



**Commission for Persons with Disabilities  
July 10, 2023**

**The Commission for Persons with Disabilities** convened virtually on Monday, July 10, 2023. Members and attendees joined the meeting by video conference and conference call options (computer or telephone).

**Commissioners Present:**

Deb Falk-Palec, *Chair*  
Anne Kearney, *Vice Chair*  
Marcia Perkins, *Secretary*  
Willie Johnson Jr., *County Supervisor*  
Damian Buchman  
Allison Caudill  
John Haupt  
Barbara Leigh  
Leon Todd

**Commissioners Excused:**

Sherry Mickelson, B.A.

**Milwaukee County Staff:**

Mike Bonk, *DHHS*  
Vincenza Doyne, *DHHS*  
Chris Kubaki, *Parks Department*  
Fran Musci, *Director MCTS*  
Theresa Gripentrog, *Parks Department*

**Attendees from the Public**

Julie Alexander  
Rebecca Rabatin  
Felicia Clayborne

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL**

Chair Falk-Palec called the meeting to order at 1 p.m., Mike Bonk, Director, Office for Persons with Disabilities took roll. A quorum of Commissioners was present. Chair Falk-Palec welcomed newly appointed Commissioner, Leon Todd, to the Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

**II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 12, 2023, COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**MOTION:** To approve the June 12, 2023, Commission for Persons with Disabilities meeting minutes.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed unanimously (Supervisor Johnson Moved, Leigh Second).

**III. SPECIAL REPORT**

- A. Transit Plus- Director Fran Musci MCTS:** Director Musci reported that the Transit Plus Ridership in May was at 30,971 van rides, and the June ridership was below 30,000. Paratransit's operations average is about 80 to 85 percent pre-covid levels.

Ms. Musci provided answers from last month's meeting regarding the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connect fares and the duration of free fares. The BRT fares, sponsored by UMO, the County's fare collection partner, are free until the end of September (September 30, 2023); anyone who would like to try this service may do so free of charge until that date. Also addressed were concerns regarding the distance between stops and the placement of stops on the (BRT) routes, including any routes close to Vision Forward, as it is the most significant concern among the disability community. She explained that for MCTS to create a rapid bus route, The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) had to make the stops further apart and select the highest ridership areas first or those closest to the high ridership areas to create the BRT platform. If they were to include more stops, it wouldn't be a rapid transit route.

MCTS had to build specific corridors to accommodate big platforms for seating, amenities, lighting, signage, and a ticket vending machine, which are higher lifted platforms for the bus to pull up close for boarding. Therefore, MCTS had to plan when selecting the platforms' placement areas, which must be unrestricted by driveways or residential areas to accommodate these size structures, which is why the BRT route does not run on Wisconsin Avenue West of Hawley Road (The road is very narrow). The BRT moved to Bluemound Road, West of Hawley Road, which is more comprehensive and busier. Ms. Musci explained how impossible it would have been to keep the bus route next to Vision Forward due to the turning movement needed for the bus due to its size, the right of way issues, the size of the street, and the location of the bus stop; it had to be removed from the route. If citizens are unable (physically able) to walk the distance to get to Vision Forward, there is the number 60 bus that will pick them up and drop them off at Vision Forward.

The new Request for Proposal (RFP) for the new paratransit van service provider, "Transdev," formally known as "First Transit," has a new General Manager, Brian Kading. Mr. Kading was a former MCTS employee who brought much experience from MCTS to Transdev. Director Musci discussed a few issues Transdev is having with transitioning. Just before the transition, Transdev purchased a new cloud-based phone system, which is experiencing intermittent problems with incoming calls being placed on hold, and the customer service team can't see the callers who are waiting. They have implemented a workaround: a cell phone number provided to

clients that they can call to be transferred to Transdev's customer service manager to be routed to their customer service team.

On June 12, 2023, Transdev took on an additional 500 riders. Some tweaking is still needed for some of the client's subscription rides, but overall, it has relieved some pressure from the outgoing vendor, Transit Express". The next wave will occur **on August 14, 2023**, of 400 riders who live between Hampton Ave. and Silver Spring Drive. These riders will receive a letter in about two weeks.

Director Musci reported on the Milwaukee County Taxi, Para Transit Taxi Alternative. A meeting was held on June 15, 2023, with the Milwaukee County Taxi Alternative, the Paratransit Taxi Taskforce, the Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disabilities Resource Center, Aging Unit (DHHS/ADS/Aging Unit) to discuss the ADA-accessible options for the taxi wheelchair services. The Aging Unit's analysis, presented by Alena DeGrado, had considered all the factors the Taxi Task Force requested (Examples: Private rides to go any place within the county and door-to-door service).

After careful examination, they could not provide the requested services and keep within the budget limits allowed. The result was that any program that could come close to meeting the needs of Americans with Disabilities with wheelchair-accessible service, along with the requests made by the Taxi Task Force, would be cost-prohibited and outside of the available budget. Ms. Musci provided examples; one, if they were to provide unlimited rides, that service alone could cost **\$4 million a year**. Currently, it's **\$ 300,000 per year**. They were aging and recommended that this be something other than what they could create to meet the demands that would fit within the budget. A prepared report of their findings was shared with the Transportation Committee. The Transportations Committee's meeting scheduled for tomorrow was canceled, and their next meeting is scheduled for September 28, 2023, where they will report the findings to the full Committee. MCTS is working on communicating the findings to the current riders who use this service to provide an end-of-service notice. The Contract with American United ends **on September 25, 2023**. Riders will be sent emails about this and what other options are being explored. The timing of these communications is being worked out, and elected officials are being notified. Director Musci ended her report by informing the Commission that MCTS's Customer satisfaction surveys are now closed; they will update the Commission when the responses are compiled.

