

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 27, 2024

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, requesting authorization to apply for and accept RAISE grant funds for transit capital enhancements along the Purple Line (North-South 27<sup>th</sup> Street).

File Type: Action Report

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**REQUEST**

Authorization is requested to apply for and accept a RAISE grant for transit enhancements along the Purple Line (North-South 27<sup>th</sup> Street).

This is a retroactive authorization. The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) November 1, 2024, with a deadline for submissions January 30, 2025, which was met by MCTS.

**POLICY**

State statute provides that the County Board may accept donations and grants for any public governmental purpose within the powers of the county.

Wisconsin State Statute: 59.52 (19)

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances: Chapter 56.06

**BACKGROUND**

RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) is a federal grant program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) which focuses on Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities. It provides an option to fully fund capital projects up to \$25 million in federal dollars requiring no local financial commitment.

MCTS has identified RAISE as an opportunity to improve transit infrastructure for the Purple Line (North-South 27<sup>th</sup> Street). As one of MCTS's busiest, it spans 18-miles across 5 cities and provides equitable access to transit for 118,000 residents, 73% people of color, 26% families in poverty, connecting riders to 2,500 businesses and over 50,000 jobs. MCTS would continue to provide high-frequency service on the Purple Line

(buses arrive every 12 minutes during daytime).

Under a successful RAISE grant, Purple Line corridor improvements would include:

- New transit shelters – To improve the customer experience prior to boarding
- Traffic signal optimization – To improve transit travel times
- Traffic calming measures – To increase safety for not only transit riders, but for all modes (pedestrian, bike, automobile)

The culmination is a unified corridor upgrade to benefit existing transit users, attract new ones, and improve safety for all.

Awards are anticipated to be announced Q2 2025 and, if approved, MCTS would implement the improvements between 2026-2027.

It should be stated that RAISE funding would not restart the former CONNECT 2 BRT project that was paused at the 30% design phase. Nevertheless, MCTS is committed to improving the quality of service for riders via investments in infrastructure in this important corridor.

#### **FISCAL EFFECT**

Anticipated no fiscal effect, as this template will replace reports already being prepared and received by Departments, the Board, and the Office of the County Clerk.

#### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation,  
[Donna.BrownMartin@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Donna.BrownMartin@milwaukeecountywi.gov)  
Julie Esch, Interim Director, MCTS, [jesch@mcts.org](mailto:jesch@mcts.org)  
David Locher, [dlocher@mcts.org](mailto:dlocher@mcts.org)

#### **PREPARED BY:**

David Locher, Manager of Enhanced Transit, MCTS

#### **APPROVED BY:**



Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Resolution  
Fiscal Note  
PowerPoint

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