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August 10, 2006

Senator Dan Kapanke
Room 104 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison 53707-7882

Representative Mark Gottlieb
Room 321 East
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison 53708

Re: Ten for Transit Plan

Dear Senator Kapanke and Representative Gottlieb,

In light of the growing gas price crunch and the increasing demand for transportation options, I am writing this letter to call on the Road to the Future Committee to adopt a "Ten for Transit" plan.

The "Ten for Transit" plan will provide relief to Wisconsin residents from skyrocketing gas prices by helping communities provide affordable, convenient transportation choices without raising fees, taxes or shifting costs to local governments.

For the first time in nearly a quarter of a century, Wisconsin residents are driving less. Meanwhile more and more people are riding transit more often. Why are legislators talking about spending billions of dollars to pour concrete and expand highways when the demand is for more transit?

Wisconsin's public transit systems offer affordable and convenient service that boosts the economy; provides access to jobs, shopping, and community life; sustains the environment; and increases livability. But, to provide these essential benefits, our transit systems need increased financial support from the state, which has chronically under funded transit.

In particular, the state has not sufficiently supported local governments that provide transit service to their residents through operating aids. Further, the state has failed outright in terms of 1) supporting capital investments in motorized transit such as vans and buses; 2) supporting capital investments in local rail transit such as commuter rail and streetcars; 3) assisting communities without transit service to create transit systems; and 4) assisting communities across the state in creating Regional Transit Authorities to coordinate and improve transit service.

Three recent reports to the Road to the Future Committee show rising demand for public transit, decreased driving, and out of control spending on highway projects.

As you know, total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) were down by 400 million in 2005, the first time since 1982 that driving in Wisconsin has decreased. It is expected that total VMT will decrease again in 2006. Just last week the Department of Transportation reported that the 27 Major Highway Projects currently enumerated into state law are expected to blow out their projected budgets by 89%, or \$1.7 billion of taxpayer money. Yet, the most recent state budget increased spending on Major Highway Projects, Highway Rehabilitation, and Southeastern Wisconsin Freeways by 30% to 45%.

At the same time, ridership on transit systems across the state, including bus systems in Fond du Lac, Stevens Point, Sheboygan Madison, Janesville, and Milwaukee, as well as Amtrak service, is booming, with some systems nearing the highest transit usage in decades. While a few communities are seeing more modest increases in ridership, or decreases, because of service cuts and fare increases due to a lack of state support, these increases are remarkable when you consider that state funding for transit in the last two budgets has increased by 0% and 1.1% and transit systems must struggle with rising gas prices just like drivers.

Clearly, current transportation priorities at the state level are way out of step with reality. Wisconsin residents know all too well that the days of \$1.50 per gallon gasoline are gone. They are doing what they can about it, driving less, driving more fuel efficient vehicles and using public transportation more. Now, it is up to you to keep up with the market demand and spend state funds on more transit, less highways.

The “Ten for Transit” plan will reprioritize the state transportation budget so that 10% of all transportation spending goes to transit funding. Currently, less than 6% of the state transportation budget goes to transit funding.

There are no hidden tax increases, no fee increases, and no new bonding in this plan and, it is not a shell game that passes the buck to local governments. The “Ten for Transit” plan calls on you to make the tough but responsible choice to cut the fat out of pork barrel highway projects and direct the savings into public transportation. The “Ten for Transit” plan increases transit funding by more than 75%, from \$150 million a year to \$267.5 million a year, for a total annual increase of \$117.5 million.

