

County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

DATE: 5/20/2020
TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: Update on MCTS NEXT System Redesign Project

POLICY

This report is for informational purposes only.

BACKGROUND

This report provides a status update on the MCTS NEXT System Redesign Project and proposed next steps. The goals of MCTS NEXT are to update the transit system route network in a way that creates more high frequency service, improves people's accessibility to the places they want to go, and reduces their travel times.

Timeline of Approvals / Updates

June 2017 – The County Board adopted resolution File No. 17-435 authorizing MCTS to study a 60/40 service delivery option and present findings in a written report to the County Board for review and approval.

September 2018 - MCTS provided the Transportation, Public Works, and Transit (TPW&T) Committee with an informational update on the plan to redesign the transit system's route structure, branded as MCTS NEXT (File No. 18-638).

December 2018 - MCTS drafted two service proposals (60/40 and 80/20) to give the public a choice regarding the type of system they would like to see. An extensive outreach plan was prepared to ask riders and stakeholders for their feedback, (i.e., multiple public meetings, on-line and on-board bus surveys, a Spanish language open house, and an on-line virtual open house). There was solid support for increasing the number of high frequency bus routes, and a preference for the 60/40 plan. Consequently, MCTS began to modify its 60/40 route redesign plan in response to specific feedback by passengers and stakeholders.

March 2019 – MCTS provided the TPW&T Committee with an informational status update on MCTS NEXT (File No. 19-241). Later in the month, MCTS presented the modified 60/40 route redesign plan to the public for further review and comment.

May 2019 – MCTS provided the TPW&T Committee with an informational update on public outreach efforts associated with MCTS NEXT (File No. 19-27). MCTS drafted a recommended system map based on public comments on the modified 60/40 plan. The recommended system map and other related details could be found at <https://www.ridemcts.com/programs/mcts-next>

A motion was approved by the TPW&T Committee to refer this file to the Office on African American Affairs, with a written report due back to the Committee for the July meeting cycle, analyzing the report from a racial equity lens standpoint.

MCTS later met with OAAA representatives and learned about the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) framework of normalizing, organizing and operationalizing racial equity. Moving forward, planners will complete racial equity tool worksheets prior to making service changes, endeavor to build meaningful relationships with organizations that represent minority residents and improve its collection of demographic data on meeting attendees and riders. Finally, it should be noted planners and other staff at MCTS participated in OAAA sponsored racial equity training.

July 2019 – OAAA provided their report on MCTS NEXT to the TPW&T Committee. They noted that MCTS NEXT outreach efforts tabulated in excess of 4,000 forms of communication. They reported MCTS would assess/review any disparate impacts to minority/low-income populations with any proposed changes and would continue its community outreach efforts to inform riders about route changes. They also noted that limited revenues from the State of Wisconsin regularly continues to disparately impact Milwaukee County and MCTS.

OAAA recommended MCTS seek ways to enhance awareness to key stakeholders including surveying riders on the bus, to identify ways to ensure that all segments of the population are fully included in the decision-making process, and to work closely with Transit Services Advisory Committee.

December 2019 – MCTS provided the TPW&T Committee with an informational update on MCTS NEXT including a description of its timeline and public outreach efforts. MCTS noted the recently completed 2020 Budget included changes to fixed route service that would require modifying the recommended system map developed in May 2019. Finally, MCTS stated it was our intention to report the TPW&T Committee in Spring with a written report on the updated recommended system map, including maps of route changes, and ask for the plan to be approved.

January / February 2020 - MCTS updated the recommended system map in light of the 2020 Budget. In addition, planners applied a racial equity tool worksheet to MCTS NEXT and made changes to ensure it advances racial equity in Milwaukee County. The updated recommended system map can be found at <https://www.ridemcts.com/programs/mcts-next/mcts-next-recommended-system-map>

Next Steps

MCTS proposes to report to TPW&T Committee in the July cycle and seek a resolution to approve MCTS NEXT. This would comply with the 2017 resolution that was originally authorized by the County Board. If approved, MCTS would prepare a schedule for making incremental service changes consistent with the plan. The County Board would be informed of every change before it would be implemented.


RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:


Donna Brown-Martin
Director, Department of Transportation