



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Room 412 East, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

September 17, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the September 17, 2008 meeting of the Special Committee on Regional Transportation Authority. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Ott called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Al Ott, Chair; Sen. Judy Robson, Vice Chair; Reps. Jeff Stone and Barbara Toles; Sen. John Lehman; and Public Members Larry Arft, Len Brandrup, Gary Becker, Gerald Derr, Brett Geboy, Dick Granchalek, Anita Gulotta-Connelly, Tim Hanna, Richard Johnson, Chuck Kamp, Scott McDonell, Delora Newton, Brian Ohm, Dick Wagner, and Tom Walker.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Robin Vos and Public Member Fritz Ruf.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Scott Grosz and Larry Konopacki, Staff Attorneys.

APPEARANCES: Rod Clark, Director, Bureau of Transit, Local Roads, Railroads, and Harbors, Department of Transportation (DOT); and Paul Larrousse, Director, National Transit Institute.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

[Note: PowerPoint presentations and other documents referred to by the speakers are posted on the committee's Internet site.]

Rod Clark, Director, Bureau of Transit, Local Roads, Railroads, and Harbors, DOT.

Mr. Clark began his presentation with a description of Wisconsin's history and demographics, and the challenges these traits place on systems of transit in the state. Mr. Clark then proceeded to describe the nature of public transit in Wisconsin, including the role of federal, state, and local government in the operation of the state's transit systems. He also provided a detailed description of transit funding in Wisconsin, including the "tiered" model of state transit funding and the manner in which federal funds are distributed among the state's transit systems.

After describing the funding of state public transit, Mr. Clark described several efforts to assess Wisconsin transit systems, including management performance reviews and annual cost effectiveness reviews, completed by individual transit providers, as well as Wisconsin DOT studies on the benefits of transit.

Mr. Clark concluded his presentation with a description of emerging public transit issues. These issues included the provision of transit services in employment corridors that overlap municipal boundaries, as well as the increasing transit needs of elderly and rural riders.

Following his presentation, Mr. Clark responded to questions from committee members.

Paul Larrousse, Director, National Transit Institute.

Mr. Larrousse spoke to the committee regarding the organizational characteristics of transit authorities throughout the United States. Using selected examples from across the country, Mr. Larrousse highlighted options for organizational structures and funding methods of regional transit authorities.

Throughout his presentation, Mr. Larrousse presented the pros and cons of the models utilized by the selected examples. He also pointed out state-to-state differences in general governance that may have contributed to the particular organizational choices made by each regional transportation authority (RTA) example. Where appropriate, he pointed out states that share demographic traits with Wisconsin. Mr. Larrousse also pointed out several failures in RTA administration and noted aspects of RTA organization that should be avoided.

Mr. Larrousse concluded his presentation with several key observations. In particular, he noted that the size of an RTA board does not necessarily correlate to the size of the area served or the scale of services offered by the RTA. Also, he pointed out that elected RTA boards are rare. Regarding funding, Mr. Larrousse noted that multiple funding sources are utilized throughout the country. However, he highlighted the predominance of sales tax as a funding source.

Following his presentation, Mr. Larrousse responded to questions from members of the committee.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Following the presentations by Mr. Clark and Mr. Larrousse, the committee engaged in a brief discussion of its assignment as well as its plans for future meetings. Chair Ott inquired whether the committee members felt it would be useful to learn more about any particular topics. Committee members responded that it would be useful to hear from a state expert, perhaps from the Department of Revenue, on the pros and cons of different taxation methods, including issues related to the administration of tax collections under different taxation methods.

Following the discussion on additional topics of study, Chair Ott asked committee members how they generally wished to proceed. The committee appeared to reach consensus that it would be productive to use the bill draft submitted along with the study committee request as a starting point and template for committee debate.

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be *Thursday, October 9, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 412 East, State Capitol, Madison*. Tentative additional meeting dates are November 13 and December 11, 2008.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

SG:ksm