

**County of Milwaukee**  
**Interoffice Communication**

**DATE:** 4/17/2020  
**TO:** Chairman Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Donna-Brown Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
**SUBJECT:** Milwaukee County Transit System's Paratransit Program – Informational Report

Information report provided at the request of Chairman of the Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee.

**BACKGROUND**

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) paratransit program, known as Transit Plus, provides a variety of programs for persons with disabilities whose disability prevents them from using the fixed route bus system. The primary responsibility of the Transit Plus office is to administer the federally required ADA paratransit program. In addition, Transit Plus administers two discretionary ride programs (Taxi and Goodwill Agency) that provide cost-savings to the ADA paratransit program. Information specific to each service offered by Transit Plus follows the budget overview below.

**Budget Overview**

The 2020 budget for these services is \$17 million. \$3.8 million is covered by passenger fares and the balance of expenses are covered by Federal, State and local resources, as shown in the table below.

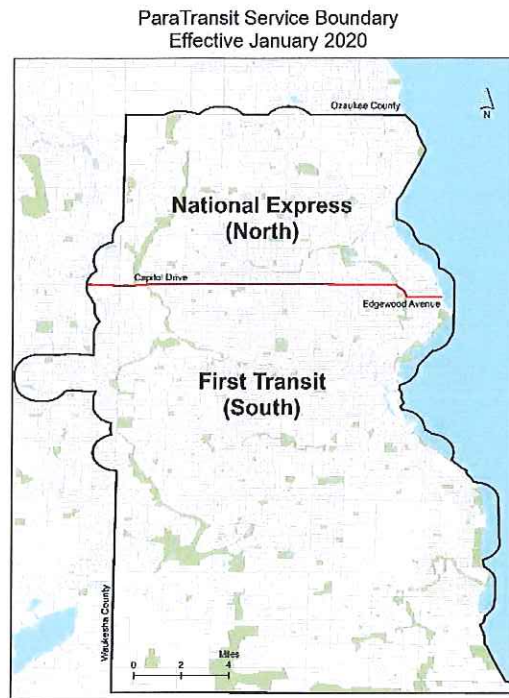
<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Federal Urbanized Area Formula Funds (Section 5307)	\$1,900,000
Federal Enhanced Mobility of Senior and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)	\$195,064
Wisconsin Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance – Paratransit Supplemental Aid (Section 85.205)	\$1,400,000
Wisconsin Specialized Transportation Assistance (Section 85.21)	\$1,522,288
Wisconsin Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance (Section 85.20)	\$5,909,800
Milwaukee County Tax Levy	\$2,549,680
Total	\$13,481,448

**Van Service**

Accessible van service is required by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Its purpose is to provide accessible service to persons with disabilities that mirrors the service provided by fixed route buses. This program serves Milwaukee County residents and visitors who are unable to use fixed route buses some or all of the time due to a disability. Client eligibility is determined via doctor certification and an in-person functional assessment conducted by Transit Plus staff.

Per ADA regulations, service must be provided by accessible vehicles within a ¾ mile zone around all fixed routes operated by MCTS. Currently, Milwaukee County provides border to border service within the

County plus the required ¾ mile buffer around fixed routes that extend into other counties. This is a shared ride service available with a reservation made one to 14 days in advance of a ride. Clients can travel anywhere in the county-wide service area but are assigned to a service provider (north or south) based on their home address. See service area map below.



ADA Van service drivers participate in random drug/alcohol testing required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and provide door to door assistance to clients. The fare is capped by the FTA at no more than double the fixed route bus fare. Current fare is \$4 per one-way trip for private pay riders or \$20.55 per one-way trip for those enrolled in Medicaid funded long term care programs.

Van service is provided via contracts with First Group, Inc. and Transit Express, Inc. MCTS pays a negotiated rate per service hour provided. The current van service contracts end in October 2023. Under these contracts, the vendors are responsible for all aspects of service provision including maintaining appropriate insurance; hiring, training and managing staff; scheduling, dispatching and providing rides; accident/incident investigation; vehicle acquisition; and equipment maintenance.

The contracts include performance standards in the areas of on-time performance, ride duration, service availability, compliance with federal requirements and service productivity. Incentives and penalties are applied as warranted.

