



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

The Honorable Robin Vos
Room 317 East
State Capitol, P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Room 309 East
State Capitol, P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

May 23, 2011

Dear Rep. Vos and Senator Darling:

As you are well aware, few priorities are as important in the current economy as creating and maintaining private sector jobs. That is why we are especially troubled by how the current state budget puts needed funding at risk for an already severely strained transit system here in Milwaukee County.

Left unaddressed, the state budget is poised to cut approximately \$13.6 million from Milwaukee County's transit system. About 39 percent of the 140,000 daily rides on the transit system are rides used by people going to or from a job. Another five percent use the transit system to go to a job interview. And thousands more - 11 percent of all riders - are future workers now at Milwaukee Public Schools and our colleges and universities who use the transit system to get the skills and training they need to enter the job market.

Maintaining a thriving transit system in Milwaukee County is a key part of keeping the economic engine of our state strong. With gas prices hovering at record levels and funding for road building set to increase, we encourage you to balance transit funding in the state budget so that our workers can get to their jobs.

For these reasons, we encourage you to consider the following changes as you discuss transit funding and the next state budget:

- Restore the state transportation fund as the source of funding for transit aid. Removing transit funding from the transportation fund and moving it to the general fund makes it much easier for that funding to be diverted to other purposes, at a time when our residents need more options, not fewer, to handle record fuel prices.
Ensure that the termination of the Southeast Regional Transit Authority (SERTA) does not penalize Milwaukee County taxpayers. The best public data shows that the vast majority of the \$1.27 million in leftover funds at SERTA came from Milwaukee County via a rental car tax. Milwaukee County taxpayers should receive that money back to protect County's transit system, rather than have it diverted to other transit systems.
Eliminate transit cuts to ensure proper balance between transit funding and other transportation projects. Media reports have shown that the proposed budget contains an increase in highway funding. Meanwhile, the legislative fiscal bureau recently re-estimated the transportation fund balance and found it will contain an additional \$27 million in funding. By keeping transit funding in the transportation fund and using just \$14 million of that funding for local transit aid, Milwaukee County can avoid cutting its transit system by \$7 million, and likewise, the rest of the state's transit systems will be able to maintain funding at the current level during the next budget cycle.

We realize that in the current fiscal environment, everyone must do more with less. But we encourage you to consider these options that will protect our ability to remain competitive as we jointly seek to help train and educate our workers and create and retain jobs in Southeast Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

[Signature of Chris Abele]

Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

[Signature of Tom Barrett]

Tom Barrett Milwaukee Mayor

[Signature of Tim Sheehy]

Tim Sheehy President, MMAC

[Signature of Greg Thornton]

Greg Thornton Superintendent, MPS

[Signature of Michael Lovell]

Michael Lovell Chancellor, UWM

CC: Chairman Lee Holloway Joint Finance Committee Governor Scott Walker Sec. Mark Gottlieb



Office of the Mayor

Paul R. Soglin, Mayor

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May 24, 2011

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

As you continue to develop the state budget I would like to provide you with some information regarding the importance of mass transit and the role it plays in maintaining the area's vital economy.

The proposed cut in state transit funding by 10% equates to a \$1.8 million reduction to Metro's \$50 million operating budget for 2012. This has potential devastating economic impacts it would be on top of the anticipated \$1 million increase in fuel prices that Metro anticipates in 2012. The proposal to transfer state transit aids from the transportation fund to the general fund leaves future transit investments more vulnerable to further cuts. Finally, proposals to eliminate the RTA in our state take away local options for funding future transit investments according to the different needs in different areas of the state.

Mass transit plays a vital role in improving the job market. A recent Brookings Institution Study shows Madison ranked 15th in the country, ahead of Chicago, the Twin Cities, and San Francisco, in having strong transit access to jobs. A recent Wisconsin DOT study shows Metro has a 19% lower cost per ride than its peers, and 41% better ridership productivity. It is important to note that 53% of Metro riders use the mass transit system to commute to work. Ridership extends beyond the Madison municipal boundaries and serves major employers such as Epic Systems in Verona.

Mass transit improves the tax base for the state and contributes to a high quality of life which attracts businesses to the state of Wisconsin. Studies show that 36% of Metro ridership are students, either traveling to local elementary and high schools, or to and from the University of Wisconsin campus. These students are the future employees and employers in this state and the education they are pursuing can only serve to improve the business climate here.

For all these reasons, transit funding should remain in the transportation fund and should not be cut, but should be held steady. Local communities should be given the option to form RTA's to address the specific needs of their communities.

