

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

DATE: 2/13/2026

TO: Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Joseph Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation
Steve Fuentes, President & CEO, Milwaukee County Transit System

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the President & CEO, Milwaukee County Transit System, requesting authorization to apply for and accept, if awarded, Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funds for transit infrastructure enhancements at MCTS facilities.

FILE TYPE: Action Report

REQUEST

Authorization is requested to apply for and accept, if awarded, a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant for transit infrastructure enhancements at MCTS facilities.

POLICY

State statute provides that the County Board may accept donations and grants for any public governmental purpose within the powers of the county.

Wisconsin State Statute: 59.52 (19)

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances: Chapter 56.06

BACKGROUND

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program, previously known as the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant, was established under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The BUILD grant is a unique, highly competitive opportunity to secure full federal funding for capital projects without requiring a local financial match. While a no-match award is not automatic, applicants who meet the program's stringent criteria can receive 100% funding. MATC is confident that our proposed projects align with these requirements. This grant specifically targets Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities, making our initiative an ideal candidate.

MCTS is evaluating a suite of modernization projects for potential inclusion in the 2026 BUILD grant application, which may include but are not limited to planning and construction upgrades to aging underground fuel tanks, and replacement of out-of-service

bus lifts. Additional modernization efforts include planning for reconstruction of deteriorating concrete infrastructure at the heavy-duty fleet maintenance facility, LED lighting upgrades across multiple facilities, and design work for roof replacements at aging garages. Collectively, these projects aim to modernize critical transit infrastructure, improve efficiency, and strengthen long-term system reliability. Awards are anticipated to be announced in Q2 2026 and, if approved, MCTS would be able to begin implementing improvements in 2027.

If the projects are not fully funded, a non-federal match equal to 20 percent of total eligible program costs would be required. In that event, MCTS would submit a 2027 Capital Project Request to fulfill the required match and any remaining project costs. It is anticipated that award notifications will be in June 2026, prior to finalizing the County's capital budget.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity.
- 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

It is recommended that the Department be retroactively authorized to apply for and accept the BUILD grant, should it be awarded in part or in full.

FISCAL EFFECT

Anticipated no fiscal effect.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Joseph Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation
John Rodgers, Deputy Director, Department of Transportation
Steve Fuentes, President & CEO, MCTS sfuentes@mcts.org
Ruben Salas, Vice President & Deputy CEO, MCTS rsalas@mcts.org
Sandra Kellner, Chief Administrative Officer, MCTS skellner@mcts.org
Brittany Bertsch, Director of Safety, Security and Project Management, MCTS
bbertsch@mcts.org

PREPARED BY:

Sandra Kellner, Chief Administrative Officer, MCTS

APPROVED BY:



Joseph Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Fiscal Note

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