

# Southeastern Wisconsin **Regional Planning Commission**



## **Key Findings from the Transit Benefits Report**

UEDA Emerging Topics Series

August 20, 2026

## Overview



- Milwaukee County asked SEWRPC to quantify the value created by MCTS
- The Transit Benefits Report offers a data-driven picture of the benefits MCTS produces, building on VISION 2050
  - *It also explores how those benefits are connected to ridership and service levels*

## Process



- SEWRPC used Federal guidance, regional travel demand modeling, EPA emissions modeling, MCTS data, and Census data to answer these questions in consistent, measurable terms.



# ~\$366 Million Per Year

in avoided regional costs | ~\$3.1 billion over 10 years

Benefits accrue to all road users.

**~\$172 M Congestion & Delay**  
25,000 fewer person-hours in traffic each weekday

**~\$85 M Vehicle Operating Costs**  
425,000 vehicle miles of fuel and wear avoided each weekday

**~\$80 M Avoided Crash Costs**  
700–900 fewer crashes per year; 2–4 fewer fatal crashes a year

**~\$29 M Emissions & Health**  
92,000 metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e avoided annually + reduced NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>



## The ~\$366M figure is conservatively estimated.



NOT MONETIZED

### Travel Time Reliability

A predictable network lets people and goods move on schedule, making jobs and services dependably reachable across the region.



NOT MONETIZED

### Other Health Benefits

Active transportation like more walking add health gains that this report does not put a dollar value on.



NOT MONETIZED

### Travel Options

Per SEWRPC's Transit Rider Survey 16% of riders would not have been able to complete their trip that day without the bus.



NOT MONETIZED

### Avoided Car Ownership

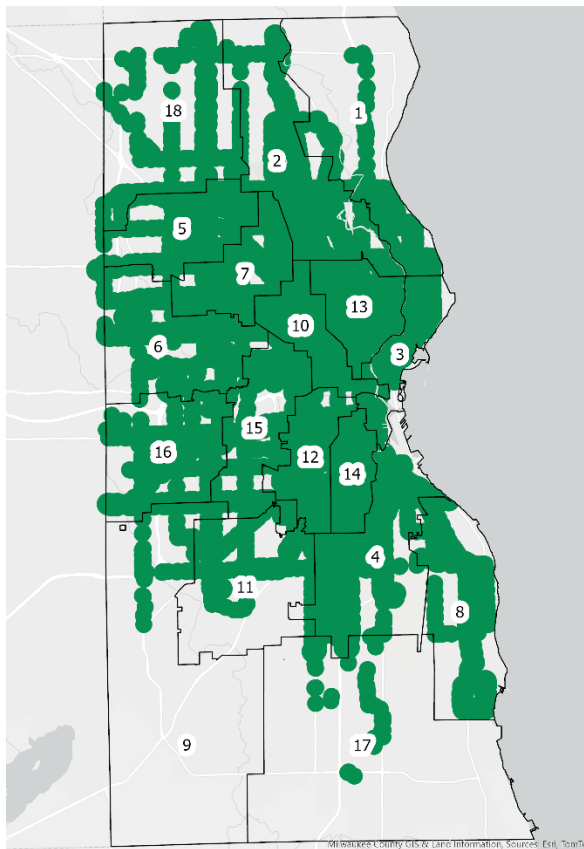
Riding the bus costs about \$1,200 a year. Owning a car costs around \$12,200. The difference stays in household budgets.



# MCTS Reaches Most Residents

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MCTS connects most Milwaukee County residents to most of the destinations they need to reach.



● MCTS Service Area

## 77%

**of Milwaukee County residents within walking distance of a bus stop**

~708,750 residents live within the fixed-route service area

### DESTINATIONS SERVED

|                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| All jobs within 5-min walk       | 78%        |
| Essential jobs within 5-min walk | 82%        |
| Hospitals                        | 39 of 45   |
| Grocery stores                   | 125 of 134 |
| Senior centers                   | 59 of 64   |
| Major employers                  | 422 of 514 |

Sources: American Community Survey 2024 5-Year Estimates, Table B03002; SEWRPC Quartersection Data, based on 2020 U.S. Census.



