County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

DATE: 8/17/2017

TO: Michael Mayo, Sr., Chairperson, Transportation, Public Works & Transit Committee

FROM: Brian Dranzik, Director, Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Informational Report on Milwaukee County Transit System Mobile Application for Trip Planning, Real-Time Bus Tracking and Fare Payment

BACKGROUND

Later this year, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) will release a new mobile smartphone application (app) called, the RideMCTS app. The free app will allow transit passengers to plan a trip, check real-time bus arrival and schedule information, and buy an electronic ticket all from a smartphone.

According to a 2017 Pew Research Study, 95% of Americans own a cellphone, including 77% who own a smartphone. The RideMCTS app is aimed at that segment of the population who is increasingly more comfortable using apps on their phone to do everything from texting to ordering food to paying bills. E-tickets are becoming more and more common within the transit industry. Last year, an MCTS focus group of non-transit riders identified access to an app as a key to helping them overcome uncertainty about using transit for the first time. The goal of the app is to make riding MCTS easier for occasional riders, attract new riders, and retain current users.

In the wake of the success of Pre>Fare, the e-ticket MCTS created for Freeway Flyer service to Summerfest in 2016, MCTS has been working to provide a new app for everyday use. Before beginning the RideMCTS app project, MCTS evaluated many transit apps and talked with several transit agencies about their e-tickets. Like Pre>Fare, the app is being developed by Tixora, a Wisconsin based startup company.

The RideMCTS app will feature a simple to understand interface with a fare structure that is consistent with our current tariff. At launch the app will have two fare forms:
- $2 for a single ride (with a 90-minute transfer)
- $5 for a 24-hour pass

Tickets bought on the RideMCTS app will be visually validated by the bus operator. Riders will get on the bus and show the ticket on their phone to the Bus Operator as proof of purchase. The e-ticket will feature numerous fraud protections and allow for machine validation by scanning a code on the phone if additional hardware is installed on each bus in the future. The app is also being designed in a way that can allow for potential future integration with other transit systems and ride sharing services.

The MCTS app will be state-of-the-art at the time of release later this year. A demonstration will be provided during the Committee meeting.
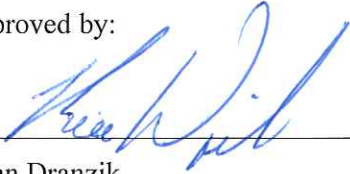
RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

Brian Dranzik
Director, Department of Transportation

cc: Chris Abele, County Executive
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        Steve Kreklow, Budget Director, DAS - PSB
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