



# Penny Bernard Schaber

*Serving the heart of the Fox Cities*

STATE REPRESENTATIVE 57th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Thank you Mr. Chair, I am happy to be here today to testify in support of SB 259, which is a bill that allows for local control of the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in the Fox Cities.

The provision of Public Transportation to and from work, to and from school, to and from shopping and many other activities that support the local economy in the Fox Cities is done through Valley Transit. You will be hearing from representatives of Valley Transit as this hearing proceeds. They will give you details about the increased ridership and use of the public transportation system over the last several years.

The Fox Cities are a vibrant, exciting and growing area. Because of the growth in the Fox Cities between 2001 and 2010, the public transportation system in the Fox Cities will lose a large portion of the Federal Funds that assist with the provision of public transportation; this will create a significant problem in the communities that I represent.

Over the last 3 years my office and Sen. Ellis' office have been working with our Congressional Representative, Representative Ribble and Representative Petri's offices to set up a temporary solution to the funding problem that we face in the Fox Cities. A partial and temporary solution passed last year that continues Federal Funding and allows Federal Funding to be used for operating costs for two years, this time will run out in July of 2014.

Regional Transit Authorities are not new to Wisconsin. In 2006 they were the focus of a Legislative Council Study Committee which put forward Recommendations. Since that process RTA's have been put in place through the budget process and they have been removed through the budget process.

Today we are looking at legislation that includes many changes to the original Legislative Council Study Committee recommendations. SB 259 allows the Fox Cities, to decide for themselves if they would like to collect a sales tax that will be used to support public transportation throughout the Fox Cities.

SB259 sets up a true local control process. It requires local communities to decide through their city council or town board if the community would benefit from an RTA, then the residents of the community are asked to determine through a binding referendum if they also support the creation of an RTA.

The referendum language is binding and will requires the language to include the specific sales tax that will be created in that community, this referendum must occur during a general election.

SB259 requires that the RTA board be made up of elected officials from the participating municipalities and it caps the amount of property tax that can be used for public transportation when the sales tax is approved and applied in the community that approves the referendum.

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SB 259 is not the state telling the community to set up an RTA and it is not the state setting a higher sales tax, it is a bill that sets up a true local control process for the approval and the implementation of a Regional Transit Authority. SB 259 allows the local communities to decide to support local funding of the public transportation system that is part of these communities. Because the Fox Cities includes numerous municipalities, including cities, towns and villages, the bill requires that the identical RTA language and the same taxing percentage be approved by each governmental unit and then approved by the citizens in a binding referendum.

The RTA Board may not increase the sales tax percentage, but they can reduce it. If it is determined that a higher sales tax rate is required, that question must be approved via a binding referendum.

If a community decides it does not want to add a sales tax then that community still has the ability to contract with the RTA for the provision of public transportation.

The bill before your committee today is a bill that allows the communities in the Fox Cities to decide for themselves how the Fox Cities will support the public transportation that is necessary for the economic development and continued growth of the Fox Cities.

I urge you to support SB259, and I ask the Chairman and Committee to schedule an executive session for SB259 in this committee. The Fox Cities should be allowed to have an opportunity to decide how they want to support public transportation.

Thank you, I am happy to answer any questions committee members have at this time.

## Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bill Highlights:

- In the 2010 Census the Fox Cities Urbanized Area has grown beyond 200,000 people, as a result the Area will be in a new and reduced federal transit funding bracket.
- Work was done last year by local communities and Federal Representatives Ribble and Petri to pass a temporary fix to keep funding at current levels until 2014, when the Fox Cities transit system will lose \$1.8 million in federal funding
- Re-establishes RTA authorization similar to 2009 Act 28, which was repealed by 2011 Act 32 (biennial budget). Grants RTAs the same powers and authorities as 2009 Act 28. 2013 SB 259 is nearly identical as 2011 AB 574 which Rep. Bernard Schaber & Senator Ellis introduced last session.
- This bill would allow an RTA to be created if the governing body of any two or more municipalities (political subdivisions) located in whole or in part in the Appleton/Fox Cities urbanized area adopt a resolution authorizing the municipality to become a member of the RTA and each resolution is ratified by the electors at a referendum held in the municipality.
- After the RTA is created, any municipality in the planning area may join the RTA if the following conditions are met:
  - The municipality adopts a resolution to join the RTA.
  - The resolution is ratified by the electors at a referendum held in the municipality.
  - The RTA Board of Directors approves.
- The RTA Board of Directors would be composed of elected officials from within the participating municipalities.
- A county can join only if a municipality within it joins, but does not have to join.
- A municipality can still enter into a contract with transit authority/transit provider to authorize service in the municipality without joining the RTA.
- Includes language authorizing a sales tax in the RTA's jurisdictional area at a rate not to exceed 0.5%
  - The actual rate of taxation must be included in the referendum; the rate can be lowered without going back and having another referendum but cannot be raised above the original approved rate.
  - The rate must be in 0.1% increments.
- This bill also provides that if a RTA is established, it caps the property tax levy that can be used to fund transit.

December 19, 2013

Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

Dear Committee Members:

The Fox Cities Regional Partnership serves as the regional economic development organization with a service area that includes Outagamie, Calumet and the northern portion of Winnebago Counties. It is our mission to support the growth of our regional economy by supporting the retention, expansion and attraction of quality primary employers.

Our organization understands the critical importance of access to a qualified workforce as an ingredient for business success. This access includes a viable and efficient public transportation system that workers can depend on for their commute to and from their place of employment. As such, public transportation benefits not only local residents, but also local employers, at the same time that it supports local and regional economic development.

Recognizing that demographics changes have dictated modifications in the funding model for public transportation in the Fox Cities Region, it is the position of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and of the Fox Cities Regional Partnership to support enabling legislation that would allow for the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Our support is conditioned on the need for the passage of a local referendum on the question prior to its implementation.

We respectfully request that you assist us in making this very important transportation tool available to the Fox Cities Region.

