

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT SYSTEM



# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS THE LINK BETWEEN PEOPLE AND POSSIBILITY.

It joins workers and jobs, consumers and businesses, entertainment venues, restaurants and customers. Public transportation is a part of modern society; it provides a range of critical services for people and the communities in which they live. Communities are places where people share a connection with each other. And public transportation is a cornerstone on which these connections are built.

And we know that public transit is **essential**.

In this annual report, you'll find helpful stats along with background about our 2022 key initiatives, of which there were many.

Two major items of note: we successfully negotiated an historic three-year contract with our union partners at ATU Local 998 and Local 9 setting a solid foundation for our bus operators and maintenance teams, and we also celebrated the arrival of our first battery electric bus.

There were many things to be thankful for, including welcoming back riders – over 1.2 million more than the previous year.

As we look ahead to 2023 and beyond, we have fiscal challenges that relate to not having an ongoing, dedicated source of funding. Stay tuned as we provide more information about how you can help support the effort to secure a local sales tax along with asking the state to commit to properly funding transit.

In the pages that follow, I hope you gain insight about the complex service that is public transit. My door is always open if you have questions.



**Denise Wandke**

President and Interim Managing Director

29-year MTS employee



MCTS is a \$163 million dollar not-for-profit. Our system covers 242 square miles across 18 municipalities.

Our transit system is an economic engine for the region – linking talent to opportunities, building economic resilience and spurring growth.

## IN 2022 WE DROVE AN ESTIMATED 6 MILLION PEOPLE TO WORK.

2022 total ridership was 15,557,421, an increase of 8.36% compared to 14,356,646 in 2021.

To demonstrate how efficiently we manage our budget, of the key measures of transit excellence among our peer systems across the Midwest, we are:

