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What Good is it Anyway?

Let's pay for results, not good feelings

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PLYMOUTH—Minnesotans think they are buying congestion reduction with their transit dollars, when in fact that is not true at all.

The jury is in: the impact of transit on traffic is: zero—zilch—nada—less than insignificant.

So why are we spending over \$300 million a year to run our transit system, and investing billions more in upgrades?

That is the \$64 billion question, and so far nobody has a good answer for the taxpayers.

The best answer so far seems to be that we invest in transit to help people without cars, or people not able to drive. Both worthy causes, but are we getting our money's worth? After all, most people who ride the bus actually own cars—leaving precious few actually transit "dependent." Metro mobility is different from the bus system, and nobody seems interested in cutting that back.

The Taxpayers League of Minnesota has a suggestion that might save taxpayers billions of dollars—and really help people in poverty who genuinely are transit dependent: let's buy them used cars. 10,000 used cars at \$5000 would cost only \$50 million—a fraction of what we spend each year to run the bus system. We could buy 40,000 good used cars for lower income people and still have money left over—from just one year's worth of transit operating costs.

"The bus system has failed its customers. How many Minnesotans are locked into poverty because they are dependent upon government schedules? How many Minnesotans are just one missed bus ride away from losing their job?" asked David Strom, President of the Taxpayers

League.

"I am very serious. The state legislature should consider scaling down the bus system and subsidizing vehicles for lower income workers—maybe with zero interest loans, or by some other means including buying the vehicles outright. It will be a win-win. We can divert resources back into the highway system where the dollars will benefit everyone, and help people get out of poverty. That's a much better deal than the current transit system, which is failing just about everyone," Strom added.

"At least the argument over whether transit helps relieve congestion is finally over!" Strom concluded.

The Taxpayers League is Minnesota's largest taxpayers advocacy organization.

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