Sincerely,

  
Larry Burkhardt  
Executive Vice President

**Koch, Eric**

---

**From:** Burgland, John <John.Burgland@generalgrowth.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 09, 2013 11:44 AM  
**To:** Rep. Bernard Schaber; Rep. Murphy; Rep. Kaufert; Rep. Steineke; Rep. Vos; Sen. Ellis; Sen. Cowles; Sen. Fitzgerald@legis.wi.gov  
**Subject:** Regional Transit Authority

The Fox River Mall is in support of the Regional Transit Authority. Bus service is a great way for our customers and mall employees to make their way to and from the mall. In many cases it is the only way for them to do so. As the dollars in the community become tighter and tighter it is an important means of transportation for many. Please give the matter your full consideration and support.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

**John M. Burgland, CSM** | Senior General Manager | **Fox River Mall** | 4301 W. Wisconsin Ave. | Appleton, WI 54913 | p. 920-739-0754 | [john.burgland@ggp.com](mailto:john.burgland@ggp.com) | [www.ggp.com](http://www.ggp.com)


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*This communication is intended to constitute an outline of certain business terms and conditions relating to a proposed transaction, and is not intended to constitute a complete statement of all relevant terms and conditions. The terms and conditions expressed in the communication are intended to be embodied in definitive documents which may reflect changes and qualifications with respect to the proposed transaction. Accordingly, unless and until definitive documents are finalized, executed and delivered by both parties, and expect as may otherwise be provided herein, neither party shall have any obligation to the other (whether legal or equitable or under this letter or otherwise) including, but not limited to, any obligation to negotiate in good faith, and either party may cease pursuing the proposed transaction at any time and for any reason. If executed, the definitive documents shall supersede this letter as well as any previous written or oral understandings.*

 *Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail*

## Koch, Eric

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**From:** Bob Pedersen <bpedersen\_gw@gwicc.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 13, 2013 9:38 AM  
**To:** Sen.Petrowski; Sen.Leibham; Sen.Cowles; Sen.Carpenter; Sen.Hansen; Sen.Ellis;  
Rep.BernardSchaber  
**Subject:** Your support of SB 259

"Dear colleagues,

I am writing to ask for your support of SB 259. This bill is critical to the success of the many people served by Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin Inc. Our folks face many barriers to success as a result of disability, under employment, unemployment and histories of incarceration. Public transportation is a necessary service that many rely on to get to work, school and the services necessary to break out of the bonds of poverty. This bill strengthens the public transportation network so critical to the success of our struggling citizens. Your support of SB 259 would increase the probability that folks will find jobs, education and services necessary for successful living. Thank you in advance for your help.

Bob Pedersen  
President and CEO  
Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin Inc

### Key points regarding SB 259:

- Passing RTA-enabling legislation is not voting for a tax or creating an RTA. It is simply giving residents of the Fox Cities the right to decide what they want the future of public transit in the Fox Cities to be.
- The formation of an RTA in the Fox Cities would provide a local sustainable funding source and would allow Valley Transit to be less dependent on limited Federal, State and local property tax funding.
- An RTA would allow improved efficiencies in the way public transportation is planned, budgeted, and managed. Valley Transit would be able to look at the region as a whole instead of municipality by municipality.
- An RTA would provide the mechanisms necessary to allow Valley Transit to continue to play a vital role in the economic vitality of our community by connecting people to jobs and allowing businesses access to a larger pool of high quality, reliable workers.
- An RTA would provide stability and allow us to develop a system that meets the needs of those who depend on us most - seniors, people with disabilities, students and people who may be struggling financially. These are people who rely on Valley Transit to get to jobs, medical appointments and school.

Bob Pedersen  
Chief Visionary & Storyteller  
Goodwill NCW  
1800 Appleton Road  
Menasha, WI 54952-3729  
Phone: (920) 968-6230; Fax: (920) 731-3041  
Email: [bpedersen\\_gw@gwicc.org](mailto:bpedersen_gw@gwicc.org)  
[www.goodwillncw.org](http://www.goodwillncw.org)

## ***RESOLUTION NO.: 79—2013-14***

TO THE HONORABLE, THE OUTAGAMIE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

***MAJORITY***

1 Public Transportation in the Fox Valley faces ongoing funding challenges. When the  
2 population of the Fox Cities urban area exceeded 200,000 in the 2010 census, Valley  
3 Transit faced the loss of federal operating funds under the Federal surface transportation  
4 law in place at that point. An increase in the population over the cap of 200,000 moved  
5 Valley Transit to a different funding category that limited the flow of federal funding into  
6 the system. The crisis was averted when a new federal surface transportation bill titled  
7 MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) was signed into effect on July  
8 3, 2012. This bill allowed transit areas over 200,000 in population but operating less than  
9 75 peak hour buses to continue to receive federal operating funds. MAP 21 must be re-  
10 authorized by Congress by September 2014 for funding to continue. Until reauthorized,  
11 MAP 21 is a stopgap measure giving time to communities in the Fox Cities to develop  
12 alternative funding models to keep the bus system fully operational within the parameters  
13 of its current operating area.  
14

15 Valley Transit is an essential service in the Fox Valley. In 2012 Valley Transit provided  
16 approximately 1.3 million rides on Valley Transit Services including the bus service, the  
17 handicapped accessible demand responsive services and the Connector, a program  
18 designed to get second and third shift workers to their jobs and to transport individuals  
19 from an area outside the Valley Transit service area to the nearest bus stop. Consumers  
20 ride the bus to access medical services, social and recreational activities, school and  
21 vocational training, shopping at local businesses and jobs. Approximately 40% of the 1.3  
22 million rides were used by individuals to get to work. For riders without access to a  
23 vehicle, this is their only affordable option of motorized transportation.  
24

25 To stabilize funding for transportation in the Fox Cities, legislation has been presented in  
26 the Wisconsin Senate by Senator Ellis and the Assembly by Representative Bernard  
27 Schaber authorizing the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority in the Fox  
28 Cities. Key provisions of both bills include the following:  
29

- 30 • The RTA is charged with the responsibilities to operate a public transportation system  
31 in the Fox Cities either directly or through contract.
- 32 • Under terms of the legislation, the RTA can only be established if the governing  
33 bodies of two or more municipalities located in whole or in part of the Fox Cities  
34 Metropolitan Planning Area (FCMPA) adopt a resolution authorizing the  
35 municipality to become a member. The resolution must be ratified by the electors of  
36 the municipality at a referendum held during a general election. The sales tax amount  
37 that must also be included in the referendum. If in the future there is a need to  
38 increase the amount of sales tax collected, it must be approved by a referendum of the  
39 electors of the member municipalities
- 40 • The FCMPA consists of the cities of Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha and Neenah; the  
41 villages of Combined Locks, Little Chute, Kimberly and Sherwood; the towns of

