



July 10, 2013

To: Fox Cities Transit Commission
Finance Committee

From: Deborah Wetter
General Manager

Subject: Approval to Accept Two Planning Grants for Strategic Planning
and Rider Survey

Valley Transit submitted a request to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for federal planning funds (section 5304) to develop a strategic plan for Valley Transit which included a rider survey as part of the planning effort. We requested \$80,000 (\$64,000 federal, \$16,000 local) with the local funding being made up of a \$12,000 grant from unrestricted funds within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, Inc. and \$4,000 from the advertising line item of the 2013 Valley Transit budget.

With significant funding challenges for maintaining the Valley Transit system in the future and the changing demographics of the Fox Cities region in the last 10 years including a dramatic increase in the diversity of the area and an aging population, it is important for Valley Transit to have a plan for the next 3, 5 and 10 years that has community support. Valley Transit, the community and the funding partners need to determine what type of transit system the community wants and needs. We need to determine how transit fits into the overall transportation system in the Fox Cities and how the system can support economic development in the region. And it is important to determine how the desired transit services will be funded. As the economy continues to improve and expand, it is important that the transit system services keep pace with the expansion of the economy and enhance the ability of the Fox Cities to attract and retain businesses and the workforce needed to sustain those businesses.

Valley Transit has not conducted a strategic planning effort for many years. The region's transportation needs will be met more comprehensively and effectively if a strategic planning effort involving stakeholder groups is conducted. And given the demographic changes that are occurring in the Fox Cities, it is also important to determine if Valley Transit's rider demographics and usage patterns are changing and how the system can be modified to be more effective for bus riders. Therefore, we need to update the comprehensive rider information which is 11 years old.

Because it is important to involve stakeholder groups, including local funding partners, community and business leaders, riders and the public, the effort will be more costly than most strategic plans done for a private company or a non-profit organization. The effort to involve stakeholders is essential if we are going to have a plan that makes sense for the Fox Cities area, reflects the changing demographics and needs of our communities and looks at the possible ways to fund such a system in the next 3, 5 and 10 years. The plan will be an essential tool as we move forward in determining how to govern, plan and fund existing and future transit services in our community.

Recommendation: Accept the \$80,000 Federal Section 5304 Planning Grant funds from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (80% federal, 20% local funds) to develop a strategic plan for Valley Transit including a rider survey.

Accept the \$12,000 grant from unrestricted funds within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, Inc. to be used as part of the local match for the federal grant.