

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

Date: November 13, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
Denise Wandke, President and Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

Subject: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the President and Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System providing an update regarding Milwaukee County Transit System Security.

File Type: Informational Report

BACKGROUND

An update about the progress made regarding security enhancements as part of the 2024 Adopted Budget.

NARRATIVE

During the 2024 budget process, MCTS recommended a number of security measures that would enhance the current security measures that are already in place at MCTS. While specific security measures are not mandated by local or federal authorities, MCTS has a number of security elements that support operators and passengers, many of them above and beyond when compared to other agencies across the country.

- A 24/7/365 Dedicated Dispatch Office
- A dedicated Safety, Security and Project Management Department to manage contracted and physical security infrastructure
- A 10-HD camera system with Live-Look capabilities on board every bus
- A discreet, silent alarm button on every bus to covertly alert Dispatch during incidents
- An operator shield on every bus – MCTS was one of the first agencies in the country to do so and buses are currently ordered with the largest shield available

- Red Kite de-escalation training provided to all bus operators, as well as fully staffed internal training department
- MCTS Route Supervision field personnel to provide a direct MCTS presence during incidents and accidents
- Secured facilities with CCTV, access control, panic alarms, fences, etc.
- SAFER electronic reporting system to collect incident and accident data for trend analysis.
- Contracted security with over 2000 hours of on the street support each week

On September 25th 2024, the FTA issued a [General Directive](#). General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers that requires more than 700 transit agencies nationwide to take action and address ongoing incidents of assaults on transit workers.

General Directive 24-1 requires these agencies to take the following steps:

- 1. Conduct a Safety Risk Assessment**
 - Determine the likelihood and severity of Operator Assaults.
- 2. Identify Safety Risk Mitigations**
 - Identify safety risk mitigations or strategies necessary as a result of the agency's safety risk assessment. Each transit agency serving a large, urbanized area must involve the joint labor-management Safety Committee when identifying safety risk mitigations to reduce the likelihood and severity of consequences identified through the agency's safety risk assessment.
- 3. Submit the findings to the FTA within 90 days**
 - December 24th, 2024, is the deadline

MCTS is already tracking, mitigating and working collaboratively with the Safety Assurance Committee to reduce operator assaults. MCTS takes operator assaults very seriously and has an established process for tracking and reporting assaults so that mitigation efforts can be effective and MCTS remains in compliance with all FTA regulations:

- MCTS staff regularly receive updates and training to ensure MCTS is compliant with all FTA reporting aspects

- There is some subjectivity to what is reported and what is not – when in doubt, the incident is reported
- Safety/Security reported incidents are regularly audited by MCTS staff to ensure accuracy
- Transit systems who receive federal funding, including MCTS, get regularly audited by the FTA to ensure accuracy and compliance across a number of categories, including Safety and Security
- There is no direct penalty or incentive to under report or over report incidents to the FTA. As long as MCTS is reporting the incidents as required and can justify how the definitions are understood and used, it is highly likely MCTS would be found to be in compliance. If not, updates or adjustments would be requested/required by the FTA, and MCTS would be allowed to make any required adjustments at that time

MCTS is confident that the reporting is fully compliant and that justification could be provided as to why or why not any incident was reported or not reported. MCTS is fully transparent and there would be no reason or advantage not to be

As part of the 2024 budget, MCTS was awarded approximately \$1.5 million to enhance existing security measures. Specifically, as part of those efforts, MCTS has committed to the following:

- Adding **256 additional hours to contracted security services**, plus one additional squad vehicle – this change was made January 14, 2024, and MCTS will continue to monitor the impact.
- Adding 3 additional MCTS employees – including two **Public Safety Supervisors** to provide oversight to contracted security personnel in the field, as well as one **Security Dispatcher** to provide a consistent, high quality Dispatch response to security incidents. These positions have already proven successful and MCTS has begun hiring more security staff in house.
- Additional training for key MCTS staff including the new positions, Dispatchers and contracted security personnel to improve the response during incidents involving individuals with mental health and other sensitive issues – this training will continue throughout 2024.

In addition to these initiatives, MCTS will continue to cooperate with ATU-998, local law enforcement, the DA's office, DHHS, BHD, OEM and all other third parties who have stake in the safety and security of MCTS. MCTS will also continue to research and outreach to peer systems to share experience and gain knowledge and perspective regarding similar issues.

Through this type of cooperation and research, MCTS has learned about new tactics and products and is currently working on a number of projects:

- In January of 2024, MCTS met with representatives from the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division and learned how to best take advantage of the mobile crisis hotline and will begin using it when appropriate.
- Many transit agencies across the country have launched campaigns to encourage passengers to respect their bus operator, as well as fellow passengers. MCTS launched its “Respect” campaign in June 2024
- In cooperation with ATU-998 MCTS has conducted peer research regarding CCTV monitors on buses, as well as a new prototype of operator shield currently being tested in New York. We are working to pilot these enhancements on board MCTS buses. Monitors will be included on the new Gillig buses arriving in 2025. We are still waiting for the manufacturer to make the shields available for testing here in Milwaukee.

Overall, 2024 has seen many updates and changes. MCTS encourages everyone to look to the future while work continues to learn and improve. While transit security has proven to be a challenge for transit systems across the country, MCTS has a team of dedicated professionals with decades of experience who are ready to meet the challenge.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity.
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities.
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes only.

FISCAL EFFECT

There is no fiscal effect.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
Denise Wandke, President and Managing Director, MCTS (dwandke@mcts.org)
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PREPARED BY:

Brittany Bertsch, Director of Safety, Security and Project Management, MCTS

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna Brown-Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

PowerPoint

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk