



Milwaukee County

Department on Aging



Holly Davis
Director
(414) 289-6010

*Milwaukee County
Commission on Aging*

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October 11, 2016

Supervisor Peggy West
Chairperson, Finance and Audit Committee
Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
901 N. 9th Street, Room 306
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Supervisor West,

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Advocacy Committee is writing in support of the transportation and transit initiatives in the County Executive's proposed 2017 budget. A robust and sustainable transportation system is vital to the health of our community. As advocates, we understand that increased investment in transit is increased investment in the quality of life for seniors. For many seniors, transit is a connection to work, recreation, and medical appointments. Protecting this critical system from deterioration is important to the older adults of Milwaukee County and the community as a whole. While we are supporting the measures before us, we would like to see the opportunity for the community to weigh in on these proposals through a public hearing and would very much appreciate a notification if such a hearing is scheduled.

We place high value on the stability and quality of bus service, and, as a result, support recommended changes to the GO Pass program. Many of the people we serve use the GO Pass for their personal and professional needs and some might be homebound without it. However, many who use the GO Pass are not dependent upon it and can afford to pay a reduced fare. Unfortunately, heavy use of the Pass has created financial instability in the transit system. We support modifying the program to make it more sustainable by narrowing qualifications for the Pass as proposed in the County Executive's budget. The proposed changes protect the most vulnerable members of our community as well as the system that they depend upon.

Even with the reform of the GO Pass, we recognize that there are long-term financial challenges facing the County's transit system. These challenges must be addressed and we understand the need to adopt a vehicle registration fee, which would be used as dedicated funding for transportation, instead of reducing service. We encourage the County to lobby the State of Wisconsin to try to gain more flexibility in the implementation of the vehicle registration fee so that it may take into account a person's income, number of cars, age of the car and any other variables which if not addressed, may create an unnecessary burden. We recognize that the vehicle registration fee funds would also support many infrastructure projects that seniors use to stay healthy and active, such as bicycle and walking paths,

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The mission of the Milwaukee County Department on Aging is to affirm the dignity and value of older adults in this county by supporting their choices for living in, and giving to, our community.

pedestrian bridges in parks, and well-maintained roads. A strong transportation system includes all those components and is a central part of the County's Area Plan for Older Adults, and for these reasons we recognize the need for additional revenue via the registration fee.

We are supportive of the County's Bus Rapid Transit initiative which has the potential to increase full-fare ridership. We also urge the County Executive and County Board to continue to urge the State government to fully restore funding for this community-sustaining service.

Our community depends on transit. We ask that you please support the proposed transit budget, so we can maintain a strong bus system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Haase". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bob Haase
Chair, Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Advocacy Committee

Cc: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors