



Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office

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NEWS RELEASE

David A. Clarke Jr.
Sheriff

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Recent Shooting of Bus Driver Highlights Increase in Crime on Milwaukee County Buses

Milwaukee - Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. directed his law enforcement crime analytics division (LEAD) to take a look at several categories of persistent crime and quality of life problems on Milwaukee County buses. Five major categories show a significant increase in offenses: assault on operator, assault on passenger, fights, thefts and vandalism/graffiti.

Up until 2009, the sheriff had a dedicated unit of sheriff's deputies riding the Milwaukee County buses that were experiencing a higher number of crimes and quality of life issues. Prior to the dedicated unit of deputies, these particular routes had high rates of crimes. MCSO took it on, providing undercover and uniformed targeted patrols, and the presence of this unit began a downward trend in assaults on operators and passengers, fights, thefts and vandalism/graffiti that culminated in the lowest number of incidents over a seven year period in 2009, the last year the MCSO unit provided security.

From 2010 to 2012, there has been a remarkable increase in these serious categories:

Incident Category	%chng2009v.2011	%chng2009v.2012
Assault on Operator	23.1%	123.1%
Assault on Passenger	82.5%	70.0%
Fight	167.0%	135.2%
Theft	264.5%	148.4%
Vandalism/Graffiti	291.3%	224.6%

Milwaukee County transit has had a history of suppressing crime and quality of life violations on buses, giving a false impression of the safety of this transportation option. Suppressing crime is not a legitimate enforcement strategy. Sheriff Clarke believes in keeping people informed and giving them the information to form a picture of what is truly going on, so riders can decide for themselves on using that form of transportation or on taking precautions.

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The recent shooting of a bus driver is a serious matter. Apparently, not to Milwaukee County transit officials. It received very little media attention, and the sheriff found out from radio host Mark Belling. The sheriff is conducting an inquiry into why he was not informed of this serious criminal act on a county bus that is being investigated by the Milwaukee Police Department. Even with the private security firm, G4S, the crime, violence and quality of life issues persist.

Former Board Chairman Lee Holloway asked the sheriff to put together a budget proposal to include a dedicated transit unit of for a consistent presence to reduce crime and violence and increase the quality of life for riders of Milwaukee County transit buses. That proposal was put before the Finance, Personnel & Audit Committee in June 2012, and Sup. Dave Cullen called it a “publicity stunt.” The proposal was rejected. Without funding, the sheriff was unable to continue a dedicated presence on the buses.

County Executive Chris Abele’s last two budgets reduced public safety resources in Milwaukee County by \$16 million, and included layoffs of deputies and correctional officers. These actions further constrained the already stretched resources that the sheriff has to reduce crime, violence and improve the quality of life for Milwaukee County residents. Abele is proposing the layoff of another 25 deputies and two supervisors in 2014.

Abele thanked Chief Flynn for stepping up and having police officers ride the buses. Abele said that MPD would provide officers to ride county buses. MPD, with furloughing 1500 officers in 2013, cannot even keep up with answering calls for service in a timely fashion and the violence that goes on in neighborhoods and city streets. Asking them to ride the buses is an ineffective use of a Milwaukee police officer because they don’t have enough officers to tend to their traditional responsibilities.

Sheriff Clarke has asked for an additional 134 deputies in his budget request. Under Chris Abele’s budgets, the manpower is down more than 20% to 253 deputies. The county executive has an obligation to fund parks patrols, lakefront patrols, bus patrols, service of restraining orders and domestic abuse injunctions. The sheriff will ask the county board again to provide a reasonable budget to carry out his mandates and duties and to avoid deficits created by the county executive’s inflated revenue projections.

County Executive Abele claims public safety is his highest priority. Sheriff Clarke is asking him to put his money where his mouth is.

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