

Transit Plus Advisory Council
July 15, 2025 Minutes

PLACE: Milwaukee County Transit System Administration Building, 1942 N. 17th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Large Conference Room & via Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: David Buck - Chair, Terry Hogans - Vice Chair, Nilda Rivera, Laurel Henschel, Kelley Santi, Anita Spight, Arlene Washington, Patricia Martin, Elois Reed, Helen White

ABSENT: Mae Wingo, Rev. William Jackson, Janice Briggs-Simmon

GUESTS: Patrick O'Brien - Transdev; Joe Pietrek – Via; Jeff Sponcia – MCDOT; Fran Musci, Paula Schultz, Megan Newman - Transit Plus; Kevin Meyers, Kris Drollinger - Guests

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the June 17, 2025, meeting were unanimously approved. Motion by Terry Hogans, seconded by Arlene Washington.

COMMITTEES:

Provider Employee Recognition Committee: No update.

Membership Committee: TPAC continues to accept applications for members into the future, but the committee is currently full.

Public Relations Committee: The Committee met and decided it would be beneficial to prepare a letter to the Transportation Committee. Nilda Rivera will create the content of the letter and send it to the group for input. This will be discussed in the September meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

SUMMERFEST 2025: Transdev has experienced some difficulty on weekends, getting into the Summerfest loop. The entrance to the Summerfest pick-up area is off of St. Paul Street. Then you drive through parking lots to get to the pick-up area. This route can be confusing to drivers, especially late at night. You cannot get to the pick-up area off of Harbor Drive which is the address for Summerfest. Overall, transportation for the event went well.

State Fair is quickly approaching. The pickup / drop off location is the same as it has been in the past. The big ferris wheel will be nearby so that should help in locating the stop.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY: Transit Plus received over 280 responses from the survey. There was a drawing for those who submitted feedback for the survey and the prize packs were mailed. ABBG will compile the responses and should have reports available in the fall.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK DATABASE: Transit Plus selected individuals to do some testing on the customer facing feedback form. That step is complete, and Transit Plus gathered some useful information.

Management has regular meetings scheduled with IT to build the administrative portal. They are making good progress and Transit Plus will involve Transdev in testing the system once it's ready.

ACCOUNT BASED FARE COLLECTION: UMO was onsite last week to kick off this project and we have scheduled ongoing bi-weekly meetings. Transit Plus management had good discussions with the MCTS IT Department and Marketing to create a new graphic for printing cards. Transit Plus continues to work with external business partners to figure out the logistics of agency fare billing processes.

TRANSDEV UPDATE: A portion of the MCTS budget shortfall is generated by Transdev due to low productivity. Transit Plus is having discussions about the contract with Transdev to move toward a more acceptable, cost-effective service. MCTS is working toward giving Transdev access to park in the secured lot across the street at the maintenance building to reduce deadhead miles which count toward unproductive time.

SAME DAY RIDE PILOT UPDATE: June ridership is 334 trips with 405 riders. Transit Plus is monitoring service levels and funding to be sure things are in line to continue service through December 2025. So far in July, ridership appears to have leveled, and projections are a little lower than June.

Fran Musci presented statistics regarding the Same Day Ride Pilot at the Milwaukee County Transportation Committee Meeting. Even though the program has grown in popularity among riders, due to budget constraints, the continuation of this service is not in the MCTS budget for 2026. If the program continues to grow as it has in the past couple months, projected cost is estimated to be \$2 million in 2026.

NEW BUSINESS:

STAFF UPDATE – MCDOT: Donna Brown-Martin has retired effective July 1, 2026. John Rogers will be the acting Interim Director once he returns from an extended vacation next week. Eddie Santiago has been handling things in John's absence and will continue as the Interim Deputy Director once John returns. He is currently the Director of Highway Maintenance. Jeff Sponcia adds that John and Eddie are long-term employees of Milwaukee County and will do well handling business until the position is filled. Please reach out to them if anything is needed. MCTS- Julie Esch, MCTS Interim President and CEO has also resigned. Sandy Kellner has been named Interim President/CEO and will fill in until a new permanent CEO is named and can be in place.

MCTS 2025 BUDGET SHORTFALL: MCTS has announced a projected \$10.9 million shortfall in the budget in 2025. The Executive Team at MCTS presented to the Milwaukee County Transportation Committee last week and is scheduled to present to the Finance Committee this week. The biggest contributing factors to the budget shortfall are MCTS driver and maintenance overtime, Transdev is currently projected to be \$3.4 million over budget, and a decrease in fare collected on fixed route.

MCTS is working with Transdev to address contractual issues and increase efficiency by improving scheduling and dispatching to cut down on unproductive time.

