

# COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

## Inter-office Communication

DATE: 4/22/2022  
TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, County Board of Supervisors  
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
SUBJECT: 2022 MCTS Roles and Responsibilities Under Milwaukee County  
FILE TYPE: Informational Report

### BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is an organization that is driven to improve its service to our community. We are a partner to Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, County Executive, and Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) in helping to make Milwaukee the healthiest County in the State through achieving racial equity.

Our partnership with the Milwaukee County Board is strongest in the tie that we have with the Transportation, Public Works and Transit (TPW&T) Committee. This Committee is responsible for discussing matters pertaining to the policy of mass transit, including fares, service routes and capital improvements. Accordingly, MCTS submits reports on such topics as:

- Updates on major projects, such as BRT construction in the East-West Corridor or a transit enhancement study in the North-South 27th Street Corridor.
- Federal and State grants that require a local funding match.
- Information about funding sources, revenue and expense projections, and fiscal constraints.
- Informational reports about program areas such as paratransit administration and operations, as well as program functions such as travel training for persons with disabilities.
- Information about initiatives to improve transit services such as the recently implemented MCTS NEXT project.
- Updates on submittals due to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) such as Title VI program plans about equity considerations of service or fare changes.
- Annual reports that inform about a previous year's accomplishments and key statistics.

In addition to the direction provided by the TPW&T Committee to MCTS, transit policy is also often set during the annual operating and capital budget process that includes a review of recommended budgets by the County's Finance Committee and adoption of amended budgets by the County Board of Supervisors and the Milwaukee County Executive.

The 2022 Operating Budget is \$163,878,763. MCTS uses these funds to connect the community to jobs, education, and life with essential transit services. Our vision is to strive to be the preferred transportation choice through service excellence and innovation. The Director's Office of MCDOT provides oversight of MCTS, conducts transit related studies, and prepares and administers Federal and State transit grants. MCDOT personnel also facilitate the acquisition of capital equipment and provide the Architecture & Engineering Division (A&E) of the Department of Administration Services (DAS) with capital improvement recommendations for MCTS facilities.

Transit employees work for Milwaukee Transport Services, Inc. (MTS), a quasi-governmental instrumentality of Milwaukee County, which manages day to day transit operations using facilities and equipment provided by Milwaukee County. As a private, non-profit corporation, MTS is guided by a Board of Directors that hires the Transit Director and manages oversight of the business and affairs of the Corporation in accordance with adopted Bylaws. Those same Bylaws authorize and delegate policy oversight to Milwaukee County, including responsibility to exercise the powers enumerated in Section 59.58(3) of the Wisconsin Statutes – Public Transit in Counties.

The 2022 operating budget for paratransit services is \$17,227,012. Transit Plus is Milwaukee County's paratransit program. There are over 8,000 registered Transit Plus participants who are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit eligible. MCTS contracts with paratransit service companies to provide rides to persons with disabilities border-to-border in the County following strict requirements of the ADA. MCTS also provides mobility management activities inclusive of fixed route travel training, community outreach and education, mobility device training, and bus operator ADA sensitivity and passenger assistance training to help paratransit eligible individuals achieve the additional freedom afforded through the extensive fixed route transit network.

The 2022 operating budget for fixed route services is \$146,649,750. MCTS uses these funds to provide transit services throughout Milwaukee County using a fleet of 350 buses operating up to 22 hours per day, 365 days out of the year. The fleet will be in service over 1,361,171 hours in 2022 and travel over 17.6 million miles. Buses are replaced when they reach an age of 12 to 13 years and by this time have 500,000 to 600,000 miles on them. MCTS expects to provide over 20 million individual rides in 2022.

Major initiatives that will be undertaken in 2022 include:

- A review of the route redesign (MCTS NEXT) completed in three-phases last year. <https://www.ridemcts.com/programs/mcts-next>
- Negotiations with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local #998 and Office Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) local #9 to establish new multi-year collective bargaining agreements for represented employees.
- Continued construction of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line stations. MCTS will also take delivery of the County's first Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) to be dedicated to use on BRT. <https://eastwestbrtmke.com/>
- Completion of a feasibility analysis of transit enhancement alternatives in the North-South 27th Street Corridor, and initiation of project development, including design and environmental work for a new BRT route. <https://www.mkenorthsouth.com/>

The multi-layered organization structure starting with the Milwaukee County Executive and extending to the Board of Supervisors through its TPW&T Committee, as well as involving MCDOT, the MTS Board, and MCTS non-represented and represented staff can seem complicated but aligns well with a standard policy governance model. Under a policy governance model, The Board's primary job is assuring that the organization produces the results expected by its owners using acceptable means. In other words, the County Executive, and County Board direct MCTS to provide the transit and paratransit services needed to serve passengers, residents, and stakeholders within our community. The governance and reporting model, including budgeting process, is how the County goes about directing transit to achieve desired outcomes. In turn, MCTS adheres to the budget and provides safe, reliable, convenient, and affordable transportation services that make a difference in people's lives.

In summary, MCTS is a partner with the County Board, County Executive and MCDOT to provide public transportation throughout the County. MCTS's professional staff of administrators, mechanics and bus operators take the mission of public transit seriously, and through service excellence and innovation, strive to provide the quality of service that will make transit the preferred transportation choice. One way to assess recent success in meeting these ends, is to review the 2021 MCTS Annual Report which can be found here.

[https://www.ridemcts.com/getattachment/who-we-are/2021-Annual-Report\\_v3.pdf?lang=en-US](https://www.ridemcts.com/getattachment/who-we-are/2021-Annual-Report_v3.pdf?lang=en-US)

#### RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

#### VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

#### PREPARED BY:

Prepared by: Dan Boehm, President & Managing Director, MCTS

#### APPROVED BY:

*Donna Brown-Martin*

---

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