1 Buchanan, Grand Chute, Greenville, Harrison, Kaukauna, Menasha and  
2 Vandenbroek.

- 3 • Other municipalities within the FCMPA or those located in whole or in part in  
4 Calumet, Outagamie or Winnebago Counties may join in the RTA after it is  
5 established by resolution ratified by referendum held during a general election and the  
6 governing Board of the RTA must agree.
- 7 • The Board of Directors of the RTA must be made up of elected officials from the  
8 participating municipalities.
- 9 • The RTA Board is given powers in the legislation to operate a public transit system  
10 including the power to acquire property through condemnation, and issue tax exempt  
11 bonds in order to meet its mission.
- 12 • To fund the operation, the RTA is given the authority to enact a local sales tax not to  
13 exceed 0.5%. The Department of Revenue may claim 1.5% of the amount collected  
14 for the department's cost of administering the tax on behalf of the RTA.
- 15 • Once in the RTA, municipalities that are a part of the RTA may not levy property  
16 taxes for public transit purposes in excess of the property taxes levied for transit in  
17 the year before the year in which the RTA tax is imposed.
- 18 • If the sales tax approved was the maximum 0.5% and if all municipalities in the  
19 region authorized participation in the RTA, The Department of Revenue estimates  
20 that the tax would raise approximately \$16.8 million on an annual basis. Valley  
21 Transit estimates that the tax needed will be approximately 0.1% depending on the  
22 number of municipalities that participate in the RTA.

23  
24 NOW THEREFORE, the undersigned members of the Health & Human Services Committee  
25 recommend adoption of the following resolution.

26 BE IT RESOLVED, the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors support the passage of  
27 legislation allowing for the development of a Regional Transportation Authority in the Fox Metropolitan  
28 Planning Area in order to secure a reliable funding source for the operation of Valley Transit services,  
29 and


30 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Outagamie County Clerk be directed to forward a copy  
31 of this resolution to all Governmental entities within the Fox Cities Metropolitan Planning Area, to the  
32 Outagamie County Lobbyist for distribution to legislators serving the Fox Cities Metropolitan Planning  
33 Area and to the Outagamie County Health & Human Services Director.

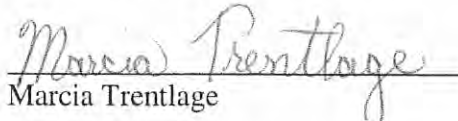
34 Dated this 22nd day of October, 2013.

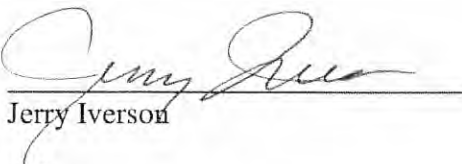


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Respectfully Submitted,  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

  
Peter Stueck

  
Marcia Trentlage

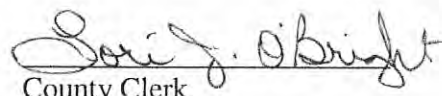
  
Jerry Iverson

  
Josh Karl

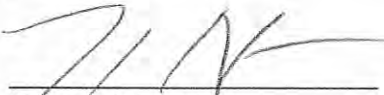
  
Barney Lemanski

Duly and officially adopted by the County Board on: October 22, 2013

Signed:   
Board Chairperson

  
County Clerk

Approved: 10 23 13 Vetoed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:   
County Executive



# Appleton Area *School District*

Office of the Superintendent

**Lee D. Allinger**

Thomas G. Scullen Leadership Center | 122 E. College Avenue, Suite 1A | PO Box 2019 | Appleton, Wisconsin 54912-2019  
Phone: (920) 832-6126 | FAX: (920) 832-1725 | [www.aasd.k12.wi.us](http://www.aasd.k12.wi.us)

Correspondence via email: [Sen.Petrowski@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Petrowski@legis.wisconsin.gov)

December 18, 2013

Senator Jerry Petrowski, Committee Chair  
Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety  
And Veterans and Military Affairs

Re: Senate Bill 259 - Regional Transit Authority

Dear Transportation, Public Safety and Veterans and Military Affairs Committee,

We are writing to express the support of the leadership of the Appleton Area School District for Senate Bill 259. The ability to establish a Regional Transit Authority in the Fox Cities is critical to the future of our regional carrier Valley Transit. Fulfilling the need for a sustainable local funding source is critical to Valley Transit and would allow increased efficiencies in planning, budgeting and management. The efficiencies would be achieved because Valley Transit could view the region as a whole rather than municipality by municipality.

Valley Transit is absolutely critical to the economic vitality of our community by connecting people to jobs and allowing businesses access to a large pool of high quality reliable workers. In addition, Valley Transit has been an invaluable partner with the Appleton Area School District. Our partnership with Valley Transit provides our students access to the entire community allowing participation in the local economy as workers and consumers.

Please strongly consider support of Senate Bill 259 to authorize the creation of a Regional Transit Authority for the Fox Cities.

Respectfully,

Lee Allinger  
Superintendent

Donald Hietpas  
Chief Financial Officer

Cc: Senator Mike Ellis, email: [Sen.Ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov)  
Representative Penny Bernard Schaber, email: [Rep.BernardSchaber@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.BernardSchaber@legis.wisconsin.gov)

## RTA SENATE BILL 259 – ENABLING LEGISLATION FOR VALLEY TRANSIT

(Comments by Rick Detienne – December 19, 2013)

Good morning. My name is Rick Detienne. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to endorse the passage of Senate Bill 259, which provides the enabling legislation needed for our Fox Cities citizens to decide for themselves on whether and how they choose to support our regional bus transportation system.

Just a little background on myself and why I'm here today...

I'm a long-term resident of Appleton. I am pleased to be a recently appointed member of the Valley Transit Commission. And, as active consumers, both my son Andy (Down syndrome) and daughter-in-law Beth (Williams syndrome), rely extensively on the Valley Transit bus system.

In many ways, I consider myself a lucky guy. I retired five years ago and I have to tell you "It's a great place to be." Prior to retiring, I was lucky to have the privilege of running, for nearly 25 years, a mid-sized manufacturing business called Laminations – headquartered in Appleton and with four other manufacturing plants across the country. Laminations is part of a larger, Appleton-based business called Great Northern Corporation. I well understand the importance of having available a well-trained and reliable workforce. People who have trouble getting to work because of transportation issues cannot always be counted on. That can affect their employability, impact plant productivity, and ultimately the ability to grow a business. Not a good combination.

