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## Keep buses rolling, then push harder

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Without another round of help from the City-County Council, Indianapolis' beleaguered bus system, IndyGo, once again faces an untenable scenario: higher fares and fewer routes.

As Council President Ryan Vaughn acknowledges, IndyGo "provides a necessary service to a large portion of the population." Yet, that service already ranks as the worst of any major city in the nation. To cut it further would be to deprive workers of their means to get to work, the elderly of the ability to visit a doctor, families of their access to grocery stores, and students of their way to and from school.

IndyGo faced the same daunting prospects a year ago. Last fall the council and Mayor Greg Ballard helped the agency bridge a \$3.2 million shortfall. This year's funding gap is double that amount.

The fault lies not with IndyGo's managers. Vaughn credits the agency with an "outstanding job of managing with limited resources." Expenses, driven by higher fuel and employee health-care costs, are expected to increase by \$2.4 million. Revenue is projected to drop by \$4 million next year, largely because of **property** tax caps.

IndyGo's heavy reliance on property taxes, rare among big city transit systems, has been a long-term problem, one the council should have addressed long ago.

Moving forward, the mayor and the council need to push hard for creation of a regional transit system, which likely would put a strong emphasis on new rapid transit buses, additional lines of **services**, improved shelters at stops and other upgrades that would make taking the bus a more viable option for residents in much of Central Indiana.

More immediately, however, the council (and the mayor) must find a way to keep the buses running for another year.

Indy's bus service already is atrocious for a city this size. We simply can't allow it get any worse.

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