

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

DATE: 5/15/2025

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

FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
Julie Esch, Interim Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the Interim President & CEO, Milwaukee County Transit System, requesting approval to implement the MCTS MOVE 2025 Recommended Route Plan.

FILE TYPE: Action Report

REQUEST

This report presents the MOVE 2025 Recommended Route Plan to the County Board for review and requests approval to implement route changes beginning August 24, 2025.

POLICY

Proposed additions, deletions, and modifications to transit routes and services are subject to approval by the County Executive and County Board of Supervisors.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of MOVE 2025 Route Plan has been to gather feedback from riders, bus operators, and the public on proposed routes and schedule changes through an extensive public outreach campaign, leading to a modified route network that better serves their needs. Project goals are to increase ridership, improve the rider's experience, and advance racial equity. MCTS has not requested any additional operational funding as service expansions will be balanced through improved efficiencies based on a review of ridership and productivity data.

MCTS gave the Transportation and Transit Committee an informational report on the MOVE 2025 Service Change Plan on 3/25/2025 in File 25-179. This plan was also referred to in File 24-827 (2025 Recommended Budget Overview).

Key themes in MOVE 2025 are as follows:

- Continually Adapting Service to Meet Riders' Needs: Ensuring the route network evolves with shifting travel patterns and new residential and commercial developments.
- Strengthen Support for Business: Adjusting routes to better serve employment centers, as most riders rely on MCTS for commuting to work.

- Increase Frequency of Service: Reducing waiting times makes the rider's experience more convenient.
- Improve Reliability: Improving route predictability and schedule stability minimizes delays and enhances overall travel efficiency.
- Broaden Coverage: Expanding service to key destinations ensures that more people can access essential locations.

Throughout this plan, MCTS will leverage detailed ridership and productivity data to guide service decisions and optimize limited resources, thus ensuring the route network will effectively be adapted to community needs and within the budget.

Project Schedule

Phase I (December 2024 – February 2025)

- Gather feedback from riders, operators and stakeholders on route proposals as well as collect their ideas for service. Route proposals were developed based on previous feedback as well as an analysis of ridership and productivity data.

Phase II (February – April)

- Compile Phase 1 feedback and prepare a draft plan(s) for additional review and comment.
- After the second round of feedback, prepare a recommended plan.

Phase III (May – August)

- Present the Recommended Plan to the County Board and request approval.
- If approved, MCTS would prepare an outreach plan to inform riders, bus drivers, and the County Board and implement route changes on August 24, 2025.

Outreach and Engagement Efforts

Riders and stakeholders have played a crucial role in shaping service design decisions. A comprehensive outreach plan was developed to ensure that service adjustments were carefully considered and transparently communicated to meet the needs of the community.

- Held 8 in-person community meetings across Milwaukee County to provide route information to riders and the public. A Spanish language interpreter and ASL interpreter were available at all public meetings. Created bus stop signage to promote awareness weeks in advance of meetings
- Created a MOVE 2025 website with background information, descriptions of route options, and project schedule.
- Created an online survey that asked for feedback on specific route proposals. MCTS received over 1,200 surveys from the 5 community meetings as well as from bus drivers.
- Published issues of Bus Lines and Rider Insider and a press release for local media.
- Met with ATU 998 leadership as well as bus drivers at both Fond du Lac and Kinnickinnic Stations to inform them of route proposals, gather structured feedback on the route proposals, and listen to additional suggestions.

- Met with stakeholders that represent the interests of persons with disabilities including Independence First, Industries for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Transit Plus Advisory Committee, and County Days events.
- Met with local municipalities DPW's including the City of Milwaukee, South Milwaukee, Oak Creek, West Allis, and Shorewood to inform them and seek their feedback.

Service Impacts – More Frequent Service

The most common request from riders was to increase the frequency of service. More frequent service was created in areas with medium-to-high ridership and with high population densities and/or high job densities. The following routes would have more frequent service:

- BlueLine – Fond du Lac Avenue: Expanded 15 min. high frequency to include the segment from 60th & Hampton Avenue to 76th & Mill Road (versus 30 min.)
- Route 63 - Silver Spring: New 15 min. high frequency service during the morning and afternoon rush hours (versus 20 min.).
- Route 57 – Walnut – Appleton: Improved frequency to 22 min. during the morning and afternoon rush hours (versus 28 min.).

