



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Lee Holloway

Chairman of the Board

January 22, 2007

Mayor Tom Barrett  
200 E. Wells Street  
City Hall Rm.201  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett,

Per the enabling state legislation creating the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the Chief Executive Officers of Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee each were able to make appointments to the Authority, subject to the confirmation of their respective legislative bodies: the County Board of Supervisors and the Common Council. Respectively, George Torres, Director of Transportation and Public Works and Sharon Robinson, Department of Administration Director, represent Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee on the RTA. Until the last meeting, members were considering recommending that Governor Jim Doyle introduce a financing mechanism in his 2007-09 budget proposal to the Legislature to take the mass transit systems of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha off the property tax by enacting a dedicated sales tax.

A super-majority vote by members is required for the RTA to approve a proposal. In light of public comments made by County Executive Scott Walker and you against the proposal before the RTA to take transit off the property tax, it is my understanding that members tabled the measure based on the assumption that the representatives of Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee would vote against the dedicated sales tax, and, thus, there would not be enough support for the measure to pass. Therefore, I have called upon the County Executive to instruct Director Torres to support the proposal based on enacted County policy (see attached). Similarly, I ask you to direct your appointee to support transit and our riders. If the RTA does not identify a dedicated source of funding (other than the property tax) for transit, this failure to progress will lie on both your shoulders, the executive leaders of our City and County. Then, regrettably, those who do not have a vested interest in Milwaukee; its residents; and the businesses that rely on our buses will be able to use your joint lack of leadership as an excuse not to act.

Unfortunately, the County Executive, who previously represented Wauwatosa as a Republican in the State Assembly, is opposing attempts to secure a dedicated sales tax for transit, even though he has been elected to a non-partisan post where he should represent all of Milwaukee County—the local government with the largest public bus system in the State of Wisconsin. Because his political voice on this policy matter does not square with

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his public mission, I have criticized his failure to stand up for the people of Milwaukee County, many of whom reside in the City of Milwaukee and who rely on our buses daily to get to work, to buy groceries, and to visit the doctor. I would hope that he would exercise compassionate conservatism in support of mass transit to address the needs of the poor, which would also promote the local economy.

Likewise, I am also deeply disappointed that, as Mayor of the City of Milwaukee, you too are failing to demonstrate the leadership this community needs from its executive officeholders to stabilize the mass transit system in your backyard. Unlike the County Executive, in your past elective offices you served as a Democrat, who in recent history have been supported by constituencies that include labor organizations, the poor, the unemployed and underemployed, the working poor, African Americans, and students. Therefore, it is puzzling that, in your current non-partisan electoral office, you are turning your back on these same constituencies in the City of Milwaukee, especially those students and adults who rely on the efficient operations of County buses because they lack driver's licenses. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute (ETI) presented some interesting research on this topic matter in their June 2005 study, "The Driver License Status of the Voting Age Population in Wisconsin." (See the attached summary table from the study.) After the selection of an all-white jury in the case involving Mr. Frank Jude, Jr., I shared this same information with the Milwaukee County Clerk of Court in my effort to diversify the juror pools.

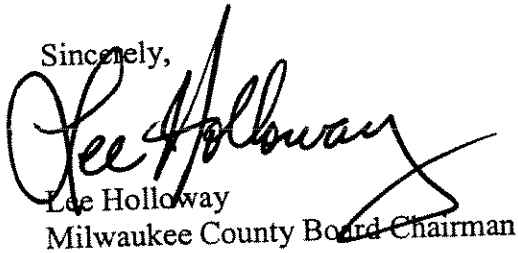
ETI found that "Milwaukee County residents are more than twice as likely to be without a drivers license as adults in the balance of the state." ETI research further demonstrates that less than half of Milwaukee County African American and Hispanic adults have a valid driver's license, only 47% and 43% respectively. ETI further presented their findings broken down by Milwaukee County ZIP codes. ETI discovered that 92% of adults had driver's licenses in the "North Shore" communities (ZIP code: 53217) of Bayside, Fox Point, Glendale, parts of River Hills and Whitefish Bay, as compared to rates of 40% or below on the near Northside of Milwaukee (ZIP codes 53205 and 53206) and around Marquette University (53233). This ETI research provides some evidence as to why a leader of Milwaukee County, who has drawn some electoral support from the eighteen suburban municipalities, where adults are more likely to be licensed to drive, might be less enthusiastic about supporting the transit system. Yet, this same data suggests that it would be wise for the Mayor of the City of Milwaukee to strongly support the transit system as an alternative mode of transportation for those adults and students who do not hold valid driver's licenses.

