



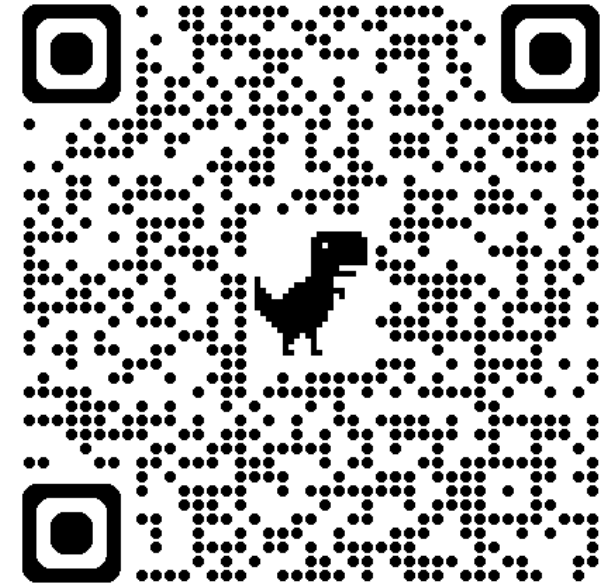
Public Transportation Matters: How to Get from Here to There

Thursday, August 20 | 9:00-11:00am

Check-in, grab refreshments, network with good people!

Share your thoughts!

When you think about public transit, what is the first thing that comes to mind?





Welcome to...

Public Transportation Matters

EMERGING TOPICS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERIES

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026

Emerging Topics in Economic Development Series

This educational series brings relevant learning and training opportunities to those active in Wisconsin's economic and community development sector.



Thank you to our Sponsors!



2026 EMERGING TOPICS SERIES SPONSORS



we energies



JPMorganChase

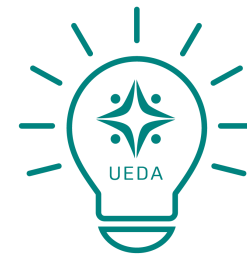
Through our membership network, community partnerships, and program areas, we facilitate cross-sector collaboration, meaningful connections, and strengthen capacity in Wisconsin's community and economic development sector.

Our vision is that the members and communities we serve are inspired and thriving, with equitable access to investment and opportunity.

Today's Agenda



- ❖ Welcome & Introductions | Opening Remarks
- ❖ Speakers
 - *Jennifer Sarnecki – SEWRPC*
 - *Steve Fuentes – MCTS*
 - *Claire Enders – Transit is Milwaukee*
- ❖ Q&A, Final Thoughts
- ❖ Near West Side Partners, Tour & Networking



Let's Get Acquainted!



1. State your name & who you're with.
2. Share **one word** that captures something you are grateful for today.

Today's Speakers

Visionary Leadership Starts Here



Transit is
Milwaukee





Jennifer Brost Sarnecki, AICP

Deputy Chief Transportation Planner
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)

- ❖ In her role as the Deputy Chief Transportation Planner for SEWRPC, Jennifer supports local governments in the development of transit plans and provides technical assistance related to transportation strategies, funding, and compliance. Jennifer has over 25 years of experience on a range of planning topics including sustainability plans, integrated transportation and land-use plans, and environmental compliance.
- ❖ Prior to joining SEWRPC in 2017, Jennifer served as Statewide Planning Chief at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Senior Planner at the Southern California Association of Governments. Jennifer graduated from UW-Madison with a degree in International Relations and a Certificate from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and received a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon.

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 CO₂e avoided annually + reduced NO_x, SO_x, PM_{2.5}



**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**

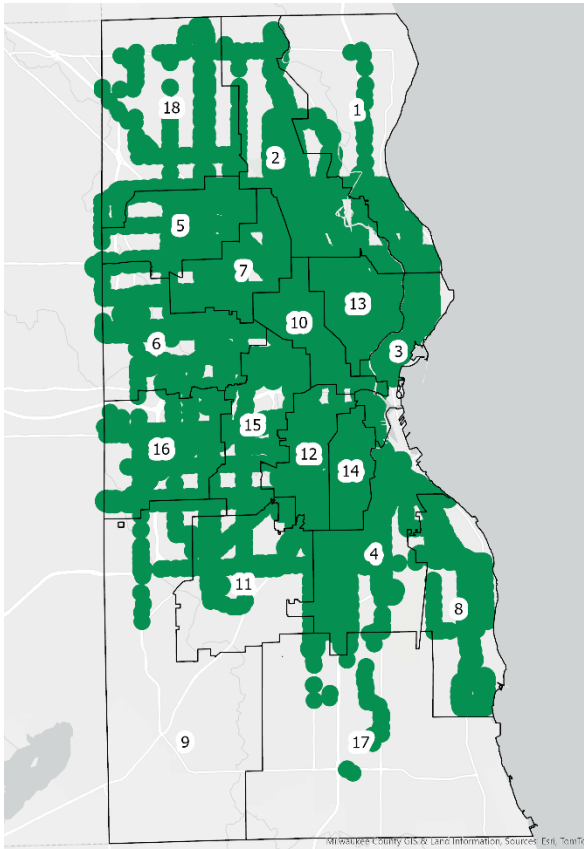
Riding the bus costs about \$1,200 a year. Owning a car costs around \$12,200. The difference stays in household budgets.





MCTS Reaches Most Residents

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



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

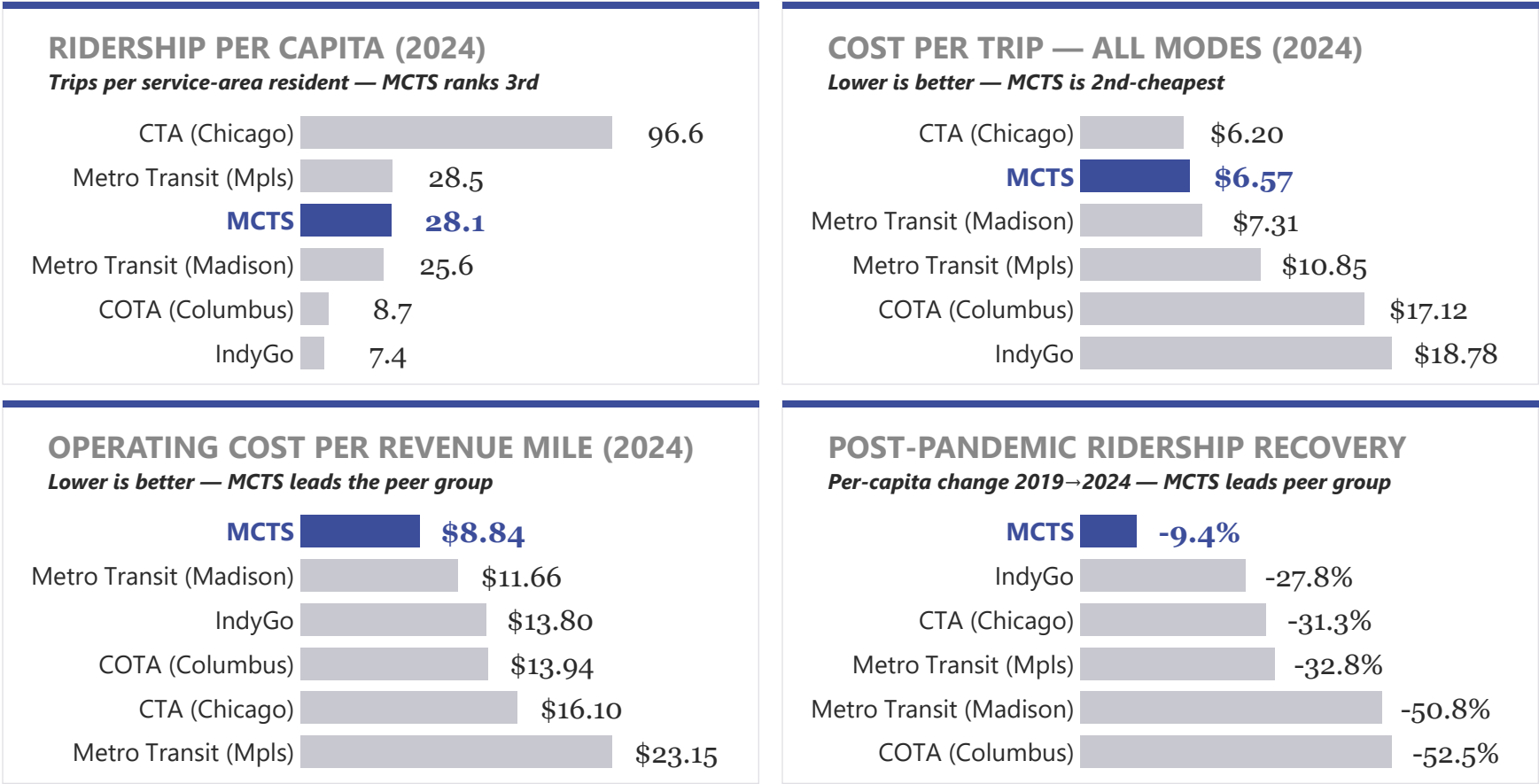
Sources: American Community Survey 2024 5-Year Estimates, Tables B03002, B08201, B18101, B01001.





