

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

DATE: 3/17/2023
TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: From the Director of the Department of Transportation, an informational report on the Milwaukee County Paratransit Taxi Program
FILE TYPE: Informational Report

REQUEST

Per the 2023 Adopted Budget for Milwaukee County, MCTS will provide a report to the County Board by April 2023 with information on new or extended contract details. The report shall also include an update on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements and completed engagement activities with impacted communities.

BACKGROUND

The MCTS Paratransit Taxi contract with American United Transportation (AUT) is due to expire at the end of May 2023. Because of this, the first step in continuing service as directed by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors was to address the need for a contract extension. The current contract has a continuation clause that would allow MCTS to extend the contract with AUT under the same terms for up to 120 days. MCTS intends to invoke the continuation clause which will bring the new end of the contract to September 28, 2023. MCDOT has submitted notice to FTA regarding our intent to extend the current contract and the efforts to work with the community for alternative solutions to the current service model. To date, MCDOT has not received feedback on this correspondence.

In the meantime, MCDOT and MCTS have been in conversation with Director Shakita LaGrant of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Marietta Luster, Administrator Aging and Disabilities Services. As DHHS operates some specialized transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities, these discussions were necessary to determine capacity to assist in taking on the taxi contract, should that avenue be pursued. As a non- FTA regulated entity, DHHS would not need to implement the random drug and alcohol testing program that is required if the program is administered by an FTA regulated entity such as MCTS. However, wheelchair accessible vehicles must be available for service under this contract no matter which entity administers the program. Information is being gathered on available resources and ability to work with MCDOT and MCTS on a taxi service moving forward.

In addition, MCDOT has spoken with WisDOT to request an increase in funding for §85.21(specialized transit) and §85.205 (paratransit) state funds. The Governor's budget recommendation is for a four percent increase in funds. While this will only become clearer as the state budget is negotiated through the spring and summer, the recommendation would be the basis for determination of budgeted expenditures for an updated taxi program.

In terms of community engagement, MCDOT and MCTS have been in ongoing communication

with representatives from Disability Rights Wisconsin, Independence First, the Transit Plus Advisory Council and the Milwaukee County Commission for Persons with Disabilities. In addition, MCDOT and MCTS are developing the Paratransit Taxi Task Force as outlined in the 2023 Budget narrative. Besides those advocacy groups listed in the budget narrative, all members of the existing Transit Plus Advisory Council, and all who attended public listening sessions on the taxi program will be invited to participate on the Task Force. The first meeting of the Task Force is scheduled to be held on April 3, 2023, at Independence First. Task force meetings will be posted in advance and MCDOT is working with the County Clerk's office to post the agenda and meetings on the County Legislative Information Center (CLIC). All meetings will be open to anyone who wants to attend and will be hybrid in nature allowing for both in-person and remote participation.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government- Transit and MCDOT are working with DHHS to implement a plan to continue service.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.- Task Force participation by service users will ensure that users are included in the process for determining a path forward.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes only.

FISCAL EFFECT

No fiscal impacts, informational only

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Frances Musci, Director of Paratransit, MCTS

PREPARED BY:

Frances Musci, Director of Paratransit, MCTS

Denise Wandke, Interim President, and Managing Director, MCTS

APPROVED BY:

Donna Brown-Martin

Donna Brown-Martin
Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

N/A

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