

## Jensen, Janelle

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**From:** Dan Boehm <DBoehm@mcts.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 10, 2019 4:29 PM  
**To:** Schmitt, James; Johnson Jr, Willie; Haas, Jason; Cullen, Eddie; MooreOmokunde, Supreme; Taylor, Sequanna; Wasserman, Sheldon  
**Cc:** Williams, Terri; Wankowski, Cheryl; Hullum, Robert; Cady, Steve; Brown, Shanin; Evans, Kelsey; Smith, Allyson; Jensen, Janelle; Esch, Julie; Brown-Martin, Donna  
**Subject:** Transit Budget Org. Unit 5600  
**Attachments:** Answers to Supervisor questions for MCTS - F&A Review of 2020 Budget 101019.pdf

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Chairman Schmitt and committee members;

Thank you for asking many good questions at today's meeting of the F&A Committee. As I mentioned this morning, I received several questions yesterday afternoon from Supervisor Cullen and Taylor. It was helpful to receive these questions in advance so that I was better prepared to provide you and the Committee with the information that you need to contemplate matters of the Transit Budget. I have attached the questions that were received, and my response, much of which I talked about in Committee with the exception of the detailed information about steps that MCTS takes to provide for the safety of bus operators and passengers – this information begins on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page.

Please let me know if there are any additional questions. Thank you.

-db

### **Daniel A. Boehm**

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**Milwaukee County Transit System  
Inter-Office Memorandum**

Date: October 10, 2019

To: James 'Luigi' Schmitt, Chairman, Finance & Audit Committee and members of the Committee

From: Dan Boehm, MCTS Managing Director

Re: Questions from Supervisors Cullen and Taylor

Supervisor Cullen and Supervisor Taylor asked several questions on the afternoon before the Finance and Audit Committee was scheduled to review the 2020 Transit Budget. Answers are provided below each question (in bold).

- **How much money was saved by cutting the route 85 line?**

About \$52,000 annualized in operating cost savings, and almost an additional \$80,000 per year in avoided capital depreciation costs for the two buses (valued at \$1 million) that were needed to operate the route was saved. The adopted 2019 Transit Budget included the elimination of this service to balance that budget.

- **How much money was saved by cutting the route 57 line?**

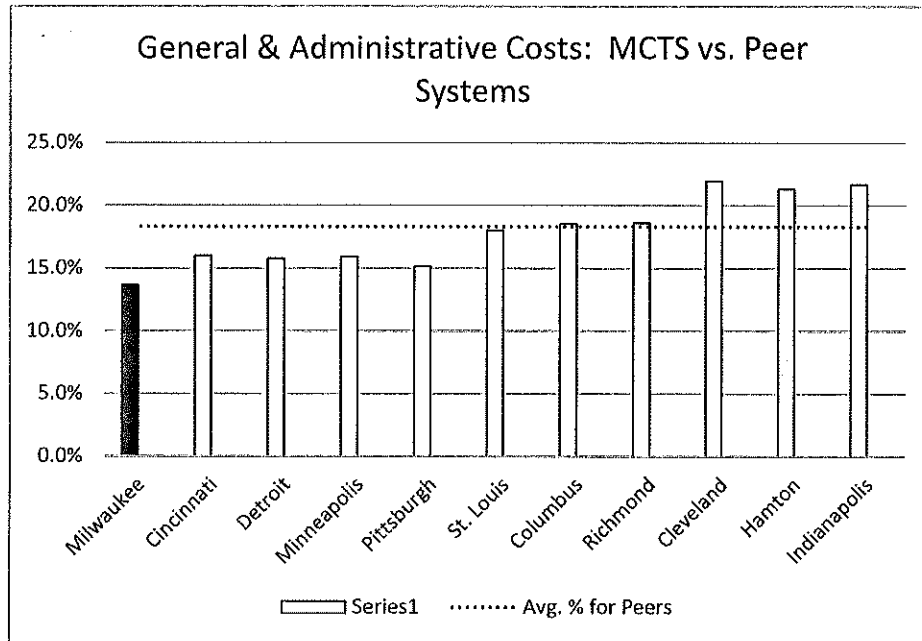
About \$1 million annualized plus the savings associated with the two buses needed to operate this extension. The adopted 2019 Transit Budget included partial year funding for this service so that negotiations with Waukesha County could continue towards an eventual cost sharing that would keep the service in operation. When that cost sharing agreement could not be established, the service was eliminated in 2019 when its funding ended.