**#1** IN LOWEST OPERATING COST PER PASSENGER

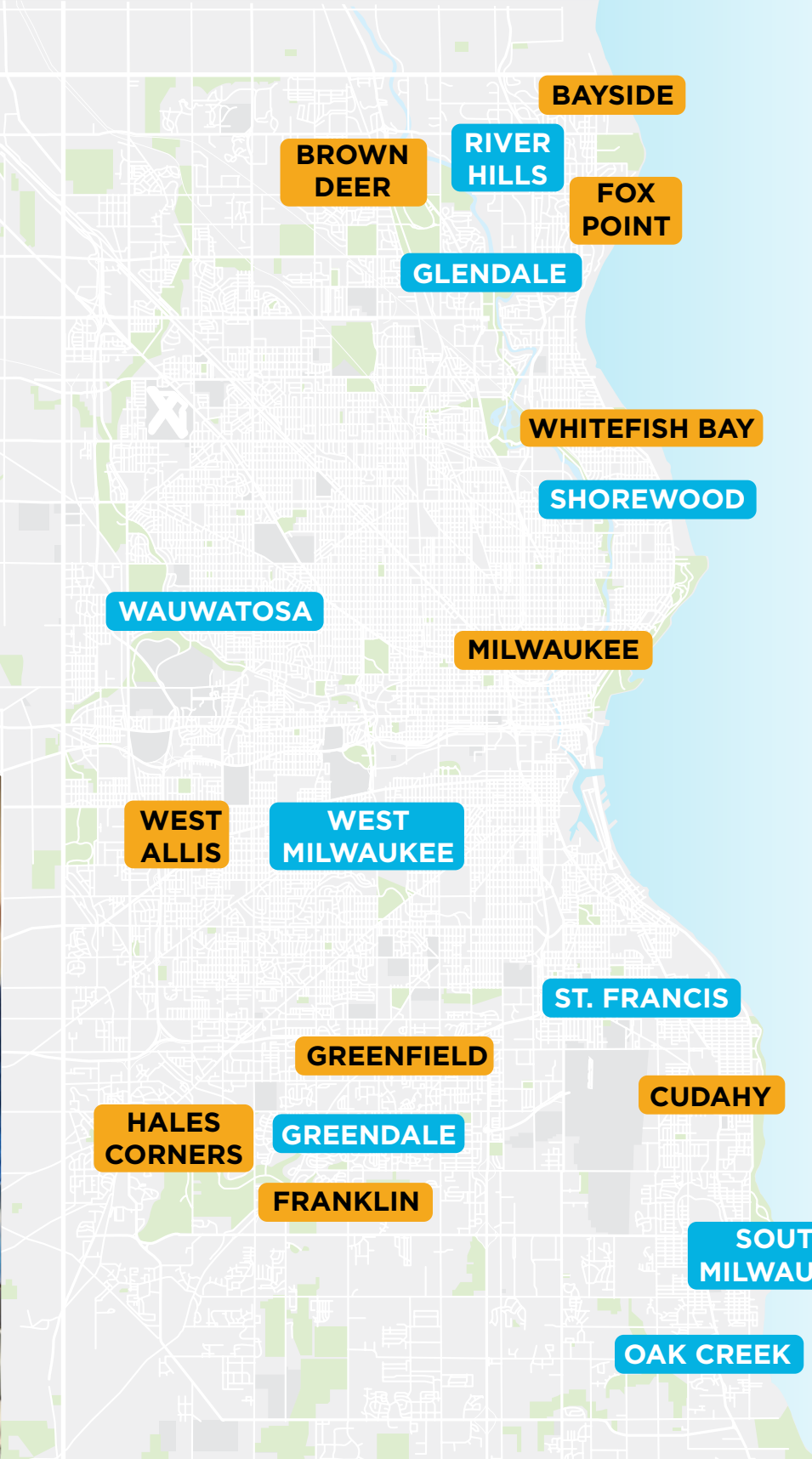
**#1** IN LOWEST OPERATING COST PER HOUR OF SERVICE

**#1** IN LOWEST % OF ADMINISTRATION STAFF TO TOTAL OPERATING COST

**#2** IN TOTAL REVENUE FROM FARES

**#2** IN LOWEST COST PER VEHICLE REVENUE HOUR

**#3** IN LOWEST COST PER PASSENGER



**15,557,421**  
TOTAL PASSENGER RIDERSHIP

**73** **NEW** GILLIG CLEAN DIESEL BUSES **318** BUSES

**17,729,093**  
TOTAL MILES SERVED

**1,330,529** **49**  
BUS HOURS ROUTES

**11.7** PASSENGERS/HOUR

AVERAGE **6** **3,984**  
BUS AGE BUS STOPS

**SAFETY BEHIND THE WHEEL:**

MCTS DRIVERS HAVE THE PATCHES TO PROVE IT

Total Commendations **138**  
Safe Driving **406**

**OPERATORS RECEIVED SAFE DRIVING PATCHES**

5-year patches	35 Operators
10-year patches	12 Operators
15-year patches	5 Operators
20-year patches	4 Operators
25-year patch	1 Operator

(patches are awarded in 5-year increments)

**A MILLION MORE RIDES**

We measured the success of the MCTS NEXT route redesign project and are pleased to report a 22 percent increase in ridership on our 16 high-frequency routes from fall 2021 to fall 2022. By mid-year, that increase translated to an increase of more than a million more rides given over the same time period in 2021.



# LINKING PEOPLE TO POSSIBILITY: 2022 BUSINESS SERVICES UPDATE



Participating universities **7**  
 Eligible student counts **39,215**  
 Number of paratransit U-Pass rides **1,112**  
 Total U-Pass rides **937,406**