MCTS Outperforms Peers

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



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.





What Comes Next

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





Tell us about your community



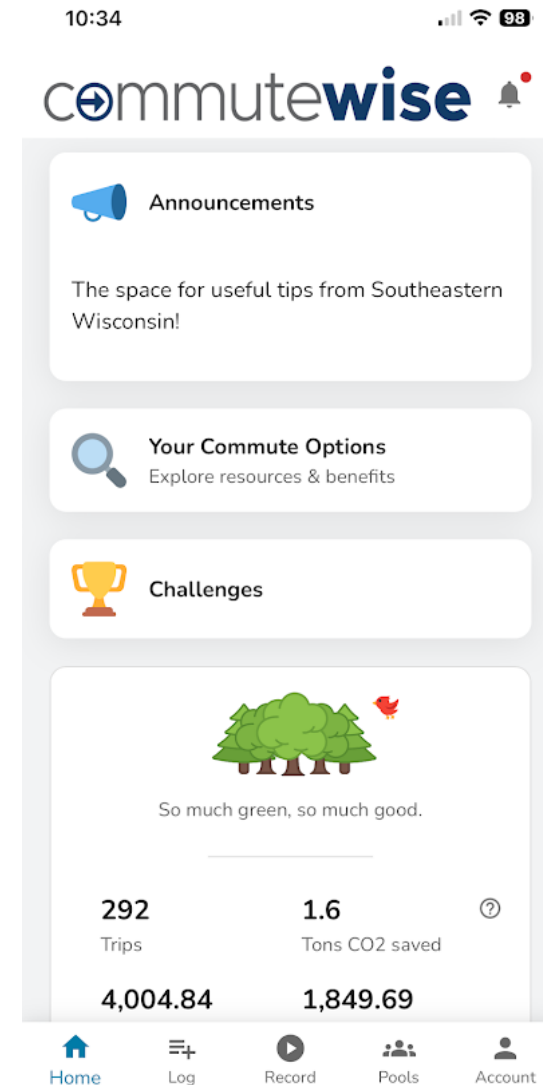
Help shape the future of Southeastern Wisconsin! Take our brief (10 minute) survey and tell us what you appreciate about where you live and what would make our Region better.

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



VISION 2060 N 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 →



Register here!

Visit 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

Jennifer Sarnecki, AICP | Deputy Chief

Transportation Planner

jsarnecki@sewrpc.org | 262.953.3202

SEWRPC.org

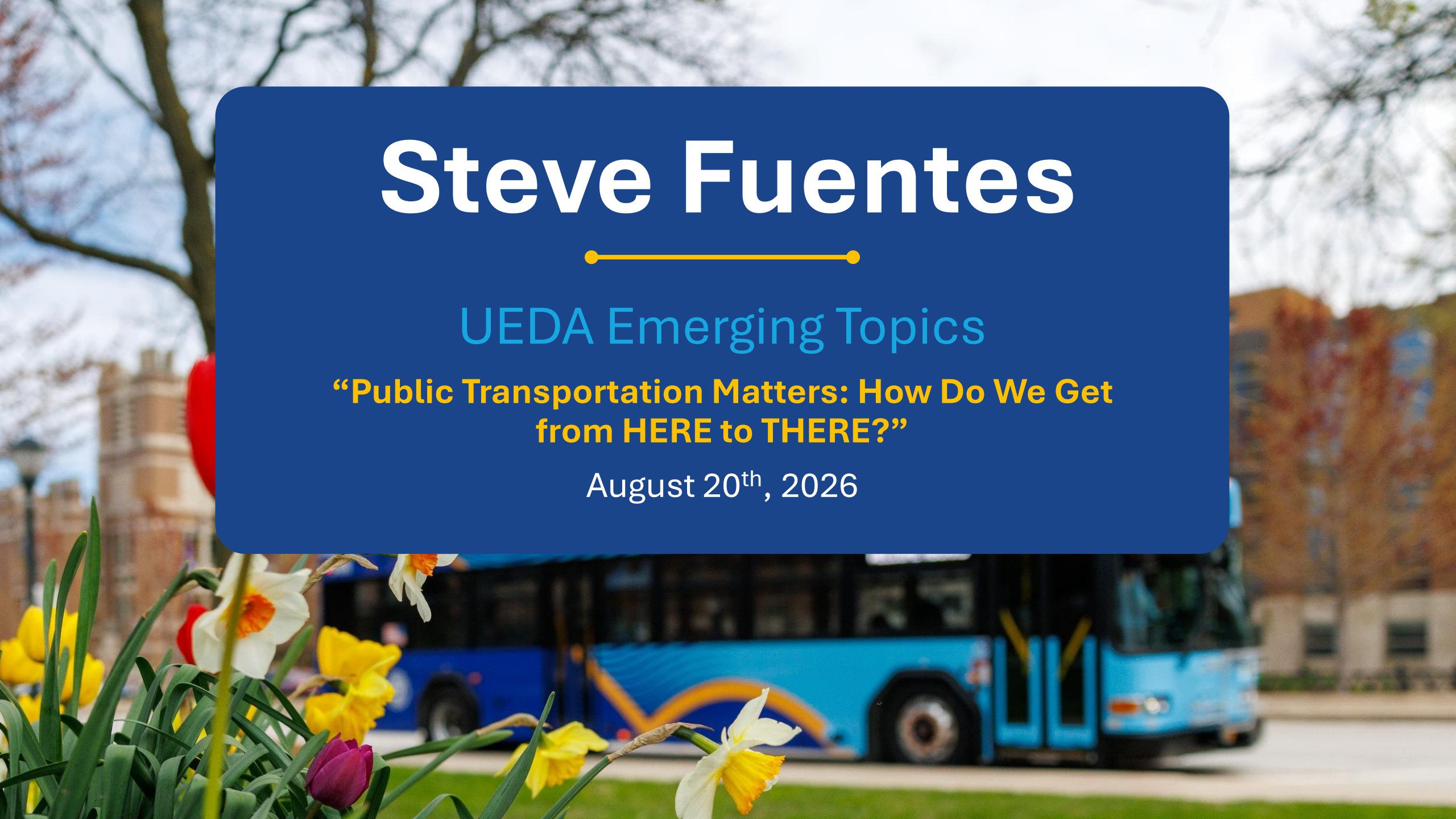


Steve Fuentes

President & CEO of MCTS

- ❖ Steve brings more than 30 years of transit operations experience to the role. He began his career at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) in 1994 as a part-time bus operator and rose through the ranks to hold several key leadership positions, ultimately serving as Regional General Manager of Bus Operations before joining MCTS in 2025.
- ❖ With a hands-on leadership style and a deep respect for frontline employees, he works closely with his executive team to ensure MCTS delivers safe, reliable, and fiscally responsible transit service. Guided by his commitment to excellence and community impact, he is focused on shaping a dynamic and resilient future for transit in Milwaukee County while strengthening partnerships with riders, employees, and community stakeholders.

Steve Fuentes

The background of the slide is a photograph of a blue bus with orange and yellow accents, parked on a street. In the foreground, there are yellow and purple daffodils. The text is overlaid on a dark blue rounded rectangle.

UEDA Emerging Topics

**“Public Transportation Matters: How Do We Get
from HERE to THERE?”**

August 20th, 2026

The Value of Transit

Gets residents to work

Reduced traffic
congestion

Fewer crashes

Lower vehicle operating
costs

Lower vehicle emissions



The Value of Transit: The Human Value

In Milwaukee County...

