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Governor Doyle Unveils Plan for Regional Transit Authority for Southeastern Wisconsin

Legislation will Invest in Jobs, Improve Bus and Rail Service and Foster Regional Cooperation in Milwaukee, Kenosha and Racine

MILWAUKEE – Governor Jim Doyle today announced legislation that creates a Southeastern Regional Transit Authority to invest in the future of Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin. Business leaders joined the Governor to express their support for the plan, which will create jobs by improving bus and rail service in Milwaukee, Kenosha and Racine.

“Regional transit doesn’t just improve the way we move people and goods – it improves the overall economy in southeast Wisconsin,” Governor Doyle said. “We now have a good, solid plan for a Southeastern Regional Transit Authority. We have the support of local communities, the support of legislators and the support of the state’s business leaders. Now, let’s get to work and get it done.”

The plan builds on the regional transit framework Governor Doyle set forth last September and represents compromises based on the needs of Milwaukee, Kenosha and Racine. Specifically, the legislation proposes:

- A truly regional transit authority that is solely focused on transportation;
- A plan that that would phase-in independent governance;
- Transportation funding that creates major property tax relief; and
- A strong plan that positions the proposed Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee commuter rail line for obtaining New Starts funding from the Federal Transit Administration.

State legislators pledged their support for the compromise legislation, which began circulating today. The Governor thanked Senators Taylor and Lehman, and Representatives Barca, Grigsby and Turner for their support of the bill. The bill proposes a two-level approach to regional transit that creates a Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SERTA) that would phase in independent governance. Milwaukee, Kenosha and Racine would initially operate as sub-RTAs, with varying sources of previously approved funding. The simple plan allows communities to join SERTA when they’re ready and provides incentive funding for joining SERTA.

In his last budget, Governor Doyle signed three other RTAs into law in Dane County, the Chippewa Valley and the Chequamegon Bay area. The Governor highlighted the state’s progress to meet the state’s regional transportation needs, and pointed out that the Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin region need it most.

Governor Doyle was joined by CEOs and business leaders from some of Wisconsin’s largest companies to announce the plan at Bucyrus International in Milwaukee. John Dickert, Mayor of Racine; J. Fisk Johnson, Chairman and CEO of SC Johnson; Robert Mariano, Chairman and CEO of Roundy’s Supermarkets; Steve Roell, Chairman, President and CEO of Johnson Controls; Scott VanderSanden, President of AT&T Wisconsin; Ed Zore, CEO and President of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance; and Julia Taylor, President of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, joined the Governor to discuss the importance of transit to economic development in Wisconsin.