Number of companies **49**  
 Total number of participants **1,498**

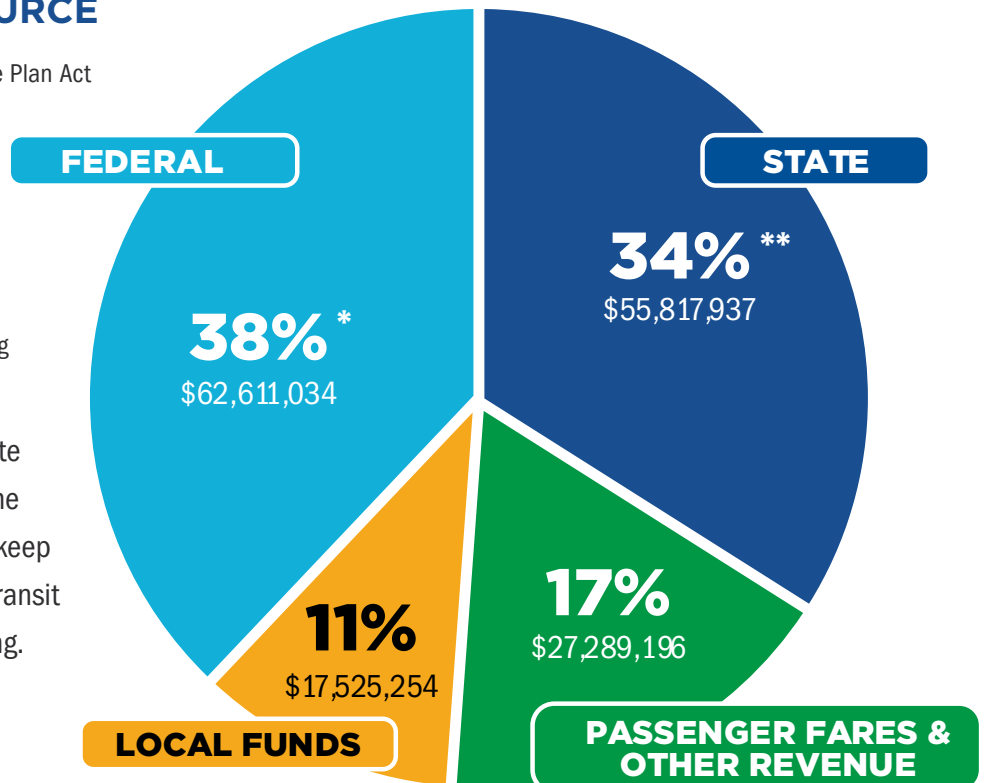
## 2022 FUNDING BY SOURCE

\*Federal funding includes American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that will be used by the end of 2024. Prior to the pandemic, Federal funding averaged 15%.

\*\*In non-pandemic years, state funding averaged 45%. We rely heavily on the state because there is no other dedicated funding source for public transit.

Please show your support for the state to allow Milwaukee County to have the ability to increase the sales tax and keep more of our shared revenue. Public transit needs reliable and sustainable funding.

Visit our [SaveTheBus](#) page to learn how you can help.



# MODERNIZING MOBILITY: INTRODUCING WISGO



The way people travel and how they pay has changed, and our new fare collection system reflects that. A major project to upgrade our fare collection system began in 2022.

MCTS recognized the existing fare collection system did not support the future developments we envisioned. Specifically, MCTS sought to integrate a mobile application into its core fare collection system, as well as expand to an account-based system which would integrate with off-board validators and ticket vending machines (TVMs) in support of its planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line.

MCTS engaged with IBI consultants to create a specification, issue two RFPs, and evaluate several vendors. Based upon a Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) grant already obtained by the Milwaukee County DOT (MCDOT), the new system was also designed to provide trip planning and transfer ability to our neighboring systems at Waukesha Metro and the City of Milwaukee's streetcar (the Hop). That grant also called for advanced features like fare capping, to provide equity to our riders.

Once the award was made for Cubic Inc.'s Umo system and implementation began in early 2022, it became clear that with transfer capabilities in place for Waukesha Metro, it would be an easy jump to make Umo the primary fare collection system for Waukesha. As we began fleshing out the details for Waukesha, it also became clear that this system could support multiple transit agencies in the area and the new fare collection brand name "WisGo" was born.