20%

Of working age
individuals don't
drive

MCTS provides about
65,000
trips each day

57%

Of our riders use the
bus for errands like
grocery shopping or
banking

The Value of Transit: The Regional Value



-92,000

Metric tons of CO₂ per year

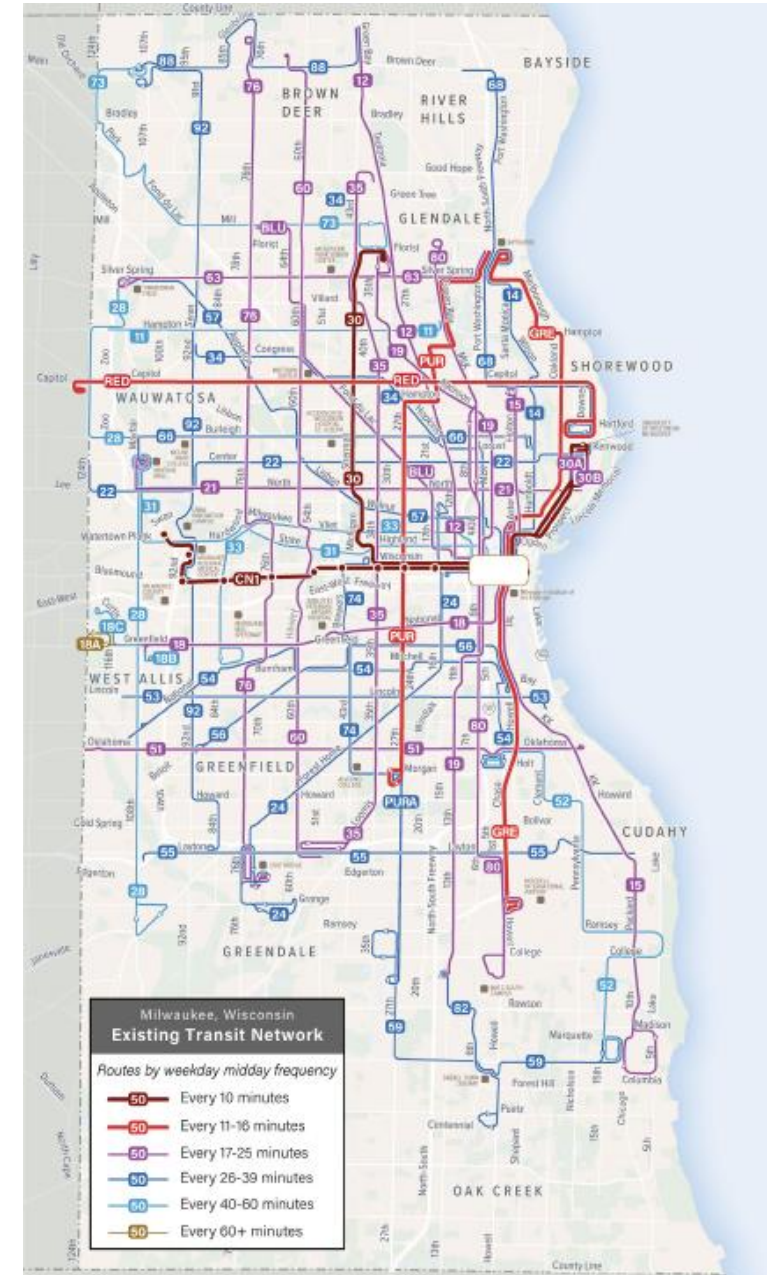
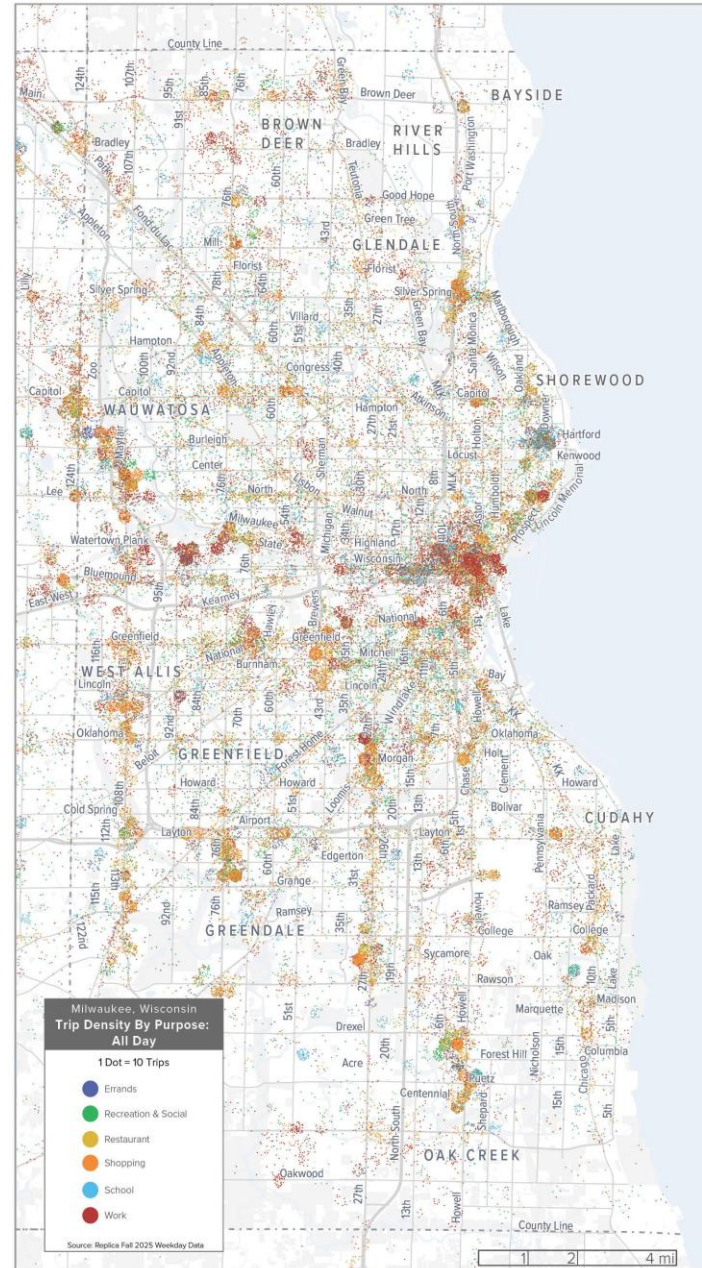
-25,000

