

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: May 20, 2020
TO: Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin
SUBJECT: Milwaukee County Department Transportation Coronavirus Response

POLICY

This report is information only.

BACKGROUND

While the coronavirus is having a devastating impact on the Southeast Region, the focus of this report is on the impact to the Milwaukee County Department Transportation (MCDOT) operations and financial outlook. MCDOT is responsible for the operation, maintenance, planning and programming of capital improvements for airport, State Highway, County Truck Highway, bridges, public transit and transportation infrastructure within Milwaukee County. There are over 1,511 employees working across five divisions responsible for delivering transportation services across the County. More than eighty percent of the overall MCDOT funding comes through State and Federal funds. Match for the remaining balance are capture through tax levy, vehicle registration and bonds. Like the rest of the County, the Department is subject to the volatility of federal and state funding during the current financial situation.

STAFF, MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Since the beginning of the spread of the virus, the Department's primary concern has been the safety of our frontline crews and the safety of the traveling public. With the closure of businesses, schools and municipal facilities, the Milwaukee County road network is experiencing one of the lowest levels of traffic in decades. An important factor to keep in mind when you have crews working under live traffic making safety improvements and fulfilling maintenance requirements on the system. Low volumes have enabled state and federal authorities to encourage County Departments to schedule maintenance work that has been delayed due to higher priority projects. The challenge has been in developing policies and strategies that ensure the safety of our road crews while meeting state directives for performing work safely during the pandemic. MCDOT has developed policies that ensure that each person is protected

while performing road work and projects. To ensure social distancing the Department has reduced the size of our work crews on jobs. Each worker is assigned a vehicle, so they are personally safe and not sharing space with another employee. Each truck has disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer in which the operator cleans the steering wheel, door handles, seats and dashboard before they leave the vehicle and before the next operator enters the vehicle for their shift. Each person is given gloves and a face mask for each shift. We also changed our work/operating procedures for work zone crews. Staff responsible for putting out barrels for work zones on New Stack Body Trucks (vehicles that drop the barrels at work zones with protective signals and barriers on the vehicle for staff safety) have new directives for how crews operate.



The Crew supervisors found that staff lost their ability to social distance after the barrels were delivered off the trucks, they were all cramming into the Truck to return to the start of the closure. Modifications in procedures were made to enable one person to ride safely in the rear of the truck; plastic sheeting was placed from the top of the roof of the vehicle across the area between the front and back seats to enable one person to ride in the back seat safely. If it is a four-man crew, we allowed staff the flexibility to walk back individually to the start of the zone so that they could ensure they were not encumbered further. We know how important social distancing is on these projects and for the staff, we have developed a set of policies to ensure the safety of our crews and we are strictly applying these procedures across the department. Supervisors are checking crews throughout the day to ensure that they are following our guidance and rules for safe distancing. For those individuals that have health issues that they would fill safer on less crowded crews, we have jobs where staff can work alone on the road system doing mowing and signage replacement along the State Trunk Highway system in the County. As we become aware of problems, we work to correct issues and get information out to the teams on changes and improvements. We recognize that there is always room for improvement, and we welcome staff input into making equipment and teams safer.

FLEET SHOP

MCDOT has three Fleet Operation shops across the county, forty-six mechanics working on both heavy-duty equipment and light weight equipment like Sheriff cruisers and motorcycles. The spacing for mechanic work in each facility is well spaced but to ensure the proper distancing between workers John Blonien the Fleet Director has split the shifts to enable half of the staff to work first shift with a Supervisor and the remaining half to work second shift to enhance social distancing. Because of the nature of their work all crews wear masks while working on the vehicles and gloves. Disinfectant wipes and spray are in each work area for staff use. Crews work orders for the day are delivered to their workstations in writing so there is less face to face interaction. Workstations are wiped down before the start of work hours and at the end of the day. Again, the emphasis is on worker safety and we encourage staff suggestions for making areas safe as possible.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

All engineering staff are teleworking at this time. As engineers and project managers they are required to go out in the field to address road construction questions and concerns. Each project manager has a vehicle that they use, each vehicle has disinfectant wipes for cleaning the steering wheel, doors and seats before starting their trips and after their trips are done. Each project manager is required to wear a mask and gloves while out on the projects.

The Department continues to follow the State Badger Bounce back guidance as well as all Milwaukee County directives for "Safe at home, Saves lives". As needed, we will update and modify our social distancing procedures and guidance as new information and direction is available.

MCDOT will continue to monitor the situation and provide the County Board with necessary updates.

RECOMMENDATION

Informational Report only.

Prepared and Approved by:

Julie Esch, Deputy

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Department of Transportation