



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF WISCONSIN

EDUCATION FUND

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To: Joint Committee on Finance

Re: Support Assembly Bill 282

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund appreciates this opportunity to express our strong support for the establishment of Regional Transit Authorities in the state of Wisconsin. **We urge the members of this Committee and other members of the Legislature to support Assembly Bill 282-ASA1.** The creation of Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) statewide provides a critical tool for moving towards 21st century transit systems that are integrated, efficient and multimodal by design. RTAs provide the mechanism to make transit planning regional and systematic, rather than piecemeal. It no longer makes sense for each municipality on its own to plan, finance and provide transit service without integration across borders with surrounding areas. Communities that want to create regional transit authorities should be able to do.

Communities that want to create Regional Transit Authorities should be able to do so without having to pass a bill in the legislature every time there is a desire to work together to provide better transit service. RTAs will have authority to use a local sales tax as a reliable funding source for operations. They will provide communities with improved bus service, linked to rail and regional buses. RTAs will provide safe and reliable paratransit services for those who cannot drive. Without authorization for RTAs, several regional bus systems (examples, Fox Cities, Green Bay Metro and Milwaukee Bus System) will likely need to reduce service and raise fares.

Regional transit has become a top attractor for businesses, developers and professionals. In today's global marketplace, regional transit is considered fundamental infrastructure which creates a competitive advantage by providing convenient and improved access to jobs and potential employees.

In recent years, Leagues statewide completed a Climate Change study and adopted positions to address Global Warming. The transportation sector accounts for 24% of all greenhouse gas emissions and this percentage is predicted to increase. Research shows that people who use public transportation over driving cut their carbon dioxide emissions by over 20 pounds per day and 4,800 pounds per year per person. Investing in RTAs is a common-sense means of meeting reduction targets needed for our communities to avoid the worst impacts of global warming.

We urge Joint Finance Committee members and the Legislature to pass legislation making it possible for communities across the state to organize and create Regional Transit Authorities. Thank you for accepting our comments on this important matter.