



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES, AND WATERWAYS REVIEW BOARD

**ALD. ROBERT J. BAUMAN, CHAIR**

*Donna Brown-Martin, Donna Burkett, Jim Carpenter, John  
December, David Jasenski, Kevin Muhs and Kevin Soucie*

*Staff Assistant: Joanna Polanco, 286-2366, Fax: 286-3456,  
jpolan@milwaukee.gov*

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Wednesday, March 1, 2023

10:00 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

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1. **Call to Order at 10:01 AM**

2. **Roll call.**

**Present:** 7 - Bauman, Brown-Martin, Carpenter, Burkett, December, Muhs, Soucie

3. **Approval of previous meeting minutes.**

*Mr. Carpenter, moved seconded by Mr. Soucie to approve the meeting minutes of  
September 26, 2019. There were no objections.*

4. **Communication from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
(SEWRPC) & the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), regarding the  
North-South and East-West Rapid Bus Rapid Transit projects.**

*Appearing:*

*Carrie Cooper - SEWRPC*

*David Locher - MCTS*

*Denise Wadke - Interim Director MCTS*

*Kevin Muhs - DPW Engineer*

*North-South Rapid Bus Transit Project -*

*Ms. Cooper from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
(SEWRPC) Milwaukee county requested a study regarding transit enhancement  
along 27th Street. One of the priorities for Milwaukee County was to enhance  
mobility to the under serve population of the county. The range of alternatives were  
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Rapid Streetcar and Light Rail Transit. The study area was  
extended to Brown Deer, and Ascension hospital in Franklin. one of the things the  
study looked at in the corridor was segments with high incidence of reckless driving.  
The recommendations presented lane protective barriers. The recommended  
alternatives would cost \$148.15 M net operating cost (including to other transit in  
2027): \$4.03 M per year; 63 BRT stations, 24 electric BRT vehicles, 18 miles route  
length (one way), 14.2 miles of dedicated transit lanes, 10.4 miles converted travel  
lanes, 6.7 miles of new dedicated bike lanes, 6.2 miles of existing bike lanes  
converted to shared bike/bus lanes, approximately 15 minutes during congested  
periods of travel time savings; 1,527 converted parking spaces.*

*Ald. Bauman asked if any demand sensitive models have been done in respect to the time savings of these recommendations. Ms. Cooper responded that rider ship does increases.*

*There was a website for the study: mkenorthsouth.com (Spanish and English), there is a technical and community advisory groups, stakeholders outreach (local event, farmer's markets and business outreach), email blasts, public meetings and community partners.*

*The recommended route alternatives were identified in the summer of 2022.  
The feasibility study was completed in the fall of 2022.  
Request to FTA to enter project development in the fall of 2022.  
Environmental clearance, design, and construction of the preferred option is projected in 2023-2026.  
Enhanced transit service open for service in 2028.*

*Ms. Cooper stated that the study did not include extensive public outreach regarding street parking elimination. As they determine what the design will be and the final number of parking spaces, they will be doing more public outreach.*

*The County 2022 Capital Budget: \$20M allotted, of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding approved for Project Development, engineering, environmental clearance, and FTA coordination. Included in the Transportation Improvement Program which would reflect \$20M in above committed funds with the local match from county funding, I-94 East-west reconstruction mitigation fund, tax Levy option and State funding.*

*Mr. Decker was impressed with the amount of decision that had to be made during this study; perhaps you could fill the BRT best practices score card set out by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, to concisely summarize the principle design decision you've made in an international recognize standard. So riders, stakeholders, policy makers can understand the criteria used to arrived to these enhancements.*

*Mr. Locher from MCTS, emphasized that although a lot of these decisions have not been made, the framework suggested can still be included.*

*Mr. Carpenter asked, how would snow plows vehicles clean the areas with the physical barriers and dedicated lanes. Mr. Muhs said that there needs to be a collaboration with DPW and MCTS to ensure appropriate clean up of these areas.*

#### *East-West Rapid Bus Transit Project*

*Mr. Locher from MCTS thanked Ms. Cooper and SEWRPC who have laid a great framework for MCTS and the County to pass the baton and to make this project into a reality. The Milwaukee Co.'s East-West BRT now, called the Connect 1, hoping this is a long standing name for future BRT and Connect 2, North-South 27th street and Connect 3, 4 for National Ave and Fond du lac Ave. Back in 2015 this was only a thought. preliminary design in 2016. After the feasibility study was completed in 2021 creating new relationship with FTA through the grant process in 2021 there was a ground breaking. there have been two years under construction. Most things are finished from the civil engineering stand point. there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 5th and service will be launch on June 4, 2023. There will be installation of Ticket Vending Machines (TVM), with cash option. Real*

