

# Madison Area Bus Advocates



For more info, go to: [www.busadvocates.org](http://www.busadvocates.org)

## TRANSIT RIDERS MANIFESTO

1. Public transportation is a basic public service for everyone, not just for those of low income or for people who cannot drive a car. There is no place for means-testing fares.
2. As long as there are no tolls for public roads, entry fees at public parks, or user fees for myriad other public services, there should be *no* fare for core bus rides. In contrast, parking is expensive as it uses land that could be used for other purposes, and should be priced accordingly—this includes parking at public parks, parking at public schools, parking at community centers, parking at public libraries, and parking at the curbs of public roads.
3. The initial focus of any regional transit planning needs to place primary attention on improving and expanding the current system, the bus, as an efficient, clean, convenient, safe and affordable means of travel throughout the Madison area.
4. Transit riders are not second-class citizens and their input should be sought to better inform decision-making pertaining to transit and land use plans.
5. There should be at least six different types of transit runs including: 1) core service running all the time; 2) extra commuter service at peak times; 3) express service with limited stops; 4) circulators and shuttles; 5) paratransit; and; 6) connectors to intercity transport carriers.
6. Core bus service should run 24 hours a day, every day of the week, at least every 20-30 minutes to accommodate 2nd- and 3rd-shift workers, as well as 1st-shift workers. Commuter service during peak hours should run at least every 10 minutes within Madison's transfer points.
7. There should be express service that makes bus riding time-competitive with the automobile for a significant proportion of the population.
8. The Madison area should have a downtown intermodal terminal for local buses, intercity buses, and intercity rail.
9. Major transfer points should be bustling, vibrant centers of commercial and public activity, rather than dead places located far away from anything else.

**\*1\*** Public transportation is a basic public service, similar to our collective interest in public safety, public health, public schools, public parks, public roads, and public libraries. Although Madison's bus system used to be a private for-profit company, it was acquired by the city and turned into a public utility on a par with public roads and municipal parking lots. At that time, fares were low for everyone, but there was no intention for public transportation to only be for poor people or to be means-tested. In fact, having fares at all was a vestige of the earlier for-profit situation and could have been eliminated entirely.

**\*2\*** Just as public roads are built and maintained with tax money shared by all, so should basic public transit be built and maintained with tax money shared by all. Fares for rides on public transit are logically analogous to tolls for driving on roads. Special bus runs could exact fees but basic runs should not. However, as sustainable travel modes reduce traffic congestion, place fewer demands on the environment, benefit health, facilitate economic activity, and generally promote the public welfare, a good case could be made for having the entire cost subsidized, even as user fees exacted for other types of travel increased.

**\*3\*** Fiscally-responsible plans for a regional transit system will build upon our current system and fit population size—that means initial plans should focus on the current bus system and also extend the use of shared-ride taxis, van pools, car pools, and smaller 21-30 foot buses, in addition to larger, articulated buses. As transit gains acceptance as the best way to travel, future rail transit modes can build on the initial bus transit strategies in selected high-volume corridors.

**\*4\*** Currently, Metro Transit schedules and plans its routes without input from either bus riders (potential or current) or bus drivers. While the 2009 system audit by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation recommended that a formal mechanism for driver input be established, this welcome direction needs to be extended further to acknowledge the importance of consumer input from bus riders. Current and future bus riders are not second-class citizens and their input needs to be sought for any important decisions to be made pertaining to transit and land use plans.

**\*5\*** Metro Transit now utilizes almost exclusively 40-foot-long diesel buses in mixed traffic; instead, there should be appropriately-sized vehicles for a variety of purposes, using environmentally-friendly power sources, running on different types of lanes, stopping more or less frequently. In addition, there needs to be a core bus service (with frequent stops) running *all* the time at 20-30 minute intervals *every*

day of week, with extra service every 10 minutes during peak-hours on weekdays.

**\*6\*** Round-the-clock bus service is essential for a city active 24 hours a day as is Madison. Besides being home to a world-renown university, Madison is a major regional/national medical center with four major hospitals and many urgent-care clinics, and, in addition, its numerous downtown entertainment venues serve large regional audiences. Many of the city's employers operate 2nd- and 3rd-shifts and all-night bus service would open employment opportunities for those most in need of a job and with fewer transportation options.

**\*7\*** In addition to the core bus service described above, a system of express buses is required, which would run frequently enough to make bus travel a serious travel option for the widest array of taxpayers, not just those who lack other travel choices; for example, it should be possible to take an express bus from every transfer point to downtown in 15 minutes (or less) seven days a week.

The system also needs a series of circulator routes around major locations and also shuttle routes running between identified high-traffic destinations. Provision must also be made for specialized transportation options for those who cannot physically use that of the mainline service. Lastly, connector bus routes must seamlessly link up the local and inter-city transit carriers serving the Madison area.

**\*8\*** Since it should be possible to get around Wisconsin without a car, the Madison area needs a centrally-located multimodal terminal where there can be seamless transfer between inter-city and local transit. The last downtown rail depot in Madison was eliminated years ago, while the last intercity bus terminal was eliminated at the end of August 2009. The capital city of Wisconsin has no intercity transit depot—it should have, and having one should be a priority of the Regional Transit Authority.

**\*9\*** A glaring indication of the lack of bus rider input into decision-making is the current location of the four system transfer points, sited away from natural locations because of objections from people who do *not* use the bus but who *did* get to have input. The Madison transfer points ended up being located a distance away from anything else, are unsafe and, while provided with a roof, are open to the wind and cold underneath. Instead, transfer points should be located at vibrant centers of activity where people can connect from different directions, stay warm and safe, accomplish small errands, and/or have refreshment while waiting for a transfer.