

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/22/2026

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

From: Joseph Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation

Subject: Milwaukee County Department of Transportation 2025 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report – Per File #: 22-104

This informational report provides a report on how the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation set and achieved its 2025 goals.

POLICY

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 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

Alignment to the above strategic goals is articulated in responses to the questions below.

BODY

- What were your Department/Office's top 3 goals in 2025? (See those listed in your 2025 Annual Report.) Please explain why they are "SMARTIE" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy.
 - **Goal 1:** The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is actively working to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities through the modernization and enhancement of streets and roadways throughout the community to promote multimodal safety, accessibility, and efficiency.
 - The Director's Office addressed this goal through securing new project funds and the continued implementation of the Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project and its plans to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Milwaukee County's 19 municipalities, consisting of 10 cities and 9 villages.
 - The Transportation Services division is addressing this goal through projects along County Trunk Highways (CTH) and roadways within the purview of Milwaukee County.
 - The Highway Maintenance division addressed this goal through assistance during the historic flooding event in August 2025
 - **Goal 2:** Implement and refine plans for each of the five transportation divisions addressing efficiency, fiscal sustainability, and employee retention.
 - Airport
 - Highway Maintenance
 - Transportation Services
 - Fleet
 - Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS)
 - **Goal 3:** Continue progress on the implementation of goals in the 3-year work plan for the Department of Transportation

These three goals align with the County's racial equity strategy and goals as MCDOT continues to support diversity and inclusion efforts across Milwaukee County.

- To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2025? Please explain.

- a. **Goal 1:** Made significant progress on transportation-related strategic objectives that address “dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities” through a variety of projects that targeted safety and mobility countywide.

August 2025 Flood Recovery Efforts

When historic flooding hit Milwaukee County in August 2025, the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation’s Highway Maintenance division rose to the challenge, in partnership with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Milwaukee County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO), to help preserve lives and property.

As soon as flooding conditions were evident, crews responded, barricading roadways and preventing thousands of vehicles from driving into impacted areas. Many roads were able to remain open, or reopened within hours, due to staff efforts to manage water flow throughout the duration of the storm.

Their dedication to safety and recovery continued for weeks, as our team focused on returning safety and efficiency to the state and county road system.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, they worked with the Milwaukee County Sheriff’s Office to clear more than 123 disabled vehicles and to clear and repair flood damage at 16 locations across the County. For weeks after, they assisted the cities of Milwaukee, South Milwaukee, Glendale, and Wauwatosa with flood debris removal.

Securing Additional Funding

In 2025, MCDOT secured \$57 million in funding outside of our traditional revenue sources. While most MCDOT and MCTS projects are primarily funded through state and federal formula dollars, we actively pursue competitive grant opportunities and intergovernmental partnerships to leverage local funds. Additional funding awards in 2025 include:

- Nearly \$25 million to fund [67 traffic safety projects](#) along ten of the County’s most hazardous roadways, through the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) [2025 Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) Grant](#)
- [\\$21 million through the USDOT BUILD Grant Program](#) to improve rider experience and public transit service operations along the MCTS PurpleLine transit corridor
- [Nearly \\$8 million](#) awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to optimize downtown transit service, upgrade MCTS’ bus fleet, and provide bus rider education
- \$3 million in local funding support from the City of Greenfield [to reconstruct a half-mile segment of W. Layton Avenue](#)

It should be noted that MCDOT’s annual scorecard metric related to increasing external funding only reflects funds secured by the Transportation Services division, not the department as a whole. Future scorecards will reflect MCDOT as a whole.

Advancing Vision Zero Initiatives

In 2025, the MCDOT Director's Office made significant progress toward its Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2037. This progress was driven by the Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project (CCTP), a safety initiative to increase multimodal safety and address reckless driving across all 19 municipalities in Milwaukee County.

In February, the Project reached a key milestone when the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to adopt the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation's (MCDOT) [Comprehensive Safety Action Plan](#) (CSAP).

The completion of the CSAP also marked completion of the CCTP's second phase. MCDOT initiated Phase Three a few weeks later, when it began working with municipal governments to create their own action plans, called [Municipal Safety Action Plans](#) (MSAPs).

In March, the Milwaukee Area Safe Streets Taskforce (MASST) launched the second phase of the Motor Vehicle Collision Dashboard, which added a new feature to visualize collision data, helping to identify collision hotspots in Milwaukee County.

In April, Milwaukee County joined the communities of Greendale, Shorewood, South Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, and West Allis to deploy a series of traffic calming demonstration activities that helped each municipality study proposed safety improvements on their streets.

