

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

DATE: 8/18/2023

TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
Marietta Luster, Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disabilities Services

SUBJECT: From the Director of the Department of Transportation and Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disabilities Services, providing an update on the Paratransit Taxi Program

FILE TYPE: Informational Report

REQUEST

Per Milwaukee County Adopted 2023 Budget, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) will provide a report to the County Board with information on the Paratransit Taxi service's new or extended contract details. The report shall also include an update on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements and completed engagement activities with impacted communities.

POLICY

Per Milwaukee County Adopted 2023 Budget, MCTS will provide a report to the County Board with information on the new or extended same day ride contract details. The report shall also include an update on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements and completed engagement activities with impacted communities.

BACKGROUND

Related File No's:	23-453, 23-543, 23-617
Associate File No's (including Transfer Packets):	N/A
Previous Action Date(s):	N/A

The MCTS Paratransit Taxi (Taxi) contract with American United Transportation (AUT) provides for same-day transportation options for ambulatory paratransit clients. This service, which is above and beyond the federally mandated requirement of complementary paratransit services, started out as a cost-effective and convenient program to supplement the paratransit van service. However, it is antiquated in that the provider does not have wheelchair accessible vehicles available for this meter-based service. The Taxi contract was extended 120 days and is now due to expire on September 28, 2023.

The Paratransit Taxi Task Force was developed to ensure collaborative approach for exploring alternative service models that would effectively and equitably meet the on-going transportation needs. In April, representatives from MCDOT, MCTS, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) met along with several members of the community, both taxi riders and advocacy groups for the first Paratransit Taxi Task Force (Task Force) meeting. In addition to gaining community feedback on the desired characteristics for continued same day rides, general information was provided regarding the expiration of the current taxi contract, FTA compliance and the potential for budgetary constraints if requests for additional funding do not come to fruition. In addition to the Task Force meetings, MCTS, MCDOT and DHHS have been working collaboratively to identify options (and barriers) to continue to provide equitable same-day service, in accordance with characteristics expressed by Task Force members.

Attached is a recommendation to the Paratransit Taxi Task Force based on analysis by DHHS of the existing paratransit taxi service and modeling of several on demand transportation services alternatives that aim to satisfy users' desired program characteristics (e.g., private rides, ability to travel throughout and outside of the county and door-to-door service). The analysis also provides estimated annual costs for each of the two models proposed.

This means that after September 28th, you will no longer be able to receive a Transit Plus subsidized ride from American United Taxi. Transit Plus will no longer pay for a portion of your ride, and Transit Plus tickets will no longer be accepted as a form of payment for taxi rides.

Paratransit (Transit Plus) service is NOT ending, and all taxi users are qualified to utilize Transit Plus to get to any destination in Milwaukee County they wish to go. To schedule rides on the van service, please call your assigned van provider the day before you plan to travel. Other options include Older Adult Transportation Services (OATS) for qualified riders aged 60+, ERAS Senior Network's Volunteer Driver program for residents aged 60+, Veyo for participants that are enrolled in Medicaid for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, and the MCTS bus system. All Transit Plus clients are eligible to ride MCTS buses for a maximum of \$2 per day using a Reduced Fare WisGo card or the UMO app.

Despite the end of the existing taxi service under FTA requirements, the Milwaukee County Paratransit Taxi Task Force continues to meet to work through service and funding ideas and to explore options for future on-demand service which can meet federal regulations and available funding levels.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity.
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered.
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities.
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

Marietta Luster, Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disabilities Services

Dan Idzikowski, Aging Unit Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Alena DeGrado, Training Coordinator, Department of Health and Human Services

Denise Wandke, President and Managing Director, MCTS, dwandke@mcts.org

Sandra Kellner, Chief Administrative Officer, MCTS, skellner@mcts.org

Frances Musci, Director of Paratransit, MCTS, fmusci@mcts.org

PREPARED BY

Julie Esch, Deputy Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

APPROVED BY

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS

DHHS RECOMMENDATION

MCTS LETTER

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

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