- **How much money is spent on MCTS management? How does the amount spent on management compare to other transit systems of similar size or compared to scale with other systems?**

MCTS spends less on management than other transit systems of similar size. The comparison to others is based on a list of Peer systems that was chosen by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and the consultant that they hired (SRF Consulting Group) to perform a Transit Management System Performance Review in 2017. As stated on page 58 of the Recommended Budget Overview document, one of the conclusions of that review was that MCTS is *"an efficient transit system with dedicated employees that is hampered by inadequate capital and operations funding."*

The consultants were only able to make the statement about 'efficiency' after reviewing our performance with respect to the list of peer systems that they chose. They used standardized data reported annually to the National Transit Database (NTD) by all transit systems in America

to make their comparisons. General and Administrative (G&A) costs are one of many fiscal measures reported annually to NTD. MCTS used the latest published NTD report (2017) to compare out G&A costs to the list of peers. Based on the 2017 NTD report, MCTS G&A costs are \$19.5 million of a total budget of \$143 million for bus and paratransit operations. MCTS's G&A rate of 13.6% is almost 5% lower than the average for the peer systems.

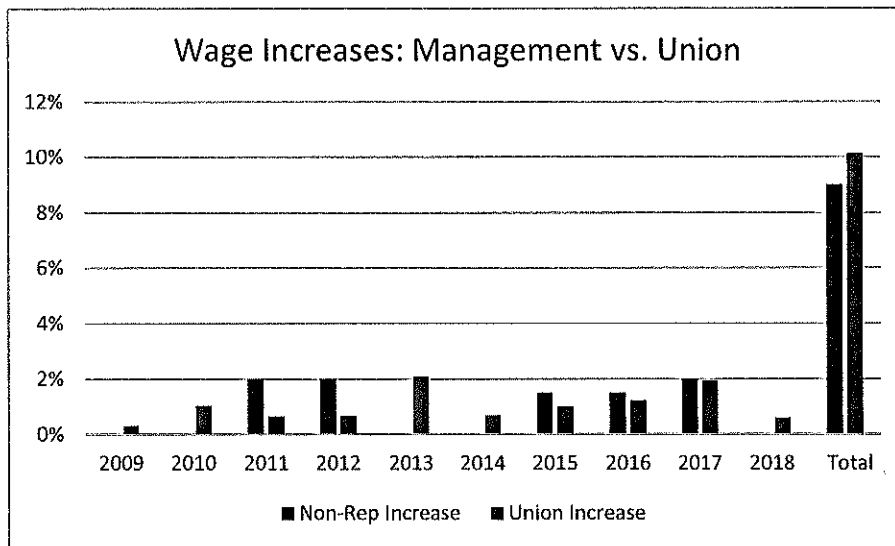


Peer Systems of MCTS as determined by Wisconsin Department of Transportation				
General & Administrative Costs as a percent of operating costs for transit and paratransit				
Region	State	Total GA	Total Expense	GA %
Milwaukee	WI	19,513,547	143,007,519	13.6%
Cincinnati	OH	14,906,924	93,188,356	16.0%
Detroit	MI	18,326,101	116,370,215	15.7%
Minneapolis	MN	46,287,701	290,671,637	15.9%
Pittsburgh	PA	50,946,158	336,267,567	15.2%
St. Louis	MO	32,435,664	180,239,176	18.0%
Columbus	OH	26,695,645	144,045,834	18.5%
Richmond	VA	8,188,683	44,028,667	18.6%
Cleveland	OH	41,528,984	189,372,178	21.9%
Hamton	VA	18,319,708	85,977,929	21.3%
Indianapolis	IN	15,253,422	70,404,701	21.7%
			avg. for peers	18.3%

- **How much did salaries increase for bus drivers, mechanics and management over the past 5, 10 and 15 years? Can you compare this with inflation?**

Bus operators and mechanics represented by ATU have received cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) quarterly per negotiated labor agreements. In addition, the labor agreements have also called for across the board wage increases of a percent or two annually. ATU represented employees have experienced a 10.1% wage increase in the past ten years.

In comparison, the accumulated wage increase for management positions has been 9% in the past ten years. In addition, as shown in the chart below it is common for non-represented individuals in Management positions to work for two years at the same rate of pay, which is starkly different than incremental growth of wages provided to ATU employees through a quarterly COLA increase.



