecting a 10% staff reduction in 2025 due to the loss of ARPA funding if it does not receive additional state support.
- Milwaukee County will subsidize the District Attorney’s Office by \$8.3 million in property tax levy in 2025, which has increased by 54% since 2020.

BACKGROUND

The criminal justice system is made up of different actors with fundamentally different but interconnected roles and responsibilities. The entire public safety continuum is negatively affected when one part of that system is under-resourced or operating inefficiently. These investments are critical to ensure Wisconsin meets its constitutional obligations to citizens impacted by the justice system, to enhance public safety, and reduce the fiscal impact on local governments. In 1990, the State of Wisconsin recognized the instrumental role of district attorneys in maintaining and improving public safety in our state and made Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs) and Deputy District Attorneys (DDAs) state employees, which their salaries and benefits becoming state funded.

Wisconsin is facing a crisis in our criminal justice system due in part to a lack of prosecutors. Delays and increased case backlogs negatively impact victims and public safety. A lack of funding, inflationary pressures, and an increasing case backlog have created significant challenges as Milwaukee County struggles to attract experienced prosecutors and retain existing ADAs.

In 2022 and 2023 combined, 37 Milwaukee ADAs resigned from Milwaukee County – over 25% of its legal staff. Most of these prosecutors left the office for higher paying jobs, including several in other units of government. In addition, half of current ADAs have less than five years of legal experience. In 2012, the Wisconsin State Legislature prioritized the function of Wisconsin Assistant District Attorneys and created the “pay progression” system. Additional investment in the pay progression system, while providing salary increases for ADAs will strengthen our law enforcement system, improve public safety, and reduce the criminal court backlog by attracting and retaining experienced prosecutors.



Milwaukee County

2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

CURRENT STATUS

Currently, the starting pay for ADAs and DDAs is \$36.72 per hour (\$76,377 annually), which was increased in 2023 partly due to the recent market study conducted by the State of Wisconsin. The maximum pay is \$76.02 per hour (\$158,121 annually).¹⁷

State of Wisconsin General Purpose Revenue (GPR) funding currently supports 90 ADA and DDAs in Milwaukee County. Additionally, there is one DNA evidence prosecutor whose position is supported entirely through surcharges. State funding also supports six clerk positions in Milwaukee County, supported by a special prosecution clerk fee. Milwaukee County also has one specialized ADA for sexually violent crimes that is funded through the federal Violence Against Women Act, the funds for which will expire on June 30, 2025. All other funding is provided by Milwaukee County.

Funds from the state’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation currently support 12.5 ADAs for backlogs due to the pandemic. ARPA funding for all 12.5 ADAs will expire on July 31, 2025. In addition, a recent workload analysis identified a need for four (one conversion and three new) targeted ADA positions to respond to current conditions: two in the domestic violence unit and two in the gun violence unit.

Scenarios	Total Hours Needed	Available FTEs (1,162 Annual Hours/ADA)*	Number of Hours Needed Above Available FTEs	Additional FTEs Needed
With conversion of the 12.5 ARPA-funded FTEs	107,557.52	89	4,139.42	3.56
Without conversion of the 12.5 ARPA-funded FTEs	107,557.52	76.5	18,664.50	16

Source: DOA State Prosecutors Office Workload Analysis, 2024

This request for the state to support critical ADA positions in Milwaukee County is urgent, as the functionality of the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office is central to maintaining and improving public safety.

¹⁷ [STATE OF WISCONSIN COMPENSATION PLAN 2023-2025](#) Retrieved November 7, 2024.