In December, MCDOT learned that several of our municipalities would be able to complete projects identified in the CSAP and MSAPs, when we were awarded \$25 million in the 2025 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) funding cycle. The funding will support 67 traffic safety projects that support the work of the CCTP. Much of the CCTP was funded by a 2022 SS4A Grant.

Modernizing and Enhancing the County Trunk Highway (CTH) System

In 2025, the **Transportation Services division** substantially completed 8 projects that modernized and enhanced CTHs through roadway reconstruction, traffic signal safety improvements, and bridge improvements.

- **Roadway Improvements (2):**

- W Rawson Ave (CTH BB) roadway reconstruction from S 13th St to S Howell Ave in the City of Oak Creek (County Project No WH0247012).
- S 76th St (CTH U) roadway reconstruction from S County Line Rd to S Creekview Ct in the City of Franklin (County Project No WH0260012).

- **Bridge Improvements (2):**

- E Mason St Bridge over N Lincoln Memorial Dr B-40-0524 bridge rehabilitation improvement in the City of Milwaukee (County Project No WH0250012)-Parks bridge.
- S 76th St (CTH U) Bridge over W Forest Home Ave (STH 24) B-40-0164 bridge rehabilitation improvement in the City of Greenfield (County Project No WH0102012).
- **Traffic Signal Safety Improvements (4):**
 - S 76th St (CTH U), S 92nd St (CTH N) and W Oklahoma Ave (CTH NN) traffic signal safety improvements in the Cities of West Allis and Greenfield (County Project No WH0249012).
 - W Layton Ave (CTH Y) traffic signal safety improvement from S Pine Ave to S Packard Ave in the Cities of Milwaukee and Cudahy at the intersections of S Pine Ave, S Brust Ave, S Pennsylvania Ave, S Whitnall Ave (West), S Whitnall Ave (East), S Nicholson Ave, Sweet Applewood Ln, and S Packard Ave (County Project No WH0273012).
 - Various CTH Intersections Signal Monitoring traffic safety improvements in Milwaukee County (County Project No WH0283012).
 - W Oklahoma Ave (CTH NN) intersection of S Wollmer Rd traffic signal safety improvements in the City of West Allis (County Project No WH0284012).

- b. **Goal 2:** In 2024, MCDOT has made progress in all areas in implementing and refining plans for each of the five transportation divisions addressing efficiency, fiscal sustainability, and recruitment and retention.

Airport

In 2025, Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport total passenger traffic dipped by 7%, as economic challenges impacted customers. Total passengers decreased from 6,316,245 in 2024 to 5,874,372 in 2025. Lower consumer confidence levels, increasing employment concerns, changes in travel habits, and widespread global trade tensions have contributed to a slowdown in passenger demand.

The Airport continues to engage in multiple initiatives that invest in the region's economic future while enhancing airport accessibility and amenities and showcasing Milwaukee as a destination.

- Broke ground on the new MKE Air Cargo Center at the former MKE Regional Business Park in February. Completion is expected in late 2026.
- Kicked off the Concourse E Redevelopment Project, which replaces that concourse with a new, flexible-use domestic/international concourse, in September. Completion is expected in late 2027.
- Opened several new concessions options on Concourse D, including Bonne Terre, Mitchell Market, and Auntie Anne's/Cinnabon.
- Launched new Make-A-Wish Kids Zones as part of a refurbishment of our existing children's play areas.

- Hosted MPS summer interns in the Aviation Careers Education (ACE) program, in partnership with the State DOT Bureau of Aeronautics.
- Partnered with Women in Aviation International and Alaska Airlines for Girls in Aviation Day in September.
- Hosted two successful pilot competition events at Timmerman Airport.
- Participated in the first-ever Airport Workers Day event on June 25, in conjunction with Airports Council International (ACI).
- Hosted an employee recognition event in October, kicking off the Airport's new centennial branding, ahead of the 2026 centennial of the airport.
- Airport again teamed up on a hiring event at MCDOT in October.
- Launched a new Where We Fly module on the airport website to better illustrate the Airport's nonstop flights and schedules.
- Launched the third annual issue of the Airport's *Now Boarding* magazine.
- Received the "Best Way to Get Out of Town" award from Shepherd Express.

Highway Maintenance

MCDOT's Highway Maintenance division continues to focus on contributing to the fiscal health of the county by developing ways to minimize cost while delivering high quality services to the residents of Milwaukee County while remaining a zero-tax levy division.

