

Milwaukee County Transit System: First phase of 'MCTS NEXT' system redesign takes effect this weekend

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MILWAUKEE — The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is reminding passengers that the first phase of its MCTS NEXT system redesign takes effect on **Sunday, March 7, 2021** – with improvements and adjustments to Routes 15, 19, 20, 31, 33, 35, 51, 52, 63, and 68.

Customers are encouraged to visit RideMCTS.com/NEXT, which features an interactive map, or call **414-344-6711** for specific information about what to expect.

Milwaukee County has evolved over the years, especially when it comes to the locations of job centers, shopping destinations, schools, and residential areas. That's why, in 2018, MCTS started working on a new approach to improve the rider experience and meet the community's modern needs. MCTS NEXT aligns with Milwaukee County's mission to advance racial equity and enhance the quality of life through great public service.

The first phase of MCTS NEXT includes benefits like:

- More high-frequency routes.
 - When buses come more often, passengers enjoy more reliable service and can take advantage of more connections to other routes.

- For example, buses on Routes 15, 19, 35, & 51 will now arrive every 15 min. or less on weekdays.
- Better connections to job centers, grocery stores, and medical offices.
 - For example, Route 35 will be extended to Meijer at 60th & Layton and Route 31 will provide more service to the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and Mayfair Mall. A new route, Route 20, will provide additional service to Walmart on S. 27th Street in Franklin.
- Improved service on Weekends.
 - Routes 15, 31 (on State and Watertown Plank), 52, and 63 will run more frequently on Saturdays and Sundays as well as Route 19 (south end of the route), and Route 51 on Sundays.
- Simpler routing that is more direct and easier-to-understand.
 - For example: Routes 19 and 31 service will be adjusted to provide more frequent service along a single corridor instead of being “branched” and providing low frequency service on multiple streets.
- Faster service by properly-balancing bus stops.
 - Bus stop balancing means shortening many riders’ travel times by removing some stops that are too close to each other, are not used often, or do not meet standards for being accessible to persons with disabilities.

In addition to making this important information about MCTS NEXT available online and via phone 24 hours a day, MCTS launched an English and Spanish-language advertising campaign on buses, bus shelters, billboards, radio, newspapers, news websites, and social media. There are also audio announcements playing on board buses, informative bus stop signage, MCTS NEXT-focused passenger newsletters, targeted business outreach, virtual meetings, and other communications efforts to inform the community.

MCTS spent nearly three years conducting a comprehensive review of the entire transit system. Planners examined and evaluated every route and bus stop across the MCTS service area to identify opportunities for improvements, enhanced efficiency, and faster service.

A massive public outreach effort – including 13 open house events and more than 40 stakeholder meetings – resulted in hundreds of comments and thousands of interactions with passengers, bus drivers, businesses, community groups, and elected officials. Additionally, MCTS received input from the Milwaukee County Office on African American Affairs (OAAA). This valuable feedback helped shape plans that will improve the overall system and advance racial equity by increasing

access for people of color to employment, education, healthcare, grocery stores, and other essential destinations.

Phase One of MCTS NEXT will be followed by Phase Two on June 6, 2021 and Phase Three on August 29, 2021 - each impacting an additional 11 routes.