



WIPTA Legislative Priorities

Statewide Transit Capital Assistance Program

WIPTA thanks the legislature for the \$32 million allocated by the Joint Committee on Finance, approved by the legislature, and signed by the governor, to the new Statewide Transit Capital Assistance Program funded by the Volkswagen settlement. We look forward to working with the Department of Administration to allocate grants and successful replacement of many eligible buses. Capital needs are still great. Our systems need much more assistance from the federal government in the form of competitive transit capital awards. At present, to replace all buses currently past their useful lives requires approximately \$200 million more. This state program, however, is a huge step forward.

Transit Operating Assistance

Since 2011, cuts to state operating assistance have resulted in nearly \$17 million in costs to municipalities, increased passenger fares, and reduced services. The Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission's Keep Wisconsin Moving report recommended restoring \$18.8 million in funding to meet the state's past commitment to transit funding. The state budget kept funding flat, but at least made no cuts. Looking forward to the next biennial budget, we ask the legislature to continue to consider increased transit operating assistance and other legislation that would help ensure vital transit needs are adequately funded. In addition to increased operating assistance, two simple ways to help decrease the burden on transit systems include:

- **Fund new state-created systems**

Four unfunded Shared-ride Taxi Systems were approved in the 2015-17 state budget. DOT indicated that the cost to fund this expansion is \$249,150 annually. WIPTA advocates adequate funding for all new transit programs created by the state going forward and increasing current transit operating assistance, at the very least, in Tier C to pay for the shared-ride systems that were previously created.

- **Reclassify certain transit aids as continuing appropriations**

When Transit budgets fall short due to unanticipated factors, like high gas prices or increased costs, transit providers must reduce services. Under current law, when savings are realized because of prudent planning and cost savings, at the end of the biennium those savings are lapsed back to the Transportation Fund - penalizing transit providers for efficiency. WIPTA supports classifying certain Transit Aids as continuing appropriations to ensure that sound budgeting is rewarded and funding requirements are met.

Regional Transit Authority

WIPTA is a strong proponent of Regional Transit Authorities. As operational funding continues to lag, local officials, business leaders, education leaders, and residents are more cognizant of the vital role that transit plays in connecting employees to jobs, students to technical college and university, and consumers to shopping. Further, a strong transit network is increasingly a prerequisite for businesses to move or expand to a community. WIPTA looks forward to working with all stakeholders towards comprehensive legislation that allows communities to take the necessary steps to increase transportation options to become more desirable places to live, work, go to school and locate or expand a business.