I encourage you to fully consider restoration of the state transportation fund as a source of funding for transit aid. As we face record fuel prices, the bus system is a truly viable option for workers as they maintain a standard of living.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Soglin
Mayor

PRS/lao


**GREATER
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The Honorable Robin Vos
Room 317 East
State Capitol, PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Room 309 East
State Capitol, PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Rep. Vos and Senator Darling:

The Greater Milwaukee Committee has prioritized and addressed regional and local transit issues for years. Adequate funding is critical for our economy, our educational system and our citizens.

\$14 million in cuts are proposed to Milwaukee County's transit system.

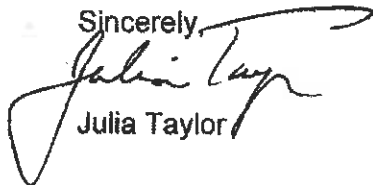
This is a crisis point for much of our population.

Please take the following actions as you discuss transit funding in the state budget:

- **Balance out the funding between transit and other transportation projects and eliminate proposed transit cuts.**
- **Include funding aid for transit in the state transportation fund and do not shift it to the general budget. Dedicated funding is critical at this time.**
- **Any funds collected from Milwaukee County for SERTA should be returned to Milwaukee County if SERTA is eliminated.**

Transit aids are a critical part of the equation for prosperity for our state and our economy. Please restore the cuts, the source of funding and keep our largest transit system adequately funded.

Sincerely,


Julia Taylor



Make It Work Milwaukee! Coalition

Strengthening Milwaukee County through better health and human services

Abri Health Plan
Alzheimer's Association,
SE Wisconsin Chapter
American Red Cross in
Southeastern Wisconsin
ARC of Greater Milwaukee, Inc.
Autism Society of Southeastern
Wisconsin
Automated Health Systems
Badger Association of the Blind and
Visually Impaired
Bell Therapy, Inc.
Curative Care Network
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging
Groups
Community Advocates
Community Care, Inc.
Disability Rights Wisconsin
Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin
Eisenhower Center
Goodwill Industries of Southeastern
Wisconsin, Inc.
Grand Avenue Club, Inc.
Guest House of Milwaukee, Inc.
HealthWatch
Impact
IndependenceFirst
Independent Care Health Plan
Interfaith Conference of Greater
Milwaukee
Jewish Community Relations
Council of the Milwaukee Jewish
Federation
Jewish Family Services
Justice 2000, Inc.
Managed Health Services
Mental Health America of Wisconsin
Meta House, Inc.
Milwaukee Mental Health Task
Force
Milwaukee Aging Consortium
Milwaukee Center for Independence
M&S Clinical Services
NAMI Greater Milwaukee
Our Space, Inc.
Partnership Council Public Policy
Committee
Public Policy Committee, Milwaukee
Child Abuse Prevention Services
Coalition
Rosalie Manor Community & Family
Services, Inc.
Southeast Wisconsin ADAPT
Transitional Living Services, Inc.
Vital Voices for Mental Health
UEDA
Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.
Wisconsin Council on Children
and Families
Gwen Jackson

For immediate Release
May 24, 2011

Transit: A Lifeline for People with Disabilities and Seniors

The Make It Work Milwaukee Coalition supports the preservation of public transportation funding. Transit and paratransit services are critical to maintaining the independence of older adults and people with disabilities as many do not drive or own a vehicle because of their disability, aging, and/or limited income.

When transportation is cut, not only are people with disabilities and older adults unable to work or get out in their community, but a caregiver may no longer be able to provide care when it is needed. Some people with disabilities need supports at all hours of the day. Transit lowers government costs by helping people with disabilities live independently and be employed.

Our agencies urge legislators to restore transit operating aids to help preserve public transportation. Over the past decade, we have seen harmful reductions in transit services, as local government struggles to maintain essential services with declining resources and increasing fuel costs. The resulting cutbacks have already taken a heavy toll on the ability of people with disabilities and seniors to work and be contributing members of the community, and also made it very difficult for the caregivers they rely on to get to work.

Nearly half of transit use is for work related purposes. Further cuts in transit will cut off people with disabilities and seniors from jobs and education, and lead to higher unemployment. Transit is vital to Wisconsin's economy, businesses and families, and lowers government costs by keeping people employed and living independently.

In addition, proposed reductions in transit aids are expected to result in significant reduction of paratransit services which are a lifeline for many people with disabilities and older adults. In Milwaukee County alone it is expected that a minimum of 2000 people with disabilities and older adults will completely lose access to transportation, leaving them prisoners in their own homes unable to travel to work, to school, to medical appointments, or to buy food. The majority of those expected to lose service live in suburban areas including Bay Side, Glendale, Franklin, Oak Creek and Greendale. Thousands more will be impacted by the reduction of the service area and may be unable to get to work, to the doctor, or to visit family.

