

County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

DATE: June 21, 2019

TO: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

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

SUBJECT: Bus Rapid Transit Project Update

BACKGROUND

In May 2018, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) provided an update to the Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee on the status of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Since that time, the project has made significant progress following determinations by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in late 2018 to present.

In September 2018, FTA directed Milwaukee County to submit an updated Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program Small Starts application, which included a route design with dedicated bus-only lanes along 53% of the route and up to 19 BRT stations pairs (36 total stations). In March 2019, FTA awarded the BRT project a Medium rating consistent with previous ratings of the application. Projects that score a Medium rating or higher are eligible for federal funding.

Throughout 2018, MCTS worked on developing a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) report under the direction of the FTA. Completing an EA is a necessary step in the process of being awarded a major FTA construction grant, and aids in documenting how BRT will fit into the man-made and natural environment along the project corridor. Following the release of the EA, a public comment period (including a series of public meetings) was conducted for 30 days ending on September 30, 2018. In November 2018, FTA concluded the EA by issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the project.

With the completion of the environmental process, the FTA authorized for MCTS to refine design activities with the City of Milwaukee, City of Wauwatosa, Milwaukee Regional Medical Center (MRMC) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The Federal Budget signed by President Trump on March 11, 2019, included the East-West BRT in the pipeline of approved projects and, therefore, signals that the East-West BRT project is positioned well for funding in the 2020 Federal Fiscal Year, pending the completion of project development elements to FTA staff's satisfaction. FTA has assigned a Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) to conduct a review of the project specific to administration, project costs, timeline and coordination requirements with the various municipalities engaged with the project.

Pending final design completion, issuance of the grant agreement by FTA (tentatively expected in fall 2019) and authorization to proceed by the County Board, construction activities could

begin in spring 2020. Per the County's 2019 Adopted Budget, MCTS is also introducing Battery Electric Buses (BEB) to service this alignment and is working to incorporate the necessary infrastructure requirements and vehicle specifications to the project.

In summary, the East-West BRT project remains well positioned to obtain funding. MCTS will continue to advance the design, engage and inform partnering entities including, but not limited to, local municipalities, businesses and community groups, and work with FTA to fulfill all federal requirements. This in turn will position MCTS to take advantage of the 2020 construction season. If funding aligns with the construction season, MCTS could begin BRT revenue service in spring 2021.

Ongoing updates on the BRT project are available on the project website:
<http://www.eastwestbrt.com/>.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

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Approved by:



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