# Who Depends on MCTS

The following metrics represent those living within walking distance of an MCTS stop:

**88%**

**of zero-vehicle  
households**

~49,000 zero-vehicle  
households in  
Milwaukee County

**86%**

**of residents of  
color**

Compared with 67%  
of white, non-  
Hispanic residents

**79%**

**of residents with a  
disability**

~119,000 residents  
with a disability in  
Milwaukee County

**71%**

**of residents age 65  
and older**

~137,000 residents  
age 65 and older in  
Milwaukee County

Sources: American Community Survey 2024 5-Year Estimates, Tables B03002, B08201, B18101, B01001.



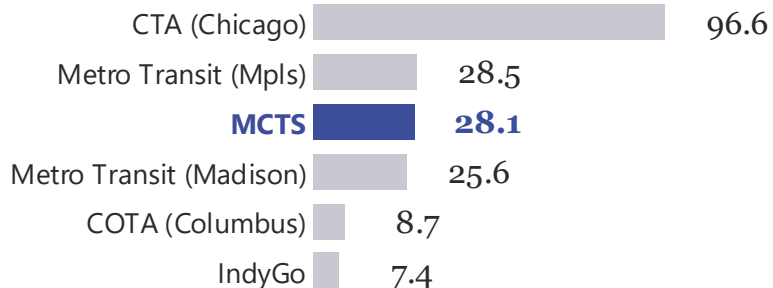
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MCTS generates these benefits while operating at the top of its peer group for efficiency.

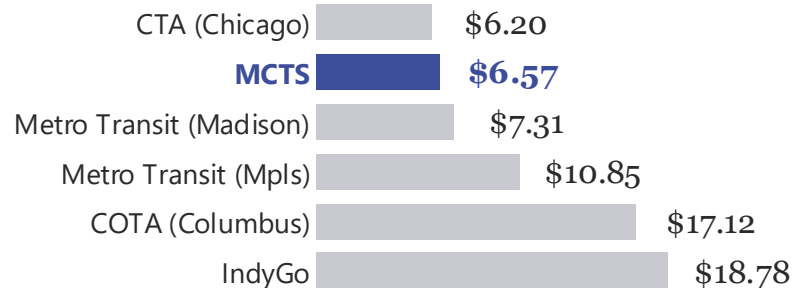
## RIDERSHIP PER CAPITA (2024)

*Trips per service-area resident — MCTS ranks 3rd*



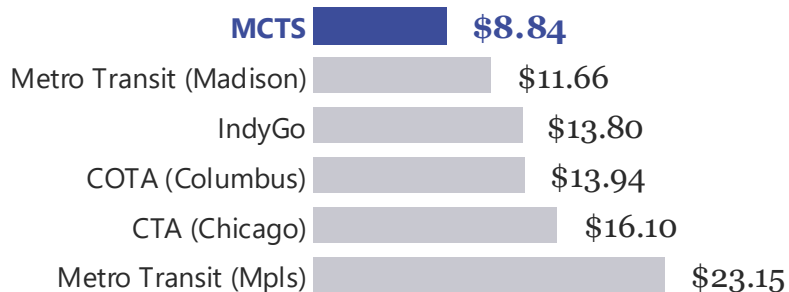
## COST PER TRIP — ALL MODES (2024)

*Lower is better — MCTS is 2nd-cheapest*



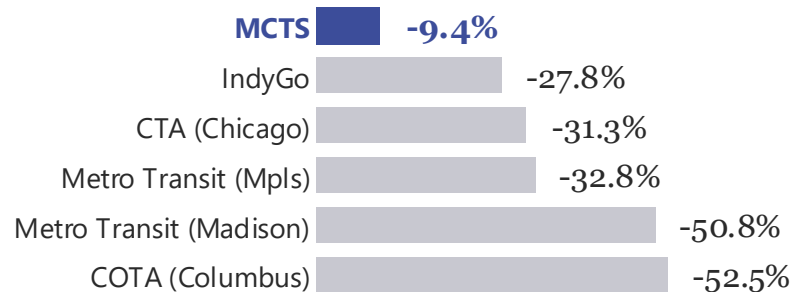
## OPERATING COST PER REVENUE MILE (2024)

*Lower is better — MCTS leads the peer group*



## POST-PANDEMIC RIDERSHIP RECOVERY

*Per-capita change 2019→2024 — MCTS leads peer group*



Source: National Transit Database (2019–2024). Peer systems: CTA (Chicago), Metro Transit (Minneapolis–St. Paul), Metro Transit (Madison), COTA (Columbus), IndyGo (Indianapolis).



