

Friends and Colleagues:

Attached please find my memo appointing Richard Murphy and Elisabeth Gerber to serve as Washtenaw's first representatives to the new Regional Transit Authority governing board. I deeply appreciate the advice and insight each of you has provided, directly and indirectly, over the last couple of weeks. I want to especially call out Yousef Rabhi's consistent engagement and leadership. Although we did not agree 100% on every aspect of this appointment process, he was a constant champion for openness and represented the values and interests of the County and our partners with extraordinary candor. For that, I am very grateful and I look forward to his continued leadership as he assumes the position of our new chair in the coming days. I also want to thank Rolland Sizemore, Bill Milliken, Carolyn Grawi and Michael Ford for engaging over the holiday to vet the applicants. I was comforted by your presence and took each of your words to heart.

Each of you expressed some concern about my relationship with Murph and the impact that might have on local partnerships and the potential conflict of interest it could represent. I want you to know that he and I both struggled over those issues. Ultimately, it is my opinion that Murph has an unmatched skillset that is particularly useful in launching the RTA. However, we are together taking two actions that I hope will mitigate some of the discomfort. First, Murph has agreed that we will alter his employment arrangement at the Suburbs Alliance. My board of directors there will contract with him and remove him from my line of authority. He will report directly to them and not to me -- this will formalize the peer relationship we already share. Second, we have agreed that it is best that he be appointed to the one-year term. This will give Yousef and the rest of our friends in the transit community a chance to assess his independence and effectiveness before deciding if he should continue his service for a longer period.

Last, and most seriously, none of this could have happened without Lisa Moutinho and Larry Allen from the County who made the process incredibly smooth despite a shortened timeline and a cadre of participants stretched across 4700 miles of our little planet! What a great team the County has! If there were mistletoe, I would kiss you all.

Cheers and a Happy New Year,

Conan

Conan Smith
Washtenaw County Commissioner
234 8th St | Ann Arbor, MI 48103
www.eWashtenaw.org
m. [734-891-2241](tel:734-891-2241)