

Blueprint for Economic Prosperity

In 2008, we helped Tim Sullivan and his Bucyrus International team celebrate the opening of their plant expansion. Over XX years, they added XXX square feet of work space and nearly doubled their employee base to X,XXX.

I remember coming to visit Tim at his office over on Rawson Road and talking about his ambitious plan to keep the plant and the jobs here in Milwaukee County. I remember the push that his board gave to consider moving to another site. And I remember talking about others in the industry moving more and more of their jobs overseas.

Tim Sullivan, however, was committed to South Milwaukee, to Milwaukee County and to Wisconsin. Today, Bucyrus is a success story at a time when we need plenty of success stories.

Thank you Tim for hosting our 2009 State of the County address. Your success is an inspiration to all of us.

I also want to thank South Milwaukee Mayor Tom Zepecki and the Common Council of their leadership in making Bucyrus a success.

Milwaukee County had many successes during the past year too.

- Our airport broke another passenger record;
- The zoo opened a new entrance and received a gift for a new exhibit;
- The Domes reopened and Bradford Beach came back to life;
- We broke ground for the David Schultz Aquatic Center at Lincoln Park;
- Our Sheriff maintained order in the parks and along the lake front;
- Our EMS system continued to be one of the best in the country;
- Our Family Care program served more older adults and we hope that the state will allow us to continue our success with people who have developmental and physical disabilities;
- We expanded transit options for people with disabilities; and
- We ran Operation Freedom again for our veterans and military personnel.

Along the way, we also benefited from the long-term decisions we made over the past few years that helped us adapt to the national fiscal crisis:

- While the state government has seen their debt go up since 2002, we reduced our debt by 10%.
- While the Governor talked about cutting 10,000 jobs in eight years but is nowhere close to that goal, we reduced our workforce by 23%.
- While the state raided segregated funds for transportation and patient compensation, we worked with the private sector to create funding partnerships.
- While the state government saw its bond-rating going down since 2002, our county was given a positive outlook last year.

While that state faces a \$5.75 billion budget deficit, we finished 2007 with a \$7.9 million surplus and are looking to break even for 2008. Unfortunately, the state budget situation is likely to have a negative impact on county government in 2009 and beyond.

Most seriously, however, is the series of announcements from local employers about job cuts and reductions. This is a major challenge to our well being in Milwaukee County and across Wisconsin. We need help now.

Individuals and companies who are hurting today cannot wait for help six months, a year or several years from now. We need action today.

This is why I am fighting for a **true** economic stimulus package.

In 1993, then President Bill Clinton submitted a stimulus package of \$16 billion. **Today, the Congress is debating a \$700 to 900 billion plan.** There is enough spending in this legislation to give every man, woman and child in America \$2,700.

Proponents of the plan claim that it will create or save some **3 – 4 million jobs. Do the math; that means the government will spend \$xxx,xxx to \$xxx,xxx per job.** How does that make any sense?

And people like Governor Jim Doyle say that we need this package to invest in more transportation infrastructure. But, according to the independent Congressional Budget Office (CBO), less than 10% of the package is for road and highway spending.

In fact, less than half of the \$30 billion in highway construction funds will be released into the economy over the next four years. And only 7% of the planned infrastructure spending would be put into the economy by September of this year according to the CBO.

The better solution is for the federal government to put this money directly into the economy through tax cuts. And we don't have to wait months or years for the impact, it can happen right now.

This is what John F. Kennedy called for in the 1960s and it is what Ronald Reagan pushed for in the 1980s. After President Reagan's tax cuts, American had the largest peacetime economic boom in history. During that time, 20 million jobs and 5 million businesses were created. Tax cuts lead to prosperity.

With or without leadership in this area from Washington or Madison, we are prepared to act to get our economy going again in Milwaukee County and throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

Today, I announce our ***Blueprint for Economic Prosperity***. This comprehensive plan calls for immediate action to improve our local economy and put people to work.

First, I propose to make **it easier for people to afford a home or business in Milwaukee County.** Last month, the Chairman of the County Board submitted a wish list of projects worth \$**XXX** million. Instead of spending more money, I propose that we put these funds directly into the economy.

