

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-office Communication

DATE: 6/24/2022  
TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, County Board of Supervisors  
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
SUBJECT: From the Director of the Department of Transportation, an informational report on Recruitment and Retention Strategies for the 2022-2023 Winter Season  
FILE TYPE: Informational Report

REQUEST

This report is for informational purposes only.

BACKGROUND

The Department is responsible for winter maintenance of Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport's and Timmerman Field's runways, State Trunk Highways and Interstate Highways as well as County Trunk Highways (CTH's). Except for CTHs, Milwaukee County has contractual requirements with federal agencies, state agencies and the airlines to maintain safe and reliable transportation infrastructure. The Department and County need to be able to fulfill its federal and state obligations as well as its obligations to its taxpayers and the driving public. Adequate and timely staffing is required to perform these critical functions.

The Airport, Fleet Management and Highway Maintenance Divisions continues to experience significant difficulties in recruiting and/or retaining permanent and seasonal employees due to the COVID19 pandemic and Milwaukee County's vaccine mandate. This is in addition to existing recruitment/retention challenges for Fleet Mechanic and Highway Maintenance Worker positions because Milwaukee County does not offer a competitive wage compared with other municipalities. Per funding agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration and State of Wisconsin, the Department is required to perform snow removal and winter maintenance at the airports, state trunk highways and the Interstate system throughout Milwaukee County. Without the appropriate levels of manpower to operate and maintain the necessary equipment, the County's transportation infrastructure will be vulnerable to delays, shutdowns, and federal fines

In anticipation of staffing shortages, the Department of Transportation division directors met in early fall of 2021 to discuss potential challenges of hiring and retaining permanent and seasonal, critical infrastructure personnel including Airport Maintenance Workers, Highway Maintenance Workers and Fleet Mechanics. COVID-19 impacts were sweeping across the country and resonating within Milwaukee County as vacancies increased, the pool of applicants decreased, and the vaccine mandate was instituted. Around the same time, the federal government enacted stricter Commercial Driver's License (CDL) testing requirements and, as a result, licensing fees increased from \$300 to \$2,500/licensee. In response, the Department requested, and the County Board approved, a one-time recruitment bonus of \$300 and retention bonuses of \$200/month for critical infrastructure positions throughout the winter season (File No. 21-1055).

The Department of Transportation continues to recruit for permanent critical infrastructure workers including Airport Maintenance Workers, Highway Maintenance Workers, and permanent Fleet Mechanic and Fleet Parts positions as vacancies in these areas persist. The Airport and Highway

Maintenance Divisions continue to experience more vacancies this year than in previous years and Fleet has vacant Parts positions. While most of the Fleet Mechanic positions are filled, there is frequent turnover. Low wages, in comparison to the regional marketplace, and the County's vaccine mandate are the main reasons for recruitment and retention challenges for these positions. For example, the City of Milwaukee recently increased pay bands for similar positions that are now higher than the County's. Below are some ideas the Department would like to pursue for continued recruitment and retention.

- Job Fair that would include truck driver training
- Communicate with cement companies to send us their drivers when winter starts.
- Summertime CDL training.
- Contact Operating Engineers local.
- Retention / recruitment bonuses.
- CDL temps required upon hiring and will pay the \$2,500 certification costs. Drivers will need to stay through the winter.
- Winter pay differential.

#### ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

1A: Reflect the full diversity of the county at every level of County government

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.

3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability.

#### RECOMMENDATION

This is for informational purposes only.

#### FISCAL EFFECT

N/A

#### VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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#### PREPARED BY:

Julie Esch, Deputy Director of Transportation

#### APPROVED BY:

*Donna Brown-Martin*

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Donna Brown-Martin  
Director, Department of Transportation

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