



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Chairwoman Marina Dimitrijevic
Supervisor Theo Lipscomb, Sr., District 1

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COUNTY SURPLUS FUNDS SHOULD BE REINVESTED

Milwaukee County Board Chairwoman Marina Dimitrijevic and Sup. Theo Lipscomb, Sr. today said that funds from a projected balance of \$50 million in the debt service reserve fund for 2015 should be used to make needed investments in transit, parks, and human capital, saying that it is crucial to the improvement of the quality of life in Milwaukee County.

Several months ago the Comptroller notified the County Board of a budget surplus. "Today we will discuss a plan to reinvest in our quality of life in Milwaukee County," Dimitrijevic said. "The County Board has set a clear vision for strengthening our public transit system and returning our county parks to their original beauty. We delivered on this promise in the 2015 budget by adding more bus routes to growing business centers in the suburbs and by expanding transit access with the successful GO Pass, which provides free bus rides for seniors and persons with disabilities."

The County Board also added an additional \$10 million in capital bonding in parks to reduce the enormous maintenance backlog that threatens the fiscal viability of our award winning parks system.

The legislation creates Transit Signal Priority for Milwaukee County Transit System buses and allows for faster commutes. Transit Signal Priority equips buses and traffic signals with devices that grant priority as they approach, often producing five to ten percent reductions in bus travel times. The City of Milwaukee has already installed this technology in some of its traffic signals, including the stretch along Wisconsin Avenue.

"It's important not only that we have sufficient routes to get people to job centers and other important destinations, but getting people to these destinations in a more timely fashion will improve the transit experience for riders and ease construction-related delays along bus routes," Dimitrijevic said.

The plan put forward by Dimitrijevic and Lipscomb builds on a vision of "encouraging pride in our community and our county and on identifying tangible ways to move it forward," Dimitrijevic said. She added that in using a portion of the county surplus, \$5 million will fund much-needed parks improvements and \$1.5 million will increase the speed of our county buses.

Lipscomb said that County parks have become neglected due to an increase in deferred maintenance and a lack of support from two consecutive administrations.

"When you talk about the quality of life in Milwaukee County, one of the first things to come to mind is the extensive park system," Lipscomb said. "For too long the parks have been neglected, and the County Board is committed to making these jewels shine once again."

A final component of the plan would make a modest investment in County employees who have experienced pay cuts due to rising health care and pension costs. "The County Executive's staff shouldn't be the only employees to receive a pay increase," Lipscomb said. "The County Executive has increased the salary of select staff by as much as 33 percent. Without this cost of living increase, general employees have lagged behind the cost of inflation."

Lipscomb said that a modest raise for County employees is necessary for recruitment and retention. "We want to have the best and the brightest employees working for County residents," Lipscomb said. "We can't recruit or retain the best employees if we allow wages to falter."

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