

Testimony in Support of Bus Rapid Transit Planning Allocation

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Board Chair Lipscomb and Milwaukee County Supervisors:

On behalf of the ACLU of Wisconsin, I want to express support for bus rapid transit in the I-94 east-west corridor. We urge the Milwaukee County Board to restore the \$300,000 BRT planning allocation included in the county executive's budget.

As many of you know, we have long advocated for more and better public transportation as a matter of equity for communities of color and persons with disabilities, who are much more likely to be transit-dependent. We have also advocated (and litigated) against highway expansion (not against reconstruction, but against adding lanes), especially when expansion projects fail to include important and meaningful expansion of public transportation.

We know that this Board is strongly committed to a better transit system. We appreciate the Board's desire to expand bus service to new job sites, such as Mequon. We also emphasize, however, that this Board - in Resolution 15-426 - endorsed rapid transit as a reasonable alternative to adding lanes to I-94 east-west.

BRT is at a critical and time-sensitive juncture *right now*. As the state is making decisions regarding the I-94 east-west reconstruction, we need to get BRT in place as soon as possible, in order to provide the reasonable transit alternative needed. Providing necessary funding for planning would allow this process to move forward – connecting transit-dependent residents to jobs, health care, and other opportunities along the corridor, and facilitating redevelopment along the corridor. By doing so, it would also provide far greater benefits to the underserved communities in the corridor than the I-94 expansion, and reduce adverse effects on those communities.

We are also extremely concerned that - rightly or wrongly - a failure to allow BRT planning to move forward will be used by decision-makers such as the state, as an excuse to justify refusing to provide a rapid transit alternative in the I-94 corridor. We urge the Board not to allow that to occur, and to restore the funding for BRT planning to the budget.