



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700, Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
(608) 267-0214 voice/tty • (608) 267-0368 fax

Date: May 25, 2011

To: Members, Joint Committee on Finance

From: Survival Coalition Co-Chairs  
Lynn Breedlove, Disability Rights Wisconsin  
Maureen Ryan, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, Inc.  
Beth Swedeen, WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

**Subject: Executive Action on 2011-13 Biennial Budget May 26, 2011 -  
TRANSPORTATION - (Paper #651)**

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations urges your support for the preservation of public transportation funding. Transit and paratransit services are critical to maintaining the independence of people with disabilities as many do not drive or own a vehicle because of their disability and/or because of limited income. When transportation is cut, not only does that mean a person with a disability cannot 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. We respectfully request that the committee restore some of the critical funding to programs and consider the recommendations below.

## **TRANSPORTATION – LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AIDS**

Mass Transit Operating Assistance – Funding Level and Convert Funding to GPR (Paper #651)

**Requested Action: Adopt Alternative #4; Adopt Alternative #6**

### **Alternative #4:**

#### **Restore transit operating aids to keep vital workforce transportation operating.**

We urge you to restore transit operating aids to help preserve public transportation which is essential to keeping people with disabilities independent and provides access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Over the past decade, we have already seen harmful reductions in transit services, as our transit systems struggle to maintain essential services with declining resources and increasing fuel costs. The resulting cutbacks have already taken a toll on the ability of people with disabilities to work and be contributing members of the community, and also made it very difficult for the caregivers they employ and rely on to get to work.

Nearly half of transit use is for work related purposes. Further cuts in transit will cut people with disabilities off 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 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. As transit operators are forced to cut service areas and service hours, thousands of other people with disabilities and seniors 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. Elimination of other local funding alternatives is also proposed through a property tax cap and the elimination of RTAs.

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.

**Alternative #6:**

**Keep transit in the Transportation Fund.**

We urge you to keep transit in the Transportation Fund to protect these important dollars. Moving transit costs to the General Fund, as proposed, would harm transit because it would compete for funds with schools, Badger Care, Medicaid and other important programs in a budget that is slated for major cuts. Transit uses less than 5% of the total Transportation Fund. This small investment does so much for Wisconsin's economy and quality of life.

**For Further Information Contact Survival Coalition Co-Chairs:**

Lynn Breedlove; 608-267-0214; lynnb@drwi.org

Maureen Ryan; 608-444-3842; moryan@charter.net

Beth Swedeen; 608-266-1166; Beth.Swedeen@wisconsin.gov