- **In what ways does MCTS already do a lot of bus driver safety?**

MCTS puts an emphasis on training and supporting every one of our employees so that we can optimize service quality and safety, not just for bus operators but for passengers as well.

#### New Operator Training & Support

Driver safety begins with training. When new bus operators are hired, they are provided with customer service and passenger interaction training that puts an emphasis on de-escalation.

New hire training has been extended from 5 weeks to up to 8 weeks in which a platform instructor observes a new bus operator in action to help address any operational problems or customer interaction challenges.

#### On-Bus Equipment & Support

Every bus is equipped with a silent alarm button in case a bus operator is concerned about being seen picking up the phone-like handset to make a call to dispatch by a troublemaking passenger.

When the button is pressed a covert microphone is turned on and the operator can speak directly to a dispatcher in a quiet voice about their problem.

A priority request to talk (PRTT) button is also available in the bus. If this button is pressed a dispatcher will respond within 5 seconds, as these types of calls are automatically pushed by the computer aided dispatch system to the top of the call list.

Bus operator shields were installed almost a decade ago in every bus. We are currently working with ATU to get bus operator feedback on five (5) new types of shields that provide a little more coverage than the shields we installed almost a decade ago.

#### Re-Training & Support

Sometimes, one-on-one reinstruction is conducted by a Transportation Trainer or Supervisor.

Passenger Interaction Program (PIP) classes are also used to refresh bus operators in small groups about how to de-escalate a conversation or situation.

Reconnect meetings, in which bus operators meet with their peers to discuss challenges of the job inevitably also include constructive conversations about de-escalation.

#### Dispatch Office Tools & Support

A Training Supervisor who has had extensive one-on-one time with new operators also works part-time in the dispatch office so that new employees hear a familiar voice when they call in with questions or for assistance.

Dispatchers meet with bus operators at Stations to discuss one-on-one, the silent alarm feature on the bus and priority request to talk button to ensure the bus operators are comfortable calling dispatch and discussing a problem or issue that they may be having on or around their bus.

Dispatchers have direct speed dial access to Milwaukee Police, Milwaukee Fire Department, and all municipalities, as well as for the MCSO.

10 High Definition Video surveillance camera's on every bus. Four of which are on the interior of the bus. Software allows us to look-in live in real-time inside of a bus to review the situations that a bus operator is faced with so that we can better determine whether to send MPD, MFD, Transit Security, or a Route Supervisors

#### On-the-Road Support

Transit Security Officers (TSOs) ride on buses in teams and also support and respond to incidents in vehicles. We also post TSOs to corners/intersections that are transfer corners that we have experienced problems at.

Route supervisors randomly board buses to check-in with bus operators randomly to ensure that everything is going ok. Over 9000 check-ins have occurred in the past 18 months.

### Accident reduction Efforts

Driver safety is also enhanced by accident reduction. All accidents and incidents are recorded in an MCTS reporting database that allows for trend analysis. The data helps to identify who is having accidents and of what type so that we can work to prevent accidents and incidents in the future. MCTS no longer just issues a bulletin/memo to all employees telling them how to do their job, we have taken a very one-on-one approach to working with each individual bus operator to show them what they could have done differently to avoid an accident or prevent an incident. This is hard work, but we have an organizational commitment to excellence and the team knows that we must do this one-on-one work to improve.

### Safety Meetings with ATU

Monthly Transit Security review meetings are held with ATU representatives to discuss safety related incidents in the previous month. Many of these incidents are one-of-a kind and a review by a team of individuals can help to identify whether a bus operator, dispatcher, TSO, or other MCTS team member could have done something differently. It helps us to continuously improve and better support each other.

Weekly meetings with TSO contractor to discuss issues/problems that we are experiencing so that we can be more targeted in our use of these limited resources.

#### - **In what ways can MCTS still do more for bus driver safety?**

We need to continue to support bus operators through on-going demonstrations of understanding and empathy. We need to continue to ensure that route supervisors follow-up with every bus operator when they report a problem so that we can check-in on their well-being. We need to continue to use video to work with operators to show how things may have gotten out-of-control and then work one-on-one with them to see if they could have done something differently to de-escalate the situations.

Additional training is always helpful but comes at a high cost. We are trying to reinforce the notions that would be covered in new training within the on-going multiple touch-points with bus operators as described above.

