



ALDERPERSON AGENDA ITEM MEMO

To: John Ruggini, Dave Simpson, Jim Archambo, Dennis McBride, Jim Moldenhauer,
From: Mike Morgan
Date: 11/17/25 (*revised draft version*)
Subject: Bicycle support budget proposal

A. Background/Rationale

During the 2026 Budget discussions, questions were raised by several alders relating to the request for a \$10,000 increase in the City contribution to the Bublr Bikes organization.

Those discussions led to a request for more information on Bublr, which has received \$34,000 from the City annually since 2019 for an estimated total of \$238,000. The 2026 request equates to a \$54,000 subsidy expecting to increase in 2027 (\$10,000 annually is passed through money from MRMC).

\$15,000 of Bubblr subsidy is paid from the annual sale of a liquor license, any the remaining funding comes directly from the taxpayers (\$29,000 for 2026).

West Allis, on the other hand, funds Bublr through its [First Ring Industrial Enterprise \(FIRE\) program](#) instead of property taxes. FIRE is a regional community development organization providing gap financing support for commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development projects throughout Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee counties.

In light of additional input from residents and alders, I suggest that we hold Bublr Bikes funding for the \$10,000 increase budget item for 2026 until we thoroughly review our ability to remove the Bublr subsidy from the property tax.

B. Key Issues for Consideration

Funding of programs like Bublr are becoming challenging, but can be solved simply and cost effectively. We need to look at more creative solutions under our current budget constraints.

We are constantly reminded of the “fiscal cliff” and our precarious financial situation. Here’s an opportunity to save money from our property tax budget for a “nice to have” program to help ensure we have funds to provide accessible essential services that enhance quality of life in ways that are most inclusive, efficient, effective and affordable.

The Bublr stations provide limited use in Wauwatosa while people are moving toward newer modes of micro-mobility like electronic scooters or eBikes that take them closer to destinations without docking stations restrictions. There are 17 Bublr stations in Wauwatosa with 200 city-owned bike docks. The 4,146 Wauwatosa-based rides in 2024 equals about 20 rides per bike. Only two Wauwatosa Bublr locations are west of 84th Street and there are no locations north of North



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Avenue. Four of the city's 8 aldermanic districts and 12 wards have zero or minimal access. There are also restrictions related to persons with disabilities access related to Bublr bikes.

We are providing Bublr prime locations for Bublr bikes while also paying them a subsidy (\$200/bike).

Wauwatosa and others have subsidized Bublr as a start up so now they can stand on their own, especially having received a \$4.15 million federal and local grant earlier this year. If the purpose is to help support a regional program including Milwaukee and West Allis, then explore Tourism, TIDs or CDGB as funding options.

For a quick example, the \$29,000 amount could help fund a fire prevention staff position, which seems more essential as we consider fire department consolidation.

C. Fiscal Impact

Save \$10,000 to reduce tax levy in 2026 to review long-term funding for more essential and effective service for Wauwatosa residents.

D. Requested Action

Proposed amendment for Council Budget review to hold the \$10,000 Bublr subsidy increase until staff thoroughly reviews funding Bublr from other sources like CDBG, TIDs or Tourism, and/or review alternative or more effective bike-share and micromobility choices. Require RFPs and shorter contracts for future similar subsidies to private programs.

E. Attachments

Other non-profit programs options available supporting disadvantaged bicycle access (if Bublr continues, then future funding should be removed from property tax and/or publicly bid to other available programs)

[Bikes For Stripes: Milwaukee Homeless Veterans Initiative](#) (Milwaukee-based program providing free donated bikes to homeless veterans)

[A free program offering bikes to homeless people in Waukesha is running again](#) (Partner with White Stone Warriors providing free bikes to low income and homeless people)

[Free Electric Bike Program 2025: How to Apply & Save Big](#) (Leogaur provides eBikes through trials, discounts and other offers)