

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/17/2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

Subject: From the Director, Department of Transportation, presenting the department's 2024 Annual Report.

File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation set and achieved its 2024 goals.

POLICY

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 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

Alignment to the above strategic goals is articulated in responses to the questions below.

BODY

1. What were your Department/Office's top 3 goals in 2024? (See those listed in your 2023 Annual Report.) Please explain why they are "SMARTIE" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy.
 - **Goal 1:** The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is actively working to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities through the modernization and enhancement of streets and roadways throughout the community to promote multimodal safety, accessibility, and efficiency.
 - The Director's Office is addressing this goal through the continued implementation of the Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project and its plans to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Milwaukee County's 19 municipalities
 - The Transportation Services division is addressing this goal through projects along County Trunk Highways (CTH) and roadways within the purview of Milwaukee County.
 - **Goal 2:** Implement and refine plans for each of the five transportation Divisions addressing efficiency, fiscal sustainability, and employee retention. Airport
 - Airport
 - Highway Maintenance
 - Fleet Management
 - Transportation Services
 - Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS)
 - **Goal 3:** Continue progress on the implementation of goals in the 3-year work plan for the Department of Transportation

These three goals align with the County's racial equity strategy and goals as we/MCDOT continues to support diversity and inclusion efforts across Milwaukee County.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2024? Please explain.
 - a. **Goal 1:** Made significant progress on transportation-related strategic objectives that address "dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities."
 - The Director's Office addressed this goal through the continued implementation of the **Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project** and its plans to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Milwaukee County's 19 municipalities
 - The **Transportation Services** division addressed this goal through projects along County Trunk Highways (CTH) and roadways within the purview of Milwaukee County, as well as with collaborations with WisDOT, municipalities and stakeholders.

The Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project

MCDOT made significant progress on multiple deliverables related to the **Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project**, an effort to increase multimodal safety and address reckless driving across all 19 municipalities in Milwaukee County.

The Project began in 2023. In 2024, Phase One was completed, and Phase Two was substantially completed. The effort, and its progress, was recognized by the US Department of Transportation as a prime example of intergovernmental cooperation and touted as a model for others to follow.

- In February 2024, MCDOT published its first ever **Transportation Safety Assessment Report**, completing Phase One of the Project. The engagement and crash data analysis findings from Phase One laid the groundwork for Phase Two to provide a comprehensive set of solutions.
- In March 2024, Milwaukee County unveiled its **Motor Vehicle Collision (MVC) Dashboard** to help Milwaukee County residents and roadway users better understand MVC distribution rates and to make streets in Milwaukee County safer. The launch of the dashboard completed Phase One of the project, which is a product of the Milwaukee Area Safe Streets Taskforce (MASST). After the launch, Phase Two of the MVC dashboard project began, which was an analysis of the data to better identify hotspots in the community.
- In August, MCDOT obtained a unanimous leadership commitment, approval and adoption to achieving Vision Zero by 2037 when the County Executive signed Vision Zero legislation.
- In September and October 2024, MCDOT held **five Safer Streets Workshops** to encourage public engagement. The workshops were open house style meetings that provided informational materials and activities designed for residents to provide opinions on which safe streets solutions may work best on the roadways and intersections they use every day.
- In December 2024, MCDOT presented its **Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP)** for review, substantially completing Phase Two of the Complete Communities Transportation Planning project. The Phase was officially completed in early 2025 when the Plan was officially adopted.

In 2024, the **Transportation Services division** substantially completed 8 projects along CTHs that modernized and enhanced CTHs through reconstruction and reconditioning, traffic signal safety improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing planning study, and other improvements.

- S 13th St (CTH V) roadway reconstruction from W Drexel Ave to W Puetz Ave in the City of Oak Creek (County Project No WH0010222).
- W Forest Home Ave (CTH OO) roadway recondition from Hi-View Dr to W Speedway Dr in the City of Franklin (County Project No WH0111012).
- W Good Hope Rd (CTH PP) traffic signals safety improvement from N 99th St to N 60th St in the City of Milwaukee at the intersections of N 99th St, N 91st St, N 86th St, Uihlein Soccer Park, and N 60th St (County Project No WH0117012).
- W Silver Spring Dr (CTH E) traffic signal system safety improvement from N 124th St to N 91st St in the City of Milwaukee at the intersections of N 124th St, N Rae Ave, N 107th St, N 103rd St and N 91st St (County Project No WH0248012).
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing Planning Assessment safety study at various pedestrian and/or bicycle crossing locations (20) on CTH's in Milwaukee County (County Project No WH027001).
- Curb Ramps-Sidewalk at E Layton Ave (CTH Y) and S Nicholson Ave intersection safety modification in the Cities of Cudahy and St Francis (WH0278012).
- 128th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) College Ave (CTH ZZ) modifications that included left turn lane construction located 250 feet west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks in the City of Oak Creek (County Project No WH0281012).
- I-43 North/South Freeway mitigation efforts associated with N Port Washington Rd (CTH W) in the City of Glendale and Villages of Fox Point and Bayside to support the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) I-43 North/South reconstruction (County Project No's WH0253012 and WH0254012).

b. Goal 2: In 2024, MCDOT has made progress in all areas in implementing and refining plans for each of the five transportation divisions addressing efficiency, fiscal sustainability, and recruitment and retention.

