



## Milwaukee Transit Riders Union

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[www.transitridersunion.org](http://www.transitridersunion.org)

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Thursday, October 13, 2016

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Milwaukee County Courthouse  
901 N. 9th St. Room 201  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear County Supervisors

The Milwaukee Transit Riders Union would like to encourage you to support the Vehicle Registration Fee proposed in the County Executive's recommended 2017 Milwaukee County Operating Budget.

The Vehicle Registration Fee would raise an estimated \$11.5 million in 2017 for Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) operations; offsetting a budget deficit, maintaining service levels and funding the GO Pass program which provides access for so many senior citizens and persons with disabilities. We believe that the VRF is important as a stable funding source for MCTS, which is one of the only major transit systems in the nation without a dedicated local funding source.

The lack of a dedicated local funding source has left MCTS particularly reliant on transit operating aids from the State of Wisconsin, which accounted for 45% of MCTS' revenue in 2015 according to their 2015 annual report. State transit operating aid has been reduced in the 2009 biennium and has remained flat ever since with the sole exception of a 2015 increase related to the MICAH/Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin Zoo Interchange settlement with the state. Milwaukee still receives less in transit operating aids from the state than it did in 2009.

Options for replacing this money with more property tax levy support are limited due to restrictions imposed by 2011 Wisconsin Act 10. Other options, including a sales tax to support transportation, require state action. The vehicle registration fee is the only solution available to local government to make up the difference.

While we support the vehicle registration fee, we ask the Board to drop planned increases in prepaid fares that will impact working people. **The proposed increases for weekly and monthly passes amount to \$96 or more per year out of transit riders' pockets.** Given the ongoing annual ridership decreases, we are concerned that this drastic added expense will continue this trend. Additionally, this poses a financial hardship, especially for Milwaukee's vulnerable, low income residents who may not qualify for the GO Pass, but still face staggering financial challenges without this fare increase. If deemed absolutely necessary fare increases imposed should be no higher than the VRF. In this case, if the increase for the monthly pass is capped at \$5 dollars a month, riders would pay an additional \$60 annually.

We thank you, the Board Members, for your record of leadership of expanding equitable transit access, maintaining local management of our transit system, and preventing service cuts and ask that you please continue this in the 2017 budget process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kieth E. Crum".

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Kieth Crum  
Treasurer,  
Milwaukee Transit Riders Union