



MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisors Rolland – District 6 • Eckblad – District 4 • Vincent – District 11

• Logsdon – District 9 • Capriolo – District 15 •

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, July 2, 2025

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Supervisors Introduce Resolution Targeting \$4M in MCTS Fare Loss Data-Driven, Safety-First Approach to Reduce Bus Fare Evasion

MILWAUKEE - Supervisors Shawn Rolland, Jack Eckblad, Kathleen Vincent, Patti Logsdon, and Sky Z. Capriolo are introducing a Milwaukee County Board resolution requesting the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) develop a data-informed fare compliance strategy aimed at strengthening revenue and ensuring long-term system sustainability without compromising rider or operator safety.

MCTS staff estimate that 2024 fare evasion reduced MCTS revenues by approximately **\$4 million** at a 25% evasion rate. If fare evasion systemwide could be cut from 25% to 15%, MCTS stands to **realize an additional \$3 million** in revenue, helping to reduce its deficit. The resolution directs MCTS to provide strategic recommendations for the 2026 budget to reduce fare evasion across the system – while also ensuring that any new enforcement tools or personnel do not increase safety risks for drivers or passengers.

“It’s time for the culture of fare evasion on Milwaukee County buses to come to an end,” said Supervisor Rolland. “It’s a major driver of MCTS’s budget deficit, and it’s forcing Milwaukee County leaders to consider reducing our bus service levels. A single mother working several jobs should not have to wait longer for her bus because others refuse to pay \$2 to ride. As a Commuter Value Pass card-carrying bus rider myself, I know how many people depend on the bus to get to work, for a night out, to get to the doctor, and back home. A large number of our neighbors rely on the bus for all of their transportation needs. But I also see how many people avoid paying their bus fares - sometimes unintentionally, sometimes very intentionally. Many of the people I see avoid paying are not those in poverty – they’re lawyers and businesspeople heading downtown! To improve Milwaukee County’s financial health, and to get Milwaukee County residents where they need to go, we have to have an efficient bus system - and this resolution is one step towards that vision.”

“MCTS needs reforms like this, and as a board, we need to stand ready to support them,” said Supervisor Eckblad. “Milwaukee without public transportation is not an option.”

“This resolution isn’t about penalizing our most vulnerable neighbors—it’s about ensuring everyone pays their fair share so we can protect and expand service where it’s needed most,” said Supervisor Vincent. “By using data to target habitual evasion without compromising rider safety, we safeguard resources for seniors, families, and essential workers who depend on MCTS every day.”

"Our goal should be to plug revenue leaks before we consider any service cuts," said Supervisor Logsdon. "An efficient transit system supports both taxpayers and riders, and this data-driven approach helps us achieve that balance."

"One of the hallmarks of a healthy community is a healthy transit system. We must work toward offering more robust services at a fare that is reasonable for riders and responsible for the County," added Supervisor Sky. "Given the financial constraints coming at us from every direction and a projected \$10M shortfall for MCTS in 2025, we need to be active in finding answers and solutions."

In particular, MCTS's CONNECT 1: Wisconsin Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route is experiencing a disproportionate amount of fare evasion: 33% - 8 percentage points higher than average, according to MCTS. The supervisors' resolution also asks MCTS to submit, by the September 2025 Board cycle, a security and compliance plan for CONNECT 1 that either:

1. Implements a more rigorous fare-enforcement model to match systemwide compliance rates; or
2. Discontinues the pre-board payment system and transitions to fare payment upon bus entry.

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