Overall, MCTS has a plan to reduce costs for the remainder of the year. First, only essential employees will be hired and if employees leave their role, an evaluation will be done to determine if the position should be filled. Only essential travel will be permitted. Move 2025 will still be implemented but the frequency of some fixed route buses may be adjusted to cut cost. Federal COVID relief funds that were intended for use in 2026 – 2027 will be used to compensate for the shortage of funds in 2025, meaning the fiscal cliff projected in 2027 will be a threat for 2026.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Mobility management will be presenting at Clinton Rose Senior Center today and McGovern Park next week.

There are two fixed route buses that will get you to State Fair if you plan to attend. Bus 18 stops along Greenfield and on the west side of the fair. Bus 33 stops on 84th Street. If you need help planning your trip call MCTS Customer Service.

Keep in mind that Move 2025 changes begin August 24th. The new bus blades will be added to all new stops for Move 2025.

TRANSDEV REPORT: Patrick O'Brien reports that Transdev continues to meet with Transit Plus staff three days a week to work on improvements. There will be 10 Transdev vans that they plan to park at the MCTS maintenance building next door. This will reduce non-productive time and miles so drivers who have to go to the north side of town for their first pick up don't have so many miles to travel without passengers onboard. Transdev management has begun working on fall schedules for drivers.

VIA REPORT: Via is hiring a few more drivers to manage the increased demand for this pilot program. Via management is also working on balancing demand with the allocated budget for the remainder of 2025.

TRANSIT PLUS REPORT: Fran Musci reports the following service update:
June 2025: 32,238 rides. For 2025, we are at 90% of pre-Covid ridership levels.

Month of May Complaint Summary:
Total complaints: 54

Highest categories:

On-Time: 9

Pickup / Dropoff Problem: 7

Safety: 6

Commendations: 8

Fran states that the MCTS management staff and Local 998 have been working on contract negotiations for several months. The contract expired in April and was extended till June. As of now, operations continue without a contract. Local 998 members voted in favor of a strike if union leadership feels it is appropriate due to the lack of an agreement. If the union decides to strike it's uncertain how it will affect Transit Plus paratransit service. Transit Plus staff is having discussions with Transdev and MCTS is preparing a plan for if there is a driver strike.

The last work stoppage due to contract negotiations occurred in 2015 and lasted for three days. Paratransit service continued without interruption as Transdev drivers work under a different contract. Fran reassured everyone that no one wants a strike as it creates hardship for everyone involved, so MCTS is doing all they can to avoid that.

Fran states that virtual meetings have been held on Microsoft Teams. Some agencies use Zoom for virtual meetings. There is a way to pin a sign language interpreter to the main screen on Zoom. This setting is also available on Teams but it is a newer feature and not as easy to find. Is anyone opposed to continuing with Teams? Zoom also has a fee associated.

Helen states that most attendees are already connected on Teams and confirmed that an interpreter could be added if there is a need. She states she would prefer to keep it the way it is.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Arlene Washington asked what can be done to ensure door-to-door service is provided? In the past it was always on the list of top complaints, and it has improved but still isn't perfect. Patrick states that door to door has been a big focus, but if it continues to be an issue, bring examples forward and drivers will be addressed individually.

Patricia Martin said rides can be so bumpy sometimes that it makes the ride uncomfortable. Do the vans need new shocks or is it the Milwaukee roads? Patrick states that vans are built on a truck chassis, which is necessary to accommodate the weight for up to 14 passengers, but sometimes they can be bumpy. The roads are also a big contributing factor. Transdev does have a thorough maintenance program.

Kris states that she would like to complement the driver who took her to the airport on June 5, 2025. She is visually impaired, and the driver took her inside the airport to the Delta check point. She was efficient in getting her to the destination and back to the van to move it because she was in a drop-off zone. Kris also states that the MCTS fixed route buses

also have the same trouble with bumpiness, and she believes it's the roads.

Kevin Meyers asked does there continue to be an issue with tablets? Patrick responded by saying the new tablets are a vast improvement over the old ones. Drivers can perform arrivals and departures now. Transdev is working with the provider to see if the issues with arriving and performing trips are related to tower location.

Kevin Meyers asked how many drivers are staffed by Transdev? Patrick states there are currently 129 Transdev drivers and 17 Peoples drivers

Laurel Herschel asked Patrick about Matthew's ride on Thursday. She said that when the driver took him home the driver forgot to collect the ticket. Do drivers get reprimanded for that? Patrick states that they balance the driver's fares at the end of their shift. There are no repercussions if a driver is short on fare unless it is a pattern.

Kris states she is new to the group and would like to know if there is room on the council to join. Chairperson David Buck states there are no open seats on the council right now but please continue to attend and if a spot comes available it would be a good opportunity to apply to join.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Nilda Rivera, seconded by Terry Hogans. Unanimously approved.