I'm also a lucky guy, because I don't have to rely on Valley Transit for getting around town. If you think about it, the freedom to go where and when you want is really quite a privilege. But not all can do that. My son Andy and his wife Beth both enjoy long-term, community-based

employment (Andy at Home Depot and Beth at Lawrence University). For them, having a financially secure, reliable bus service is essential for getting to work (Andy hates the idea of being late), for doing their volunteering, and for pursuing their recreational interests. In the future, if our bus service changes significantly, it's reasonable to assume that Andy and Beth could lose their jobs, sacrifice independence, and require more community services. There are many others who would be similarly affected. Bad for these individuals, bad for the economy, and bad for the community.

Right now Valley Transit operates in a zero-sum service environment. As the Fox Cities continue to grow – more housing, increasing employment – the only way to provide transit services to rapidly growing areas is to shift resources away from other locations. Robbing Peter to pay Paul. Negatively affecting the ability of this essential transportation resource to provide the quality, reliable service the entire Fox Cities needs.

I think it's accurate to say that all of us are concerned with the quality of life where we live, the services we enjoy, and our ability to decide for ourselves the important issues that directly affect us. As a local employer, those issues were often on my mind when thinking of what was best for our business and my co-workers.

What I particularly like about the RTA business model is that it puts the ultimate decision-making into the hands of the local community where it belongs. We decide if we want it and if we are willing to pay for it. To me, that sure seems like democracy at its most practical and finest.

I encourage you to bring the Senate Bill 259 enabling legislation to the floor for a vote, including your strong endorsement for its passage. Thank you again for your time, attention, and careful deliberation on this important issue.



December 19, 2013

Testimony relating to Senate Bill 259

Patricia Jorgensen, Vice President of Student and Community Development  
Fox Valley Technical College

My name is Patti Jorgensen, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Regional Transit Authority bill, SB 259. I am here in my professional capacity, which is Vice President of Student and Community Development at Fox Valley Technical College. The abbreviated description of what I do is executive oversight of services designed to attract and enroll students, to retain them until they earn credentials, and to get them employed and earning sustainable wages.

Each year, FVTC serves over 50,000 people with training, program courses, and life enrichment classes. About 10,000 of our students are enrolled in programs, meaning that their intentions are to earn credentials or enhance skills. Of the 10,000 program students, about 65% of them are either eligible for, or are currently receiving federal Pell Grants. I mention this because Pell eligibility is the nearest thing we have to the free and reduced lunch statistics reported by the public K-12 schools. Pell eligibility is, in short, a poverty marker.

I'd like to tell you a very brief story that highlights the level of need in our student population. Last year, we successfully applied for a grant from Great Lakes Corporation to provide small amounts of emergency funding to students so they could and would stay in school. The college received \$40,000 for the first year, and the grant was set up to provide one-time assistance to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for things like rent, heat, auto repairs, and transportation. Although we never imagined this would happen, the unfortunate reality is that we spent the entire \$40,000 before the year was up. And you should know that this fund is one of three emergency funds that we have available for students in need.

Valley Transit is the lifeline to a significant number of FVTC students. Last year, 22,312 boardings were recorded at the FVTC bus stops. These boardings were not students who had "always dreamt" about attending college and hopped aboard the bus to come to school. These boardings were students who desperately needed to get to FVTC for high school equivalency diplomas or college credentials in order to have a fighting chance at moving out of poverty. Bus usage doesn't end at getting to school for these individuals. They depend on the bus to get to doctor appointments, their childrens' schools, job interviews, grocery stores, and everywhere else they need to go.


As you know, this is not a request to form a Regional Transit Authority. This request is to allow the Fox Cities, the people directly involved in the funding and the usage of the transit system, to make the decision about forming an RTA. What a wonderfully sensible request.

Thank you.



# Fox Cities

Chamber of Commerce & Industry

TO: Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, Veterans & Military Affairs  
FROM: Thom Ciske, Vice President of Government Affairs   
DATE: December 18, 2013  
RE: **Support for Senate Bill 259**

Good morning. My name is Thom Ciske, I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry (The Chamber), a membership organization representing over 1300 businesses throughout the Fox Cities area.

For the past seven years, The Chamber has been part of a joint effort to secure passage of legislation allowing for the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in the Fox Cities. I am here again today, respectfully requesting that you assist us in making this very important transportation tool available to the Fox Cities.

The Chamber has recently undertaken a significant economic development initiative in conjunction with public and private sector partners. Our development efforts can only be enhanced by the ongoing presence of a safe, convenient, financially sound mass transit system connecting children with schools, consumers with businesses, and workers with jobs.

As a result of our metropolitan area exceeding a population threshold of 200,000, an automatic reduction in federal assistance for mass transit has been triggered and threatens to compromise existing service. To compensate for the loss long term, we would be looking at service reductions as well as a very noticeable fare increase.

The Chamber is not here today requesting that the state fill the hole. Rather, we are asking that you create enabling legislation that will give those directly impacted, by the end result of the reduction in federal revenue, the opportunity to indicate their level of support for this valuable resource via local referenda.

We would appreciate your help in creating enabling legislation by supporting SB 259.

Date: December 19, 2013

**Senate Public Hearing**

**Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs**

RE: Supporting Senate Bill 259

Honorable Committee Members,

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fox Cities Urbanized Area, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has long supported and recommended the creation of a Regional Transit Authority.

Under federal metropolitan planning regulations 23 USC 134, the MPO works with all jurisdictions, federal and state partners, the public, and various stakeholders in the metropolitan area to develop and adopt the required a long range transportation plan.

The current *Long Range Transportation Plan for the Fox Cities Urbanized Area* and three prior adopted plans have all included a recommendation to organize and create a Regional Transit Authority. We have worked with numerous elected and local officials, various stakeholders and the public to evaluate the feasibility of creating a Regional Transit Authority and recommend that the process is allowed to move forward.

Each County in the state that receives funds for and provides specialized transportation services, is required to prepare a Transportation Coordination Plan. The number one priority in the adopted 2014-2018 Outagamie County Human Services-Public Transportation Coordinated Plan is to establish a Fox Cities, Regional Transit Authority. The Transportation Coordinated Plan focuses on specialized transportation for elderly, disabled and low income individuals and supports alternative funding opportunities that might be achieved through an RTA.

