



**Kicking Carbon to the Curb: Ordinary  
People Doing Ordinary Things**

**League of Women Voters of Dane County  
Resource Materials for November 9, 2021 Public Issues Forum**

“Our decisions about transportation determine much more than where roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives - and thus how hard or easy it will be for people to get where they need and want to go.”  
Elijah Cummings

*Forum speakers: **Philip Gritzmacher, Jr.**, Transportation Planner, City of Madison’s Department of Transportation; **Robbie Webber**, Honorary Fellow with the State Smart Transportation Initiative, a joint project of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and Smart Growth America; and **Zia Brucaya**, Program Manager for RoundTrip, the transportation demand management program of the Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization*

### **The League’s Position**

The LWVUS position on [transportation](#) has changed greatly since the 1970’s when the position stated “...energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs... and [the League] will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals....”

“In 1988, [transportation] was incorporated into the Meeting Basic Human Needs positions and [the LWVUS] urged State and Local Leagues to use the Transportation position with their own local or [Interleague Organization (ILO)] positions to back local and regional moves to improve mass transit and support other alternatives, such as express lanes for buses and carpools. (pg. 141)

**The LWVUS policy** on [Meeting Basic Human Needs](#) is to “Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.” This includes providing “...quality public services and facilities, including schools, transportation, recreation, etc., that will encourage integration and stability.” One of the criteria for supportive services is “Transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and should also provide energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation.”

[Transportation Action by the LWVWI](#) has been taken under the national League position as well as the state Land Use and other Natural Resource positions, and Social Policy positions under Meeting Basic Human Needs, Equal Rights and Community Policy positions...

In 1975, the LWVWI supported a “wide-ranging transportation proposal, including a revised road aids formula, mass transit funds, money for state highways and bridges, plans for the reorganization of the Department of Transportation and the establishment of county transportation commissions” that was considered during a special session of the [Wisconsin] legislature....

“In 1994, LWVWI protested the canceling of Amtrak services from Milwaukee to Chicago and urged increased funding from national and state governments. This action was based on Social Policy, Natural Resources and Community Policy positions. We also supported the establishment of the bicycle as a vehicle that year.”

### Discussion Questions:

1. According to the IRS, it costs about \$.50/mile to operate a car. To drive, say, 6 miles to the Madison Central Public Library (12 miles round-trip) and park in the ramp for two hours (\$1.20/hr.), would cost approximately \$8.40. A full-fare Metro bus ticket would cost \$4.00 and for seniors, \$2.00. How often, if ever, might the savings motivate you to take the bus rather than to drive alone in a car? What circumstances affect your choice?
2. How often do you walk to a destination within 1-2 miles of your home rather than take a car or ride the bus? Where do you go and how safe or convenient is it to walk? Have you driven an electric car, or have you considered purchasing one?
3. If you bike, how often do you bike? Do you use a city bike rental, or ride an E-bike? Do you ride to shop, get to work, or for recreation? Is your neighborhood safe to ride in? Would you, or others you know, use the library bike rentals that are available for free?
4. What recommendations do you have to change/alter/improve the Madison Metro bus system?

*“For every \$1 Billion we invest in public transportation, we create 30,000 new jobs, save thousands of dollars a year for each community and dramatically cut greenhouse gas emissions.”* Bernie Sanders

### Transportation and Climate Change: Background

“Transportation is now the largest and [fastest growing source](#) of carbon emissions in the United States. We must focus on reducing emissions now in order to help prevent disastrous climate change. We must work to build a future that includes accessible, clean, and affordable transportation options available to everyone in our communities.”

The EPA tracks total [greenhouse gases emissions](#) annually. These gases are the result of “the burning fossil fuel for our cars, trucks, ships, trains, and planes. Over 90 percent of the fuel used for



transportation is petroleum based.” Transportation is responsible for the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States; it accounted for 29% in 2019.

Lest we forget, last year vehicles transported 11 billion tons of freight, more than \$32 billion worth of goods each day, and moved people more than 3 trillion vehicle-miles. U.S. Department of Energy's [Vehicle Technologies Office](#) provides low cost, secure, and clean energy technologies to move people and goods across America.

The [Transportation Equity](#) policy of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin states that a “disproportionate focus on automobiles has encouraged sprawl, unsustainable land use patterns and contributed to transportation being the largest source of climate changing carbon emissions in the United States. [T]heir goal is to move Wisconsin towards a balanced, cost-effective, equitable transportation system that discourages sprawl and accelerates the decarbonization of the transportation sector.”

