



Jobs, Justice and a Brighter Future

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

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**Common Sense Coalition Public Safety Agenda:
Keeping Pace with Growth**

(MADISON) – The Common Sense Coalition announced today that it will aggressively pursue additional funding for public safety-related services and tie that funding to growth in the area.

“Population has been exploding while police, fire and EMT staffing increases have been incremental,” said Scott Favour, president of the Madison Professional Police Officers Association and interim board member of the Common Sense Coalition. “We have to keep pace with growth, keep safe our streets for the children of this community and make public safety a priority.”

Favour says the national standard for public safety is a ratio of 1.8 police officers per 1,000 citizens. Madison’s average is currently 1.6 officers per 1,000. Madison Police Department would need to add 15 positions to attain the national standard. The cost for those officers is estimated to be \$1.1 million.

“We understand and appreciate how tight the city’s budget is, but this is about priorities, safety and quality of life,” said Favour. “People would be shocked to learn that the east or west side is covered by just 5 cops on an average day.”

How would 15 extra police officers be used? The police department could staff two new Community Policing Teams (10 officers, 2 sergeants) and add a “beat” (3 officers—one patrolling area).

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Or, the department could add an afternoon or evening Traffic Unit (4 officers, 1 sergeant), a Community Policing Unit and a “beat”.

Response time is also a critical public safety issue. Currently, the average response time for emergency medical personnel in Madison is 7 minutes, according to Tim Healy, vice president of the Madison Firefighters’ Local 311. The national standard for response times is 5 minutes. That means that 90% of all calls should have a response time of 5 minutes or less.

“Two minutes may be the difference between life or death, we have to make the investment,” said Healy. “Remember, 7 minutes is the average response time. That means that several areas of Madison have response times of 10, 11, 12 or more minutes. Madison is currently 4 fire stations short of being able to provide the service that the national safety standards call for.”

The Common Sense Coalition is also exploring:

- **Development of a funding formula** that ties public safety budgets and staff to population increases.
- **Expansion of the Educational Resource Officer (ERO) program** into targeted Madison middle schools. Currently, EROs are in all four Madison high schools all day, all week, all year but they are not in the middle schools. The Madison Metropolitan currently pays MPD for the officers. Additional funding options need to be explored.
- **Cameras in all Metro buses** and transfer stations. The number of violent incidents on Madison’s transit system continues to rise and the city needs additional tools for protection and prosecution. Funding should be explored utilizing Homeland Security Agency grants.

The Common Sense Coalition is a diverse, non-partisan public policy group that is committed to change. Its core issues revolve around sustainable economic development, open and responsive government, enhanced public safety, quality education and responsible land use and development. The coalition is comprised of individuals and representatives from the business community, education, building trades and public safety unions and non-profit organizations. Anyone interested in learning more about or joining the Common Sense Coalition should log on to www.commonsemadison.com.