

**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION
COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**

DATE: October 6, 2014
TO: Marina Dimitrijevic, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Paul Bargren, Corporation Counsel *PB*
SUBJECT: Agreement and Bus Route Changes at Southridge

It is requested that this file be referred to the Committees on Transportation, Public Works and Transit.

Southridge is served by four MTS bus routes – 14, 55, 64 and 76 – comprising about 180 buses per day, with about 200 passengers getting on and 200 getting off each day.

The mall is private property. Starting November 1, 2013, the mall directed that MTS buses could no longer use a stop near the Sears store but instead had to use a stop on the mall's ring road that is about 1,000 feet from the nearest mall entrance.¹ Reaching the mall from that stop requires walking along the edge of a parking lot, crossing a busy parking lot access road and then continuing along a mall road to a sidewalk. The walkway consists of a pedestrian lane painted at the edge of the parking lot surface. Although the walkway and the bus stop comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, this has proven a difficult path for those with handicaps or who have difficulty walking.

A number of avenues were explored over the winter, although given Southridge's private property status, options were limited. Sup. Jursik took the lead in organizing opposition to Southridge's move, including organizing a coalition of groups known as BUSS (Bus User Safety at Southridge). BUSS and others staged protests and expressed opposition to the change in bus stops. A number of other supervisors joined the effort. At the May 7 meeting of the Transportation Committee, the Southridge mall director appeared and agreed to attempt to negotiate improvements in the transit situation. Corporation Counsel was asked to represent the County Board and this Committee in those discussions.

Numerous contacts and negotiations with Southridge representatives have resulted in an agreement that will accomplish the following, as illustrated on Exhibit A of the Agreement: move the current stop west about 200 feet, to the corner of the ring road and the parking lot access road. This would eliminate the worst of walkway issues, including eliminating the need to cross the access road and the temptation to set out diagonally across the parking lot. Work is required to make the corner suitable for a bus stop. The walkway will be improved with the addition of traffic markers for at least a portion of its

¹ Southridge also eliminated bus layovers and freeway flyers at the mall. The current tally of about 400 "ons/off" each day is a substantial decline since these changes were imposed. In March 2013, Southridge showed 1,176 ons/off per day, according to figures from MTS.

length; the curb on the west side of the walk will remain in place. In addition, a second bus stop will be added at the south end of the mall, about 350 feet from the building. Southridge will construct a dedicated ADA compliant walkway from this stop to the mall. The walkway will be set off for now with traffic markers and future improvements are planned. The new north stop will service the 55 and 14 routes, and the new south stop will service the 76 and 64 routes. Southridge will construct concrete pads at the new stop locations and will handle snow and ice removal. MCTS will provide shelters at the stops. MCTS will provide an initial contribution of up to \$30,000 from 2014 funds toward the bus stop improvements and up to \$10,000 annually beginning in 2015 toward maintenance costs. The funds will be allocated from the Milwaukee County Transit 5600 funds. Due to the amounts involved, Finance Committee approval is not required.

While it is understood that many would prefer alternate arrangements, Southridge's status as a private property owner provides it with strong rights to control access. The changes described in the Agreement are a definite improvement over the current situation in terms of safety, proximity and service. Approval is requested.

cc: Kelly Bablitch
Shanin Brown
Raisa Koltun
Brian Dranzik
Steve Cady