

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-office Communication

DATE: June 21, 2024

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

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

SUBJECT: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the President and  
Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System, providing an  
Informational Report regarding a project update for the 2024 Capital  
Budget Sub-Projects WT016301 & WT016601 - MCTS Bus Shelters,  
Pads, and Bollards.

FILE TYPE: Informational Report

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**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) to provide informational reports upon request of County Board supervisors.

**BACKGROUND**

To keep the committee informed on the progress of new bus shelters, ADA boarding pads, and safety bollards at MCTS bus stops. The project team will provide an update using the attached presentation.

**NARRATIVE**

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is Milwaukee County's fixed route public transportation system providing a robust service to residents and visitors throughout Milwaukee County. In 2023, MCTS provided over 17 million rides, a 10% increase over 2022, and opened the first bus rapid transit (BRT) system in Wisconsin, the CONNECT 1.

MCTS manages more than 3,700 bus stops and 600 bus shelters at locations across Milwaukee County. In an effort to make bus stops more accessible, safer, and welcoming, Milwaukee County allocated funds in the FY2024 Capital Budget towards the purchase and installation of new bus shelters, ADA-compliant concrete boarding pads, and safety bollards. This memorandum serves as a progress report on this capital expenditure and project.

## **1. Bus Shelters**

MCTS manages an inventory of approximately 630 bus shelters distributed at bus stops across Milwaukee County. Most of these shelters are MCTS's signature "bubble top" model, initially purchased several decades ago. While MCTS staff do an excellent job maintaining our existing shelter stock, over time, the MCTS inventory has been reduced as shelters have outlasted their designed length of service.

### **a. FY2024 Milwaukee County Capital Budget Allocation (sub-project WT016301)**

The FY2024 Milwaukee County Capital Budget includes \$500,000 (\$400,000 federal and \$100,000 County commitment) to purchase 25 new bus shelters. As bus shelters are MCTS's most visible presence in the community besides buses, new shelters will serve to elevate MCTS's brand, improve the rider experience, and be a tangible investment in neighborhoods across the county.

The locations for these 25 new bus shelters were chosen using a combination of metrics including ridership, % non-white population, % below poverty, and % of households without a vehicle. All 25 locations currently have an existing bus shelter. Upgrading existing units with new will allow MCTS to redeploy current stock to other locations in need of seating and coverage, expanding the overall bus shelter network.

### **b. Project Status & Timeline**

Since MCTS has not purchased new bus shelters since the 1980s, the process to determine a new design which reflects the MCTS brand requires time. MCTS staff have been performing their due diligence to specify a design that will be durable, easy to maintain, and attractive. MCTS expects to have a final design by the end of August 2024. Following final design, MCTS will issue a request for proposals for new bus shelters in fall 2024 and execute a purchase order prior to the end of 2024. Delivery and installation of bus shelters is expected to begin in early 2025.

With a new bus shelter design determined, future orders of bus shelters will be quicker and more efficient. MCTS expects to request funds for bus shelters each year for the foreseeable future.

## **2. Boarding Pads and Bollards**

As of summer 2024, MCTS serves over 3,700 bus stops across Milwaukee County. The key component to making bus stops, and the associated bus service, accessible are ADA concrete boarding pads. Each boarding pad is a slab of concrete installed in the grassy area between the sidewalk and the curb, which provides a solid surface for passengers to board and disembark as they step on or off the bus. Minimum dimensions must allow the bus's front door ADA ramp to deploy, which is critical for providing transit access to persons using a mobility device. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the minimum boarding pad size is 8-feet by 5-feet. Ninety-two percent of MCTS bus stops are ADA compliant. MCTS maintains a list of stops that are not ADA compliant, seeking to coordinate improvements as opportunities arise. In lieu of a budget to address deficient boarding pads, MCTS has traditionally requested from its partners at the municipal (DPWs), County (MCDOT), and State

(WisDOT) level to bring stops up to standard through sidewalk improvement plans and roadway reconstruction projects. This approach has led to major improvements (e.g. Hampton Avenue between Teutonia and 60<sup>th</sup> Street) but is a long-game approach. A reconstruction project may not be slated for an area of need for decades. For this reason, County funds were requested by MCTS to focus on areas outside the scope of projects and programs controlled by others.

**a. FY2024 Milwaukee County Capital Budget Allocation (sub-project WT016601)**

The FY2024 Milwaukee County Capital Budget includes \$185,000 (\$148,000 federal and \$37,000 County commitment) to construct ADA boarding pads and install bollards at bus stops. While MCTS and its partners update bus boarding pads when streets and roads are reconstructed, many of the non-ADA compliant bus stops are along corridors that are not expected to be reconstructed for many years. This funding will allow MCTS to accelerate efforts towards making the entire system ADA compliant, improving access to regular transit service for all county residents.

In addition to bus boarding pads, MCTS will be installing safety bollards at a number of stops to help protect riders and shelters at high ridership locations. As Milwaukee has struggled with reckless driving in recent years, MCTS has seen a growing number of bus shelters and bus stops impacted by vehicles leaving the street at high speed and damaging adjacent infrastructure. Bollards installed at key locations will make it safer for passengers waiting for their bus and protect the County's infrastructure investments. Locations for boarding pads are prioritized based on ridership, % non-white population, % below poverty, and % of households without a vehicle. Locations for bollards are prioritized based on vehicle crash data, the City of Milwaukee's pedestrian high-injury network, and MCTS data on damaged bus shelters.

**b. Project Status & Timeline**

Bollard installation is a new endeavor for MCTS, and we are developing the specifications needed to ensure that the bollards will protect passengers and infrastructure. MCTS expects to have a defined specification by August 2024 and issue a request for proposals for boarding pads and bollards in fall 2024. MCTS expects to issue one request for proposal that includes bus shelter purchase and installation, boarding pad construction, and bollard installation.

Recognizing the importance of ADA accessibility, passenger safety, and the protection of transit infrastructure, MCTS looks forward to implementing ADA boarding pads and protective bollards. Anticipating a successful rollout, MCTS expects to request funding for these items at additional sites on an annual basis.

**3. Summary**

Apart from the buses traveling on the roadways, places where those buses stop are the most public facing side of MCTS. Investing in improved bus stops with shelters, ADA accessible boarding pads, and safety bollards helps to elevate transit in the public sphere and improves the experience for riders. These funds are an investment in the

public who depend on MCTS everyday to access jobs, education, health care, and wherever in Milwaukee County they need to go.

**ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

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.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for informative purposes and there is no request at this time.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

There is no fiscal effect at this time.

**TERMS (if applicable)**

N/A

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

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

David Locher, Manager of Enhanced Transit, MCTS, [dlocher@mcts.org](mailto:dlocher@mcts.org)

Dan Adams, Transit Specialist, MCTS, [dadams@mcts.org](mailto:dadams@mcts.org)

**PREPARED BY:** Dan Adams, Transit Specialist, MCTS

**APPROVED BY:**



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Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation

**ATTACHMENTS:**

PowerPoint

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