

## **Record of MCTS Communications related to MCTS Service Disruptions in May/June 2020**

### **Setting the Stage**

The death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, by police officers in Minneapolis has led to a movement that continues to energize and unify people around the world against racism and injustices. Peaceful protests, demonstrations and marches took place across the globe – including in Milwaukee County – in late May and early June.

While the vast majority of events were peaceful, our community did experience some dangerous and illegal activity – centered around the reckless use of vehicles – that put members of the public, including bus drivers and passengers, in danger. Public safety officials reported a significant increase in wrong-way driving, speeding, failing to obey traffic signals, gunshots being fired from moving vehicles, and the operation of personal vehicles on sidewalks, in parks, and on private property.

The constantly evolving situations on local streets impacted MCTS bus service. The entire MCTS team worked hard to keep employees, passengers, and our buses out of harm's way – especially in the nighttime hours.

### **Emergency Operations Involvement**

The MCTS team had representatives on the streets and embedded in the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC). An EOC is a central location that allows for the coordination of municipal police, sheriff's deputies, National Guard, fire departments, emergency responders, and other County, State and Federal officials. Because of this, MCTS was able to receive real-time updates on conditions and pass those along to bus drivers, dispatchers, street supervisors, Transit Security Officers, and managers – who were tasked with finding safe detours for buses that were unable to travel along their regular routes.

MCTS's presence in the EOC was also helpful whenever buses were identified as an obstacle to public safety professionals who were working in advance of demonstrations to safeguard protesters from on-coming traffic, which at times meant closing entire intersections. To the degree that MCTS could help this cause, our team would detour buses away from certain areas. On one occasion, police ordered MCTS to get all buses off of the streets within a massive area bordered by Silver Spring Drive on the north side, Lincoln Avenue on the south, 64th Street on the west, and the lakefront on the east. This section of the County is where most MCTS buses operate.

### **Service Communications Overview**

Throughout the protests, MCTS made every effort to keep bus service running for the people who depend on it. However, there were multiple occasions where MCTS had to suspend service early for the safety of employees and riders. MCTS worked hard to inform the public using all communication methods at our disposal, including: RideMCTS.com, the Ride MCTS app, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, our automated telephone hotline, our e-newsletter database (40,000), press releases to the media, the participation in a press conference, and a County-wide emergency alert on cell phones.

MCTS, like all public transportation agencies, has the hardest time sharing information with riders who do not have access to the internet or smartphones. In these cases, we rely heavily on traditional media outlets – like TV stations – signage, our automated telephone hotline and word-of-mouth.

Unfortunately, given the fluid nature of a situation like this, it is not possible to install physical signage on all 4,800 bus stops in the County.

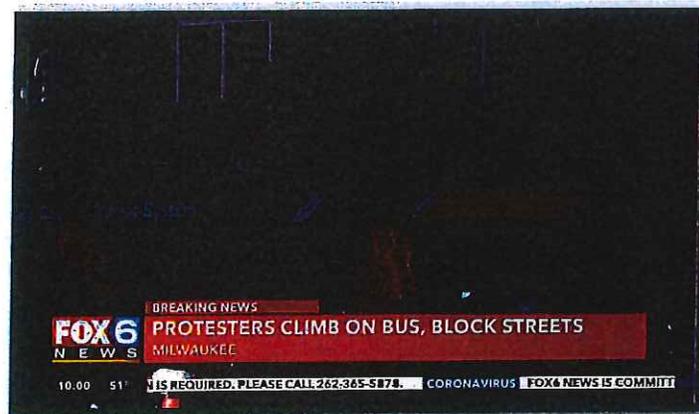
Our dedicated team members who were out on the streets those nights also took it upon themselves to inform any riders who they encountered waiting at bus stops along detoured routes and after the service suspensions took place. Additionally, whenever our staff was able, they used their vans and Route Supervisor vehicles to transport passengers who were seen waiting at bus stops.

Below is a timeline that helps explain what took place each night from May 30 to June 9.

## Timeline

### Saturday, May 30

- Bus service was not suspended early on the first night of protests, but there were delays and detours impacting bus service.
- Protesters climbed on the roof of an active MCTS bus around 9:00 p.m. The bus driver and passengers had to exit the bus and flee the area because they were concerned for their own safety. Law enforcement, including a SWAT team, arrived several minutes later to help secure the bus so it could be safely driven away from the area. Inaccurate social media posts began circulating claiming that protesters had stolen the bus. This was not true.
- Media coverage showing protesters on the roof of the bus also included reports of gunfire at that same intersection, just moments later.



