

March 2015

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET PRIORITIES

ISSUE:

Transportation is critical to maintaining the independence of people with disabilities. About half of transit use is for work related purposes. However, many do not drive or own a vehicle because of their disability and/or limited means. Transit lowers government costs by helping people with disabilities live independently and be employed. 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.

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, get medical care, patronize businesses, go to church or visit family and friends.

BACKGROUND:

Survival Coalition urges policy makers to prioritize transportation programs that assist people with disabilities and their caregivers who would otherwise have few options. This includes transit aids and specialized transportation for people with disabilities and the elderly. We have seen reductions, inflation and demographic changes eat into the ability of transportation programs to serve their customers.

Transportation aids are vital to keeping people with disabilities independent and provide access to employment, healthcare, businesses and other important places in the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The 2015 – 2017 budget should strongly support transit services, including specialized transportation.

- Preserve the state investment in local transit by increasing Transit Operating Aids as proposed by Wis-DOT.

- Restore \$2 Million to Transit Operating Aids.
- Create a Supplemental Transit Expansion program to provide for new routes for ridership, jobs and economic development.
- Increase funding for the *Specialized Transportation Assistance Program* (Sec. 85.21).
 - Support the Wis-DOT request for a 1% increase to this program.
 - Appropriate an additional \$5 Million to address long-term issues identified by the Governor's Transportation Finance and Policy Commission.
- Actively pursue coordination of funding streams. Counties have demonstrated that coordinating transportation programs can increase the rides within existing funding.
 - Allow braiding funding from programs such as Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and other programs.
 - Provide local governments with the ability to work with other jurisdictions in their region, to support transportation programs.
 - Fund mobility management programs.
- Preserve Transportation Alternatives funding for projects that help people with disabilities get around their communities easier and safer.
- Ensure that the Medical Transportation provides safe, efficient transportation for medical needs.
 - Consider NEMT recommendations of the Audit Committee,
 - Consult consumers and other stakeholders in development of the system, and
 - Provide independent advocacy for consumers who cannot get to their medical appointments.

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Investing in People with Disabilities**