On behalf of the MPO, we would welcome the opportunity to establish, by public consent, a mechanism to adequately and cooperatively meet the demand and improve public and specialized transportation services in the Fox Cities as proposed in Senate Bill 259.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Walt Raith, MPO Director

*Peter Kelly  
President/CEO  
United Way Fox Cities*



**RTA Public Hearing on Senate Bill 259**

19 December 2013

Good morning. I'm Peter Kelly, president and CEO of United Way Fox Cities. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you why United Way Fox Cities supports Senate Bill 259. I will be speaking from our experience in working with Valley Transit to develop a unique regional transportation service.

I am willing to wager that most of you arrived here, at work, in your own car. And when you leave you will get in your car and be off to your next destination. Without reliable transportation your ability to hold a job would be compromised. If you did not own a car ... how would you get to work?

This was a question that United Way Fox Cities was asking after the findings of the 2006 LIFE Study were made available. The LIFE study is a community assessment conducted every five years by United Way in partnership with the Community Foundation and Chamber of Commerce. Through this detailed analysis of our community in 2006 and confirmed again in 2011 we learned that reliable transportation was a growing concern for residents of the Fox Cities. There was no bus service for individuals working or aspiring to work 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts nor was there service for those who live or work in the outlying areas of the Fox Cities.

Based on this research, United Way Fox Cities' volunteers identified access to transportation as a major barrier to work. If we could remove transportation as a barrier to employment we felt we could increase self-sufficiency for the working poor. When people are working they build self-



businesses, and community was \$1.2 million.

*UWFC has invested over \$344,000 in The Connector since its inception in 2007.*

We consider The Connector a great success. It is a valuable resource for those in need of safe and affordable transportation to work.

*reliable*

Our overall experience with The Connector has emphasized the need for the Fox Cities to address transit issues at a regional level. As we continue to grow we need to not only sustain, but strengthen our public transit system. We need to focus on regional planning in order to develop a strong cohesive transit infrastructure which will benefit residents and businesses in the Fox Cities.

The formation of the Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority or RTA will help our community explore options and plan regionally. We realize that the possibility of a tax is an issue, but what we are asking is that we have the opportunity to present options in a referendum to the people living and working in the Fox Cities, and allow them the right to have a voice on the future of public transportation in our community.

I strongly support Senate Bill 259 and ask that you please do so as well. Give us the tool to determine how to sustain Valley Transit.

Thank you.

esteem and the financial resources to care for themselves and their family. When these same people are working they are consuming fewer, if any, social services that we all pay for.

United Way Fox Cities felt that the most effective way to have an impact on this issue involved developing a regional service that would expand access to public transportation throughout the Fox Cities. This service would ensure individuals with lower incomes in our area have reliable and affordable transportation in their efforts to obtain or maintain employment, especially for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts jobs. Working in partnership with Valley Transit, we developed The Connector, a regional service that operates 20 hours a day, six days a week.

We launched The Connector in the fall of 2007 and soon realized that the demand would significantly exceed our initial projections. Our pro forma budget estimated 8,000 rides during the first full year of operation; however, The Connector provided 11,400 rides. Data was collected from partner agencies that showed that 83% of their clients were able to apply for more jobs and 75% were successful in obtaining employment.

Since the launch in 2007, over 80,000 rides have been provided. In 2013, we will have provided over 15,000 or an average of 1,250 rides/month.

Over 90% of these rides are employment-related. (UWFC: \$344,984 since inception.)

In March of this year, the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh completed a cost benefit analysis on The Connector's 2012 operating year. They estimated that the overall benefit of The Connector to individuals,



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December 17, 2013

Senator Jerry Petrowski  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

**RE: Support of Senate Bill 259: Authorizing the creation of a Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority**

The many members of WURTA wish to thank the Transportation Committee for holding this hearing on enabling a RTA for the Fox Cities. Partners, public and private, have worked hard with the resources they have to try to at least meet the minimum transit needs of their communities. It has been a challenge. And, the needs continue to grow.

A RTA would help maintain access to jobs, medical appointments, shopping, and schools; preserve mobility for a growing senior population; meet the increasing demand for accessible transportation for the disabled; and support economic development.

A RTA would provide a stable, predictable, dedicated funding source for transit services and remove the cost of transit from the property tax.

Most importantly, a RTA would enable municipalities to respond to diminishing funding from other sources.

The Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission recommended the enactment of legislation that allows for regional and local ballot initiatives that support transportation with county or local sales taxes.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely,

Crystal Martin, WURTA Legislative Committee Chairperson

December 19, 2013

Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

Dear Committee Members:

The Fox Cities Regional Partnership serves as the regional economic development organization with a service area that includes Outagamie, Calumet and the northern portion of Winnebago Counties. It is our mission to support the growth of our regional economy by supporting the retention, expansion and attraction of quality primary employers.

Our organization understands the critical importance of access to a qualified workforce as an ingredient for business success. This access includes a viable and efficient public transportation system that workers can depend on for their commute to and from their place of employment. As such, public transportation benefits not only local residents, but also local employers, at the same time that it supports local and regional economic development.

Recognizing that demographics changes have dictated modifications in the funding model for public transportation in the Fox Cities Region, it is the position of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and of the Fox Cities Regional Partnership to support enabling legislation that would allow for the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Our support is conditioned on the need for the passage of a local referendum on the question prior to its implementation.

We respectfully request that you assist us in making this very important transportation tool available to the Fox Cities Region.

Sincerely,



Larry Burkhardt  
Executive Vice President



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF WISCONSIN

612 W. Main Street, #200  
Madison, WI 53703-4714

Phone: (608) 256-0827  
<http://www.lwwwi.org>

December 19, 2013

To: Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

Re: Support for SB 259

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin strongly supports SB 259, which would authorize the creation of a Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority (RTA) with the ability to pass a local sales tax of up to 0.5% to fund public transit in the Fox Cities, provided that two or more municipalities adopt an authorizing resolution and the resolution is ratified by the electors in referendum. The creation of a Regional Transit Authority provides a critical tool for 21<sup>st</sup> century transit systems that are integrated and efficient.

