

**Local Transportation  
1972, 1998**

## Local Transportation Study

**Background:** The current position, adopted following an “emergency study” in 1972, is:

### VII. BUS SERVICE

- A. Preserving bus service.
- B. Improving bus service.

*– League of Women Voters of Appleton – Local Support Positions*

**Study Committee:** Sue Silton, co-chair; Cheryl Barnes, co-chair; Corinne Goldgar; Mary Lokensgard; and Terry Noto.

**Meetings:** (1) A general meeting on November 3, 1997, featuring a tour of the Valley Transit Operations and Maintenance Building, the history of transit in the Fox Cities by Corinne Goldgar, and an overview of the current system by Charles L. Kamp, General Manager of Valley Transit. (2) A unit/consensus meeting on February 17, 1998, at 7:15 p.m., in the Appleton Public Library. Prior to the discussion portion of the meeting, the attendees assembled at the Transit Center and rode the half-hour Valley Transit route of their choice.

Attending the unit/consensus meeting: Cheryl Barnes; Anna Faye Dodd; Sue Eich; Corinne Goldgar; Sue Kinde (discussion leader); Ann Schell, Assistant Director and Transportation Planner, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission; Alex Schell, guest; Sue Silton; Janet Van Asten, guest; Bev Wieckert; and Vivian Wright. Attendance was not recorded at the general meeting.

### Consensus

1. Because the size of the Fox Cities urban area requires that people have transportation – means of getting from place to place – providing facilities to accommodate some modes of transportation (*e.g.*, private automobiles/trucks, transit/paratransit, and bicycles) and regulating facilities of other modes (*e.g.*, taxis and walking) constitute proper functions of government. With the exception of walking, all of these modes of transportation are to some extent subsidized by tax monies. (Paying for sidewalks is the responsibility of the abutting property owner.)
2. It is not a proper function of government to determine the value of a trip’s purpose to the person taking the trip. Insofar as resources will allow, people dependant on public transportation should have the same ability to get around the community as people using private modes.
3. It is recognized that each of the various modes of transportation has its own advantages and disadvantages to the individual and to the community:
  - a. The private automobile, while probably the most convenient mode, not only requires considerable up-front expense and parking space but is also a major cause of traffic congestion and air pollution. It also requires that the individual be mentally and physically able and licensed to operate a vehicle.

- b. Public transportation, both fixed route buses and paratransit, is pay-as-you-go for the individual and requires neither parking space nor for the user to have special abilities. Further, while less polluting than the private automobile, transit does create some air pollution. It is, however, less convenient because the individual user must accommodate to the bus schedule or to make his paratransit reservation in advance. It also lacks the privacy of the automobile.
    - c. Taxis, while providing both privacy and door-to-door service generally at the time desired by the user, are relatively expensive in this area.
    - d. Bicycles, not consuming fossil fuels and thus being non-polluting, are a healthy mode of transportation both for the user and for the community. Their safe operation, however, is weather-dependant, and vandalism is a threat to "parked" bicycles.
    - e. Walking has the same advantages and disadvantages as the bicycle except that there is no vehicle to be parked.
4. Integration of the various modes so that an individual's trip can use more than one is highly desirable. Examples of such integration would include:
  - a. Park-and-ride lots on the perimeter of the transit service area;
  - b. A transit route or routes serving the terminals of other modes – the airport, intercity bus station (now being accomplished with Greyhound being located in the Transit Center), railroad depot (if the area were to get inter-city rail service);
  - c. Bicycle racks on the buses and enclosed bicycle "lockers" at the Transit Center.
5. Although owned and operated by the City of Appleton, Valley Transit provides an integrated service, the only efficient and effective way to serve the entire urban area. To make the system's policy-making and funding arrangements reflect the integration of the service, two changes would be desirable:
  - a. For the policy body, the Transit Commission, no longer to be restricted to residents of the City of Appleton. Its structure should include representatives of other areas of the transit service area.
  - b. The term of the service contracts between the City of Appleton and the other participating municipalities and the time required for notice of early termination should be lengthened both to provide more stability for the system and to allow for more effective long-term planning.
6. It is recognized that Valley Transit is generally trying to serve people who are transit dependent. The desirability of making the system more attractive to "choice" riders is also recognized. Consequently, the following are examples of additions that should be made to the current service given adequate resources:
  - a. Sunday service;
  - b. Half-hour service throughout the day.