Specifically, I call on the Governor to allow us to stimulate the economy by taking that same \$**XXX** million and provide the following tax cuts:

- Suspend the county sales as of March 1st. This will save taxpayers \$XX million and will give consumers another reason to shop in our county. It will also help small businesses – like builders, auto dealers, merchants and others who purchase a large volume of materials.
- Rebate the county property tax levy bill for 2009. This will save taxpayers \$254 million. For the owner of a \$150,000 home in the City of Milwaukee, this translates into a savings of \$XXX. For the owner of a small business with a property worth \$XXXXX, it means a savings of \$XXXXX.
- Create a JOBS Fund worth \$150 million that can help the county retain jobs and attract new jobs. The fund will target job creation at small and mid-sized businesses.
- Create an Innovations Fund worth \$100 million that will focus on businesses that create jobs in our country related to new innovations in XXXX XXXX. The fund would be created from a portion of the proceeds from a long-term lease of airport operations.

In addition, I propose that the Governor take the nearly \$4 billion that the State of Wisconsin will be eligible for under the so-called stimulus package and apply it to the quickest method to improve the economy: tax cuts. Specifically, I call on the Governor to suspend the collection of the state sales and use tax as of March 1 for the remainder of 2009.

This bold move would be an immediate incentive to put money into the marketplace. Imagine the impact on builders, auto, truck and motorcycle dealers, retailers and all others who are hurting under this economy.

Aggressive tax cuts will put more money into the hands of consumers to stimulate the economy and into the hands of employers who can create more jobs.

I want to thank business groups like the Metropolitan Builders Association of Greater Milwaukee, the Metropolitan REALTORS Association, and the Independent Business Association of Wisconsin who are represented here today. They understand that the quickest way to stimulate the economy is to put more money into the hands of consumers and employers.

Next, we need to **increase the odds of finding and keeping a job**.

One specific way to immediately stimulate the economy is to approve our plan to move our mental health complex to the site of the former St. Michael Hospital. Our plan will provide a state-of-the-art facility for a lower cost. Most importantly, it is “shovel ready.”

Conversely, the proposal to seek \$92 million in federal funding to build a new facility does not meet the definition of “shovel ready” as it would be 12 – 18 months before a shovel will hit the ground. I ask that the members of the County Board take immediate action on our proposal so we can start shortly after approval.

It also opens the door to the county selling and developing the land on the County Grounds where the complex currently rests. The Milwaukee Regional Medical Center is one of our largest job centers and we can add to these numbers with action on this site.

Today, I call on the members of the County Board to stimulate the economy by acting on our proposal to move to the former St. Michael Hospital site and to sell the existing site for development at the regional medical complex.

I want to thank Scott and Doug Weas for working so hard over the past two years to be at a point where we are “shovel ready” today.

Building a new School of Engineering for the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee on the County Grounds is another project that will truly help stimulate the economy. We negotiated a reasonable asking price for the land and now, we need to approve the deal and let UWM get on with their work.

Today, I call on the members of the County Board to pass our proposal to provide the land for a new UWM School of Engineering.

I want to thank UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago for his perseverance with this incredible project. His vision will help build our economy for generations to come.

And there are plenty of other areas of county property that can spur economic development. From land at 6th and State to 68th and State, to land around the House of Corrections; we have plenty of opportunities to act on in 2009.

One of the biggest areas of land that is ripe for development is the Park East Corridor. To jump start work on this area, I propose selling all of the county land to the City of Milwaukee.

Working with the Department of City Development, we have a plan for success. The county should sell the land to the city for market value and repeal the so-called community benefits from years ago. City officials have the tools necessary for a large-scale project and they need the flexibility to attract a wide range of interests.

Today, I call on the members of the County Board to approve our plan to stimulate the economy by selling the Park East land to the Milwaukee Department of City Development and to repeal the so-called community benefits ordinance.

I want to thank Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and his DCD Director Rocky MXXX for their willingness to work with us to get people working on this project.

Next, we propose new ways to **connect people to jobs**.

We propose the continued growth of General Mitchell International Airport. Our plans include pursuit of a third major runway and two new concourses. Mitchell continues to set the pace for passenger growth and we want to be the most convenient airport in the Midwest. Since the airport is our front door to the business traveler, we will continue our plans to remodel and enhance the facility.