An RTA in the Fox Cities would provide the mechanism to make transit planning regional and systematic, rather than piecemeal. It makes sense for municipalities to plan, finance and provide transit service with integration across borders with nearby communities.

Regional transit is good for the economy. Recent studies have shown that good public transit has become a top attractor for businesses, developers and professionals. In today's global marketplace, regional transit is considered fundamental infrastructure. It creates a competitive advantage by providing convenient and improved access to jobs and potential employees. In fact, almost half of Valley Transit rides are job related.

This bill does not mandate the creation of any tax. It would allow voting residents in local communities to decide the future of transit funding. Local voters will decide through a referendum on a dedicated sales tax for transit, and if passed this would remove local transit costs from the property tax.

RTAs are efficient and effective. We support SB 259 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Public Safety

FROM: Craig Thompson, Executive Director

DATE: December 19, 2013

SUBJECT: Support for Senate Bill 259

The Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin (TDA) strongly supports SB 259. It has been a long standing position of our organization that local communities should have the ability to fund a mass transit system to a level they believe to be appropriate and to provide them with a funding option other than the property tax in order to do so.

The Transportation Finance and Policy Commission, of which I served as one of the 10 voting members, also recommended the state consider allowing local communities to form Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs).

The Fox Valley has demonstrated that there is a good deal of support from the local government leaders and many citizens in the region. The bipartisan sponsorship of the two Fox Valley co-authors demonstrates this broad support.

This legislation will not provide for an RTA in the Fox Valley. This legislation will not implement a sales tax on citizens in the Fox Valley. This legislation, if enacted, will provide the citizens in the Fox Valley with the choice of creating an RTA and implementing a .05% sales tax in order to improve their public transportation services in their area if they see fit.

TDA believes that an integrated transportation system is about providing citizens with choices. This legislation moves the Fox Valley in that direction. Most other states in this country allow various population centers with precisely this sort of option to fund their local transit systems with local revenue.

We respectfully ask you to vote in favor of SB 259 and provide the citizens of the Fox Valley with the option to form an RTA.

Executive Director Craig Thompson

# WISPIRG

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**Standing Up  
To Powerful Interests**

To: Senate Committee on Transportation  
From: Bruce Speight, WISPIRG, (608) 268-0510, [bspeight@wispirg.org](mailto:bspeight@wispirg.org)  
Date: December 19, 2013  
Re: Senate Bill 259

Good morning Chairman Petrowski and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Bruce Speight and I'm the Director of WISPIRG, the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group. WISPIRG is a statewide, non-partisan public interest organization. We represent members across Wisconsin.

I am here today to support Senate Bill 259. Municipal leaders across Wisconsin are eagerly seeking better transit in their communities for its economic development benefits, to appeal to a new generation that is less focused on driving, and to connect workers to jobs. Efficient public transportation systems would make Wisconsin's transportation future better for everyone by reducing traffic congestion and pollution and increasing our options for getting around. Regional transit authorities (RTAs) are a proven strategy for funding and strengthening the ability of communities to meet their local transit needs.

I want to share a few brief thoughts about our state's changing transportation trends and the increasing demand for transportation options, like transit, especially among the Millennial generation.

The way we get around is changing, especially in our cities like Appleton. Wisconsinites are driving less, and taking transit, biking and walking more.

Here are a few factors that are driving this shift:

- Owning and maintaining a car is an increasing economic burden for everyone, and the high cost of gas is an ever-present economic drain on our budgets.
- Baby boomers, who grew up thinking of cars as a symbol of freedom and mobility, are moving out of the phase of their lives when they do the most commuting.
- At the same time, the Millennial generation is entering the workforce, but they are far more likely to seek alternatives to driving than previous generations.

According to the National Household Travel Survey, from 2001 to 2009, the annual number of vehicle miles traveled by young people dropped by 23 percent. During the same period of time, the number of passenger miles traveled by 16-34 year olds on public transit increased by 40 percent.

Whether or not Appleton becomes a hot spot, a magnet for talent, and has the kind of high-skilled workers that draw investment will depend a lot on whether Appleton is seen by young

college graduates as a place they would want to live. Whether or not Appleton has a well-functioning transit system increasingly appears to be one of those litmus tests. For example, an October 2013 National Association of Realtors survey found that a majority of younger people, which they defined as respondents under 50, say their state government should place a high priority on providing alternatives to driving. Among college-educated “young” folks, the majority is even larger. Only half (51%) of those under 40 agreed with the statement, “For me, car is king. Nothing will replace my car as my main mode of transportation.”

Giving the Fox Valley the authority to form an RTA and have dedicated funding for transit will enable the community to respond to these changing trends, and at the same time, enable the community to attract and retain young talent and Millennials, who seek to live in communities that don’t require a car to get around. Doing so will give the people of the Fox Valley the viable transit options that more and more people are using.

While Millennials aren’t the only ones who want more options – after all, Wisconsinites of all ages want more choices for getting to work, school, shopping and more, the infrastructure we build today will mainly be used and paid for by the Millennials, who are leading the trend away from driving.

One way to respond to these changing trends in the Fox Valley is to allow for the creation of a regional transit authority (RTA) with the ability to levy dedicated funding for transit.

Across Wisconsin, cities are looking for ways to support their residents’ desire to drive less. SB259 is a solution that will enable Appleton to respond to this need.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.





## John Muir Chapter

Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter  
222 South Hamilton Street, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3201  
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[john.muir.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:john.muir.chapter@sierraclub.org) <http://wisconsin.sierraclub.org>

### **Support SB 259, Authorizing the Creation of a Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority (RTA), Before the Senate Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, December 19, 2013, 9:00 a.m., 330 SW**

Thank you for accepting our comments and holding this important public hearing today. The Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club, the nation's oldest, largest, most influential grassroots environmental organization. Our priorities are reducing climate change threats and protecting water and land resources in Wisconsin. We are here today to urge you to support SB 259, a bill that we strongly support that will allow the Fox Cities to form a regional transit authority to raise stable, local, dedicated transit funds.

The Sierra Club has long supported allowing local communities to create regional transit authorities (RTAs) as part of our campaign to reduce our dependence on imported oil by expanding clean transportation, which includes supporting everything from bus transit to biking and walking paths to cleaner, more fuel-efficient cars and more. But maintaining quality, affordable transit services is not only good for the environment, it also supports economic development and increases the strength of our requests for much-needed federal transit funds, given that most other states already allow RTAs. Transit is critical for connecting people to jobs, medical appointments, shopping, school and recreational destinations. It also preserves mobility for the disabled and Wisconsin's growing senior population that allows these groups to maintain independence.