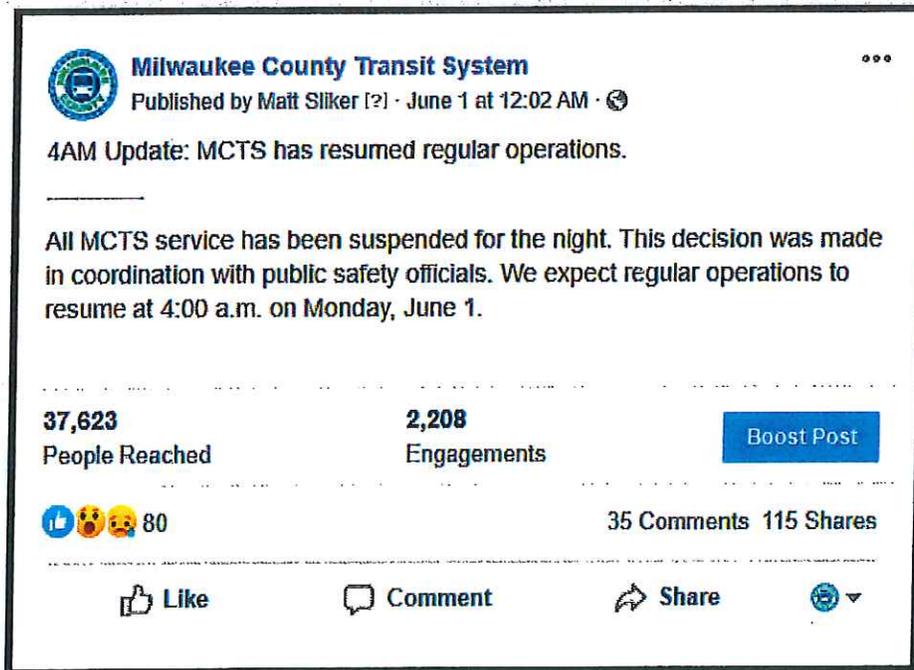
*Media Coverage Shows Protesters Climbing on Bus*

- Several buses became stuck in crowds of protesters and vehicular traffic throughout the evening, including at an intersection where law enforcement was utilizing tear gas. Bus drivers feared for their safety.
- At one point, MCTS decided to temporarily pull all Route 22 buses off of Center Street due to pedestrian activity in the streets and dangerous vehicular activity. Because this decision to pull Route 22 buses was made unexpectedly, there was no way to give advance notice to riders.
- Buses could not be safely returned to the Fond du Lac Garage/Station location near 35th Street and Fond du Lac Avenue. Buses were instead pulled into the MCTS Fleet Maintenance Facility on Vine Street near 17th and Fond du Lac. Buses eventually had to be transferred back to Fond du

Lac Garage/Station once things calmed down; this process went on until 4:00 a.m. on Sunday. Drivers were also shuttled back to their cars parked at the Fond du Lac Garage/Station throughout the night and early-morning hours. There were nearly constant reports of gunfire around the Fond du Lac Garage/Station that night.

**Sunday, May 31** (bus service suspended at midnight)

- MCTS made every effort to provide regular service throughout the evening, as conditions allowed. However, at 11:43 p.m., all buses were ordered to pull in due to reports of nearly constant gunfire in the neighborhood near 17th Street and Fond du Lac, as well as near the Fond du Lac Avenue Garage/Station. After first notifying bus drivers, our Transportation team contacted the Marketing team in order to begin public notifications.
- The following message was posted between 11:59 p.m. and 12:01 a.m. on Facebook and Twitter. It was also listed at the top of RideMCTS.com, on the homepage, and on the Service Alerts page. It was also posted as an announcement on the Ride MCTS app.
  - *All MCTS service has been suspended for the night. This decision was made in coordination with public safety officials. We expect regular operations to resume at 4:00 a.m.*
  - Then at 4:00 a.m., we posted an update saying: *4AM Update: MCTS has resumed regular operations.*



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the Milwaukee County Transit System. The post is titled "4AM Update: MCTS has resumed regular operations." and contains the text: "All MCTS service has been suspended for the night. This decision was made in coordination with public safety officials. We expect regular operations to resume at 4:00 a.m. on Monday, June 1." The post has 37,623 people reached and 2,208 engagements. It also shows 80 reactions (including thumbs up, thumbs down, and a sad face), 35 comments, and 115 shares. The post is published by Matt Sliker on June 1 at 12:02 AM.

**Milwaukee County Transit System**  
Published by Matt Sliker [?] · June 1 at 12:02 AM · 🌐

**4AM Update: MCTS has resumed regular operations.**

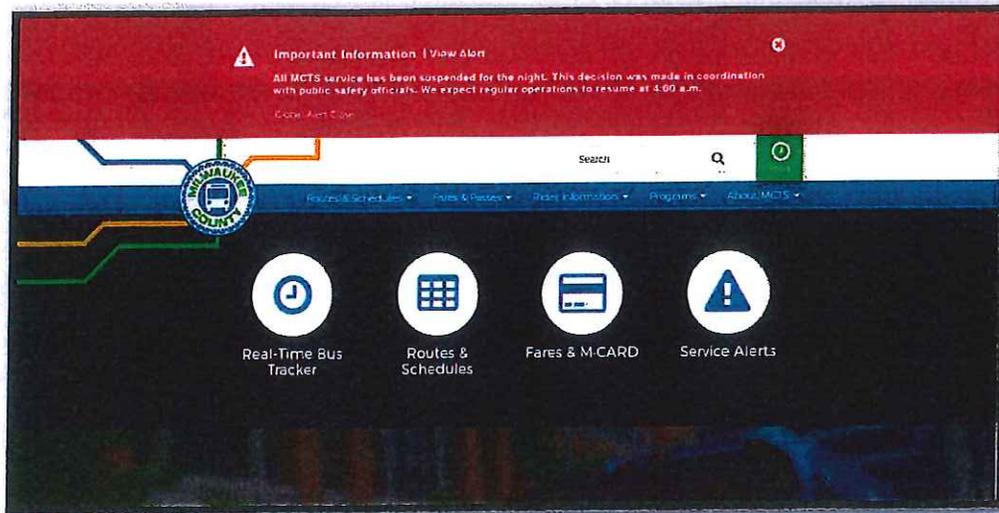
All MCTS service has been suspended for the night. This decision was made in coordination with public safety officials. We expect regular operations to resume at 4:00 a.m. on Monday, June 1.

