



Madison Area Bus Advocates

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On UW's Unlimited Ride Pass

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The Madison Area Bus Advocates (MABA) has learned that UW Transportation Services (UWTS) is experiencing a shortfall in its transportation fund. We understand that this is due primarily to two factors: 1) the governor transferred some of the money out of the fund to help balance the state budget, a move we disagree with, and 2) due to continuing construction of new university buildings on what were surface parking lots, the cost of building replacement parking has skyrocketed, as putting parking in a structure, either above- or below-ground, is far more expensive than simply paving an empty lot. In addition, the mayor's ill-timed and large bus fare increase has resulted in an increase in the amount entities that offer unlimited ride passes, including the university, have to pay for each ride. This also has put pressure on the fund.

MABA appreciates the UW-Madison's past strong support of transit through its unlimited pass program, and hopes that this leadership would continue. This is in contrast to the proposal that UWTS start charging for the pass. Reasons include: 1) that the unlimited ride pass program for the UW takes pressure off UW parking facilities by encouraging more employees to take public transit; this is a major reason the UW sought out the passes in the first place. People who take the bus reduce total pollution, reduce road congestion, and help finance the transit system, a public good; 2) driving is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has already reached 391 parts per million while climate scientists agree that we need to be below 350 ppm to avoid catastrophic consequences for our planet; 3) the major cause of the fund shortfall appears to be due to the high cost (up to \$50,000 per stall and increasing rapidly) of building new parking, an expense that would be unnecessary were more UW employees willing to avoid driving to the campus; and 4) we understand that UWTS has decided to limit this year's fee increases for parking permits, which range as high as \$1230 per year, to no more than \$10, "in light of the first year of furloughs."

Since campus employees who do not buy parking permits have also suffered the consequences of furloughs, the decision to limit parking permit increases to only \$10, when the increased parking costs are a major contributor to the fund's shortfall, shifts these higher parking costs onto the backs of employees who limit their carbon footprint by not driving to work. This is wrong. People who are part of the solution should not be subsidizing people who are part of the problem.

Therefore, the Madison Area Bus Advocates strongly urges the UW to continue to provide unlimited ride passes to its employees at no cost to the employee.