Hours in traffic per day

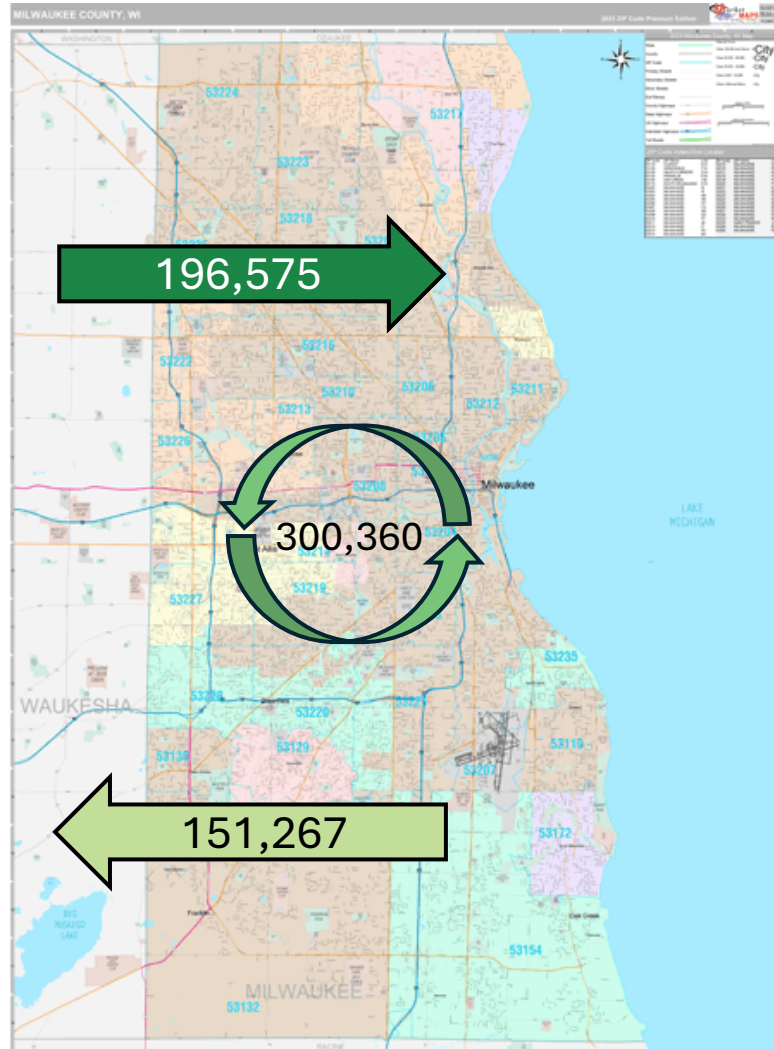
-700

Crashes per year

Trip Density by Purpose & Our Service Area

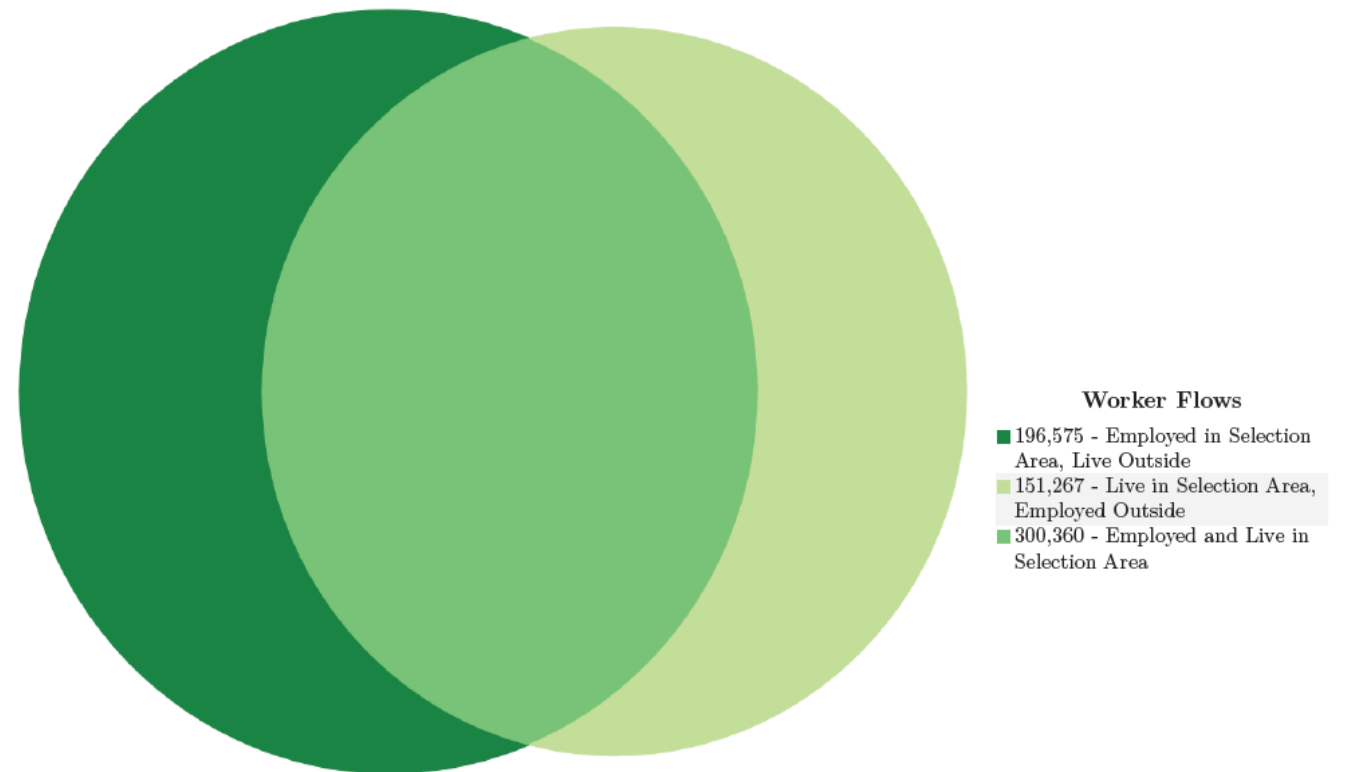


Inflow-Outflow of Jobs

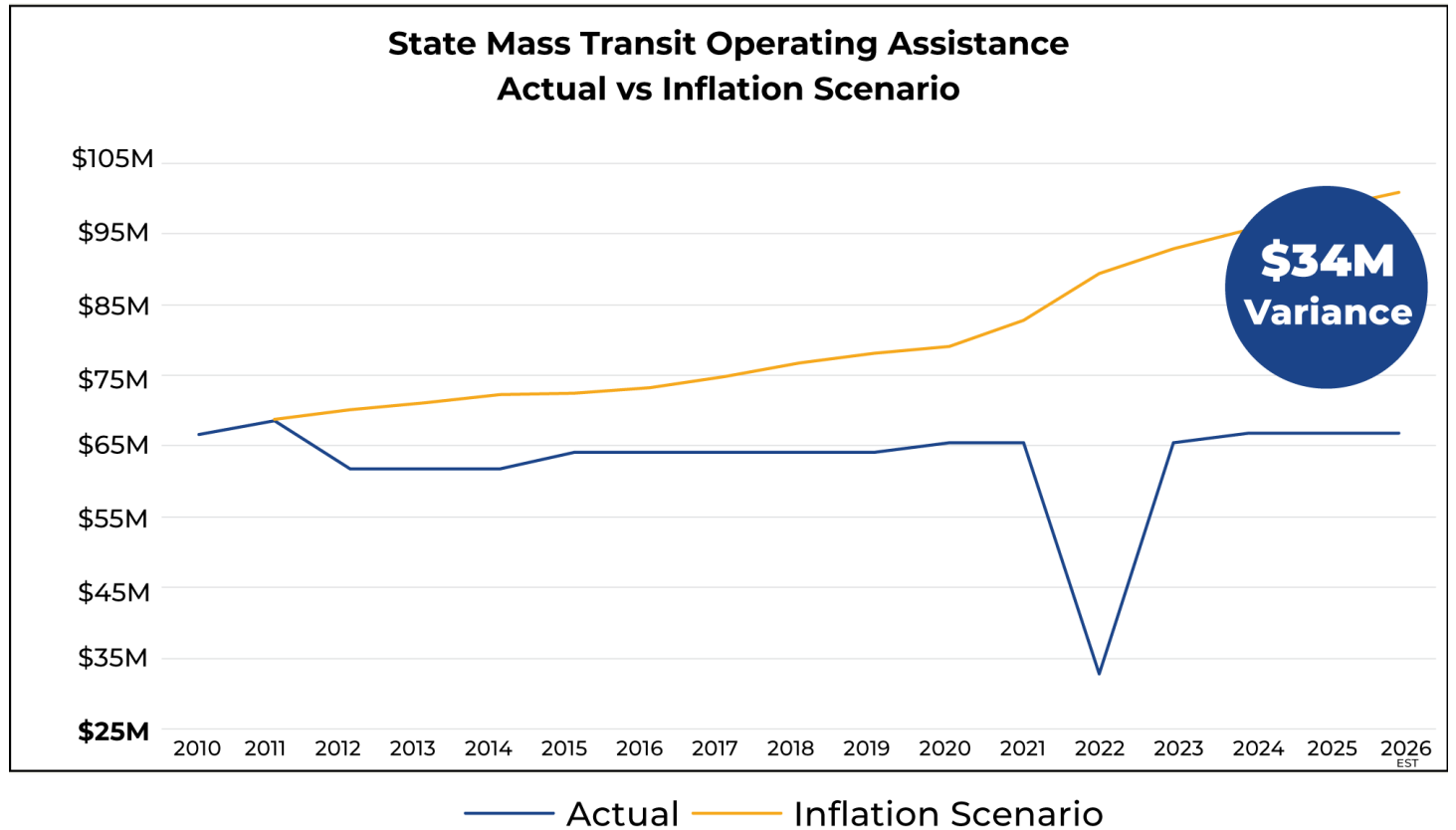


Inflow/Outflow Counts of All Jobs for Selection Area in 2023

All Workers



Fiscal Challenges – Years in the Making



Comparison to Other Agencies



Milwaukee

- **Milwaukee County Transit System**
- **Bus**
- **Dedicated Transit Funds**
 - **NONE**

Agency Comparisons

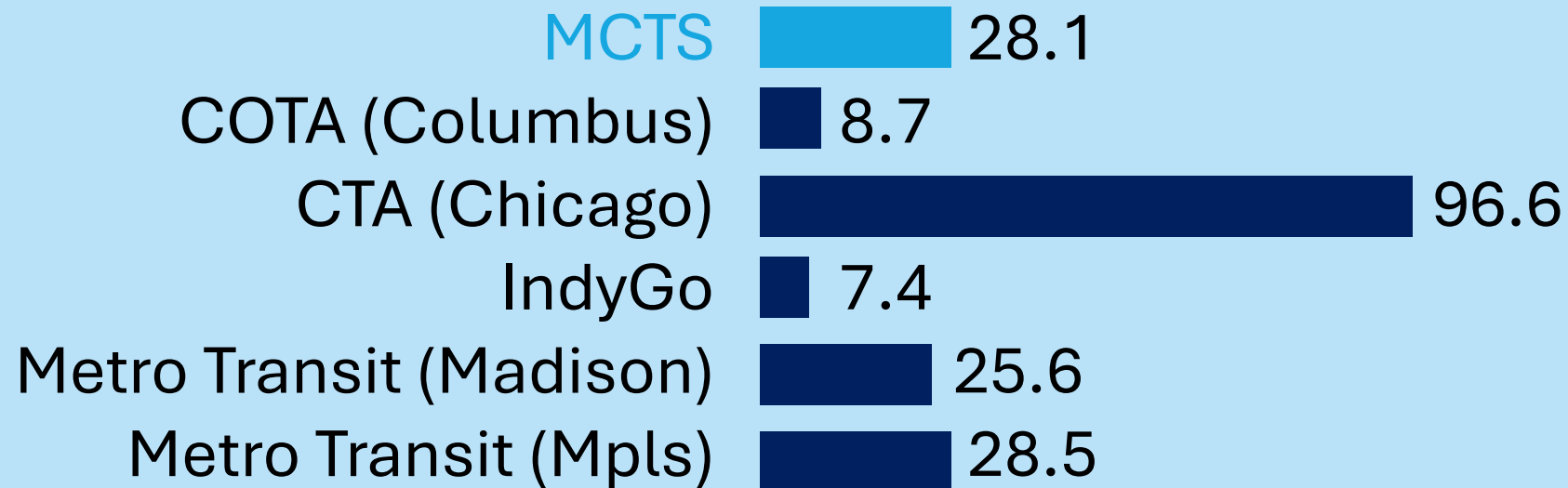


- **Buffalo**
- **Chicago**
- **Cincinnati**
- **Cleveland**
- **Columbus**
- **Detroit**
- **Grand Rapids**
- **Indianapolis**
- **Kansas City**
- **Louisville**
- **Minneapolis**
- **Nashville**
- **Pittsburgh**
- **St. Louis**

