

Allow Regional Transportation Authorities

Give Communities More Tools to Coordinate Transportation Across Municipal Boundaries

People's transportation needs don't stop at city, village or county lines. Wisconsin communities need tools that allow them to plan, fund and coordinate transportation regionally.

People with disabilities, older adults and other nondrivers may need to travel between communities for work, health care, shopping and other parts of everyday life.

But transportation services and their funding are often divided among individual municipalities, counties, programs and providers.

WILN believes Regional Transportation Authorities could give neighboring communities another way to work together to build stronger, more coordinated transportation systems.

The Problem

Transportation needs are regional, but transportation systems and funding can be fragmented.

Wisconsin residents routinely travel between municipalities as part of everyday life.

For people who cannot drive, making those connections depends on having transportation services capable of getting them where they need to go.

WILN believes locally coordinated transportation solutions are an important part of creating a robust, user-driven transportation system.

The implementation of Wisconsin's statewide transportation brokerage model in 2012 changed how transportation services are delivered across the state. According to WILN, that change affected providers' ability to deliver rides outside of Medicaid-funded transportation.

WILN has also seen smaller transportation providers struggle to remain competitive and reports an increase in transportation-related complaints.

These challenges point to a need for stronger local and regional coordination.

WILN's Solution

Allow Wisconsin communities to establish Regional Transportation Authorities.

A Regional Transportation Authority, or RTA, would provide a structure through which multiple municipalities could work together on transportation.

WILN believes allowing RTAs could help communities:

Coordinate transportation regionally.

Neighboring communities could work together rather than approaching transportation exclusively through individual municipal boundaries.

Bring together funding sources.

Regional coordination could allow participating municipalities to combine resources and create more opportunities to support transportation services across a larger area.

Support braided transportation funding.

WILN believes regional coordination would increase the feasibility of its proposal to better coordinate different transportation funding sources.

The result could be a transportation system built more around how people actually travel throughout a region.

Why it Matters

Community life rarely happens entirely within one municipality.

A person may live in one community, work in another, see a doctor somewhere else and rely on services located throughout the surrounding region.

For someone with access to a personal vehicle, crossing those boundaries may be routine.

For someone who cannot drive, fragmented transportation services can make the same trip considerably more difficult.

Regional coordination offers communities an opportunity to look beyond individual boundaries and consider how transportation systems can better reflect the actual needs of riders.

The Ask

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers to:

Allow Wisconsin communities to create Regional Transportation Authorities that can coordinate transportation services and funding among multiple municipalities.

WILN believes this additional tool could strengthen locally driven transportation solutions and create greater opportunities for coordinated and braided transportation funding.

The Bottom Line

People travel across communities every day. Wisconsin should give communities the option to work together across those same boundaries to build transportation systems that better serve the people who depend on them.