The work of improving safety for bus operators and passengers, as well as decreasing accidents is never done. A new safety committee will generate new ideas. We will measure outcomes, try new initiatives and continue to improve.

#### - **What is the justification for cutting the Brewers line?**

Ridership on the Brewer's Line has declined by 57% since 2013. We now only average about 50 rides per game due to competition from bar/tavern shuttles. Each bus operator is paid for about 7 hours of work per game and there are at least two buses on the route. The resulting productivity is only about 4 passengers per bus hour. The cost of each ride is about \$25 (\$50 round trip) with the passenger only paying a fare of about \$3. If we charged \$20, instead of \$3 no-one would use the service.

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Supervisor Taylor asked four questions in advance of the Finance and Audit Committee meeting on the 2020 Transit Budget. Answers are provided below each question (in bold).

**1. Regarding cutting the route serving shopping/industrial/corporate parks in the Northwest corner of Milwaukee, how did MCTS determine this line should be cut?**

As shown on page 61 of the Budget Overview prepared by County Analysts, Route 223 has the lowest performance as measured in terms of passengers per bus hour of all services that were identified to be eliminated to balance the 2020 Transit Budget (2.9 PBH). About 26 individuals are generating 52 rides/day on this service.

**2. When would service end?**

The service would end on January 5, 2020.

**3. Over the past ten years, how many lines have been cut that formerly served portions of the Northwest corner of the County?**

Earlier this year (2019), Route 57 Extension from County Line to Germantown ended when an agreement for funding this service into Waukesha County couldn't be reached between Waukesha and Milwaukee Counties.

In 2016, Route 279, which was started with funding from the WisDOT Zoo Interchange Litigation Settlement monies, ended at the request of the plaintiffs to the lawsuit due to low ridership.

In 2010, Route 8, an industrial park shuttle serving Quad Graphics plants in Sussex and Pewaukee was ended due to low ridership and an end to a cost sharing arrangement that used to involve three parties: Quad Graphics, Waukesha County and Milwaukee County.

**4. How does examining transit from a racial equity lens figure into the cuts to transit lines connecting the north side of Milwaukee to our northern suburbs?**

About 60% of MCTS ridership is comprised of minority populations <note: as was pointed out in committee today, White passengers are the minority on transit.> Maintaining the health of the Transit system is a racial equity issue. A lack of revenue alternatives for Milwaukee County and in turn, MCTS creates additional pressure on how to best serve the greatest number of passengers and keep an eye on efforts to provide for racial equity in the decisions that are made at budget time. We are all here today, because the County Board, beginning with the Finance & Audit Committee, also plays a critical role in these decisions.

From Transit's perspective, keeping a low performing bus route -- and in turn eliminating a higher performing bus route -- because of a lack of revenue, will result in less passenger revenue for MCTS to operate with. The more low performing routes that are maintained, the less able we are to maintain the core fixed route services that operate 365 days out of the year for those passengers, who by choice or necessity, use transit for most if not all of their transportation

needs. In other words, keeping a low performing route jeopardizes the rest of the transit system, which is vital to all in the community.

- 5. When the Joblines were cut this year, the Transit committee requested a report from OAAA (attached) to examine the impact of that cut using a racial equity lens. The July report stated that it was too soon for us to examine transit cuts from a racial equity lens, that racial equity tools would not be developed for some time, and that MCTS did not collect enough user data to make data-driven judgments in that regard. What racial equity tools and data is MCTS using?**

MCTS uses Census Data for information about race as it pertains to residential locations. This is customary in the Transit industry nationally. In fact, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance prescribes this set of data for aiding in the performance of Title VI analyses with respect to whether a route change will have an unintended impact on low income or minority populations. Admittedly, there are limitations to Census Data and the methods for analysis prescribed by the FTA. MCTS is invested in Milwaukee County's efforts to advance racial equity, which we know goes well beyond just matters of compliance, in this case, with Federal Requirements.

OAAA has encouraged us to collect information about the impacts of route changes on individuals that are using the services. MCTS Transit Planners rode all bus routes that were considered for elimination to balance the 2020 Budget and talked with and surveyed riders on each route to gain the riders perspective and gather more of the types of information recommended by OAAA for decision making.

Ultimately, the fiscal resources available to Milwaukee County and in turn MCTS puts all of us in the position of having to make difficult decisions.