MILWAUKEE COUNTY SPECIAL PROSECUTION CLERKS

REQUESTED ACTION

Authorize an additional \$75,000 to the program in year one and an additional \$80,000 to the program in year two for a total of \$155,000 during the biennium, *as reflected in the Department of Administration's 2025-27 Agency Budget Request.*

SUMMARY POINTS

- The clerks covered under Special Prosecution Clerks program are assigned to support Milwaukee County Speedy Violent Crimes courts, Operation Ceasefire, and homicide courts.
- The request for an additional \$155,000 for these positions during the 25-27 state budget is necessary to reduce the gap between the state funding level and actual costs for the positions.
- These positions are critical support positions that allow cases to be entered and reviewed by Assistant District Attorneys, as well as support after initial case entry to have cases move smoothly through the criminal justice system.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 978.13(d), the State of Wisconsin funds six full time equivalent (FTE) clerical positions in the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office to support the prosecution of violent, gun, and drug crimes. The Special Prosecution Clerks program is funded in part through a \$3.50 surcharge that is imposed in civil filings in Milwaukee County, under Wis. Stat. s. 814.86(1m). Wis. State § 20.475.

In previous years, funding for the positions has been limited to \$305,000 per State Fiscal Year (SFY); however, each year, actual expenses for the Special Prosecution Clerks positions substantially exceed this amount. For example, actual expenses were \$367,748.97 for claims submitted in SFY 2022; \$389,470.29 for claims submitted in SFY 2023; and \$373,174.40 for claims submitted in SFY 2024, yet each year recovery was limited to \$305,000. Based on projected increases in the salaries and benefits of Milwaukee County employees, it is anticipated that actual costs will be even higher in SFYs 2026 and 2027.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the collection of the civil filing fees. In SFY 2019, collections were \$322,303.33. During SFY 2020, with the onset of the pandemic, collections fell to \$308,269. As the pandemic continued in SFY 2021, collections fell further to \$230,925.48. Notably, collections in May of 2020, reported and submitted in July of 2020, fell to an all-time low of \$7,811.88.

As health restrictions were lifted and court operations began to normalize, collections began to increase correspondingly: in SFY 2022, collections increased to \$277,578.06. Collections continued to rise with SFY 2023 increasing to \$293,473.59 and SFY 2024 increasing to \$297,770.98. While still below pre-pandemic levels, it is anticipated that civil filings will continue to increase, with collections of the \$3.50 civil filing fees continuing to rebound to pre-pandemic levels.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

CURRENT STATUS

The Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office request that an additional \$75,000 be allocated to the Special Prosecution Clerks program SFY 2026 and an additional \$80,000 in SFY 2027 is necessary to reduce the gap between the state funding level and actual costs for the positions. Based on current authorized positions and employment levels, it is projected that the cost of the clerical positions will be \$373,935.05 in SFY 2025, \$388,724.18 in SFY 2026, and \$391,846.53 in SFY 2027. There will still be an additional amount remaining that will be paid by Milwaukee County to cover the costs of the Special Prosecution Clerks program.

The clerks covered under this program are assigned to support Milwaukee County Speedy Violent Crimes courts, Operation Ceasefire, and homicide courts. Their responsibilities include case entry, processing of subpoenas, and general support for the violent crimes unit, which includes non-fatal shootings and felony level drug cases, as well the homicide unit. These positions are critical support positions that allow cases to be entered and reviewed by Assistant District Attorneys, as well as support after initial case entry to have cases move smoothly through the criminal justice system.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

MASS TRANSIT AIDS

REQUESTED ACTION

Increase mass transit operating assistance by 10% over the 2025-27 biennium (cumulative), estimated at \$20.7 million total during the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is the largest transit system in the State of Wisconsin, providing nearly 29 million rides in 2019 (pre-pandemic) and over 17.1 million rides in 2023.
- As state-mandated services increasingly consume the entire local property tax levy, Milwaukee County will face possible route reductions of 40% and unable to provide local levy support to MCTS by 2028.
- Economic growth requires continued investment in public transit as studies have shown a 5 to 1 economic return.
- MCTS provides access to the over 600,000 jobs in Milwaukee County, assisting employers who depend on workers for the success of their businesses. Approximately 50% of MCTS riders use transit to get to and from their jobs every day.
- A 10% increase in mass transit aids in the 25-27 budget is critical for Milwaukee County to prevent service reductions that will have a devastating and long-lasting impact on the regional and state economies.

