



Re: Public Comments to Finance Committee on MCTS Plan - Agenda Item #6

From Justin Bielinski <Justin.Bielinski@milwaukeecountywi.gov>

Date Thu 12/11/2025 8:58 AM

To Barbara Beckert <bpbeckert@gmail.com>

Cc Allyson Smith <Allyson.Smith@milwaukeecountywi.gov>

Thank you for sharing these comments Ms. Beckert!

I will forward these along to the Committee Coordinator, Allyson Smith, so this is added to the record.

In Service,

Sarah Fajardo (she/her/hers) | Legislative Assistant

Legislative Services, Office of the County Clerk

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Supporting County Board District Offices 1, 14, and 16

By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee County is the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

From: Barbara Beckert <bpbeckert@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2025 8:53 AM

To: Willie Johnson Jr <williejohnson1951@icloud.com>; Steve Taylor <Steve.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>;

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Cc: Joseph Lamers <Joseph.Lamers@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; John Rodgers

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Subject: Public Comments to Finance Committee on MCTS Plan - Agenda Item #6

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Public Comment Finance Committee meeting - December 11, 2025 Agenda Item 6 - MCTS - 2026 Service Plan

Thank you, Supervisors, for your work to advance the resolution and amendment that provide additional funding for transit and paratransit at this challenging time. I serve as a member of the Milwaukee County Paratransit Taxi Task Force. I was initially appointed to represent Disability Rights Wisconsin, and have continued to serve after retiring. The Task Force was formed at the direction of this board to develop a plan for an accessible same day paratransit program to replace the Milwaukee County Paratransit Taxi Program which had provided same day paratransit service for over 40 years, however, the service was not accessible to people who used a mobility device such as a power chair or wheelchair.

The amendment requires Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) to submit a report that includes recommendations on how to best utilize allocated contingency funds to prevent service reductions to transit and to revise the Same Day Paratransit Program. I am encouraged to see the report from MCTS allocates funding to continue an updated version of the same day paratransit pilot program with more limited criteria, based on reduced funding.

Thank you, Supervisors, for supporting the continuation of this program which provides essential accessible same day transportation for Milwaukee County residents who are paratransit eligible and provides reliable transportation responsive to situations which cannot be planned 24 hours in advance. Transit Plus riders have no other option for public accessible same day transportation. MCTS, Transit Plus and MCDOT should continue to work with the Task Force to revise the Same Day Paratransit program, to develop criteria and work within funding constraints and to serve as a continuing resource. Community engagement and collaboration with the Task Force will be essential to planning and implementing the changes and to developing a strong communications plan.

It is also encouraging to see the plan to restore some of the transit service cuts proposed in the 2026 budget. Given that over 40% of Milwaukee County residents are non-drivers, retaining a strong transit system is essential. As the new "peak hours" routes and segment changes move forward, ongoing dialogue and communication with transit riders, employers, and other stakeholders will be essential. I hope the plan will have the flexibility to provide more extensive hours for heavily used routes such as route 28 which provides transportation to work for many Milwaukee County residents, including many people with disabilities.

The proposed changes to bus routes including limiting access to peak hours, will be a major alteration for residents who rely on these routes and will require a multipronged communication plan. I urge supervisors to prioritize development of such a plan. Many people with disabilities and other low income bus riders are on the disadvantaged side of the digital divide and may not have smart phones or computers. A communication strategy must address the communication needs of riders who are deaf, have vision loss, physical or cognitive disabilities. MCTS should include stakeholders in the planning and implementation of these changes, including transit riders, employers, disability organizations, and other stakeholders. This should include focus groups, surveys, and other strategies for dialogue with the community. The mantra of the disability rights movement is "nothing about us without us" – inclusion is key to advancing these significant changes.

Disability advocates stand ready to do our part in communicating with state and federal policymakers about the importance of increased funding for transit and paratransit moving forward, and working with you to reimagine our system here in Milwaukee County.

Please include these comments in the public comments for this meeting. At the December 3rd Transportation Committee, I submitted e-comments on the agenda item for the MCTS report, however, they were not included with public comments. I am not clear on the process to digitally submit written public comments and would appreciate guidance from staff. My comments are also attached.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to support and sustain paratransit and transit.

Barbara Beckert
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Paratransit Taxi Task Force member