Beyond the proposed reductions, transit is at risk for further cuts as proposed State aid reductions for local municipalities will create substantial additional competition for funding at the local level.

Seniors, people with disabilities and direct care workers rely on transit for their livelihood. A balanced approach funding all modes of transportation is critical to keep workers connected to jobs, students in school, and provide Wisconsin with a better return on investment.

Contacts for MIWM:

Barbara Beckert, Disability Rights Wisconsin, 414-773-4646/ 414-719-1034
Tom Hlavacek, Alzheimer's Association of Southeastern Wisconsin, 414-479-8800

Make It Work Milwaukee! is a cross-disability, aging, youth, and families coalition that is dedicated to strengthening Milwaukee County by supporting a meaningful life in the community for people with disabilities, older adults, and youth and families.



“Advocating for All Generations”

The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization that was founded in 1978.

Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

Intergenerational Leadership Development ■ Education ■ Advocacy ■ Elder Law Center

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

Re: State Transit Aid – Governor Walker’s 2011-13 State Budget

The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide membership organization that was founded in 1978. Our 27 elected Governing Board members represents over 90,000 grass roots members, in all Wisconsin 72 counties.

CWAG held its 34 Annual State Convention and Membership meeting over this last weekend in Madison and our Governing Board and statewide membership support having the Joint Finance Committee to restore the state transportation fund as the source of funding for transit aid and we oppose the Governors 10% budget cuts in transit aid in Governor Walker’s 2011-13 State Budget.

We also support Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, Mayor Barrett, along with the Milwaukee Public Schools, UW-Milwaukee and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, in making sure Milwaukee County maintains its current level of state transit aid, especially given the 140,000 daily riders, which include many of Milwaukee County’s elderly.

Maintaining a thriving transit system in Milwaukee County and else where, is a key component in keeping the economic engine of our state strong. With rising gas prices hovering at record levels and funding for road builders set to increase, we encourage the state legislature to balance transit funding in the state budget so that our workers can get to their jobs, for our poor and for our elderly who need public transit so they have the ability to continue their volunteerism and for them to maintaining a better quality of life.

What is being proposed in Governor Walker’s 2011-13 State Budget will undermine every aspect of public transportation and if in acted, will hurt our state’s job retention efforts, the poor and the elderly.

Nino Amato
President & Executive Director
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
608-514-3317 / namato@cwag.org



2011-2013 Wisconsin Budget & Legislative Summary

Focus on Impacts to Milwaukee County

March 24, 2011

www.transitnow.org

262-246-6151

kthomas@transitnow.org

The Governor's 2011/2013 State Budget proposal:

Moves the cost for public transit out of the segregated Transportation Fund to the General Fund. This results in dramatically increased competition for scarce General Fund dollars, which funds most state supported programs such as schools, Badger Care, and Medicaid.

- The total state support for transit in Wisconsin is currently \$115 million annually, or about 5% of the total Transportation Fund.
- Milwaukee County accounts for half of transit ridership in Wisconsin and receives about half of the total transit aids provided to local transit.

Reduces state operating support to local transit systems by 10% in 2012, while eliminating local funding alternatives and increasing competition for local funding sources.

- **Cuts state support for local municipalities** adding even more pressure on the property tax levy, which is the local funding source for transit.
 - **Cuts 15% in shared revenue to the County PLUS a cut of 15% in local transportation aids**, which supports local roads and bridges.
- Local transit systems depend on support from the state Transportation Fund to continue providing transportation services, much like highways, local roads, ports, freight rail, intercity rail and other forms of transportation.
- **Locks in the property tax levy limit** at 0 percent or the percentage increase in valuation due to net new construction, whichever is higher.

The Special Session Budget Adjustment Bill (SS SB/AB11, recently passed)

Forfeits \$46 million in federal funds for transit in Wisconsin annually.

- Milwaukee County will likely be impacted by this significant reduction in federal funds across transit systems in Wisconsin, even though Milwaukee County Transit workers are under private contract and would not fall under the Repair Bill.

The RTA Repeal Bill (SB25/AB36)

Eliminates all Regional Transit Authorities that were enabled in the 2009-11 State Budget.

- This bill will eliminate local decision-making and crucial tools for communities to provide needed flexibility, improved efficiency, and stronger regional linkages. Existing RTA's would have no fiscal impact on the 2001-13 State Budget.
- Would eliminate the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SERTA,) and stop the proposed KRM Commuter Rail project and the job access and economic development it would provide by linking the Milwaukee-Chicago economic corridor along the Lakefront.

