



## **Madison Area Bus Advocates**

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### Position on Regional Transportation Authorities

Madison Area Bus Advocates favors legislation that would enable Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) because Madison has become a central city surrounded by other municipalities that together are interdependent parts of a regional area. Area transportation is best dealt with by a regional authority that can provide dedicated funding for buses.

We encourage consistency between the service area of an RTA and the planning boundary of its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). For the Madison Area, as buses are—and will continue to be—a major component of its transit network, transit funding 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 tapping the sales tax may be a good way to relieve dependence on property tax, the primary goal should be 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.