



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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*101 East Wilson Street, Room 219, Madison, Wisconsin 53703*  
Voice: 608/266-7826 Fax: 608/267-3906

May 26, 2015

Hon. Alberta Darling, Co-Chair  
Hon. John Nygren, Co-Chair

Honorable Members, Joint Committee on Finance

The Survival Coalition represents the interests of the more than 650,000 people with disabilities in Wisconsin. The coalition would like you to consider the following regarding tomorrow's consideration of transportation issues, including items described in papers #641, #643 (and Transportation – Local Aid Item #4), #647 and #655.

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. Currently, the number of Wisconsin residents with disabilities is on the rise.

Transit lowers government costs by helping people with disabilities live independently and get to jobs. Transit also allows family and caregivers to get to their family or customers to provide care. 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. Inability to get to these activities negatively affects the economy.

### **Transit Operating Assistance**

Survival Coalition supports Alternatives A.2.d and B.2. The increases will partially make up for cuts to services over the past several years. Alternative B.2. allows expansion of services in small urban areas without cutting service in other parts of the state.

### **Specialized Transportation Capital Assistance**

Survival Coalition is thankful for the increase under the budget bill. Given Wisconsin's growing population of older adults and people with disabilities, we are disappointed that the paper does not include an alternative that would increase this investment in independence. Access to accessible transportation is currently very limited for many Wisconsinites with disabilities and older adults. Increasing access will be cost effective because it will support the opportunity for this growing

population to maintain their independence in the community and further limit the need for costly nursing home care.

We ask you support a 10% (\$1.36 million) increase in specialized transportation as a cost effective investment in the independence of older adults and people with disabilities.

### **Transportation Alternatives Program/"Complete Streets"**

Pedestrian facilities that are not accessible to people with mobility or visual disabilities increase costs to local government. Lack of accessibility keeps people at home or requires expensive paratransit services to provide access to their communities. The alternative is people with disabilities with their wheelchairs, white canes or other devices competing with vehicles when they need to travel through busy areas.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires governmental entities to make public rights-of-way accessible to people with disabilities. Cf. *Barden v. Sacramento*, 292 F.3d 1073 (9th Cir. 2002), cert. den., 539 U.S. 958 (2003), *Fortune v. City of Lomita*, No. 12-56280 (9th Cir. 2014). Limiting state assistance may discourage planners from addressing these access needs.

Transportation Alternatives provide funding for safe pedestrian facilities. These are crucial for people with disabilities to get around their communities safely. We note that over \$50 Million worth of projects have been requested.

In paper #647, Survival Coalition supports Alternative A.2. If that is not possible, please keep the program as provided by Alternative A.4.

Paper #655 also addresses pedestrian facilities as part of the "Complete Streets" program. This law explicitly requires transportation planners to consider the needs of pedestrians, including people with disabilities, as part of road projects. This state law requirement parallels the federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirement with respect to meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Accordingly, the projected cost savings from repeal of the law are not likely to be achieved.

The Survival Coalition supports Alternative A.2. or A.3. in paper #655. We also oppose Alternative B.1. to ensure funding for projects to meet obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sincerely,

Survival Co-Chairs:

Maureen Ryan, [moryan@charter.net](mailto:moryan@charter.net); (608) 444-3842;  
Beth Swedeen, [beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov](mailto:beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov); (608) 266-1166;  
Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, [kitk@drwi.org](mailto:kitk@drwi.org); (608) 267-0214

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.