



07 October 2016

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
901 N. 9th Street, Room 306
Milwaukee, WI 53233

RE: Milwaukee County SAVE Transit Letter of Support

Dear Honorable Supervisors:

On behalf of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, I am writing in support of the SAVE Transit plan to ensure the future sustainability of Milwaukee County's transportation system.

A robust transportation system that includes high-quality transit service and well-maintained roads and parkways is a major driver of economic development, connecting people with jobs and opportunities all over the County. For many people in our community, transit is also quite simply their lifeline to get to work, school, medical appointments and our region's vibrant cultural assets. Protecting this critical system from deterioration is of utmost importance.

Most of us are aware that transit faces many challenges in funding at the state and national levels; this is a precipice moment for Milwaukee County. Refusing to take action now to ensure future sustainability puts the improvements we've made over the past several years at risk. For more than a decade, Milwaukee County saw route cuts, fare increases, or both. That trend has completely turned around since 2011, with fares staying flat and the addition of more than one million route miles. Too many partners have worked together to make gains in our system to undo that progress. Moreover, if we want to see growth and expansion of transit service in the future and not a reduction, then we must take action at this crucial moment.

Now is the time to come together to build a stronger transportation system by modernizing our transit service with Bus Rapid Transit, stabilizing the operations of the transit system while protecting the most vulnerable members of our community by reshaping the GO Pass, and creating dedicated funding for transit and infrastructure maintenance with a vehicle registration fee.

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

07 October 2016

Page 2

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will provide an improved transit connection to major employment and activity centers and has the potential to remarkably improve people's lives and spur economic development. With faster travel times and more frequent service, ridership is expected to increase dramatically as connectivity in our region improves.

A robust network of BRT lines that build upon our local service is only possible if funding and revenues of the current transit system are stabilized. The GO Pass, while admirable in purpose, is unsustainable in its current form. The proposed changes to the GO Pass maintain the integrity of the Pass' intent to support the members of our community who need it the most while ensuring the system that riders depend upon does not crumble from lost revenue.

Maintaining the GO Pass in this form, however, still has a cost, which is one reason to support a vehicle registration fee. For years, our community has acknowledged and discussed the need for dedicated funding to support transit and transportation. A vehicle registration fee is the only option the County can implement on its own that will meet the growing needs our transportation system. Dedicated funding for transportation is needed to ensure our transit lines don't have to be reduced, but can instead be built up; will allow the County to buy new buses to replace the large number of old ones at the end of their useful lives; and will allow the County to catch up on deferred maintenance on roads, highways, parkways, bridges and bike paths – the critical infrastructure that our County needs to keep people and the economy moving.

We can't rely on, nor do we have time to wait for, the state or federal government to fully fund transit. The County needs real local leadership to ensure the sustainability of our system for the future. Please support the proposed SAVE Transit plan and help keep Milwaukee County traveling forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jorge Franco', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jorge Franco
Chairman, President, and CEO