- **Routine Maintenance Agreements:** In 2025 the Highway Division received nearly \$15,265,300 dollars in State Reimbursements via Routine Maintenance Agreements and added another \$1,904,500 in additional maintenance projects via Discretionary Maintenance Agreements.
- **Salt Brine Usage:** The county's investment in brine production is leading the county's environmental sustainability initiatives. In 2025, the Highway Division significantly increased its use of brine versus rock salt for winter weather events, saving taxpayer dollars while reducing the amount of salt that could run into local waterways. Highway Maintenance utilized over 780,809 gallons of salt brine throughout the winter season. In 2026, we will be able to further increase these efforts due to additional high-capacity brine-making units at the North Shop and the South Shop.
- **Citizen Issue Reporter:** In 2025, the Highway Maintenance Division increased public outreach/feedback via its Citizen Issue Reporter web application.
 - A total of 621 Issues were reported and resolved in 2025 compared to 604 reported in 2024.
 - Maintained 24-hour turn-round on all maintenance concerns, even as usage of the issue reporter increased.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** Highway Maintenance has seen significant increases in the recruitment and retention of diverse talent, which has resulted in a decrease in vacancies. The division has gone from averaging 10 vacancies per month in the past 5 years to averaging fewer than 4 vacancies per month.

- 23 full-time hires in 2025 (does not include the seasonal HMW II temporary hires)
 - 8 employees were promoted within the Division
 - The division entered the 2025 winter operations season with less than 5 full-time vacancies
- **Training and Development:** The Highway Maintenance division has developed innovative approaches to involve employees in training and development. These efforts aim to enhance safety and improve staff skills, abilities, and job knowledge, better preparing them both personally and professionally for daily operations and future advancement opportunities within the division. In 2025:
 - 42 highway maintenance workers were newly certified, and 23 were recertified in WisDOT Flagger Training.
 - 32 highway maintenance workers were trained and certified in OSHA-10
 - All highway maintenance workers attended a synergy, teamwork, communication, and generational influences seminar presented by Brad Gingras with Superior Strategies.
 - As part of the annual Safety and Training Week, all highway maintenance workers participated in specialized equipment training covering tar and mastic kettles, routers, and Vacall sweepers. Fleet Maintenance led a seminar on proper loading and hauling procedures. Crews also received winter refresher training on salting and brining, with an emphasis on effective control operation and best practices to maximize efficiency. Retirement Services and Deferred Comp/Empower delivered presentations to provide employees with retirement planning information. Additionally, staff had the opportunity to meet individually with representatives from ERS or Empower to discuss financial options and retirement goals.
 - A pilot program utilizing departmental resources began to offer eligible maintenance workers training and testing opportunities to obtain a Class A CDL, preparing them for potential promotion to the Highway Maintenance Worker III heavy equipment operation position.

Fleet Management

In 2025, the Fleet Management division advanced fleet policy and procedures aimed at reducing fleet repair and maintenance costs, as well as reducing overall fleet size and carbon footprint, including fuel usage.

- **Fleet Optimization Project:** In 2025, Fleet Management successfully worked through the Administrative Manual of Operating Procedures (AMOP) process to implement two new County procedures aimed at reducing vehicle fleet repair and maintenance costs, as well as the fleet's overall carbon footprint.

The County currently owns approximately 2,500 vehicles (rolling stock and associated attachments), a number of which are now obsolete, used minimally, or

near the end of their useful life. Each vehicle requires resources for annual maintenance, repair, insurance, and storage. To optimize fleet operations, **the Fleet Vehicle Reduction AMOP and the Fleet Vehicle Purchases AMOP** represent a collaborative effort to reduce capital and operating expenses for user departments and increase environmental sustainability for the county through reduced fuel usage.

- **Sustainability Initiatives:** The division has progressed several projects to address sustainability through fuel reduction and exploration of sources of renewable energy.
 - In 2025, the division began implementation of a fuel management strategy after installing an automated fuel monitoring system for all vehicle fuel sites in 2024. Fleet management has monitored more than 27,000 fuel transactions, allowing the division to pinpoint and target high-use and high fuel consumption areas in departments that can be focused on for carbon reduction.
 - In 2025, the division began a cost/benefit analysis of two electric squad vehicles as a test for future electric fleet vehicle investments. Initial results have been mixed, showing high vehicle performance in summer, but lost miles during the winter. Testing will continue through 2026.
 - The division's facility management staff completed a four-year project to improve the efficiency of the main fleet maintenance facility by replacing all exterior windows and doors in the fleet garage. Through the project, 55 60-year-old windows were replaced with energy efficient double paned glass.

Recruitment and Retention: While the Fleet Management division has several initiatives in place to address hiring and recruitment challenges, more work is needed to retain high-demand positions.

