



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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TRANSPORTATION BUDGET PRIORITIES

STATEMENT

Transportation is critical to maintaining the independence of people with disabilities. However, many do not drive or own a vehicle because of their disability and/or limited income. When people with disabilities cannot access transportation or the transportation network does not get them where they need to go when they need to, people with disabilities are unable to work, spend money at local businesses, attend worship, or visit family and friends.

Without transit, family and caregivers may no longer be able to provide care when it is needed. Some people with disabilities need supports at all hours of the day. Nearly half of transit use is for work related purposes.

Funding transit is a smart investment. It lowers government costs by helping people with disabilities live independently and be employed. It also allows transportation-limited people to provide care for people with disabilities.

BACKGROUND

Survival Coalition encourages policy makers to prioritize transportation programs that assist people with disabilities and their caregivers who would otherwise have few options. This includes increasing transit operating aids to enhance public transportation. The past decade has seen reductions in transit services. These aids are vital to keeping people with disabilities independent and provide access to employment, education, healthcare, small businesses and large retailers, and other important places in the community (libraries, schools, churches, civic buildings, and community events). For example, in southeastern Wisconsin, transit services have been cut over 20% over the past ten years and fares have increased to some of the highest in the country. Cutbacks have taken a heavy 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 rely on to get to work. In addition, reductions in transit aids have resulted in significant reduction of paratransit services and increases in fees. The 2015–2017 budget should strongly support these services, including specialized transportation, as they are key to independence and life in the community for people with disabilities.

RECOMENDATIONS

- Keep transit in the segregated transportation fund to ensure that these funds are protected and not in competition with education, Medicaid, and other programs. Transit uses less than 5% of the total transportation fund. This small investment does so much for Wisconsin's economy and quality of life.

- Preserve the state investment in local transit by increasing Transit Operating Aids.
- Maintain support for paratransit services. These funds have been essential to helping local governments maintain paratransit services for people with disabilities and older adults.
- Increase funding for the *Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for older adults and people with disabilities* (Sec. 85.21).
- Support development of Regional Transit Authorities as a way to increase efficiencies, improve regional connectivity, provide local communities the flexibility and tools to improve their systems and create a robust transportation network, and position Wisconsin to take advantage of federal funds for capital investment.
- Provide local governments with the ability to support transit in a sustainable way, and to designate a dedicated funding source for transit.
- Actively pursue coordination at local, regional, state level and utilize all funding options to do so, e.g. United We Ride grant from 2009.
- Use Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding for TAP projects and not flex this funding for other purposes.
- Ensure Wisconsin's ability to enhance coordination through increased funding for mobility management programs.

Contact Survival Coalition Co-Chairs for additional information

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