Supervisor Johnson, Jr. asked if the Task Force had any alternatives. The task force did listen to the discernment shared by the Department of Health and Human Services, but unfortunately, there's not enough money in the

budget to support the request for the taxi services, and DHHS was reluctant to support a program that they don't have enough funding currently to support a new program. MCTS is looking at possibly providing a free paratransit ride for clients or a weekly voucher for a weekly ride on the bus to soften the blow for riders using the taxi service who can no longer. Chairwoman Falk Palec expressed her concerns with the number of people who rely on the taxi service to get to work on time and those who use the service for other needs. There was a listening session with solid advocacy from blind people and those with low vision in the community to support this service that received rides to get to appointments on time. Director Musci explained that ambulatory and visually impaired riders mostly use this service. However, the taxi service doesn't have a schedule for an on-time taxi standard. So, she doesn't recommend using this service for work because the pick-up time is not always reliable; that's why clients are provided a pick-up window time, measured by the pick-up window, a metric set by the FTA. For the upcoming contract, MCTS has included a drop-off requirement for those who have an appointment time, so there will be an appointment time measure in place.

A meeting participant asked if it were possible to add the different types of pick-ups and drop-off information to the taxi report to help explain and better understand how the taxi service is being used. Director Musci stated that the analysis was conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services based on the ridership data from the taxi service, which was based on all commercial locations. If there were a lot of medical appointments, it would have shown in the heat mapping metric, which shows the most frequented locations. Also, due to FTA standards, MCTS can't ask clients what their trip purpose is on an ADA paratransit ride.

Further questions were asked about county property being painted for parking spaces or having icons painted on the ground for the BRT stops for people with disabilities. Director Musci couldn't answer for the County, but for MCTS initially, they wouldn't have an image. But, because they needed to give the drivers a target to line their bus up at the station, they had to paint an ADA target that the contractor had available to them; it was an oversight not to have the up-to-date ADA logo. Chairwoman Falk-Palec suggested emailing photos of the ADA stencil, so others are aware and use it.

- B. Accessible Intersections for All, Mike Amsden, Manager of Multi Modal, City of Milwaukee:** Director Bonk explained that Mr. Amsden couldn't attend today's meeting due to a meeting conflict. However, he did provide a brief update via email to Mr. Bonk. The City of Milwaukee's accessible intersections are still within the design phase, and they anticipate

the project continuing into next year. Director Bonk will ask Mr. Amsden if he could attend next month's meeting to provide a report.

- C. Milwaukee County Parks, "Jackson Park Upgrades",** Therese Gripentrog, Landscape Architect, and Chris Kubacki, Civil Engineer: Ms. Gripentrog is the project manager for the Jackson Park Upgrades. She provided a PowerPoint presentation to overview the work engaged with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewer District (MMSD) along the Kinnikinnic River and the Kinnikinnic Parkway. Ms. Gripentrog also included two links in the chat to the MMSD website for anyone interested in learning more about the projects. She discussed the plans for the pavilion and plaza overlooking the lagoon, the service yard, and the County's Aquatics Study. There were a few questions asked about the plan review process and inspection for the County, and public meetings to discuss plans. Chair Falk-Palec would like the presenters to present again at another meeting. For more information, see the attached PowerPoint titled, "".

#### IV. Recreation Update

Director Bonk reported that they are in the middle of summer camp, and currently, they have over 40 campers at Willow Way Underwood and 35 campers at Willow Way Grant. Within two-week periods, the numbers fluctuate between camps, going up or down. The asphalt improvements were completed at Willow Way Underwood, but the park bench replacements still need to be completed. The Capital projects for both locations for splash pads were submitted, and they are also in the middle of the Sail Away program. Due to the Harley-Davidson Anniversary party this weekend, Friday's sale must be rescheduled for later August (Information will be added to the website). The Office for Persons with Disabilities Recreation Services Coordinator Jacqueline Formanic's first day is today. Also, their new intern's first day was today. Chair Falk-Palec mentioned she took pictures of the new asphalt; she will forward the pictures to Director Bonk to share with the Commission.

Chair Falk Palec asked several questions about the needed repairs. She asked when the benches would be replaced; Director Bonk stated that they were ordered and on their way. He has to contact Parks to see when the installation date will be. She asked if matting was ordered to replace the asphalt by the changing area to the pool. Director Bonk stated that it was ordered as well and will be replaced. She asked about shading structures at the locations. Both campsites have multiple shade structures. Lastly, she asked when the American Camp Association is coming for the review. They are scheduled for review **on Wednesday, July 19, 2023**, to provide the accreditation. Chair Falk-Palk encouraged Commissioners to let her know of anyone who would like to serve on the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, as there is one position left to fill. She announced that one person was going through the approval process.

**V. Discussion Items**

**A. Other Commission Business: None**

**B. Other Matters by the Public- Other Matters: None**

**VI. Adjournment: (2:42 p.m.) The next Meeting Monday, September 11, 2023, at 1 p.m.**

**MOTION:** To adjourn.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed unanimously, none opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang  
Executive Assistant

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