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As WISDOT Pushes Ahead With I-94 Expansion Plans, Community Calls for Local Infrastructure Fixes Instead

Advocates Deliver More Than 3,000 Comments and Signatures as Comment Period Ends

MILWAUKEE – Members of the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation delivered several thousand public comments and petition signatures to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WISDOT) today, urging the agency to scrap its billion-dollar proposal to unnecessarily add lanes to I-94 and to instead fix the highway without expansion. Advocates also called on the Department to put forward more cost-effective, community-oriented alternatives that would better address Milwaukee’s most pressing transportation needs, such as repairing existing infrastructure and improving transit service. Friday marked the end of the public comment period on WISDOT’s proposal to expand I-94 between the Zoo and Marquette Interchanges.

“The message today is clear: The community doesn’t want this highway expansion, Milwaukee doesn’t need it, and Wisconsin just can’t afford it. WISDOT should fix I-94 without expansion,” **said Elizabeth Ward, Conservation Programs Coordinator with the Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter.** “There are better, less expensive ways to meet the region’s transportation needs and to address congestion than widening I-94 – ways that won’t have devastating impacts on Milwaukee neighborhoods and their residents, or cost taxpayers \$1 billion.”

Over the past twenty years, Wisconsin has [doubled down on highway expansion](#), building more and wider roads despite evidence that Wisconsinites are increasingly looking for different transportation options. These imbalanced spending priorities have led to a growing transportation infrastructure crisis: [Close to 40 percent](#) of Wisconsin’s local and county roads are in need of urgent repair; [more than 1,200 bridges](#) are structurally deficient, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers; and due to recent state funding cuts, [31,000 fewer jobs](#) in the Milwaukee area are served by Milwaukee County transit today than in 2001, with outside impacts for minority populations. WISDOT’s State Highway Program is

currently being audited by the Legislative Audit Bureau, due in part to questionable traffic projections that have been used to justify billions of dollars' worth of highway expansions.

“Thousands of people and dozens of organizations are calling on WISDOT to focus on real transportation priorities,” **said Peter Skopec, WISPIRG Director.** “Needlessly adding lanes to highways while existing infrastructure crumbles means that many of Wisconsin’s real and urgent transportation needs will remain unmet. The huge cost of this proposed expansion would make it even harder for us to find money for things like fixing potholes and sidewalks on local roads, or providing better bus service to connect people to the places they have to go.”

The proposal to expand I-94 has yet to be approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation. USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx [recently used harsh words](#) to criticize transportation policies that segregate and adversely impact minority communities – chief among them the construction and expansion of urban freeways like I-94. Secretary Foxx urged decisions-makers to avoid repeating these past mistakes.