Efficiency

Ridership Per Capita – All Modes (2024)

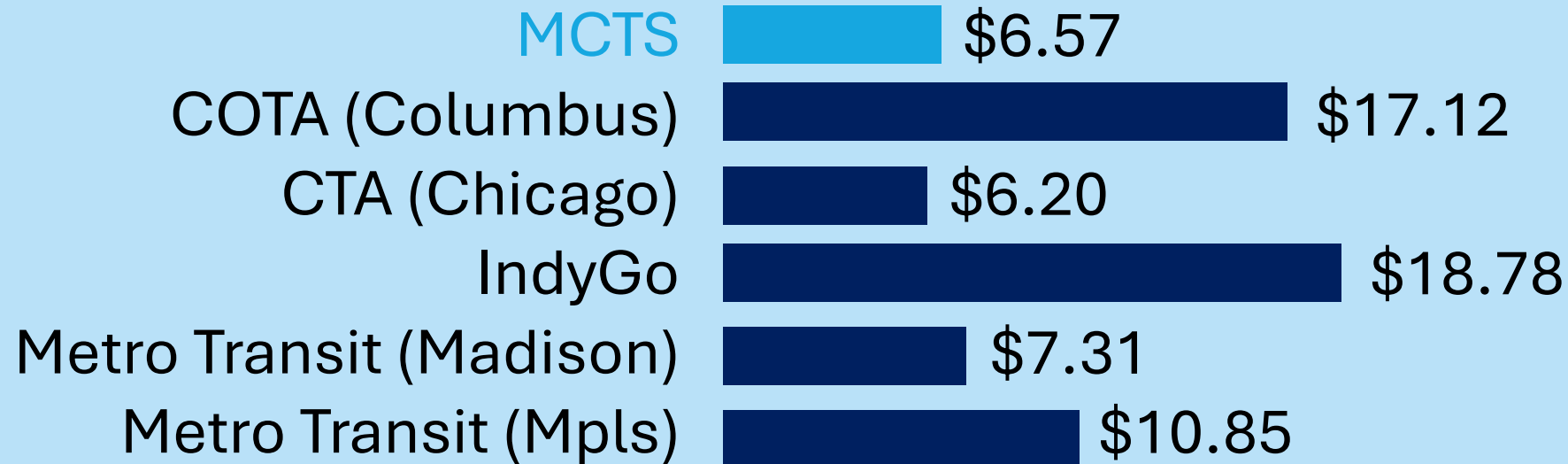
Trips per service-area resident – MCTS ranks high



Efficiency

Cost Per Trip – All Modes (2024)

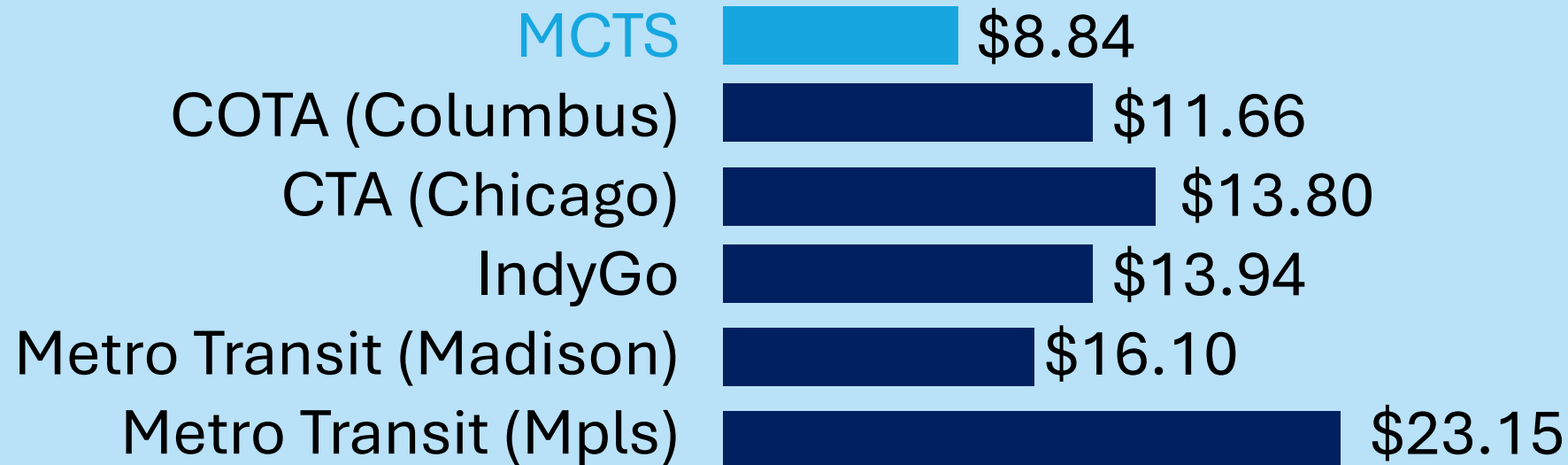
Lower is better – MCTS is 2nd-cheapest



Efficiency

Operating Cost Per Revenue Mile (2024)