WisGo is the idea of having a regional transit application that supports multiple transit agencies, managed centrally by MCTS, and working to achieve consistency and ease of use for all riders in the area as well as shared, economical costs for the participating transit agencies.

By the end of 2022, all the internal back-end systems were in place to start deploying validators on buses by spring 2023 and launch the full version of the Umo/WisGo mobile app and new WisGo card to replace the M-Card.



# MOVING WISCONSIN'S FIRST BRT CLOSER TO LAUNCH: MCTS CONNECT

The new BRT brand, **MCTS CONNECT**, launched in 2022. The first of MCTS's battery-electric vehicles from Nova Bus was unveiled in early November at a special celebration on Wisconsin Avenue at the heart of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. More than 100 event attendees got to see how the branding looked on the battery-electric bus (BEB). The BEBs feature a sleek new look to highlight their advanced technology. The light blue color scheme is a natural extension of the existing MCTS blue, and a larger than life "C" logo and the phrase "Clean Energy. Clean Air." further distinguishes the brand. The name CONNECT fits MCTS's mission to connect the community to jobs, education and life via essential transit services. The graphic elements connote rapid movement, and the reflective decals are eye-catching at night. For MCTS, the word 'connect' means community and togetherness. The bus is an integral part of Milwaukee County- you can't think of one without the other, and the look of the BEB is so new and interesting that it truly invites people to ride.

## THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS WERE ALSO COMPLETED IN 2022:

- 33 stations with premium shelters
- Operator restroom facility at the Watertown Plank park and ride
- BEB charging arm for in-route charging from ABB (the charging pole stands 15 feet tall and weighs 3,000 pounds)

## IN 2023, THE FOLLOWING INFRASTRUCTURE IS PLANNED:

- Ticket Vending Machines (VenTek)
- Fare Validators (Cubic)
- Real-Time Signs (Clever) and Pylon Signs
- Dedicated Bus Lanes

MCTS CONNECT IS  
SCHEDULED  
TO START  
**JUNE 4, 2023**



# INCREASING RIDERSHIP AND RELIABILITY AND ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

The MCTS Service Development team continues to work hard on its annual goals to increase ridership and efficiency, improve service reliability, and ensure that transit service is provided to the community in ways that advances racial equity. The MCTS NEXT system redesign project, completed in 2021, advanced each of these priorities.



## INCREASING RIDERSHIP AND EFFICIENCY

One of the exciting changes to come out of MCTS NEXT system redesign was the addition of 6 High Frequency routes (16 total throughout our route network) to shorten the time it takes riders to travel on transit. Buses arrive every 15 minutes or more often on every high frequency route.

- Overall, ridership on high-frequency routes has **increased 22%** from 42,000 rides/day in 2021 to 52,000 rides/day in 2022.
- **Route 30** (Sherman – Wisconsin) and the **RedLine** (Capitol Drive) had the largest increase in ridership from 2021 to 2022 with an additional 1000+ rides. The next largest increase was on the **PurpleLine** (800 rides). Every other high frequency route also saw an increase in ridership (**300-700 rides**).
- Most of the increase in systemwide ridership could be attributed to the gains seen on **high frequency routes** (70% of the increase).



## IMPROVING SERVICE RELIABILITY

Across the network, on-time performance reached was 86% in 2022 despite a larger-than-normal year of construction detours that impacted many routes for much of the year. MCTS's goal for on-time performance in 2023 is 90%. More than 60 schedules were updated to improve on-time performance and reliability for riders who rely on an accurate schedule. These schedules were chosen in part by feedback from bus drivers and customers.



## ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

- Milwaukee County's vision is that by achieving racial equity, Milwaukee will be the healthiest county in Wisconsin. MCTS understands the importance of being intentional about racial equity as we follow our mission to connect the community to jobs, education, and life with essential transit services.
- One example of this effort has been the creation of the **MCTS Racial Equity Workgroup**. Composed of employees across multiple departments, staff meets to discuss how to refine internal processes using a racial equity lens. One example was to discuss how to incorporate the perspectives of front-line staff in decision making, many of whom represent predominantly minority and female populations. Other activities included discussing future employer engagement luncheons and organizing neighborhood/station cleanups.
- In addition, MCTS works to ensure that transit services are provided in a non-discriminatory manner as outlined in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Specifically, multiple service equity analyses were prepared throughout the year to determine if proposed changes would have a disparate or disproportionate impact on minority and low-income populations. MCTS also generated a fare equity analysis of the new fare collection system that launched in 2023.



# INNOVATING MICROTRANSIT SOLUTIONS TO JOB CENTERS: FLEXRIDE

The number one reason people use public transit is to get to work. That's why we partnered with FlexRide Milwaukee: to offer riders an on-demand ride service that gets them "the last mile" to job centers. Riders are picked up from one of five stops served by MCTS in and around Milwaukee's north and northwest sides then dropped off at any employer within the Menomonee Falls and Butler service areas. FlexRide's goal is to use technology to close Milwaukee's first- and last-mile transit gaps (the distance between the last bus stop and one's final destination). Research has shown that closing transit gaps can expand access to transportation for local workers, ultimately fostering opportunities for economic mobility.



## DRIVING A HEALTHIER MILWAUKEE COUNTY: NEW, CLEAN DIESEL BUSES

73 new clean diesel buses arrived in 2022. The investment in more fuel-efficient and cleaner air buses enables MCTS to continue transforming its fleet in alignment with Milwaukee County's health and environmental sustainability initiatives. MCTS will retire 73 buses federally recognized as past their useful life, replacing each with an advanced clean diesel bus.



# BOOSTING RIDERSHIP THROUGH RESEARCH

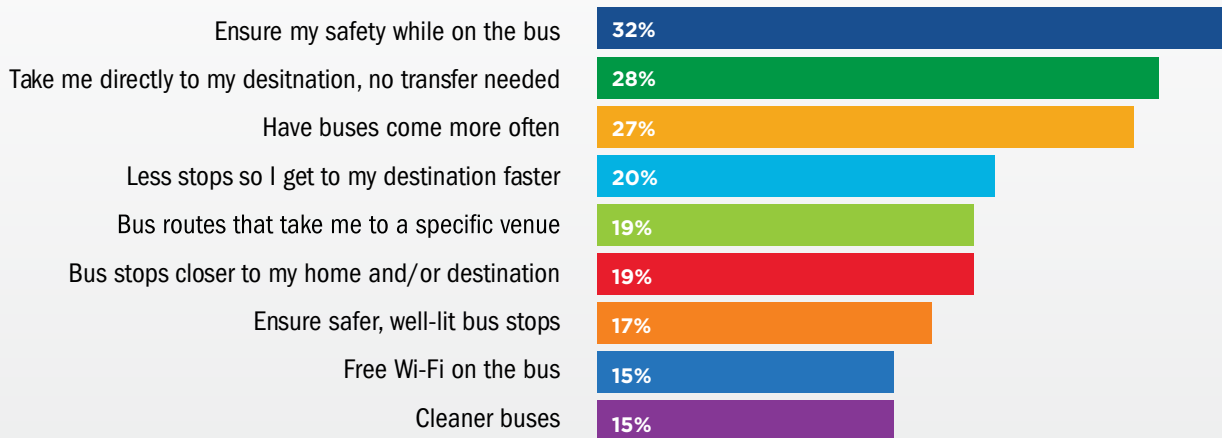
Every few years, we gather the opinions of riders who don't use or infrequently use transit. We targeted research participants who lived near bus stops in Milwaukee County to better understand why they don't use public transportation and what MCTS can do to change perceptions and increase ridership. We also explored how COVID-19 impacted their likelihood to ride in the future.

**Two types of research methods were conducted.**

- *Qualitative Research:* Two, ninety-minute online focus groups were conducted.
- *Quantitative Research:* An online survey was conducted in February and March 2022. A total of 200 online surveys were completed.

