

County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

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DATE: 8/16/2019
TO: Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chair, County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: Informational Report on MCTS Paratransit Program

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) paratransit program, known as Transit Plus, provides transportation 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 paratransit services required by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Transit Plus staff also administer two discretionary programs for taxi and Goodwill Agency rides as a cost-saving alternative to the ADA paratransit program. An overview of Transit Plus services follows.

Van Service

The purpose of ADA Van Service 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.

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.

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 National Express, Inc. Clients are assigned to a provider based on their home address (see Map 1 attached). In June 2019, the boundary line between van provider service areas was shifted approximately one mile to the north. This was done to improve overall service and to more evenly distribute rides between carriers. MCTS pays a negotiated rate per service hour provided. The current van service contracts end in October 2023.

Taxi Service

Taxi service is a Milwaukee County discretionary program created to provide a cost-effective alternative that would reduce demand for ADA van service. Taxis are used by 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 an 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 then 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 program participants. Transit Plus services are available to eligible individuals during the same hours as fixed route bus service. Annually, Transit Plus program participants take over 500,000 rides.

Paratransit Program	2016	2017	2018
Total Rides	530,989	526,411	527,941
Van Rides	433,986	430,893	440,374
Taxicab Rides	77,947	79,319	73,043
Goodwill Rides	19,056	16,199	14,524
Avg. Cost/Trip	\$27.84	\$27.87	\$29.35
Expense	\$14,780,592	\$14,672,306	\$15,497,500

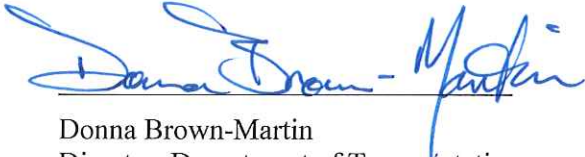
In summary, the MCTS Paratransit office manages all aspects of ADA paratransit eligibility, service provision, reporting and compliance with state and federal requirements. In addition, Transit Plus manages two discretionary ride programs that help offset demand and costs associated with ADA paratransit service. Services are monitored for efficiency and effectiveness. Complaints are recorded and investigated. Finally, efforts to enable persons with disabilities to travel independently on fixed route services in addition to, or instead of, paratransit services are on-going through travel training and mobility management initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

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Approved by:



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ParaTransit Service Boundary Effective September 2019