## **Discussed – Without Agreement or Dissent**

What are the sources of the funding for public transportation – fixed-route bus and paratransit service?

Capital costs are met through federal transit aids and the annual depreciation assessed to the local participating municipalities with the federal government providing the major part, 75% – 90%, depending on the project. Operating costs are met through federal and state transit aids, farebox revenues, and appropriations by the local participating municipalities; currently, the state provides the largest part, 42%. The local share of the costs is apportioned among the participating municipalities based on the hours/miles of service within their corporate boundaries.

Why such big buses?

Although the buses seem to run empty or almost “all the time,” at some time during the day a full-size “big” bus is required to accommodate the number of people wanting to ride. Since the major part of operating expenses is the wages of the drivers, adding a second bus for those peak times would not be cost effective. The “big” heavy-duty buses are almost as fuel-efficient as smaller buses and they have an operating life more than three times longer.

Why do all of the routes, except the two completely within Neenah, center on downtown Appleton?

Because of the L-shaped configuration of the urban area following the river and the lakes, a grid system is not suitable for the Fox Cities. Furthermore, a route following the perimeter of the urban area would not diminish the time required for most trips since transfers between such a route and the intersecting routes could not be coordinated to diminish the time required for most trips.

## **Possible Action Initiatives**

1. Including meetings of the Transit Commission among those to be regularly attended by a representative of the Observer Corps.
2. Close monitoring of the budgets which fund public transportation – federal, state, and local. The local budgets to be monitored should include, in addition to that of the City of Appleton, those of the other municipalities and counties which participate in the transit and paratransit services.
3. Monitoring initiatives for all modes of transportation to insure that minority interests (those of walkers, bicyclists, and transit users) are considered along with majority interests (those of the users of private automobiles.)
4. Encouraging League members – and the general public – to familiarize themselves with the transit system and to use the service whenever feasible.



## Some Historical Facts about Our Local Public Transportation

*No one alive today has ever experienced the Fox Cities without public transportation!*

- Public transportation in the area was provided primarily by electric streetcars for 44 years.
  - In 1886, the Appleton Common Council authorized a system of streetcars “drawn by horses or any other form of power not harmful to the community.”
  - In August 1886, the first “commercially successful” electric streetcar system began operating in Appleton with 5 cars and 4½ miles of track. By 1900, the streetcars were operating the length of the Valley.
  - The last “run” of the streetcars was on April 6, 1930, when Wisconsin Electric Power Co. replaced the trolleys with buses from its operation in Milwaukee. But as early as 1924 the buses of Olof Lundquist’s Fox River Bus Co. were operating on Appleton’s northside in an area not served by the streetcars.
- All local transit systems in Wisconsin are now municipally owned. (While public transportation flourished as private enterprise until the 1950’s, virtually all local transit systems in the country are now governmental operations.)
  - In 1953, the Janesville’s transit system “went public” — the first system in Wisconsin to do so.
  - When Milwaukee’s system was acquired by Milwaukee County in 1976, the last privately-owned “big city” system in the country had become public.
  - On January 1, 1978, Appleton and Oshkosh purchased their systems, making them the last in the state to go public.
- The decade, 1968–78, was a period of recurring crises for transit in the Fox Cities. Ultimately, when faced with the possibility of losing public transportation service, Appleton reluctantly chose to buy and operate the system. Significant in this period were:
  - The death of Mr. Lundquist and Appleton’s inability to get technical assistance from the Fox Cities Council of Governments, the then regional planning agency, which was facing its own demise.
  - The Mayor’s Urban Transit Service Study Committee which recommended that a Transit Commission be created and that transit be regarded as a public service.
  - The Transit Commission, appointed in March 1973, which made heroic efforts to keep the privately-owned transit system afloat. It did not propose public acquisition until Fox River Bus Lines *seriously* petitioned to abandon the urban service.
  - Two referenda in Appleton: one, in 1971, on the question of a \$2000/month subsidy passed 10,046 to 2,709; the other, in April 1977, asking whether the City should “buy, own, and operate” the transit system, passed 10,414 to 3,349 and carried in all of the City’s then-20 wards. The Appleton League of Women Voters and the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce took the lead in promoting a “yes” vote in the acquisition referendum.
  - Referenda in four surrounding municipalities in 1976 on continued participation in transit subsidies, all of which passed: Kaukauna, 2,347 to 1,201; Kimberly, 1,334 to 812; Menasha, 2,363 to 1,473; and Neenah, 2,945 to 2,017.
- In July 1994, an Appleton alderman offered a resolution that Valley Transit be dismantled and replaced by “a system of mini-vans,” which led to a study of the transit service.
  - One result of this study was a re-arranging of service hours and the re-introduction of evening transit service for the first time since the early ’70’s.

