



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 619

Physical Fitness Requirements for Local Transit Employees

February 17, 2016

Good afternoon, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 619, which would require all transit bus drivers in Wisconsin to undergo the same periodic medical fitness exams that are required of others with commercial driver's licenses, such as semi-truck and school bus drivers.

Federal law requires all interstate drivers to pass a medical exam every two years. Federal law makes only a few specific exemptions to this requirement such as fire trucks, certain farm equipment, drivers of school buses, and drivers for a political subdivision, including transit buses. Drivers in intrastate commerce do not cross state lines, and are governed by state law. Many states have applied the federal medical requirements to other safety-sensitive transportation employees. In Wisconsin, like many other states, school bus drivers are required to have a periodic fitness exam. Transit bus drivers, however, remain exempt from periodic fitness exams. Other states, such as Minnesota, Arizona, Massachusetts, Washington, Tennessee, and Kentucky require their mass transit drivers to pass medical fitness requirements.

The periodic medical fitness exam as provided under the bill will allow municipal transit systems to be pro-active in helping drivers treat issues that may have gone unnoticed and could endanger the lives of their passengers, pedestrians, or other drivers. Driving a large, heavy vehicle is very different from driving a car. Things like stopping time and distance, blind spots, and limited maneuverability require drivers to be in top driving condition. It is important for drivers to be alert to changes in traffic and be able to make quick, controlled decisions.

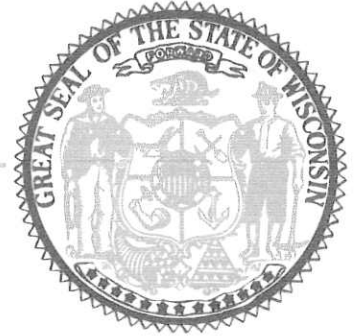
It is important to note that, under the bill, the requirement for the medical fitness exam is not subject to collective bargaining. How that requirement is implemented, and how the results of those exams are used, however, will be handled in the collective bargaining between labor and management.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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FRED A. RISSER
Wisconsin State Senator



February 17, 2016

Senator Jerry Petrowski, Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
123 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Chairman Petrowski,

Thank you Chairperson Petrowski, and committee members for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 619, relating to proof of physical fitness requirement for certain local transit employees.

I appreciate Chairman Petrowski's willingness to coauthor and lead this legislation in the Senate and Representative Amy Loudenberg for introducing companion legislation in the Assembly. Representative Loudenberg serve on SCERB together and I appreciate the opportunity to work with her on this matter.

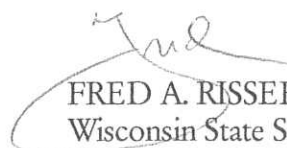
Wisconsin currently requires all school bus drivers to have periodic physical fitness exams. Senate Bill 619 extends the same requirement to municipal transit drivers.

Metro transit drivers are valued and important members of our communities. They are responsible for safely transporting thousands of people each day to and from work or other destinations, transporting many school children to and from school each day, and also helping our elderly and disabled neighbors with their transportation needs.

Any medical issue that develops during a transit driver's shift could pose a serious threat to themselves and those they are responsible for safely transporting. Having a period physical examination may help alleviate this possibility by identifying getting treatment for unknown medical conditions. Metro drivers and their families will also benefit from a regular physical exam through early detection and prompt treatment of any potential health issues that may be discovered.

I appreciate your willingness to schedule this measure for a public hearing. It is a good, common sense bill and I encourage the committee to look favorably upon this important legislation. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or concerns.

Most Sincerely,


FRED A. RISSER
Wisconsin State Senate

FAR:tet

Cc: Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs.

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February 17, 2016

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veteran Affairs

Re: Support for Senate Bill 619

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. The bill before you would require medical examinations periodically for our transit drivers, similar to requirements for interstate bus drivers and Wisconsin school bus drivers. If passed, this would become an important part of our safety program at Metro Transit in Madison, where I currently serve as General Manager.

Before serving here, I was the manager of the transit system in the Fox Cities for 15 years where I began to see the need for this as part of the overall transit safety program there. In Madison, we have had incidents where medical issues are related to accidents or near-accidents, and I believe there is a need to for this tool to improve how we provide safe service to our passengers in Madison and the surrounding community.

I would be happy to try to answer any questions.



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February 17, 2016

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
From: Nick Zavos, Government Relations Officer
Re: Support for Senate Bill 619

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. Senate Bill 619 would require municipal transit drivers to meet the same periodic medical fitness requirements that school bus drivers and truckers currently meet.

Municipal transit drivers are safety-sensitive positions. On a daily basis, transit drivers face circumstances where loss of consciousness or other medical issues pose potentially serious consequences. In Madison, transit drivers provide over 14 million riders per year. Our transit system serves as the primary transportation method for many school children, providing over 1.5 million transit rides per year to K-12 school children.

Under federal law, all drivers of commercial vehicles driving in *interstate* commerce (across state lines) must have a medical fitness exam every two years. Drivers in *intrastate* commerce (who do not cross state lines) are governed only by state law; the "FedMed" law does not apply. Many states have chosen to require similar medical fitness exams for intrastate drivers. Wisconsin currently requires all yellow school bus drivers to have periodic physical fitness exams. This bill will extend the same requirement to transit drivers.

Thank you for your consideration of this important safety issue.