



## **Madison Area Bus Advocates**

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### **POSITION ON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

Madison Area Bus Advocates favors legislation that would enable a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) because transportation has become a regional issue best dealt with by a regional authority with a dedicated funding source. Madison has become a central city surrounded by other municipalities that are interdependent parts of a regional transportation system.

We encourage consistency between the service area of the RTA and the planning boundary of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Buses are—and will continue to be—a major component of Madison's transit and transportation networks and funding for transit should continue to reflect that. Rail transit may become part of the network, however, bus funding and service should not be cut to support it.

While the inherent preference for rail has perhaps been overstated in the Transportation 2020 process, we believe that a Regional Transportation Authority for Dane county and the city of Madison is the way forward, whether rail implementation proceeds or not. A sustainable funding source for mass transit could keep travel times down and ridership levels up, and we would like to see this new funding source used for increased frequency of service with reduced wait times, better amenities for users, and longer service hours, as well as the enhancement of geographic coverage of the system.

While we support the agreement between the mayor and county in general, and tapping the sales tax is a good way to relieve dependence on the property tax, the primary goal is for transit to receive a larger portion of the state's transportation budget. There is also the potential for a power shift with implementation of an RTA, moving control of funds, decision-making and service from Madison to the more sparsely-supported suburbs, even though Madison has by far the most transit users and a denser urban fabric.

While Madison Area Bus Advocates supports expanding the geographic coverage of mass transit, this must not come at the expense of core service within Madison. In fact, we are expecting increased service for Madison and will oppose legislative proposals which are likely to reduce service within the city. New funding should primarily go to adding new service with an over-all larger budget, although some reduction in reliance on the property tax would be acceptable. Finally, the governance structure of any RTA should be designed to be transparent and the method by which funds raised by an RTA would then be allocated should be clearly spelled out in any legislation.