Also, we advocate the pursuit of a long-term lease option for the airport. Mayor Daley in Chicago received a winning bid of \$2.5 billion for Midway last September. We want to prepare a similar process, but we need the approval of the County Board.

For more than two years, we have looked into this process, yet some have asked what the rush is. Simply put, we don't want to lose our chance.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a pilot program with five slots. Midway has one and one is for general aviation. The New Orleans City Council voted to apply for an opening in November. Recent reports show **that XXX and XXX** (as well as others) are seeking one of the remaining spots.

Today, I call on the County Board to approve funding to submit a preliminary application to the FAA for the program.

*I want to thank Anne **XXX-XXX** of the **GFOA** for working with us to put together the best way for Milwaukee County to make this work. This is a win-win for everyone.*

As I have in the past, I envision the proceeds from such a long-term lease going (first) to pay off all outstanding debt for airport related projects and then using the most of the rest as a long-term funding stream for our bus transit system. As mentioned earlier, I would also use \$100 million from the proceeds to establish the Innovations Fund.

In April, we will submit our application to the federal government for a Very Small Starts grant to create a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line from the northwest, down Fond du Lac Avenue to downtown Milwaukee and then back down National to the state Fair Park and West Allis. The County Board approved funding for this request in the 2009 budget.

It is also time for this community to use the remaining \$91.5 million for bus transit in Milwaukee County. Today, I ask our members of Congress to establish that all of these funds be used to improve and upgrade the bus-based transit system within Milwaukee County.

With a stable funding source for operations and with the use of these federal funds to upgrade the current fleet, we will stabilize and improve the transit system. In turn, this is will make the bus system easier for current riders and more attractive to future riders who can use the system to get to and from work.

A week ago, we announced a new partnership on transit with the City of Waukesha and Waukesha County. Once approved by each of our governing bodies, we will no longer have additional transfer fees for bus trips that go beyond county lines. We will help Waukesha County advance van pools. And we will prepare to purchase new fare box systems that will be the same in both counties.

I want to thank Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson and Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas for this leadership. We hope this level of cooperation will expand throughout the region.

Next, we need to **increase jobs for those in need.**

Today, I call for the Governor to keep his commitment to people with developmental and physical disabilities and approve the expansion of Family Care for these individuals in Milwaukee County before the end of this fiscal year. This is a cost effective program for those over the age of 60 and need to hold the Governor's feet to the fire to approve our expansion.

Currently, there are **XXXX** people on the waiting list for service. These people need help now.

Today, there are XXXXX older people in our county that need some form of long-term care. That number will grow to XXXX by XXXX. We need to recruit, train and employ XXXX more people to be caregivers in this county.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we will expand our Caregiver Recruitment Program started through the LTC: Let's Take Care initiative. Long-term care agencies need more employees and we need to increase the number of caregivers in the system and to help these agencies retain quality workers.

I want to thank XXXXXX who is heading the Caregiver Retention Program. XXX

Finally, we need to streamline government to be able to build an environment for job growth in Milwaukee County.

During the next year, we will continue to push our efforts to reform county government to make it more effective and efficient. There is still much work to be done.

To put more of our resources into services to the public instead of benefits to employees, we need to change state law to be more like the private sector. Today, I call on the Governor and members of the State Legislature to approve positive changes to the mediation/arbitration laws in Wisconsin. Local governments need relief from the state so we can control employee wage and benefit costs.

Too many people believe that government must either cut services or raise taxes. I believe that is a false choice.

We can do well at providing core services without raising taxes (the kind of thing that will drive jobs out of our area), but we need help from the state to do it.

Overall, we are ready to rebuild this county, this state and this country. Our Blueprint for Economic Prosperity will actually lead to real job growth. Today, I call on each of you to help use enact this blueprint.

Many of these projects are "shovel ready." As a sign of our intent to move forward on this agenda, I have a shovel for every member of the County Board. For those who are here, I invite you to come up and join me as we grab a shovel and a hat. And for those who are not, we will deliver it to your office in hopes that it might stimulate an interest in our agenda for economic recovery and – ultimately – economic prosperity.

Monday, February 09, 2009