*More on the back ➔*

● Other assorted historical facts

○ About local transit:

- The transit system was renamed "Valley Transit" in March 1978 to indicate that, although it is owned and operated by Appleton, the service is regional.
- What Appleton purchased when it acquired the system were the "urban assets" of Fox River Bus Lines. For several years FRBL continued to operate its yellow school bus and charter bus services.
- Valley Transit bought 14 GMC "new look" buses in 1980, 10 Orion buses in 1992 and another 10 Orions in 1994. Several good used "new looks" were acquired in the mid-'80's. (Prior to municipal acquisition, Appleton had never had even one brand-new bus.)
- In June 1983, Valley Transit moved from the garage at 1024 W. Wisconsin Avenue to its Operations & Maintenance Building. The Transit Center opened in March 1990; prior to that the layover/transfer point was on Washington & Appleton Streets, having been moved from College & Oneida when the Avenue Mall closed Oneida.
- Basic fare: 

<i>before 1970</i>	. 25¢	1987	.....	50¢	
1970	.....	30¢	1990	.....	60¢
1972	.....	35¢	1993	.....	75¢
1983	.....	45¢	1996	....	\$1.00
- The half-fare for the elderly and handicapped, required by state and federal transit regulations, was implemented locally in 1975.
- Exact fare policy — drivers do not make change — implemented in 1979.
- Pre-paid fare: 

<i>before 1983</i>	. tokens
1983	..... Flash Passes & 25-Ride Tickets
1993	..... 10-Ride Tickets
<i>since 1988</i>	.. DayPasses
- From 1982 through 1991, Valley Transit contracted with Red Cross Dial-a-Bus to provide its paratransit service for people unable to use the buses because of a disability. Since 1992, following a competitive bid process, Medi-Vans has held this contract. Valley Transit's part of Medi-Vans' service is called "Valley Transit-II."

○ State and Federal transit assistance

- Urban Mass Transportation Act passed in 1964 provided federal grants for capital projects.
- Urban Mass Transportation Act amended in 1974 to include federal grants for operating assistance.
- Federal grants are now administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA — pronounced "ice tea"! ). The predecessor of FTA was the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA).
- Wisconsin began its program of transit operating assistance in 1975.

Background of the current position on local public transportation  
of the Appleton League of Women Voters  
(excerpted from the Bulletins of October and November 1972 – with annotations)

LETTER FROM WHATSHERNAME<sup>1</sup>

"Sic transit gloria mundi" keeps running through my head although it doesn't have anything to do with buses in Appleton or anywhere else. Nevertheless, mass transit in Appleton and just about everywhere else is sick on Monday and all the other days, and Mayor Sutherland has appointed a committee<sup>2</sup> to find a remedy before the city misses the bus completely. By taking a hard look at the local facts, the League can get set to speak out on public transportation in Appleton under the national EQ and HR positions. At the meeting on Oct. 11, we will take that hard look and decide what (if anything) we want to say. Mark the date on your calendar in red with stars and arrows. Public transportation is a subject that merits our serious attention and concern.

- Corinne Goldgar

BUS SERVICE IN APPLETON:  
REFINEMENT OF POSITION

Twenty-three League members met October 11, 1972 to hear Ken Theine of East-Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission speak, and then discussed the issues of bus service in Appleton. Since there was no local study committee on transportation and we relied on the Fox Valley Council of Government's<sup>3</sup> Regional Mass Transit Study for information, and because of the time limits of our own garrulousness and the building's<sup>4</sup> closing hour, the refinement of position is not as detailed as we might have preferred. Though some members supported the Study's optimum level of service, there was not clear agreement and a strong minority felt that we needed more time and information.