*time signs, cameras. The fleet of 11 Battery Electric Buses will begin on June 4th with 7 buses to start, and the remaining 4 will arrive in early July. There will be Dedicated Lane Striping/signage on the pavement in April.*

*There was a great effort to retained as many parking spots as possible.*

*Ald. Bauman posed the question regarding security in the buses and the collection of fares, if the driver is not authorized to collect monies.*

*Ms. Brown-Martin said that MCTS continues to work w there is limited resources, limited funds to address both security and ensured the safety of the people that work for MCTS. Ms. Brown-Martin stressed that they are continuously working with a system to collect data and statistics to be able to present the need of more resources and funds and work with the legislators and congressional staff to see if it may address from a federal level in term of security funds. However, at this time MCTS is doing what it can with the resources available to them.*

*Denise Wandke, MCTS interim director said that a great percentage of their staff is represented by a union. In finishing their recent labor negotiation contract back in November 2022, safety was one of the biggest issues to address. Having decided that fare collection is not one of the bus driver's job, they started collecting this type of data. if a passenger refuses to pay, the bus driver pushes a button that generate a tracking of those non payment locations or bus stops and it alerts the TSO or Transit Security Officers to be present at those stops.*

*The current M-card will continue to be effective until about October once the new system is in place, said Mr. Locher.*

**5. Communication from Amtrak and WisDot relative to planned and potential intercity rail projects in Wisconsin.**

*Appearing:*

*AMTRAK - Arun Rao, Director Network Development for the Central Region*

*WisDot - Lisa Stern, Chief of Railroads and Harbors*

*Mr. Rao is responsible for guiding and facilitating passenger rail corridor development initiatives in the central 1/3 of the US from the early planning stages through implementation. \$66B have been made available for passenger and freight rail investment over 5 years. \$22B is for Amtrak to focus on improving and upgrading its assets. \$44B will flow through FRA discretionary grant programs.*

*Amtrak priorities are to rebuild the business, modernize the assets and improve and expand the network through partnerships.*

*Amtrak is replacing 20th century fleet with modern trains to transform the customer experience including new Airo intercity trainsets, new ALC-42 charger locomotives for long distance services, new Acela fleet, State-acquired Venture cars, and long distance equipment refresh and long-term fleet replacement initiatives. The stations of New York Train Hall, New York Penn Station, Philadelphia Gray 30th Street Station, Washington Union Station, Chicago Union Station and Baltimore Penn Station.*

*Investments in accessibility will include ADA station investments benefit all our passengers; Amtrak has invested \$560M to date, bringing 103 stations into full ADA compliance. With \$1.2B in planned investments, we're on track to meet 100% ADA compliance by 2028 at all Amtrak- responsible stations.*

*Investment in sustainability include Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2045, pushing the development of zero-emission equipment and Company-Wide Resilience Program.*

*Amtrak's recent major investment in Wisconsin include \$5M toward improvements on CP Rail to implement Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) service, \$2M toward Milwaukee Airport Rail Station second platform, \$8M toward Muskego Yard Freight Bypass of Milwaukee Intermodal Station Project and ADA improvements at all WI stations. Amtrak is improving and expanding service in the Midwest.*

*Ms. Stern gave an update on the Twin cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) Intercity Passenger Rail project adds an second, daily round-trip passenger rail service on the corridor used by Amtrak's long-distance Empire Builder and Hiawatha routes, while improving freight movement.*

*Currently in final design with construction to take place 202-2025. Estimated cost of \$53M and \$31.8M FRA Crisis Grant. the service start Date is to be determined. Currently pre-BIL FRA Restoration and Enhancements Grant \$12M toward first 3 years of operating.*

*In the Hiawatha Service is current state-supported route. Has 7 round trips daily, 89 minute travel time. In 2019 Record High Performance with 880,000 riders. 85% of costs recovered by fares. Over 90% of trains arrive on-time at destination. In 2022 Ridership (recovery) was 540,000 riders. Over 90% of trains arrive on-time.*

*The Amtrak Thruway Initiative Interstate 41: offers two round-trips daily. Enables same-day round-trip to Green Bay, Fox Cities-Chicago. Timed connection to Hiawatha trains to/from Chicago and MKE airport service. Regarding ridership in September 2022 190% higher than September 2021. August 2022 180% higher than August 2021 and approximately 13,000 riders in 2022.*

*The Hiawatha Expansion Projects: MARS Expansion includes the Milwaukee Airport Rail Station (MARS) Expansion Project adds 2nd platform with overhead access and elevator towers. \$16.7M estimated project cost ((\$5.05M FRA CRISI Grant). To improve capacity, reliability, accessibility, and safety. the building reLET - April 2023 and construction in 2023-2024.*

*Also includes upgrades signaling on 2 miles of track in and near Milwaukee Intermodal Station (MIS) to Centralized Train Control (CTC). \$5.2M of the project is fully funded (\$2.6M FRA CRISI Grant, \$2.6M WI).*

