



March 19, 2015

To: Fox Cities Transit Commission

From: Deborah Wetter  
General Manager

Subject: Letter to Joint Finance Committee

The Joint Finance Committee is accepting public comment regarding the 2015-2017 Wisconsin state budget proposed by Governor Walker. There are several key issues we'd like the Transit Commission to bring to the attention of the committee as they begin to deliberate the proposed budget.

1. The proposed budget recommends that Mass Transit Operating Assistance continue to be funded from the Segregated Transportation Fund. The letter we have drafted for your consideration urges the Committee to support this.
2. The 2011-2013 state budget resulted in reduced transit investment by the state. The proposed 2015-2017 budget allocates funding for a 4% increase in operating assistance as provided in 2013 Act 20 (the final approved budget) but calls for the following years to remain flat. The letter we have drafted asks the Committee to consider gradually restoring funding to historic levels in 2016 and 2017.
3. Federal capital funds have decreased by 50% (from \$12 million to \$6.2 million) annually. At that level, it will take Valley Transit 27 years to replace the fleet of buses which currently range between 10 and 21 years of age. The letter we have drafted asks that the state create a transit capital investment program in order to maintain the safe and reliable transportation services people depend on.
4. A request to be provided with RTA-enabling legislation so that the taxpayers in the Fox Cities can determine whether or not they want to tax themselves to support transit services.

**Recommendation: That the Fox Cities Transit Commission approve sending a letter to the Joint Finance Committee signed by Chairman Chuck Rundquist on their behalf that supports the four points listed in this memo.**



March 25, 2015

Dear members of the Joint Finance Committee,

The Fox Cities Transit Commission, made up of Fox Cities municipal funding partners of Valley Transit, provides oversight for fixed route and paratransit services and acts as an advisory group to the Appleton Common Council. It is on behalf of the Fox Cities Transit Commission that I am writing to you regarding the proposed 2015-2017 state budget.

Valley Transit is an essential part of the economic development and vitality of our region. Fifty percent (50%) of the 1.27 million trips taken with Valley Transit services are getting people to jobs. Transportation is becoming an increasingly serious problem for worker retention for major employers in our area. Workforce Development and several manufacturing companies have contacted Valley Transit to request assistance in getting their employees to work so they can continue in their jobs.

With regard to Governor Walker's proposed 2015-2017 budget, we are pleased to see the Governor has recommended that Mass Transit Operating Assistance continue to be funded from the Segregated Transportation Fund and we urge you to support keeping it in the segregated fund. Public transit has always been and continues to be an important part of Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure.

With the reduced transit investment by the state as a result of the 2011-2013 budget, a greater share of operating costs has shifted to Valley Transit's twenty-two local funding partners who continue to face the challenges of state imposed levy limits and reduced shared revenue payments. Valley Transit riders are also paying more following a fare increase on January 5, 2015. While we are pleased to see the Governor's budget allocating funding for the 4% increase in operating assistance as provided in 2013 Act 20, it calls for subsequent years to remain flat. At a time when more people are turning to public transit to get to jobs and job training, we urge you to consider gradually restoring funding to historic levels in 2016 and 2017.

We also ask that the state create a transit capital investment program to replace lost Federal capital funds so that vital transit vehicles, facilities and equipment can be maintained. The availability of Federal capital funds has declined nearly 50%. Under current Federal funding levels, it will take Valley Transit 27 years to replace their fleet of buses. In order to maintain the safe and reliable transportation services people depend on, adequate transit capital assistance is vital to maintain the transit infrastructure.



March 18, 2015

Page 2

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Valley Transit is providing an essential service to thousands of people in the Fox Cities and has a direct impact in the economic health and vitality of our community. In order to continue to support the needs of the businesses and residents of our community, we need to have a stable and sustainable local source of funding. The Fox Cities is ready and supportive of a Regional Transit Authority. We ask you to provide us with the enabling legislation necessary so that the taxpayers in the Fox Cities can determine whether or not they want to tax themselves to support transit services in our community.

We ask that you keep these points in mind as you are deliberating on the 2015-2017 biennial budget.

Sincerely,

Chuck Rundquist  
Fox Cities Transit Commission, Chair