37,623 People Reached      2,208 Engagements      Boost Post

👍👎😞 80      35 Comments 115 Shares

👍 Like      💬 Comment      ➦ Share      🌐

Facebook Post



*Global Alert at Top of RideMCTS.com*

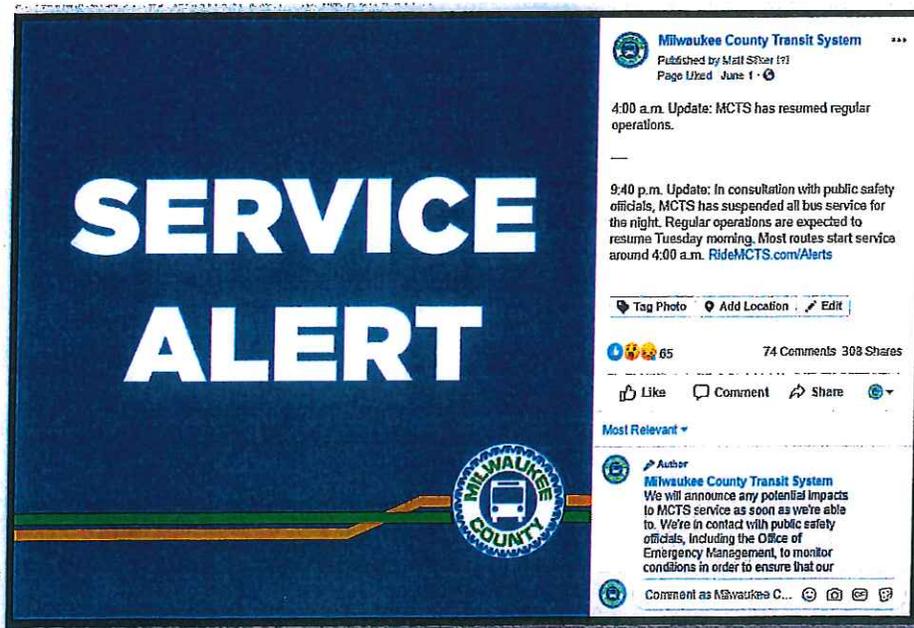
- We received dozens of comments on social media in response to the first night that we suspended service.
  - Several people said thank you for keeping bus drivers safe, mentioning that it was very dangerous out there with people speeding and driving recklessly.
  - Others were upset that this sudden service suspension would negatively impact riders who need the bus to get to and from work in the middle of the night.
  - Multiple people said we should have given more advance notice so that riders could make plans for alternative transportation.
  - Some people spread false information on social media, saying that we suspended service in order to use buses to transport police officers and National Guard troops. The reality is that only a handful of buses were used to transport public safety officials; this action had nothing to do with the decision to suspend bus service in the overnight hours.
    - In times of emergency, MCTS is called upon by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) on behalf of community partners and public safety officials to help. MCTS buses are used year-round by the Red Cross, firefighters, and law enforcement during fires, gas leaks, evacuations, and multiple other types of incidents. In winter months, buses provide a warm place for individuals and families to gather when they are displaced during emergencies. In warmer months, buses provide a cool place for individuals and families to gather when displaced during emergencies. In this situation, MCTS buses were used to transport law enforcement and the National Guard. One of the reasons for this was to avoid a larger number of military Humvees operating on the streets of our community.
  - In addition to social media, one third of all callers to our Customer Service Center filed complaints that MCTS did not give enough advance notice about the service suspension.

**Monday, June 1** (bus service suspended at 9:40 p.m.)

MCTS made every effort to provide regular service throughout the evening, as conditions allowed. However, the decision was made around 9:40 p.m. to pull all buses in. Buses could not operate on most streets east of the Milwaukee River, including around the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee campus, where multiple bus routes converge. The public notification process began. Most buses were pulling in by around 10:09 p.m.

Because we knew in advance that several demonstrations, protests, and marches were planned throughout that evening, MCTS wanted to proactively inform riders that there *\*could\** be impacts to bus service. So we posted the following messages and updates on social media, RideMCTS.com, and the Ride MCTS app (including a push notification at 9:48pm).

