



Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired



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Local Leaders, Community Members to Show Gaps in Wausau’s Transportation System *New report highlights the growing need for transit access across the state*

Wausau, Wis. – Today transit riders, activists and transportation experts gathered to release a first-of-its-kind report, [Arrive Together: Transportation Access and Equity in Wisconsin](#), that shows how people’s needs are not being met by the state’s transportation system. The report examines the effectiveness of public transit access to major employers and other areas of interest in nine cities and regions across Wisconsin, including Wausau.

Statewide, the report’s authors identify a lack of transit access to school, work, the grocery store, the doctor’s office, and other needs. These gaps in the transportation system disproportionately impact those who are unable to drive or cannot afford to drive - including seniors, people with disabilities, low- to middle-income Wisconsinites, and young people.

“Despite research into individual transit systems across the state, two things were two reoccurring themes. First, our transportation system is leaving people cut off from the places they need to go -- hurting our economy, lowering quality of life, and making this a less attractive place to live,” said **Elizabeth Ward**, Conservation Programs Coordinator for the Sierra Club and one of the report authors. She continued, *“and we found that this isn’t the fault of our transit systems, they are doing the best they can. Cuts in funding for local transportation and our transit systems have left cities without the ability to meet the needs of the community.”*

A need for better cooperation was found across the state and was extremely evident in Wausau. **Kathi Zoern**, transit rider and NAOMI leader, explained, *“Many people in our community assume that everyone can just get to Rothschild, Schofield, Weston and Rib Mountain on the bus, but there is no bus moving through those communities.”* Zoern then told her story about being unable to get to the DMV for a voter ID card by transit and would have to pay for a taxi cab.

The report concludes that, while each community faces unique challenges in providing transportation access to employment, medical services, major businesses, local attractions or other points of interest, the absence of consistent and sufficient funding for public transportation is a major hurdle across the board. Demographic changes will likely exacerbate these challenges in the future: Statewide, communities are already struggling to meet the transportation needs of a growing population of seniors, and to retain young people who increasingly want to live in transit-friendly, walkable, bikeable towns and cities. The authors identify increased transit funding and better coordination between municipalities as viable solutions to many transportation challenges outlined in the report.

“Public transit is a community issue, it’s an inclusive issue and it’s a quality of life issue. Public transit is good for the whole community,” **Zoern concluded.**

Arrive Together: Transportation Access and Equity in Wisconsin was released by [1000 Friends of Wisconsin](#), [Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance](#), [CUSH](#), [NAOMI](#), [MICAH](#), [ESTHER](#), [Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter](#), [SOPHIA](#), [Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) and [WISDOM](#), with support from the [Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group \(WISPIRG\)](#).

To view a full copy of the report, visit sierraclub.org/Wisconsin/ArriveTogetherReport.

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