

Transit Plus Advisory Council

September 15, 2026

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

PRESENT: Terry Hogans - Chair, Helen White – Vice Chair, Laurel Henschel, Nilda Rivera, Anita Spight, Kelley Santi

EXCUSED:

ABSENT: Mae Wingo, Elois Reed, Arlene Washington, Patricia Martin

GUESTS: Patrick O'Brien - Transdev; Joe Pietrek – Via Transportation; Megan Newman, Fran Musci - Transit Plus; Claire Enders – Milwaukee County Aging and Disability Services; Jeff Sponcia – MCDOT; Jeff Young, Kevin Meyers, Stephen Hiatt-Leonard, Rita Bruce, Denise Koss – Guests; Nikki Todd – Milwaukee County Office of Strategy, Budget & Performance

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes for the July 21, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved. Motion by Laurel Henschel, 2nd by Kelley Santi.

COMMITTEES:

Provider Employee Recognition Committee: The committee selected three employees for customer service going above and beyond their job expectations. Awards were given and distributed by Transdev General Manager.

Membership Committee: The committee is seeking to fill three open slots. Applications can be submitted to Megan Newman for any interested party. The committee will be available for interviewing candidates in October.

Public Relations Committee: No updates.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Transit Plus Same Day Pilot: July ridership: 488 trips for 580 passengers. Ride demand has remained consistent for the past several months. Last Task Force meeting was on June 30th. MCTS is waiting to hear if supplemental budget request for continuation of a same day ride option makes it into the Co. Exec's 2027 budget (due on or before October 1st). Final budget will be announced by mid-November.

Next meeting for the Taxi Task Force will be October 29, 2026, at 9:30 AM on Zoom. Mark Tillman can send the meeting link to anyone interested in attending. Please let Megan know.

Software Implementation Update:

The Spare software implementation project is in full swing. Staff from MCTS, Transdev and Spare meet multiple times per week to configure new system, work on reporting and conduct testing. The “Go-live” date has been pushed back a few weeks to make sure everything is ready for a successful launch. First phase will include operations and deploying the app so people can check on their rides. The second phase will be launched once scheduling software is stable and will include tweaks to increase efficiency and the launch of self-booking features in the app. Transit Plus is working with MCTS Marketing team and Spare to coordinate customer communication. A letter will be sent to all riders within the week as notification of the changes that affect them.

MCTS Fixed Route Redesign Public Outreach:

- MCTS Forward: On website, 5 public open houses as well as events across the County.
- Cudahy Library, Thurs 9/24, 4:00 -6:00 PM
- Independence First, Wed 9/30, 1:00 -3:00 PM
- Wauwatosa Library, Thurs 10/1, 4-6 PM
- Milwaukee Public Library- Center St Branch, Fri 10/9, 11:00 AM -1:00 PM
- United Community Center (offered in Spanish), Tues 10/13, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Please encourage as many people as possible to review the Ridership Concept Map and the Coverage Concept Map and weigh in with your opinions by taking the online survey that is open until October 26, 2026.

NEW BUSINESS:

Federal Transit Funding: Jeff Sponcia reports that there is a significant budget cut at the federal level written in as part of the Build America 250 Act. It is a bill that funds federal transportation over a 5-year period. If passed as written currently, it will reduce funding for public transit by an additional 14%.

This will affect all users of public transit throughout the state, including paratransit. The state of WI is allocated to receive \$124 million in federal grant funding – 20% of this amount would reduce up to \$17 - \$25 million annually. Milwaukee is allocated approx. \$31 million of those grant funds. MCTS will see a reduction in funding of approx. \$6.3 million each year for the next 5 years. This is above the existing budget deficit.

The bill will also limit the capability to apply for grant funding for capital projects such as bus purchases and repairs.

The bill reflects a range of impacts which will drastically affect funding for MCTS. Jeff asks all stakeholders to contact elected officials to urge them to preserve public transit funding by maintaining funding for public transit. On Sept 1st, MCTS issued a letter template to transit advocates, including TPAC members, and encourage everyone to reach out to State Legislators, expressing how these proposed budget cuts would affect you, personally. Jeff encourages you to use your voice to advocate and speaks on the importance of voting in November.

Transit is Milwaukee – Claire Enders, of Milwaukee County Aging Services and Cochair of Transit is Milwaukee spoke on their efforts to advocate for more improved transit for the urbanized area. She states the goal is to secure sustainable funding for MCTS. Once this measure is achieved, the focus will shift to increase transit funding which has seen no increase for several years. Transit is Milwaukee is focusing on advocating at the state level. Claire presented the council members with a postcard to send to elected officials. Claire encourages advocates to attend upcoming Transit is Milwaukee meetings.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT:

Mobility Manager, Paula Schultz, was unable to attend in person. Fran Musci reports the following in her absence. The Federal 5310 Grant Application was submitted at end of August. Transit Plus will be notified of the outcome of the application in early December 2026.

The mobility management team have been busy with group and individual travel training and is currently booked out into early November. The next bus operator ADA Sensitivity Class is on October 8, 2026. There are currently 15 new drivers scheduled to be attending class.

Mobility Management continues to provide ADA refresher training at monthly NAMI classes.

Paula will attend the Wisconsin Public Transit Association (WIPTA) conference next week and is looking forward to the opportunity to learn and network with peers.

If you know of a group or facility that would like a Freedom on Wheels bus orientation session, please notify the Mobility Management Team.

Carrier Report:

Transdev – Transdev General Manager Patrick O’Brein reports that they are hiring more drivers with a goal of building up staffing levels for a successful launch of the new scheduling software. The new driver pick was implemented on September 6, 2026, but there are vacant spots after all drivers have selected routes. Current staffing levels are short by 19 drivers. Transdev is currently looking to supplement staffing with drivers from other locations while hiring and training is in progress.

Patrick is pleased with the functionality of Spare scheduling software but would like to remind riders that with change comes ebbs and flows before service runs as smoothly as we expect it to. Please be patient with Transdev staff as the scheduling software is launched.

The renovations at Transdev are progressing. The contractors are finishing the construction on the second floor and will soon transition to phase two; updates to the first floor of the building.

Via – no updates beyond what was already given.

TRANSIT PLUS REPORT:

- Ridership: July: 29,741 rides
- OTP: July: 92.01%, up from 91.22%, in June
- Productivity: July: 1.51

- July feedback:
 - 83 complaints: On time & Door to Door: 12, Discourteousness & Late appointment drop off 11.
 - 2 Staff commendations

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Laurel is concerned with the number of safety complaints that occurred in July. Fran says safety entries could have a wide range of reasons, such as railroad crossing violations, the rider didn't feel their mobility device was secured properly, among many other reasons. Megan adds that those are the number of entries and does not consider the outcome of the investigation. They could be marked as duplicate or invalid once investigated.

Rita Bruce says she was under the impression that the new software was scheduled to be implemented on Labor Day weekend. Fran states it was postponed giving more time to ensure system reporting functions are tested and working properly. Fran and Chris will be out for a period of time in October, which limits testing capacity and the delay in implementation will allow Transdev to increase staffing levels put us in the best position once the new software is launched. Fran states that the goal is to be well prepared, so the transition is seamless in a way that riders don't recognize it happened.

Patrick O'Brien shares his appreciation with the Membership Committee for recognizing drivers for their exemplary performance in Quarter two of 2026. There are two who are on leave and one who is driving to maintain service but accepts the recognition on their behalf.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion made by Anita Spight, 2nd by Helen White. Motion carried. Adjourned 3:22 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm.