



## MILWAUKEE DOWNTOWN

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VISIT Milwaukee

May 22, 2023

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Finance,

I am writing on behalf of Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21 (BID #21) in support of allocating funding for the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS).

To provide a brief background on our organization, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 was established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Milwaukee Downtown funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe, friendly, and economically viable downtown for all to enjoy. The organization manages nearly 150 blocks representing approximately 500 commercial property owners. Several major MCTS routes traverse downtown Milwaukee and connect it to the larger region. Workers, residents, and visitors alike use MCTS service to travel to their destinations, homes, and places of work.

The benefits of MCTS service extend well beyond Downtown, as MCTS is an integral part of Milwaukee's overall transportation infrastructure. Unfortunately, the system is in grave financial danger. With the end of federal ARPA funding and looming cuts at both the county and state levels, MCTS faces a projected \$26.5 million budget shortfall in 2025. If that becomes reality, service could be cut (or even eliminated) on almost **HALF OF MCTS ROUTES**.

To put that in a broader context, that means nearly 8 million MCTS bus rides won't happen, 74,000 local employees lose their ride to work, and 2,300 businesses lose bus service. This is more than just a Milwaukee issue. Large regional employers rely on MCTS to deliver them employees. If transit reductions cause labor-related slowdowns at Milwaukee-area companies, it's not only riders who will feel the pain.

As members of this community, we want to voice our support for increased state-level financial support for the Milwaukee County Transit System. More specifically, we support the efforts of Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley and the Move Forward MKE coalition to create sustainable local funding through at least a 1% sales tax.

Milwaukee County is the economic heart of Wisconsin and businesses across the state rely on its economic health. Please work with your colleagues to restore state funding levels for this critical part of Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Weirick  
CEO

# DOWNTOWN