Service Impacts – Creating New Routes

The second most often request from riders was to expand service to unserved or under-served job centers. The following routes would be created as part of this effort:

- Route 59 – Drexel Avenue: New route would be created along Drexel Avenue between Chicago Avenue and 27th & College. This request came from riders who wanted a faster way to travel from Cudahy /South Milwaukee to Drexel Towne Square / IKEA.
- Route 73 – Mill Road: New route would be created along Mill Road from Teutonia & Florist to 124th & Brown Deer. This route will expand access to jobs/shopping via new connections to Routes 12, 19, 30, and 35. This route will replace some segments of the BlueLine.
- Route 74 – S. 43rd Street: New route would be created along S. 43rd / Miller Park Way from 35th & Wis. to Loomis & Morgan. This route will simplify access and shorten the time it takes to travel to jobs/shopping. MCTS is also working with WisDOT on the feasibility of adding a new stop next to American Family Field as part of the I-94 Reconstruction Project. This route will replace a segment of Route 56.
- Route 82 – S. 13th – Howell Avenue: New route on 13th, 6th, and Howell Ave. between College Avenue and Puetz Avenue. This change will improve the efficiency of service as well as on time performance. This route will replace a segment of Route 19 to Oak Creek.

Service Impacts – Extending Service / Improving Connections

Another common request from riders was to extend service and improve connections to unserved or under-served job centers. The following would be created or modified as part of this effort:

- Route 14 – Humboldt – Wisconsin: Route would be extended west on Wisconsin Avenue to 17th Street and provide a one bus ride to more employers in downtown and to Marquette University.
- Route 30 – Sherman – Wisconsin: Route would be modified to serve Florist Avenue to Teutonia Avenue and create new connections to Routes 12 and 19. This change will address concerns from bus operators to improve access to nearby restrooms.
- Route 52 – Clement – Pennsylvania: Service on the north end would be modified to travel to Chase Ave. & Holt Street. Service on the south end will be extended to Chicago Ave. & Drexel Ave. Both changes will allow connections to other routes and better serve jobs/shopping. Service to the Kelly Senior Center and the Aurora South Shore Hospital will continue to be provided.
- Route 56 - Greenfield - Beloit: Extension would provide new service along Beloit Road from 60th St. to 92nd St. & Oklahoma Avenue. This change will improve access to jobs/shopping via connections from other routes.
- Route 68 – Port Washington Road: Route would be extended to UWM via Capitol Drive and Downer Ave. This change would allow the RedLine to be modified to use Oakland Avenue and shorten travel times to UWM.

Service Impacts – Routes Modifications Based on Ridership

Some routes and service levels were modified due to low ridership and productivity. MCTS will not eliminate any routes but only segments of some routes. The total number of rides on these segments represents 1% of the daily ridership in the entire system.

- Route 19 – Dr. MLK Drive – S. 13th: Service on MLK Dr. between Kilbourn Avenue and McKinley Avenue will be moved to 6th to shorten travel times and improve reliability. In addition, service on the south end will be shortened at College Ave. Riders going to Oak Creek can connect to new Route 82.
- Route 20 – S. 20th Street: Route will be shortened at Edgerton Avenue due to low ridership. Riders going to the College Avenue Walmart can connect to the PurpleLine on 27th St.
- Route 28 – 108th Street: Service is modified to travel along Hampton and Lovers Lane in both directions. Eliminates one way service with low ridership.
- Route 51 – Oklahoma Avenue: Midday service would be reduced to every 22 min. (versus 15 min.). Limited-service on Lake Drive would be eliminated due to low ridership.
- Route 55 – Layton Avenue: Limited-service on Lake Drive would be eliminated due to low ridership. Service to the Kelly Senior Center and Aurora South Shore Hospital would be maintained via Route 52. This would improve frequency for most riders on the route.

- Route 58 – Villard Avenue: Service on the west end would be modified to end at Villard & Appleton due to low ridership. Service on the east end would be extended to Green Bay & Baker and provide new connections to Route 63. This change will help bus drivers by improving access to restrooms. Finally, service would be modified to run only during the daytime due to low ridership.
- PurpleLine – 27th Street: Service on the south end would be modified to end at the College – Walmart due to low ridership. New Route 59 will connect with the PurpleLine at the College – Walmart and maintain the connection to IKEA. It will also provide new service to Drexel Towne Square.
- RedLine – Capitol Drive: Service to UWM would be modified to use Oakland Ave. to shorten travel times and improve efficiency. Service on Capitol Drive east of Oakland and on Downer Avenue would be replaced by Route 68.

