



Madison Area Bus Advocates

P.O. Box 260156
Madison, WI 53726-0156
email: info@busadvocates.org
Website: www.busadvocates.org

Dane County Needs a Regional Transportation Authority August 10, 2026

Madison Area Bus Advocates favors legislation that would enable Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) in Wisconsin that devote at least 50% of their funds to public transit. Madison has become a central city in Dane County surrounded by incorporated and unincorporated areas that together are interdependent parts of a region. Transportation in such an area is best dealt with by a regional authority that can provide dedicated funding for capital and operational expenses.

Public transportation includes everyone. A Dane County RTA would bring together the 30-40% of the County's population that does not drive with people who **do** drive but would prefer not to and with people who **do** drive and prefer it that way. It should give people options. And it should use people's energy to expand everyone's well-being, not waste it by having us fight over slices of a shrinking pie.

A Dane County RTA could involve a power shift away from the city of Madison to the county of Dane. The control of funds, decision-making and service could then be housed in a county agency or board rather than in a city agency. That should not mean a reduction in service within Madison itself of course, but the addition of new service to other areas from new funding in an overall larger budget.

Buses are a transit backbone, hence the word bus in our name. Every day, for work, school, family, and health, people in Dane County depend on the bus for mobility needs. But just as we acknowledge that there are different kinds of buses, we acknowledge that there are other kinds of transportation as well, including light or heavy passenger rail, vans, shared ride and single occupancy automobiles, scooters, bicycles, etc. However, funding for the local bus should not be cut to support anything else. Indeed, different transportation modes work best when they work together.

A land value tax or income tax can be a more progressive way to procure funds than a flat rate property tax or a sales tax. However, an even larger goal than choosing a fair tax should be for the state to put transit back into the state's transportation fund and for that fund to allocate a larger proportion of its budget to such local programs as public transit rather than state highways.

Many other features of a Special Purpose District may be similarly indeterminant. Its governing body can be elected or appointed, have many or few members. Members may or may not need certain qualities to be eligible. Whatever the governance structure ends up being however, RTAs in Wisconsin should be transparent. How they raise and use funds should be clear.