

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Communication

Date: 11/8/2023

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors

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

Subject: From the Director, Department of Transportation, requesting approval for recruitment and retention bonuses for various critical infrastructure positions (permanent and seasonal) in the Divisions of Airport, Fleet Management and Highway Maintenance for the 2023-2024 winter season.

File Type: Action Report

BACKGROUND

The Department of Transportation continues to recruit for permanent and seasonal critical infrastructure workers including Airport Maintenance Workers, permanent and temporary assignment Highway Maintenance Workers, and permanent Fleet Mechanic positions. The Airport and Highway Maintenance Divisions continue to have vacancies, in seasonal and temporary assignment positions. While Fleet Mechanic positions are filled, Fleet has experienced frequent turnover.

Low wages, in comparison to the regional marketplace, especially as trucking companies, in particular are paying top wages for Commercial Drivers License holders, are the main reasons for recruitment and retention challenges for these positions.

The Department is responsible for winter maintenance of Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport's and Timmerman Field's runways, State Trunk Highways and Interstate Highways as well as County Trunk Highways (CTH's). Except for CTHs, Milwaukee County has contractual requirements with federal agencies, state agencies and the airlines to maintain safe and reliable transportation infrastructure. The Department and County need to be able to fulfill its federal and state obligations as well as its obligations to its taxpayers and the driving public. Adequate and timely staffing is required to perform these critical functions.

REQUEST

Consistent with the 2022-2023 winter maintenance season, the Department of Transportation requests approval of a one-time \$300 sign on bonus for new hires (permanent and seasonal) and a one-time \$300 retention bonus for existing critical infrastructure positions including: Airport Maintenance Worker, Airport Maintenance In-Charge, Airport Maintenance Worker Assistant, Airport Maintenance Worker Assistant In-Charge, Highway Maintenance Worker, Highway Maintenance Assistant Supervisor, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Highway Maintenance Crew Lead, Fleet Mechanic, Fleet Mechanic Supervisor, Fleet Parts Assistant, Fleet Parts Manager, Fleet Welder, Fleet Iron Worker, Body and Paint Technician, Fleet Maintenance Worker and Facilities Ground Worker I.

Additionally, the Department is requesting \$200 monthly retention bonuses for those critical infrastructure employees who remain in their positions for the entire month. The retention bonuses would be given at the end of the winter season for the months of December, January, February, and March for a maximum of \$800.

Airport, Fleet Management and Highway Maintenance Divisions are experiencing significant difficulties in recruiting and/or retaining permanent and seasonal employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Milwaukee County's vaccine mandate, and marketplace wage competition.

Per funding agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration and State of Wisconsin, the Department is required to perform snow removal and winter maintenance at the airports, state trunk highways and the Interstate system throughout Milwaukee County. Without the appropriate levels of manpower to operate and maintain the necessary equipment, the County's transportation infrastructure will be vulnerable to delays, shutdowns, and federal fines.

POLICY

The County Board approved File No. 22-938, which authorized the same bonus plan for the 2022-2023 winter maintenance season.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the strategic plan:

- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability.
With appropriate staffing levels, Milwaukee County will be able to fulfill its federal and state contractual obligations and avoid potential fines for being unable to clear snow and perform other winter maintenance activities.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.
The Department is working very diligently, and with success, in hiring diverse staff. We strive to be an employer of choice to all current and perspective employees by being able to react to changes in the marketplace.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approve a sign-on bonus of \$300 to new recruits and to existing employees in the above identified positions, and a \$200 per month retention bonus (for the months of December, January, February, and March of the 2023-2024 winter season) to position incumbents who work the entire month.

FISCAL EFFECT

The estimated maximum cost of \$228,800, will be offset by non-county revenues of \$192,775. There will be a zero net tax levy effect for the Airport bonuses, a net county cost of \$25,575 for Highway Maintenance bonuses, and \$10,450 tax levy impact for Fleet Management. The Department will submit a January 2024 fund transfer request should one be needed to cover these expenditures.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, donna.brownmartin@milwaukeecountywi.gov
John Blonien, Fleet Management Director, john.blonien@milwaukeecountywi.gov
Brian Dranzik, Airport Director, bdranzik@mitchellairport.com
Eduard Santiago, Highway Maintenance Director, Eduardo.santiago@milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

Julie Esch, Deputy Director

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna Brown-Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Fiscal Note

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