Lower is better – MCTS leads the peer group



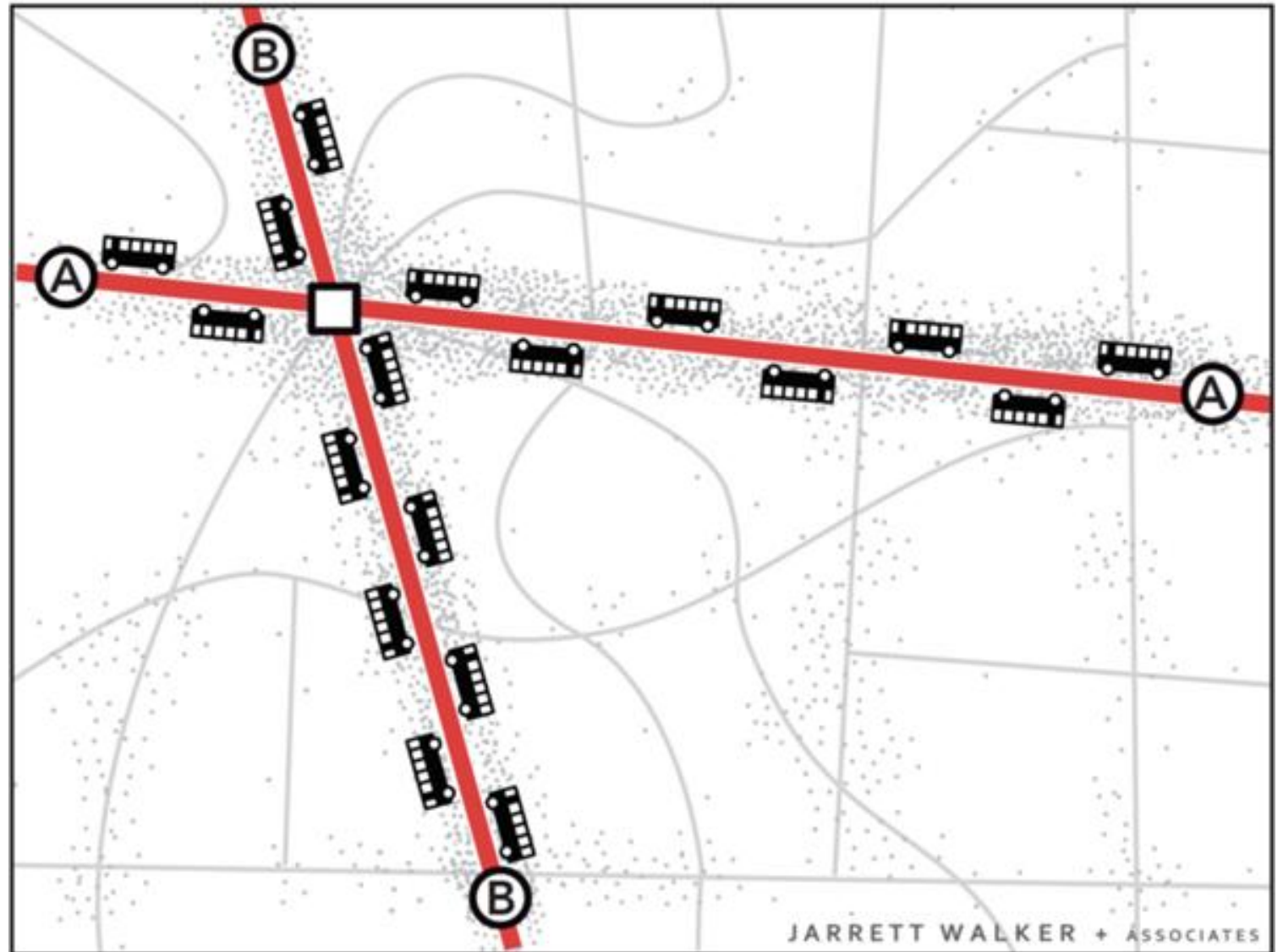


MCTS

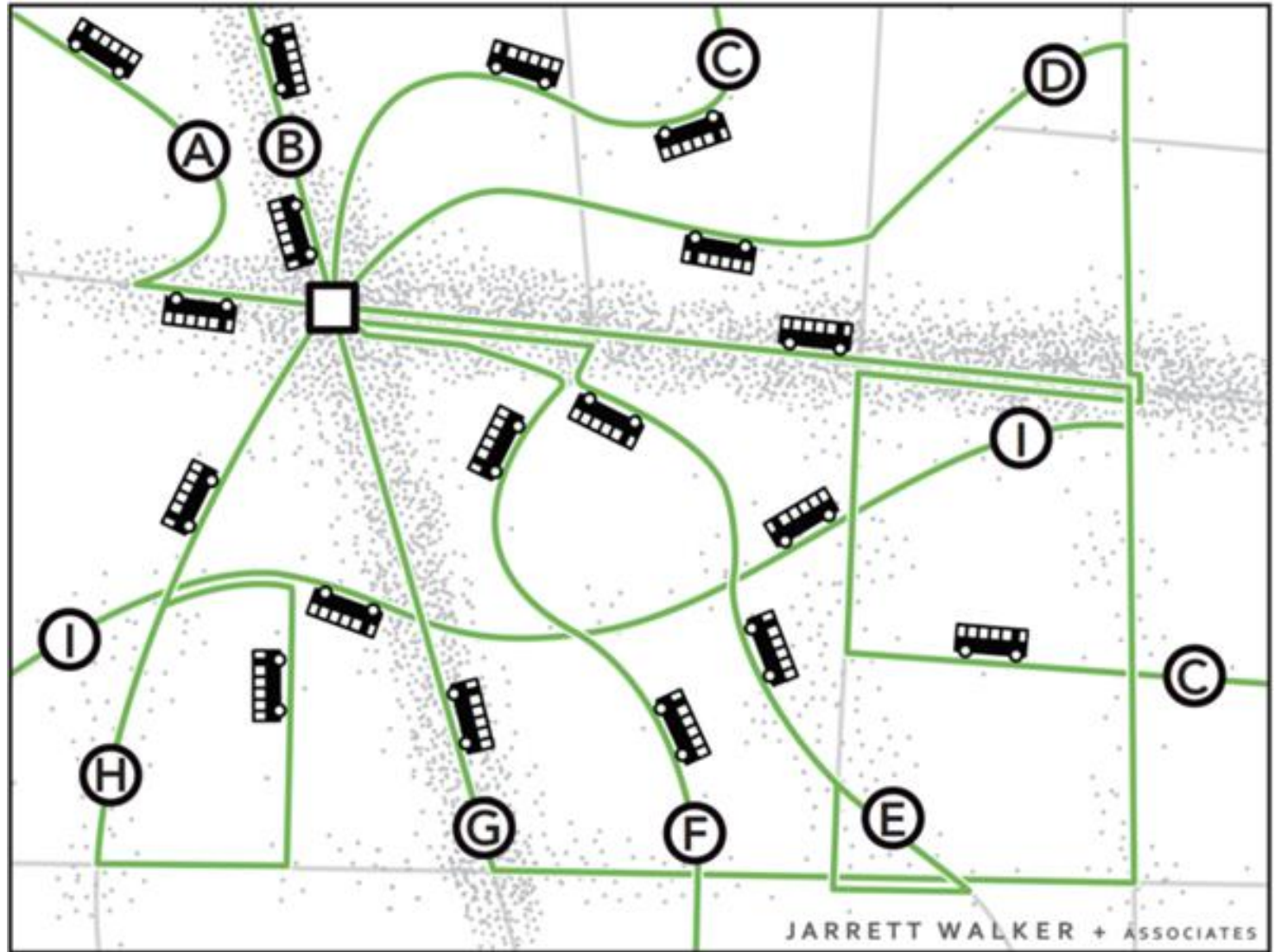
FORWARD



Ridership



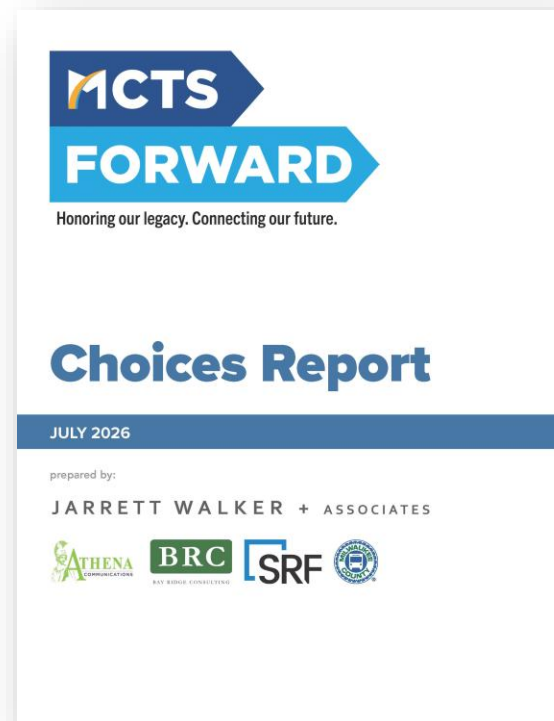
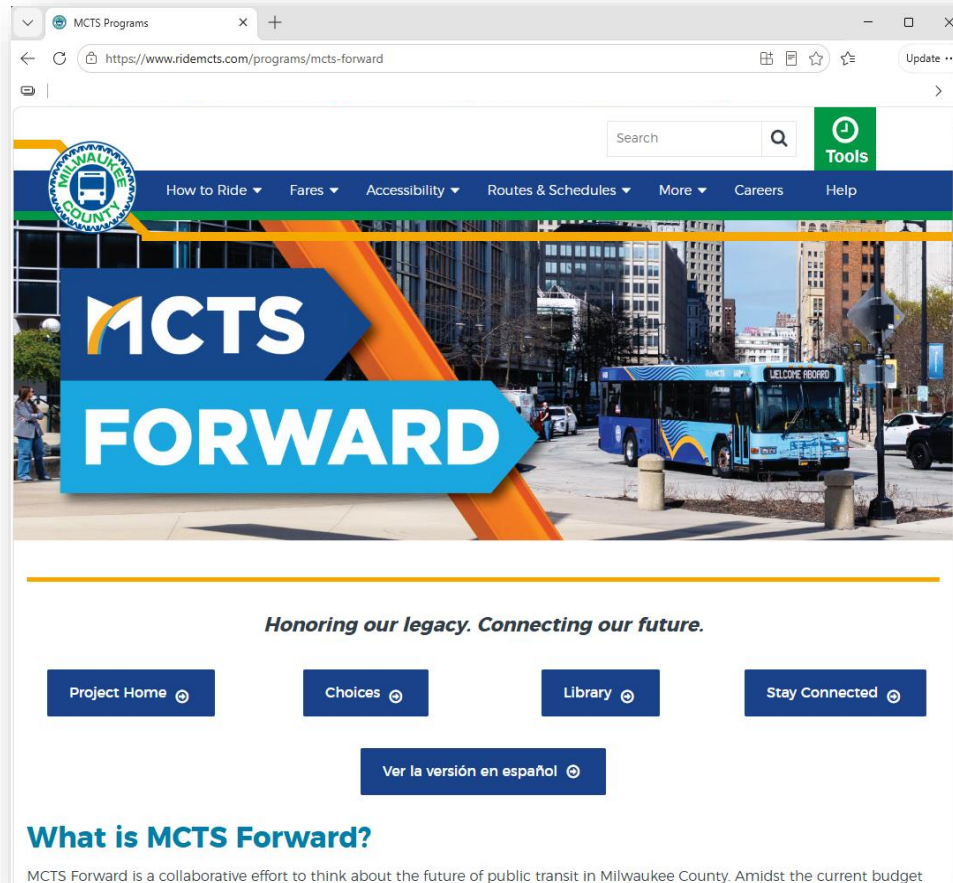
Coverage



Funding Advocacy

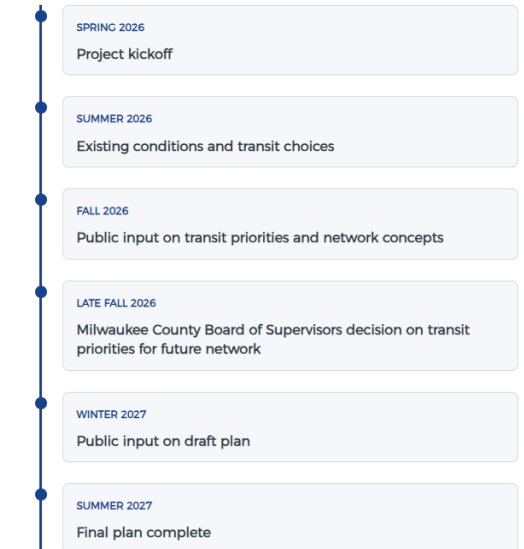


What's Next?



