

## **County of Milwaukee**

### **Interoffice Communication**

**DATE:** 6/25/2021  
**TO:** Marcelia Nicholson, Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
**SUBJECT:** MCTS Route 81 Amazon Oak Creek - Status Update

#### POLICY

Proposed additions, deletions, and modifications to transit routes and services are subject to approval by the County Executive and County Board of Supervisors.

#### BACKGROUND

Route 81 is designed to improve job access—a key component towards advancing Racial Equity—for residents within Milwaukee County by connecting both the near North and South Sides of Milwaukee to the Amazon Distribution Center in Oak Creek, hereafter referred to as Amazon MKE2. Route 81 starts at W. Fond du Lac Avenue and N. 35<sup>th</sup> Street-W. Burleigh Street and primarily travels along Fond du Lac Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and Interstate 43/94 to Oak Creek. This route connects with 18 different MCTS bus routes across Milwaukee County. A map is included in the attached presentation.

Amazon MKE2 opened in Fall 2020, and operation of Route 81 was initiated at that same time, after the County Board of Supervisors appropriated money for the route thru the end of the year (2020). The Adopted 2021 Transit Operating Budget included the following amendment that conditionally funded the route: “For 2021, transit service for Route 81 will be funded through August with the remaining funding set aside in an allocated contingency account in Org. Unit 5600. MCDOT and MCTS in July 2021 will present an action report based on ridership data to the County Board which may decide to continue the route, otherwise Route 81 service will terminate by September 6, 2021, in line with when MCTS schedules normally change.”

#### **Ridership update**

Since its opening in October 2020, Amazon MKE2 has become Oak Creek’s largest employer with 1,500 jobs. MCTS worked closely with officials from Amazon and the City of Oak Creek to make sure Route 81’s schedule synchronizes with four different shift times seven days per week. To help show support for transit in Milwaukee County and to promote jobs at its Oak Creek facility, Amazon purchased high-profile advertising including ads on buses and shelters at bus stops.

Route 81 has met original ridership estimates and is averaging approximately 100 riders per day. To date, Route 81 has provided more than 13,000 rides between the City of Milwaukee and Amazon MKE2, meaning Milwaukee County residents who are now Amazon employees have relied on Route 81 to get to and from work over 6,500 times since October.

#### FISCAL EFFECT

Funds sufficient to operate Route 81 are held in allocated contingency in Org. Unit 5600.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve of MCTS continuing to operate Route 81 for the rest of 2021 using the funds held in allocated contingency in Org. Unit 5600. Ridership is sufficient now and has potential to grow. It is the intent of MCTS to also include this route in the requested 2022 Transit operating budget.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

*Julie Esch, Deputy Director*

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Donna Brown-Martin  
Director, Department of Transportation

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager