

**County of Milwaukee  
Interoffice Communication**

**DATE:** November 13, 2020

**TO:** Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Authorization to Accept Federal Section 5309 Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program Funds for the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project and Status Update

**POLICY**

Chapter 56 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances requires authorization from the County Board to accept state or federal discretionary grant awards.

**BACKGROUND**

In June 2020 the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) provided an update to the Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee on the status of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. MCTS continues to progress towards construction of the project through on-going coordination and determinations by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

As previously described, in September 2019, FTA directed Milwaukee County to submit an updated Section 5309 Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program Small Starts application (similar to the resubmission requested in September 2018), which included a route design with dedicated bus-only lanes along 53% of the route, up to 17 BRT stations pairs (33 total stations) and accommodation for 11 Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) with associated infrastructure as directed by the County Board in the 2019 Adopted Capital Budget. In March 2020, FTA again awarded the BRT project a Medium rating, consistent with previous ratings of the application. Projects that score a Medium rating or higher are eligible for federal funding.

On May 29, 2020, Elaine Chao, United States Secretary of Transportation announced the apportionment of \$40.9M in CIG funding for the project. Administered by the FTA, federal funds will cover approximately 79% of the project's estimated \$55.05M cost. Coupled with an earlier FTA project development approval of \$2.3M from federal Section 5307 funds, Milwaukee County's local match contribution of approximately \$11.85M was approved through Milwaukee County Bus Replacement Funds, Milwaukee County Signal Prioritization Project, Milwaukee County 2019 Capital Budget, Milwaukee County Bonding, and Vehicle Registration Fee Revenue. The bulk of the local match will come from the deployment of BEBs as required in existing policy. An RFP for BEB procurement was released on July 30, 2020 with proposals submitted on October 14, 2020. Review of proposals is under way, and the vehicle contract is expected to be awarded by the end of 2020.

Milwaukee County has not yet received the grant agreement from the FTA but has been informed that this is imminent with execution expected in mid-December 2020, barring any unforeseen circumstances or delays.

In summary, the East-West BRT project is now positioned to obtain funding from the FTA. MCTS will continue to advance the project and continue to engage and inform partnering entities including but not limited to local municipalities, businesses and community groups, and work with FTA to fulfill all federal

requirements. This in turn will position MCTS to take advantage of the 2021 construction season and begin BRT revenue service in fall 2022.

Ongoing updates on the BRT project, are available on the project website: <http://www.eastwestbrt.com/>.

The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) recommends that Milwaukee County accept this apportionment of federal funds for the East-West BRT project and execute the grant agreement with FTA upon receipt; with the goal of beginning construction activities in April 2021.

MCTS will not begin construction until the agreement is issued by the FTA **and** executed by the County Board.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program that will fund the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project requires a minimum 20 percent local matching funds contribution. This contribution was demonstrated to the FTA through the adoption of Milwaukee County's 2017 and 2019 Capital Budgets with the directive to deploy Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) to service this alignment. Milwaukee County's contribution of \$11.85M for BEBs and associated infrastructure will leverage the federal apportionment of \$40.9M and an earlier FTA project development approval of \$2.3M from federal Section 5307 funds for a total estimated project cost of \$55.05M.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Director of the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) recommends that Milwaukee County accept the \$40.9M apportionment of federal funds for the East-West BRT project and execute the grant agreement with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) upon receipt.

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Approved by:

*Julie Esch, Deputy Director*

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Donna Brown-Martin  
Director, Department of Transportation

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