# Transit Dollars Circulate Locally

The money spent to operate MCTS flows through the regional economy in notable ways.

## 1. Local Wages

- MCTS employs ~1,000 people
- The **\$117.5m** in wages are largely spent within the region at local businesses, on housing, and on services that employ other residents

## 2. Vendor Spending

- Operating the system requires local goods and services
- These expenditures flow to businesses and workers throughout the county

## 3. Outside Investment

- 64¢ of every \$1 spent on transit, since 2014, has come from Federal & State sources
- Transit brings annual Federal and State dollars into Milwaukee County

This framework, based on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) economic impact methodology, is different than the avoided-cost estimate described earlier. This details how MCTS' direct spending supports the local economy.



The report is anticipated to be published this Fall and is intended to inform future work



## MCTS System Redesign

- MCTS has engaged a consultant to develop service options based on expected funding
- The data in this report can help inform the process



## VISION 2060

- SEWRPC has started work on the region's next long-range transportation and land use plan
- The processes developed in this report will inform that effort



## Transit Planning

- SEWRPC will continue to provide transit assistance and recommend multimodal options



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# Tell us about your community



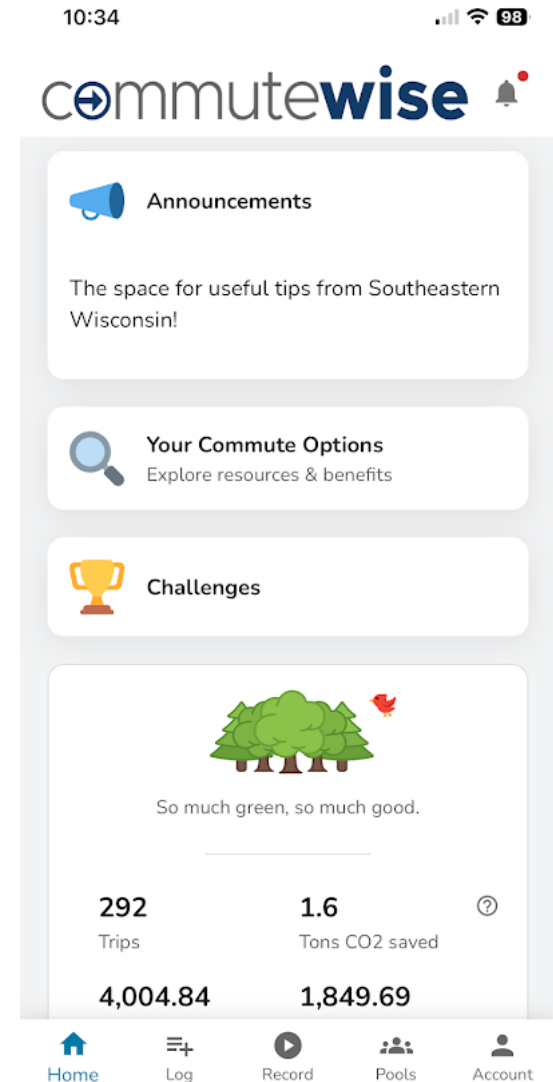
Help shape the future of Southeastern Wisconsin! Take our brief (10 minute) survey and tell us what you appreciate about where you live and what would make our Region better.

Your input will directly inform VISION 2060's vision and goals.



VISION 2060

- Provides tools, subsidies, and expertise to empower individuals and employers to expand travel choices beyond driving alone
- Holds semiannual travel challenges to encourage people to try alternative modes, and log trips on the platform
- App and mobile-friendly website →





# CommuteWISE September Challenge

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Register here!

Visit [connect.commutewise.org](http://connect.commutewise.org) to explore your commute options, and join the **CommuteWISE Challenge** in three easy steps:

- 1 Sign up or log in
- 2 Try a sustainable commute—bike, bus, carpool, walk—and log your trip
- 3 Become eligible to win prizes and follow the leaderboard to compete with other commuters



## commutewise

September 1 – 30 | Free to join and participate | Win great prizes



# Thank You

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