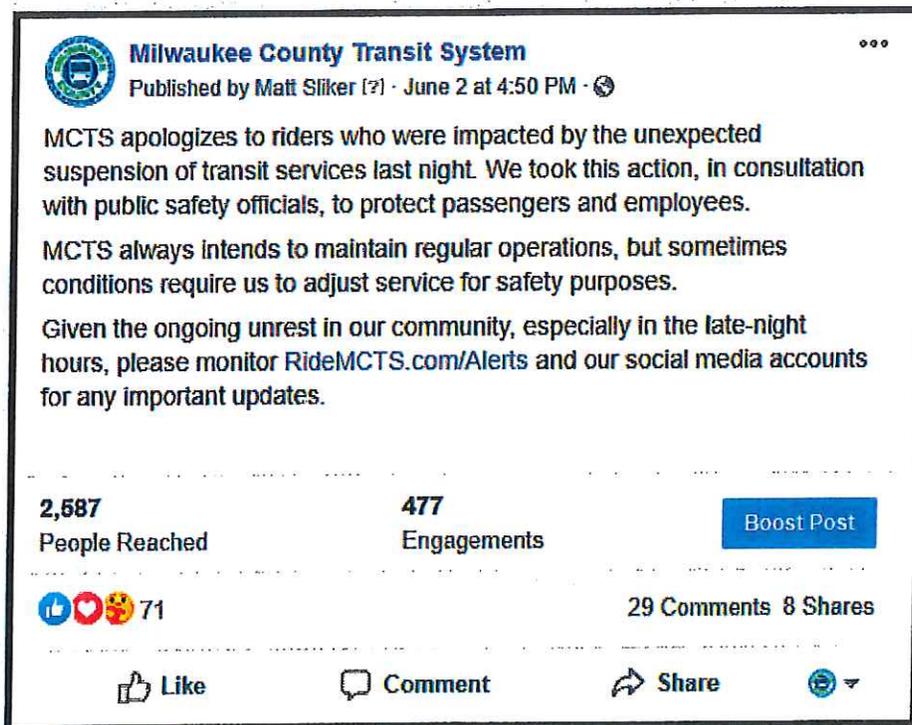
- **5:10 p.m.:** *MCTS will be monitoring conditions in Milwaukee tonight during the City's curfew. Any announcements about changes to bus service will be posted on social media and at RideMCTS.com/Alerts.*
- **9:30 p.m.:** *Due to roving demonstrations and other gatherings across the city, many of our bus routes are experiencing detours, delays and service disruptions. Per the recommendation of public safety officials, we are currently unable to serve the large area from Hampton on the north to Lincoln on the south; and from 60th on the west to the lakefront on the east. MCTS continues to monitor conditions. Any other updates about changes to bus service will be posted on social media and at RideMCTS.com/Alerts.*
- **9:42 p.m.:** *In consultation with public safety officials, MCTS has suspended all bus service for the night. Regular operations are expected to resume Tuesday morning. Most routes start service around 4:00 a.m. More at RideMCTS.com/Alerts*
- **4:00 a.m.:** *MCTS has resumed regular operations.*



Facebook post

Tuesday, June 2

- Ultimately, no buses had to pull in early this night.
- However, earlier in the day, we prepared for the possibility that it could happen again. So we posted the following on social media, RideMCTS.com, and the Ride MCTS app at 4:53 p.m..
  - *MCTS apologizes to riders who were impacted by the unexpected suspension of transit services last night. We took this action, in consultation with public safety officials, to protect passengers and employees. MCTS always intends to maintain regular operations, but sometimes conditions require us to adjust service for safety purposes. Given the ongoing unrest in our community, especially in the late-night hours, please monitor RideMCTS.com/Alerts and our social media accounts for any important updates.*
- MCTS also emailed that statement to local media outlets in hopes that they would broadcast it – so that riders who do not have the internet or smartphones would see it.



Apology Facebook post

Wednesday, June 3 (bus service suspended at 11:38 p.m.)

- Knowing it was possible that another night of protests could impact bus service again, MCTS Marketing staff decided it would try providing the public with “play by play” live updates throughout the afternoon and evening, so that riders who utilize social media, our app and our

website could stay updated on any impacts to bus service. Normally this level of detail is not possible due to regular staffing, so this was effectively a "trial" to see how it would go.