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is the largest transit system in the State of Wisconsin, providing nearly 29 million rides in 2019 (pre-pandemic) and over 17.1 million rides in 2023. Operating over 350 buses in its fleet, MCTS runs 1.3 million hours of service and almost 17.2 million miles annually across 44 routes and 3,984 bus stops.

Safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation is critical to the economic health of our region. Increased investment in MCTS can lead to significant economic growth because of both the short-term stimulus impact of public transit outlays and a longer-term, cumulative impact on economic productivity. MCTS provides access to the over 600,000 jobs in Milwaukee County, assisting employers who depend on workers for the success of their businesses. Approximately 50% of MCTS riders use transit to get to and from their jobs every day. In roughly 10 zip codes, 20% of households do not own a car. In three zip codes, 30% of households do not own a car, and in one zip code, that number is over 40% of households. Nearly 40% of older adults in Milwaukee County do not have access to a vehicle.

While mass transit is a critical service to our region, it is not mandated by the state. Wisconsin is one of only a few states in the U.S. that does not provide its transit systems with capital funding, forcing these systems to rely on local funding and federal grants, many of which are highly competitive. MCTS relies on four main categories of funding for its revenue, including intergovernmental aid (state and federal dollars), farebox revenues, property taxes, and a Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF), which was implemented in 2017.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

The greatest source of revenue for MCTS comes from the state’s Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance Program. In 2023, 40% MCTS’ revenues came from state operating assistance funds (s. 85.20 funds). Farebox revenues consist of roughly 17% of MCTS funding, while Milwaukee County funds (property taxes and VRF) make up another 17%. Milwaukee County funding is utilized to fill any gaps created as revenues decline or expenditures increase.

The increased reliance on local dollars to balance MCTS’s structural issues decreases the transit system’s sustainability and viability. In 2017, the VRF was implemented to support MCTS and reduce its reliance on Milwaukee County’s tax levy. The VRF enabled Milwaukee County to reduce MCTS’ levy allocation by almost \$13 million, but the decline in state and farebox revenues required additional local dollars to support operations. Since the implementation of the VRF in 2017, county dollars utilized to support MCTS have increased nearly 60% (\$28.3 million in 2022) above what was collected through VRF in 2017.

Farebox revenue recovery continues to improve to nearly 90% of pre-pandemic levels, but operational and maintenance costs have increased significantly due to inflationary pressures. Without increased and sustainable funding, MCTS will be required to pursue drastic service reductions, raise fares, and reduce staff. Minority and disadvantaged communities in Milwaukee County will be disproportionately impacted by these cuts, as access to family sustaining jobs will be lost, negatively impacting employers and businesses.

To sustainably reduce costs, Milwaukee County implemented a multi-year strategy, MCTS NEXT, to reconfigure the transit system to create more efficiencies and substantially decrease the cost per passenger. To reduce costs, Milwaukee County has deferred maintenance, delayed capital purchases, and eliminated multiple local routes and services. While budget challenges could be addressed by implementing additional service reductions, such reductions have a negative impact on ridership, revenue, and most importantly the regional economy. Slashing service to cut costs inevitably drives riders away, producing a vicious downward cycle.

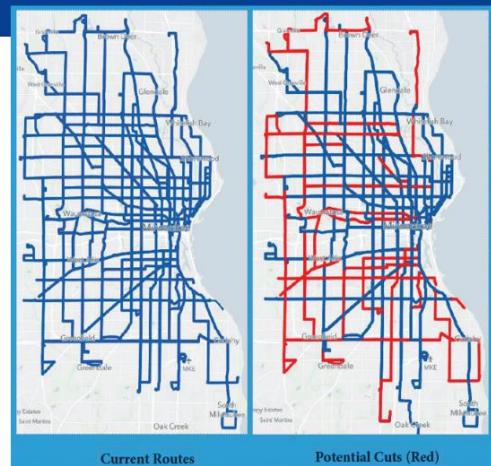
CURRENT STATUS

The MCTS budget continues to be in peril. The estimated gap between operating expenditures and revenues will hit \$12.6 million, growing to \$17.5 million by 2029.