Support of:

1. Preserving bus service.
2. Improving bus service.
3. City-owned, but not necessarily city-operated bus service.

- Sue Kinde

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<sup>1</sup> Title of the then-President's column.

<sup>2</sup> Chaired by Judge Andrew Parnell.

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<sup>3</sup> The planning agency which preceded East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

<sup>4</sup> The First National Bank – now, after several name changes/mergers, Bank One.

## EXHIBIT B. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Public transportation in Appleton has a long history. In 1882, the city fathers authorized a streetcar system using horse-drawn cars, but leaving open the option of using any power source that would not be harmful to the community. Four years later, the first commercially successful, electrically powered urban transit system in the world began operation in Appleton. The electric trolleys were replaced by buses in 1930, although as early as 1924 certain areas of the north side were being served by buses of Olof Lundquist's Fox River Bus Company. The years following World War II saw a decline in the number of people using public transportation in Appleton, as elsewhere. The urban and interurban routes that had replaced the streetcars changed hands many times before being purchased by Mr. Lundquist and made part of Fox River Bus Lines in 1957.

The end of the '60's found Fox River Bus Lines with declining revenues and an aging fleet. Efforts to obtain financial assistance from the City, which began in 1969, met with reluctance on the part of the Common Council, and governmental dollars were not forthcoming only under the pressure of a walkout of the drivers in April 1970. During the first three-month subsidy, the management of FRBL formed Appleton City Transit, Inc., to handle the six routes being subsidized; at the recommendation of the Common Council, it also raised fares and reduced service. The Common Council put off continuation of the subsidy after the initial three months; however, following a referendum in April 1971 at which the electorate voted in favor of a subsidy by 10,046 to 2,709, the Council approved a subsidy of \$2,000 a month and agreed to pay some of the losses of the previous July - December period. Efforts of the City to receive technical advice from the Fox Cities Council of Governments were hampered by the Council of Governments problems



concerning its continued existence.

Appleton City Transit's losses continued through the second half of 1972, and its requests for increased subsidy were refused. Consequently, in August 1972, ACT petitioned the Public Service Commission for permission to abandon service on September 1. Responding to this possible loss of service, the Council agreed to absorb all losses; ACT agreed to raise its fares by 5¢ (to 35¢); and an Urban Transit Service Study Committee, chaired by Judge Andrew Parnell, was appointed. Among the recommendations of the Parnell Committee, which reported in October, were the establishment of a Transit Commission and the regarding of mass transit as a public service. In March 1973, a five-member Transit Commission was appointed, and, with its assistance, Fox River Bus Lines and Appleton City Transit were able in October 1973 to acquire fourteen (secondhand) "new look" buses and to return to half-hour headways throughout the week. The new equipment and improved service coincided with the energy crisis of the winter of 1973 making it difficult to determine the reason for the ridership increase. In April 1975, Appleton City Transit, with the assistance of the Transit Commission and with a subsidy from Outagamie County, was able to extend service to Little Chute and Kaukauna, replacing Kobussen's Kaukauna Bus Service, Inc., which had abandoned the route in October 1974. In June 1975, Outagamie County agreed to continue contributing financial assistance to Appleton City Transit on behalf of Kaukauna and Little Chute through the remainder of the year with the expectation that these municipalities would take over the contribution of assistance in their local budgets for 1976.

Although the six routes serving the City of Appleton were split off to form Appleton City Transit and to receive subsidy, Fox River Bus Lines continued to operate its routes serving the surrounding municipalities of Kimberly and Grand Chute (#7) and

Menasha and Neenah (#8), as these routes were showing a profit. However, by the fall of 1975, rising expenses had turned the profit to a loss; and in September 1975, Fox River Bus Lines petitioned the Public Service Commission for permission to abandon service unless a subsidy were forthcoming. While awaiting the decision of the PSC, the Appleton Transit Commission assisted Fox River Bus Lines in approaching the various municipal governments to request assistance. The PSC granted abandonment on January 1, 1976; however, by the date set for abandonment, all of the local governments except Grand Chute had agreed to subsidize at least on a temporary basis; and Kaukauna and Little Chute, whose local share had previously been paid by Outagamie County, also agreed to subsidize only through March.