RideMCTS.com/MCTSForward

Timeline



Thank You!

The background of the slide is a photograph of a blue bus with orange and yellow accents, parked on a street. In the foreground, there are yellow and purple daffodils. The text is overlaid on a dark blue rounded rectangle.

UEDA Emerging Topics

**“Public Transportation Matters: How Do We Get
from HERE to THERE?”**

August 20th, 2026



Claire Enders

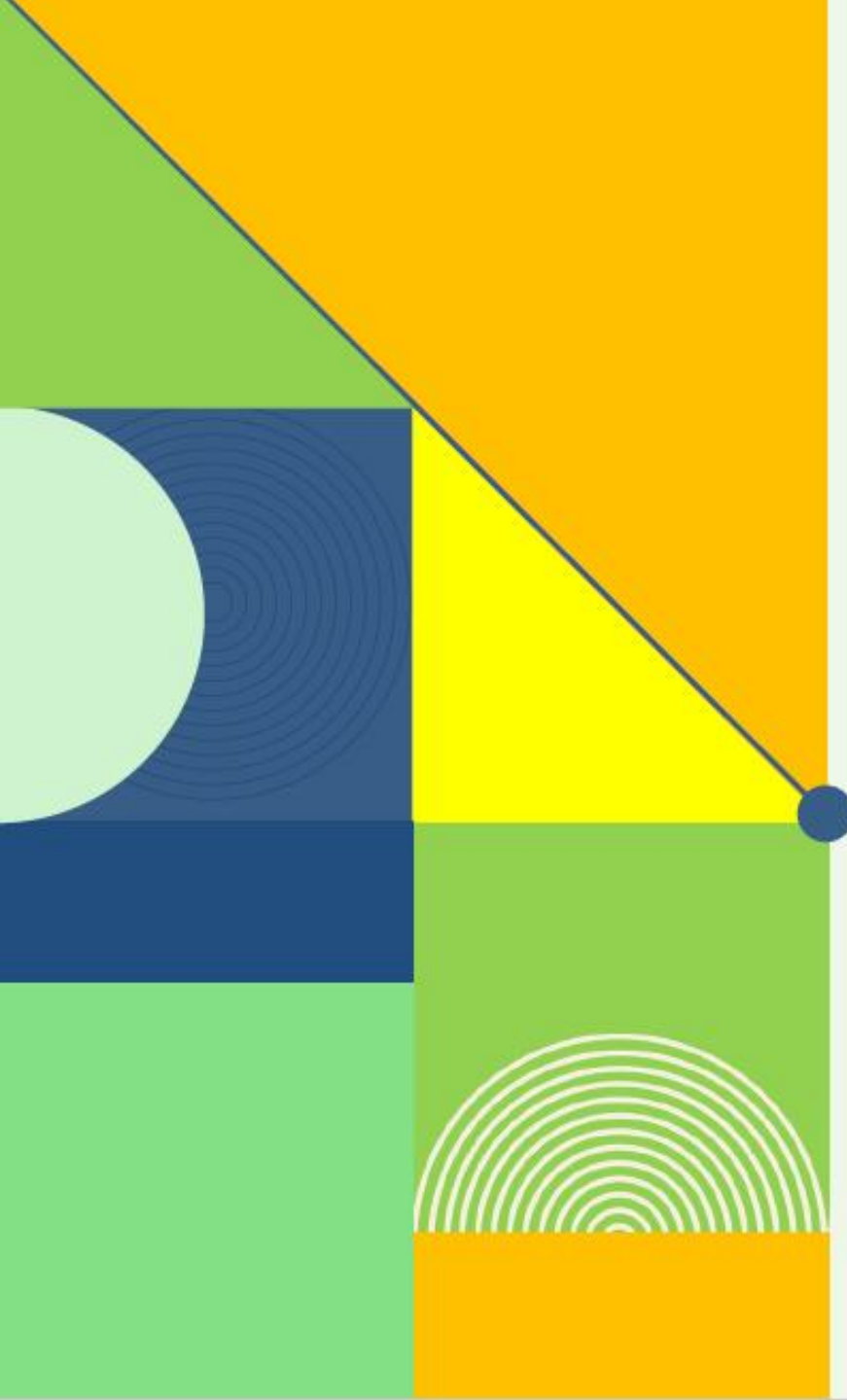
Transit is Milwaukee

- ❖ Claire (she/her) is a transportation professional, non-driver and public transit enthusiast. She has served as the co-chair of the Transit is Milwaukee transit advocacy steering committee since fall 2025. Claire holds a master's degree in urban planning from UW-Milwaukee. For over two years, Claire has served as the Transportation Coordinator for Milwaukee County Aging and Disabilities Services.
- ❖ In this role, she connects older adults with transportation services and advocates for the mobility needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Claire believes that convenient, safe, efficient, and accessible transportation for all is a right, not a privilege.



Transit is *Milwaukee*

Presented by Claire Enders
Transit is Milwaukee Co-Chair

An abstract geometric design on the left side of the slide. It features a large yellow square in the top-left corner, a green square in the top-right, a blue square in the bottom-left, and a green square in the bottom-right. A white circle is partially visible in the top-left, and a white semi-circle is in the bottom-right. A small blue circle is located at the intersection of the yellow and green squares in the top-right.

Agenda

Who We Are

Our Why

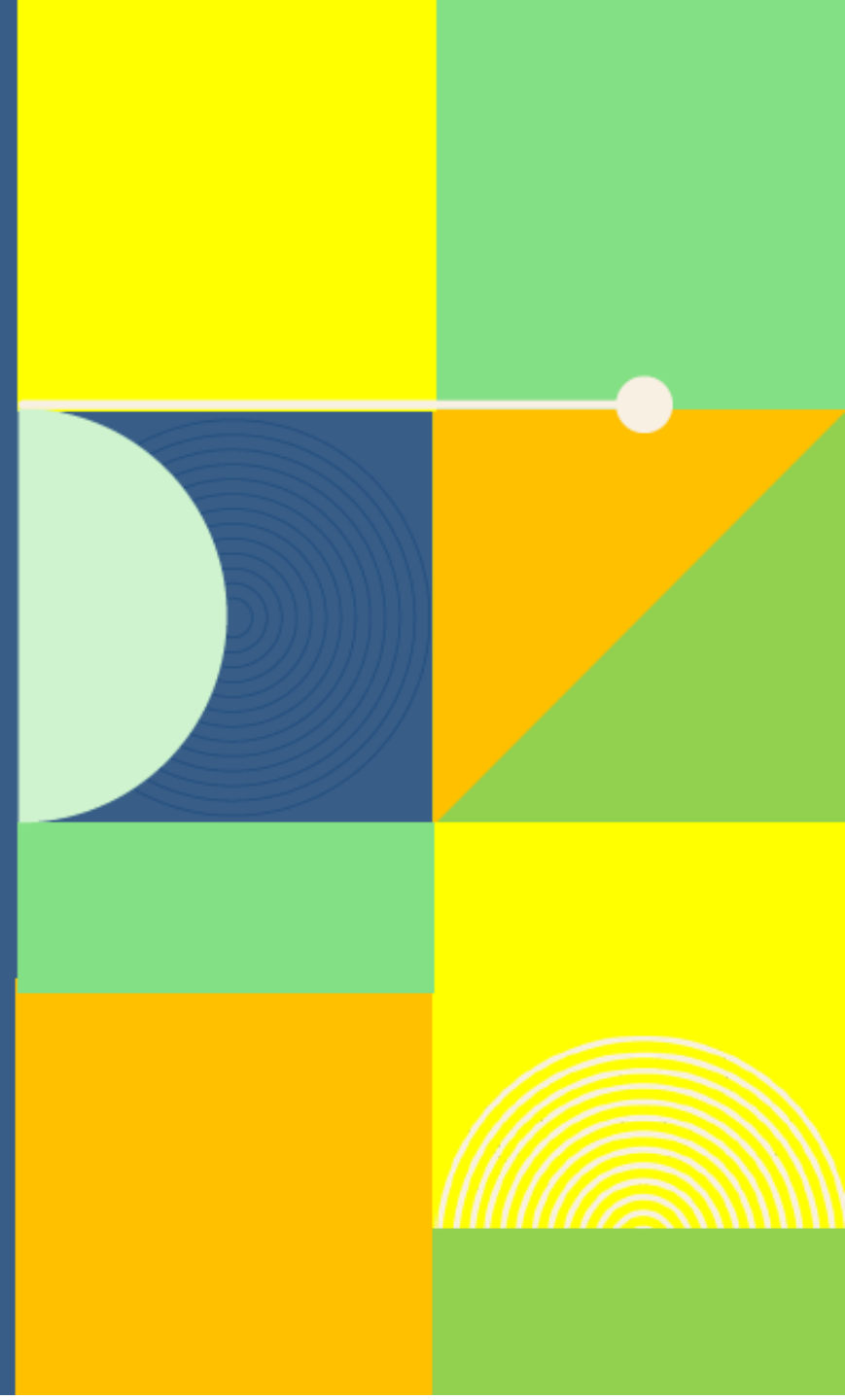
Our Priorities

What We Do

Call to Action

Who We Are

A coalition of transportation professionals, planners, community organizations, transit riders, disability rights advocates, transit advocates, and community members that advocates for local and regional public transit by educating and organizing stakeholders throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan area.



