

Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Study

Background: The current position to be presented to the League of Women Voters of Appleton at the 2102 Annual Meeting supports the development of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). We propose establishing this position under the existing position of Local Transportation.

VIII. Local Transportation

D. Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

1. provide a sound, dependable funding source
2. direct election of board members
3. advisory committee of users

LWV-Appleton – Local Support Position(s)

Study Committee: Irene Strohbeen; Stevie Schmidt; Corinne Goldgar; Marlys Fritzell; Shirley Strange, co-chair; Carolyn Mewhorter, co-chair. Committee meetings were held March 10, 2011; May 19, 2011; June 9, 2011; July 21, 2011; September 1, and 23, 2011; October 27, 2011; November 3, 2011; December 1, 2011/

Meetings: (1) A general meeting was held on February 17, 2011 at Valley Transit. Mayor Hanna and Deborah Wetter, General Manager of Valley Transit, provide an overview of Valley Transit; services, current funding sources, and challenges to these funding sources. A meeting was held on February 8, 2011 with Deborah Wetter to plan for the general meeting. (2) A forum open to the public and the second general meeting for League members was held on October 13, 2011 at the Appleton Public Library. Titled “Public Transportation at Risk in the Fox Cities” the forum provided a panel made up of citizens and officials knowledgeable about Valley Transit and the Fox Valley area it serves responded to questions from the audience. Those on the panel included: Tim Hanna, Appleton Mayor; Al Runde, WI Legislative Fiscal Bureau; Thom Ciske, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce; George Dearborn, Community Development, Menasha; Penny Bernard Schaber, State Representative, 57th District, and Jo A. Egelhoff, Founder Fox Politics.net. (3) A consensus meeting was held on November 10, 2011 at the Appleton Public Library. Those in attendance included Stephanie Malaney; Renee Gralewicz; Sara Companik; Maryls Fritzell; Marcia Hittle; Shirley Adams; Helen Nagler; Irene Strohbeen; Shirley Strange; and Carolyn Mewhorter.

Consensus

1. Because of need for public transportation, the League of Women Voters of Appleton supports a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that will provide sound, dependable funding. The League of Women Voters-Appleton has long had a position on Local Transportation. Valley Transit continues to serve the needs of the community providing rides for employment, medical care, personal needs, school, and entertainment. 41% of the 1,143,832 trips taken in 2010 were for

employment purposes. Many employers in the Valley rely on transit to attract and retain employees.

2. Federal funding has been consistent in the past; however, the 2010 census has shown our population to be over 200,000 a point at which the federal government will withhold 1.5 million dollars in support to Valley Transit. A loss of 1.5 million dollars would result in decreased services and even possibly an end to a transit system in our area.
3. State funding is not consistent with a 10% cut being made earlier in the year (2011). Efforts to take transit out of the transportation budget and put it in the general fund have been dropped as of this writing.
4. A Regional Transit is already in place with 13 municipalities and counties participating in the service. The communities have long worked together to provide this important service which will facilitate establishing a Regional Transit Authority (RTA).

Discussed – Without Agreement or Dissent

1. Make up of the board of a Regional Transit Authority. Election or appointment of members. Size of the board.
2. The 100 Busses Coalition.
3. Supporters of Valley Transit:
4. The Connector.
5. The School ID Ride Program.

Possible Action Initiatives

1. Attend Transit Commission meetings when possible.
2. Monitor budgets funding transit – federal, state, and local.
3. Track legislation pertaining to transportation/transit on a regular basis and provide support as is appropriate. Keep League members aware of developments.
4. Work with other groups supporting funding for transit, e.g. Esther.

February 13, 2012
Carolyn Mewhorter