

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

Date: November 13, 2024

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

From: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation;
Denise Wandke, President and Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

Subject: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the President and Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System, providing an Information Report regarding the Transit Plus Program including the Same Day Pilot.

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This report provides an overview of MCTS's paratransit program and provides an update on service performance.

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) paratransit program, known as Transit Plus, provides transportation for persons with disabilities whose disability prevents them from using the fixed route bus system. The primary responsibility of the Transit Plus office is to administer the federally required ADA paratransit program. In addition, Transit Plus also administers the Same Day Pilot program and the MCTS Mobility Management program.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2024 budget for paratransit van service and Mobility Management is \$18,913,348. \$2,697,916 is covered by passenger fares and the balance of expenses are covered by Federal, State and local resources as shown in the table below.

Program	Amount
Federal Urbanized Area Formula Funds (Section 5307)	\$ 3,300,000
Federal Enhanced Mobility of Senior and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)	\$ 241,108
Wisconsin Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance – Paratransit Supplemental Aid (Section 85.205)	\$ 1,639,346
Wisconsin Specialized Transportation Assistance (Section 85.21)	\$ 1,636,458
Wisconsin Urban Mass Transit Operating Assistance (Section 85.20)	\$ 5,909,800
Milwaukee County Tax Levy	\$ 3,488,720
Total	\$ 16,215,432

Van Service

Accessible van service is required by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Its purpose is to provide accessible service to persons with disabilities that mirrors the service provided by fixed route buses. This program serves Milwaukee County residents and visitors who are prevented from using fixed route buses some or all of the time due to a disability. Client eligibility is determined via doctor's certification and an in-person functional assessment conducted by Transit Plus staff.

Per ADA regulations, service must be provided by accessible vehicles within a ¾ mile zone around all fixed routes operated by MCTS. Currently, Milwaukee County provides border to border service within the County plus the required ¾ mile buffer around fixed routes that extend into other counties. This is a shared ride service available with a reservation made one to 7 days in advance of a ride. Clients can travel anywhere in the county-wide service area for any purpose. Service is provided from first exterior door to first exterior door during the same hours and days as fixed route bus operation.

ADA van service drivers participate in random drug/alcohol testing required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and provide door to door assistance to clients. The fare is capped by the FTA at no more than double the fixed route bus fare. The current fare is \$4 per one-way trip for private pay riders or \$35.00 per one-way trip for those enrolled in Medicaid funded long term care programs.

Van service is provided through a contract with First Group (a wholly owned subsidiary of Transdev North America). MCTS pays a negotiated rate per service hour provided. The current van service contract began in October 2023 and ends in October 2030. Under this contract, the vendor is responsible for all aspects of service provision including maintaining appropriate insurance; hiring, training and managing staff; drug testing, scheduling, dispatching and providing rides; accident/incident investigation; vehicle acquisition; and equipment maintenance.

The contract includes performance standards in the areas of on-time performance, ride duration, service availability, appointment drop-offs, compliance with federal requirements and service productivity. Incentives and penalties are applied as warranted.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data since contract start:

Activity	Standard	Nov- Dec 2023	January- August 2024
Van Trips	N/A	55,180	239,671
On- time performance (OTP) -Pick up within 30-minute pick up window	93%	82.6%	92.9%

Missed trips- van arrives outside of pick-up window and client does not travel	Less than 0.1% of scheduled trips	1.55%	0.4%
On-time appointment drop off	99% of trips with appointment times	89.3%	90.5%
Ride duration comparable to fixed route bus	90%	87.5%*	85.8%
Telephone calls answered in less than 2 minutes	95%	31.6%	91.5%
Passengers per service hour	1.70	1.48	1.53

*Random sampling. Full survey of all trips began in January 2024.

Customer complaints are processed jointly through both Transit Plus and the provider. Once a complaint is received, it is entered into a database and investigated. Resolutions are communicated to the appropriate parties, as needed, and documented in the complaint database.

Key Paratransit Service Statistics

There are approximately 5,800 active Transit Plus clients. Transit Plus is available to eligible individuals during the same hours as fixed route bus service. Annually, Transit Plus program participants take over 350,000 paratransit van rides.

Paratransit Program	2022	2023	2024*
Paratransit Van Rides	331,263	350,779	239,671
Avg. Cost/Trip	\$45.55	\$47.91	\$52.86
Expense	\$15,088,516	\$16,804,671	\$12,668,277

*Through August

Mobility Management

In addition to the van transportation service listed above, MCTS has secured an FTA Section 5310 Grant for 2023-2024 to fund Mobility Management activities that support use of the transit system by older adults and persons with disabilities. These funds have also been requested for the 2025-2026 grant cycle. The activities supported by this grant include individual and group travel training; community outreach and education; mobility device training; bus operator ADA sensitivity and passenger assistance training.

Transit Plus Same Day Pilot

In September 2023, Transit Plus ended a long-standing taxi program that served ambulatory Transit Plus riders due to the lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) and required random drug and alcohol testing for the drivers. Knowing that this program was ending, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors set aside contingency

funds in the 2024 budget to allow for the implementation of a replacement program. The Paratransit Taxi Task Force met throughout 2023 and 2024 to develop the service parameters for this replacement program in line with the Board's stipulations.

Service began on the Transit Plus Same Day Pilot at the end of August 2024 and is contracted with Tidewater Transit, dba Via, to run until September 2025 or until budgeted funds are expired. Service is provided on a same day basis for health/medical or employment rides that could not have been scheduled the day before and thus could not have been scheduled on the existing paratransit vans. Some examples of the use cases for this service would include a same day trip to urgent care, going to pick up a sick child, or being called into work. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible, and drivers are subject to random drug and alcohol testing. Rides can be shared or private depending on demand. The contracted rate for this service is \$98.73 per vehicle hour.

Service runs from 7 AM to 5:59 PM, 7 days/week and is provided border to border within Milwaukee County. The rider fare is \$10 per one-way trip. A Personal Care Attendant (when required due to rider disability) is allowed to accompany the rider at no cost. One companion can ride with the client for an additional \$10. Fare can be paid with a credit/debit card or a cash voucher code purchased at the MCTS Administration Building. Trip booking can be done using a smartphone app or over the phone. The vehicle must arrive within one hour of booking the trip.

There were 10 trips provided on this program in September and 10 trips in October. Transit Plus and the Task Force members continue efforts to educate potential riders about the availability of this service.

SUMMARY

The MCTS Paratransit Program, known as Transit Plus manages all aspects of ADA paratransit eligibility, service provision, reporting and compliance with state and federal requirements. In addition, Transit Plus manages a same day discretionary program that is offered by Milwaukee County to help offset the unmet need for same day transportation for persons with disabilities. All programs are closely monitored to maintain service efficiency and effectiveness. Complaints are carefully recorded, investigated and resolved. Efforts to enable persons with disabilities to be able to successfully use fixed route services in addition to, or instead of, paratransit services are on-going through mobility management.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 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.
- 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.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

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

Julie Esch, Deputy Director, MCTS (jesch@mcts.org)

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

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

PREPARED BY:

Frances Musci, Director of Paratransit, MCTS

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna Brown-Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

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