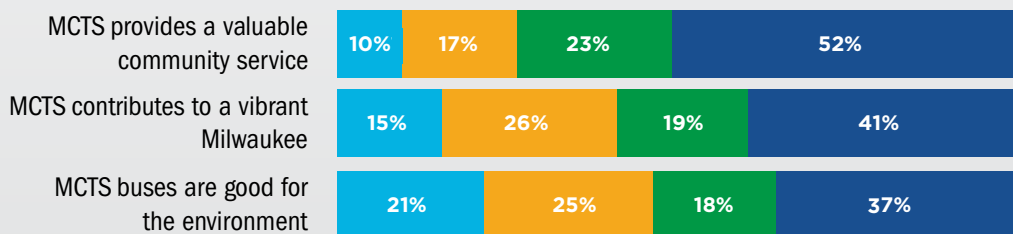
**THE RESEARCH FINDINGS WERE USED TO REFINE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN AND COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGING USED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES FROM THE RESEARCH:**

**Priority Items**



**What is your perception of the following attributes?**

**“Good for Milwaukee”**



# COMMUTER VALUE PASS AND U-PASS HAS POSITIVE OUTLOOK

As bus ridership started rebounding in 2022, MCTS Business Services also saw an upward trend.



**LET'S GET TO WORK**

The Commuter Value Pass continues to make a very strong resurgence, while serving approximately 50 companies with nearly 1,500 participants in various industries throughout Milwaukee County. MCTS welcomed several new partners throughout 2022 including: Talgo America, Virtual Care Provider Inc., Psychiatric Consultants, and MacGregor Partners. This popular program allows employers of all sizes to offer a valuable benefit to their staff at a relatively low cost, and in return, the staff develop positive public transit commuting habits promoting less stress and retention. Commuter Value Pass employees love having MCTS as reliable transportation. They also appreciate the ability to avoid traffic congestion and eliminate the expenses that come with driving and parking.

The U-PASS program serves seven universities and colleges with well over 39,000 eligible students including: UW-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Marquette University, Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Bryant and Stratton College, Mount Mary University and Medical College of Wisconsin. Looking ahead to 2023, MCTS has the potential to add others to the prestigious list of universities and colleges that we currently serve. Like our CVP riders, students have appreciated our reliability along with saving money and avoiding expenses related to owning a car. Outside of work and school, pass holders also enjoy using their passes for other activities ranging from shopping to attending events.



# NEW TEEN ADVISORY BOARD HELPS BOOST RIDERSHIP AMONG YOUNGER RIDERS

The **MCTS Transit Teen Advisory Board** is a new community outreach program open to Milwaukee County residents ages 14 to 18. This exciting initiative empowers teenage residents to advocate for MCTS through fun and interactive sessions designed to develop their leadership skills. Teens will learn and share information about how public transportation affects them, their peers and their families. Teens applied to be on the Board and were selected to represent each county district. They meet twice a month at MCTS and the term coincides with the school year.

# CONNECTING ELECTED OFFICIALS TO MILWAUKEE COUNTY CONSTITUENTS

The **Mobile Meet Ups** program continued to connect Milwaukee County and Wisconsin-elected officials with their constituents on board MCTS bus routes and at bus stops. In 2022, state and local leaders successfully hosted informal opportunities to talk one-on-one with residents who live and work in their districts about issues of concern to them. This year's mobile meet ups were held with: **State Senator Lena Taylor** and **Representative Lakeisha Myers**, **Representative Deb Andraca**, **Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde** and **State Senator LaTonya Johnson**, **Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson**, **Supervisor Kathleen Vincent**, **Supervisor Ryan Clancy**, and **Supervisor Shawn Rolland**, along with:

- Supervisor Ryan Clancy, 4th District: 2,920 riders
- Supervisor Shawn Rolland, 6th District: 3,356 riders
- Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson, 10th District: 9,796 riders
- Supervisor Kathleen Vincent, 11th District: 5,358 riders
- Supervisor Priscilla Coggs-Jones, 13th District: 6,130 riders
- Supervisor Peter Burgelis, 15th District: 4,565 riders

**Photo: Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde speaks with a rider during a Mobile Meet Up event.**



# MAKING MCTS THE SAFEST WAY TO RIDE

MCTS has worked over the past year to continue to improve safety and security measures across the system.

