



Milwaukee County Transit System Safety Fact Sheet



Creating a Safer Environment for Riders & Operators

Improvements in Safety and Security

The safety of riders and operators is MCTS' #1 priority. MCTS continues to build upon ongoing safety investments through staffing, technology, training, and infrastructure.

MCTS rolled out several key initiatives aimed at enhancing safety and security on our buses for our customers and employees, including the following:

Partnership with Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office

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.

Larger Bus Shields

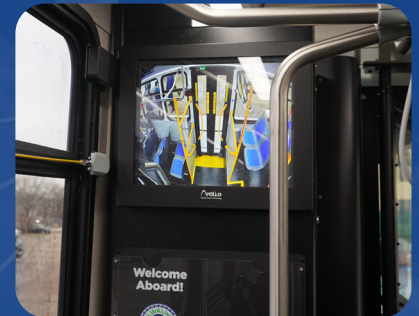
While all buses have protective shields for operators, MCTS is experimenting with a new, more enhanced driver safety barrier prototype.

On-Bus Cameras

MCTS maintains more than 3,500 cameras across the system. In addition, starting in 2025, all new buses will have monitors near the front that show a live camera feed from inside the vehicle, helping riders stay aware of their surroundings.

In-House Public Safety Officer Department

In 2024, MCTS launched an internal public safety team, known as Public Safety Officers (PSO). In the first year of the PSO program, operator assaults went down by 50%. This in-house PSO program has grown to 27 dedicated staff, with coverage on all three shifts. MCTS developed an in-house field training program for PSOs to ensure a high quality and consistent training program for all new hires. We continue to grow the program, creating an in-house Public Safety Dispatch office providing a dedicated communication resource for enhanced safety and security coordination and support.



Protecting Our Bus Service by Improving Fare Compliance

MCTS is taking fare evasion seriously and has implemented a layered strategy to increase fare compliance. In summer, 2025 up to one in three riders were not paying a fare, resulting in approximately \$4 million in lost fare revenue annually. Approximately 15% of MCTS revenue comes from passenger fares. With the focus on reducing fare evasion, we are already seeing progress.

Fare Collection Policy Change

On February 1, 2026, MCTS implemented a new fare collection policy which allows our bus operators to politely engage with the riding public to inform those who do not voluntarily pay their fare upon boarding what the proper fare requirement is.

This reverses a 2022 policy directing bus operators not to request fares. The goal at that time was to reduce conflict from fare disputes. However, the policy also had the effect of dramatically escalating fare evasion.

The new policy was rolled out in partnership with Local ATU 998 with training sessions done with operators prior to the adoption of the changes.

Additionally, a comprehensive communication campaign supported this change.

Fare is Required Campaign

To coincide with the fare policy change in 2026, bus destination signs display “Fare Is Required” along with their designated route and destination.

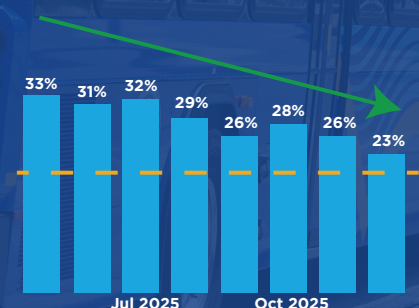
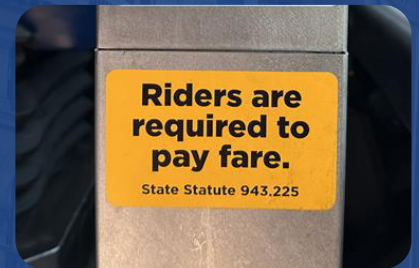
It was enhanced with marketing messaging, news media, social media and community outreach.

This builds on a previous public awareness campaign Every Fare Counts launched in fall of 2025, that emphasized the importance of paying your fare for the sustainability of the system.

Reduction in Fare Evasion

Between August and December 2025, fare evasion estimates declined significantly—from 33% in August to 23% in December. Overall, fare evasion for 2025 was estimated at approximately 30% (see graph).

MCTS made paying bus fare easier by introducing credit card, debit card, Google Pay and Apple Pay, smartphones and smartwatches. Now riders can pay with just about anything in their wallets. This technology further reduces barriers to payment.



Creating a Culture of Safety

De-escalation Training

MCTS continues to equip its workforce through a three-day De-escalation & Crisis Prevention Workshop. Led by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the interactive training equips staff with practical tools for de-escalation, self-care, and connecting individuals with community support. Operators and staff consistently describe the workshop as highly relevant to their daily work.

Fatigue Management

In 2025 MCTS created a robust Fatigue Management Policy in collaboration with Local ATU 998. Additionally, MCTS has contracted with partners such as Haleo & FitPro to assist in mitigating fatigue – encouraging MCTS to show up for work, ready to work. A training video, highlighting ways to mitigate fatigue was produced that is presented to all new hires, during NAMI, and available on the employee web portal.

Safe + Sound Week

MCTS participated in our inaugural Safe + Sound Week in August 2025. Led by OSHA and the National Safety Council, it recognizes the steps businesses have taken to improve workplace safety and health, implementing safety and health programs. CPR and certified first aid training for registrants was available during this event and operators who achieved incredible milestone were honored including 30+ years with no preventable accidents on the road.

Vision Zero

Transit is one of the safest forms of transportation. Increasing transportation choices – such as taking transit, walking, or biking instead of driving – is an important part of Milwaukee County's Vision Zero Strategy, as fewer people driving results in fewer crashes overall. In Milwaukee County, when transit ridership declined between 2016 and 2022 fatal and serious injury crashes spiked, this aligned with data from the National Transit Database that showed an increase in fatal and serious injury crashes, which appeared to coincide with cuts to public transit funding (see graph).

MCTS is a strong Vision Zero partner, collaborating with both the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County on initiatives on transit infrastructure improvements that lower the risk of collisions and enhance pedestrian safety through dedicated transit lanes, traffic signal optimization, traffic calming, and controlled pedestrian crossings. In the last three years, multiple corridors were constructed with these safety enhancements and MCTS launched the CONNECT 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. We are also leveraging federal grant monies for future improvements.

- In 2029, MCTS plans to implement enhancements along the 18-mile Purple-Line Corridor. Improvements will include optimizing traffic signals along the route, new bus shelters at 69 stops, bus islands and sidewalk landings, raised transit platforms, as well as traffic calming measures to improve safety.
- In 2029, MCTS plans to implement a project to enhance downtown transit travel times by retrofitting 85 buses and 24 intersections with traffic signal optimization technology.

"This training was helpful for real-life situations— great knowledge to know," shared a NAMI participant about the training.