You have publicly said that you do not support the proposal before the RTA to remove mass transit from the property tax because the sales tax should be a broader revenue source to additionally fund public safety programs, such as fire and police services. Your prioritization of funding public safety programs via a sales tax is confusing. As Mayor of a major American city, you must know that police and fire services in many, if not most, large cities have traditionally been funded by the property tax. This financing mechanism is based on the long-standing connection between these vital services and the value of property.

Comparatively, mass transit services in larger, more urban communities throughout the country are funded through dedicated sources, including the sales tax, not the property tax. *In fact, the Milwaukee County Transit System is the only one in its peer group of 13 transit systems – and one of the very few of all urban transit systems nation-wide – which relies on local property tax funding.*

Milwaukee needs and deserves a dedicated funding source to sustain our transit system and provide property tax relief. It is incumbent upon you to use your leadership position to promote the economic vitality of our community by supporting transit. I look forward to a change in your mindset and anticipate greater advocacy for the Milwaukee County Transit System as we head into the next state biennial budget cycle.

Sincerely,



Lee Holloway  
Milwaukee County Board Chairman

Attachment

cc: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker  
Alderman Willie Hines, Jr., President of Common Council  
Milwaukee County Common Council  
Sharon Robinson, City of Milwaukee Director of Administration  
George Torres, Director of Milwaukee County Transportation & Public Works

## Voting Age Adults in Milwaukee County with Valid Drivers Licenses

ZIP Code (ZCTA)	Voting Age Males	% of males with a valid drivers license in the ZIP Code	Voting Age Females	% of females with a valid drivers license in the ZIP Code
Milwaukee 53233	7,485	21%	6,471	16%
Milwaukee 53205	2,858	38%	3,854	36%
Milwaukee 53206	8,860	40%	12,555	37%
Milwaukee 53204	15,707	47%	13,113	33%
Milwaukee 53212	9,796	47%	11,827	44%
Milwaukee 53210	8,632	49%	11,713	50%
Milwaukee 53208	10,668	53%	12,992	46%
Milwaukee 53202	11,129	55%	9,217	57%
Milwaukee 53216	9,976	57%	13,577	60%
Milwaukee 53218	11,895	61%	15,734	58%
Milw., Wauwatosa 53225	8,582	62%	10,497	63%
Milwaukee, Brown Deer, Glendale, River Hills 53209	15,447	62%	20,067	63%
Milw., West Milw. 53215	19,384	63%	20,407	52%
Milwaukee 53224	6,247	63%	7,565	63%
Milw., Shorewood, W. Bay 53211	14,669	65%	16,068	64%
W. Allis, Milw., W. Milw. 53214	14,124	65%	14,474	68%
Milw., Brown Deer 53223	10,443	66%	13,060	65%
St. Francis 53235	3,562	67%	3,878	63%
W. Allis, Milw., Greenfield 53227	9,273	74%	10,534	71%
Milwaukee, Greenfield, West Allis, West Milwaukee 53219	12,956	74%	14,995	70%
Milwaukee 53207	14,327	75%	15,028	74%
Milwaukee, Wauwatosa 53222	8,818	76%	11,357	71%
Franklin 53132	12,208	77%	11,121	90%
Wauwatosa, Milwaukee 53226	7,085	77%	8,433	77%
Milwaukee, Greenfield 53221	13,444	78%	15,615	72%
Cudahy 53110	7,007	79%	7,639	75%
Wauwatosa, Milwaukee 53213	9,298	80%	10,974	80%
Greenfield, Milwaukee 53220	9,532	81%	11,319	78%
South Milwaukee 53172	8,001	81%	8,342	83%
Greenfield, Milwaukee 53228	5,295	85%	6,292	80%
Oak Creek 53154	10,832	88%	11,564	87%
Greendale 53129	5,329	88%	6,145	89%
Hales Corners 53130	2,826	89%	3,302	84%
Bayside, Fox Pt., Glendale, River Hills, W. Bay 53217	10,707	92%	12,087	92%
<b>Milwaukee County</b>	<b>336,402</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>381,816</b>	<b>65%</b>

**Voting Age Adults in Milwaukee County with Drivers Licenses  
(Including Valid, Suspended and Revoked Licenses)**

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Hales Corners 53130	2,826	95%	3,302	86%
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<b>Milwaukee County</b>	<b>336,402</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>381,818</b>	<b>68%</b>