



## MILWAUKEE TRANSIT RIDERS UNION

*It's time to move forward.*

6/29/20

Dear Mr. Sponcia,

I am writing to offer Milwaukee Transit Riders Union's support for the MCTS NEXT route redesign.

We believe that the service frequency increase along the routes, particularly the high frequency routes, represent an improvement for the transit riding community. We recognize that a part of the tradeoff to be able to implement this service is to remove some stops and believe that with increased service frequency, this is a worthwhile tradeoff.

We encourage MCTS to find ways to reduce wait times further than the frequency offered in MCTS NEXT. We recall a not too distant past when 10-minute service frequencies were the norm for many MCTS routes. While the planned 15-minute frequency on high-frequency routes is an improvement from the existing service, this frequency makes it difficult to arrive at jobs and appointments on time, and in wintertime can become downright dangerous! We urge MCTS to pursue service frequency of 12 minutes or better for high frequency routes (as frequent as every 8 minutes with an average of 10 minutes during peak travel time). While this is only a few minutes difference, this change could dramatically improve the experience for riders - reducing the need to even consult a schedule, thereby easing the experience for riders and the ability of MCTS to attract new riders. This is the positive, upward cycle of service and ridership we have long sought and hope to see soon.

Though we recognize funding options are largely outside of MCTS control, we believe more could be done to save a few minutes for riders (which add up to hours and days for dedicated riders). We encourage the County to work with the City and surrounding municipalities to identify all possible opportunities for dedicated lanes, especially along the high frequency service corridors. There is no doubt that dedicated lanes (even without other Bus Rapid Transit type improvements) could reduce travel times, save the system money in terms of fuel and driver costs that could be invested in improved service.

Additionally, we caution against future frequency reduction. We encourage MCTS to recognize that removing stops is seen by riders as a commitment for improved service frequency and urge management to not waiver from this commitment. A future reduction in service frequency, after the removal of these stops would result in a loss of trust among riders who could see this as a lose – lose situation: loss of bus stop proximity and service frequency. We urge MCTS to not 'retreat' from this effort to improve frequency.

In conclusion – we support the general direction of MCTS NEXT and hope that you and your team continue this effort with the goal in mind to ensure a truly high frequency service in the next few years. While MCTS NEXT is a good step towards the future, signs from the past that linger on Prospect Avenue remind us when the City cared enough about transit riders to provide dedicated lanes. We still believe that MCTS can reclaim its status as one of the premier transit systems in the country and to do so this is an important step, with many more to go.

Sincerely,

Nick DeMarsh and Kieth Crum