

WISCONSIN ALLIANCE OF CITIES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FINISH WORK ON RTAs, CITY LEADERS URGE

The Wisconsin Alliance of Cities today urged the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance and both houses to finish the work the Assembly Transportation Committee began last week and enact legislation allowing Wisconsin communities to create regional transit authorities.

Assembly Bill 282 is a statewide bill originally inspired by the Alliance, tailored to better fit a Southeastern Regional Transit Authority and modified to include a stronger property tax relief provision, as well as including provisions for a Fox Cities RTA.

"Transit is a service best managed and delivered on a regional basis," said Mayor Timothy Hanna of Appleton. "To protect the investments already made in our current transit systems and to allow transit to play a vital role in our state's economic future, it's time for the State of Wisconsin to move forward and authorize the use of Regional Transit Authorities."

Time to enact the bill is running short, with lawmakers' last general-business floor period of 2010 due to end April 2010. Time is also running short for all the transit systems in Wisconsin, which stand to lose operating funds as a result of the 2010 Census.

"This is a bipartisan bill that recognizes how important transit is to our cities," said Edward J. Huck, executive director of the Alliance "Businesses across the state support RTAs. And transit is more important in tough times than when the economy is rosy."

AB 282 has the support of business and labor. "Transit is about economic growth and jobs – jobs, not ideology," wrote Roger Caron, president of the Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce, before last week's vote.

Labor sees RTAs as a tool that will benefit both small businesses and major corporations. City leaders see them as a device to expand property tax base and encourage Smart Growth along rail lines.