Creative budgeting, stringent fiscal planning, and critical aid to supplant historic farebox revenue shortfalls have allowed Milwaukee County to avoid major route eliminations or personnel reductions to date; however, due to Milwaukee County’s overall structural deficit and competing demands to fund state-mandated services, without additional support from the state, MCTS will face 40% route reductions within the next few years and be unable to provide levy support to address projected budget gaps by 2028.

The proposed route reductions would result in 2,300 businesses no longer being accessible to a bus route, 70,000 fewer jobs located near a bus route, and 125,000 people no longer living close to a bus route. Among those affected are 60,000 individuals of color, 30,000 people with disabilities, and 15,000 senior citizens.

MCTS Fiscal Cliff – Current versus Future





GENERAL TRANSPORTATION AIDS

REQUESTED ACTION

Increase General Transportation Aids (GTA) by 10% each year (cumulative), estimated at \$1.7 million total during the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- With limits on local property tax collections, GTA is one of most important sources of county transportation funding.
- Milwaukee County faces an infrastructure backlog currently valued at roughly \$1 billion over the next five years.
- Investment in GTA is a force multiplier for commerce in the Milwaukee metropolitan region, increasing economic output and generating financial benefits to the entire state.
- While recent increases by the state have improved GTA funding to counties, counties still receive a lower percentage of the “share of costs” than ten years ago.

BACKGROUND

General Transportation Aid (GTA) is distributed to all counties to assist in maintenance, improvement, and construction of the county trunk highway system. Payments are distributed to government entities based on either a percentage of eligible highway-related expenditures or a per-mile payment, whichever is greater. Counties receive a share-of-costs aid, which covers a percentage of six-year average costs. With limits on local property tax collections, GTA is one of most important sources of county transportation funding.

With a growing number of maintenance projects combined with rising costs of construction materials, labor, and state-mandated services, county governments have been forced to delay or defer critical maintenance projects. Investing in maintenance efforts can significantly extend the lifespan of highways, which act as essential arteries for the state’s economic activity.

Milwaukee County faces a fiscal crisis as the local levy is nearly entirely consumed by the growing cost of state mandated services. To prevent greater service cuts and operational impacts, Milwaukee County has been forced to delay important maintenance work and capital projects. *As a result, Milwaukee County faces an infrastructure backlog currently valued at roughly \$1 billion over the next five years.* Milwaukee County is responsible for general and winter maintenance on the County Trunk Highway (CTH) system. This includes pavement repair and resurfacing, shoulder maintenance, vegetation control, safety appurtenances, road drainage, litter pickup, snow and ice control, traffic signal maintenance, highway signing, and pavement marking.

As counties throughout the state face similar financial constraints, GTA has been one of the most important sources of aid to counties. It is a critical source of revenue for Milwaukee County, as it helps mitigate the costs of services to maintain a safe and reliable transportation network. Investment in GTA is a force multiplier for



Milwaukee County

2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

commerce in the Milwaukee metropolitan region, increasing economic output and generating financial benefits to the entire state.

CURRENT STATUS

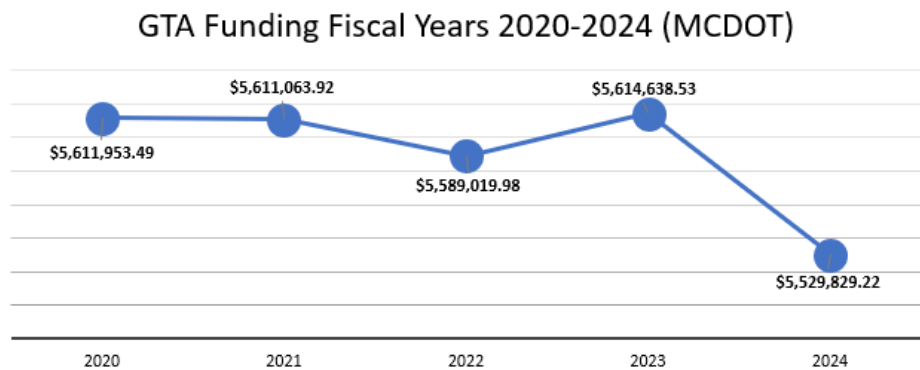
Aid payments are made from the state's segregated transportation fund, which includes revenues from the motor fuel tax, vehicle registration fees, and other transportation-related taxes and fees. For 2022, general transportation aid payments equaled 24.0% of 2021-22 net transportation fund revenues after revenue bond debt service (including transfers from other funds).¹⁸ From 2014 to 2023, there has only been a total increase of 30.9% in GTA to counties, for an average of 3.4% each year, with no increase in four of the nine years.

