

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

**Date:** March 3, 2023

**To:** Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

**From:** Lynn J. Fyhrlund, Director and Chief Information Officer, Information Management Services Division, Department of Administrative Services

**Subject:** Report on 2023 Adopted Budget Amendment #4 requesting a status update, which includes cost estimates and a project timeline for implementation of translation services, including multilingual captioning services and multilingual meeting notices and agendas.

**File Type:** Action Report

**REQUEST**

Department of Administrative Services – Information Management Services Division (DAS-IMSD) was requested to provide a report to the County Board of Supervisors for consideration no later than the April 2023 meeting cycle with a status update, which includes costs estimates and a projected timeline for implementation of translation services, including multilingual captioning services and multilingual meeting notices and agendas. In addition, Milwaukee County leaders make appointments to numerous Boards and Commissions at the State and local level that would benefit from a better tracking system. To ensure appointments to these positions are made with an eye towards equity, unallocated funding from Capital Project WY0726 – Milwaukee County Digital Transformation Initiative is also earmarked to develop a Countywide appointment tracking software.

**POLICY**

<b>Specific Adopted Budget:</b>	2023
<b>Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:</b>	4
<b>Specific Adopted Capital Project:</b>	WY0726 – Milwaukee County Digital Transformation Initiative

**BACKGROUND**

In collaboration with the Office of the County Clerk and the Department of Administrative Services – Information Management Services Division (IMSD) will provide technological support to strengthen public access to County meetings and hearings. In alignment with the Procurement Division, the following is a cost and timeline estimate for implementing a solution for Captioning and Translation for Public Proceedings.

## **Multilingual Captioning Services**

### **Recommended: Link Electronics Bundled Hardware and Software Solution**

Link Electronics develops products for both audio and video applications for the broadcast industry. Out of the box, the Link's Automatic Captioning Engine (ACE2200/102) hardware and software can caption and translate with 95% accuracy, which we can also increase with speaker identification functionality.

The hardware's built-in web-based interface allows the County Clerk's staff to schedule and control the system remotely. Meetings can be scheduled on demand, on an individual basis, or on a repeated schedule. Captioning is done in real-time. Additionally, to further Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance, speaker identification allows for increased accuracy with acronyms and complex words.

Link's solution can be integrated with Granicus (the County's Legistar/CLIC vendor) for streaming purposes. The County currently owns one encoder for English captioning. Each additional language requires its own encoder. Users can turn off captions in the Granicus Video Player.

Due to physical facilities/building requirements, the Link ACE hardware must be located in the same location as encoding equipment. The device can only be used for one meeting at a time.

### **Future research on recommended solution capabilities**

IMSD continues to research the ability for users to remote into the equipment for broadcasting off-site locations and the possibility of multiple devices to support multiple meetings at the same time.

### **Other Solution Options**

IMSD also evaluated other solutions, including functionality in Microsoft Teams and Granicus' translation services.

**Microsoft Teams** supports live translation and captioning in over 40 languages. This functionality was released in October 2022. However, research about accuracy is not available. IMSD and the County Clerk's staff would need to complete testing to ensure the display is accurately represented for meeting participants attending in person and virtually. Additionally, closed captioning would need to be configured at the beginning of each meeting, and captioning data is permanently deleted after each meeting. There is no cost associated to this functionality at this time.

**Granicus** The second option IMSD evaluated was closed captioning services provided through Granicus directly, which supplies the Legistar/CLIC platforms to Milwaukee County. There is no additional hardware or installation needed. Once the purchase is confirmed, Granicus activates the closed caption feature on their end, and the captions become available. The Granicus captioning service is an annual fee purchased in the form of blocks of hours. These hours also do not roll over at contract year end (i.e., "use it or lose it"). Third, and perhaps most crucial, is the Granicus service comes with a live person captioning each meeting. Granicus subcontracts to a company called Vitac to provide live person captions, and Vitac in turn assigns a captioner to our account that would be the same captioner for our meetings to provide consistency in quality.

