

County of Milwaukee
Interoffice Communication

DATE: June 17, 2020

TO: Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson, Chair, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

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

SUBJECT: Bus Rapid Transit Project Update

BACKGROUND

In July and December 2019, the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) provided updates to the Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee on the status of the East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. MCTS continues to progress in the design of the project, as well as through on-going coordination and determinations by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to date.

In September 2019, FTA directed Milwaukee County to submit an updated Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program Small Starts application (similar to the resubmission requested in September 2018), which included a route design with dedicated bus-only lanes along 53% of the route, up to 19 BRT stations pairs (36 total stations) and accommodation for 11 Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) with associated infrastructure as directed by the County Board in the 2019 Adopted Capital Budget. In March 2020, FTA again 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.

President Trump announced via Twitter on May 28, 2020 that he is “proud to commit \$40.9M in USDOT funding to Milwaukee’s East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.” The FTA subsequently issued a notice listing the East-West BRT project under the category of “Anticipated Funding Agreements For Execution.” In consultation with the FTA, this indicates that a maximum of \$40.9M in CIG (Section 5309) funds has been appropriated for the project and is accessible upon execution of the Small Starts Grant Agreement (SSGA).

\$40.9M will fund approximately 75% of the project’s estimated \$54.7M cost. Coupled with an earlier FTA project development approval of \$2.3M from federal Section 5307 funds, Milwaukee County’s local match contribution of approximately \$11.5M was approved through the 2017 and 2019 Adopted Capital Budgets. The bulk of the local match will come from the deployment of BEBs as required in existing policy.

Milwaukee County has not yet received an SSGA from the FTA. FTA continues to review the project specific to administration, project costs, schedule and coordination requirements. FTA and its PMOC also reviews project documents including but not limited to Designs, Project Management Plans (PMP), Quality Assurance Plans (QAP) and Risks associated with the project. FTA has not indicated when it

would complete reviews or issue the SSGA but it is tentatively expected in fall 2020 barring any unforeseen circumstances or delays.

MCTS will not begin construction until the agreement is issued by the FTA **and** executed by the County Board. Should authorization from all parties be provided in fall 2020; construction activities could begin in spring 2021. Under direction from the County Board, MCTS continues work to ensure that BEBs 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 is now positioned to obtain funding from the FTA. MCTS will continue to advance the project and continue to 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 2021 construction season. If funding aligns with the construction season, MCTS could begin BRT revenue service in fall 2022.


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.

Prepared by: Mike Zabel, Project Manager HNTB
Dan Meyers, Project Manager, AECOM

Approved by:



Donna Brown-Martin
Director, Department of Transportation