



## League of Women Voters of Delaware Supports

**1) a dedicated funding stream for public transit, 2) the reduction of vehicle miles traveled...and 3) by extrapolation, an increase in transit funding**

Transit funding should have a higher priority than has been reflected in the 2017-18 transportation budget, which allots 11% to transit, including rail and paratransit. The national average for transit funding is 20% of the transportation budget. Increasing access and availability of transit can have a significant impact on congestion management if its economics, convenience, and comfort are demonstrated.

Increased availability of transit is critical to accessing employment for non-drivers. Certain areas of the state are underserved, often with a larger population of persons with limited means. Delaware's residential development patterns have moved people further and further away from employment centers. The number of households not within walking distance of a bus stop is increasing. Thus, an increasing population is having less and less reasonable access to transit. Delaware's job creation growth is expected to occur primarily in already developed centers while population growth is expected to grow in a dispersed manner.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled is a goal if we are serious about encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their part in pollution containment, reducing traffic fatalities, and greenhouse gas reduction. Traffic fatalities have been reduced by 14-16% from an all-time high in the mid-1990's; the national reduction in traffic fatalities in this period, however, is 39%. The more cars on the roads the higher the risk of traffic fatalities; Delaware is projected to increase single occupancy travel over the next decades.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, transportation accounts for a whopping 40% of Delaware's greenhouse gas emissions.

Transit funding has an uphill battle competing with the very real need for road and bridge maintenance, also necessities for a healthy economic climate and employment. Roadway projects typically receive well over half of capital transportation expenditures in Delaware. Paratransit absorbs 47% of that 10% (while providing only 10% of the rides) leaving the remaining funds insufficient for doing much more than maintain the status quo for fixed route service.

Fixed route buses are wheel chair accessible, making the fixed route bus suitable transport for many of the persons with disabilities **if** the riders can get to the bus stop. Making all bus stops truly accessible is an essential cost to be budgeted. If fixed route service is made more available, expenses for the paratransit system could be significantly reduced. Both fixed route and paratransit fares are subsidized by the state. The LWVDE study of transportation's connection to land use policies showed that in 2014 a fixed route ride was subsidized at \$4.91; paratransit at \$47 per ride.

Delaware's transit performance doesn't fare well in national assessments. It ranks as 20th in the All Performance Score which looks at connectivity, access to jobs, frequency of service. Compare this with New Jersey ranking 6th, Maryland 7th, and Pennsylvania at 17th. Perhaps Delaware doesn't feel the need to catch up to its neighbors, but the transit budgets we've accepted will never let Delaware catch up to its own looming future needs and possibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> WILMAPCO's 2040 Regional Transportation Plan Progress Report of 2014.