Our Why: Transit Matters

Transit benefits everyone (even if they don't think so!)

- Equity
- Accessibility
- Environment
- Public Health
- Less traffic
- Access to:
 - Jobs
 - Healthcare
 - Education



Photo Credit: MCTS



Our Priorities

- **Goal 1:** Maintain current funding levels for MCTS
- **Goal 2:** Pass enabling legislation for the creation of Regional Transit Authorities (RTA)
- **Goal 3:** Identify long-term sustainable funding for regional transit

What We Do

- Community Outreach
 - Tabling at community events
 - Postcard writing campaign
 - Conversations aimed at changing the narrative
- Policy and Research
 - Research best practices
 - Educate public about transit policy
- Support statewide transit advocacy efforts with partner organizations



Photo Credit: LaShawnda Jones



Photo Credit: weekwithoutdriving.org

**October 1-8,
2026**

Week Without Driving

- Initiative intended to help policy makers, elected leaders and transportation professionals understand the barriers nondrivers experience in accessing their communities
- Challenges participants to get around for a week using non-driving options
- Reflect on experiences
 - How did your daily routine change?
 - What challenges did you experience?
 - What surprised you?
 - Were there any destinations you couldn't reach without driving?

Call to Action



- Write to your elected officials
- Talk to people in your life about transit
- Engage and educate elected officials on the benefits and needs of public transit policies
- Join our meetings (third Friday of the month)
- Participate in the Week Without Driving
- Ride the bus!

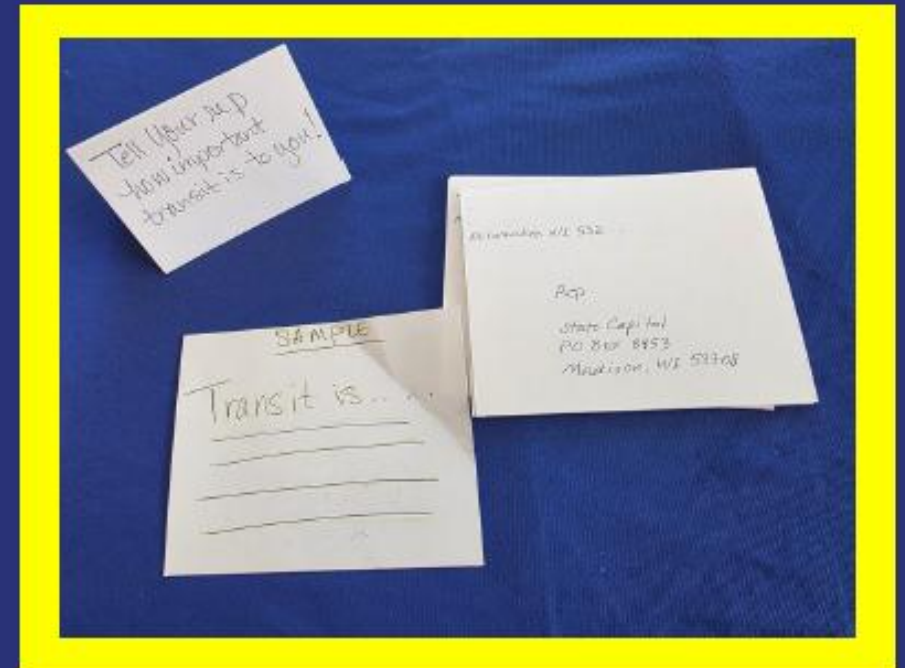


Photo Credit: LaShawnda Jones



THANK YOU

Claire Enders

claire.enders@milwaukeecountywi.gov

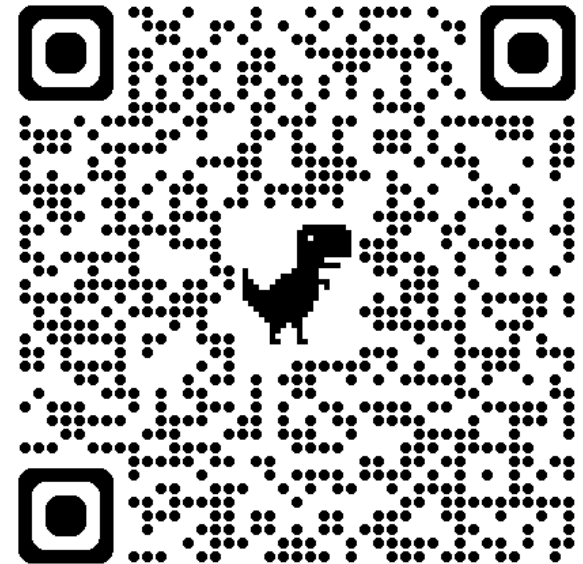
Instagram: [transitismilwaukee](#)

Discussion



And share your thoughts...

What informs your knowledge and understanding of public transportation?



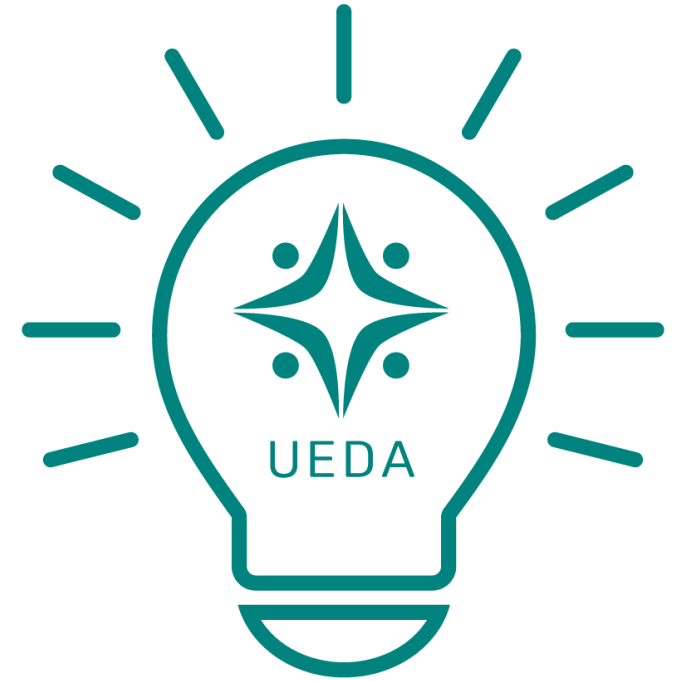


Final Thoughts

Other Resources

Upcoming UEDA events

Closeout with Near West Side Partners



OTHER RESOURCES



Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

“Study Highlights Milwaukee County Transit System's Value to Southeast Wisconsin's Regional Economy, Key findings demonstrate benefits to all road users, not just those who ride the bus” [View release here](#)

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS)

[Moving Forward Together](#)

MobiliSE – www.mobilisewi.org

An organization that works to unite leaders around shared strategies and actions to address Southeastern Wisconsin’s transportation challenges. [Learn about their events](#) and sign up for updates (they hold 2 convenings each spring and fall).

Transit Is Milwaukee – launched Spring 2026

<https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/04/28/transportation-new-coalition-seeks-to-boost-milwaukee-transit-funding/>

Join us at these upcoming events

UEDA's newsletter comes out the last week of the month! Be sure you're on our list.



Healthcare Information Session

Thursday, September 10 | 9-10am | YWCA Training Room

You will learn about an ICHRA plan and the Health Insurance Marketplace updates.

Take Root Milwaukee Member Information Exchange

Thursday, September 10 | 3-4:30pm | YWCA Training Room

UEDA Annual Community Gathering

Tuesday, September 22 | 4:30-6:30pm | Dandy

Celebrate our impact and award winners

Coffee and Coverage Information Session

Thursday, September 24 | 9-10am | YWCA Training Room

No-jargon look at what 'risk management' actually means for a nonprofit.

Join us at these upcoming events

UEDA's newsletter comes out the last week of the month! Be sure you're on our list.



Next Emerging Topics Series Session

Tuesday, October 27 | 9-10am | YWCA Training Room

Focus on solutions to food insecurity issues in Milwaukee

Bank On Greater Milwaukee Quarterly Member Meeting

Wednesday, November 18 | 9-10:30am | YWCA Training Room

Carnival Milwaukee

Friday, March 5, 2027 | 5:30-8:30pm at the Factory on Barclay

Our signature fundraiser!



Thank you to...

Near West Side Partners

Lindsey St Arnold Bell





UEDA

Thank you for your time and interest!

2026 EMERGING TOPICS SERIES SPONSORS



weenergies



JPMorganChase

Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin

1915 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53212

414.562.9904 | www.uedawi.org