Historically, GTA was provided at a rate to counties that met a share of maintenance costs at roughly 30 percent. That funding amount was recognized as integral to ensure the fiscal feasibility of continuing critical maintenance work on our important highways. While recent increases by the state have improved GTA funding to counties, counties still receive a lower percentage of the “share of costs” than ten years ago.

Roads are among the most important public assets in Wisconsin. Road improvements bring immediate and sometimes dramatic benefits to road users through improved access to hospitals, schools, and businesses; improved comfort, speed, and safety; and lower vehicle operating costs. For these benefits to be sustained, road improvements must be followed by a well-planned program of maintenance. Without regular maintenance, roads can rapidly fall into disrepair, preventing realization of the longer-term impacts of road improvements on development.

Postponing road maintenance results in high direct and indirect costs. If road defects are repaired promptly, the cost is usually modest. If defects are neglected, an entire road section may fail completely, requiring full reconstruction at three times or more the cost, on average, of maintenance costs. Delayed maintenance has indirect costs as well. Neglected roads steadily become more difficult to use, resulting in increased vehicle operating costs through more frequent repairs, more fuel use, etc., and a reluctance by transport operators to use the roads. This imposes a heavy burden on the economy: as passenger and freight services are curtailed, there is a consequent loss of economic and social development opportunities.

Additional funding to local governments through a 10% increase in GTA over the biennium will help Milwaukee County and counties across the state address the growing backlog of maintenance projects along county trunk highways.



¹⁸ Informational Paper #41 Transportation Aid General Transportation and Connecting Highway Aid, State of Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau (January 2023), page 1.



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

PARATRANSIT AIDS

REQUESTED ACTION

Increase § 85.205 and § 85.21 Paratransit Aids by 20% each year (cumulative), estimated at \$2.5 million total during the biennium.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Per the Americans with Disabilities Act, WisDOT is required to provide paratransit aids to assist eligible mass transit operating assistance recipients.
- In 2022, 85.205 funds to Milwaukee totaled \$1,644,785, which was only 10% of Milwaukee County's paratransit budget expenditure. To cover the full cost of the service, any funding gap is filled by Milwaukee County's local levy to cover the full cost of the service. In 2025, Milwaukee County will subsidize this service by \$1,519,802.
- There are over 7,700 registered Transit Plus participants who are ADA paratransit eligible.
- Nearly 40% of older adults in Milwaukee County do not have access to a vehicle and as the population continues to age, this percentage will grow, and importantly more than 70% (7,700) of Transit Plus's riders are older adults.

BACKGROUND

Paratransit Aids (§ 85.205). Paratransit is a state mandated service and critical component of the mass transit system. It ensures all Wisconsinites can access jobs, grocery stores, and health care – especially those who face mobility challenges. User fees cannot be more than twice MCTS's fixed route fare per ride but the cost per ride is substantially higher. In 2022, 85.205 funds to Milwaukee totaled \$1,644,785, which was only 10% of Milwaukee County's paratransit budget expenditure. To cover the full cost of the service, any funding gap is filled by Milwaukee County's local levy to cover the full cost of the service. In 2025, Milwaukee County will subsidize this service by \$1,519,802.