Nearly 1 out of every 6 households in Milwaukee County (16.6%) do not have access to an automobile.

Transit forms a vital link between thousands of workers and their jobs every day, **reduces household transportation expenses creating spending power that supports families and the local economy**, and is a priority for business and talent attraction.

- Transit keeps Wisconsin working. **Nearly half of transit trips are for work purposes, on average.**
- Transit is a cost effective way to move people and support our economy. **Every dollar invested in public transit in Milwaukee Co. returns \$4.72 to the community in economic benefits.**
- **Transit has become a "must have" for business retention, attraction, and expansion.** Nearly every metro area in the U.S. is *improving* transit in 2011.

- **Many people rely on transit for work, school, to shop for food, and get to healthcare.** Keeping people employed, living independently, and providing an educated workforce is essential to building a **stable and growing economy**, and reducing government costs.

Reduced flexibility and transit funding can only result in more cuts in transit service and fare increases, and eliminate opportunities for modern advancements such as Bus Rapid Transit. Reductions in transit aids will hit Milwaukee County especially hard. Milwaukee County Transit is facing a structural funding crisis and has resulted in 20% reduction of services in the past decade and fares increased to one of the highest in the nation.



Milwaukee-area leaders call for more transit aid

In letter, 5 cite higher-than-expected calculations for state transportation funds

By Larry Sandler of the Journal Sentinel

May 23, 2011 | [\(18\) Comments](#)

Revised calculations of state transportation funding would give lawmakers the financial leeway to block all of Gov. Scott Walker's proposed cuts in aid to Wisconsin public transit systems, Milwaukee-area leaders said Monday.

In a letter, five top government, education and business executives urged legislative budget writers to roll back the transit cuts, in a vote now scheduled for Thursday.

They also backed Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele in calling for the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee to reverse its decision on how to split up the assets of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority. In its current form, that move could cancel out state aid cuts to a bus system that serves the district of the legislator who proposed it.

Also Monday, the co-chairman of the budget panel predicted his committee would kill Walker's plan to shift transit aid from the state's transportation fund into the general fund, where buses and shared-ride taxi systems would compete with schools, courts and other programs.

The letter from Abele, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Gregory Thornton, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Chancellor Mike Lovell and Tim Sheehy, president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, was sent to the committee's co-chairmen, Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and Rep. Robin Vos (R-Rochester).

"Maintaining a thriving transit system in Milwaukee County is a key part of keeping the economic engine of our state strong," said the letter, noting that commuters account for 39% of the bus system's 140,000 daily rides, with another 5% for job interviews and 11% for students being educated for the workforce. "With gas prices hovering at record levels and funding for road building set to increase, we encourage you to balance transit funding in the state budget so that our workers can get to their jobs."

Walker has proposed slicing state aid to transit systems by 10%, or \$9.6 million a year, which would take \$6.8 million from the Milwaukee County Transit System alone, starting next year. County officials have warned that an aid cut of that magnitude could force them to raise fares and end four regular routes and all Freeway Flyers, late-night and weekend service and festival routes, along with most suburban van service for the disabled and elderly.

But the latest estimate of transportation fund revenue, released earlier this month by the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, is \$27 million higher than previous projections, the letter notes.

Because of the timing of state aid payments and the difference between the state and local fiscal years, it would cost about \$14.8 million to cancel all the transit aid cuts in the 2011-'13 state budget, said Al Runde, a fiscal bureau analyst. That's just more than half the extra revenue available, the letter notes.

Vos said he expected his panel to keep some cuts in transit aid, but he declined to predict how much. Lawmakers have voiced interest in easing Walker's 10% cuts in local road aid, which amount to \$43.3 million a year to local governments statewide.

The letter also disputed the committee's plan to dissolve the three-county RTA. That body has \$1.27 million in its coffers, which would be divided equally among Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha counties, under a budget amendment pushed by Vos.

As a result, each county would get \$423,440, the remaining proceeds from a predecessor body's discontinued rental car tax. Abele and other local officials say that's unfair, because most of the car rentals came at Milwaukee County's Mitchell International Airport.

But Racine's Belle Urban System could come out ahead, because Racine County's share would exceed the roughly \$200,000 a year the bus system would lose from a 10% aid cut. Vos' Assembly district includes Yorkville and part of the Town of Mount Pleasant, which are served by the bus system.

However, Vos noted that it would be up to county officials whether to give some or all of the money to the city-run bus system. He said he thought it was fair to divide the cash equally because much of the money raised by the rental car tax went to pay lobbyists who were pushing for new and higher taxes to replace property tax funding for bus systems.

Racine transit officials did not return calls seeking comment.

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<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/122481649.html>

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