

Despite the editorial last Saturday, approving a resolution that calls for a referendum on a 1% sales tax is not a good idea for the following reasons:

Negative Economic Impact: At a time when fuel and gas prices are sky high, adding a \$130 million tax increase would not be good 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 relief to property taxpayers.

Tax Island: 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.

Non-Binding Referendum: The referendum question is merely advisory. No one in state government is required to do anything about it. Since approval for a sales tax must come from the state, that detail is very important.

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.