

Metropolitan Area Transit (MAT) System

Service: Initially, the four bus systems in the region would work out agreements to cooperate on routes through adjoining jurisdictions. The systems could also work on joint purchasing agreements and other cost saving measures.

Ultimately, a Metropolitan Area Transit (MAT) system would operate the bus systems within Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha counties – as well as administer all other federal and state funds designated for transit within these counties. Provide service on a regional basis throughout the four-county area. Consolidate four current bus systems and funding for services within one structure.

Governance: Initially, the leaders within the four counties should put together a panel of individuals from each jurisdiction. The charge of this panel will be to create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) about how the four systems and additional programs can operate under a single authority.

Ultimately, the chief executive in each county and within the largest municipality in each county will appoint – pending the confirmation of each respective legislative branch – one member to serve on the MAT board. The Governor shall appoint one person from within the four-county area to serve on the MAT board. A chair shall be elected from among the appointed members of the MAT board.

Funding: Initially, local officials from the region should lobby state government to provide adequate funding for mass transit. Traditionally, the state covered close to 70% of the costs of transit. Since 2000, the level of support has dropped below the rate of inflation. I propose that the new growth in revenue from the existing sales tax collected on vehicle related purchases (\$103.5 million in the current biennium) be designated to support transit in the state. About 60% of those funds come to southeastern Wisconsin.

In addition, a consolidated system in southeastern Wisconsin would provide cost savings by reducing administration and overhead costs. A formula shall be developed to link the level of local support (currently from the property taxpayer and from fares) to the level of service provided by the new MAT system within each of the counties.

The board of the new MAT would not have the authority to levy or administer any new tax (i.e. sales or gas taxes).

Savings: The most immediate savings will come from the consolidation of four administrative staffs and the other overhead costs associated with each system into one system. In addition, the new MAT system should push to replace existing employee contracts with wage and benefit packages that do not exceed the wages and benefits provided by any other current system in the four county area (cannot be done until the existing contracts are done).