

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

Inter-office Communication

DATE: 2/12/2025

TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
Julie Esch, Interim Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Transportation and Interim Director, Milwaukee County Transit System, providing an informational report on MCTS MOVE 2025 – Service Change Plan.

FILE TYPE: Informational Report

POLICY

Proposed additions, deletions, and modifications to transit routes and services are subject to approval by the County Executive and County Board of Supervisors.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of MOVE 2025 is to gather feedback from riders, bus operators, and the public on proposed routes and schedule changes through an extensive public outreach campaign, leading to a modified route network that better serves their needs as well as that of the overall community. MCTS referred to this effort in File 24-827 (2025 Recommended Budget Overview). Project goals are to increase ridership, improve the rider's experience, and advance racial equity.

MCTS does not request any additional operational funding to complete MOVE 2025. The scope of the project will be smaller in nature compared to the system wide redesign completed under MCTS NEXT in 2021. Service expansions will be balanced through improved efficiencies based on a review of ridership and productivity throughout the system.

Key themes in MOVE 2025 are as follows:

- Continually Adapting Service to Meet Riders' Needs: Ensuring the route network evolves with shifting travel patterns, new residential and commercial developments, and changes in post-COVID ridership trends.
- Strengthen Support for Business: Adjusting routes to better serve employment centers, as most riders rely on MCTS for commuting to work.
- Improve Reliability: Improving route predictability and schedule stability minimizes delays and enhances overall travel efficiency.
- Broaden Coverage: Expanding service to key destinations ensures that more people can access essential locations.
- Enhance Frequency: Reducing wait times makes the rider's experience more convenient.

Throughout this plan, MCTS will leverage detailed ridership and productivity data to guide service decisions and optimize limited resources, thus ensuring the route network will effectively be adapted to community needs and within the budget.

Project Schedule

Phase I (*December - February*)

- Gather focused feedback from riders, operators and stakeholders on route proposals as well as collect their ideas for service.
 - Route proposals have been developed based on previous rider and operator feedback as well as an analysis of ridership and productivity by route.
- Feedback will be collected via 7 meetings across Milwaukee County, an online survey, and feedback sheets filled out by bus operators.

Phase II (*February – April*)

- Compile Phase 1 feedback and prepare a draft plan(s) for additional review and comment.
- After the second round of feedback, prepare a recommended plan.

Phase III (*May – August*)

- Present the recommended plan to the County Board of Supervisors and request approval.
- If approved, MCTS would implement route changes in Fall 2025.

Outreach and Engagement Efforts

Riders and stakeholders will play a crucial role in shaping service design decisions. A comprehensive outreach plan has been developed to ensure that service adjustments are carefully considered, transparently communicated, and effectively implemented to meet the evolving needs of the community. Under this plan MCTS has and will:

- Hold 7 in-person community meetings across Milwaukee County to provide route information to riders and the public.
 - A Spanish language interpreter was available at all meetings to answer questions.
 - ASL interpreters were available at all public meetings.
- Create bus stop signage to promote awareness weeks in advance of meetings
- Create a MOVE 2025 website with background information, descriptions of route options, and a survey to gather feedback
- Publish issues of MCTS Bus Lines and Rider Insider and prepare a press release for local media.
- Met with ATU 998 bus drivers at both Fond du Lac and Kinnickinnic Stations to inform them of route proposals, gather structured feedback on the route proposals, and listen to additional suggestions.
- Met with stakeholders that represent the interests of persons with disabilities including Independence First, Beyond Vision, and the Milwaukee County Transit Plus Advisory Committee
- Met with local municipalities including the City of Milwaukee, South Milwaukee, Oak Creek, West Allis, and Shorewood to inform them and seek their feedback.

Title VI Review

MCTS will follow normal policies and procedures under its Title VI Plan for any service changes under consideration in MOVE 2025. In brief, guidelines state planners must examine a change to a route to see if it meets the definition of a “major service change”:

- it affects 25% of the bus hours on a route or group of routes,
- it affects 25% of the one-way mileage of a route or group of routes,
- it affects 25% of the daily service period,
- it reduces the frequency of service (increases headway) by 50%, or
- it creates a gap of greater than one-half mile from the nearest alternative service.

If a major service change is confirmed, MCTS must prepare a service and fare equity analysis (SAFE). The SAFE indicates whether the change has a disparate impact on the minority population or a disproportionate burden on the low-income population. If either impact exists, MCTS must take steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts where practicable.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informative purposes only. MCTS will return to the Committee in May 2025 to seek a recommendation to approve the MOVE 2025 service plan and implement service changes in the fall.

FISCAL EFFECT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

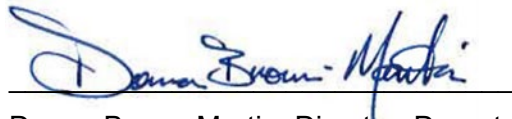
VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
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PREPARED BY:

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APPROVED BY:



Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

PowerPoint

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