

# Footnotes...

**SECOND QUARTER 2008**

## **Survey provides insight into views of members**

Responses to help guide future

The Forum recently wrapped up its first membership survey. Of the 597 surveys sent via e-mail, 108 responses were received for a respectable 18.1% rate. Members appear satisfied overall with what the Forum is doing and how it's done. And 49% of the respondents said they were satisfied with their involvement in the Forum.

The survey also yielded guidance on how the Forum might consider its future priorities.

Eighty-nine respondents (82.5%) felt it was important or very important to enhance the Forum's capacity to provide research assistance to policy leaders. Eighty-seven (80.6%) said it was important or very important to increase Forum staff attendance at government meetings. Eighty-two (76%) said it's important or very important to increase media coverage.

Forum President Rob Henken says the results support the organization's increased focus on issues immediately confronting local governments. "Our ongoing work on transit, early childhood education, and community justice, and new projects on local government structure and housing are consistent with what we're hearing from our members," says Henken. "They want us to be topical, relevant, and visible."

Henken adds that survey comments indicate the organization is maintaining its reputation for non-partisan objectivity. "One member said we were too pro-business and another said we lean to the left. That indicates we're right where we want to be," he says.

*Highlights of the survey results follow:*

**KEY:** 1-5, 1 being not important; 3 being neutral; 5 being very important

### **Question 1** (108 responses)

#### **Factors in decision to become a member**

Receiving invites to Forum events:	84 said 4 or 5 (45 said 4)
Receiving mailings of research results:	94 said 4 or 5 (56 said 5)
Being listed as a member of the Forum:	86 said 3, 4, or 5 (40 said 4)
Providing networking opportunity:	77 said 3 or 4 (43 said 4)
Serving critical purpose in community:	74 said 5

### **Question 2** (151 responses)

#### **What can be done to add value to Forum**

After work/evening events:	21
Before work/breakfasts:	24
Member-only events:	9
Research available only to members:	9
Greater difference in event costs:	17
Everything is OK as is:	45

### **Question 3** (108 responses)

#### **Importance of Forum strategic priorities**

Greater media coverage:	82 said 4 or 5 (48 said 4)
Increase attendance at gov't meetings:	87 said 4 or 5 (48 said 4)
Increase research capacity to leaders:	89 said 4 or 5 (46 said 4)
Enhance efforts to engage policymakers in cooperation:	75 said 5
Reach out to young leaders:	71 said 4 or 5 (40 said 4)

### **Question 4** (108 responses)

#### **How often do you attend Viewpoint luncheons**

1-2 annually	54
3-4	35
5 or more	7
Never	10

### **Question 7** (108 responses)

#### **Are you receiving what you expect from the Forum**

Yes	86
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### **Question 8** (117 responses)

#### **Would you like to become more involved**

Committee member	26
Event sponsor	3
Research funder	2
Satisfied	57

### **Forum takes on local government structure**

On Wednesday, July 23, the Forum will host a Viewpoint on the structure of government in Milwaukee County. A panel, moderated by **Mike Gousha**, will include **Dan Finley**, former Waukesha County Executive; **Ralph Hollmon**, former director of Milwaukee County Human Services; **Chas. Mulcahy**, former Milwaukee County supervisor; **Michael Skwierawski**, former Milwaukee County chief judge; **Richard Cox**, former superintendent of the Milwaukee County House of Correction; and **Linda Seemeyer**, former director of Milwaukee County Administrative Services. For more information and to sign up, go to [publicpolicyforum.org/events.php](http://publicpolicyforum.org/events.php).

In addition, the Forum has launched a major research initiative looking at local government structure. A new project will delve into the policy and practical implications of a possible restructuring of Milwaukee County government. The Forum also is conducting an opinion survey to gauge citizens' views on our existing structure and potential regional or metropolitan alternatives.

### **Footnotes** (published quarterly)

<i>President:</i>	Robert E. Henken, M.J.P.A.
<i>Research Director:</i>	Anneliese M. Dickman, J.D.
<i>Senior Researcher:</i>	Ryan J. Horton, M.U.P.
<i>Researchers:</i>	Jeffrey K. Schmidt Melissa Kovach, M.P.P.
<i>Communications &amp; Development Director:</i>	Jerry Slaske
<i>Office Manager:</i>	Catherine A. Crother
<i>Research Interns:</i>	Eva Lam Samantha Leonard

633 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 406 Phone: 414-276-8240  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203 Fax: 414-276-9962  
[www.publicpolicyforum.org](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org)

# **Forum rolls out transit funding analysis**

## **Looming financial crisis needs to be addressed**

A recent Forum report on transit in Milwaukee County quantified and shed new light on the financial crisis facing the quasi-private Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), and laid out options for dealing with the problem.