In March 2021, WTS Transportation Panel Discussion at the Participatory Learning and Teaching organization (PLATO) offered a variety of [perspectives on transportation](#) issues, including the interactions between technologies and transportation policies, the impacts of Covid-19, the effects of various strategies on low-income communities, and the roles of state, local and national governments.

## Creating Cleaner Cars, Trucks, Buses and Trains

### Electric cars

In the 1990's, federal legislation resulted in increased interest and research into [electric vehicle technologies](#) (1990 Clean Air Act Amendment and the 1992 Energy Policy Act, among others). The first widely popular hybrid (gasoline/electric) car, the Prius, was released in the United States in 2000. Other manufacturers have started releasing hybrid and electric cars over the last 20 years. There were a [million electric cars](#) on the road in the US in 2018.

Charging stations are a critical requirement for electric vehicles. “Through the Recovery Act, the Energy Department invested more than \$115 million to help build a [nation-wide charging infrastructure](#), installing more than 18,000 residential, commercial and public chargers across the country.” Private businesses and automakers have installed over 2000 more, resulting in more than 20,000 charging outlets at 8,000.

Developing a wide-spread network of charging stations is one of the goals of the Regional Electric Vehicle Midwest Coalition, or [REV Midwest](#). It is bipartisan and was created by the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. REV Midwest aims to improve the economy of the region, reduce toxic emission from vehicles, improve public health, create jobs, and “make it easier to find charging stations, which could boost adoption of electric vehicles....” An additional goal is to provide standardized regulations and charging operations for drivers of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles across the states. It is hoped that the REV Midwest coalition will also “... capture a larger share of electric

vehicle production... and spread economic opportunity... with specific consideration for communities that are historically disadvantaged.”

### **Electric trucks**

Cars are not the only vehicles in the process of transitioning to electricity for power. [Electric pickup trucks](#) are now on the road. Pickup “trucks are the lifeblood of the automotive industry....[They] make up more of new-car sales in the U.S. than any other type of vehicle by far.” Electric pickups are versatile and have high towing values and solid payload ratings.

Medium and [heavy trucks](#), including semis and local delivery trucks, account for almost a quarter of greenhouse gases. Using electric commercial trucks and semis would greatly reduce these gases. However, “we’re right at the beginning of transitioning trucks and semis” to electric power sources.

### **Electric buses**

Over [10 million battery-electric buses and trucks](#) are expected to be sold over this decade.... [E]lectrified powertrains – hybrid, fuel cell and battery electric – will account for over 2.5 million annual registrations of commercial vehicles by 2030, out of a total of over 20 million.”

### **Electric trains**

“Colossal [freight locomotives](#) are a fixture of the American landscape, but their 4,400-horsepower engines collectively burn 3.5 billion gallons of diesel annually....” “Battery-powered trains could be a climate game changer.... [The railroad] industry has begun operating locomotives that run on stored electrical power. American passenger lines could also be transformed by the technology.”

In addition to the positive impact on climate, “...it is estimated that it is [50 percent less expensive](#) to power a train by electricity than by diesel.... The cost of [electric locomotive engines](#) is about 20 percent less than diesel locomotive engines on the global market, and maintenance costs are 25-35 percent less than for diesel engines.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation hopes to provide [transportation options along the rail corridor](#) along the rail corridor between the Twin Cities, Milwaukee, and Chicago passenger rail project seeking your comments. If it is approved construction will begin in 2022 and service start in 2024.

## **Creating Cleaner, Smarter Transportation Structures: Roads, Streets and Rails:**

The [Road to Clean Transport](#) outlines how Wisconsin can move towards a balanced, cost-effective equitable transportation system discouraging sprawl and increasing the rate at which carbon produced is reduced. This would involve combining multiple methods of travel, including automobiles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrian walkways.

In this [TED talk](#), “...environmental designer Kevin J. Krizek reflects on how temporary shifts -- like transforming streets into places for dining, recreation, and community -- can become permanent fixtures that make for more livable and sustainable cities.”

