**Fiscal Facts: Economic factors may influence transit ridership**

What forces may have caused ridership in most of Wisconsin’s largest transit systems to drop between 2014 and 2017? The strengthened economy, relatively low gas prices, and the rise of ride-hailing services are seen as possible factors driving a similar national trend.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Wisconsin’s seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate fell from 6.1% in January 2014 to 3.1% in January 2018. As a result, some transit riders who are newly employed or earning higher wages may have purchased vehicles or chosen to drive more often. Wisconsin DOT data show the number of vehicles registered in the state increased from 5.6 million in 2013 to 6.0 million in 2017.

Federal Highway Administration data also show driving is on the rise again in the U.S. The total number of miles driven nationally was virtually the same in 2013 as in 2005 but increased 7.4% between 2013 and 2017.

Relatively low gas prices may be another factor. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average price of gasoline has increased over the last two years but remains substantially lower than in 2014.

Ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft, which have grown dramatically since the recession, may also play a role.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education.*