



**LWVDC Statement to the Transport 2020 Finance and Governance Subcommittee
February 23, 2009, Middleton, Wisconsin**

The League of Women Voters of Dane County supports the formation of an RTA for Dane County. The Madison metropolitan area is fast outgrowing its present system of cars and busses, and, throughout the County, the population continues to grow and spread. With this growth come dollar costs of fuel for motor vehicles and for materials for road building and maintenance as well as for parking structures. There are also the environmental costs of polluted air and water and loss of farmland and open space. Only very good planning will make it possible to meet these challenges with efficiency.

And, by its very nature transportation planning must be regional. No one or two municipalities alone can decide how to move people and goods around the county. A transportation agency will bring the several units of government together to plan for the beginnings of a county-wide integrated, multi-modal accessible transportation system. We hope that a successful RTA will bring coordination and cooperation among the various governmental units that will lead to more general cooperation regarding land-use regulation.

Some among the public fear that an RTA will automatically create a rail system that will be costly and will replace the existing bus system. We are confident that it will be the job of the RTA to consider all the modes and routes and ultimately give the best information on what is good and should be kept as well as what changes are needed. The RTA will provide the administrative structure and the professional staff to examine the many modes of travel, the existing routes, and the impact on land use of various alternatives. It may recommend more rail, but it may not.

Assuming that rail will be recommended, we believe that the return on money spent for putting rail service into the mix will occur over a long period of time, with far greater fuel efficiency than with an expansion of the highway system. People pay for the existing road system without a whimper, so some support for moving forward, with savings for all in time, money, and energy; into the twenty-first century ought to be forthcoming.

But for now we know that establishing an RTA is an essential first step in applying for necessary federal funds for any transportation planning. Good transportation planning will not proceed without that funding. So the League of Women Voters urges the Legislature and the County Board to proceed as soon as possible.

Connie Threinen
Libby Lewis