The Appleton Transit Commission instructed Fox River Bus Lines to shift the newly subsidized routes to Appleton City Transit, its wholly-owned subsidiary, in order to facilitate the payment of subsidy and to make these routes eligible for federal and state transit aids, and a Commission subcommittee was appointed to meet with representatives of the surrounding municipalities and to act as a liaison with their governments in the details of subsidy and service. Following the unfavorable response on subsidy from the Town of Grand Chute, the Commission instructed Appleton City Transit to reduce the number of trips on this segment of route in an effort to cut the losses while continuing some service to this area of apartment developments and automobile-oriented business; however, by the end of February, it had become obvious that the route could not continue without subsidy, and in late March, it was discontinued.

The reluctance of the various municipal governments to commit themselves to a transit subsidy on a long term basis stemmed from their being accustomed to regard public transportation as a profit-

making private enterprise. None denied the desirability of having bus service, but almost without exception they questioned whether it was a proper recipient for tax monies and whether it was worth the cost. The Cities of Kaukauna, Neenah, and Menasha placed a referendum question on the ballot at the April local elections; all the referenda passed by sizeable majorities. The Village of Kimberly will hold a transit subsidy referendum at the November (1977) election.

On September 16, 1976, citing administrative and financial problems, the management of ACT - FRBL informed the City that it was terminating the contract on December 31, 1976, but that it would continue urban service through June 30, 1977, to allow time for other arrangements to be made to continue public transportation in the area. A referendum on public ownership is expected to be held in April 1977.

In the months prior to the notice that Appleton City Transit intended to withdraw from urban service, the Transit Commission, with the assistance of the ACT management and of the Transportation Planner at East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, made a concerted effort to improve and promote the system. An expanded route through Neenah, Menasha, and the Town of Menasha was begun on August 1. On September 1, a new system of "modified linear" routes was put into effect in Appleton to replace the looping routes and thus to give a quicker, more convenient ride; at the same time, the service to Kaukauna and Little Chute, which had been on a split schedule, was made consistent throughout the day. In conjunction with the new service, an advertising firm was retained to design a new logo, route map, and promotional program to increase ridership.

Although precise arrangements are somewhat unsettled at the present time, there seems to be little question that public

transportation will be continued in the Appleton area. When given the opportunity to express themselves on the subject, the people of the Appleton area have consistently indicated that transit is a service that is needed and wanted. This was shown in Appleton's 1971 referendum and in the referenda held in the surrounding municipalities in the spring of 1976. The following excerpt from the report, *Results of the Appleton Growth Study Committee Survey of Appleton Citizens*, issued on August 25, 1976, is the most recent evidence; under the heading, "What do Appleton citizens want in transportation facilities?", the report says:

"Appleton citizens expressed strong support for bus service, even at the expense of providing more highways and parking facilities. Survey respondents were asked: 'In general, would you favor providing for increased travel needs by building more highways and parking facilities or by improving and expanding bus service?' Fifty-seven percent chose 'improve bus service' while only 28% selected 'more highways and parking.' Thirteen percent didn't know.

"Additional questions reinforced that conclusion; sixty-four percent of respondents said 'yes' when asked if they 'consider the Appleton bus system an attractive alternative to the automobile,' and 84% said Appleton 'should' continue to subsidize bus service to guarantee its continuation."

## Consensus: Local Transportation Study

1. Because the size of the Fox Cities urban area requires that people have transportation – means of getting from place to place, providing facilities to accommodate some modes of transportation (e.g., private automobiles/trucks, transit/paratransit, and bicycles) and regulating facilities of other modes (e.g., taxis and walking) constitute proper functions of government. With the exception of walking, all of these modes of transportation are to some extent subsidized by tax monies. (Paying for sidewalks is the responsibility of the abutting property owner.)
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### **Meeting Details**

Held Tuesday, Feb. 17, 1998, at 7:15 p.m. in the Appleton Public Library. Prior to the discussion portion of the meeting, the attendees assembled at the Transit Center and rode the half-hour Valley Transit route of their choice.

Attending the meeting: Cheryl Barnes; Anna Faye Dodd; Sue Eich; Corinne Goldgar; Sue Kinde; Ann Schell, Assistant Director and Transportation Planner, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission; Alex Schell, guest; Sue Silton; Janet Van Asten, guest; Bev Wieckert; and Vivian Wright.