



Commission on Aging

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October 20, 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

In Wisconsin, public transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities continue to be vital for connecting community members to their daily needs, such as employment, medical appointments, and grocery shopping, while also reducing social isolation and increasing independence and quality of life. As Milwaukee County's population continues to age, the need for public transportation options, such as transit and specialized transportation, will continue to grow. Unfortunately, State funding for public transit and specialized transportation has not matched the growing demand for services over the past 20 years.

There are more than 1.7 million non-drivers in Wisconsin, making up 31% of the state's total population, many of whom are older adults and people with disabilities who rely on transit and specialized transportation services (*WisDOT Non-Driver Application, 2022*). In Wisconsin, Milwaukee County has the second highest non-driving population 15 years and older, only behind Menominee County. The transit-dependent population in Milwaukee County is made up of older adults (14%), people in low-income households (36%), people with disabilities (12%), and people in households with no vehicles available (13%) (*US Census Bureau, 2019 and 2021*). For these populations, public transportation can be the difference between meaningful community engagement and independence, or isolation.

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is approaching an estimated funding gap of \$20M in 2024 due to factors including the County's structural deficit, annual losses of state shared revenue, pandemic impacts on ridership, and inflation. The projected gap in funding for MCTS will disproportionately impact the older adults, people with disabilities and low-income communities that rely on public transportation services to meet their everyday needs.

If local governments in Wisconsin are not given the statutory authority to raise local revenue for transit, the County is left with no options for maintaining, much less expanding, service to meet the growing demand. The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging urges local and state government cooperation and collaboration that leads to increased support for public transportation, including transit and specialized transportation.

Sincerely,

Chair, Commission on Aging

Legislative Officer



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
& HUMAN SERVICES
**AGING & DISABILITIES
SERVICES**

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