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FOR INFORMATION CALL

September 23, 2019

Ald. Robert J. Bauman
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Review Board to Discuss Recent Sales Tax Proposal and its impact on Public Transit

Meeting set for Thursday at City Hall

There has been ample discussion lately about expanding revenue sources for local governments through the adoption of a local sales tax. Over the course of this discussion the dire situation facing public transit in Milwaukee County has been largely ignored.

Alderman Robert J. Bauman, chair of the Public Transportation, Utilities and Waterways Review Board, said that while the various sales tax proposals being floated envision additional revenue flowing to Milwaukee County (the operator of the transit system), none of this revenue is dedicated to transit.

“It is possible, even probable, that if this new local sales tax is implemented (raising the overall sales tax in Milwaukee County from 5.6% to 6.6%) transit will still be in a death spiral because transit funding will still be competing with all of the other county spending priorities such as parks and social services,” said Alderman Bauman, who also chairs the Public Works Committee.

“Transit would still not have a predictable, stable and dedicated funding source,” he said.

Virtually every other major transit system in the United States is funded, at least in part, through a dedicated funding source—most often a dedicated sales tax. These other systems are often operated by a dedicated agency, such as a regional transit authority, that collects and manages the dedicated tax revenue.

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Review Board/ADD ONE

Perhaps dedicated funding for transit has been absent from this tax discussion because the elected officials and business leaders participating in these discussion do not believe public transit is a core public service in Milwaukee.

With these issues in mind, the city's **Public Transportation, Utilities and Waterways Review Board** is convening this week (**10 a.m. on Thursday, September 26 in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.**) to hear from experts from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission SEWRPC and Wisconsin Policy Forum who will discuss proposed (and past cuts) in transit service, methods of funding transit systems across the United States and the use of dedicated taxes to fund transit. The board will also discuss what, if any, impact the current sales tax proposal will have on public transit.

Thursday's meeting will be televised live on the City Channel (Channel 25 on Spectrum Cable and on AT&T U-Verse Channel 99) in the City of Milwaukee. It can also be viewed via streaming video on the City website at milwaukee.gov/Channel25.

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