Allowing the creation of a Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority will enable the municipalities of Appleton, Buchanan, Grand Chute, Kaukauna, Kimberly, Little Chute, the City of Menasha, the Town of Menasha, and Neenah to work together to create an efficient and integrated transit system across political boundaries. An RTA will provide a reliable funding source that will make it possible to plan and maintain a transit system that is less vulnerable to state and federal funding cuts. The Fox Valley suffered as a result of the 10% decrease in transit funding in the 2011 state budget, and this funding was only partially restored in the most recent budget cycle. The Fox Cities population exceeded 200,000 in the latest US Census, causing this region to become ineligible for federal transportation operating funds. Although U.S. Representatives Ribble and Petri were able to temporarily restore funds, this critical part of our state stands to lose \$1.8 million in 2014 once the temporary fix expires. SB 259 is needed now to avoid service cuts or fare increases that could occur as a result of these declines.

SB 259 was carefully written to address concerns raised about previous RTA bills. It follows the WI Transportation Finance and Policy Commission's recommendations of having an elected RTA Board that requires local voter approval before raising up to a 0.5% transit sales tax. Counties and communities within a county have flexibility to decide whether or not to participate in the RTA.

For all these reasons and more, we urge the members of this Committee and the Legislature to pass SB 259 to allow the Fox Cities to create a much-needed Regional Transit Authority. Thank you for accepting our comments on this important matter, and we wish you and yours happy, healthy holidays.

December 19, 2013

To: Members of Senate Transportation, Public Safety and Veterans and Military Affairs

Re: SB 259

Good Morning. My name is David Lowe, and I currently work for Running, Inc., having retired from the Transit Section of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation back in 2010. Running, Inc. operates transit services in nearly 30 Wisconsin communities, including our role in providing special paratransit service to persons with disabilities in the Valley Transit service area.

I am here today in support of SB 259. This legislation allows the citizens of the Fox Valley to have the option of deciding how they wish to fund public transit. Currently, Valley Transit receives funding from over a dozen counties and municipalities, which use property tax revenues to provide their support. This bill would give residents the option of establishing a Regional Transportation Authority, which would have the ability to levy a sales tax to fund transit operations.

That availability of that option makes sense on two fronts—it reduces the already high reliance on the property tax to fund local services and public transit boosts sales of area businesses by bring them employees and customers, thereby increasing the revenues available from the sales tax.

Enacting this legislation would allow the people of the Fox Cities to vote on the formation of an RTA. If they approved, Valley Transit would be better able to respond to the needs of the community because it would have certainty regarding the local funding available for services. This would assure that innovative services like the Connector, which gets people to and from employment in hours the system does not operate, could be continued. This service puts money back into the community because of the jobs opportunities it creates for low and moderate income individuals. By helping them stay employed, these individuals have reduced or no need for government income and insurance support programs.

Another positive effect that would be gained by passage of this legislation would be the ability to look at the needs of the entire area rather than the needs of each of the participating municipalities. As we all know, job opportunities, medical services and commercial needs don't necessarily follow municipal boundaries. .

Running, Inc. believes that viable public transit vital to the economic, health of any community. I urge you to support this legislation, and let the people of the Fox Cities determine how they wish to support their transit system..

Human Access – Senate Transportation – 2013-12-19

*Transcript of my comments on 19 Dec 2013 before the Senate Transportation Committee regarding SB 259, Authorizing the Creation of a Fox Cities Regional Transit Authority*

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of SB 259. My name is Hans Noeldner; I am a resident of Oregon, Wisconsin; and a member of the Sierra Club “Clean Transportation Committee”.

First I would like to thank Senator Mike Ellis and Representative Penny Bernard Schaber for working together on this much-needed bill. A lot of people in the Fox Valley are depending on you to do the right thing – let them decide how best to fund and manage transit services in their region. I would urge all members of the Senate Transportation Committee not only to recommend this bill, but to work vigorously for its passage by the Legislature and Governor.

But this bill is just a start. Now I could sit here and tell you why you should support transit generally – and why you should authorize regional transit authorities elsewhere in the state. But nothing I could say to you while you are sitting here, warm and comfortable, would help you to understand what is really at stake.

A significant – and growing – minority of Wisconsin citizens don’t qualify for a driver’s license. Can’t afford a car. Don’t have family or friends – or staff – to chauffeur them. And many people – especially our younger generations – don’t want to enslave themselves to a life of “having” to drive everywhere. But they live in a world that all too often turns a cold shoulder to them.

They don’t have much money or political clout. That means you need to make a special effort to represent their interests. And to really understand what they need, you have to put your own skin in their game. You need to feel that cold shoulder they often feel.

Guess what? You aren’t going to catch on from the inside of a car. So I am here to challenge you – some of you for the second time this year.

If you are a physically-able man, I challenge you to do your grocery shopping twice a month...without using a car. Promise this to your constituents, and tell them why you are doing it. Then follow through. No excuses.

By committing to this simple, humble act several dozen times per year, you will begin to grasp what many Wisconsin citizens have to deal with many times every day. And then you will understand why SB 259 is just a first step.

A week from today many of us will celebrate the birth of a man who was not too proud, nor too busy, nor too important to spend His entire adult life walking with the “least among us”. He understood what it means to serve His people. May His example inspire you.

Merry Christmas!



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To: Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs  
From: Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities  
Date: December 19, 2013  
Re: SB 259, Enabling Communities in the Fox Valley to Create a Regional Transit Authority

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities supports SB 259, authorizing Appleton and other communities in the Fox Valley to create a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) with taxing authority. Bus and other mass transit services are critical to the state's economy. RTAs would enable municipalities to respond to diminishing funding from the state and federal governments and other sources. RTAs would provide a stable, predictable, dedicated funding source for transit services and remove the cost of transit from the local property tax. Under this bill an RTA could be created only upon approval by the voters in a referendum.

RTAs would stabilize transit services, which for many people provide access to jobs, medical appointments, shopping, school and recreational destinations. RTAs would help preserve mobility for our growing senior population; meet the increasing demand for accessible transportation for the disabled; and support economic development.

The Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission recommended the enactment of legislation that allows for regional and local ballot initiatives that support transportation with county or local sales taxes.

We urge you to recommend passage of SB 259. Thanks for considering our comments.

## **Testimony in support of SB259 regarding a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for the greater Fox Cities Region**

**December 19, 2013**

As you well know, the source of funding for transportation, the gas tax, is diminishing and does not provide sufficient funding for current needs, let alone future needs. In order to meet the needs of our growing communities, funding for public transit needs to increase NOT face continuing cuts.

If routes and service hours are cut and people can't get to where they need to go, they will stop riding the bus, and pretty soon we have no service at all. Our bus service has a tremendous economic impact. Almost half of Valley Transit rides are job related. If people cannot get to work or school, this has a ripple effect.

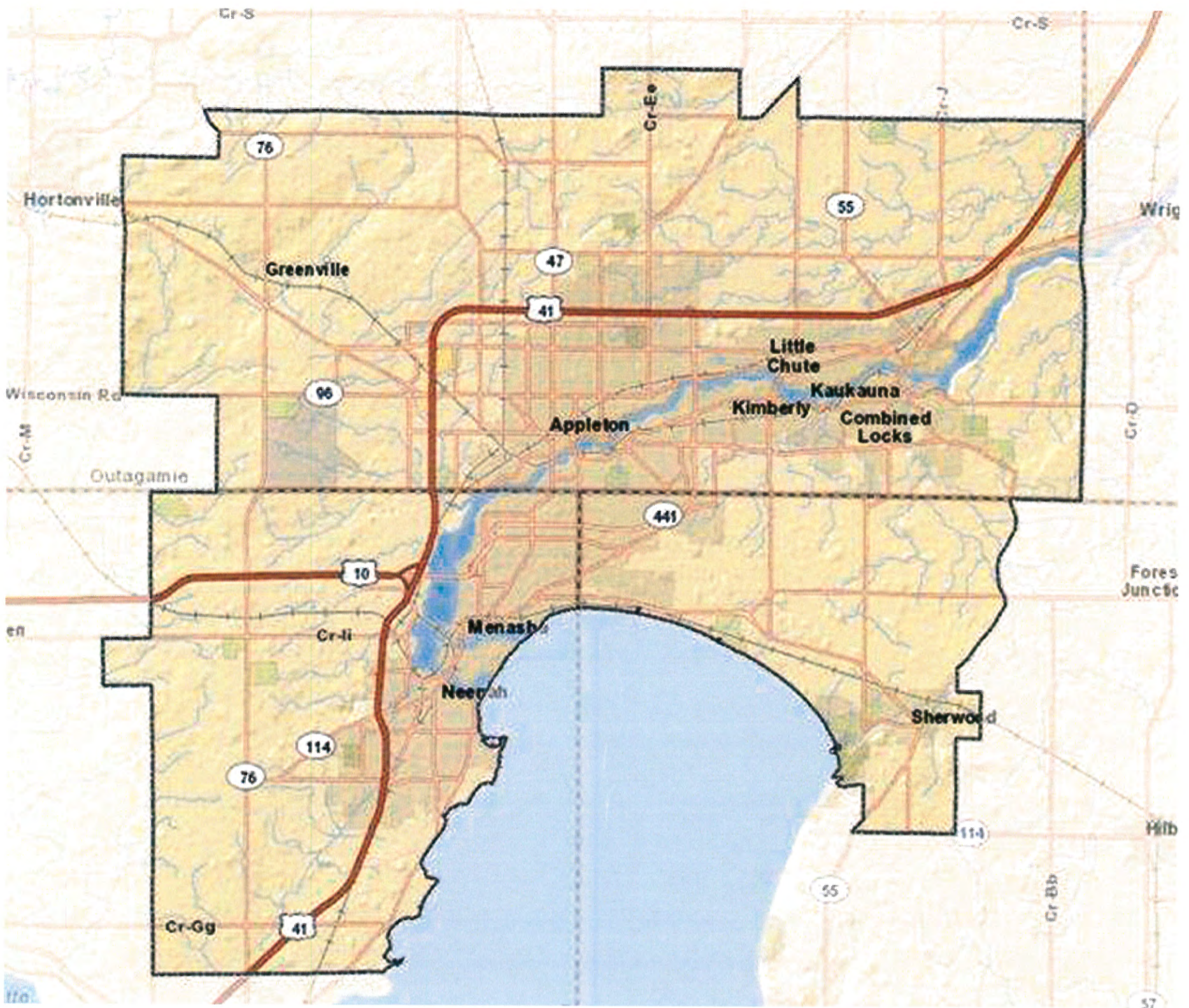
1. A regional transit authority in the greater Fox Cities would provide better coordination and advance efficient regional linkages for jobs and economic growth. RTA's are efficient and effective.
2. An RTA would provide a dedicated funding source for transit to provide adequate, stable local funding for transit and prevent significant cuts in service.
3. The dedicated sales tax voted on locally through a referendum of up to but not greater than 0.5% for transit will provide property tax relief by removing local transit costs from the property tax.
4. This bill would let the local citizens decide whether or not to create an RTA and allow a sales tax. Let the people democratically decide on a solution.

Please support SB259

Thank you,

*Penny Robinson*

Penny Robinson  
President, ESTHER  
1708 S. Weimar St.  
Appleton, WI 54915-4250  
920-843-8083





## Office of the Mayor

Paul R. Soglin, Mayor

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December 19, 2013

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

I am writing to urge your support for Senate Bill 259, allowing the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for the Fox Cities area.

At its core, this bill is about jobs. The legislature has taken some positive steps this session to assist in job training. However, there is more to employment than training and a job opening. Without transportation, childcare and housing an individual can effectively be shut out of the job market. Transit serves as a bridge between jobs openings and areas of unemployment. For individuals without a vehicle, transit is often is the only means of reliable transportation to work or school.

Unfortunately, every source of transit funding - national, state and local - is under pressure. This legislation will allow the Fox Cities area to have a stable locally-approved funding source, and take pressure off the property tax levy. Further, it will allow the funding and the planning to occur on a regional level in an area of the state where transit needs cross many jurisdictions.

At a time when local governments are having to do more with less, SB 259 will provide the Fox Cities a valuable tool, and it will give Wisconsin a chance to experiment with alternate forms of revenue to support public transit.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. Soglin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul R. Soglin  
Mayor