

Date: July 12, 2016  
Re: Support for Bus Rapid Transit  
To: Members of Milwaukee Common Council  
From: Barbara Beckert, Disability Rights Wisconsin – Director, Milwaukee Office 414-773-4646 x 2724

I am writing to you today on behalf of Disability Rights Wisconsin. DRW is part of a national network of protection and advocacy agencies charged by Congress to protect the rights of people with disabilities and advance their independence. As you consider proposals related to Milwaukee County's proposed East-West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, we respectfully ask you to consider the benefits for many community members with disabilities.

The BRT initiative would provide an improved transit connection to major employment and activity centers in southeast Wisconsin, including downtown Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and the Milwaukee County Research Park. We are supportive of the BRT because access to transportation is so vital to the independence of people with disabilities. Many are unable to drive because of their disability and/or limited financial resources. As the Protection and Advocacy Agency for Wisconsinites with disabilities, we have found that access to transportation is consistently among the top concerns for people with disabilities in Wisconsin. When people with disabilities cannot access transportation or the transportation network does not get them where they need to go when they need to, they are unable to work, spend money at local businesses, access healthcare, or visit family and friends.

The proposed East-West Bus Rapid Transit service would be of tremendous benefit to many Milwaukee residents who have a disability, as well beneficial for the work force which provides direct care support and services. Improved and more timely access to the regional Medical Center and the health care services based there, will be especially helpful, since many people with disabilities frequently access these services. In addition, lack of access to reliable and timely transportation is one the greatest barriers to employment for people with disabilities. The proposed BRT service will increase access to jobs and increased employment opportunities for many people with disabilities. An additional benefit relates to the many direct care workers who provide personal care, supportive home care, and other services to people with disabilities, and rely on public transportation. The additional options and reduced travel time offered by the BRT initiative will be an important asset for direct care workers. This is especially important as Milwaukee transitions to a community based model of care for people with disabilities.

The East-West Bus Rapid Transit service is a smart investment which has the potential to significantly improve access for people with disabilities to health care, employment, and other vital services. We strongly support this direction. Please keep us informed as this advances and we welcome opportunities for additional input and collaboration from DRW and others in the disability community. Thank you for your consideration and your service to our community.

All the best,



Barbara Beckert  
Director, Milwaukee Office

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