A national coalition has developed a program, known as “Complete Streets.” “A [Complete Streets](#) approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks, helping to ensure streets put safety over speed, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.... everyone should have “safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, moving actively with assistive devices, or taking public



transportation,” with a special emphasis “...older adults, people living with disabilities, people who cannot afford or do not have access to a car, and Black, Native, and Hispanic or Latino/a/x communities.”

The 2020 [Dane County Action Plan](#) includes strategies to reduce driving and switch from gasoline- to electric-powered vehicles, and increase options for getting around the county. Insufficient transportation options create barriers to healthy and affordable goods and services, and economic opportunities. Creating access to clean,

affordable, reliable transportation is critical to addressing inequity in Dane County.

The Greater Madison [Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO) leads the collaborative planning and funding of a sustainable, equitable transportation system for the Greater Madison region. “The goal of the MPO planning process is to build regional agreement on transportation investments that balance roadway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation needs and support regional land use, economic, and environmental goals.” Click [here](#) to find out how you can participate.

## Creating and Changing Behaviors: How We Get from Here to There

### Riding the bus

A 2020 survey by [UW Transportation Services](#) found that UW-Madison students and faculty/staff, and UW Hospital staff use public transit at a higher rate than the national average of 5%. In good weather, 69% of students walk or ride to campus. In bad weather, 35% walk or bike, and 41% take the metro and/or campus bus. Twenty percent of faculty/staff walk or bike in good weather, and 12% ride the metro bus; in bad weather, 5% walk or bike, and 20% ride the bus. Among UW Hospital staff, 11% walk or bike in good weather and 6% take the metro bus; in bad weather, 4% walk or bike and 9% ride the bus.

The Metro Transit Network [Redesign Alternatives Report](#) provides “...two very different alternative futures for the Metro Transit network. One greatly expands coverage, the other increases frequency of routes. These alternatives cannot both be achieved.

Metro Transit has committed buses to expand [Sun Prairie commuter routes](#) as early as next year and launch Bus Rapid Transit by 2024, if the city moves ahead on the plan. The BRT electric bus service boasts more frequent service, fewer stops and quicker rides from Madison Sun Prairie’s Park and Ride to Madison.

### Biking

The [popularity of biking](#) has exploded during the pandemic. Millions more Americans are riding bikes, some for the first time in years. Safety is a major concern among many people who would like to bike, but don’t. American cities are building more bike lanes, including some that are protected from vehicular traffic.

The [Community Pass Program](#), a partnership between Bcycle and Madison Public Library, brought bike sharing to Madison. Now anyone with a Madison Public Library card can access one of 300 electric bikes for free; they can also check out a helmet at no cost.

Several Madison nonprofits are working to [expand access to biking](#) to more people, especially communities of color and people with disabilities. BikEquity, a recently formed non-profit, is partnering with Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR) to host a weekly bike club, and the Mobile Bike Library, where people can check out a bike and helmet for free. Madison Adaptive Cycling is focused on helping people with disabilities gain access to biking. One of their goals is to “normalize seeing a more diverse group of people in Madison’s bike lanes.”

### **Local agencies working to improve alternative transportation options**

Two organizations are working with the City of Madison to create more [equitable access to downtown events](#) and festivals. Downtown Madison Inc., Access to Independence, and the City of Madison have created a [guide](#) to help make such events more accessible to people with disabilities.... It will assist event organizers with no-cost or low-cost accessibility improvements that go beyond the minimum requirements established by the Americans with Disability Act. The guide covers best practices for areas such as transportation, parking, seating, signage, restroom, and digital outreach.

The [Fitchburg Report on Sustainability](#) in the 2019 Green Tier Annual Report to the state, outlines bike path improvements to increase pedestrian and bike safety in the Fitchburg area.

[Middleton's annual report in 2019](#) highlights their strategies to “encourage walking, bicycling, and transit as modes of transportation within a community and seek to curb the number and length of trips by vehicles. In addition, the city plans to improve existing infrastructure, introduce new technology, and plan for future of transportation system improvements.”



### **Introducing our campaign:**

### **Kicking Carbon to the Curb: Ordinary People, Ordinary Things**

**Campaign GOAL:** To reduce carbon emissions from transit within Dane County and build on existing efforts to scale up their work, such as Dane County Action Plan (DCAP), whose plan is to reduce 15% of current Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 2050, and to encourage League members to lead by example to expand equitable and accessible transit options by engaging members and the public at large about the importance of reducing VMTs, equitable access issues, and transit alternatives.

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