- Between 2:22 p.m. and 11:38 p.m., we posted 28 updates on Twitter and RideMCTS.com. There were also links to these updates on Facebook and the Ride MCTS app. The updates are below, starting with the earliest and leading to the last update, when service had to be suspended.
  - **2:22PM:** *There are multiple demonstrations and marches planned today in Milwaukee. Rolling street closures will likely lead to detours and delays to bus service. Monitor this Twitter account and <http://RideMCTS.com/Alerts> for the latest updates.*
  - **2:29PM:** *A large group is marching eastbound on Layton Avenue from 13th Street towards the lakefront. At the moment, Route 55 continues to operate normally along Layton Avenue. But Route 55 riders should be aware that last-minute detours are possible.*
  - **2:46PM:** *Another event is currently underway at Humboldt Park near Oklahoma & Howell. At 3:00 p.m., participants are expected to head north on Howell to Water Street and continue into Downtown. This will likely impact GreenLine, Route 15, and Route 52.*
  - **3:11PM:** *A large group is departing Humboldt Park near Oklahoma & Howell. They are heading north on Howell and are expected to merge onto Kinnickinnic, then 1st Street/Water Street. The GreenLine is now using 6th Street between Howard & National.*
  - **3:27PM:** *Route 54 is currently unable to operate on Kinnickinnic Avenue between Mitchell and Becher. Buses are currently using portions of 1st, 2nd, and Maple.*
  - **3:41PM:** *Route 52 is currently unable to operate on Kinnickinnic Avenue between Lincoln & Mitchell. Buses are currently using 1st Street.*
  - **3:49PM:** *Route 52 has resumed its regular routing.*
  - **3:55PM:** *Route 54 has resumed its regular routing.*
  - **3:59PM:** *The GreenLine is currently using 6th Street between Lincoln and Wisconsin.*
  - **4:10PM:** *Route 15 is currently using 6th Street between Lincoln and Wisconsin.*
  - **4:27PM:** *There is a group of people marching south on Oakland near Locust. There are currently delays to GreenLine buses in the area.*
  - **4:34PM:** *Expect significant delays for buses in the downtown area right now, including GreenLine, GoldLine, and Routes 14, 15, 30, 33.*
  - **4:53PM:** *Due to street closures and large gatherings of people in roadways, buses are unable to serve the area from National on the south to Walnut on the north; and from 16th on the west to the lakefront on the east. Expect significant delays.*
  - **5:47PM:** *The affected area described below has changed. The main areas currently w/ street closures and groups of people are along Wisconsin Ave heading towards Downtown as well as Humboldt & North. Conditions are constantly evolving. Bus service continues, but expect delays and detours.*
  - **7:34PM:** *Buses have resumed using regular routing for the time being, but there are still lingering delays. Our team continues to monitor conditions and will make any necessary adjustments.*
  - **8:00PM:** *Route 21 buses heading eastbound are now turning around at Humboldt instead of completing their full trip to Lake Drive.*
  - **8:25PM:** *The GoldLine is currently not operating on Downer. Instead, it is using Route 30's routing between North Avenue and UWM.*

- **9:03PM:** *The GoldLine and Route 30 are no longer operating east of 6th Street. They will instead head north on 6th Street and follow Route 80's routing to Capitol. At that point, they will head east to UWM, loop around, and return in the same direction they came from.*
- **9:15PM:** *Route 14 is no longer operating east of 6th Street. It is instead heading north on 6th Street from Wisconsin, eventually taking 7th Street to Capitol, Capitol east to Wilson, then resuming its regular routing.*
- **9:15PM:** *Route 15 and the GreenLine are using 6th Street/7th Street north to Capitol then west to their regular routing.*
- **9:38PM:** *Route 21 buses heading eastbound are now ending eastbound service at Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior Drive instead of completing their full trip to Lake Drive.*
- **10:07PM:** *Route 21 buses heading eastbound are now ending eastbound service at 6th Street instead of completing their full trip to Lake Drive.*
- **10:10PM:** *Route 19 is using Route 80's routing between Walnut and Burleigh, and then will resume its regular routing.*
- **10:11PM:** *The GoldLine and Route 30 have resumed using their regular routing.*
- **10:23PM:** *Route 14 has resumed using its regular routing.*
- **10:36PM:** *Route 22 heading eastbound on Center Street is no longer able to operate east of Teutonia.*
- **10:49PM:** *Route 60 buses are no longer able to operate east of 7th Street.*
- **11:38PM:** *MCTS is suspending all remaining bus service for the night in order to protect our employees and passengers. Regular operations are expected to resume early Thursday morning, June 4. Most routes start service around 4:00 a.m.*
- **4:52 AM:** *The majority of MCTS routes have resumed regular operations. However temporary detours remain on the following routes: 19, 22, BlueLine.*
- **4:52AM:** *BlueLine is detouring off of Fond du Lac between 35th and Sherman. Using Burleigh & Sherman during this time.*
- **4:52AM:** *Route 22 is detouring off of Center between 7th/8th & Holton using North*
- **4:52AM:** *Route 19 is detouring off of Dr. MLK Jr between North & Keefe using 7th/8<sup>th</sup>*
- **7:52AM:** *Routes 19, 22 and BlueLine are no longer detoured. All routes are back to regular operations.*

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

Another event is currently underway at Humboldt Park near Oklahoma & Howell. At 3:00 pm, participants are expected to head north on Howell to Water Street and continue into Downtown. This will likely impact GreenLine, Route 15, and Route 52.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

A large group is marching eastbound on Layton Avenue from 13th Street towards the lakefront. At the moment, Route 55 continues to operate normally along Layton Avenue. But Route 55 riders should be aware that last-minute detours are possible.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

There are multiple demonstrations and marches planned today in Milwaukee. Rolling street closures will likely lead to detours and delays to bus service. Monitor this Twitter account and [RideMCTS.com/alerts](https://www.rideMCTS.com/alerts) for the latest updates.

