



P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

June 5, 2019

Senator Alberta Darling
Joint Committee on Finance Co-Chair
Room 317 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Representative John Nygren
Joint Committee on Finance Co-Chair
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Darling, Representative Nygren, and legislative members:

The Department of Transportation (DOT) provides funding for public transit and other county-based transportation services critical to people with disabilities, aging adults, and low-income caregivers commuting to work in client's homes.

Survival Coalition has reviewed the Legislative Fiscal Bureau budget papers for DOT and recommends the committee support the following alternatives:

Mass Transit Operating Assistance (LFB Paper #711)

- Support alternative A1, increase aids for all mass transit systems

Public transit is an essential service that enables many people with disabilities and older adults to get to medical appointments, commute to work, and take care of routine personal business, like grocery shopping. Low-income caregivers serving people with disabilities and older adults rely on public transit to commute their client's homes to deliver the services that and help keep them out of expensive Medicaid funded institutions.

Both specialized (85.21) and employment transportation (WETAP) use transit systems as the backbone for providing services to older adults, people with disabilities and low-income workers. In many areas, transit and specialized programs are coordinated and braid funding to fund the transportation and transit services in a community. 55% of transit riders are headed to work.

Transit Capitol Assistance Grants (LFB paper #711)

- Support alternative B2, create dedicated funding for a transit capital assistance grant program.

Replacement of aging buses and other transit vehicles is a critical need and capital expenses can be difficult for local governments to outlay without assistance. The cost of maintaining older vehicles can increase over time and as vehicles pass their useful life this can impact the capacity of the system to deliver services. Accessibility features and improvements may be available on newer generation models; continuing to use older fleets delays these improvements for older adult and disabled riders.

Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities -- Specialized Assistance and County Assistance Programs (LFB paper #712)

- Support alternative A1 and 3e

Specialized transit is a critical service for people with disabilities and older adults. In many areas of the state, especially rural areas and places without other public transit systems, specialized transit may be the primary mode of transportation system available.

Employment Transportation Program (LFB paper #713)

- Support alternative A3

The WETAP program provides critical assistance to help low income workers commute to jobs, and for mobility management that can help coordinate transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes.

Transportation Crisis

Survival Coalition's [fall 2018 statewide survey](#) of older adults, people with disabilities, and their family members reveals major transportation gaps in Wisconsin communities. Survey results underscore how transportation is a critical—and largely unmet—need that impacts every aspect of people with disabilities and older adults' lives.

The survey results highlight the transportation challenges that advocates consistently hear about from families and people with disabilities and give a clear indication of the policy problems that need to be addressed. Large areas of the state have limited or no transportation options, or of the options that do exist they are unaffordable, unreliable, unavailable at times people need them, or do not go where people need to go.”

These survey results show that significant investment in public transit, existing programs—including WETAP, Specialized transportation, Paratransit, and mobility management--regional approaches that increase transportation options and capacity, and initiatives that transportation options in communities where public transit does not exist are necessary.

Survival Coalition requests these items be included in the 2019-21 state budget.

Sincerely,

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