

Great parks and a reliable transit system are vital to our quality of life.

While there are many challenges facing our parks and transit system, passing a resolution that calls for a referendum on a sales tax is not the answer. Here are some of the many reasons for that conclusion:

Negative Economic Impact: At a time when fuel and gas prices are sky high, adding a \$130 million tax increase to our area does not seem to be a positive sign for the economy.

Non-Property Tax Relief: In 1991, the County Board created a .5% sales tax with a resolution calling for the funds to be used to provide “property tax relief.” From 1992 to 2002, the property tax levy went up 55%. The county’s lawyers note that nothing in the current referendum question legally binds anyone to provide true relief to property taxpayers.

Tax Island: Currently, our neighbors in Racine and Waukesha counties pay .5% less in sales tax than we do. If enacted, the new sales tax would be a full one percent higher than our neighbors and would be the highest in the state. Businesses on the border would suffer.

Non-Binding Referendum: The referendum question is merely advisory. That means that no one in state government is required to do anything about it – even if the voters did pass it in November. Since approval for a sales tax must come from the state, that detail is very important.

Some may claim that passage of the referendum will lead to pressure on the folks in Madison. Remember the two referendum questions on state mandates passed in the spring of 2006? Voters in 69 of the 72 counties overwhelmingly passed the referendum questions, yet the budgets presented by the Governor and passed by the State Legislature increased the costs of unfunded mandates on county governments.

A better way to improve our parks – in the short-term – is to change the workforce with seasonal and contract employees that add hours of labor while dropping high overhead costs. Long-term, the answer is moving to an independent and elected Parks District.

For transit, the answer is using one of our other valuable transportation assets as a means to fund our bus system. Currently, the City of Chicago is in the process of bidding out operations of Midway Airport for some \$3 billion (after they got \$1.8 billion for Skyway Toll Bridge). A long-term lease of our airport can provide a stable funding source for the transit system.

These positive ideas can solve the challenge of supporting our parks and our transit system. Each of these ideas actually provides a real solution – passing a flawed sales tax referendum does not.