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*example tweet from thread #1*

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

Route 54 has resumed its regular routing.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

Route 52 has resumed its regular routing.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

Route 52 is currently unable to operate on Kinnickinnic Avenue between Lincoln & Mitchell. Buses are currently using 1st Street.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

Route 54 is currently unable to operate on Kinnickinnic Avenue between Mitchell and Becher. Buses are currently using portions of 1st, 2nd, and Maple.

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 3

A large group is departing Humboldt Park near Oklahoma & Howell. They are heading north on Howell and are expected to merge onto Kinnickinnic, then 1st Street/Water Street. The GreenLine is now using 6th Street between Howard & National.

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*example tweet from thread #2*

In addition to the above posts, MCTS also updated its automated telephone hotline with updates. We also sent a Rider Insider e-newsletter to our database of 40,000+ subscribers at 5:00 p.m.. At this same time, MCTS forwarded the email to all County Supervisors as a 'heads up'. Later, at 11:41 p.m., MCTS also sent an email to County Supervisors.

The ultimate decision to suspend all service around 11:38 p.m. was made due to high speed chases, and cars driving erratically, including on sidewalks – this was all a safety concern. Most of the buses were detoured to the extent they were not serving their routes at all. At one point, buses could not operate in a huge area bordered by Silver Spring Drive on the north side, Lincoln Avenue on the southern side, 64th Street on the west, and the lakefront on the east.

**Thursday, June 4** (bus service suspension announced: Thursday – Sunday from 10 p.m. - 3 a.m.)

- In consultation with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and the County Executive's Office, MCTS decided that it needed to take action to give riders as much advance notice as possible, rather than continuing to take chances that 'last-second' suspensions of service would be needed.
- On Thursday June 4, starting at 1:20 p.m., MCTS publicly announced that it would suspend service in the overnight hours (approx. 10 p.m.-3 a.m.) on June 4, June 5, June 6, and June 7. This gave the public as much notice as possible so that they could arrange for alternate transportation.
- This announcement was communicated to the public via a press release to local media, updates on RideMCTS.com, Twitter, Facebook, the Ride MCTS app, a Rider Insider e-newsletter to 40,000+ subscribers, and recordings on our automated telephone hotline.
- The information was included in the County's bi-weekly virtual press conference at 2:00 p.m.
- We also provided details to our Customer Service Call Center so that they could answer any questions from people who called or emailed in.
- Additionally, MCTS worked with OEM to send out an emergency alert text message to people across Milwaukee County. This alert was sent out at approx. 3:50 p.m. Mobile phone carriers are required to send this alert to all users within the set zone, which was Milwaukee County. In addition to the emergency text message, the information also went out to more than 4,700 County employees and others who have subscribed to the County's emergency alert system.



OEM Phone Emergency Alert Message



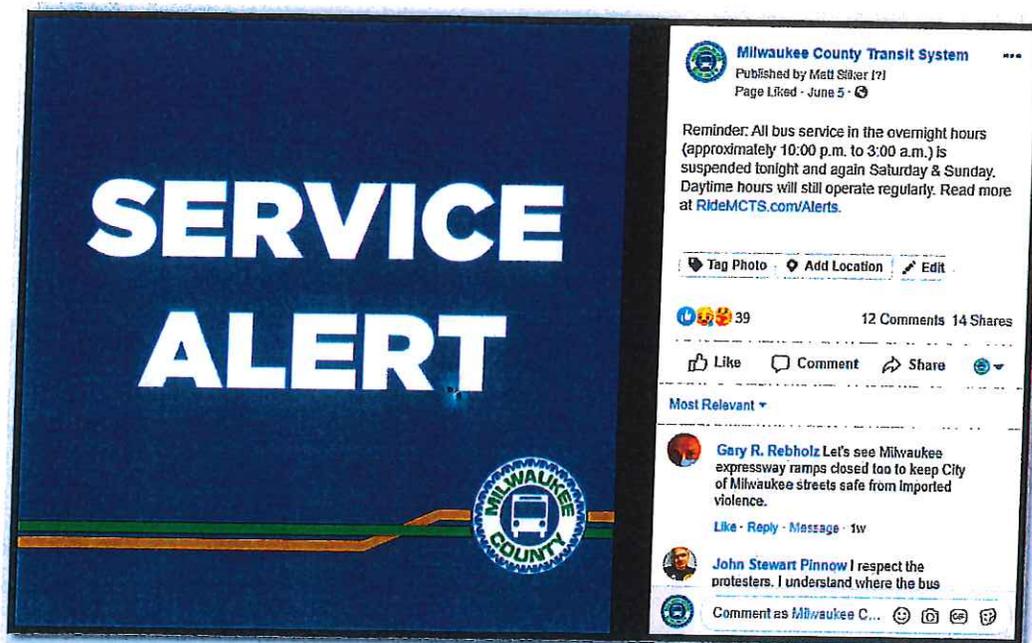
Facebook post



Sample of Media Coverage

Friday, June 5 (bus service suspended at 10 p.m.)

