



Milwaukee County

Legislation Text

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From the Director, Department of Transportation and Public Works, and the Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), submitting an informational report regarding Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funded Express Service Projects. **(INFORMATIONAL ONLY UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED BY THE COMMITTEE).**

POLICY

Proposed additions, deletions and modifications to transit routes and services are subject to County Board approval prior to implementation. Requests for such changes are researched and reported to the County Board by Transit System and DTPW staff.

BACKGROUND

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of steps being taken by DTPW and Transit System staff in an effort to secure available Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for use in creating new fixed route express bus service in 2012 which would allow MCTS to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and restore some of fixed route local bus service changes that were included in MCTS' 2012 recommended budget.

The CMAQ Program

The CMAQ program was created under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and later reauthorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The purpose of the CMAQ program is to fund transportation programs that will contribute to attainment or maintenance of the national ambient air quality standards for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter (PM). CMAQ provides funding for transportation related projects aimed at improving air quality and reducing congestion in the State's air quality non-attainment areas.

To be eligible for CMAQ operating assistance funds, a project must be included in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) current transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). General conditions that must be met for operating assistance to be eligible under the CMAQ program include: (a) the intent is to help start up viable new transportation services that can demonstrate air quality benefits and eventually cover their costs as much as possible; (b) operating assistance includes the costs of providing new transportation services including, but not limited to, labor, fuel, administrative costs and maintenance; and (3) non-Federal share requirements apply when CMAQ funds are used for operating assistance.

Project Application Process

As part of the State of Wisconsin 2011-2013 biennial budget passed in June, the State legislature and Governor acted to provide for the dissolution of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SERTA) which

was responsible for the implementation of the KRM commuter rail project. Consequently, \$15 million in CMAQ funding that had been approved for the KRM project will no longer be used for the commuter rail line.

On August 15, 2011, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) staff advised MCTS of an upcoming WisDOT solicitation of candidate projects to utilize the \$15 million of Federal CMAQ funds which were available as a result of the cancellation of the KRM commuter rail project. MCTS was informed that the project solicitation, evaluation and selection process, which usually takes several months, would be occurring on a much more accelerated schedule to ensure that the funds were utilized in the years 2012 and 2013.

The CMAQ funding would be made available for eligible projects within Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee counties because the funds were intended for a major transit project in those counties. However, projects will also be considered for funding outside of the three counties if there are not sufficient qualified candidate projects from within Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee counties.

SEWRPC further advised that a project submittal timeframe of three weeks was being considered and inquired whether that would be a sufficient amount of time for transit operators to prepare and submit a project application to potentially use some of the available \$15 million in CMAQ funding. MCTS informed SEWRPC and WisDOT that three weeks would be a sufficient amount of time to prepare and submit a project application. On August 23, 2011, WisDOT released applications for reprogramming the \$15 million of KRM CMAQ funds. The application submittal deadline was September 14, 2011. A technical advisory group consisting of staff from SEWRPC, WisDOT and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will review all project applications.

Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Rail CMAQ Funds - Capitol Drive Express Bus Service, Bayshore to Airport Express Bus Service and 27th Street Express Bus Service

Based on notice that the project solicitation, evaluation and selection process would take place on an accelerated schedule, and contingent upon the amount of funding awarded, MCTS prepared a plan that would create up to three new express routes: Bayshore-Airport Express, 27th Street Express, and Capitol Drive Express. Maps of the potential express routes are attached. The express routes will enhance the transit experience of customers through faster service to jobs and other locations. In addition, express route service will allow Milwaukee County to reprogram funds from portions of underlying local routes to support other parts of the transit system that is facing potential service cuts. These express routes would only serve bus stops at transfer corners and major destinations, and additional bus stops may be added in circumstances where warranted. In general, express service would operate every 15 minutes during the weekday rush hour. Local service would continue to operate underneath the express service where appropriate for service demand, but at a lower frequency of service.

The express routes chosen were based on many factors including: prior identification in the Milwaukee County Transit System Development Plan as routes with unmet transit needs in Milwaukee County; lengthy transit travel times; a lack of service to major activity centers; and inadequate frequency of service. These express routes address those needs by operating new limited stop transit service that connects major destinations such as Bayshore Shopping Center, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Downtown Milwaukee, Mitchell International Airport, Riverworks Center, Midtown Center and the 124th Street commercial district. These destinations generate thousands of vehicle trips per day for which transit can effectively compete. Transit users will benefit from service that operates frequently with relatively fast travel times across a large area of

Milwaukee County. Ridership is also expected to increase in these travel corridors.

The Route 27 corridor (27th Street) is one of the most productive fixed routes in Milwaukee County, carrying an average of 51.2 passengers per bus hour on weekdays. This route not only is in need of increased capacity but has very high potential for increased ridership by attracting new riders. Similarly, Route 62 (Capitol Drive) is a high transit demand corridor; however, speed is not competitive with alternate forms of transportation. Limited stop express service is needed in the Capitol Drive corridor to continue to serve the high demand for transit, but do so in a faster, more customer friendly manner.

Applications for these projects were submitted by DTPW to WisDOT by the September 14, 2011 deadline. Depending upon the amount of funding awarded, express bus service would begin operation around January 30, 2012. This will allow sufficient time for MCTS to begin work necessary to effectively implement the express service, including preparing schedules, decaling express bus stops and public education.

BRT CMAQ Funds - Fondy-National Express Bus Service

As part of the calendar year 2009 CMAQ application process, Milwaukee County was awarded \$6.4 million for two years to operate the Fondy-National Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. The BRT route was planned to operate along Fond du Lac Avenue into downtown and then out of downtown via National Avenue and Greenfield Avenue. Subsequent to the CMAQ award, the BRT project was included in the recommended 2010 budget, but was not adopted by the County Board.

Although BRT service was not implemented, the CMAQ funds that were allocated for the project are still available. MCTS proposes to use these funds to operate a modified form of express service operating along the existing segment of Routes 23 (Fond du Lac Avenue) and 18 (National Avenue). Specifically, MCTS seeks to create a new express route, Fondy-National Express, which would provide limited stop service from Park Place & Bradley Woods to 2nd & Wisconsin and continuing to 70th & Greenfield Avenue. Express service would operate at 15 minute headways during peak periods which would enhance the level and attractiveness of service along this corridor. Local service (all bus stops would be served) would operate from 60th & Fond du Lac to 2nd & Wisconsin at 15 minute headways in the peak period. The average combined local service and express service headways on Fond du Lac Avenue at express stops would be 10 minutes all day.

Assuming that express service can begin in 2012, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has advised MCTS that the funds can be rescheduled for a \$3.2 million CMAQ transfer each year in 2012 and 2013. The normal 20% local match applies to each year of the project. CMAQ funding would cover 80% of the costs of the express service.

Opportunity for Restoration of Proposed 2012 Budget Reductions

As a result of creating express bus transportation services, the cost savings from reduced local service on express routes would be used to restore a portion of the 158,000 hours of bus service that is currently proposed to be reduced or cut in the 2012 budget. If MCTS were to receive funding to operate the express services, substantial reductions in transit service could potentially be avoided in the 2012 budget.

Depending upon the outcome of the process to redirect CMAQ operating funds from the BRT project and application for the reallocation of CMAQ funds from the KRM project, MCTS anticipates that a portion of fixed

route service changes planned for 2012 could be restored considering factors such as:

- Reinstatement service to significant job corridors.
- Restore gaps in service span (early a.m. and late night) and on weekends.
- Improve frequency of service to routes where service was significantly reduced.
- Reinstatement high productivity freeway flyer service.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes unless otherwise directed.

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