“Policymakers face a stark choice,” says the Forum’s highly publicized report. “They can accept a system that is a shell of its former self or they can consider one or more selections from a menu of difficult policy options that could either delay the day of reckoning once again or perhaps prevent it altogether.”

The report’s major findings include:

- Without an infusion of new money from the feds, the need for such funds in the system’s operating budget soon will outstrip the amount of funds available by more than \$15 million annually;
- Almost \$40 million of a \$44 million reserve of federal capital funds have been used to fill holes in the system’s operating budget and avoid greater service cuts, but this strategy has deferred new equipment (bus) purchases;
- There is a growing funding gap in paratransit services for persons with disabilities because of increased demand;
- The system’s fiscal challenge has been enhanced by a new government rule that requires the system to budget annually for long-term liability for retiree health-care benefits;
- MCTS carried 10.3 million fewer riders in 2007 than seven years earlier;
- MCTS was the most cost-effective bus system in the country in 2006 based on data from the Wisconsin Department of

Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration, indicating that cost savings from efficiency improvements may be limited.

The report discusses a set of “status quo” options, concluding that this approach would have to include severe cuts in service resulting in a system consisting almost exclusively of central city routes. It also quantifies the amount of sales tax needed under an approach that would seek a regional solution to “bridge MCTS’ budget gap, remove transit costs from the property tax, and fund the operations of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee commuter rail line.”

A temporary alternative would be what the report calls a “triage” approach that would include a \$10 registration fee for all vehicles kept in Milwaukee County and the use of some or all of the infamous \$91.5 million in federal money to implement a “Bus Rapid Transit” system.

“This could be pursued without state approval and would put the system on more solid financial ground for perhaps the next two years, while also preventing service cuts and continued reserve depletion,” says Forum President Rob Henken.

Such an approach also would allow new bus purchases to begin in 2010 after having been delayed several times in the past.

Henken presented the report to nearly a dozen government, business, and community groups, including Milwaukee County and city of Milwaukee legislative committees, the Intergovernmental Coordinating Council, the Regional Transit Authority board and the Downtown Business Improvement District.

## **Early childhood education survey results**

# **Parents satisfied with quality of child care, but providers say cost constrains quality**

Most parents, according to the results of a Forum survey of 430 parents in southeastern Wisconsin, wouldn’t change a thing with their child care arrangements even if they had the chance, and even more said they’d pay more for their current child care. A follow-up survey of 414 child care providers throughout the region, however, indicated that low wages and lack of benefits for workers inhibit providers from pursuing improvements to child care quality.

“The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the current quality of their child care arrangements,” says Forum Research Director Anneliese Dickman. “But the cost of accreditation to ensure that factors associated with the highest level of quality care are being met is constraining providers from pursuing improvements.”

Over three-quarters of the provider survey sample is neither accredited nor seeking accreditation.

The report on the parent survey results says “parents may be satisfied with what experts may deem lower quality child care either because they are not aware the quality is not optimal or because they value different aspects of quality than do researchers and policymakers.”

According to Dickman, the lack of capacity among providers to make improvements is relevant to the debate in Wisconsin regarding parent subsidies for child care. The state now spends more than \$300 million annually in such subsidies, which are

not tied to provider quality. Over half of provider budgets include government funds like subsidies.

The parent survey also reveals that parents are uncertain about how and whether their child care provider is regulated by the state and have little knowledge of child care accreditation. In addition, there were significant demographic and geographic differences regarding the type of child care used and the affordability of such care.

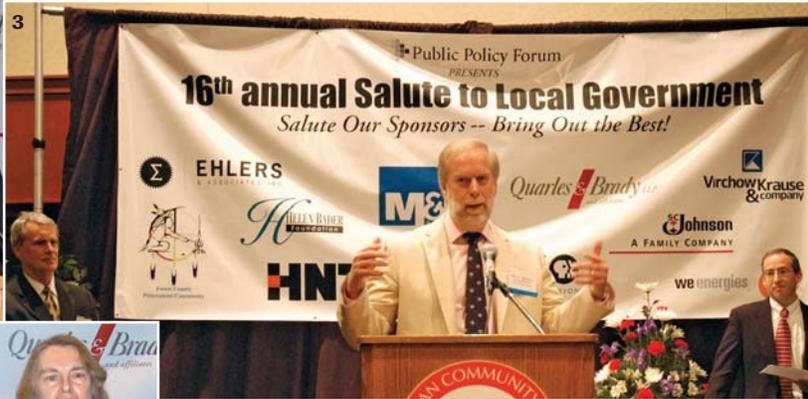
The surveys are part of the Forum’s three-year project on early childhood education. Both can be found in their entirety at [www.publicpolicyforum.org](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org).