Transit Plus is Milwaukee County's paratransit program and is operated by MCTS. There are over 7,700 registered Transit Plus participants who are ADA paratransit eligible. MCTS contracts with two paratransit service companies to provide rides to persons with disabilities in Milwaukee County. As demand increases, paratransit's mobility management activities will also realize a corresponding increase for trainings in the areas of fixed route travel training, community outreach and education, mobility device training, bus operator ADA sensitivity and passenger assistance training. Ridership is expected to rebound to pre-pandemic levels (513,609 in 2019) and increase over the next few years.

Specialized Transportation (§ 85.21). Wisconsin's Specialized Transportation Assistance Program provides critical funding for transportation services to older adults and people with disabilities who wish to remain active in their communities but can no longer drive, enabling them to remain healthy and active by reducing isolation and providing access to healthcare and recreation. Similar to paratransit, these services are costly and state funding has not kept pace with inflation.

Nearly 40% of older adults in Milwaukee County do not have access to a vehicle. As the population continues to



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

age, this percentage will continue to climb. More than 70% (7,700) of Transit Plus's riders are older adults. Statewide, limited 85.21 funding has resulted in limited transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities. Other options either do not exist or have been severely reduced – such as public transit and volunteer driver programs that have not recovered from a severe reduction in revenue and volunteers during the pandemic. In the coming years, labor costs, inflationary pressures, and an aging population will significantly increase service costs and demand.

Paratransit provides essential transportation services for individuals with disabilities, ensuring they have access to reliable and safe travel options. One of the primary benefits of paratransit is its focus on accessibility. Paratransit vehicles are equipped with features such as wheelchair lifts and securement systems, making them suitable for passengers with mobility aids.

Another advantage of paratransit is the level of assistance provided. Trained personnel are available to help passengers with boarding, disembarking, and any other needs during the journey. This support is crucial for individuals who require additional help due to physical or cognitive disabilities. Paratransit services also promote independence and social inclusion. By providing accessible transportation, paratransit allows individuals with disabilities to participate in community activities, access essential services, and maintain social connections. This can significantly enhance the quality of life and well-being of passengers.

CURRENT STATUS

In the 2021, Transit Plus expenditures totaled \$13.2 million while revenues totaled \$11.74 million (including a \$1.64 million WisDOT grant). Per the Americans with Disabilities Act, WisDOT is required to provide paratransit aids to assist eligible mass transit operating assistance recipients. Funding is provided to each system's percentage of expenses and revenue miles compared to the total expenses and revenue miles of all fixed route bus systems. Tier A-1 (Milwaukee) received \$1.64 million, Tier A-2 (Madison) received \$509,200 and Tier B and Tier C received \$946,600.

MCTS faces significant challenges related to its fiscal health and sustainability. When MCTS's federal funds are exhausted in 2025, its fiscal crisis will exponentially worsen as the system anticipates a \$32 million deficit as early as 2025, growing to \$60 million by 2028. The cost of providing specialized transportation rose dramatically due to sharp increases in fuel and labor costs and is expected to increase up to 15% within the next two years. At the same time, statewide 85.21 funding increased for the first time in FY21-22 and FY22-23, but only at a modest 3%.

The current statewide 85.21 appropriation is \$959,000; a 20% increase would result in a statewide increase of \$192,000 (\$787,730 for Milwaukee). 85.205 funding is currently \$3.178 million; a 20% increase would result in a statewide increase of \$625,000 (\$457,773 for Milwaukee).



LOCAL ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM – DISCRETIONARY SUPPLEMENTAL

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide an additional \$100 million each year in Local Road Improvement Program – Discretionary Supplemental (LRIP-S) funding, for a total of \$200 million during the biennium and make this funding category permanent.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) assists local governments in improving seriously deteriorating county highways, town roads, and city and village streets.
- LRIP is a reimbursement program that pays up to 50% of total eligible costs, with local governments providing the balance.
- In 2019, the state legislature created the “one-time” LRIP-Supplemental program.
- After two successful budget cycles, LRIP-S has proven to be an effective and necessary program that assists local governments in addressing local transportation-related construction needs.