Title VI Review

MCTS followed its policies and procedures under its Title VI Plan to review service changes under consideration in the MOVE 2025 Recommended Plan. In brief, guidelines state planners must examine a change to a route to see if it meets the definition of a “major service change”:

- it affects 25% of the bus hours on a route or group of routes,
- it affects 25% of the one-way mileage of a route or group of routes,
- it affects 25% of the daily service period,
- it reduces the frequency of service (increases headway) by 50%, or
- it creates a gap of greater than one-half mile from the nearest alternative service.

If a major service change is confirmed, MCTS must prepare a service equity analysis (SAFE). The SAFE indicates whether the change has a disparate impact on the minority population or a disproportionate burden on the low-income population. If either impact exists, MCTS must take steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts where practicable.

Applying these thresholds to the MOVE 2025 Recommended Plan indicated it would be a major service change. Consequently, MCTS performed a SAFE analysis.

The process of completing a SAFE involves several calculations. The first step is to measure the number of annual people-trips traveling through each census tract in the current system as well as in the 2025 MOVE Recommended Plan. These datasets were evaluated for both the low-income population and for the minority population. A comparison was then made between the number of annual people trips for the low-income and non-low-income population and similarly between the minority population and the non-minority population.

The next step in the process was to compare the percent change in annual people trips for each pair of population groups, i.e., minority to non-minority and low income to non-low income. If the difference in percent change is less than 80% (known as the Four-

Fifths rule), then the impact on the minority or low-income groups would be considered disparate and disproportionate, respectively. If the difference in percent change was higher than 80%, then the impacts would not be considered disparate or disproportionate.

A review of the data indicates the changes contained in the MOVE 2025 Recommended Plan would not have a disparate impact on minority populations nor a disproportionate burden on low-income populations (see table below). In general, this plan would bring more useful transit service throughout the county by serving new areas and creating more connections while increasing service for both low-income and minority population groups.

Population Group	Annual People Trips Before	Annual People Trips After	Percent Change	Application of 4/5th's Rule (Exceed 80%?)
Low Income	50,769,455	51,400,850	1.2%	Yes (>100%)
Non-Low Income	48,558,740	48,346,780	-0.4%	
Minority	56,308,255	56,352,040	0.1%	Yes (>100%)
Non-Minority	43,439,375	43,395,590	-0.1%	
Total	99,747,630	99,747,630		

A "People Trip" is defined as the total population served by a route (or group of routes) multiplied by the annual scheduled trips on that route (or group of routes).

Summary

The purpose of MOVE 2025 has been to gather feedback from riders on cost neutral route and schedule proposals that would better serve the needs of the public. MOVE 2025 will help riders by making service more frequent and by creating or extending routes to better connect areas with jobs/shopping. It will also improve efficiency by reducing or removing service in areas with low ridership and productivity.

Riders and stakeholders were supportive of the service changes in MOVE 2025. These changes would not have a disparate impact on the minority population nor a disproportionate burden on the low income population based on a service equity analysis as required under Title VI.

MCTS believes MOVE 2025 will strengthen the transit system's ability to grow the regional economy and improve the quality of life in Milwaukee County. MOVE 2025 is also in alignment with the MCTS mission to connect our community to jobs, education and life with essential transit services as well as Milwaukee County's mission to enhance the quality of life through great public service.

If approved, MCTS would prepare an outreach plan to inform riders, bus drivers, and the County Board of upcoming changes in June and July. New service changes would begin August 24, 2025.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.

3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

RECOMMENDATION

MCTS recommends a resolution authorizing the approval of the MOVE 2025 Recommended Route Plan and implementing service changes starting August 24, 2025.

FISCAL EFFECT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

John Rodgers, Deputy Director, Department of Transportation

Julie Esch, Interim President & CEO, MCTS, jesch@mcts.org

Tom Winter, Director, Service Development Dept, MCTS, twinter@mcts.org

Jesus Ochoa, Planning Manager, Service Development Dept, MCTS, jochoa@mcts.org

PREPARED BY:

Tom Winter, Director, Service Development Department, MCTS

Jesus Ochoa, Planning Manager, Service Development Department, MCTS

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Donna Brown-Martin", is written over a horizontal line.

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Fiscal Note

PowerPoint

System Map

Route Impacts Map

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