Airport

In 2024, Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport continued to increase passenger traffic and services to many fantastic destinations across North America. Total passengers increased by nearly 5% in 2024, from 6,015,731 to 6,316,245 total passengers. That means an additional 300,000 passengers chose MKE for their air travel in 2024. This growth is crucial to the success of the airport.

The Airport also engaged in multiple initiatives to enhance airport accessibility and amenities while showcasing Milwaukee as a destination.

- Successfully accommodated RNC travel with no major issues.
- Sun Country Airlines began new nonstop service from MKE to Punta Cana, DR and expanded their existing service to Cancun, MX.

- Walk-in TSA PreCheck enrollments became available at the Airport seven days per week via a new partnership with CLEAR. Previously, enrollments were by appointment only at off-site locations or at temporary mobile enrollment events.
- Hosted the second-ever Global Entry enrollment event in October.
- Opened the first Dunkin Donuts locations at MKE Airport.
- MKE partnered with Children's Wisconsin, TSA, and Alaska Airlines to host free Family Travel Night events, making the airport more accessible for families traveling with young children.
- Launched a new public art program in partnership with students from the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.
- New wayfinding signage was installed on Concourse D.
- Replaced the carpeting in the concession mall.
- Received an AirportNEXT award for best transportation access.
- Hosted two successful pilot competition events at Timmerman Airport.

Highway Maintenance

The Highway Maintenance division continues to focus on contributing to the fiscal health of the county by developing ways to minimize cost and continue to deliver high quality services to the residents of Milwaukee County while remaining a zero-tax levy division.

- **Routine Maintenance Agreements:** In 2024 the Highway Division received nearly \$17 million dollars in State Reimbursements via Routine Maintenance Agreements and added another \$1.5 million in additional maintenance projects via Discretionary Maintenance Agreements.
- **New North Region Highway Maintenance Facility:** In late 2024, the new North Region Highway Maintenance Facility was substantially completed. The new building will significantly improve services in the northern region of the county, replacing an obsolete facility built in the nineteenth century. Modern equipment and facilities will improve highway maintenance, save utilities costs, and reduce the county's carbon footprint.
- **Salt Brine Usage:** The county's investment in brine production is leading the county's environmental sustainability initiatives. In 2024, the Highway Division significantly increased its use of brine versus rock salt for winter weather events, saving taxpayer dollars while reducing the amount of salt that could run into local waterways. In 2024, Highway Maintenance utilized over 650,000 gallons of salt brine throughout the winter season. In 2025, we will be able to further increase these efforts due to additional high-capacity brine making units at the North Shop and the South Shop.
- **Citizen Issue Reporter:** In 2024, the Highway Maintenance Division increased public outreach/feedback via its Citizen Issue Reporter web application.
 - A total of 604 Issues were reported and resolved in 2024 compared to 383 total issues reported in 2023.
 - Maintained 24 hour turn around on all maintenance concerns, even though usage of the issue reporter increased.

Recruitment and Retention: Significant increases in the recruitment and retention of diverse talent, which has resulted in a decrease in vacancies. The Highway Division has gone from averaging 10 vacancies per month in the past 5 years to now averaging under 4 or less vacancies per month.

- 25 full-time hires in 2024 (does not include the seasonal HMW II temporary hires)
- 10 employees were promoted within the Division + 7 temporary assignment to regular assignment promotions
- Went into our 2024 winter operations season with only 1 full-time vacancies

Fleet Management

In 2024, the Fleet Management division made progress in enhancing fleet policy and procedures aimed to reduce fleet repair and maintenance costs, as well as overall fleet size and carbon footprint, including fuel costs. The Fleet Management division as also had an extremely successful year with its recruitment and retention efforts.

Fleet Optimization Project: In 2024, Fleet Management began development of procedures to ensure consistent purchase and utilization of Milwaukee County vehicles among all departments.

- Reductions in maintenance and operational costs for user departments, including depreciation, insurance, and repair, will significantly optimize the County's financial stability.
- Efficient reductions will produce environmental and sustainable benefits for the County's climate action plan.

Sustainability Initiatives: The division has implemented several projects to address sustainability through fuel reduction and exploration of sources of renewable energy.

- The division implemented an automated fuel monitoring system for all vehicle fuel sites, allowing monitoring of equipment utilization. This information will allow the division to begin development of a fuel management strategy.
- Fleet Management completed a solar feasibility study for providing solar panels on the roof of the fleet garage. However, projects identified in the study did not rank high enough in the Capital Improvement Project scoring criteria.
- An electric truck was used as a test case for a cost/benefit analysis in moving to electric vehicles. This analysis continues.

Recruitment and Retention: To address hiring and recruitment challenges, Fleet Management implemented an internal career ladder model to provide opportunities for existing employees to advance within the department.