- Three mechanic positions were vacant at the end of 2025
- The division has continued its internal career ladder model to provide advancement opportunities for existing employees.
- The division has also begun exploring opportunities to generating interest in fleet careers with young people. In 2025, the department had conversations with MATC and MPS about opportunities to expose students to potential career paths. The division also held events at two high schools to talk with students and provide opportunities to experience fleet equipment.

Transportation Services

Throughout 2025, the division continued to work toward ensuring the safety of the traveling public, as reported above, while focusing on strategies to enhance fiscal sustainability and improve recruitment and retention by maintaining a productive and diverse workforce.

State and federal funding: Secured approximately \$3 million in local funding support from the City of Greenfield [to reconstruct a half-mile segment of W. Layton Avenue.](#)

Recruitment and Retention: In 2025, Transportation Services continued to focus on strategies to improve recruitment and retention in maintaining a productive and diverse workforce with an emphasis on employee engagement, professional development, and

a positive work environment. The division conducted regular employee engagement activities to strengthen teamwork and open communication, leading to better collaboration and engaging work environment.

- The division recruited and filled one vacant Engineer position and one vacant Construction Coordinator position that are critical to delivering transportation improvement projects on time, within budget, and of quality.
- The division also supported the efforts of Human Resource Department's Compensation Transformation project aimed at aligning salaries with market rates and streamlining pay structures to improve recruitment, enhance retention, and boost morale.

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS)

In 2025, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors acted to stave off a fiscal cliff for MCTS after it exhausted COVID-19 relief funding earlier than anticipated. To address these challenges, MCTS worked to implement multiple strategies to increase the sustainability of the county transit system, ranging from system efficiency and fare compliance strategies to increasing safety and reliability for riders and improving paratransit services. MCTS also took initial steps to begin rightsizing the system in future years.

Ridership: MCTS ridership remained stable, providing 25 million rides in 2025, compared to 25.3 million rides in 2024. While this is a slight drop from the previous year, MCTS implemented service changes at the end of 2025 which may have impacted end-of-year growth. Even with stable ridership, MCTS has outperformed expectations in recovering ridership following the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2024, MCTS had regained 87.2% of its pre-pandemic ridership. National Transit Database reporting indicates that this recovery exceeds Madison's (71.7%), Columbus' (63.5%), Indianapolis' (74.9%), and Minneapolis–St. Paul's (61.7%).

Sustainability and Efficiency Initiatives: In 2025, MCTS took steps toward improving the sustainability of the system by building a stronger culture of data-driven decision-making that will support better service and smarter investments in the years ahead.

- MCTS adopted a single Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to replace multiple financial databases. Built on Microsoft Dynamics 365, the cloud-based platform provides one source of truth and gives departments real-time access to financial data. The new system replaces manual reporting with automated, data-rich insights, increasing financial productivity by 20% while reducing manual tasks and the potential for human error.
- MCTS introduced Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) along with the ERP to better track progress on priorities such as disruption management, on-time performance, and safety. Departments across the agency use these metrics to stay aligned, collaborate, and reinforce accountability and shared goals.
- At the end of 2025, MCTS launched a public awareness campaign aimed at increasing fare compliance, which includes the addition of on-bus audio announcements at every stop, along with a destination sign on the front of the

- bus, social media, website, news media and other communication channels that highlight the importance of paying your fare for the sustainability of the system
- MCTS made service changes that focused on protecting essential transit service while managing ongoing financial challenges facing transit systems nationwide.
 - In fall 2025, some routes experienced reduced frequency due to budget constraints. With support from the Milwaukee County budget, MCTS avoided route eliminations in 2026, sustaining vital bus and paratransit service for riders who rely on public transit every day.
 - MOVE 2025 marked the largest service update since 2021, bringing changes to 40 of 46 routes, adding 95 new bus stops, and launching four new routes.
 - Service expanded in South Milwaukee with the launch of Route 59, connecting riders to jobs, schools, grocery stores, and healthcare.
 - Route 52 was also extended to serve local schools along 15th Avenue.
 - In September, MCTS announced a new three-year collective bargaining agreement with ATU Local 998 that underscores a shared commitment to serving riders, supporting employees, and strengthening the community. The agreement prioritizes safety and security, fair compensation, and the long-term financial sustainability of transit operations.
 - In 2025, MCTS laid the groundwork for Transit Plus riders to use WisGo on the paratransit van service. Paratransit van passengers will benefit from the same modern, convenient, fare payment system as bus riders, making it easier for everyone to access services they rely on every day.