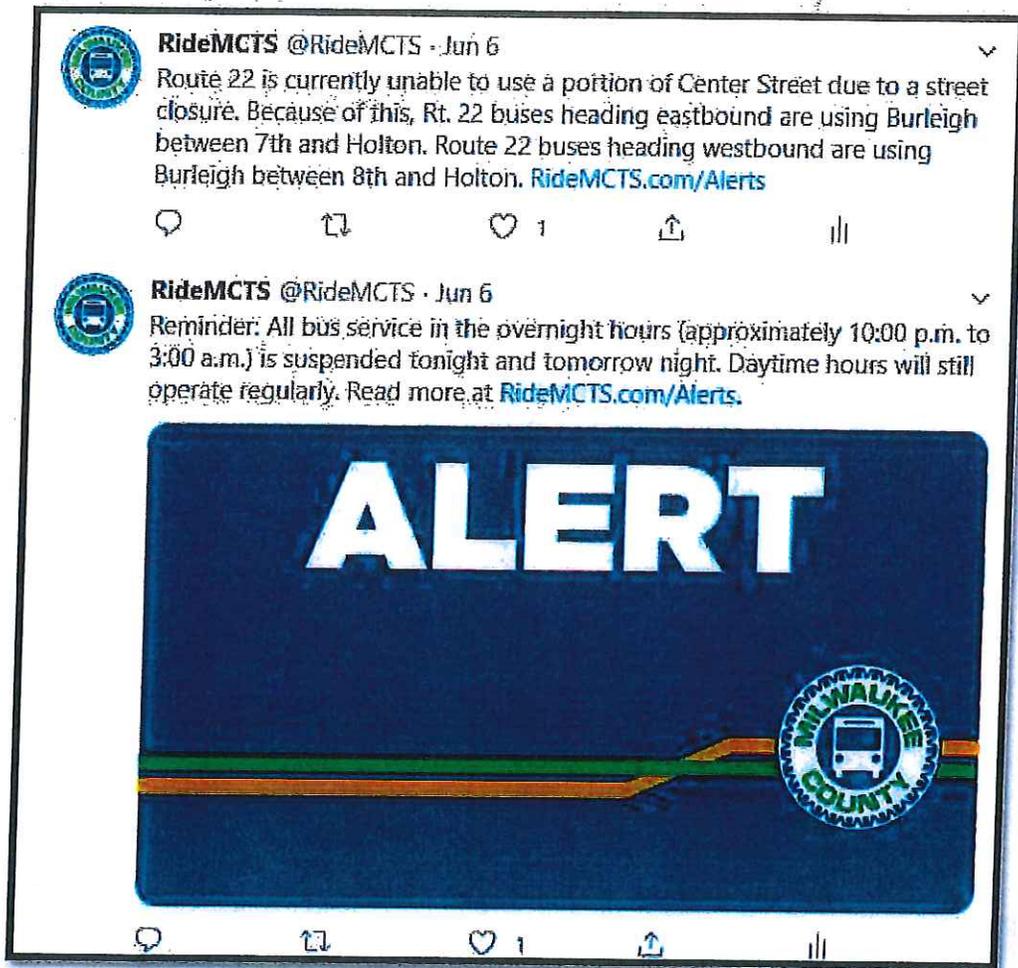
- MCTS posted reminders about that night's planned service suspension on Twitter, Facebook, RideMCTS.com, and the Ride MCTS app. There was also a special recording on our automated telephone hotline.



Facebook post

Saturday, June 6 (bus service suspended at 10 p.m.)

- MCTS posted reminders about that night's planned service suspension on Twitter, Facebook, RideMCTS.com, and the Ride MCTS app. There was also a special recording on our automated telephone hotline.
- Earlier in the day, there were also significant delays and detours related to protests and demonstrations. MCTS provided live "play by play" updates on Twitter and at RideMCTS.com. There were also links to these updates on Facebook and the Ride MCTS app. MCTS posted 10 updates between 11:04 a.m. and 9:40 p.m. so that riders would know which routes were detoured at any given moment.



Tweet from thread #1

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
Route 30 is currently using 35th between Vliet and Highland.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  1   

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
Route 19 buses heading northbound are using 6th/7th between Walnut and Keefe. Route 19 buses heading southbound are using 8th between Keefe and Walnut. [RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  1  1  

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
Route 33 is currently using Wisconsin between Hawley and 35th.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  1   

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
Route 31 is currently using Wisconsin between Hawley and 35th.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  2  2  

*Tweet from thread #2*

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
The PurpleLine is now using 35th Street between Lisbon and Wisconsin.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  2  1  

 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
The PurpleLine is currently using 17th Street between North and Highland.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

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 **RideMCTS** @RideMCTS · Jun 6  
Route 33 is currently using Highland between Vliet and 27th.  
[RideMCTS.com/Alerts](https://RideMCTS.com/Alerts)

