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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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January 30, 2007

Ald. Robert J. Bauman  
Ald. Michael Murphy  
Ald. Michael D'Amato  
Ald. Willie L. Hines, Jr.  
286-2221

## Local Transit Users Left Out In The Cold By RTA *Vote Today Earmarks \$0 For MCTS, Other Local Transit Systems*

A vote today by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority to recommend a \$13-per-vehicle increase in the car rental tax to fund the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail is a blow to Milwaukee transit users and to the future of the transit system, a group of Milwaukee Common Council members said.

Six representatives of the seven-member RTA – which includes City of Milwaukee Department of Administration Director Sharon Robinson – approved a resolution that calls for an increase in the rental car tax in Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha counties from its current \$2 per car to \$15 per car. “We were particularly disappointed by Ms. Robinson’s vote because she promised the Council’s Steering and Rules Committee on January 25<sup>th</sup> that she would not support a dedicated funding source that only funded KRM commuter service,” said Ald. Robert J. Bauman, a transit proponent who sponsored a Common Council measure – which has been endorsed at the committee level – opposing any RTA local funding source proposal that does not include local transit systems.

The RTA’s resolution specified that the tax increase would fund the local share of the capital and operating costs of the KRM line, with zero (\$0) proceeds going to fund local transit. Ald. Bauman said he will lead an opposition movement to block the RTA’s rental car tax increase proposal, which next goes to the state Legislature for a vote.

**-More-**

## **Fight Coming Against RTA Tax Increase/ADD ONE**

“It’s a sad day for all Milwaukee transit system users when our city’s lone representative on the RTA votes to leave them out in the cold,” Ald. Bauman said.

The second sentence of the resolution approved today states that the RTA “will continue to discuss of the overall needs of transit and the potential to expand transit service in the RTA counties, and seek alternative funding sources for transit as its second major initiative.” Ald. Bauman described that wording as “vague overtures signifying nothing.”

Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr. expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the RTA vote. “I am very disappointed and concerned that the Mayor failed to direct his representative to properly reflect the sentiments of the Council,” he said. “Because of this misdirection the Steering and Rules Committee was misled to believe that the Mayor’s office would not support anything that did not include fixed revenue streams to address local transportation needs.”

“We trusted that the Mayor would have first concerned himself about the need to transport residents within the City of Milwaukee, and the desire to preserve transportation for his residents should have been his first and highest priority,” Ald. Hines said.

Ald. Michael S. D’Amato, who co-sponsored the Council measure opposing any RTA local funding source proposal that does not include local transit systems, also had strong words for the Mayor. “It’s inconceivable that Milwaukee’s Mayor would support a tax increase that is paid for by our citizens while offering them little or no additional service nor offer any property tax relief,” said Ald. Michael S. D’Amato.

“Again, Mayor Barrett had the opportunity to hit a home-run in addressing Milwaukee’s future transit needs and instead he struck out looking,” Ald. Michael S. D’Amato.

Ald. Michael J. Murphy said the situation is especially dire in Milwaukee because property taxes are being stretched to pay for other services, leaving fewer dollars for transit costs and resulting in annual route and service reductions. “This dedicated funding source we’re calling for would not only be used to pay for improved transit service but it would also provide property tax relief for Milwaukee city and county residents,” Ald. Murphy said.

**-More-**

## **Fight Coming Against RTA Tax Increase/ADD TWO**

“Our first priority must always be to work for our constituents and all residents of the City of Milwaukee, many of whom rely on transit but who don’t have a voice unless we speak on their behalf,” said Ald. Murphy.

The KRM commuter rail service will generate few direct benefits to the City of Milwaukee and will carry a fraction of the passengers served by MCTS, said Ald. Bauman.

Ironically, the rental car tax increase will mostly be generated in Milwaukee County – and especially at Mitchell International Airport – according to Ald. Bauman. “So we’re feeding the KRM with dollars that come mostly from Milwaukee, while Milwaukee transit users and the MCTS get the short end of the stick,” he said.

The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) provides 50 million rides per year.