- Started conversations with local municipalities on how MCTS can partner with them to improve overall transit security
- Hired a new Safety and Security Coordinator that has previous law enforcement experience
- Held safety and security training sessions at each station
- Recently created new policy that will remove Operators from engaging with passengers over non-payment
- Built a new training classroom at Fond du Lac (FDL) Station – Kinnickinnic (KK) Station coming in 2023
- Created a new Safety, Security & Training Department that is focused on the safety and security of employees and passengers
- Effectively started using data to identify trends and transit security assignments
- Created new tracking system to assist operators who were involved in a security incident and to walk them through the legal process
- Installed new HD camera system at FDL station and Fleet Maintenance Facility
- Upgraded security fencing and lighting at KK station
- Partnered with community and county leaders to address homelessness and extended riders on MCTS buses
- Implemented a new Safety Promotion Committee
- Implemented a new Safety Assurance Committee



# INVESTING IN FACILITIES

- New employee parking lot at KK Station
- Bus storage HVAC replacement at KK
- New roof at FDL Station
- Restroom updates at FDL Station
- New training room, flooring and operator workspaces at FDL Station
- New boilers at Admin building
- Upgraded KK facility to charge battery electric buses



## A LOOK UNDER THE HOOD: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

MCTS's Information Technology (IT) department's work touched every aspect of the Company this past year. We have focused on the upgrade and update of hardware, software and cyber security to keep the organization running as smooth and efficient as possible while improving on cyber security for the safety of the company and our workers. This included the purchase of upgrades from vendors and updating internal systems to modern platforms. Other notable projects include:

- Converted the COBOL system to Supply Chain
- Upgraded the Purchasing system
- Implemented advanced thread protection and encrypted e-mail solution - FortiMail
- Implemented multi-factor authentication for endpoints and Microsoft 365 - Cisco Duo
- Upgraded Avaya phone system
- Replaced all Wi-Fi access points
- Clever CAD / AVL Implementation, Training and Interfaces
- Ceridian Dayforce Forms Development
- FD and Fleet Camera upgrade
- BRT station Cradlepoints built and tested (a few installed)



**TRANSIT**PLUS  
MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARATRANSIT SERVICES

# CONNECTING PARATRANSIT RIDERS TO THE COMMUNITY: 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

Paratransit van rides: **331,263**

Paratransit taxi rides: **25,268**

Transit Plus pass bus rides: **63,157**

Paratransit assessments completed: **2,182**

Boardings with mobility devices: **46,779**

Paratransit outreach presentations: **65**

Travel training sessions: **46**

New bus operators trained: **130**

## NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR ONGOING ACCESSIBILITY:

- Developed and awarded single-provider paratransit van contract set to begin in 2023
- Tested and installed Service Infractions Program to minimize rider no shows
- Updated contract monitoring procedures for more comprehensive performance oversight
- Planned for transition of Transit Plus bus riders to new account-based fare collection system
- Resumed in-person eligibility assessments
- Continued to coordinate rides for COVID-19 positive riders
- Began initiative to translate documents into Spanish
- Produced a Bus Driver Procedures Training video focusing on the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and working with persons with disabilities
- Provided ADA sensitivity and securement training for new and veteran bus operators



# LOOKING AHEAD

We're excited for 2023 which will further connect communities with essential transit service throughout Milwaukee County. We'll launch our new WisGo fare collection system and celebrate the official start of our first BRT route, MCTS CONNECT. Every segment of our society — individuals, families, communities, and businesses — benefits from public transportation. We have a strong foundation and need strong fiscal support to get people to jobs, education and life.