Improvements in Safety and Security: In 2025, MCTS rolled out several key initiatives aimed at enhancing safety and security on buses for customers and employees, including the following:

- Starting in 2025, all new buses are equipped with monitors near the front that show a live camera feed from inside the vehicle, helping riders stay aware of their surroundings
- In 2025, MCTS continued to expand its Public Safety Officer (PSO) program, to a total staff of more than 20 persons. Since the program began in 2024, MCTS saw a 50% reduction in operator assaults in the first year.

Recruitment and Retention: MCTS took numerous steps to increase recruitment and retention in 2025.

- In 2025, after four years of planning and collaboration, MCTS reached a major workforce milestone with the official registration of Wisconsin's first Coach/Bus Operator and Mechanic apprenticeship programs. Designed to address ongoing workforce shortages in public transit, the apprenticeships create a pathway for recruiting, training, and retaining skilled employees. DWD awarded MCTS a \$387,000 Fast Forward Grant and hopes other public transit agencies across Wisconsin will replicate to address the statewide shortage of public transit workers.
- In August, MCTS participated in our inaugural Safe + Sound Week, led by OSHA and the National Safety Council, it recognizes the steps businesses have taken

to improve workplace safety and health, implementing safety and health programs.

- MCTS developed fatigue awareness training for drivers, including a training video, and was invited to the Wisconsin Public Transit Association to present on the topic.
- In 2025, MCTS continued investing in its people through a three-day De-escalation & Crisis Prevention Workshop open to employees across the organization, led by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- In 2025, MCTS introduced the Hub, a new digital home for employee news, updates, and resources. Replacing the former Employee Portal, the Hub brings essential tools together in one convenient place online. The Hub costs less than the previous tool and requires no separate login.
- MCTS extended the March 18 National Transit Employee Appreciation Day into a week-long celebration in honor of its 50th anniversary

c. **Goal 3:** MCDOT continues to work toward the goals as identified in its 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

- What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
 - Support of the County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive's Office in addressing MCTS' 2025 budget shortfall, and for their collaboration in the development and passage of the 2026 MCTS service plan that maximized fixed route and paratransit service for the next year.
 - External and internal support and collaboration were key to advancing a number of MCDOT's projects, including the Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project, a coordinated emergency response to the August 2025 floods, Fleet's new AMOPs, the E Concourse Project, and more.
- What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
 - All our divisions are impacted by rising operational and capital costs related to labor, vehicles, equipment, and parts. In turn, this increases operating and maintenance expenses for user departments.
 - As costs rise, most of our revenue streams remain flat or are decreasing. We are working to maintain our level of service with fewer resources.
 - MCTS is one of the only major transit agencies in the nation – and the only one in the Midwest - without a dedicated source of funding.
 - Ongoing issues and uncertainty at the federal level could result in fewer and reduced funding and award opportunities
 - Mechanics continue to be in high demand, so continuing aggressive recruitment strategies, and potential salary increases, will be necessary to maintain staffing levels and fill remaining position vacancies.
 - We have few mechanisms left to address rising fuel costs, as the County has already spent years building a more efficient fleet, expanding hybrid vehicles, and implementing anti-idling policies. Investing in large-scale sustainability initiatives is limited due to high-up-front costs.

- Economic challenges, such as lower consumer confidence levels, increasing employment concerns, changes in travel habits, and widespread global trade tensions, contributed to a slowdown in passenger demand.
- We are also navigating challenges in the airport industry, including airline financial issues, aircraft fleet delivery for some airlines, and air traffic control issues
- What is the status of your Department/Office in developing its strategic plan? If complete, please upload your plan with this report.

Complete

- If not addressed in #5, what are your Department/Office goals for 2026?

We will continue building partnerships and strengthening collaboration with stakeholders to advance our goals. We will also identify dedicated funding sources and opportunities to sustain or enhance services. In addition, we will maintain our commitment to initiatives that ensure the safety of the traveling public.

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

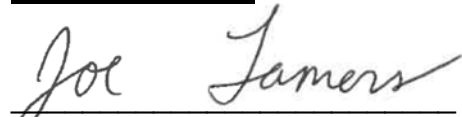
VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Joseph Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation
 Brian Dranzik, Airport Director, Department of Transportation
 Steve Fuentes, President and CEO, MCTS
 Andrea Weddle-Henning, Director of Transportation Engineering, Department of Transportation
 Eduardo Santiago, Highway Director, Department of Transportation
 John Blonien, Fleet Director, Department of Transportation

PREPARED BY:

Nicole Armendariz, Director of Public Affairs and Marketing, Department of Transportation

APPROVED BY:



Joe Lamers, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

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