

**County of Milwaukee**  
**Interoffice Communication**

**DATE:** 11/13/2020  
**TO:** Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
**SUBJECT:** MCTS NEXT System Redesign – Implementation (Phase 1) Report

**BACKGROUND**

A resolution approving of the implementation of the MCTS NEXT System Redesign Project and the 2020 System Map (File No. 20-476) was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in September 2020.

MCTS is seeking to implement the redesign incrementally beginning in March 2021. As a brief reminder, the goals of MCTS NEXT are to give people more access to places they want to go and to get them there in a shorter amount of time. This will be accomplished through updating the service model from 40 percent high frequency vs. 60 percent low frequency to a new mix of 60 percent high frequency and 40 percent low frequency (with high frequency being defined as buses running every 15 minutes or more often).

To achieve the goals of MCTS NEXT, the following types of changes are necessary:

- Expand high frequency routes in several new corridors
- Expand service to unserved or under-served job centers
- Provide faster service by removing lightly used bus stops that are close together
- Reduce or remove service in areas where the demand for transit is low or very low
- Simplify the network to make it easier for riders to understand

Moving forward with implementing MCTS NEXT is critical as ridership has dropped to record low levels (approximately 50% of normal) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is well-known among transit industry experts that the key ingredients to attracting people to transit are expanding high frequency service and increasing the speed of service, both of which are core features of MCTS NEXT. MCTS also believes finishing the implementation prior to the start of the East – West Bus Rapid Transit project (scheduled to begin in 2022) would be essential both from an operations standpoint and to maximize the benefit for riders.

**Implementing MCTS NEXT**

MCTS envisions updating the route network in three phases beginning with Phase I in March 2021. Under each phase, MCTS will modify routes in a cost neutral manner to increase the amount of high frequency service and expand access to job centers to ultimately advance racial equity in our community. The remaining two phases will occur in June and September, as MCTS regularly makes schedule changes in these months consistent with our collective bargaining agreement with ATU 998. A brief description of the routes in each phase, as named on the approved MCTS NEXT 2020 map follows:

- Phase 1 (March 2021) realizes MCTS Next for Routes 15, 19, 20, 31, 33, 51, 52, 63 and 68.
- Phase 2 (June 2021) realizes MCTS Next for PurpleLine, and Routes 11, 12, 58, 65, 80 and 88.
- Phase 3 (September 2021) realizes MCTS Next for BlueLine, OrangeLine and Routes 22, 28, 54, 55, 56, 60 66, 76 and 92

The phased approach affords MCTS enough time to complete all essential work, e.g., create new schedules, update real time information and on-board bus announcements, inform and train drivers on new routes, hold public meetings to inform and engage the public, and update information on our website, as well as printed timetables. The details of Phase I follows. At future meetings of the Transportation, Public Works, and Transit Committee, MCTS will provide details for the changes proposed in Phases 2 and 3.

### **Phase 1 March 2021 Service Change Details**

Phase 1 introduces new high frequency service in four corridors across Milwaukee County:

- High frequency service will be introduced on Route 35 (35<sup>th</sup> Street) and Route 51 (Oklahoma Avenue) as shown on the attached map for Routes 35 and 51 (**See Map 1 attached**)
  - Route 35 will also be extended from Howard Avenue to Layton Avenue via Loomis Road and then to 60<sup>th</sup> Street to serve a major retail / grocery store.
- High frequency service will also be expanded on Route 19 (King Drive – S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street) on S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street to match service on N. King Drive and N. Atkinson Avenue. New Route 20 will be created to provide daytime service on S. 20<sup>th</sup> Street as shown on the Map for Routes 19 and 20 (**See Map 2 attached**).
- High frequency service will be added to Route 15 (Holton – Kinnickinnic) between Capitol Drive and Drexel Avenue as shown on the Map for Routes 15, 52, 63 and 68 (**See Map 3 attached**).
  - Route 15 service on Port Washington Road will be replaced with new Route 68 (Port Washington) that will provide daytime service.
  - Route 63 (Silver Spring Drive) will be modified to terminate at the Bayshore shopping center. The forementioned Route 68 will replace Route 63 service on Port Washington Road north of Bayshore to Brown Deer Road.
  - Route 52 (Clement – Pennsylvania) will be modified to provide daytime service between Clement Avenue & Kinnickinnic Avenue to Chicago Avenue & Drexel Avenue

Phase 1 also includes a redesign of Route 31 (State – Highland) to increase service to the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and Mayfair shopping center. Route 33 (Vliet Street) will be extended past its endpoint at 60<sup>th</sup> Street to downtown Wauwatosa and continue via Glenview Avenue and S. 84<sup>th</sup> Street past State Fair Park to National Avenue in West Allis as shown on the Map for Routes 31 and 33 (**See Map 4 attached**).

Under Phase 1, MCTS would also shorten travel times by reducing the number of bus stops on these routes. Bus stops would remain at key destinations and transfer corners as well as at major employers, schools, and multi-unit residences for elderly persons and persons with disabilities. These changes make it possible to add time into the layover and give operators more time to walk to nearby restrooms. It will also help operators get back on schedule if they happen to fall behind due to high ridership or heavy traffic conditions.

### **Outreach and Engagement Efforts for each Phase**

MCTS has prepared an extensive communications plan to inform and engage riders and stakeholders on service and bus stop changes. Under this plan MCTS will:

- Host virtual community meetings to provide route / schedule information to neighborhood and business groups and to underrepresented populations.
- Update our website with revised route maps/schedules in early 2021. Videos will be prepared to describe key information on the new routings.

- Publish special issues of MCTS Bus Lines and Rider Insider.
- Develop and install bus stop signage to promote awareness of route/bus stop changes weeks in advance of implementation. Buses will also make audio/visual announcements of changes.
- Prepare press release for local media.
- Provide key materials in Spanish and use a Spanish language interpreter to answer questions.
- Provide new route/schedule information to County Board Supervisors and answer any questions.

MCTS has also met with ATU 998 leadership to inform them and listen to their suggestions regarding the implementation plan and will continue to do so throughout this process. Furthermore, MCTS will create a wall sized map of the new route network and display it for operators at both Fond du Lac and Kinnickinnic Stations to keep them abreast of changes in the current and future phases. Finally, detailed route maps and other training materials will also be on display at the stations for our bus operators.

### **Summary**

Consistent with the adopted MCTS NEXT System Redesign Project and the 2020 System Map, MCTS has developed plans to incrementally implement the redesign. Route changes are planned in phases, to be implemented in March, June, and September of 2021. MCTS will create a well-rounded public outreach campaign to notify riders and stakeholders, including the County Board before changes take effect. MCTS will also regularly meet with ATU 998 leadership and bus operators to inform and seek their input.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

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