



A Stronger, Safer Transit System Help Drive Wisconsin's Economy

In Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, federal funding is essential to maintaining a healthy regional transportation system. The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), Wisconsin's largest transit agency, benefits every nearby county, every business, and every traveler in the region by expanding workforce and education access, reducing congestion and crashes, and supporting major events.

Sustainable funding is critical to protecting the transportation network that powers Wisconsin's largest economic center and the employers, workers, and communities that rely on it every day.

HOW FEDERAL FUNDS SUPPORT MCTS

Federal funding represents a significant portion of MCTS revenues, delivering critical support to modernize aging capital assets and transportation for senior and disabled individuals.

MCTS receives federal funding primarily from:

- **Urbanized Area Formula Funding (5307):** Supports capital projects and planning (\$27.3 million in 2025)
- **Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program (5339):** Provides funding to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment (\$4 million in 2025)
- **Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (5310):** Supports the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities (\$533,000 in 2025)

In addition, MCTS has relied on discretionary grants to support its infrastructure needs, including:

- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds
- Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Section 5309 funding for support of East/West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- BUILD Grant: Congressionally directed funding
- Other discretionary grants



Federal Transit Administration

WHY THESE FUNDS MATTER

Federal funding ensures that communities of every size can keep people moving, support economic growth, and maintain essential mobility. It allows agencies to replace aging buses, maintain safe infrastructure, and support seniors, people with disabilities, low-income riders, and veterans for daily access to jobs, healthcare, and essential services.

AGING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS (5307)

Many of MCTS's capital assets are beyond their useful life and have failed or are at risk of failure, including bus fuel storage tanks, bus lifts, and MCTS's maintenance yard.

1/3

of MCTS's bus fleet is past it's useful life

80%

of MCTS's bus shelters were designed over 40 years ago

TRANSIT-DEPENDENT RIDERS (5310)

MCTS serves the largest transit-dependent population in the state of Wisconsin. Meanwhile, Milwaukee County's population of adults sixty years of age and older is trending steadily upward. Transit service is critical to those who rely on it the most.

76%
of residents with disabilities and
67%
of older adults are located within
the fixed route service area

Approximately
6.5%
of MCTS fixed route
riders are 65 or older
or have a disability

18%
of all rides are
reduced fare
(Eligible for ages 65
and over, aged 6 to
11, or riders with a
qualifying disability)

As of February 2026,
approximately
6,100
people were registered
as eligible users of
MCTS paratransit service

HOW MCTS CURRENTLY LEVERAGES FEDERAL FUNDING

MCTS has been leveraging federal and local dollars to improve its system, but sustainable funding is needed to meet modern transportation needs.

IMPROVING SERVICE

- Upgrading 65 bus stops, including 25 modern bus shelters, 30 ADA-compliant concrete boarding pads, and the beautification of ten shelters.
- Installation of 30 new ADA boarding pads in 2025, increasing countywide accessibility compliance to 84%.
- Redesign and replacement of 3,500 bus stop signs to make them more visible and ADA accessible.
- Winning a 2025 BUILD Grant to transform the 18-mile PurpleLine with ADA upgrades, new bus shelters, raised platforms, and traffic signal optimization.
- MCTS recently submitted a 2026 BUILD Grant Application to provide critical infrastructure upgrades at all of its bus maintenance facilities.
- Working towards a consultant-led redesign evaluating service design, coverage, and frequency.
- Planning to use recently allocated federal funds for major upgrades to its bus fleet, to align with the upcoming system redesign.
- Launching a Traffic Signal Optimization Project in 2029 to enhance transit travel times Transit Signal Priority (TSP) technology in downtown Milwaukee.

IMPROVING SAFETY

- Since launching an in-house Public Safety Officer program in 2024, MCTS has tripled this PSO staff with the most recent cadre focusing on fare evasion.
- A pilot program with the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) began in 2026, where plainclothes law enforcement officers ride buses on higher crime routes.
- MCTS maintains more than 3,500 cameras across the system which have been successfully used in law enforcement and collision investigations.

SUSTAINABLE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Federal programs provide the foundation for safe, reliable, and accessible transit service in Wisconsin's economic hub. Continued investment ensures workers can access jobs, older adults and people with disabilities maintain independence, and the region's transportation network stays strong.

Connect With Us

Please reach out to us if you would like to learn more about MCTS and its role in Southeast Wisconsin's regional transportation network at community@mcts.org.