BACKGROUND

Established in 1991, the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) assists local governments in improving seriously deteriorating county highways, town roads, and city and village streets. LRIP is a reimbursement program that pays up to 50% of total eligible costs, with local governments providing the balance. Additionally, there is a component of this program called LRIP-S, which provides up to a 90% reimbursement as determined by the appropriate review committee. LRIP projects are awarded every two years on a biennial budget cycle.

In 2019, the state legislature created the “one-time” LRIP-S program. After reauthorizing it in the 2021-23 biennial budget, counties were allocated \$66.1 million to LRIP for that program cycle, and the budget included a one-time \$100 million allocation for the LRIP-S component. The purpose of this additional allocation was to enhance the amount of assistance available to local governments for critical improvements within LRIP.

Milwaukee County and its municipalities have many county highways and municipal streets and roads that need significant reconstruction and rehabilitation, including safety-related engineering improvements that will reduce injuries and deaths related to reckless driving.

Roads are among the most important public assets in Wisconsin. Road improvements bring immediate and sometimes dramatic benefits to road users through improved access to hospitals, schools, and businesses; improved comfort, speed, and safety; and lower vehicle operating costs. For these benefits to be sustained, road improvements must be followed by a well-planned program of maintenance. Without regular maintenance, roads can rapidly fall into disrepair, preventing realization of the longer-term impacts of road improvements on development.

Postponing road maintenance results in high direct and indirect costs. If road defects are repaired promptly, the cost is usually modest. If defects are neglected, an entire road section may fail completely, requiring full reconstruction at three times or more the cost, on average, of maintenance costs. Delayed maintenance has



Milwaukee County 2025-27 Biennial State Budget Priorities

indirect costs as well. Neglected roads steadily become more difficult to use, resulting in increased vehicle operating costs (more frequent repairs, more fuel use) and a reluctance by transport operators to use the roads. This imposes a heavy burden on the economy: as passenger and freight services are curtailed, there is a consequent loss of economic and social development opportunities.

CURRENT STATUS

After two successful budget cycles, LRIP-S has proven to be an effective and necessary program that assists local governments in addressing local transportation-related construction needs. This program strengthens the relationship between the counties and state, as the responsibility to maintain a high-quality state transportation system is essentially divided among its counties, municipalities, and other local governments.

An increase of \$200 million in LRIP-S funding over the biennium and acting to make this funding category permanent are critical to complete “shovel ready” projects within Milwaukee County and across the state, making our roads safer and more beneficial to the state’s growing economy.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY 2025-27 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

A strong partnership between the State of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County ensures that the region remains an economic driver for Wisconsin and can provide critical services that ensure a high quality of life to build and retain human and economic capital.



Economic Growth. Public Safety. Reduced Taxes.

The state-county partnership is strengthened by prioritizing core service needs, enabling local governments to pursue efforts that stimulate economic growth and reduce local property tax burdens. Public safety, transportation, housing, and mental health services reduce barriers for economic participation and improve quality of life.

Over the last decade, Milwaukee County has addressed a \$340 million budget gap and reduced costs by implementing significant reforms and efficiencies, dramatically reducing capital footprint and utilizing more efficient service delivery to preserve funding for critical services. Despite sound fiscal management, the structural deficit will grow to \$69 million by 2029 primarily due to state-mandated services.

Milwaukee County's 2025-27 state budget requests focus on strengthening its partnership with the state to address key issue areas, supported by broad coalitions, to help counties statewide.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Milwaukee County has used every tool currently available to address its budget crisis.

- ▶ Reduced physical footprint by nearly 3 million square feet.
- ▶ Implemented public-private partnerships in largest service areas to reduce costs and improve outcomes.
- ▶ Improved earned revenue and efficiencies in key areas.
- ▶ Deferred maintenance to maintain service but resulting in nearly a billion-dollar infrastructure backlog.
- ▶ Overhauled pension and benefit systems to maintain fiscal solvency.
- ▶ Utilized sales tax revenue to address and eliminate the pension crisis.

