



Funding Transportation Through **BUILD America 250: Why Maintaining FY 2026 Funding Levels is Critical to Wisconsin Communities**

As consideration of the BUILD America 250 Act (BA250) continues, maintaining FY 2026 funding levels for all federal transportation programs is essential to protect mobility access for tens of thousands of Wisconsinites.

The bill — as written — would significantly cut Wisconsin’s transit funding. This would have a devastating impact on all riders, including those with disabilities and the elderly who rely on paratransit services to meet their basic needs.

BA250 would cut federal transit funding by 14%. Although state and local funding impacts are still being determined, a 14% cut would result in an annual statewide impact of \$17 million per year in Wisconsin. We urge Congress to maintain FY26 funding levels for transit and to maintain the IIJA advanced appropriations structure in the long-term reauthorization.

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 Grants
- Other discretionary grants
- Congressionally directed funding



**Federal Transit
Administration**

WHY THESE FUNDS MATTER

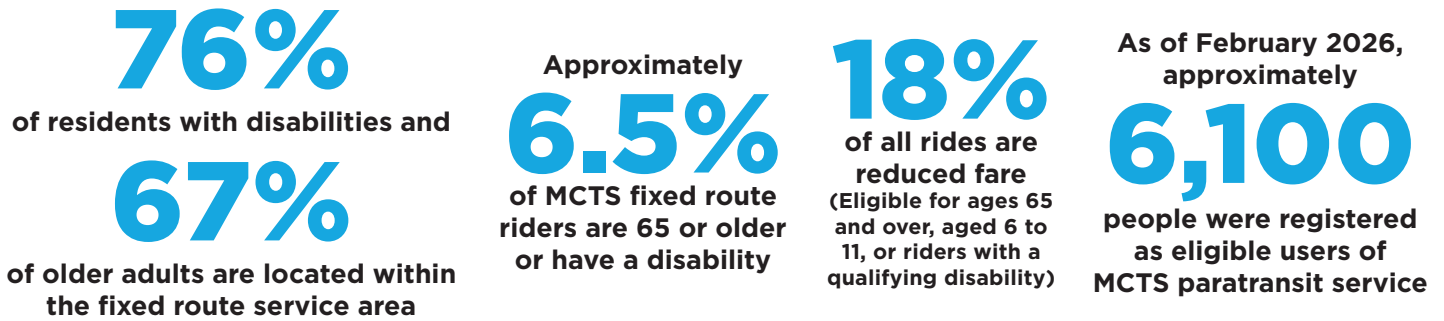
Federal funding ensures that communities of every size can keep people moving, support economic growth, and maintain essential mobility. It allows agencies to replace aging buses, maintain safe infrastructure, and support seniors, people with disabilities, low-income riders, and veterans for daily access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

TRANSIT-DEPENDENT RIDERS (5310)

Preserving existing transit programs, including paratransit and mobility services in Wisconsin is essential. The potential loss of federal funding, as proposed in BUILD America 250, would further strain these programs and make it more challenging to maintain reliable service for those who depend on public transportation most.

Transit-dependent residents live in rural, suburban, and urban communities across Wisconsin and rely on public transportation to access employment, health care, education, essential services, and other basic needs. Collectively, Wisconsin's public transportation systems provide more than 65 million rides each year through fixed-route bus, paratransit, shared-ride taxi, and microtransit services.

Protecting these services are essential to maintaining mobility and access to opportunity for residents across the state. In Milwaukee County:



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

- MCTS recently upgraded 65 bus stops, including the installation of 25 modern bus shelters, 30 ADA-compliant concrete boarding pads, and community design of ten shelters.
- The installation of 30 new ADA boarding pads in 2025 increased countywide accessibility compliance to 84%.
- 3,700 bus stop signs were redesigned and replaced to make them more visible and ADA accessible.
- MCTS has won two consecutive BUILD Grants. A 2025 award will transform the 18-mile PurpleLine with ADA upgrades, new bus shelters, and traffic signal optimization. A 2026 award will help modernize MCTS infrastructure and reduce operating costs through improved efficiency and avoidance of unplanned equipment repairs.
- MCTS Forward is underway, a network redesign to help build a stable, sustainable, scalable system with the system's existing budget.
- A Traffic Signal Optimization Project will equip nearly 75% of the MCTS bus fleet with traffic signal optimization technology by 2030.

IMPROVING SAFETY

- Since launching an in-house Public Safety Officer program in 2024, MCTS has tripled security staff with the most recent cadre focusing on fare evasion.
- MCTS has invested in more than 3,500 cameras across the system which have been successfully used in law enforcement and collision investigations.

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 bdeneve@mcts.org.