

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: May 15, 2023

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

From: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

Subject: Milwaukee County Department of Transportation 2022 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how Milwaukee County Department of Transportation set and achieved its 2022 goals.

POLICY

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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BACKGROUND

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year
- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department’s performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy, if applicable)
- (c) Report the department’s year-end results relating to the goals it had set, and
- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.
- (e) Explain the department’s progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead.”

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 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

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

BODY

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office in 2022? Please explain why they are “SMARTIE” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the County’s racial equity strategy.
 - **Goal 1:** MCDOT actively participate in the development of transportation related strategic objectives that address “dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities” (3C), including creating, submitting, and receiving federal and state funding to develop a countywide plan to end reckless driving for all 19 municipalities in the County.
 - This aligns with the County’s goals by addressing the root causes of racial and socio-economic inequities in our community and in county government itself through policy initiatives and programs that create intentional inclusion. Securing external funding supports the County’s fiscal health goals as well (3B)
 - **Goal 2:** Implement and refine plans for each of the 5 Transportation Divisions on individual recruitment (1A, 1B).
 - Airport recruitment & retention
 - Highway Maintenance recruitment & retention
 - MCTS recruitment & retention
 - Fleet recruitment & retention
 - Transportation Services recruitment & retention
 - **Goal 3:** Continue progress on the development of a strategic Plan and 3-year work plan for the Transportation Department.

These three goals align with the County’s racial equity strategy and goals as we/MCDOT continues to support diversity and inclusion efforts across Milwaukee County.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2022? Please explain.

Each goal has metrics, measurement tools and assumptions including risks identified in meeting the stated goals.


Goal 1: MCDOT was successful in securing funding for a transportation-related strategic objective that “dismantles barriers to diverse and inclusive communities:” the development of a countywide plan to end reckless driving.

- Milwaukee County Department of Transportation created and submitted the application for consideration to WisDOT and USDOT for the Federal Transportation Alternatives Program and the Safe Streets for All program.
- Created the Charter for the Complete Communities Transportation Planning Project.
- Developed the Goals and Objectives of the project:
 - Increase and re-emphasize the importance and availability of driving education resources for all age groups.
 - Perform significant outreach to communities and neighborhoods to document their input/ideas and index based on data.
 - Identify sustainable, scalable engineering solutions to curb reckless driving behavior.
 - 100% attendance by law enforcement at each project team meeting and their participation at the decision and policymaking table.
- Developed RFP seeking Consultant contracts for community outreach and consensus building for TAP project implementation over the next 3 years.
- Began Planning Survey to circulate to the 19 local municipalities for community data gathering in Spring 2023.

Goal 2: Implement and refine plans for each of the 5 Transportation Divisions on individual recruitment.

- Airport recruitment & retention:
 - Fall hiring event at 3 locations throughout the county; north, south, and central. This event included a streamlined process that took care of as many pre-employment needs as possible. MCDOT worked closely with HR Recruitment and our HR Business Partners (2B) were very helpful in making the event a success.
 - Winter bonus program once again was helpful in the recruitment and retention of staff throughout the winter months.
 - Airport accomplishments include: Addition of JetBlue Airways service to Boston Logan and New York, JFK in March 2022.
 - MKE receives ACI-ASQ award for Best Airport North America 5-15 million passengers.
 - JD Power ranks MKE 5TH OF MID-Size Airports.

- Conde Nast Traveler names MKE a Best Airport in 2022 Reader's Choice awards.
 - Launched a Spanish website and e-newsletter (1B, 2A, 3C), in mid-August 2022. The newsletter has 433 subscribers, and the website receives approximately 200 page views each time a newsletter is issued in Spanish.
 - Demographics for Airport employees in Leadership roles are 84% male and 16% female, of which 84% are White Alone, 11% Black Alone, 2% Asian Alone and 2% Hispanic/Latino. For Non-Leadership roles 82% are Male and 18% are Female, of which 74% are White Alone, 14% Black Alone, 10% Hispanic/Latino and 1% Asian Alone.
- Highway Maintenance recruitment & retention:
 - Significant increases in the recruitment and retention of diverse talent, which has resulted in a decrease in vacancies (32 full-time positions filled in 2022).
 - Increased Public outreach/feedback via our Issue Reporter Web. App.
 - 24 hour turn around on all maintenance concerns: A total of 331 Issues reported and resolved in 2022.
 - Increased Employee training, education and engagement activities.
 - Promoted continuing or developmental education opportunities for all staff.
 - Highway received 12 Discretionary Maintenance Agreements from WisDOT, totaling \$1.275M dollars over our routine maintenance agreement budget with the State.
 - Transportation Services Division recruitment & retention:
 - Transportation Services hired an Engineer, Engineer Intern and a Finance Manager.
 - The Division has been successful in retention due to a great cultural environment in diversity, flexibility in work arrangements, recognition of hard work, and valuing open communication.
 - Fleet Management recruitment & retention:
 - Fleet management was able to update compensation for all shop staff in August of 2022. This brought salaries closer to industry standard. We successfully filled 9 vacancies, lost 2 employees due to retirement, and 1 due to resignation, for a net staff increase of 6.