### **New members** (since January 1, 2008)

Thomas A. Brophy Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin	Johnson Direct LLC The Joxel Group LLC Wade C. Kuettel Literacy Services of Wisconsin	Christine A. Reese St. Francis (city of) State Representative Jeff Stone Sean M. Walker, CPA
Commercial Association of Realtors Wisconsin Cudahy (city of) Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee David Ellis Gilbane Building Co.	Milwaukee Art Museum Mukwonago (village of) Sandra Pasch Chip Pieper Planning Council for Health and Human Services, Inc.	Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare Wisconsin Hospital Association Bill Zaferos

# Sweet 16

“Salute to Local Government” reaches milestone



**1)** Kathleen M. Cooke, Ph.D., superintendent of the Hamilton School District (including Sussex, Menomonee Falls, and Lannon) accepted the Salute award for implementation of a plan to improve performance that included research-based instruction and assessment, collection and utilization of data in decisionmaking, promotion of community engagement, and prioritization of financial resources. **2)** Martha Brown (right), deputy commissioner of Milwaukee's Department of City Development, and Suzanne Hanson, the Development Center's operations manager, talked about the department's award-winning program that reduced overall permit processing time. **3)** Norman N. Gill Award recipient Barry Bateman, director of Milwaukee County's Mitchell International Airport, flanked by Bill Haberman (left), Forum chairman, and Rob Henken (right), Forum president, called the airport a “great example of a public/private partnership” and “one of the cogs of the southeastern Wisconsin economy.” Almost 6,000 people work at the airport, 5,500 of whom are private sector employees. Providing “consistent vision and leadership” is key to the airport's growth, Barry said. **4)** Emphasizing that city planning is a team effort, Steven Schaefer, West Allis city planner, accepted the Leader of the Future Award for leaders in government under the age of 40. **5)** Forum President Rob Henken (left) congratulated Matt Gibson, Ph.D., superintendent of the School District of Elmbrook, for the district's award for a revised construction/renovation referendum that passed.

## Award recipients

### Excellence in Problem Solving

City of Milwaukee – Dept. of City Development  
*ePermit Program*

### Effective Use of Technology

Milwaukee County Treasurer's Office  
*One-stop real estate records center*

### Managing for Results

Hamilton School District  
*Implementation of plan to improve academic achievement, aging facilities, and community satisfaction*

### Inter-governmental Cooperation

Walworth County Board of Supervisors  
& the 15 school districts of Walworth County  
*Lakeland School for special needs education*

### Private-Public Cooperation

Milw. Center for Independence & Milw. Public Schools  
*FUELAU Breakfast Packaging Program*

### Government Transparency/Ethics

School District of Elmbrook  
*Implementation of construction/renovation school referendum*

### Leader of the Future Award

Steven J. Schaefer, City Planner  
City of West Allis

### Norman N. Gill Award

Barry Bateman, Director  
General Mitchell Int'l. Airport, Milwaukee County

### James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award

Jim Ryan (accepted by widow, Lisa Ryan)



**6 & 7)** Lisa Ryan accepts the Forum's first-ever James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award from Forum President Rob Henken. “Jim was an ordinary man who did extraordinary things,” said Lisa, Jim's widow. Three of the four Ryan children looked on while Lisa talked about Jim's accomplishments. “His number one priority in life was his family,” she said. Standing behind Lisa (from left to right) are John, Kristen, and Jim. Cathryn was out of town. Moreover, Lisa said “cooperation was important to everything Jim did in his public life. He always wanted there to be winners in any type of negotiation.” The day of the Salute was also Jim's birthday.



Viewpoint: Future of the airport

**Taking off on economic development**

On May 8, the Forum held a Viewpoint luncheon, “Runways and jetways,” on the future of Milwaukee’s Mitchell International Airport. Panelists included Barry Bateman, airport director; Scott Dickson, Midwest Airlines’ chief marketing officer; and Ryan McCue, mayor of Cudahy, a city that borders the airport. Despite the turmoil and crisis atmosphere in the aviation industry today, Mitchell International is doing well. In the first quarter of 2008, traffic was up more than 8.5%, making the airport a star among mid-size facilities. “One of the reasons for the airport’s growth is competitive service, with no one carrier dominating,” Bateman says. “This has resulted in competitive fares.” And if there’s one thing Milwaukeeans like, it’s a bargain.

**1)** With the airline industry in the throes of monumental change due mainly to fuel prices, Bateman was cautious in talking about future growth at the airport. **2)** Audience questions reflected that the airport benefits all of southeastern Wisconsin. **3)** Mayor McCue talked about the importance of having the airport as a neighbor. **4)** “I don’t think any carrier in the industry has a growth plan for the next 18 months,” says Midwest’s Dickson. **5)** A contingent from Graef, Anhalt, Schloemer & Associates listened intently as panelists highlighted the economic benefits of Mitchell International Airport.

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