- Three mechanic positions and an assistant mechanic were successfully filled.
- By the end of 2024, Fleet Management was down to only one vacancy. That position that has since been filled, and the department is currently fully staffed for the first time in about a decade.
- The new staff come from a range of backgrounds, adding to the overall diversity of the department.

Facility Efficiency: Fleet Management successfully met and expanded upon its goal to maximize use of space in the MCDOT Administrative Building. The department provided office and storage space to nine county departments, in addition to MCDOT.

- Of these nine departments, four of them housed approximately 40 staff at the MCDOT building, filling 100% of available office spaces in the building and offsetting facilities costs.

Transportation Services

Throughout 2024, the division continued to focus on strategies to enhance efficiencies by providing fiscal sustainability and improve recruitment and retention in maintaining a productive and diverse workforce.

State and federal funding: Secured approximately \$29 million of Federal/State revenue to help continue to maintain safety and provide infrastructure improvements to Milwaukee County owned roadways and bridges over the next 5 years.

Recruitment and Retention: In 2024, Transportation Services continued to place an emphasis on employee engagement, professional development, and a positive work environment to assist with retention and recruitment efforts. The division conducted regular employee engagement activities to strengthen teamwork and open communication, leading to better collaboration and engaging work environment.

- The division filled one (1) vacant Engineer position that is critical to deliver transportation improvement projects on time, within budget, and of quality.
- The division attained approval of a new position, Deputy Director of Transportation Engineering, in the 2025 Milwaukee County budget, an important component in the future strategic growth and re-organization of the division.
- Completed the renovation of a portion of the County facility located on Lapham St, fostering a sense of positivity while adding more space for growth to better serve Milwaukee County.

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS)

MCTS continues to invest in strategies to increase the sustainability of the county bus system, including initiatives to increase ridership as well as recruitment and retention of staff.

Ridership: MCTS significantly outperformed its goal to provide one million more bus rides compared to the prior year. In 2024, MCTS saw a 13% increase in ridership, increasing from 22.3 million rides in 2023 to 25.3 million rides in 2024.

Please note that starting in 2024, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) updated ridership data to align with National Transit Data (NTD). Previous annual reports will be updated to align this information. NTD ridership figures have become much more comprehensive than in the past, due to more of our buses having counters on them.

Recruitment and Retention: MCTS has taken numerous steps to increase recruitment and retention.

- In 2024, MCTS increased staffing of the Maintenance Department to nearly 96% by the end of the year, up from 89.74% in January. The Talent Acquisition team collaborated with the Marketing Department to create a recruitment campaign placing ads on buses, bus shelters, television, radio, social media and print. This exceeds MCTS' goal of 95% staffing in the Maintenance Department.
- MCTS hired 110 Bus Operators, nearly reaching its goal of hiring 120 Bus Operators to account for attrition.
- MCTS has successfully reduced "Time to Fill" for non-represented positions by 28% compared to 2023, exceeding its goal of 25%. In 2023, the average time to fill was 114 days from the time of opening the job requisition to the employee's first day on the job. In 2024, the time to fill was reduced to 82 days.

- c. **Goal 3:** For the first time, MCDOT has a three-year Strategic Plan in place. MCDOT continues to work toward the goals as identified in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

3. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- Support of leadership, including the County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive's Office in meeting stated objectives.
- External and Internal support to address ongoing reckless driving and safety concerns of Milwaukee County residents.
- Pay increases closer to market standards attracted more qualified applicants. We had a lot of success recruiting by "word of mouth."

4. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- Limited financial and staff resources to engage and involve the County staff in the broader safety concerns of reckless driving.

- Mechanics continue to be in high demand right now, so continued aggressive recruitment strategies will be necessary to maintain staffing levels and to fill remaining position vacancies.
 - Compensation remains an issue. Studies remain underway by Human Resources.
 - Upfront costs are a barrier to investing in large scale sustainability initiatives
 - Funding at the state level remains stagnant, even as cost-to-continue increases
 - Ongoing issues and uncertainty at the federal level could result in fewer and reduced funding and award opportunities
5. What is the status of your Department/Office in developing its strategic plan? If complete, please upload your plan with this report.

Complete

6. If not addressed in #5, what are your Department/Office goals for 2025?

Developing partnerships and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders. Identification of dedicated funding sources or opportunities to maintain and/or enhances services. Continue initiatives to ensure safety of the travelling public.

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

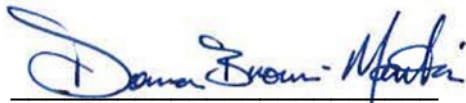
VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, MCDOT
John Rodgers, Deputy Director, MCDOT
Nicole Armendariz, Director of Public Affairs and Marketing, MCDOT
Brian Dranzik, Airport Director, MCDOT
Eduardo Santiago, Highway Director, MCDOT
John Blonien, Fleet Director, MCDOT
Andrea Weddle-Henning, Transportation Services Director, MCDOT
Julie Esch, Interim President and Managing Director, MCTS, jesch@mcts.org

PREPARED BY:

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

APPROVED BY:



Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

Strategic Plan
PowerPoint

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