- Milwaukee County Transit recruitment & retention – MCTS held 3 goals for 2022:
 - Goal #1 hire 182 Operators – for 2022, MCTS hired 124 Operators. MCTS was at the end of the contract with STU local 998, and the wages were no longer competitive, which made it very difficult to meet our goals.
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Goal #2 Increase staffing level of the Maintenance Department to 95% -- At the start of 2022, the staffing level was around 90% which was disruptive to service and led to buses not available for pull out for routes. MCTS was able to increase the staffing level in October to 93%. But for the end of the year, even this small increase made a tremendous difference in service.
 - Goal #3 Reduce turnover rate of Bus Operators to 20% -- MCTS saw an unprecedented number of resignations in 2022. Through analysis we determined the majority of resigned Operators occurred during the window of 6-18 months into the job, and the reason was primarily the Operator Schedule. A change was made to have all new Operators start on nights which resulted in more predictability for their schedule. Prior to making this change in July 2022, the turnover rate was at 24.8% through August. Once the change went into effect, the turnover rate dropped to 17.5% for the last four months of the year, exceeding our goal.

Goal 3: Continue progress on the development of a Strategic Plan and 3-year work plan for the Transportation Department.

- MCDOT completed the revision of our Mission, Visions and Values statement in 2021. The Leadership team has yet to begin its formal strategic planning process, our goal is to kickoff the planning process in the fall of 2023. The Leadership team agrees that the middle management team of MCDOT must be included in the process to ensure that staff and management are fully engaged (1B). As part of our fall kickoff we will contract with a strategic planning consultant to develop a planning workshop to identify MCDOT strategic priorities. The priorities will be the basis for our strategic plan wrap up in spring 2024.

3. What factors enabled progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- Support of leadership, including the County Executive's Office and the County Board of Supervisors.
- External and Internal support to address ongoing reckless driving and safety concerns of Milwaukee County residents. MCDOT engagement in the debate with plans and objectives to organize and address a long-standing public concern.

- Pay increases closer to market standards attracted more qualified applicants. We had a lot of success recruiting by “word of mouth.” All employees recruited were actively employed elsewhere and applied because someone they knew worked here and strongly recommended it. Our workplace climate has improved greatly over the past few years, that has helped us greatly to retain staff.
- For MCTS, a new contract with ATU Local 998 was ratified at the end of 2022. As a result, wages increased which has led to a dramatic increase in applications in 2023. MCTS is on pace to hire 150 Operators in 2023.

4. What factors hindered progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- Limited financial and staff resources to engage and involve the County staff in the broader safety concerns of reckless driving.
- Lack of funding hindered our ability to develop broad sweeping improvements in coordinating policy and infrastructure changes to meet stated safety goals.
- Similar to the reasons that make hiring difficult, the tight labor market has had a negative impact on the ability to retain employees.
- For MCTS the top-level mechanic (A Bus Mechanic) has been the hardest position to fill. Although the wages are fairly competitive to the market, it has been extremely challenging to fill 3rd shift positions. This is a union environment, and all positions are filled based on seniority.
- For Fleet, Mechanics are in very high demand right now, so more aggressive recruitment strategies are going to be necessary for us to fill remaining position vacancies. We also struggle to find qualified staff, because we do not offer the same level of flexibility as other employers due to type of work, and emergency support requirements. Prospective candidates value work/life balance more than ever before. Our scheduling and Mandatory overtime (year-round) are not always conducive to that focus.
- Compensation remains an issue. There has not been a comprehensive review of positions relative to the local, and in the case of the airport, national landscape. We continue to struggle with professional positions particularly in the areas of IT, finance and administrative positions. On several occasions we have only one or two at best qualified applicants. Frequently, candidates take jobs before we can interview and hire them.

5. Aside from financial resources, what help does your department/office need in identifying and achieving your strategic goals?

- Non-financial organizational advice and guidance.

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation
Julie Esch, Deputy Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

PREPARED BY:

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

APPROVED BY:

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

None

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