Customer complaints are processed jointly through both Transit Plus and the providers. Once a complaint is received, it is entered into a database and investigated. Resolutions are communicated to the appropriate parties and documented in the complaint database.

### **Taxi Service**

Taxi service is a Milwaukee County discretionary program created to provide a cost-effective alternative that would reduce the demand for ADA van service. This program serves Transit Plus clients who are



ambulatory or who can transfer from a collapsible mobility device into the vehicle without driver assistance. The taxi program is not the ADA required paratransit service. It is a premium, same day, private ride service that is available to/from destinations within Milwaukee County. Drivers provide curb-to-curb service.

The fare structure for taxi service is designed to share the cost of the service between Milwaukee County and riders. The client is required to pay the initial \$4 on the meter using either a Transit Plus ticket or cash, like the fare charged on the ADA van service. Transit Plus is billed for the next \$10.60, up to \$14.60 on the meter. The client is responsible for any amount over \$14.60 on the meter in cash at time of service.

Service is provided via a contract with American United Taxicab Services. MCTS is billed on a per trip basis. This amount includes an administration fee (currently \$5.62 per trip), plus the amount on the meter between \$4 and \$14.60 for each ride. The current Taxi service contract ends in May 2021, with two optional one-year extensions.

### **Goodwill Agency Service**

Goodwill Agency service is a Milwaukee County discretionary program created to combine rides to high demand destinations for efficiency and cost saving purposes. This program serves Transit Plus clients who attend scheduled programs at Goodwill sites throughout Milwaukee County. Ridership on this service has been declining over the past several years due to the changing landscape of day programming available for persons with disabilities in Milwaukee County.

Similar to ADA van service, the fare for this program is \$4 per one-way trip for private pay riders and \$20.55 per trip for those on Medicaid funded long term care programs. Rides are scheduled in advance and drivers are required to provide door to door assistance to clients. Service is provided via a contract with First Group, Inc. MCTS pays a negotiated rate per ride. The current Goodwill Agency service contract ends in December 2021.

### **Mobility Management**

In addition to the transportation services listed above, MCTS has secured an FTA Section 5310 Grant to fund Mobility Management activities that support use of the transit system by older adults and persons with disabilities. These activities include individual and group travel training; community outreach and education; mobility device training; bus operator ADA sensitivity and passenger assistance training.

### **Key Paratransit Service Statistics**

There are over 8,300 active Transit Plus clients. Transit Plus is available to eligible individuals during the same hours as fixed route bus service. Annually, Transit Plus program participants take over 500,000 rides.

<b>Paratransit Program</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total Rides	526,411	527,941	513,609
Van Rides	430,893	440,374	437,466
Taxicab Rides	79,319	73,043	62,500
Goodwill Rides	16,199	14,524	13,643
Avg. Cost/Trip	\$27.87	\$29.35	\$32.14
Expense	\$14,672,306	\$15,497,500	\$16,510,434

### **Milwaukee County Department on Aging Transportation Services**

In addition to the services provided by MCTS under its paratransit program, Milwaukee County also provides transportation services for older adults through the Department on Aging (MCDA). MCDA Transportation includes rides for medical and dental appointments for a fee of \$3 for individuals that are 60 years or older who are unable to ride the bus but are still able to get onto a van. MCDA also provides

free rides to Senior Dining sites, and for groceries. These group rides provide for single destination convenience and the camaraderie of traveling in a group. MCDA, through its Aging Resource Center, educates older adults about MCDA Transportation, as well as about MCTS, both the fixed bus route options and paratransit services.

#### SUMMARY

The MCTS Paratransit Program, known as Transit Plus, manages all aspects of ADA paratransit eligibility, service provision, reporting and compliance with state and federal requirements. In addition, Transit Plus manages two discretionary programs that are offered by Milwaukee County to help offset the demand and costs associated with ADA paratransit service. All programs are closely monitored to maintain service efficiency and effectiveness. Complaints are carefully recorded, investigated and resolved. Efforts to enable persons with disabilities to be able to successfully use fixed route services in addition to, or instead of, paratransit services are on-going through mobility management. MCDA also provides services to some members of our community that are also eligible for Transit Plus but can choose to use MCDA Transportation due to convenience, cost, or a desire for camaraderie.

#### RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

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