  1   

*Tweet from thread #3*



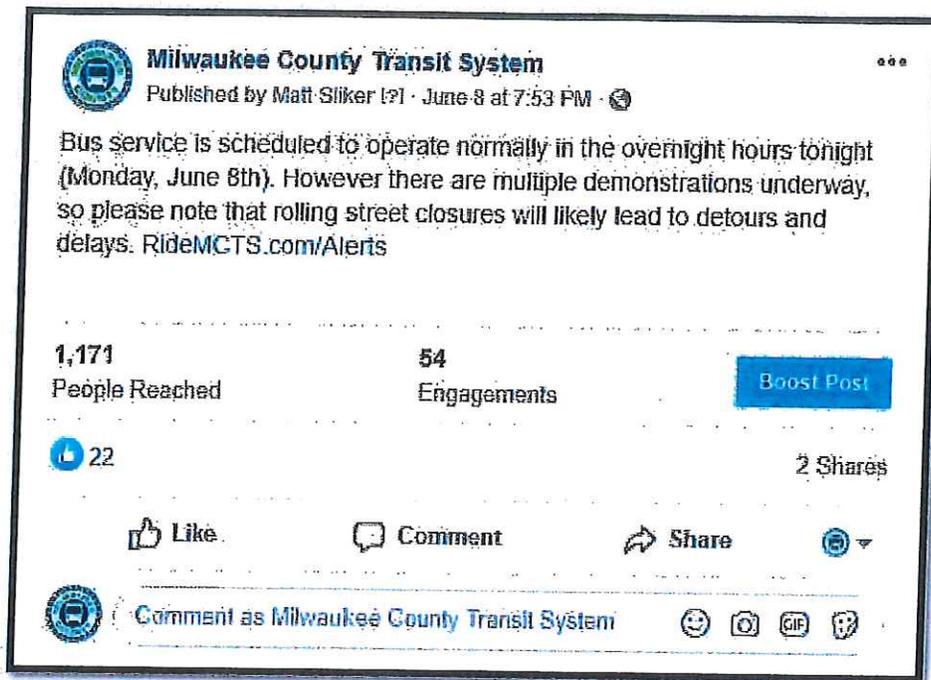
Facebook post

**Sunday, June 7** (bus service suspended at 10 p.m.)

- MCTS posted reminders about that night’s planned service suspension on RideMCTS.com and the Ride MCTS app. There was also a special recording on our automated telephone hotline.

**Monday, June 8**

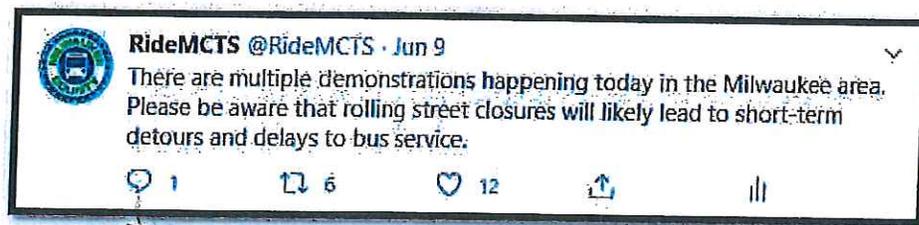
- MCTS posted a message on our website and app at 8:00 a.m. – which remained up for most of the day – saying:
  - *Bus service is scheduled to operate normally in the overnight hours tonight. However there are multiple demonstrations planned, so please note that rolling street closures could lead to detours and delays.*
- MCTS posted the following message on social media at 7:49 p.m.:
  - *Bus service is scheduled to operate normally in the overnight hours tonight. However there are multiple demonstrations underway, so please note that rolling street closures will likely lead to detours and delays. RideMCTS.com/Alerts*



Facebook post

Tuesday, June 9

- We posted a message on social media, our website, and app at 3:20 p.m. saying:
  - *There are multiple demonstrations happening today in the Milwaukee area. Please be aware that rolling street closures will likely lead to short-term detours and delays to bus service.*



Tweet regarding demonstrations

### After Action Summary

Public feedback in response to the overnight suspension of transit service reminded us that riders need to know about service changes in advance so that it is possible for them to make alternate transportation plans. The more advance notice, the better.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to predict what conditions will be like in the future. MCTS always strives to keep operations up and running, and that is why, during the first few nights of protests, we stayed open until it became too dangerous to continue doing so. This led to significant inconveniences for some riders who normally utilize transit in the overnight hours.

In order to prevent this from happening again over the weekend of June 4 through June 7, MCTS decided to pro-actively make the difficult decision to suspend service in the overnight hours. While we knew this would still be an inconvenience, the advance notice allowed time for riders to make alternate transportation plans – and reduced the likelihood that anyone would be left stranded without a ride.

Throughout this process, passengers thanked MCTS for taking necessary steps to protect employees and riders. Most understood that, when it comes to decisions based on constantly-evolving conditions in the community, it is not always possible to give advance notice. Many passengers wrote and called MCTS on June 4 to thank us for making the announcement early in the day – giving them plenty of time to make alternate transportation plans for that night and for the next few nights as well.

MCTS is in the business of providing safe and reliable transportation that connects the community to jobs, school, and life – 365 days a year. MCTS strives to balance our community's transportation needs with our responsibility of keeping employees and riders safe.

Prepared by: Dan Boehm, Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

Approved by:

*Julio Esch, Deputy*

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Donna Brown-Martin, Director  
Milwaukee County Department of Transportation