### **Recommendation**

IMSD recommends the Link ACE solution. This option provides Milwaukee County with the functionality to deliver the most accurate captioning and translation experience to constituents in a cost-effective manner. Once purchased, the device is the property of Milwaukee County and does not require additional fees or yearly contracts, though an optional annual support and maintenance service is available. Additionally, this option does not require Milwaukee County to

rely on external resources to enable functionality or participate in meetings. There will be minimal support and configuration for Milwaukee County Resources to implementation. In alignment with Procurement, this solution should be sole-sourced due to the specialized nature of the solution.

### **Estimated Cost for Recommended Solution**

\$78,000 – \$93,600 from set aside ARPA Digital Transformation – These amounts include purchase of the Link ACE solution, an additional Granicus language encoder for Spanish, and installation support and services. A range is presented due to the need for installation contingency.

Future costs are estimated at \$7,000 for the optional but recommended annual support and maintenance of the Link ACE device. Granicus language encoders are a one-time cost.

Based on contracting, shipping, and implementation timelines, IMSD anticipates the Link ACE solution will be implemented and operational by the end of Q4 2023.

### **Multilingual Meeting Notices and Agendas**

At this time, IMSD recommends using Microsoft Translator for Business functionality, which is currently available within the County's Microsoft Word license. This functionality allows County staff to translate Meeting Notices and Agendas into multiple languages at no additional cost to the County. IMSD will coordinate with the County Clerk's staff and the County Board's staff to monitor ease of use and accuracy and make alternative recommendations in the future if required.

### **Countywide Boards and Commissions Appointment Tracking Software**

In 2022, IMSD evaluated technology options at the County Board's and County Executive's request for the management of appointments to select Boards and Commissions. The Granicus Boards and Commissions module was selected and funds for the purchase were encumbered in 2022. There is no additional funding needed for the purchase. Future software renewals will be covered under the IMSD managed technology Central Spend org. Therefore, no additional tax levy is being requested.

The contracting process took longer than expected and was finalized in January 2023. In parallel, IMSD worked with County Board and County Executive staff to capture appointment data necessary for the implementation. Currently, IMSD staff are undergoing training and will then proceed with implementation in coordination with County Board and County Executive staff. IMSD anticipates the implementation and user training will be completed by July 31, 2023.

<b>Related File No's:</b>	21-555, 22-106, 22-977, 23-200
<b>Previous Action Dates(s):</b>	June 24, 2021, February 2, 2022, September 22, 2022, February 2, 2023

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

The implementation of a solution for Captioning and Translation for Public Proceedings would support the Department of Administrative Services – Information Management Services division's alignment to the strategic plan areas

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

One-Time Costs – \$78,000 – \$93,600

- Link ACE – \$73,000

- Granicus Encoder – \$4,500 per encoder
- Granicus Support to add additional languages to Legistar/CLIC – \$500.00 per language
- Implementation Contingency (20%) – \$15,600

Recurring Costs – \$7,000

- Warranty & Support for Automated Captioning Device provided by Link – \$7,000.00.  
Note: The first year is included with purchase. IMSD will request this as an increase for technology Central Spend in 2024.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

- Lynn Fyhrlund – Director and Chief Information Office, Information Management Services Division, Department of Administrative Services
- Matt Johnson – IT Director Governance and Business Solutions, Information Management Services Division, Department of Administrative Services
- Linda Alexander – IT Business Relationship Manager, Information Management Services Division, Department of Administrative Services

**PREPARED BY:**

Matt Johnson – IT Director Governance and Business Solutions, DAS-IMSD



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**Lynn J. Fyhrlund**

*Director and Chief Information Officer*  
DAS – Information Management Services Division

**APPROVED BY:**



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**Aaron Hertzberg**

*Director of Administrative Services*  
Department of Administrative Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 is the Fiscal Note  
Attachment 2 is the Board Resolution

CC: David Crowley, County Executive  
Liz Sumner, Chairperson, Committee on Finance  
Sequanna Taylor, Vice-Chairperson, Committee on Finance  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division, Office of the County Clerk  
Aaron Herzberg, Director of Administrative Services  
Margaret Daun, Corporation Counsel  
Scott B. Manske, Comptroller  
Joseph Lamers, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget  
Amy McKinney, Sr. Budget and Management Analyst, Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget  
Elena LaMendola, Financial Manager, Central Business Office

Steve Cady, Director of Research & Policy, Office of the  
Comptroller  
Shanin Brown, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County  
Clerk