*The Hiawatha Expansion Projects: Muskego Yard include the Freight Bypass of Milwaukee Intermodal Station (MIS) through CP Rail Muskego Yard; Two new mainline signalized freight through-tracks and new upgraded bridges. It adds capacity at MIS for passenger trains. The project conceptual design complete, environmental clearance complete. the final design 2024; construction is for 2025-2026. Estimated cost of \$55.6M - existing grant (\$26.6M FRA CRISI Grant). Project equips Hiawatha trains with new passenger rail cars consistent with all other Midwest equipment. 6 Siemens Venture coaches and 3 cab-coaches. Service is expected for 2025/2026. The Midwest equipment pool contains 33 Siemens Charger Locomotives in service and 88 Siemens Venture Cars.*

*The Wisconsin draft Rail Plan 2050 was released on January 27, 2023 and the*

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*official comment period closed February 26, 2023. the Public can sign up for email updates, attend upcoming webinars, share comment, and view the draft plan is available visiting the website: <https://www.wisdotplans.gov/plan/wrp2050>  
There will be an additional 45-day public comment period on the final draft plan anticipated in the Spring.*

**6. Communication from Milwaukee County Transit System regarding dedicated transit service to major traffic generators such as Summerfest and American Family Field.**

*Appearing:  
Denise Wandke - MCTS Interim Director*

*Regarding dedicated transit service to major traffic generators such as Summerfest and American Family Field, Ms. Wandke said that in her 29 years of her tenure with MCTS and the services they used to provide was probably one the biggest highlight of being a bus operator as well as being the administrator to running the services to Summerfest and American Family Field. In 2019 there were 777 bus operators and about 370 buses. Obviously COVID hit, MCTS stop doing the service. After that, the company has struggled in the hiring process. Currently, MCTS is down to 56 buses from 2019. MCTS has lost funds that had allowed for purchasing buses. Company if facing a deficit for 2025. Through the years routes services have been cut out. As a consequence contributes to the decrease in ridership. One of three of the stations had to be closed due to financial challenges. MCTS has made a generous, work-life balance union contract with the bus operators hoping that, it would help the containment of current employees and hiring new ones.*

*From a policy stand point, if the issue is money, in theory that solve by having the beneficiaries of the service put up the money, said Ald. Bauman. Ms. Wandke said that the issue is the lack of bus. Buses go to the end of their life which is 500,000 miles or 12 years; and there is a fleet of these. MCTS has offered Summerfest different scenarios given the fact the during the summer UWM routes open up few extra buses that could be use for Summerfest also, the BRT buses are coming a couple of weeks later, so MCTS will have to supplement with Diesel buses. We offered them 15 buses to service 2 different lots, conversation still pending.*

*Ms. Wandke said that serving Summerfest has been a great opportunity for MCTS, given the circumstances MCTS is faced with now, we are letting Summerfest make their request.*

*Mr. Carpenter submitted a written statement regarding a conversation he held with Donnell Shorter, president of ATU, Local 998*

*"March 1, 2023*

*My Conversation with Donnell Shorter, President of ATU, Local 998*

*Re: staffing problems at MCTS*

*I was motivated to do this conversation because a couple months ago I had a conversation with Mr. Shorter and I was informed that some routes could not maintain scheduled levels of service because of staffing problems.*

*In today's conversation, Donnell said MCTS is still struggling with staffing problems. There is a huge turnover. In the last 4 years, over 500 drivers were hired but more than 500 quit.*

*The required split shift and forced OT puts drivers under tremendous stress. Routes start at 3 am. and finish at 2:30 am. New drivers on spilt shifts may not get sufficient sleep between end time and start time.*

*New drivers may be forced to do 70 hours a week in driving. In the old contract, it was as much as 90 hrs per week. OT is at company discretion. Senior drivers usually*

*choose to work about 48 hours.*

*When I asked if this stress could be reduced by PT drivers doing only one of split shifts, he said part time drivers cannot get benefits. My reply was that this is just another example is why we need a national health insurance system like other countries where health insurance is not tied to employment.*

*In my opinion, the city should go on record with a resolution or otherwise, supporting Improved Medicare for All.*

*In my opinion, it should also go on record supporting increased federal operating assistance for public transit by reallocating money from a bloated Pentagon budget.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jim Carpenter"*

*Ms. Wandke continued by saying that especially during the weekend, there is a high level of absence due to sickness from drivers, so creating a shortage of drivers.*

*Ms. Brown-Martin said that using a Charter bus to service Summerfest event has FTA regulations that does not allow for MCTS to lease these buses.*

7. **Communication from SEWRPC, WisDot and private operators regarding Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee commuter rail service.**

8. **Meeting adjourned at 12:24 pm**

**Joanna Polanco**

**Staff Assistant**

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