

## COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

### Inter-office Communication

DATE: 5/19/2023

TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
Denise Wandke, Interim Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Transportation and Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System, providing an Informational Report regarding updates on the Paratransit Taxi Program.

FILE TYPE: Informational Report

#### REQUEST

Per Milwaukee County Adopted 2023 Budget, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) will provide a report to the County Board with information on the Paratransit Taxi service's 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.

#### POLICY

Per Milwaukee County Adopted 2023 Budget, MCTS will provide a report to the County Board with information on the new or extended same day ride 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 (Taxi) contract with American United Transportation (AUT) provides for same-day transportation options for ambulatory paratransit clients. This service, which is above and beyond the federally mandated requirement of complementary paratransit services, started out as a cost-effective and convenient program to supplement the paratransit van service. However, it is antiquated in that the provider does not have wheelchair accessible vehicles available for this meter-based service. The Taxi contract was extended 120 days and is now due to expire on September 28, 2023.

The Paratransit Taxi Task Force was developed to ensure collaborative approach for exploring alternative service models that would effectively and equitably meet the on-going transportation needs. In April, representatives from MCDOT, MCTS, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) met along with several members of the community, both taxi riders and advocacy groups for the first Paratransit Taxi Task Force (Task Force) meeting. In addition to gaining community feedback on the desired characteristics for continued same day rides, general information was provided regarding the expiration of the current taxi contract, FTA compliance and the potential for budgetary constraints if requests for additional funding do not come to fruition. In addition to the Task Force meetings, MCTS, MCDOT and DHHS have been working collaboratively to identify options (and barriers) to continue to provide equitable same-day service, in accordance with characteristics expressed by Task Force members. Below are some of the key take-aways from these discussions.

- The community would like to see same day ride program continue with similar features as today (low cost, same day ride, private ride, etc.) as well as enhancements (ability to make stops along the way, service into other counties, appointment-based trips, etc.)
- The funding outlook is likely to hamper the County's ability to continue with a program that meets all of the desired elements
- The service will be considerably more expensive than today's model
- County and MCTS staff would begin work towards developing an RFP and costing out various service options

Additional work is underway

- MCTS and DHHS staff are researching existing RFPs used elsewhere around the country that would meet the desired service characteristics.
- MCDOT and DHHS are refining a plan for how this program will be administered and confirming the funding availability

#### ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 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.

#### VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Frances Musci, Director of Paratransit, MCTS, [fmusci@mcts.org](mailto:fmusci@mcts.org)

Sandra Kellner, Chief Administrative Officer, MCTS, [skellner@mcts.org](mailto:skellner@mcts.org)

Denise Wandke, Interim President and Managing Director, MCTS, [dwandke@mcts.org](mailto:dwandke@mcts.org)

#### PREPARED BY:

Sandra Kellner, Chief Administrative Officer, MCTS

Denise Wandke, Interim President, and Managing Director, MCTS

#### APPROVED BY:

*Donna Brown-Martin*

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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