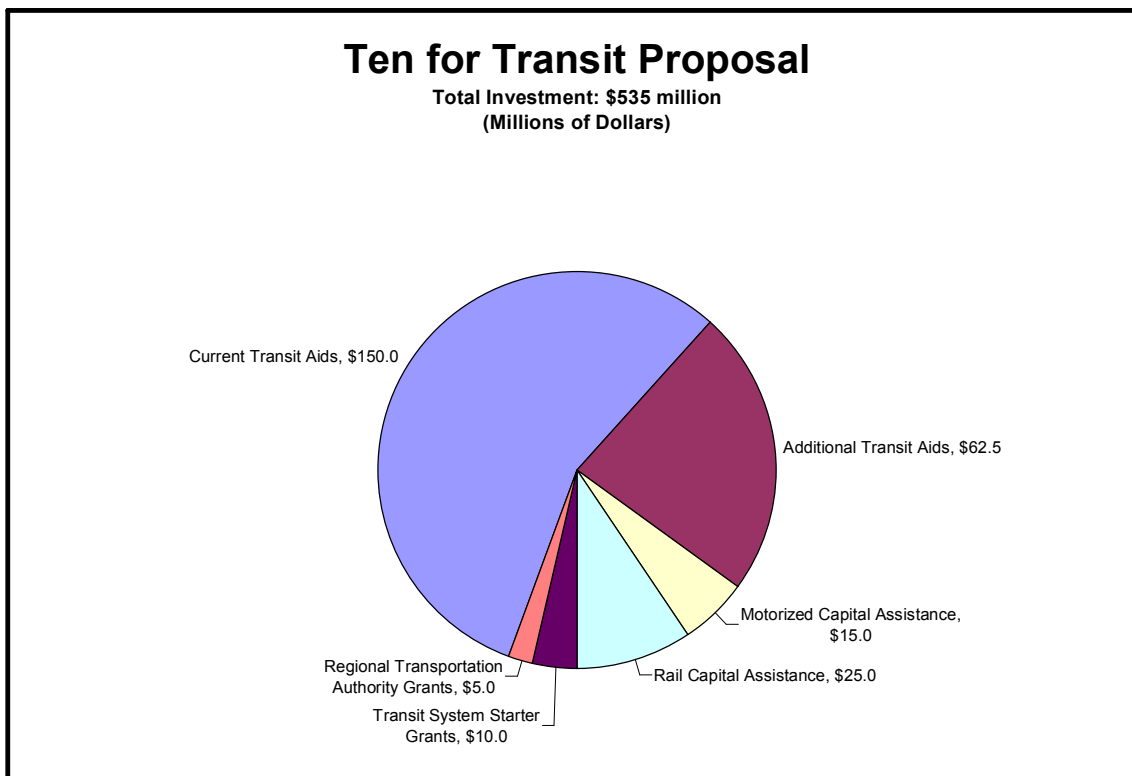
State Transportation Budget Spending in 2006 and 2007

Total Biennial Spending	\$5.35 billion
Current Transit Aids (State and Federal) as a Percent of State Transportation Budget	5.6%
Current Biennial Transit Aids (State and Federal)	\$300 million
Ten for Transit	\$535 million
Biennial Increase to Transit Funding	\$235 million
Annual Increase to Transit Funding	\$117.5 million

Ten for Transit

The six main components of the “Ten for Transit” plan are as follows:

- Continue disbursement of current **\$150 million** in combined state and federal transit annual operating assistance
- Increase state funding of operating aids by an additional **\$62.5 million** annually
- Establish a new **\$15 million** annual state funded motorized transit capital program to assist communities with costs for replacing and adding buses and vans
- Establish a new **\$25 million** annual state funded rail transit capital program to assist communities in building rail transit systems
- Establish a new **\$10 million** annual state funded new transit systems program to assist communities that currently do not have transit service in establishing transit systems
- Establish a new **\$5 million** annual state funded grant program to help regions study and create Regional Transit Authorities



It is time for the Road to the Future Committee to tell Wisconsin residents whether or not they intend to drive our state’s transportation system back into the 1950s, or if they are going to push to increase investments in public transit to help Wisconsin residents suffering from our nation’s addiction to oil.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments. I look forward to your response to this proposal.

Sincerely,

Ward Lyles
Transportation Policy Director