UNFUNDED MANDATES

As a subdivision of the State, the county is mandated to administer important services. Costs have skyrocketed, while revenues stagnated for 20 years.

CRITICAL SERVICES

Milwaukee County provides public safety, housing, and transportation services, which are critical to remaining a globally competitive metropolitan region.

The cost to provide state and local services is rising more than twice as fast as local revenues.

STRUCTURAL DEFECIT

State-mandated services consume **80%** of local levy and are disproportionately related to public safety.

SHARP INCREASES

Public safety mandates have increased by **\$73M** since 2020, with Milwaukee County assuming the entire cost.

UNSUSTAINABLE

This lack of adequate support continues to reduce funding and necessitate cuts to much-needed non-mandated services.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY 2025-27 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

The following priorities summarize urgent funding needs in high-impact areas that will strengthen the partnership between the State of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County.



Courthouse Complex

Milwaukee County's courthouse complex is the public safety nexus for the region, directly impacting the region's public safety outcomes. The current building is crumbling, functionally obsolete, poses risks to community safety and justice, and requires replacement to address significant safety and constitutional issues, protect taxpayers, and preserve resources for other critical public safety services. Milwaukee requests a cost-sharing agreement to provide the county with 50% of the funding required to replace the facility. The cost-sharing agreement utilizes state funding to build a unique, regional public safety asset, which executes state-mandated services at the local level and is modeled after the state-county partnership utilized in the juvenile justice overhaul through WI Act 185 and the joint state-county effort to build the Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine.

Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Patrol Services

Milwaukee is the only county in Wisconsin required by state law to patrol its expressways, while the state Highway Patrol is responsible for the rest of the state's expressways. Milwaukee County requests a cost-sharing agreement to MCSO \$32 million over the biennium to implement these state services at the local level. As the most populous county, with the greatest number of highway miles, commuters, and interstate travelers, a partnership ensures MCSO has adequate resources to implement these mandated patrol services on state and county highways, including proactive policing and efforts to combat reckless driving.

Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Court Services

Milwaukee County has the largest circuit court in the state, with more than 750,000 visitors and handling 15% of all cases filed in Wisconsin, which is more than Dane, Waukesha, and Brown counties combined. Wisconsin Supreme Court rules require two sworn officers per courtroom, resulting in 114 total for Milwaukee's courts, which is more than the entire sworn force of roughly 90% of Wisconsin counties. Adding nine positions to the 2025 budget, Milwaukee has budgeted for 90 bailiff positions but faces significant challenges due to competing state mandates that reduce available resources and staff. Milwaukee County requests \$14.9 million (50% of cost) over the biennium to meet the state's service level and prevent disruptions to proactive policing in the community.

Mass Transit Aids

The state-county transit partnership is critical as it sustains a necessary service for a globally competitive metropolitan region to attract businesses, people, and investment. Transit plays a vital role in stimulating Milwaukee's regional economy by reducing barriers to employment and expanding opportunities for consumers – in Milwaukee, 50% of riders use MCTS to get to work. A 10% increase in transit aids in each year of the biennium (\$20.7 million) strengthens the state-county partnership; it enables communities across the state to benefit from Milwaukee's economic growth due to Act 12's revenue sharing. Conversely, with no additional support, MCTS will be forced to reduce routes by 40%, which will dramatically impact the region and state's economy.

Youth Aids

In 2017, Act 185 transformed Wisconsin's youth justice model by moving away from large, state-run youth prisons like Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake to a county-operated system focusing on community-based settings and rehabilitative services. The state financially supported the construction of these county facilities and transferred the operations to counties. To ensure the success of this new partnership, Milwaukee County requests a 2% statewide increase in Youth Aids over the biennium and \$4 million to support both transitional costs and intensive programming and treatment. Milwaukee County spends \$463k annually to place one youth at Lincoln Hills; the DOC's proposed 82% increase of the daily rate from \$1,268 to \$2,305 would increase anticipated costs by \$5.7 million per year. Adding to the immediate funding challenges, Milwaukee County will need to add 32 new positions to staff the facility for an additional of \$2.5 million.